

Adaptive Promotion Strategy for Schools in Border Areas (Kapas Hulu Case Study)

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the promotional strategies implemented at SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana and SMP Negeri 1 Empanang, to analyze the challenges encountered during their implementation, and to examine the efforts undertaken by both schools to overcome these constraints. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana and SMP Negeri 1 Empanang. Data were collected through in depth interviews with principals, vice principals for public relations, and teachers, supported by participant observation and document review. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that both schools primarily employ banners, brochures, and community-based activities as their initial promotional tools. However, recognizing the limitations of human resources and geographical remoteness, both institutions have increasingly adopted digital media particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube to broaden their promotional reach and engage wider audiences. Furthermore, collaboration with nearby elementary schools has proven effective in strengthening student recruitment and building sustainable community relations. These adaptive strategies demonstrate how schools in remote areas creatively utilize low-cost digital platforms and inter-school partnerships to enhance visibility. The study contributes to educational management by providing insights for school administrators, policymakers, and public relations practitioners seeking effective and contextually grounded promotional strategies for resource-limited regions.

Keywords: Collaboration, Digital Media, Educational, Management, Promotion Strategy

A. Introduction

Education has an important role in shaping individual character and abilities, because education is the foundation of life that raises dignity and opens opportunities for every individual. Education as a basic right not only provides knowledge, but also forms character, builds social awareness, and facilitates active participation in society. With equitable and quality education in Indonesia, a better future can be created, where every individual has the opportunity to develop and contribute to the progress of the nation. Education is the key to realizing the nation's ideals, eliminating all forms of social disparities, and creating justice, equality, and freedom for all Indonesian people, regardless of regional, cultural, or economic status.

Although education in Indonesia has progressed, the quality gap between urban areas and borders is still a serious challenge (Ardi Rafsanjani & Rozaq, 2024; Komari et al., 2025). Border areas such as Kapuas Hulu Regency in West Kalimantan Province face various limitations, including lack of educational infrastructure, difficult access to transportation, and limited quality teaching staff (Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006; Putranti, 2024). This condition has an impact on the low attractiveness of local educational institutions, even encouraging some students to choose to attend schools in neighboring countries such as Malaysia, which offer better educational facilities and support (Siregar et al., 2023). This phenomenon shows that there is an urgent need to strengthen the competitiveness of schools in border areas in order to be able to maintain their existence and improve the quality of educational services (Lestari & Pratiwi, 2019; Nurlina et al., 2023).

School promotion strategies are one of the important instruments in strengthening the image and attractiveness of educational institutions (Sugitayasa et al., 2020). Planned and adaptive promotion allows schools to introduce their academic and non-academic excellence to the wider community. Hasanudin et al. (2024) emphasized that effective marketing of educational services requires the ability of schools to adjust strategies to the needs and perceptions of the community. In addition, the management of educational institutions in a professional, quality-oriented, and responsive manner to stakeholder expectations is a prerequisite in building public trust (Kustian et al., 2018).

Previous research has discussed the importance of marketing and promotion strategies for education, but it has mostly focused on the context of urban schools or private educational institutions that have adequate resources. Research highlighting promotional practices in border areas is still limited, even though the social, geographical, and cultural characteristics of the regions demand a different approach. This gap shows the need for an in-depth study of how educational institutions in border areas develop effective promotion strategies with limited resources.

The results of the researchers' initial observations at SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana and SMP Negeri 1 Empanang show that the implementation of school promotion strategies is still limited. The obstacles faced include the lack of use of social media, the lack of promotional innovation, and the limitations of supporting infrastructure, including uneven internet access (Rahma & Kartiasih, 2024). Based on these conditions, this study aims to identify the promotion strategies implemented in the two schools, analyze the obstacles faced in their implementation, and examine the efforts made to overcome these obstacles. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of an education promotion strategy model that is adaptive to geographical and socio-cultural conditions in Indonesia's border areas.

B. Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe in depth the education promotion strategy at SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana and SMP Negeri 1 Empanang, Kapuas Hulu Regency, West Kalimantan. This approach allows researchers to understand the process and dynamics of implementing educational promotion contextually in accordance with the social and cultural conditions of the school. As explained by Creswell (2014), qualitative research seeks to interpret the meaning of

participants' experiences to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

The research was carried out in two schools on the Indonesia-Malaysia border because the region has different social, economic, and educational access characteristics from other regions. This condition is an important context in assessing the effectiveness of promotional strategies implemented by schools. The research was conducted over a focused period from January to May 2025, including the data collection, analysis, and verification stages.

