Analysis of School Promotion Program in Admission of New Learners at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru

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A B S T R A C T

This research was motivated by the phenomenon of a significant decrease in the number of new students at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru in the last three years, which ultimately led to the school not opening the New Student Admission (PPDB) in 2024. The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of promotional programs in PPDB at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma, examine the types of promotions used, and identify the obstacles faced in its implementation. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the school has implemented a promotional strategy by referring to the marketing mix principles (7P), AIDA model, STP, and Promotion Mix components. The promotional strategies used include distributing brochures, direct visits to elementary schools, using social media, and providing incentives such as discounts and vouchers. However, the implementation of promotion has not run optimally due to several obstacles, including: the absence of a special promotion team, the limited utilization of digital media, and the lack of physical facilities that affect the school's image.

1.   Introduction

The education sector in Indonesia continues to experience significant dynamics. One of the challenges faced by educational institutions, especially junior high schools (SMP), is the increasingly fierce competition in attracting prospective students. Education is the main foundation in the development of superior human resources (Putra et al., 2025). Competition that occurs especially in the world of education cannot be avoided, some educational institutions experience the phenomenon of being abandoned by their customers. This has led to margers in the world of education, especially in the past few years (Maulana, 2022).

School promotion faces various challenges, such as intense competition with other schools, limited budgets, changing educational trends, and the rapid development of information technology. Education promotion is an effort by educational institutions to meet the needs of school stakeholders, including students, parents, communities, and companies that need alumni or higher education institutions (Arifin, 2020). An effective promotion strategy is the key to the success of an educational institution in attracting prospective students. In maintaining the existence of an institution, maximum promotion is needed, so that it can attract customers. Therefore, schools are required to be creative in exploring the various advantages and uniqueness of their schools so that they are in demand and needed by customers of educational services (Setyaningsih, 2023). Advertising is a form of communication to many people, whose purpose is to provide information by influencing consumers to create the impression of wanting to buy and to satisfy consumer desires to convey communication to consumers (Uluwiyah, 2022).

Strategy is steps that are systematically arranged in an organization to achieve its goals in the midst of competition (Martowinangun, 2019). Strategy is a plan for making methods to compete in the market, making tactics used to carry out planned activities and goals, taking into account that the organization still needs to adjust to competitive conditions (Harahap, 2021). Improving the quality of education In this context, it is important to implement a quality assurance system in order to provide the best quality of education services for the community (Rizal, 2020). This will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of learning, considering that the success of the teaching-learning process is highly dependent on the interaction between students and educators. (Al-Khowarizmi, 2020).

New Learner Admission (PPDB) is an activity or the first process in an activity for school institutions, where PPDB is through a selection that has been determined by the school to prospective new learners or students. The government also has rules about PPDB that aim to ensure this process runs fairly. PPDB aims to ensure that all Indonesian children who are ready for school can get quality education (Saadah et al., 2023).

There are several factors that play a role in influencing a person in choosing something, including (Mardiana, 2021):

a. **Curriculum,** Curriculum is a learning plan in school. Its contents include subjects, values taught, and educational goals. A good curriculum will make students more interested and motivated to learn.
b. **Role of Parents,** Parents have an important role in shaping children. They are responsible for guiding, protecting, and setting a good example for their children.
c. **Job Satisfaction,** Job satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or displeasure with their work. If someone is satisfied with their job, they will usually work better.

d. **Promotion,** Promotion is an effort to introduce a product or service to others. The goal is to get people interested in buying or using the product or service.
e. **Interest,** Interest is a person's interest in something. If someone has a high interest in something, they will find it easier to learn and achieve.
f. **Decision Making,** Decision making is the process of choosing the best option from several available options. We all make decisions every day, be it small or big decisions (Mardiana et al., 2021)."

This research aims to analyze in depth the factors that cause a decrease in the number of new student registrations at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru as well as the effectiveness of promotional programs that have been implemented. To achieve these objectives, this research will use a framework as the basis for analysis. According to Sugiono (2019), a framework is a conceptual model that describes the relationship between theory and various aspects that have been identified in the research. Thus, the framework will be the basis for identifying key factors that influence the decline in enrollment and formulating recommendations to improve the effectiveness of future promotional programs (Syahputri, 2023).

2.   Methodology

The method used in writing this research uses a qualitative method. Creswell defines qualitative research as a type of educational research in which researchers rely on the views of participants or informants: researchers ask at length, ask general questions, collect data consisting mostly of words (or text) from participants, describe and analyze the text into themes, and make subjective requests and provoking other questions (Safrudin, 2023). The data collection techniques used in this study are interviews, observations and documentation (Ardiansyah, 2023).

