



Marketing Management of Educational Services in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

The number of PAUD institutions has increased very significantly. This makes each institution have to compete and devise a strategy to win the hearts of parents of prospective students. This study aims to analyze the marketing strategy of educational services carried out by PAUD institutions to parents of prospective students. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach, the researchers conducted observations and interviews with teachers, parents, and community leaders in 3 PAUD institutions in Tulungagung Regency. The respondents in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the criteria set by the researcher. The results of the study show that PAUD institutions are aware of the urgency of marketing management. Various elements such as teachers, student guardians and stakeholders synergize in marketing educational services. Among the implications of this research is the importance of resources in educational institutions having the ability to manage the marketing of educational services. This ability will increase competitiveness, sustainability of institutions and the quality of graduates.

Keywords: *Marketing Strategy, Educational Services, PAUD*

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Introduction

It is known that early age is a golden phase for children's growth (Shaturaev, 2021). In this phase, children's intellectual, emotional, and social abilities develop significantly. The stimulating the children by giving them nutritional intake and quality education will have a major impact on the quality of life in the future (Macrides et al., 2022). Providing good stimulation for early childhood at this time is the same as investing for the progress of the nation in the future (Baum et al., 2019).

The Central Statistics Agency noted that in 2021 there were 30.83 million early childhood children in Indonesia. Where 57.16% are toddlers (aged 1-4 years), and 29.28% are preschoolers (aged 5-6 years). It would be very unfortunate if that many children did not get the best quality of education, because in 2045, or the 100th anniversary of Indonesia's independence, these children will have productive age (Kusnandar, 2021).

The overflow of early childhood children and the high awareness of the urgency for early childhood education are also offset by the enhancement for the number of PAUD institution throughout Indonesia. (Azzahra et al., 2022) The data about the number of PAUD institutions in Indonesia, for the recent years grows significantly. As an illustration, in 2011

there were 63,248 PAUD throughout Indonesia. In the following year the number increased to 71,351 institutions and in 2013 there were 74,487 institution in total. From 2011 to 2012 there was an increment about 8,103 institution, while from 2012 to 2013 it has 3,136 additional institutions. The latest data (2019/2020) shows that currently, Indonesia has 205,472 units of early childhood education. That is not too much to say, such very significant improvement(BPS, 2022). According to the geography point of view, East Java is has the biggest number of PAUD institutions, that is 38,673 institutions, followed by West Java and Central Java, each of which has no less than 29 thousand PAUD institutions. Meanwhile, the 3 regions that have the least PAUD institutions are West Papua, Bangka Belitung and North Kalimantan which have less than a thousand PAUD units (Prastyo, 2020; Rohmani, 2020).

The growth of various early childhood educational institutions, on the one hand, has a positive impact, that is various choices the parents have to take the best PAUD institutions for their children. Some villages even have more than one PAUD institution (Maulidiyah, 2021). This encourages each institution to improve services and image so that it has advantages compared to other institutions. By then, this growth has a positive impact in improving the quality of PAUD institutions. (Aisah et al., 2021)

The growth of PAUD institutions has also an impact on institutional competition to find new students. Competition always produces winners and losers. There are some PAUD institutions that have many students, but there are also some PAUD institutions that have fewer students. This kind of situation is a problem faced by some PAUD institutions. Some institutions managed to get up and improve themselves, while some other institutions survived in poor conditions. Live reluctantly, either don't want to die. Some PAUD institutions that do not have competitiveness with other institutions will gradually be abandoned or be not a choice (Eka et al., 2022; Utami et al., 2019).

Indicators of an educational institution that has competitiveness are the products (the quality of graduates) and the services provided (Budiharso & Tarman, 2020; Rao et al., 2019). So that information about the advantages of educational institutions to be widely known by the public, especially parents for prospective students, the managers of educational institutions must proactively introduce the institution to the wider community. They should not be passive and waiting only for parents to find information and choose the desired institution by themselves (Dhieni, 2008; Sumiyati, 2020).

Marketing is needed for educational institutions in building a positive school image.(Pratiwi & Munastiwi, 2020) Marketing is a process that must be carried out by schools to disseminate information to the public about the added value of educational services. Marketing strategy has a very important role to achieve the goals of the institution to be achieved. Marketing strategy should be based on internal analysis and adapted to the changes. Thus, the marketing strategy must be able to provide a clear and focused picture of what PAUD institutions will do in using every opportunity in the target market.

