

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INNOVATION IN MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR INCREASING INTAKE IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, private universities keep trying to do their best to increase the students' intake, as the competition among them is tough. It is heightened by the condition that not only private universities but also state universities are active in promoting their program to attract prospective students. One of the strategies that private universities implement is having innovation as one of their marketing public relations strategy. This study tries to investigate the significance of innovation in Marketing Public Relations to increase students' intake in private universities. This study involves 6 private universities in Central Java. They have implement marketing public relations strategies with innovation in it. The data were obtained from interviewing the public relations personals in those private universities. The interview used open-ended questions to explore a more thorough answer. The result of the study shows that innovation does have significance in increasing students intake in private universities. The increase of the intake they have achieve so far with the innovation they have implemented is from 5% - 20% depending on the situation and condition of each university.

**Keywords:** Marketing Public Relations, strategy, innovation, intake, promotion, private university.

## INTRODUCTION:

Nowadays, most private universities try to compete with other private universities in order to gain as many students as possible. Based on the research done by Sinatra and Krismiyati (2013), it is stated that most private universities have applied their marketing public relations strategies in their promotion program. In most of their program they should have new innovations to attract new students to register in their universities.

The marketing public relations strategies that they have already done is having good relations with the high school students, media, parents, counseling teachers, society and also with the study programs. Besides having this relationship with the stakeholders, each private university should have a new innovation to attract the high school students to register in their universities.

Seeing the fact that MPR strategies with new innovation is really important for a university, then it is crucial for the universities to really think and plan effectively and efficiently of what kind of innovation that they will use for achieving their objectives and target. Therefore the objectives of this study are to see whether there is any significance of innovation in Marketing Public Relations program done by private universities in Central Java in order 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:

According to Harris (1993: 8), there are many signs that marketing public relations has come of age :

- a. Public Relations has become a big and profitable business. It means that most of the companies acquired major PR firms not only to offer broader communication services to clients and gain greater access to client top management, but also because PR offers them greater proportionate profit potential.
- b. Marketing public relations is the largest and fastest growing segment of a fast growing industry.
- c. Companies have recognized the growing importance of marketing public relations with bigger budgets and fatter paychecks.
- d. Public relations is getting increasing interest in the marketing and business media
- e. The academic community is showing greater interest in public relations.

From those points above, it shows that public relations are really needed in all aspects. Besides that knowing about marketing public relations strategies is really useful for gaining the image of the companies / institutions.

Marketing public relations has grown rapidly and pragmatically to meet the opportunities of a changing marketplace. Therefore it is stated that Marketing public relations is the process of planning, executing and evaluating programs that encourage purchase and consumer satisfaction through credible communication of information and impressions that identify companies and their products with the needs, wants, concerns and interests of consumers. (Thomas, 1993)

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).

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).

According to Kasali ( 2005 ) , the Integrated Marketing Public Relations consist of (1) maintain the relationship with stakeholders, (2) focus on the target audience ,(3) Be consistent in implementing the strategies, (4) have an interactive dialogue, (5) Know the corporate mission, (6) apply the zero-based planning, (7) emphasize in integration among functions, (8) Rely on main competency, (9) manage the data bank for consumers, (10) Have relationship with the integrated communication consultants

There are 3 phases that we should do in implementing marketing public relations communications. These phases will act as a guideline for planning the promotion strategies. These phases are : (1) market segmentation, (2) decide the segmentation which is based on the product and decide what promotion strategy will be used, (3) decide the product position as a product that can satisfy the consumers by using certain message ( Kennedy. John, 2006:69)

### 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.

In addition, Harris ( 1993: 38) stated The role of Marketing public Relations practitioners are getting involved in : product publicity, sponsorships, special events, public service, publications, media events, media tours and also the trade support. This Marketing Public Relations used in marketing situations to influence consumers, is an important component of the four Ps strategy, specially supporting promotion to facilitate a transaction .

### **THE CONCEPT OF INTAKE AND INNOVATION:**

Based on the free dictionary by Farlex, the word “intake” means a quantity taken in . but 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 and register at the college in a particular academic year.

The word “ Innovation “ means a new technique, idea , etc ( Hornby, 1995 : 615) . Webster’s school dictionary stated that It means a new idea, method or device ( Merriam, 2004: 464) . From these two definitions, it can be concluded that the meaning of innovation in this study is a new technique in attracting high school students

### **RESEARCH METHOD:**

This study involved 6 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 privates 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, the significance of the innovation in marketing public relations strategies will be revealed.

The research question posed in this study was whether innovation in marketing public relations strategies is really a significant factor that should be created in supporting the promotion program in order to gain more student’s intake for private universities

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

- Does the implementation of innovation really show different influence for high school students in choosing the university?
- Are there any hindrances in implementing the innovation?
- How much is the increase of the intake resulted from the implemented innovation?

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 implementation of innovation in marketing public relations program
2. The hindrances faced by the public relations practitioners in implementing the innovation
3. The increase of students’ intake in last year academic year

Having done with categorizing the data into those three focuses, the significance of innovation will be shown. This model will show that innovation is really important for private universities in creating new attractive promotional to attract high school students.

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 AND DISCUSSION:**

The result and discussion of the study conducted in this context is presented in this section. It will present the result of this study which is followed by discussion and interpretation of the data.

