

MPR STRATEGIES MODELING FOR INCREASING STUDENTS' INTAKE AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN CENTRAL JAVA- INDONESIA.

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ABSTRACT

The competition among private universities in this globalization era is getting much tougher. Each university tries every effort they could possibly do to achieve their set goal, which is generally a higher student intake in each academic year. This phenomenon also happens in Central Java. This study tries to investigate the potential Marketing Public Relations (MPR) strategies in private universities in Central Java along with their strategies implemented and the average increase of their students intake in one academic year. Lastly, it tries to propose an MPR modeling for increasing students' intake at private universities in Central Java. This study employs interview and literature study for data collection. The data are then analyzed qualitatively to answer the posed research questions. This study involved 8 private universities in Central Java. The result of the study shows that the Public Relations unit in each private university has carried out their function though not maximum yet. However they emphasize their strategies for promoting and image building for the institution. They have all the stages in MPR strategies; planning, implementation and evaluation. Besides, they have innovation each year as their effort to increase the students' intake. The average increase for each university is around 10 -20% each year. This study proposes an MPR model named innovative-star network with the PR unit functions as the center of the network and all related stake holders serve as the tie of the network.

Keywords: Marketing Public Relation (MPR), strategies, promotion, intake.

INTRODUCTION:

In this globalization era, competition between private universities in Indonesia, especially in Central Java is getting tougher. Each private university tries every effort so that they can achieve their target number of students for each academic year. Therefore, they function their related department as effective as possible. In this case, is the Public Relations Unit. This units normally serves as the one who handles all the programs to maintain and enhance the institution image building as well as promotion for students' intake. Therefore the PR unit in each institution will do their best for this purpose.

For the purpose of their image building and attracting prospective students, PR units generally already have some routine program to execute. This program might include any Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, workshops, roadshow, promotion with media, maintaining relationship with stakeholders, etc. Those programs are normally intended either reaching the society or any specific target directly or indirectly. If the universities really plan and execute those programs well then they will usually be able to achieve their set target either enhancing institution image building in the society and target market or their students' intake.

Seeing the fact that MPR strategies are very important for a university, then it is crucial for the universities to really think and plan effectively and efficiently so that they can achieve their objectives and target. This also happens to the private universities in Central Java. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to see the PR potential that could be developed in private universities and their strategies implemented. This also investigates the average increase of students' intake based on the implemented strategies. Besides, this study will try to model the MPR strategies in private universities in Central Java to increase their students' intake.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

This section will present a study literature done in this study that covers the previous study carried out in this field and some theoretical background serving as the theory basis of this study.

THE CONCEPT OF MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS:

In Marketing and Public Relations, a New Marketing Model which relies on marketing with C-W-V models that is Consultative, Win-Win and Value Added. It means the marketing aspects of the model cannot be separated from the concern for the interests of the producers as consumers through the public consultation (research and development, interview and questionnaire), and mutual (mutual Symbiosis) for both parties and can provide added value or more benefits to the users of goods and services (Ruslan, 2006: 245).

Drawing upon the most frequently used definitions of Public Relations and marketing and personal experience, the definition of Marketing Public Relations is " Marketing Public Relations is the process of planning, executing, and evaluating programs that encourage purchase and customer satisfaction through credible communication of information and impressions that identify companies and their products with the needs, wants, concerns and interests of customers" (Harris, 1993)

Another experts Eduard Depari said that The term of Marketing Public Relations refers to a product or service marketing activities that are included in public relations activities. As the public relations activities, this should be designed to create, develop, and maintain the image of an organization or institution. It also reflects the self-selling, because between the good things about the institution and also the image of the product cannot be separated, but on the other hand it should be interrelated and influenced one and another (Anggoro, 2005:255).

As Marketing Public Relations practitioners, they involve in may area of work such as : (a) Positioning the company as a leader or expert, (b) Building trust (confidence and trust) consumer, (c) Introducing new products, (d) Removing , re-launching products, (e) Communicating the benefits of the products, (f) Promoting the use of new methods for the product that is already known, (g) Involving the society to the product, (h) Reaching secondary markets, (i) Giving pressure to a weak market, (j) Expanding the use of advertising, (k) Spreading the news prior to advertising, (l) Creating a communicative advertising, (m) Describing the product in more detail, etc (Kasali, 2005: 13).

