



**EVALUATION OF SCHOOL EXCELLENCE-BASED PROMOTION STRATEGIES
IN IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY**

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of a promotional strategy focused on school excellence in improving competitiveness and educational quality at SMPN 2 Kauman. The research focuses on three main aspects: the implementation of a promotional strategy based on production excellence (art classes, tahfidz classes, achievements, and cultural events), the efficiency of digital and offline promotional channels in influencing applicant interest and the institution's image, and identifying obstacles and suggestions for improving the quality of promotion in line with the quality of educational services. This study applies a qualitative approach with a case design through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The study findings indicate that the school has consistently implemented a promotional strategy based on excellence through flagship programs and public activities that are in line with community needs. Utilizing dual promotional channels in-person through school events and online through social media has been shown to increase school appeal, although the effectiveness of digital channels still needs to be strengthened in terms of content quality and publication consistency. Key identified obstacles include limited funding, a lack of human resources trained in digital marketing, and the lack of a data-driven promotional evaluation system. Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening school promotional management by establishing a dedicated team, planning promotions based on performance indicators, professionalizing digital content, and integrating promotions with improving the quality of educational services. This study confirms that promotional strategies that prioritize excellence and are supported by professional governance have significant potential to sustainably improve school competitiveness.

Keywords: educational marketing, promotional strategies, school excellence, school competitiveness

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INTRODUCTION

In an era of increasingly fierce competition in education, schools are required not only to improve the quality of learning but also to position themselves and communicate their added value to the public. The transformation of

parents' behavior as "education consumers" and advances in information technology are encouraging educational institutions to implement more structured marketing practices, from the use of digital media to school brand management, to retain and attract new

students and support the institution's sustainability. Julaeha (2025) shows that the implementation of a planned marketing strategy plays an important role in increasing the visibility and number of school applicants. Research shows that implementing a well-planned marketing strategy plays a crucial role in increasing school visibility and enrollment.

In theory and practice, the concept of edupreneurship and the educational marketing mix serve as important references for formulating a sustainable promotional model: more than just advertising, but rather a combination of educational products (flagship programs), services, and strong community relationships. Research from Pratiwi & Inayati (2023), Sintasari & Afifah (2022), and Widadi et al. (2025) highlight the importance of identifying school strengths (e.g., arts programs, tahfidz (memorization of the Koran), laboratories, and achievements) and packaging them as promotional products through appropriate digital and offline channels; this has proven effective in increasing school attractiveness when combined with internal quality management. The results of these three studies also indicate that edupreneurship

enhances school independence in creating added educational value.

However, empirical evidence also points to challenges in implementing promotional strategies at the junior high school level: limited promotional budgets, human resource capacity (school communications/marketing teams), public perceptions of public schools compared to private schools, and the digital divide between regions, which impact the effectiveness of promotional channels. Research from Ratnawati (2025) and Adekoya (2021) recommends the importance of strength mapping based on a SWOT analysis, enhancing digital content (profile videos, testimonials), and collaborating with school communities/committees as evaluation and improvement measures to ensure promotional strategies have a tangible impact on quality and competitiveness. This situation makes regular evaluation of promotional strategies an urgent managerial imperative for schools.

Based on this situation, this research focuses on SMPN 2 Kauman as a case study to analyze: (1) the extent of the implementation of a promotional strategy based on production excellence; (2) the effectiveness of promotional channels (digital and offline) in increasing applicant interest and the

school's image; and (3) obstacles and recommendations for improving promotional quality in line with improvements in the quality of educational services. This research aims to comprehensively evaluate the promotional strategy focused on excellence at SMPN 2 Kauman and formulate practical recommendations to improve the competitiveness and quality of education at the school.

METHODS

The research method applied in this research is a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design (Pahleviannur et al., 2022) which prioritizes the evaluation of promotional strategies at SMPN 2 Kauman as a unique case unit. This study involved three main data sources: (1) primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with the principal, curriculum representative, promotion coordinator, teachers supervising superior programs (arts and tahfidz), and the school committee; (2) direct observations conducted during various promotional activities such as the annual Dakapo festival, special intelligence competitions, large-scale religious studies, digital publications, and the new student admission process; and (3) secondary data in the form of school profile documents, achievement reports, archives of social media

publications, and official documents on promotional strategies used by the school.