Through a descriptive approach, this study attempts to describe existing conditions, while in-depth analysis allows researchers to provide meaning and interpretation to the data that has been collected (M. Waruwu, 2023). Informants are people who have knowledge or experience relevant to the research topic and are willing to share that information with researchers. Informants act as the main source of data in qualitative research, where researchers collect information through interviews, observations, or documents (Ardiansyah, 2023). The following are the informants in this study.

Table 1. Research Informant Data

No	Informant	Type of informant
1	Waka Humas	Key Informant
2	PPDB Committee	Key Informant
4.	School Committee	Supporting Informant
5	3 Learners	Supporting Informant

To obtain comprehensive data on the decline in new student enrollment at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahmah Pekanbaru, this study involved various key informants,

including the head of the foundation, the principal, the vice principal for public relations, the school committee, three students, and the administration. Primary data can be the result of observations, interviews, or data collection through questionnaires (Zulkifly, 2022). In contrast to primary data that is collected directly by researchers, secondary data is pre-existing data. This data can be in the form of government reports, journal articles, or published statistical data (Sulung, 2024).

Research instruments in qualitative research are interview guides, observation checklists, documentation study guidelines, case study plans, and focus group guides (Ardiansyah, 2023). Miles and Huberman suggested that component data analysis consists of several stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Drawing conclusions is the last process of the steps taken above. Conclusions are drawn from data that has been analyzed and data that has been checked based on evidence obtained at the research location (Zulfirman, 2022).

3.   Results and Discussion

Research Results

Implementation of the Promotion Program

Based on the review of school program documents, it was found that the PPDB promotion strategy emphasizes the dissemination of information through printed brochures and school social media.

Product

Informant (WH) stated that the flagship program at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru is basically the same as the flagship program at other IT junior high schools in Indonesia, namely tahfidz (memorizing the Qur'an) at least one juz and understanding of fardhu ain and fardhu kifayah. Informant (MN) explained that the flagship program at SMP IT Raudhatul Rahma is memorizing the Qur'an at least one juz every year. The main target of this program is the ability to read the Qur'an well, starting with tahsin (improving reading) before tahfidz.

Informants GN, SH, and ND stated that the school has a superior program, namely at least memorizing juz 30 and its matan. GN suggested that extracurricular activities be tailored to students' interests and ND emphasized the importance of improving infrastructure to make the school better known. In addition, they feel that monotonous learning methods reduce learning comfort. Overall, students wished for improvements in facilities and a variety of extracurricular activities to support the development of their interests and talents.

In addition, the integration of Islamic values into the school curriculum also strengthens students' religious character, giving the school a distinctive position in the community.

Figure 1. Vision and Mission of Raudhatur Rahma IT Middle School, Pekanbaru

However, the strength of the program is not fully supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure. Additional classrooms are still needed to accommodate the optimal number of students, and sports facilities such as decent fields are also still limited. Extracurricular programs also do not fully cover the various interests and talents of students.

Price

Informant (WH) said that "registration fees at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma are included in the standard category and the school applies different fees for each registration wave". Informant (MN) explained that "registration fees have their own provisions and details of the financing are listed in the brochure." Informants (GN, SH, and ND) also stated that "registration fees at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma are different for each registration wave"

Place

Informant (WH) revealed that "the location of SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru is close to other junior high schools, namely SMPN 50 Pekanbaru and SMP Al-Fatih Pekanbaru. In addition, informant WH also mentioned that the school's facilities and infrastructure are less supportive, so the school feels less confident in inviting influencers in promotional activities because the facilities do not meet students' expectations in developing talents and interests." The existing facilities do not meet students' expectations in developing talents.

Figure 2. Sports Field

Informant (MN) also stated that "the location of the school is close to other schools that are potential competitors. Informant MN also added that the facilities at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma are still lacking." Informant (GN) argued that "the location of the school is close to his house, making it easier for parents to drop off and pick up students. However, GN informants also highlighted the lack of school facilities, especially for extracurricular sports activities." Informant (ND) argued that "the location of the school is not visible from the road, so at first they thought it was a mosque. "Informant (SH) stated that "the school is close to home and close to his sister's school, making it easier to go to school together."