The data source consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and public relations staff who were directly involved in school promotion activities. Secondary data comes from official documents, activity reports, and school promotion archives. Data collection techniques were carried out through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and documentation. The researcher plays the role of the main instrument directly involved in the process of data collection and interpretation with the help of interview guides and observation sheets as supporting instruments.

The validity of the data is guaranteed through triangulation of sources and techniques as stated by Sugiyono (2015). Source triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of interviews between informants, while technical triangulation is carried out by confirming the results of the interviews through observations and supporting documents. The application of triangulation aims to increase the credibility and reliability of the data obtained.

The data analysis of this study used the Miles and Huberman Interactive model, which includes the stages of Data Collection, Data Condensation, Data Display and Conclusion Drawing / verification. Interactive models in data analysis are shown in the following figure:

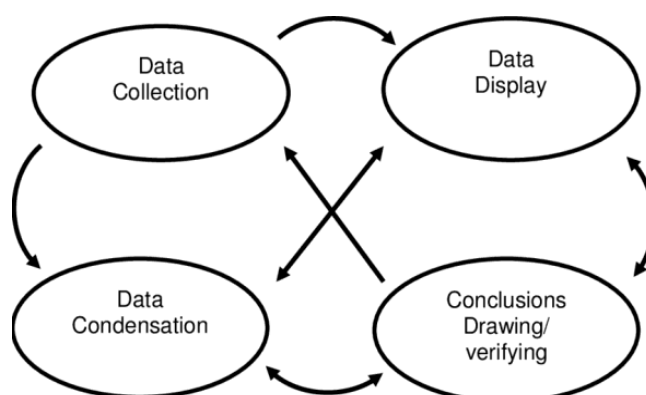


Figure 1. Interactive techniques

This process allows researchers to systematically identify patterns, relationships, and meanings that emerge from the data. The results of the analysis are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the practice of education promotion strategies in border schools and become the basis for the development of more effective promotion strategies in the future.

C. Results and Discussion

Result

This study produces an empirical picture of the education promotion strategies implemented in SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana and SMP Negeri 1 Empanang which are located in the border area of Kapuas Hulu Regency, West Kalimantan Province. These two schools face challenging geographical conditions, limited human resources, and limited access to communication, but still strive to carry out promotional activities to improve the image and number of new students.

At SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana, the promotion strategy is carried out by utilizing various simple media that are easily accessible to the surrounding community. The school uses banners, brochures, and participation in community social activities, such as mutual cooperation, religious events, and village activities, to introduce the school's profile and its flagship programs. The principal plays an active role in coordinating promotional activities, assisted by teachers and staff who concurrently work in the public relations department. Promotional materials focus on school excellence, student achievement, and government support for education programs at the border.

However, the school faces several obstacles in implementing its promotional strategies. Internal constraints include the limited number of teachers and administrative personnel, resulting in multiple responsibilities for each staff member and the absence of specialized promotion personnel. External challenges include remote geographic access, minimal transportation, and unstable internet networks. To overcome these, the school strengthens teamwork, divides responsibilities more efficiently, and utilizes social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook to share updates on school activities, student achievements, and registration announcements. Interview data and school reports indicate an observable rise in the number of inquiries and applicants following the use of social media for promotion, showing increased community engagement with the school.

Meanwhile, at SMP Negeri 1 Empanang, the promotion strategy is focused on cooperation with elementary schools (SD) around the sub-district area. Promotion is carried out mainly through farewell activities for elementary school students, which are used as a place to introduce facilities, educators, and extracurricular activities. In addition, schools also use banners and brochures as promotional support media. However, schools face limitations in terms of digital promotion skills and supporting facilities.

As an adaptive effort, the school began developing digital-based promotion through platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube. These media are used to share school activity documentation, learning outcomes, and new student registration information. Teachers and staff noted that more parents and prospective students were

aware of school programs after digital content was regularly uploaded, demonstrating the role of digital media in increasing visibility and trust. This strategy has proven effective in expanding the reach of information and building a positive image of the school in the midst of geographical limitations and resources.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the promotion strategy at SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana and SMP Negeri 1 Empanang is carried out adaptively and contextually in accordance with social, geographical, and limited school resources. The promotional efforts carried out by the two schools are simple, but effective in introducing educational institutions to the surrounding community. This shows that the promotion of education does not always depend on the size of the budget or the completeness of facilities, but on the creativity and ability of schools to optimize local potential as a means of public communication.

