

IAIN Curup's Public Relations Strategy in Branding the Campus Through the Use of Social Media in New Student Admission Promotion

Received: 07-02-2024

Revised: 23-03-2024

Accepted: 28-05-2024

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the communication strategies of IAIN Curup's Public Relations (PR) in branding the campus through the utilization of social media for the promotion of new student admissions. Every academic year, higher education institutions face the challenge of declining numbers of prospective new students, which becomes a seasonal concern. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a field research method to uncover the underlying phenomena related to the promotional strategies. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to obtain maximal data. The results indicate that the role of the PR department in higher education is highly strategic in ensuring the dissemination of information regarding the institution's vision, mission, and leadership policies to the public, as part of institutional branding. The task of PR is to create a positive perception in the community about the campus through various branding attributes. Furthermore, from 2019 to 2022, IAIN Curup's PR utilized seven social media platforms for campus branding, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), YouTube, and TikTok. The use of these social media platforms successfully reached thousands of followers and visitors. Additionally, the branding strategy was realized through planning, implementation, and evaluation to enhance the effectiveness of new student admission promotions.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi strategi Humas IAIN Curup dalam membranding kampus melalui pemanfaatan media sosial pada promosi penerimaan mahasiswa baru. Setiap tahun akademik, perguruan tinggi menghadapi tantangan penurunan jumlah calon mahasiswa baru, yang menjadi kecemasan musiman. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode *field research* untuk menggali fenomena yang belum terungkap terkait strategi promosi tersebut. Informan ditentukan menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling* untuk memperoleh data yang maksimal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran Humas perguruan tinggi sangat strategis dalam memastikan penyampaian informasi mengenai visi, misi, dan kebijakan pimpinan institusi kepada publik, sebagai bagian dari branding citra kelembagaan. Tugas Humas adalah menciptakan persepsi positif di masyarakat terhadap kampus melalui berbagai atribut branding. Selain itu, Humas IAIN Curup pada periode 2019-2022 memanfaatkan tujuh platform media sosial untuk membranding kampus, antara lain Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), YouTube, dan TikTok. Penggunaan media sosial ini berhasil menjangkau ribuan pengikut dan pengunjung. Selanjutnya, strategi branding ini direalisasikan melalui perencanaan, penerapan, dan evaluasi untuk meningkatkan efektivitas promosi penerimaan mahasiswa baru.

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Keywords: *Public Relations; Strategy Branding; Social Media.*

INTRODUCTION

Students are one of the important components in higher education and function as an indicator of the quality and popularity of a higher education institution. The existence of students is very crucial as stated in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, which states in Article 1 Paragraph (15) that students are students at the higher education level, both in public/private universities and public/private religious universities.(Indonesia 2012) The process of obtaining new students is carried out through the delivery of effective information to prospective students through socialization and promotion carried out by public relations (public relations). According to Nasruddin, as quoted by Yayan Nuryanto et.all (Nuryanto, Taryana, and Sandjaya 2022), Public Relations of Higher Education as part of Government Public Relations has specific objectives that focus on two fundamental things: first, reporting all forms of activities to the community, and second, creating active support and community participation in the programs implemented. The three main objectives of government public relations are: 1) providing information to the public about agency activities, 2) ensuring active community involvement in government programs, and 3) maintaining community support in the formulation and implementation of programs and policies.

The existence of IAIN Curup Public Relations is regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 30 of 2018 concerning the Organization and Work Procedures of IAIN Curup, which states in Article 45 Paragraph (2) that the Sub-Division of Cooperation and Public Relations has the task of managing the administration of cooperation, public relations, documentation, and publications.(RI 2018) The first step in managing social media at IAIN Curup is to improve existing ones and create new accounts, such as: 1) improving the quality and quantity of news on the website www.iaincurup.ac.id (Curup 2023), 2) manage IAIN Curup's Facebook account and posts, 3) create a Facebook fanpage IAIN Curup,(Facebook.com, n.d.) 4) Create an Instagram account @iaincurup_(Instagram.com 2023) 5) Create a Twitter (X) account @iaincurup, and 6) Create a YouTube channel HUMAS IAIN CURUP.(www.youtube.com 2023) Campus branding for new student admissions has been carried out through social media with various forms of content, such as the distribution of digital brochures, flyers, video testimonials from officials, regional and national figures, and vlog competitions in 2021 and 2022. In general, the promotion received a positive response from the community, parents, and prospective students.