The informant selection technique used purposive sampling with attention to direct participation in school promotional activities. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document analysis. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods to ensure consistency of information. The collected data were analyzed interactively through the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, as expressed by Huberman & Miles (2012), so as to produce a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of promotional strategies based on school excellence to increase competitiveness and quality of education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Production-Based Promotion Strategy for School Excellence

The research findings indicate that SMPN 2 Kauman has systematically implemented a promotional strategy that focuses on school excellence by developing and publicizing flagship programs such as art classes, tahfidz classes, and achievement programs in academic and non-academic fields. These flagship

programs serve not only as talent development tools but also as core products that emphasize the school's identity and differentiation compared to other schools in the Kauman District area. This implementation is evident through activities such as the Dakapo Festival, student art performances, tahfidz graduations, and announcements of student achievements through various school publications. This finding aligns with the concept of value-based educational marketing, which emphasizes that educational promotion must be based on clear and publicly demonstrable core service quality (Muaz et al., 2025).

In the context of contemporary education, it is emphasized that schools must optimize unique advantages based on local identity as a differentiation strategy that is in line with the preferences of parents and students. Research by Agus & Nafi'ah (2024) Studies have shown that excellence based on culture (arts-based education), religiosity (memorization and character building), and academic achievement are three groups of values frequently utilized by schools to enhance their institutional appeal. Results from SMP N 2 Kauman align with these recommendations, particularly when the flagship program is accompanied by concrete evidence such as certificates of achievement, documentation of arts activities, and regularly published

results of memorization and memorization. In this way, the school has implemented the principle of evidence-based differentiation, promoting excellence based on actual data and proven achievements.

The implementation of this excellence-focused promotional strategy at this school is supported by the integration of the flagship program with routine academic activities, providing students with opportunities to continuously demonstrate their abilities. Field observations indicate that students from the flagship program frequently participate in school activities to showcase their learning outcomes, such as art performances at internal and external events or Quran memorization during religious activities. This integration model aligns with the learning-showcasing cycle paradigm, where the learning process is accompanied by an exhibition of results, thereby strengthening character and making it easier for the school to publicly highlight excellence (Hidayati, 2023; Santi & Atun, 2021). These results indicate that a promotional strategy focused on producing excellence is not only visible but also reflects systematic internal development practices.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of the promotional strategy at SMPN 2 Kauman is also influenced by the principal's dedication to developing a

sustainable excellence program. Visionary leadership has proven to be key to educational development, Mahardhani (2016) emphasized the principal's role as both an institutional marketer and a guarantor of the quality of flagship programs. Interviews revealed that the principal actively communicates the institution's vision of excellence in various forums, while encouraging teachers to create more innovative development models. Therefore, the promotion focused on excellence at this school has a solid managerial foundation.

Overall, the implementation of a promotional strategy that prioritizes school excellence at SMPN 2 Kauman has been quite mature, marked by a well-planned flagship program, regular exhibitions, documentation of achievements, and managerial support. Compared to the latest educational marketing theory, this school's implementation fulfills the elements of a product strategy, namely making service quality the primary promotional tool. However, several elements, such as evaluation of promotional impact and consistency of digital documentation, need to be improved to achieve competitive, high-quality school standards.

The Effectiveness of Digital and Offline Promotion Channels on Applicant Interest and School Image

Research findings indicate that SMPN 2 Kauman utilizes two categories of promotional channels simultaneously: offline channels (school events, new student admissions socialization, school committee networks) and digital channels (social media, online publications). Offline channels have proven highly effective in reaching the surrounding community because they can build direct trust through the lived experiences of parents and the community regarding school activities. Activities such as arts festivals, tahfidz graduations, and religious events have proven attractive to prospective students, offering sensory and emotional experiences that online platforms find difficult to match. This aligns with the concept of experiential marketing, which emphasizes the power of direct experiences in creating a positive school image.

The effectiveness of digital channels shows a more varied pattern. The school utilizes social media to publish activities, promote achievements, and disseminate information about new student admissions. However, their effectiveness remains influenced by the quality of the content and the consistency of posting. Azim & Mustaqeem (2024) revealed that educational institutions that are able to increase enrollment through digital marketing have a solid publishing pattern: innovative content, consistent posting

frequency, the use of story-based narratives, and active engagement with the audience. The digital channels at SMPN 2 Kauman have moved towards this pattern, but are not yet fully utilized; for example, there is no data-driven content segmentation or digital campaigns.

However, the combination of digital and offline channels (an omnichannel strategy) has been shown to significantly improve the school's image. Offline channels build trust through social connections, while digital channels increase the reach of information and strengthen the visibility of achievements. Interviews revealed that many parents learned about the school through social media but chose to enroll after attending offline activities or hearing recommendations from the community. These results support the dual-channel engagement theory, which states that parents' decisions are generally formed after receiving initial information digitally and confirming their beliefs through direct experience or traditional advice (Wei et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2021).