Promotion

Interviews with informants at SMP IT Raudatul Rahma revealed various strategies in the school promotion process. Informant (WH) explained that they use conventional and digital methods, such as printing brochures and making banners. The most influential method is door-to-door promotion to schools, where they bring letters and hold games to attract students' attention. This proved to be effective, as many applicants were attracted after participating in the activity. Informant (MN) added that they also visited public and private schools, gave invitations, and conducted games, and gave vouchers to the winners as incentives. In addition, Informant (WH) mentioned that there is an enrollment discount based on Qur'an memorization, which is also an attraction for prospective students. And some students stated that they found out about the school through parents and friends, and many of them were encouraged to enroll because of the school's proximity to home.

The school's digital promotion strategy still has room for development. The use of social media, such as Instagram and Facebook, which have great potential to reach prospective students from millennials and gen Z, has not been optimized. This may limit the school's promotional reach in conveying its excellence widely. To strengthen the school's online promotional presence, specialized training and the establishment of a digital marketing team can be a long-term solution.the brochure can be seen in the picture below.

Figure 3. Brochure of Raudhatur Rahma IT Middle School, Pekanbaru

People

Informant (WH) revealed that "the parties involved in promotion are still limited to teachers and there is no special team for school promotion". Informant (MN) also stated that "promotion is mostly done by teachers and there is no special marketing team". Informant MN added that "the school gives appreciation in the form of money to teachers who successfully invite students to register". Informants (GN, ND, and SH) stated that students are not involved in promotions outside the school or visits to elementary schools, but have distributed brochures in front of the school during Friday blessings activities.

Physical Evidence

The physical appearance of the school is still simple, both in terms of buildings and supporting facilities. Classrooms, public areas and sports facilities still need improvement and organization. The unattractive visual appearance of a school can affect the initial assessment of prospective parents during a visit. This factor cannot be ignored because visual impressions greatly influence the decision to choose a school.

Figure 4. IT Junior High School Building Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru

The results of the interview review (WH) stated that "The facilities and infrastructure of SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma are still below standard, so if the school asks for help in promoting the school with influencers, the school feels inappropriate, because the facilities and infrastructure still do not meet the standards." The informant (MN) also added that "the facilities of SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma are still not good, as well as our sports field is still incomplete and poorly maintained." Informants (GN, ND, and SH) stated that "facilities, especially for sports, need to be improved".

Proces

The results of observations on the promotion process at SMP IT Raudatul Rahma show that this school has implemented various strategies to attract prospective students. First, the informant (WH) explained "the preparatory steps for PPDB which include data collection of elementary schools in Tuah Madani sub-district, the formation of a PPDB team from teachers, printing brochures, and making cover letters for private elementary schools and the nearest public elementary schools".

Promotion is carried out through conventional and digital methods, with an emphasis on direct activities, such as door-to-door promotion. The informant (WH) stated, "The method that goes directly door-to-door to the school, by us coming to submit a letter if we want to promote there and at the same time making games, quizzes and all sorts of things is very effective in attracting the attention of prospective students."

In addition, the informant (MN) added that they are actively promoting to other schools, giving invitations, and providing motivation. They mentioned the need for a special team for promotion, because currently all promotional activities are still carried out by teachers. This shows that there are limitations in resources that can affect the effectiveness of promotion. Community involvement is also an important aspect of the promotion process, with activities such as gotong royong and cheap markets helping to build a positive image of the school. Overall, this observation shows that although SMP IT Raudatul Rahma has made various efforts in promotion, there is still room for improvement, especially in terms of developing a marketing team and using social media to reach a wider audience.

Types of Promotion Programs

This program includes activities such as direct visits to elementary schools, distribution of brochures as information media, and the application of conceptual frameworks such as the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) and STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) models.

AIDA Model

Attention

Informant (WH) stated, "The method that goes directly door to door to schools, by us coming to submit a letter if we want to promote there and also make games, quizzes and all sorts of things, then we give vouchers, that's what's popular. For digital promotion, if our school is not well-known, it doesn't have an effect, unlike schools that are already well-known, their social media will definitely run like Al-Fatih school, the facilities and infrastructure are already good, then inviting influencers can be famous, but for schools if they want to invite influencers, they are still reluctant because the facilities and infrastructure are not good yet".

Informant (WN) added, "For school promotion, we usually go to public schools and then private schools, such as giving promotional invitations and we motivate the school, then we carry out games/games in the school. After that, whoever wins the game will get a voucher, then the voucher is exchanged with the school to get more benefits than others. Second, we usually distribute brochures in public and private schools, yes, the promotion is still manual, it has not reached the social media stage".

Interest

Informant WH said, "To increase the interest of prospective students by holding games during promotions, while holding events at school to invite alumni or regional officials does not exist yet". Informant WN explained, "Through games and conveying religious activities in school as a way to make prospective students start to be curious about SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru".