### **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION IN MPR STRATEGIES:**

From the 8 private universities involved in this study, all of them have implemented the innovation in Marketing Public Relations Strategies. One university mentioned that they have already implemented the innovation in their MPR strategies during the year when they carried out their MPR program. They have run the bus for one day service to the prospective students. They have designed the bus in such a way that it resembles the process of registration for prospective students (PR personel 1). By so doing, it turns out that it attracts students interest to apply for a university program. Besides, those students do not need to come to the university to sit for the test and process their registration.

Another PR personnel (PR4) says that what his university has implemented successfully attracted prospective students to apply. The innovation was pick up service for new students in the nearest airport to the university. In this case, not only the parents who feel secured sending their children to the university, but also the prospective students feel that they are cared for and served. This adds a plus point to the university service. From this experience, those students spread the news about the pick up service and the power of words of mouth begins. In line with that, the service that the university provide for the new students such as providing students with the information of finding the accommodation and personal guidance given by students from the previous cohort has become a particular value adding to other services given to the prospective students. In this case, according to one of the PR personnel (PR5), is the heart. Therefore, the service and care that is based on the sincerity of the heart plays an important role.

Another innovation proposed in one of those private universities was giving a reward to those high school students who rank in the top ten to compete for a free tuition fee during their study. It has proven to attract prospective students to apply for the award. “With this innovation, we can attract more students to apply at our university (PR Personnel3). He also mentions that another innovation that has been implemented in his university has resulted in the big interest the prospective students to the program offered in that university. The PR personnel (PR 1) says “ By giving the school a reward of allowing one of their staff to pursue master degree program with a waived tuition fee for the school staff has also been a promising appeal for the teacher to lead the students applying in a particular program. Of course, it must be in accordance with students’ interest. So far, it works well for us “

From those implementation mentioned above, it is clear that the innovation is indeed significant in influencing the prospective students on whether they will apply to the university. It becomes a special attractive power that could arise their interest to choose a program in a particular university. Innovation in this case has a powerful impact in increasing the students’ intake in private universities. Most of the university involved in this study, have successfully increased their students’ intake through the innovation they integrate in their Marketing Public Relations strategies.

### **THE HINDRANCES FACED BY THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE INNOVATION:**

The implementation of the innovation in Marketing Public Relations does not always go smoothly.



There are sometimes some circumstances that influence the level of its success. Based on the data obtained from the interview, most of the circumstances affecting whether the innovation will be a success in increasing students' intake were technical problems.

One PR personnel (PR1) says that what they have done so far in terms of implementing the innovation is that technical problem such as the downfall of the system they design as they use a great deal of social media and web-based system. In line with that, sometimes they could not give very fast responses to the problem due to technical problems. "As the system is human-designed, there must be a downside or error that could happen. There is also a problem with the network sometimes" mentioned one university's PR personnel (PR3). Apart from the technical problem, there is also a problem hindering the success of the implementation of the innovation in MPR, which comes from the other parties cooperating with the universities. In this case is from the coordination that one of the universities made with the one of the stakeholders. One of the PR personnel (PR4) explains that what they have planned to achieve by making commitment with guidance and consultation teachers in all over the city do not succeed. It does not work well like what they expect.

Another big problem is the fund available for them to implement the innovation. One PR personnel (PR3) mention that fund is another problem in implementing the innovation in Marketing Public Relations. "We have to change the use of one media because of the fund limitation" said PR personnel (PR5). "Sometimes what we have planned could not be executed as the planned detail because of the fund. There are cases in which we have to look for another option for a particular plan, such as media" PR personnel explains (PR2).

In short, there are two main hindrances faced by those PR personals in implementing the innovation; they are technical problems and fund limitation. These two hindrances influence the success of the innovation at the implementation stage. Although, there are problems, still the innovations make a difference in increasing the students' intake at the university.

### **THE INCREASE OF STUDENTS' INTAKE IN LAST YEAR ACADEMIC YEAR:**

With all the innovation in Marketing Public Relation strategies that the universities, it has given significant increase in students' intake. The private universities involved in this study mention that their intakes do increase. One PR personnel (PR2) mentions that they have around 10-15 % increase in the intake in 2013. It is a big increase compared to the last year intake as a result of the innovation they make in their MPR strategies. "Our students' intake this year has increased by 20%. It is such a success and it is more or less influenced by the innovation we have in our MPR strategies especially in our promotion program. We will continue to innovate every year so that we could keep the students' intake increasing year by year " PR personnel (PR4) explains.

Despite of the hindrances met during the implementation of the innovation in MPR strategies, the students' intake still increase from 5%-20%. It shows that the innovation does have an impact towards the students' intake. All the PR personals involved in this study mention that innovations have significance in increasing the students' intake. From the data obtained, it can be concluded that the increase of the students' intake after they implement the innovation in their marketing public relations strategies is significant. Each university at least get 5% increase compared to last year intake in which they do not have innovation in it. With the usual strategies they have so far without innovation, the students' intake is up and down. However, with the innovation they have in their new strategies, it does give impact towards the students' intake. Most of them say that they will continue to innovate each year so they could increase the intake every year, as it is one of the goals of private universities, which try to keep their existence in the tough competition with the state universities.

### **CONCLUSION:**

To sum up with, the innovation that each university has in their strategy has contributed a significant increase in terms of the number of the students coming to the university. The increase obtained ranging from 5 – 20%. The result got from the innovations implemented during their promotion program varies

from one to other universities due to the different problem they face. Some technical problems and fund limitation have hindered the success of the innovation implementation. However, the innovations they have implemented so far have proven to increase the students' intake in 2013 academic year. In short, innovation does have significance in increasing students intake in private universities in Central Java .

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