The socialization targets for the three new student admission paths of IAIN Curup are: 1) SPAN PTKIN is a selection pattern that is carried out nationally by all universities determined by the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. 2) UM-PTKIN is a selection process for UIN, IAIN, STAIN and PTN under the coordination of the Directorate of Islamic Religious Higher Education of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (PTKIN 2023). 3) UM-Independent/Local (Independent/Local Entrance Exam) is carried out independently by IAIN Curup.

This study aims to find out how IAIN Curup's Public Relations strategy in branding the campus focuses on the use of social media in promoting new student admissions at IAIN Curup during the 2019-2022 period. The two questions that want to be answered in this study are: 1) Why was social media chosen as the main platform for branding the campus and as a promotional medium for new student admissions? 2) What is IAIN Curup's public relations strategy in branding the campus through social media in promoting new student admissions?.

Some of the relevant previous studies include: Valentina Adisti (Adisti 2021) in his research "Public Relations Strategies in Increasing Community Participation during the Covid-19 Pandemic" which implements a two-way strategy that requires and does not require feedback, applied to online

student counseling. Novia Setia Rahmawati (Rahmawati and Trihantoyo 2021) in the research "Public Relations Strategy in Improving Vocational High School Marketing during the Covid-19 Pandemic" using a network marketing strategy. M. Abdul Malik Zuhri (Zuhri and Christiani 2019) in the research "Utilization of Instagram Social Media as a Library Based Community Promotion Media" using the theory of Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (AIDA). Dinda Sekar Puspitarini (Puspitarini and Nuraeni 2019) in the research "Utilization of Social Media as Promotional Media at Happy Go Lucky House" emphasizes the active use of social media features.

This research adopts the strategy management theory proposed by Barney, which starts with strategy planning, determination of the media used, implementation, and evaluation or control. This research is different from previous studies, such as Valentina Adisti's research which focuses on feedback in counseling, Novia Setia Rahmawati's research which emphasizes networking, and M. Abdul Malik Zuhri's research which uses AIDA theory and Dinda Sekar Puspitarini's research which focuses more on social media features. Based on previous studies, both from the focus and the locus of the research, this study is interesting to study more deeply because it has never been discussed before.

This research study is included in the category of field research using a qualitative approach and a type of descriptive research. This method is applied to explore and understand phenomena that have not yet been revealed in depth. (Nurdin 2019) The data collected in this study focuses on IAIN Curup's Public Relations strategy in branding the campus through the use of social media in promoting new student admissions. Primary data, which is the main source of research, is obtained directly from informants who have in-depth and detailed knowledge of the problem being researched. (Bungin 2006) Data collection techniques are carried out through in-depth interviews, documentation, and direct observation. (Moleong 1989) In analyzing the data, this study uses a data analysis model from Miles and Huberman which consists of four stages: data collection, data presentation, data reduction, and conclusion drawing or verification. To ensure the validity of the data, checks are carried out through four criteria, namely credibility (degree of trust), transferability (distraction), dependability (dependency), and confirmability (certainty)

Public Relation

The importance of reputation in an institution has actually been studied since the 1950s by public relations scientists, public relations is placed in the function of strategic management, so that it has a significant impact on the university. According to the British Institute of Public Relations, public relations is the whole effort made in a planned manner in order to create and maintain good will and mutual understanding between an organization and all audiences. (Sari and Sugiarto 2019) So its activities manage communication between the organization and the public. Thinking, planning and devoting resources to build and maintain mutual understanding between the organization and the public. (Sumolang, Himpong, and Harilama 2022) According to Scott in effective Public Relations as quoted by Leliana, public relations is a management function that recognizes, builds and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its various audiences where the success or failure of the organization is. The definition of public relations (public relations) is an effort to build and maintain a good and useful reputation, image and communication between the organization and the community. The success or failure of an organization can be affected by public relations activities So public relations is a social science that analyzes trends, predicts, their consequences, advises organizational leaders and implements programs of planned activities that are beneficial to both the organization and its audience (Leliana and Agusta 2019).