Desire

Informant WH stated, "At the time of promotion, we convey the superior program in SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru". Informant WN confirmed, "When promoting the school, the main thing that is conveyed is the superior program at school".

Action

Informant WH explained, "When promoting to schools, we make games, quizzes, after that we ask the students how many juz they have memorized. Well, each of them has different discounts, those who memorize 1 juz discount 10% of the development money and those who memorize 2 juz discount 20% of the development money. During the promotion, for example, if there are 10 people who register first, we give a special voucher and at the time of promotion to the school we hold a quiz that the child can answer, such as connecting verses or reciting certain prayers, we will give a voucher 50% of the base fee. Now when we do something like that, there is a discount, many students register". Informant (WN) elaborated, "For wave one, usually before PPDB opens, which is from December - April, for wave two, after PPDB opens from the education office, which is June, if for wave three it is held after people enter school. For each wave the price is different, the sooner you register the cheaper it is".

STP Model

Segmentation

Informant WH stated, "SMP IT Raudhaturah Rahma Pekanbaru promotes schools only in private and public elementary schools in Pekanbaru, especially in the sub-district of Tuah Madani and not far from the school, because SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru is not boarding. However, in the new school year 2024, the PPDB was eliminated, so that in the current SMP IT Raudhaturahma Pekanbaru there are only grades 8 and 9 ".

Targeting

Informant MN explained, "For the target, we take children from the neighborhood near this school first, which is still within the scope of this sub-district in Pekanbaru, and in Pekanbaru we also still measure the distance close or not from the school, for example in Senapelan or Garuda Sakti sub-districts, we don't have promotions there far away and the school does not provide dormitories or places to stay".

Positioning

Informant WH confirmed, "For special criteria for prospective new students, the superior program owned by SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanabru is focused on Islamic religion".

Promotion Mix

Personal Selling

The results of the interview review of informant WH explained "the promotion strategy is directly door to door to the school, with us coming to submit a letter that we want to promote there as well as make games, quizzes of all kinds after that we give vouchers that are crowded". Then informants WM and M also added "For school promotion, we usually go to public schools and then private schools, such as giving promotional invitations and we motivate the school, then we carry out games in the school. After that, those who win the game will get a voucher and then exchange the voucher with the school to get more benefits than others."

Mass Selling

The use of conventional and digital media has been implemented but not yet optimal, in line with the statement of informant WM, namely "school promotion uses conventional and digital, for conventional starting from banners, brochures. for digital promotion, if our school is not yet famous, it has no effect, in contrast to schools that are already famous, surely their social media is running, such as Al-Fatih school, the facilities and infrastructure are good and then inviting influencers can be famous, but for schools if they want to invite influencers, they are still reluctant because the infrastructure is not yet good".

For large-scale events at school such as open houses, alumni events and others, the school has never carried them out. But SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru still participates in external activities, although it is not optimal. The following is an interview from informant M "There is no alumni event and we have never held an event to invite alumni to the school. But for activities outside the school we usually take part in competitions such as from universities or other schools we always participate, but for activities such as bajar we have never participated."

Sales Promotion

SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma actively uses various forms of sales promotion to attract prospective students. One of the main strategies is the provision of discounts based on Qur'an memorization. Informant WH explained, "There is, if PPDB 3 years ago we went to schools to make games, quizzes, after that we asked the students how many juz they had memorized." He continued, "Well, each of them has a different discount, those who memorize 1 juz discount 10% of the development money and those who memorize 2 juz discount 20% of the development money." The effectiveness of this strategy can be seen from Informant WH's statement that, "Now when it is done like that with a discount, many students register."

In addition to the memorization discount, the school also offers special vouchers as enrollment incentives. Informant M mentioned, "During the promotion, for example, if the first 10 people register, we give special vouchers and during the

promotion to the school we hold a quiz that the child can answer, such as connecting verses or reciting certain prayers, we will give a voucher 50% of the base fee."

Another strategy used is a wave registration system with different fees. Informant (MN) explained, "Yes, there is, for wave one, usually before PPDB opens, which is from December to April, for wave two, after PPDB is opened from the education office, which is June, if for wave three it is held after people enter school." He added, "For each wave, the price is different, the sooner you register, the cheaper it is." This suggests that there is an incentive in the form of lower prices for early registrants. The school also has a "special quota" for the first batch, which is "one class of 25 people first".

Public Relation

The results of the interview review of informant WH explained, "To bring the school closer to the surrounding community, namely by doing mutual cooperation with the surrounding community, then the school also held a cheap market, and if the community wants to use the building, they are welcome". Informant MN added, "Usually we have gotong royong clean up the environment here teachers and students with the surrounding community, then when holding religious activities we will invite the surrounding community".