Jusuf (2022) Research reveals that effective promotional methods need to combine the strengths of digital marketing (wide reach, lasting documentation) with the advantages of local word-of-mouth (high trust, cultural relevance). SMPN 2 Kauman has implemented this approach,

although it is not yet fully organized. Networks such as the school committee, community leaders, and alumni have proven to play a crucial role in enhancing the school's social image. Digital channels serve as a repository of information that demonstrates the consistency of its flagship programs.

The effectiveness of promotional channels at SMPN 2 Kauman has been sufficient in attracting prospective applicants and strengthening the school's image. However, this effectiveness can be further enhanced through the creation of more professional digital content, increasing the number of publications, and utilizing data analytics to understand audience patterns. The results of this study support modern educational marketing theory, which states that promotion is not simply about sharing information but about creating a strong, authentic, and consistent institutional narrative through various, mutually supportive channels (Arghanty et al., 2024)

Obstacles and Recommendations for Improving the Quality of Promotion in Alignment with the Quality of Educational Services

Interviews and observations revealed several key obstacles to school promotion, including limited budgets, a lack of human resources skilled in digital content creation, and a lack of official

documentation of promotional results. These obstacles are quite common in the context of public schools in Indonesia, as explained Basorah et al. (2024) This indicates that most schools rely on internal creativity rather than professional marketing. This limitation impacts the quality of promotional content, the consistency of publication, and the ability of schools to objectively assess the effectiveness of promotional strategies.

Another obstacle is the lack of a measurable promotional evaluation system. Schools lack annual information that combines total enrollment by pathway, the success of events in attracting public interest, or the performance of digital content based on social media analytics. However, data-driven educational marketing theory highlights that successful promotions need to be supported by performance indicators such as audience engagement, enrollment conversion, and public opinion (Othman et al., 2025). Without adequate data recording, schools struggle to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies and identify areas for improvement.

The third obstacle is the lack of effective collaboration between promotion and improving the quality of educational services. Although flagship programs have been implemented effectively, many remain undocumented systematically,

preventing the public from always being aware of the latest developments at the school. The effectiveness of promotion at SMPN 2 Kauman relies heavily on the school's internal quality; promotion is only successful if educational services align with the message being conveyed. Therefore, the synergy between service quality and marketing strategy must be continuously improved.

Addressing these obstacles, this study suggests several concrete actions: (1) establishing a school promotion team with a clear division of tasks, including a digital content specialist; (2) developing a comprehensive annual marketing plan with targets and evaluation indicators; (3) training for teachers and education personnel in digital marketing; and (4) external collaboration with local media, parents, alumni, and the arts and culture community to expand promotional channels. These recommendations align with the school branding and marketing framework, which emphasizes the importance of organizational structure in supporting sustainable promotion.

In conclusion, the results of this study confirm that improving the quality of promotion needs to go hand in hand with improving the quality of educational services. By strengthening the documentation of flagship programs, enhancing human resource capabilities in

digital marketing, and developing a data-driven evaluation system, SMPN 2 Kauman has the potential to become a highly competitive school in the region. This aligns with the concept of educational marketing literacy, which emphasizes that

CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that the use of the Montessori model at Daycare Pocenter Ponorogo plays a significant role in improving the quality of the daycare program by providing an organized prepared environment, consistently implementing sensory and practical life activities, and fostering more supportive and independence-focused interaction patterns between educators and children. This implementation has been shown to support children's holistic growth, particularly in fine motor skills, self-regulation, creativity, social-emotional skills, and learning initiatives, reinforced by positive parental feedback and daily progress records. Furthermore, authentic portfolio-based assessments and reflective interactions between teachers and parents enhance learning effectiveness and support continued stimulation between school and home. However, quality improvement still requires ongoing teacher capacity building, standardized developmental evaluations, the availability of sufficient Montessori materials, and the integration of local

successful schools are those that can integrate service innovation, a strong public narrative, and a sustainable professional promotional strategy (Mahardhani, 2021; Setiawati & Nuraeni, 2022).

values with Montessori philosophy to ensure implementation remains appropriate to the institution's socio-cultural context. These research findings confirm that Montessori is not just a teaching method, but rather a comprehensive conceptual approach that can improve the quality of daycare services if implemented consistently and supported by training, supervision, and ongoing quality improvement strategies.

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