The role of public relations in higher education based on the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs Article 1 paragraph 3 No.13 of 2011 explains that government public relations is the activity of institutions or individuals of government administrators who carry out management in the field of communication and information to the public, stakeholders or vice versa. The function of government public relations is to ensure security about government policies, provide services to the public, and disseminate

information about government programs and policies.(Amani and Djuwita 2021)

Branding Strategy

Strategy is a series of grand blueprints that describe how a company must operate to achieve its goals.(Hayani 2012) In Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) It is stated that the term strategy is "a science to use resources to implement a certain policy".(Kebudayaan 2007) The strategy shows the general direction taken by the association to achieve its goals.(Malarangan, Salim, and Haekal 2020) Strategy in simple terms is a way or method used in introducing goods or products that we sell through a brand or slogan that is easy for the public to remember or a jargon or a yell that is made so that it becomes a joke, laughter and fame for them, but when they mention it, they remember the product or service that we are offering. According to Kenneth R. Andrews in Nurahmi, strategy is a process of evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a company compared to the opportunities and threats that exist in the environment faced and deciding on a product market strategy that adjusts the company's capabilities to environmental opportunities. Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of competitors becomes a specialty, mastering a simple word in the head, leadership that gives direction and understands the reality of the market by being the first rather than being better.(Hayani 2012)

The strategy that has been set in introducing a product needs to be carried out by management. According to Barney, strategy management is the process of selecting and implementing an overall strategy regarding the use of resources to create a profitable position. Strategy management is the art and science of drafting, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable a company to achieve its goals, develop policies and plans to achieve goals, and allocate resources to implement policies and plan to achieve organizational goals.(Julianti 2021)

Strategy management consists of three processes including: 1) Strategy making, including the development of long-term missions and goals, identifying opportunities and threats from outside as well as the strengths and weaknesses of educational institutions. 2) The implementation of the strategy includes, determining annual operational goals, organizational policies, motivating members and allocating resources. 3) Strategy evaluation/control, including efforts to motivate the entire creation and implementation of strategies including measuring individual and company performance and taking improvement steps. The purpose of strategy management is to carry out and evaluate the selection of this strategy that is selected must be appropriate in its effectiveness and efficiency, always evaluate the performance of targeted work, and can always formulate in the development of the existing external environment, always try to review existing strengths, press on weak points, provide opportunities and threats in the future, and always innovate on the achievement of a product that is in accordance with what has been desired previously.

In formulating a strategy is not easy, the most important meaning in understanding a strategy is to take an action that is different from other competing institutions to achieve the desired position and goals. Strategy is based on integrated and holistic analysis, which means that after the strategy is prepared, all elements and elements in the organization have internalized the vision, mission properly and correctly. Strategy management is in charge of controlling a long process, lifting and placing the people involved in that process. Strategy management is the art and science of drafting, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable a company to achieve its goals, develop policies and plans to achieve goals, and allocate resources to implement policies and plan to achieve organizational goals.

As an effort to improve the image of the institution in the eyes of the public, the strategy used by IAIN Curup Public Relations is by means of media relations. According to Iriantara (Iriantara 2005), Media Relations is part of external public relations activities that foster and develop good relations with the mass media as a means of communication between institutions and the public to achieve the goals of the institution. The purpose of the institution in this case is public trust that can build a positive image of the institution. Citra according to Krisyanto (Krisyanto 2008), is the image or perception of the public about the company in terms of service, product quality, company culture or the behavior of individuals in the company.

Meanwhile, according to experts as stated by Kotler (Kotler 2008) that branding is a symbol, term, naming or a combination of various concepts that describe a product, service and company to have a difference from the same. The key branding is in the activities, programs and communication concepts offered with the ultimate goal of building public perception that our organization, institution or company is the best compared to organizations, institutions or companies engaged in similar services.

Some expert views on the concept of branding include; Michael Lenvin (Lenvine 2003) say “The concept of branding and public relations are closely intertwined. The job of public relations is to encourage the public to have positive thoughts about a particular company, products, service, or individual. Branding is the idea that particular set of attributes will encourage the public to have positive thoughts about a particular company, product, service, or individual. It’s a subtle distinction but an essential one”. Lenvin added that Public Relations work behind the scenes, but its impact on branding is enormous.