Direct Marketing

Informant (MN) further explained this strategy: "Secondly, we usually distribute brochures in public and private schools, so the promotion is still manual and has not reached the social media stage". This indicates a focus on direct distribution of physical materials in the target locations. In addition, the school also utilizes group communication platforms for direct marketing to existing student guardians. Informant M stated, "There is a WhatsApp group and then we send brochures to the group and it's not bad that sometimes they get filtered out". Although not entirely "outside", this is a form of direct marketing to an identified and relevant group. Overall, direct marketing at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma relies heavily on the direct distribution of brochures to prospective students at schools or in public locations, as well as the use of digital communication groups to convey information to guardians.

Advertising

Informant WH explained that the school uses a "conventional and digital" promotional approach, for conventional starting from banners, brochures. This shows the use of banners as a form of outdoor advertising that seeks to reach a wide audience. However, the effectiveness of digital advertising is still a challenge. Informant M stated, "For digital promotion, if our school is not well-known, it has no effect, unlike schools that are already well-known, their social media must run like Al-Fatih school, the facilities and infrastructure are good, then inviting influencers can be famous, but for schools if they want to invite influencers, they

are still reluctant because the facilities and infrastructure are not good." This indicates that although there is an understanding of the potential of influencers as an advertising medium, schools feel hampered by the condition of internal facilities.

The use of social media for advertising has also been tried but has not produced results. Informant MN said, "I used to promote through FB ads or other social media, but it had no effect on promoting this school." He added a possible cause, "Maybe it's the condition of our school that makes people less interested in coming here." These statements collectively indicate that SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma has tried several forms of advertising, both conventional (banners, brochures) and digital (Facebook ads), but has faced significant obstacles in achieving effectiveness, especially in the digital realm and the use of influencers, which are largely related to the condition of the school's facilities and infrastructure.

Discussion

The success of the promotion program has a significant correlation with the enthusiasm of prospective students in enrolling in SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru. Effective promotion plays an important role in building public awareness of the importance of quality education, which ultimately encourages them to choose the right educational institution. In this context, it is important to understand that promotion is one of the key elements in the marketing mix.

The concept of the marketing mix has various interpretations from various experts. This study refers to the 7P framework introduced by Booms and Bitner, because it is more relevant to the characteristics of service marketing. The seven variables in this model include product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and process. Promotion, as one of the 7P components, plays an important role in communicating the value of the product (in this case, educational services) to the target market (Ambarwati, 2025).

According to Kotler and Armstrong, promotion is part of the marketing mix that is used to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the products or services offered. This definition has strong relevance to the mechanism of organizing the promotion program in the New Student Admissions (PPDB) at SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma Pekanbaru. In the context of PPDB, promotion is not only about announcing the existence of a school, but also about building a positive image, emphasizing the excellence of educational programs, and creating strong relationships with prospective students and parents.

4.   Conclusion

Based on an in-depth analysis of the implementation of promotional programs, the types of promotions used, and the challenges faced, several main conclusions can be drawn, SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma has implemented a promotional program with a structured approach and includes key elements of marketing. The promotion

aspect is realized through the distribution of printed brochures and the use of social media to reach the target audience. The people aspect is emphasized by involving teachers as promotional agents who provide positive testimonials. Physical evidence is highlighted through students' academic and non-academic achievements, which serve as evidence of the quality of school education. The process aspect is realized through direct promotional activities to elementary schools, including interesting interactions such as games and quizzes, which aim to build closeness with prospective students and the community.

The school uses various types of promotion that are aligned with the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning), and Promotion Mix models. In the context of AIDA, students' attention is built through interactive visits to the elementary school, interest is cultivated through superior program information (such as tahfidz in brochures), desire is triggered by showcasing achievements and offering incentives (discounts for Al-Qur'an memorizers), and enrollment action is encouraged through the provision of vouchers and the opening of several batches of enrollment.

Within the STP framework, the promotional focus is segmented for primary school students in the Tuah Madani sub-district, with the main targets being children and parents. The school positions itself as a quality educational institution that integrates Islamic values. In terms of Promotion Mix, promotion is done directly by teachers through visits, supported by printed materials such as brochures and banners. In addition, the school provides incentives in the form of vouchers and organizes community activities to strengthen the positive image in the eyes of the community, which effectively contributes to the increase in the number of enrollees, the decision not to implement PPDB in 2024 has a direct impact on the number of students, indicating the need for urgent improvement of promotional strategies so that SMP IT Raudhatur Rahma can attract more new learners in the future.

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