THE MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCESS:

Clearly public relations is operating from a new depth of understanding of the marketing process and MPR planning is becoming ever more sophisticated. Media is still at the heart of most MPR, programs are more closely focused on meeting pre-established marketing goals, and increasingly there are opportunities for MPR to provide input in the creation of those goals. Today MPR strategies are good only insofar as they meet

marketing objectives. Ideas are good because they are on strategy (Harris, T 1993 :62)

Harris (1993) also stated that Marketers have begun to recognize that the marketing public relations plan, like the advertising plan, should be an integral part of the marketing plan and should describe how MPR support marketing objectives and strategies.

The MPR plan, like the advertising plan, must show how MPR strategies support marketing strategies and must explain why the tactics proposed are on strategy. How the tactics (MPR programs) will be implemented must be spelled out in detail and accurately budgeted. Finally, the public relations plan should always include an evaluation component to measure how well the program succeeds in meeting its objectives.

THE CONCEPT OF MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY:

In doing the job, Marketing Public Relations practitioner should know about the strategies that he/she should do in order to decide what communication tools used in implementing the program. The Marketing Public Relations strategies include : planning, implementing and evaluating the programs that can stimulate prospective students to choose study programs that are offered. It also can regain the satisfaction of prospective students through the reliable information given and also give positive impression about the university / programs offered which are suitable with their needs, desires, concerns and interests (Ruslan, 2006).

In doing the MPR strategy, there are some steps that must be done in, such as (Ruslan, 2006):

- a. Conducting market research, to obtain information according to the needs and desires of consumers in this case is the prospective students.
- b. Creating products. It means a study program in accordance with the results of the market research
- c. Determining the price of these products . it means the cost of the tuition fee charged by the university
- d. Determining the target consumer, target audience which is suitable with the programs offered.
- e. Planning and implementing promotional campaigns (pre-selling projects) which will be launched and be able to compete in the future and is quite attractive to prospective students in terms of output which would be obtained after finishing their study.
- f. Maintaining good relationships with its stakeholders especially the parents, High school teachers , etc.

According to Kotler and Keller (2007). Marketing public relations tools covers many aspects as follows:

- a. Publications: companies entrust the expansions of the products based on the publication which will influence and attract the targeted buyers. These publications includes annual reports, brochures, articles, company newspapers, magazines and also audiovisual materials
- b. Identity media : the company needs to create an identity that can be easily recognized by the society. For example : company logo, stationery, brochures, signs, corporate forms, business cards, buildings, uniforms and also performance regulations for employees.
- c. Events : the company can draw attention to their new products or service by having special events, such as interviews, seminars, exhibitions, competitions, contests etc , in order to reach wider community.
- d. News : One of the main public relations work is to create or find events that fit with the company, its products, its people or its employees, and also make the media interested to make press releases and come to the press conferences managed by the company.
- e. Speeches : Company should be able to answer the questions asked by the community well
- f. Public service activities : company can build a positive image by getting involved in any public service activities
- g. Sponsorship : company can market their products by being a sponsor any sport events or cultural events that give the benefit for the company.

THE CONCEPT OF INTAKE:

As Hornby (1995) said in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, intake means a number of people entering an institution etc during a particular period (group of people who get into an institution within a certain time).

From this definition it can be concluded that the meaning of intake in this study is the number of new students who enroll at the college in a particular academic year. While to know the increase of the intake, will be seen from the large number of students who re-register at the college in a particular academic year.

RESEARCH METHOD:

This study involved 8 private universities in Central Java. The data used for this study was qualitative data obtained from the interview. The interview involved the Public Relations personnel in each university. In

addition, the data was also obtained from literature study and previous study related to this topic. This study chose private universities in Central Java with the hope that it could contribute to the development of MPR area in Central Java and private universities at once. The interview was carried out in each university involved in the study using open-ended questions. The interview developed as it happened due to the situation and condition of the interview. After the interview was done, the data was transcribed and analyzed qualitatively to answer the posed research questions. After all the research questions were answered, a model was created based on the result of the interview.

The research questions posed in this study were:

- a. What are the potential of MPR strategies at private universities in Central Java?
- b. What MPR strategies implemented to increase students' intake in Central Java?
- c. What is the average increase of students' intake as a result of implemented MPR strategies?
- d. What MPR strategies model could be created based on the implemented strategies?