Along with the development of digital technology, one of the branding efforts can disseminate information through social media or other platforms, social media networks through online communities can help to convey testimony, opinions, expressions of satisfaction. Ferbita et.al (Ferbita, Setianti, and Dida 2010) In his research, he said that the challenge that must be faced when branding through social media is the ability to manage communication when responding to negative comments, if not wise in responding to the situation will have a bad impact on the world of mouth social media users.

Social Media

Social media according to Penissi and Riese (Penissi and Riese 2010) From the root of the word first, social refers to communication strategies or the way people interact. While the media is a means of communication such as television, newspapers or radio. So social media means that two-way communication can be through writing, photos, videos, or audio using internet channels. Kaplan (Kaplan and Heanlen 2010) Social media is a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of content created by its users. Yusmawati as quoted by Leliana explained that social media is a site where people communicate with their friends they know in the real world and cyberspace. (Leliana and Augusta 2019) The form of social media according to Puntodi (Puntodi 2011) i.e. participatory online media that publish photos, news, videos, podcasts that are announced on social media.

According to Antony Mayfield in Arum Wahyuni Purbohastuti, the definition of social media is media that users can easily participate in, diversify and create roles, especially blogs, social networks, online wikis/encyclopedias, virtual forum forums, including virtual worlds (with avatars/3D characters). (Arum Wahyuni Purbohastuti 2017) Social media is simply used as a facility to facilitate communication between individuals, but globally it is very fast to be able to form public opinion through sensational news with continuous results able to build a positive image, as well as the function of social media itself. As Alexis S. Tan thinks about some of the functions of social media: 1) Informant, studying threats and opportunities, understanding the environment, testing reality and reaching decisions. 2) Educate, the media acquires knowledge and skills that are useful for functioning effectively in their society, learning appropriate values and behaviors so that they can be accepted by their society. 3) Persuading, the media is able to make decisions in adopting values, behaviors and rules that are suitable to be accepted by their community. 4) Fun, satisfying communicative needs, exhilarating, relaxing nerves, entertaining and able to distract from the problems at hand. (Ekasuci et al. 2020)

The development of the use of social media in Indonesia is growing rapidly. According to Nielsen research, the growth rate of internet use in Indonesia reached 26%. Indonesians spend 1.5 hours a day surfing the internet. According to ICT Watch, currently mobile phone users in Indonesia reach 180 million people out of around 220 million Indonesians. Instagram users in Indonesia reached 22 million active users according to a press release received by CNN Indonesia.

Meanwhile, the latest update based on the We Are Social Report quoted from dataindonesia.id shows that the number of active social media users in Indonesia was 167 million people in January 2023. This number is equivalent to 60.4% of the population in the country. The

number of active social media users in January 2023 decreased by 12.57% compared to the previous year which was 191 million people. Meanwhile, the time spent playing social media in Indonesia reaches 3 hours and 18 minutes every day. The duration is the tenth highest in the world. Furthermore, the number of internet users in Indonesia was recorded at 212.9 million in January 2023. Prospective students in this day and age are called the Net Generation, which is the generation that was born and grew up in the development of information technology and internet sophistication. According Tapscott(Tapcott 2009) characteristic net generation among others: freedom, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed, dan innovation. The library must adjust the design of library promotion to the characteristics of the net generation as library users in today's era.(Yenianti 2019)

So the media used for promotion must be the media that is loved by millennial children. The New Student Admission Committee can choose various social media presented in cyberspace. King explained that there are several types of social media that can be used by universities, including: Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, Google Plus, Flickr and WhatsApp.(King 2015) From the twelve types of social media, the branding team or stakeholders can choose which social media is suitable for their consumers in promoting their institutions, while the trends used by most public relations are Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and WhatsApp. The Global Web Index (GWI) launched social media Tik Tok and Telegram are no less important.