The promotional approach through banners, brochures, and community social activities reflects a form of community-based school marketing, where schools utilize social interaction as a medium to build trust and emotional closeness with the community. This strategy is relevant to the views of Gray et al. (2023) and Bayani (2024), who affirm that the success of school promotion is highly dependent on the institution's ability to build harmonious relationships with its social environment. In the context of border areas, strong social ties are an important asset to strengthen the legitimacy and image of state educational institutions amid the increasing attractiveness of schools abroad, such as in Malaysia.

The promotion strategy through collaboration with elementary schools (SD) implemented by SMP Negeri 1 Empanang shows the existence of a network-based promotion approach. Promotional activities in the farewell ceremony of elementary school students act as a form of direct communication between high schools and the community. This approach is in line with the theory of relationship marketing in education (Kotler & Keller, 2016), which emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining long-term relationships with stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of educational institutions. This relationship not only serves to expand the reach of promotion, but also to strengthen public trust in public schools as credible and open institutions (John & De Villiers, 2024).

The main obstacles faced by both schools, namely limited human resources and remote geographical conditions, reflect the structural problems that schools in border areas are commonly faced. Kebubun (2025) stated that inequality in social development in border areas has a direct impact on the limited educational facilities and the low availability of professionals. In this context, the two schools are trying to overcome these limitations through adaptive strategies in the form of internal task sharing and the use of simple communication technology.

The use of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube shows a transformation from traditional promotional strategies to more open and participatory digital promotion. This is in line with the findings of Wijaya (2021; Rahmawati et al.,

2024) who emphasized that social media can expand the reach of promotion and increase public perception of educational institutions. Through digital content that displays learning activities, student achievements, and daily school life, educational institutions are able to build a positive digital image in the midst of physical and geographical limitations. This digital approach also supports the distance learning process and strengthens communication between schools, parents, and prospective students.

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce the idea that the effectiveness of promotional strategies is not only determined by the intensity of activities, but also by the school's ability to manage messages and build social relationships (Safaat & Manafe, 2023). Strategies based on community participation show the success of two-way communication that is more effective than a one-way promotional approach that is purely informative (Rahmadina et al., 2023). Thus, education promotion should not only be understood as an institutional marketing activity, but also as an effort to build public image and trust in the quality of educational services.

Practically, this finding implies that schools in border areas need to strengthen public communication and digital literacy competencies for educators. Training in social media-based promotional content creation, digital reputation management, and collaboration with elementary schools or community leaders can be sustainable strategies to expand the reach of promotions. Local governments are also expected to provide support in the form of improving digital infrastructure and training human resources so that the promotion of education in border areas can run more effectively.

The limitations of this study lie in the relatively limited scope of location and duration of the research, so the results cannot be generalized for all schools in the border area of Indonesia. Further research can be carried out by involving more schools, using a mixed-method approach, and quantitatively evaluating the influence of promotion strategies on increasing the number of students and public perception of school quality.

D. Conclusions

This study concludes that the education promotion strategies implemented by SMP Negeri 1 Puring Kencana and SMP Negeri 1 Empanang demonstrate an adaptive response to resource limitations and geographical isolation. Both schools have successfully combined traditional and digital approaches to maintain public visibility and community engagement. The use of banners, brochures, and community participation activities reflects their ability to build direct relationships with society, while the integration of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube illustrates the schools' efforts to modernize communication and broaden outreach despite infrastructural barriers.

The study also confirms that the key determinants of success in educational promotion within border areas lie not in material resources, but in the creativity, collaboration, and adaptive capacity of school stakeholders to manage public communication effectively. By fostering partnerships with elementary schools and leveraging digital tools, both institutions have been able to maintain their appeal and reinforce their institutional credibility.

Practically, the findings imply that educational institutions in remote or border regions need to enhance human resource competencies, particularly in digital literacy, public relations, and content creation for social media-based promotion. Continuous professional development, collaboration with local education authorities, and improved access to digital infrastructure are essential to sustain promotional effectiveness and equitable access to quality education.

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