The interview used the following open-ended questions as guidance. The questions were:

- Strategies done by the universities (planning, implementing and evaluation)
- Any market research carried out to identify the needs
- Marketing promotional strategies done by Public Relations Officer (advertisement, sponsorship, events, presentation, road show, etc)
- The influence of Marketing Public Relations Program towards the intake
- Any innovation made to increase the intake
- Public Relations program in relation to regain the image of the universities
- Any program to build the good relationship with stakeholders especially high schools and parents
- Form of community service in regaining the image of universities

Those questions were derived from the literature study conducted before as well as the previous study preceding this one. Those questions served as guidance only because in the interview, there were some questions came up based on the information given by the interviewee. This was also the reason why open-ended questions were used, that was giving the opportunity to both side to develop and elaborate the flow of the interview.

After transcription was done, the data were classified into these categories:

1. The potential for MPR strategies implementation in private universities.
2. The role of media in supporting MPR
3. MPR program carried out by private universities
4. MPR strategies in increasing students intake at private universities

Having done with categorizing the data into those four focuses, a model of MPR strategies was then created. This model will serve as guidance or reference for the private universities later on.

For ethical consideration, all the participants involved in this study have signed a consent form that their responses will be quoted anonymously for their confidentiality. They were ensured that their name would not be mentioned at all in the report. Apart from that, there was not any objection from the participants to be involved in this study.

RESULT / FINDINGS:

This section describes the result of this study covering four main focus; they are the potential for MPR strategies implementation in private universities, role of media in supporting MPR, MPR program carried out by private universities and MPR strategies in increasing students' intake at private universities.

THE POTENTIAL FOR MPR STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTATION IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES:

All the universities involved in this study have already implemented MPR strategies started from planning stage, implementation to the evaluation stage. In general, those universities plan the entire MPR program in two levels; they are faculty level and university level. The one who handles all of the planned program are the Public Relations units.

One of the universities had the grand design for MPR programs decided at university level. It means that others derived program should refer to this grand design. The Public Relations staff said that “ (UNIKA). The grand

design was usually discussed in university board members. The Public Relations unit had the responsibility to share all the information to faculty members so that they could adjust what they had to do for their promotion and image building either for their faculty specifically or university in general.

There was also a case where the plan was designed at university level only and no Public Relations unit involved due to the condition of the university that had few study program. The person in charge of public relations mentioned that “ (STIE AMA).

In general, the planning stage of MPR strategies for these universities were done either at faculty level or university level depended on the condition of the university. There was not any fixed pattern for planning for these universities. It developed and elaborated according to the needs and situation of each university.

The next stage of MPR strategies implemented at private universities involved in this study is implementation. At implementation stage, all the planned program were executed by corresponding staffs appointed at those universities. The implementation might differ from one to each other. In one university, it was only the staff at PR office who had to do the planned program. The staff mentioned, “ We are the units that have to carry out the planned program either for promotion or for image building. Normally we will do coordination with the corresponding faculty when we have something to confirm. Besides, we recruit students that will help us in doing some of the programs such as participating in an exhibition, doing a roadshow to high schools or doing Corporate Social Responsibility programs depending on the situation at that particular time” (PR 1, translated by the researcher)

In short, the implementation stage needs the contribution both the PR units and faculty members to make all the planned programs successful so that they could achieve the set target and objectives, either for promotion or image building for the university.

Last but not least, the last stage of MPR strategies that could not be forgotten was the evaluation. All universities after implementing their program generally would do an evaluation either formally or informally. After the implementation, the PR units will evaluate what they had just done in a meeting (formal) or just informal discussion between themselves (informal). One of the staff said “ Yes, normally after we finish carrying out a program, all the staff will gather in a meeting to evaluate how far we have done and whether our target and objectives are met. By doing this, we will know what to do next, either continue with the program or plan another program to do” (PR 3, translated by the researcher).

To put it shortly, evaluation was a must for these universities to carry out as this was one of the ways to measure their achievement and know whether they meet the target of their program.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN SUPPORTING MPR:

Media held a quite important role in supporting MPR programs. All the universities in this study used media to support all their MPR programs. They used both electronic media such as radio and television station either local or national. The use of this electronic media depended on the agreement that the university had. They usually broadcasted their activity or were involved in television program such as being the resources person for that program. One PR staff mentioned that there were some local or national television station contacted their universities asking for staffs that could serve as resource person for a talk show or similar program (PR 3).

Apart from electronic media, they used printed media as well. Most of them used newspaper, magazine or flyer as their promotion media. Some of those universities also published their own media such as bulletin or periodicals to cover all the activities and achievement they had. Two PR staffs from different universities explained that they printed a biannual bulletin to cover the achievement and activities to distribute to high school students as their prospective students, so it had two functions as promotional media and image building (PR 4 and PR 6). For those universities who did not have their own publication they used local and national newspaper for press release. Their objective for publishing press release as often as possible was for image building. According to most PR staffs interviewed in this study press release was effective for image building. It also served as a measurement for their competitors.