IAIN Curup Social Media to Brand the Campus

The Cooperation and Public Relations Sub. Division of IAIN Curup since January 2019 has had several social media, namely: 1) Facebook Iain Curup, this account has existed since it was still in the status of STAIN Curup which was originally created and managed by TIPD. Due to the limited capacity of friends provided by the fb platform is only 5,000 people/account, checks are carried out on accounts that make friends periodically by the admin, if detected as a fake or inactive account, it will be removed from friends and confirmed by friends who have queued up to ask for confirmation. 2) IAIN Curup facebook fanpage, which is a business account that presents an organization or someone with unique features in it. Unlike Facebook, which is only used for social media, fanpages are intended for business purposes and handle social media professionally and for a fee. This account was created on April 7, 2021 in order to develop the coverage or reach of Iain Curup's facebook platformform with certain targets and paid and until now has 1.9 thousand followers.

Next 3) Instagram iaincurup_ a photo and video sharing app that allows users to take photos, take videos, apply digital filters and other networking activities. Instagram account iaincurup_ launched since May 2019 until now it has more than 6,000 followers with more than 6,00 posts on <https://instagram.com/iaincurup>. Twitter social media @iaincurup a service app for friends, family, and coworkers to communicate and stay connected through a quick exchange of messages and can often contain photos, videos, links and text. @iaincurup twitter account was created in May 2019 until now it is only interested by 36 followers. 4) Youtube channel HUMAS IAIN CURUP i.e. is the brand/name of the channel or channel that contains video content created and can be uploaded to the youtube account. Youtube account HUMAS IAIN CURUP made on March 12, 2019 until now it has 1.36 thousand subscribers with 93 videos. 5) Tik Tok IAIN CURUP, Tiktok is an application used to record, edit, and upload it to several social media. With Tiktok, you can make short videos accompanied by music and writing. Unique content will usually go viral quickly. Tik Tok IAIN CURUP was created on February 8, 2022 until now has 70 followers with 12 video posts. 6) IAIN Curup's official WhatsApp number 0812 7808 8819 has existed from January 2021 to December 2022, this number is linked to IAIN Curup fanpage.

As public relations activities start from managing communication between the organization and the public. Furthermore, thinking, planning and devoting resources to build and maintain mutual understanding between the organization and the public. So in general, what news and moments are published by the institution's public relations on its social media in order to provide information as well as brand the campus. If explored specifically in terms of substance or content, special promotion in new student admission activities can be seen in the following table:

Table 4.1
Recapitulation of PMB Content Posts on IAIN Curup Social Media
Year 2019 - 2022

Number	Social Media Names	Content PMB / Years				Information
		2019	2020	2021	2022	
1.	Facebook	18	20	57	60	Slides/Videos
2.	Fanpage Facebook	-	-	11	25	Slides/Videos
3.	Instagram	10	10	14	36	Slides/Reals
4.	Twitter	-	-	-	2	Slides
5.	Youtube	-	-	10	15	Videos
6.	Tik Tok	-	-	-	3	Videos
7.	WhatsApp	-	-	44.793	-	Chat/Videos
	Sum	28	30	44.880	144	

Based on the table above, it is illustrated that IAIN Curup Public Relations has used 7 social media in branding the campus in the promotion of new student admissions from 2019 (since the existence of the Sub. Division of Cooperation and Public Relations) to 2022. In terms of the frequency of special publications containing student admission content on Facebook social media, there has been an increase from 2019 as many as 18 posts, in 2020 as many as 20 posts, in 2021 as many as 57 posts and in 2022 as many as 60 posts. On the Facebook fanpage that is managed on a paid basis only in 2021, there are 11 posts with settings for the region, regional coverage, and age of the user. There were 2 significant visits giving feedback through WhatsApp Bisnis as many as 44,793. Meanwhile, on Instagram, Youtube and Tik Tok accounts, posts with new student admission content from year to year also fluctuate as shown in the table above, in contrast to twitter accounts that do not experience development because they are less loved by visitors.

Reasons for Social Media to Be Selected as Campus Branding Media in New Student Admission Promotion

In simple terms, social media is used as a facility to facilitate communication between individuals, but globally it is very fast to be able to form public opinion through sensational news with continuous results able to build a positive image, as well as the function of social media itself.