Research on the marketing of educational services, of course, has been carried out a lot. However, most of it is done for elementary school education(Mukmin, 2020)), middle school (Fathurrochman et al., 2021; Iqbal, 2019; Sarifudin & Maya, 2019) to university (Anggraeni, 2019; Romli, 2020; Tunggal & Budi, 2020). However, not much research has been conducted on the theme of marketing educational services in preschool education. This study tries to fill this void by conducting research related to the synergy of teachers, parents and stakeholders in the marketing strategy of PAUD institutions..

Methodology

This study implements descriptive qualitative design. Researcher conducted observations at 3 Early Childhood Educational institutions in Tulungagung Regency, and interviewed 9 teachers, 6 parents of students and 3 community figures who represented each institution. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique. The three selected schools were schools located in downtown area, namely Kec. Tulungagung and Kec.

Kedungwaru. Interviews were conducted in 2 ways, they are face to face for respondents who have enough free time and by telephone for respondents who have high mobility or business. The data analysis technique used to evaluate and understand the data collected through interviews, observation and/or documentation is descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis can assist in knowing the profile of the respondent or sample and obtaining an overview of the data.

Result and Discussion

Empirical and Factual Conditions of Competition among PAUD Institutions

Currently in Indonesia we can find that almost every village has an early childhood education institution. Even in some villages which have quite large and developed areas, there is more than one PAUD institution. This can be interpreted that the awareness of the Indonesian people about the urgency of PAUD for children's growth and development is quite high. Even so, the condition of PAUD institutions is also different. Several PAUD institutions already have permanent buildings, while others still live in people's homes or use public facilities such as community halls.

Java Island has highest number of Early Childhood Educational Institutions throughout Indonesia. The total numbers are 205,472 PAUD institutions recorded nationally in 2019/2020, the 38,673 institutions were in East Java Province, followed by Central Java and West Java, each in the range of 28-29 thousand (Nasrun et al., 2019). This means that about 46% of the total PAUD units are on the island of Java (PPPAUD dan Dikmas Jateng, 2019).

Meanwhile, based on data from the Central Statistics Agency, there are 81,616 villages throughout Indonesia. East Java has 8,576 villages, followed by Central Java as the province with the second largest number of villages, namely 8,569 villages. With this number, the average village in East Java Province has more than 3 PAUD units. This number is not entirely accurate, but it is sufficient to give an idea of the number of PAUD institutions in Indonesia, especially in East Java (Setyawati, 2019).

What is certain from the data on the number of early childhood and PAUD institutions in Indonesia as described above is that there has been a very significant growth in the number of children and PAUD institutions (Susanto et al., 2019). In 2011 there were 63,248 institutions. While in 2019/2020 there were 205,472. In just 10 years, the number of PAUD institutions has increased more than 3 times. The significant enhancement of PAUD institutions has made many PAUD institutions unprepared (Aprilyani & Anwar, 2021). They have been in their "comfort zone" for a very long time. They were once the only PAUD institution in the village. This makes parents of children often have no other choice for PAUD institution. Even without going through any significant effort, students will come. Marketing is done in a traditional and unsystematic way.

The distance between school and home was once a major consideration for parents in choosing a school. The school chosen is the school closest to the home. The consideration is that parents can easily drop off and pick up their children. In some cases, children can even go to school on their own on foot. But this kind of way is not always in the case today. Everyone now has a motorcycle, making everyone's mobility easier and faster than before, distance is no longer a problem anymore. Some parents choose a good PAUD institution even though it is outside their village or region.

Competition among PAUD (Early Childhood Education) institutions is intense due to the many options available to parents in choosing the place of education for their children. A good PAUD institution must have adequate facilities, qualified teaching staff (Lauricella et al., 2020; Lim & Able-Boone, 2005), and innovative educational programs to be able to compete with other institutions. In addition, PAUD institutions must also be able to provide reasonable prices and good services to parents and children. This competition can be a motivation for PAUD institutions to continue to improve the quality of education provided and provide the best for children and parents (Hewi & Shaleh, 2020).