Besides using electronic and printed media, they used social media such as Facebook, twitter, Google +, and the guest book found in universities web site. The reason of using social media was that most prospective students were familiar and used social media a lot. They also mentioned that most of prospective students tend to search information online rather than looking at printed media or asking others. One staff said “ We appointed a staff member to be in charge of maintaining our social media account for providing any information about our university, including all the achievement we had, our current activity, even information on students’ admission” (PR3, translated by the researcher)

Not only they use electronic, printed and social media, another important aspect was that those universities

maintained a good relationship with media. They usually held a special program for media crew such as gathering or involving them in any activity that they had on campus. According to one of the PR staffs those media crew felt that they were treated well when they were involved in any activity. It reflected that universities not only care when they needed their service but also remember and involve those media crew almost in every possible opportunity.

To sum up with, all universities thought that media indeed had a crucial role in supporting their MPR strategies directly or indirectly. The use of printed, electronic, and social media more or less contributed to the success of their programs.

MPR PROGRAM CARRIED OUT BY PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES:

All the universities in this study had their MPR programs. They varied based on the situation in each university. Most universities had promotion program, CSR programs and other program to maintain good relationship with related stakeholders. They had many promotion programs such as roadshow to high schools each year, participating in education exhibition, sponsoring events, publishing press release for attracting prospective students and advertorial in any possible media.

Most PR staff mentioned that they usually had roadshow to high schools in their target area. Some of the target area was around Java and others might cover outside Java area. Roadshow and participating in education exhibition were kind of routine that those universities had.

Not only they had promotion programs for their prospective students, these universities also carried out Corporate Social Responsibility programs such as holding a workshop, community service, and training for the surrounding society. They might also have health service and providing scholarship for the needy community in their area.

One thing that could not be denied was the fact that these universities usually had special program for maintaining good relationship with related stakeholders such as parents, community, high schools, and other parties. They had to maintain the relationship because directly or indirectly those stakeholders influenced the existence of the university.

Shortly, universities had various MPR programs, which might have different purpose from to each other. However those programs normally served as their support for getting higher students intake and image building.

MPR STRATEGIES IN INCREASING STUDENTS INTAKE AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES:

The objective of private universities each year normally was to get the target intake they set. They needed students in order to survive in the competition with other private universities. Increasing the students' intake each year was likely to be the goal of each private university. To achieve this goal, private universities had to effectively and efficiently carry out their MPR programs. Their MPR programs was ranging from promotion program, image building, CSR programs, to maintaining good relationship with related stakeholders.

The way they carried out the program would be different from one university to the others. It was adjusted and adapted to their situation and condition in each university. An important fact was that apart from those MPR strategies they planned and had, they always came up with something new each year either as promotion program or an effort for their image building. This was called as innovation. Each university would have an innovation that might be different or same as the other.

One university had pick up service as their innovation to attract the interest of their prospective students (PR 5). There was also an interesting innovation created by one of those private universities. They gave a laptop for any school that could bring a certain number of students to the university to register, for example if one school had 20 students register to the university and completed their admission process then that school would be given a laptop as a token of appreciation (PR4).

In summary, the MPR strategies carried out in private universities involved in this study was varied depended on the need of each university. In general they had similar objective in doing their MPR strategies that were for attracting prospective students and image building. Their effort in increasing the students intake each year would be innovation that was distinguished from one to each other.

DISCUSSION:

This section gives the answer of the posed research questions and discussion based on the result explained in the previous section.

POTENTIAL OF MPR STRATEGIES AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN CENTRAL JAVA:

All universities involved in this study have their own Public Relations unit that might be called differently one to another such as Promotion Bureau, Public Relations Unit, etc. Although they already have their Public Relations unit or staff, most of them have not served PR functions as it is. What happens so far is that this unit normally concern about promotion program that they have to carry out each year and image building for their institution. They have not explored other functions in Public Relations that they can actually do to contribute to their university, because as public relations, they are not only as people who promote the institutions, but they should also do the role as a communication technician, expert prescriber, communication facilitator, and also problem solving facilitator (Cutlip.S, Center.A and Broom.G , 1994)

These universities generally emphasize the function of Public Relations in terms of maintaining good relationship with their stakeholders like high schools, media, prospective students, parents, society and many more. They also do MPR strategies that they usually start with market research. Marketing public relations are the combination of marketing and public relations. Today MPR programs are grounded in research about the marketing place, the category and the consumers (Hariss, 1993), that is why before launching their new product, they should know who are the their target (consumers – students and parents) and finally they will launch a new study program in their university which is based on what the target need. All of the programs are aimed for increasing students' intake each year so that they could keep up with the competition pace among private universities.