As Alexis S. Tan argues, the function of social media functions to 1) provide information, study threats and opportunities, understand the environment, test reality and reach decisions. 2) Educate, the media acquires knowledge and skills that are useful to function effectively in their society, learn appropriate values and behaviors so that they can be accepted by their society. 3) Persuading, the media is able to make decisions in adopting values, behaviors and rules that are suitable to be accepted by their community. 4) Fun, satisfying communicative needs, exhilarating, relaxing nerves, entertaining and able to distract from the problems at hand.

According to Tapscott, the characteristics of net generation include: freedom, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed, and innovation. So the promotion of new student admission information must be packaged as attractive as possible according to the times with persuasive techniques and no coercion. This theory is correlated with interviews conducted by researchers on new students based on the incoming batch from various study programs at IAIN Curup randomly as follows:

Table. 4.2
Information Sources for Prospective New Students Getting to Know IAIN Curup

Number	Students		Resources / Media			
	Years In	Sum	Teachers/ School	Brochure/ Banner/ Billboard	Socialization of the PMB Committee	Social Media
1.	2019	15	3	2	5	5
2.	2020	15	3	2	2	8
3.	2021	15	1	1	1	12
4.	2022	15	2	1	1	11

Data Source: Interviews with Students in March 2023

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the four elements used as a source of information or a medium for delivering messages about new student admissions are still relevant to use and each has an output of delivering a message to prospective students, prospective students understand, prospective students are interested in making choices at IAIN Curup, prospective students register through the entrance channels available at IAIN Curup, prospective students are declared to have passed, Continue to re-register and attend lectures.

According to Jurianto (Secretary of the PMB Committee 2019, 2020 and Chairman of the PMB Committee 2021, 2022) in normal times without Covid, socialization of effective ways to socialize and promote new student admissions by involving grade XII teachers to convey information directly to prospective new students. However, since Covid, socialization through social media is seen as more effective for now, because based on data from 2022 social media users, the age range of 18-24 is around 99.07 million Tiktok users in Indonesia, and 101.76 million Instagram users. Following up on new student admission information massively through social media both in the form of short videos, slides / flyers and twibbon is a solution to make past information easy to receive and all feedback has been managed based on social media.(Jurianto 2023)

IAIN Curup's Public Relations Branding Strategy on New Student Admission Promotion

Referring to the branding strategy stated by Barney above, the Sub. Division of Cooperation and Public Relations conducts three stages of branding strategy in new student admissions as follows:

First, the Creation of a Branding Strategy for New Student Admissions through Social Media is as follows: a) Development of the Vision and Mission of Higher Education for Long-Term Goals, Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Religion Number 2 of 2019 concerning the Statute of the Curup State Islamic Religious Institute, Article 3 that the Vision of IAIN Curup is: "Becoming a Quality University in the Development of Moderated Islamic-Based Science at the Southeast Asian Level in 2045". Furthermore, it is developed through the Mission in Article 4, namely: "1) developing quality science and technology based on Islamic Moderation, 2) increasing quality scientific publications based on Islamic Moderation, and 3) developing quality community service based on Islamic Moderation".

The development of the Vision and Mission above is manifested in the form of massive socialization to the public through news on the website, online media and the creation of IAIN Curup profile videos. The leadership chose the Brand that became the Tagline, namely "IAIN Curup Center of Excellent and Islamic Learning". As revealed by Zahdi (Head of IAIN Curup AUAK Bureau) that the steps that have been taken by Public Relations to publish IAIN Curup profile videos are a form of branding informing us that we have changed our status as well as changing the community's mind site where we are no longer STAIN but have become IAIN.(Taher 2023)

Second, Identify opportunities and threats from the outside, strengths and weaknesses of educational institutions. The opportunities as well as strengths that can be utilized by IAIN Curup in branding prospective new students can be seen from several things. a. from a geographical point of view, the position of IAIN Curup as the only State Islamic Religious University in Rejang Lebong Regency, is on the crossroads at the end of Bengkulu Province which is directly adjacent to South Sumatra and not far from Jambi Province, directly in terms of distance can be reached by 18 surrounding city districts. b. The number of Islamic Boarding Schools, MA/SMA/SMK is located in the buffer Regency/City area or around IAIN Curup. c. Accreditation of Institution B and Accreditation of Study Programs with an average of B and 2 Study Programs A or Excellent. d. from the economic side, UKT and living needs are relatively low compared to Bengkulu, Palembang and Jambi. Therefore, campus branding through social media has been carried out by sharing information about campus profiles and new student admission information through social media platforms.