The Awareness about The Urgency of PAUD Institution's Marketing Strategy

Human resources in PAUD institutions can be said to be quite diverse. Not all PAUD teachers are college graduates. The main competence that is considered mandatory for PAUD teachers is loving children, even if they are not university graduates. This makes not all PAUD teachers aware of the importance of institutional marketing management. Initially, PAUD institutions were managed by the government and were the only institutions in the village. However, in its development, new institutions emerged. Some of these institutions are owned by individuals or foundations. PAUD institutions have transformed from not-for-profit institutions into profit-oriented institutions. They need money for operational purposes. It is at this point that the number of students obtained greatly affects the sustainability of the institution, especially the welfare of teachers (Nakajima et al., 2019).

When many of new PAUD institutions have emerged, PAUD institutions that are used to being passive in 'waiting' for new students to arrive must now be faced with the fact that parents have a choice of PAUD institutions for their children. Even though parents are aware of the importance of PAUD and the number of school-age children is increasing (Palupi et al., 2022), they still have to compete with other institutions to win favors. They must have competitiveness and distinguishing values from other institutions in order to be chosen by parents. Schools that present many innovations, achieve achievements from various competitions, have representative facilities and infrastructure, and various other advantages will get many students. Meanwhile, schools that fail to compete will lose fans (Amelia et al., 2019).

However, competition to get students does not only stop at the level of improving the quality of the institution, but also efforts to introduce the competitiveness of the institution to the public or the wider community. It is at this point that PAUD managers begin to realize the importance of marketing strategy for educational services. Starting from the traditional way by visiting the homes of prospective students, to using social media (Eliza et al., 2022).

Efforts of teachers, parents and stakeholders in the marketing of institutions

The financial condition of an educational institution generally depends on the number of students it has. One of these is related to Student Operational Assistance and School Operational Assistance from the government. On this basis, PAUD institutions are educational institutions that often face economic problems because the number of students they have is small when compared to educational institutions at other levels. The limited funds owned by PAUD institutions affect the marketing strategies they use (Kusna et al., 2020). PAUD managers devise strategies that cost almost nothing at all. They take advantage of existing resources. Teachers, parents and stakeholders synergize and share roles in marketing.

The teacher's role is more related to the work of improving the quality and services of PAUD. In addition to coordinating parents and other stakeholders in marketing work. The very large number of students is tasked with inviting neighbors and relatives to also send their children to PAUD institutions. While the role of stakeholders is to provide confirmation and strengthening of PAUD institutions to the public (Fradito & Mulyadi, 2020; Zhadko, et al. 2019).

Parents are an important factor in marketing PAUD institutions. They are a major source of information for prospective students and other families. Parents who are satisfied with the services of the PAUD institution will be effective advertisers because they can provide positive recommendations to their family and friends (Frengki et al., 2022; Mahmud et al., 2022). Parents can also provide input and suggestions that assist PAUD institutions in improving the quality of services and student learning experiences. Therefore, PAUD institutions must pay attention to the role of parents in marketing the institution and establish good communication with parents of students.

The marketing strategy for PAUD (Early Childhood Education) institutions can include several things such as improving the quality of services, improving the quality of educators and education staff, and improving the quality of facilities and infrastructure. In addition, PAUD institutions can also increase promotion and institutional branding through social media, websites, leaflets, and so on (Anjel et al., 2022; Falah & Setiawan, 2022). PAUD institutions can also work with other institutions, such as the local education office, to improve the institution's marketing. By carrying out the right marketing strategy, PAUD institutions can increase the number of students and improve the institution's image in society.

Conclusion

The number of new PAUD institutions that grow significantly can be defined as a response to the enhancement of awareness for parents about the urgency of Early Childhood Education. This case also creates a positive competitive climate. PAUD institutions are obsessed with continuously improving the quality and services of the institution to attract the interest of parents for children. In order to attract the interest of parents to send their children to PAUD, schools need to develop various marketing strategies. Although it must be admitted that some institutions are slow to realize the importance of doing marketing in a systematic and planned manner. The high sense of ownership of the institution (sense of belonging) for the teachers, parents and stakeholders, has an impact on their militancy in the marketing efforts of PAUD institutions. They work together to market PAUD institutions to parents who have preschool age children.

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