MPR STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED TO INCREASE STUDENTS' INTAKE IN CENTRAL JAVA:

To increase students' intake, private universities involved in this study have already implemented some MPR strategies. They do all the steps in MPR strategies from planning to evaluation. In planning any program, they normally see their target market, do their market research, and last but not least they will make an innovation each year.

The common programs carried out to increase students' intake are doing road show to high school, participating in education exhibition, holding competition for high school students to come to universities, and promoting the university through any media. Maximizing media to boost universities image building such as publishing press release, advertorial, and outstanding campus activities are also considered to have contribution to the increase of students' intake. Despite the use of media cost a lot of money, but using media still remains as a reference in setting priorities in establishing the strategic marketing communication (Kennedy.J and Soemanagara.D, 2006 : 7) Apart from carrying out those promotion programs along with their image building effort, one thing that could not be taken for granted is innovation. Most universities' Public Relations units admit that with the innovation they plan and have each year proves to be very effective in increasing students' intake. Therefore, all the Public Relations units in those private universities try their best to come up with innovation in their program each year. Some of the innovation made by those universities to increase students' intake are having pick up service at nearest airport or railway station for new students outside Java island, giving a token of appreciation to high school which could get their students to register at their universities with a certain number, and creating selection team to support the promotion team. Some other innovation are widening their target area for their promotion program, using social media as means of spreading any information about the universities in general including achievement, activities and students' admission, and doing talk show either in local and national televisions or in any local radio depending on their target area.

By having those innovations, the universities in average could increase 10-20% of their students' intake each year. It shows that innovation has an important role in supporting the promotion program along with the routine activities they normally do each year. With the increase achieved, most universities always try to do something differently each year as their innovation.

From the explanation above, it is proved that innovation drives the productivity and performance of business, and can help the institutions grow and improve their business. Besides , businesses that innovate have better productivity performance, grow faster and generate higher quality (Business, 2013)

MPR STRATEGIES MODEL COULD BE CREATED BASED ON THE IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES:

Based on the data and analysis done in this study, there is an MPR model that could be developed and hopefully could be adopted by universities in the future. Looking at the strategies that have been successfully done to increase the students' intake, then this study proposes an MPR model named "innovative star-network". The rationale of this model is that each university in implementing their MPR strategies always maintain a good relationship with its stakeholders either internal or external ones such as high school students /prospective

students, parents, counseling teachers, media, faculties and society. These stakeholders are very important for the future of the private universities because as it is stated that stakeholders are a group whose collective behavior can directly affect the organization's future, but which is not under the organization's control (Grunig.J. 1984 : 297).

The innovation that the university has each year is expected to be the point of interest to those stakeholders and finally with a good teamwork within the public relations unit along with their supporting parties could achieve the goal, which is increasing students intake. In this case, the university, represented by the public relations unit, serves as the center of the network and all the relation they make with all those stakeholders would be the tie of the network. Last but not least, they have to include innovation as one of the ties in that star network. The MPR model could be seen in the following figure.

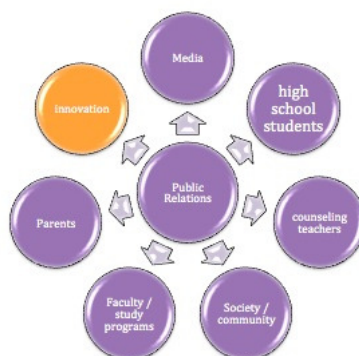


Figure 1. Innovative-star network

CONCLUSION:

To conclude with, this study has successfully answered the posed research questions. Firstly, all the universities have served their function as Public Relations though it is not optimal yet. There are still some areas to explore so that they could function as it is supposed to be. Those units generally emphasize promotion program as well as their image building to achieve their students' intake target. In addition, they have innovation as their effort to increase students' intake each year. Secondly, the MPR strategies done by private universities in Central Java are initiated with planning, implementation and evaluation. Meanwhile, their programs are ranging from promotion program, image building to CSR programs. The percentage of students' intake increase that those universities achieve each year is around 10-20%. Lastly, the MPR model developed in this study is innovative-star network. Hopefully this model could be implemented and adopted by other private universities to increase the students' intake.

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