The threats as well as weaknesses that must be watched out for and carefully observed are: a. Open University, PTN, PTKIN and PTS pavorit in Bengkulu City. Furthermore, almost every regency/city in Rejang Lebong and its surroundings has emerged Private PTKI and PTS that offer relatively easy and cheap tuition fees and systems. b. IAIN Curup still has a limited number of study programs with public interest, especially general study programs such as sports, engineering and others, so for middle and upper economics they will choose to study outside according to the study program of their choice.

Third, the Implementation of Branding Strategies for New Student Admissions through Social Media a. Determination of annual operational targets, determination of operational targets for branding new student admissions through social media are: First, prospective new students of class XII or alumni of the previous year and two years from MA/Ponpes/SMA/SMK equivalent. Second, the Principal / BK Teacher / Class XII Guardian and the School Operator who is a socialization partner. Third, parents of prospective new students and the general public.

Meanwhile, the annual operational form of IAIN Curup Public Relations maximizes the potential that has been possessed or programs that have been implemented. The potential that exists that IAIN Curup has been owned by as many as 7 (seven) social media, namely: 1) Facebook, 2) Facebook Fanpage, 3) Instagram 4) Youtube 5) Twitter 6) Tik Tok 7) WhatsApp Bisnis and WahtsApp Blast. Of the 7 existing social media, the most social media user data was traced in the age range of 18 to 50 years considering the goals as described above. Each social media selected for branding prospective new students is classified as material or content based on the features and characteristics of each social media. Facebook, Facebook Fanpage and Instagram are used to publish short narrative information equipped with slides, flyers, photos, real videos and share links. While youtube is used to share videos through channels HUMAS IAIN CURUP With the categories of Institute Profile Material, Study Program Profile, Alumni Testimony Video, Community Leaders, Public Officials and Practitioners. Organizational Policies

The branding program in the admission of new students has been an organizational policy since 2021 on the proposal of an activity program from the Sub. Division of Cooperation and Public Relations to the leadership, namely the Vlog Competition which was attended by IAIN Curup students with the theme Kampusku IAIN Curup and Ngampus Yuk di IAIN Curup. All videos of contest participants are uploaded to their Instagram accounts by giving a mention to iaincurup_ and Tag #iaincurup #ayokuliahdiaincurup #humasiaincurup.

Fourth, Evaluation of Branding Strategy Control for New Student Admissions through Social Media. The evaluation is carried out on two things, namely the process and the results, in terms of the process so that the quality of content can be improved with more attractive packaging in the future through an increase in human resources and adequate supporting tools. As for the results, it shows that branding through social media is very helpful in the socialization of new student admissions, as evidenced by the occurrence of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, almost no offline or face-to-face socialization was carried out and socialization was carried out massively through social media. In 2020 there were 1100 new students of IAIN Curup and in 2021 there were 1200 new students of IAIN Curup.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the role of public relations at IAIN Curup is very important in building and managing institutional branding, which focuses on socializing the vision and mission of the institution throughout the year. Through the use of seven social media platforms Facebook, Facebook Fanpage, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business as well as WhatsApp Blast, public relations managed to reach a wider audience, including prospective new students, from 2019 to 2022. Content disseminated through social media is tailored to the characteristics of each platform, such as short narratives, slides, photos, real videos, and link sharing on Facebook and Instagram, as well as institutional profile videos and testimonials on YouTube. Although direct socialization to schools, madrasas, and Islamic boarding schools is still carried out, the use of social media has proven to be very effective, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, when physical restrictions were imposed. This did not significantly reduce the number of new students, demonstrating the effectiveness of social media in reaching the target audience even in limited conditions. Therefore, the branding strategy implemented through three stages - planning, implementation, and evaluation and control requires optimal support in the form of adequate budget distribution and improving the quality of public relations resources. With this step, it is hoped that public relations can continue to have a significant positive impact on the development and reputation of the institution.

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