



Marketing communication strategy for academic branding through educational content

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ABSTRACT

Academic Branding is a communication technique to promote the competitiveness of educational institutions. This study intends to investigate marketing communication techniques for academic branding through case studies in the Information Systems Department, Faculty of Engineering, Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia. This research adopts a case study approach with the following stages: data collecting stage, data processing stage, stage of data analysis and interpretation, and reporting phase. The results of this investigation reveal that The marketing communication strategy of the Information System Study Program at the Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya, through educational content, proves to be highly beneficial in academic branding, effectively capturing the interest of prospective students. The primary emphasis is crafting informative and engaging educational content highlighting the program's unique features and academic offerings, including the MBKM. This strategy aligns with the preferences of contemporary learners who seek personalized and relevant information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Academic branding and marketing communication strategies are integral to an educational institution's efforts to establish and enhance its distinctive identity ((Gordon-Isasi et al., 2022). The primary focus is creating a compelling narrative communicating the institution's unique values, strengths, and offerings. This involves a strategic alignment of various elements, such as the quality of academic programs (Product), the reputation and distinctiveness of the study programs (Program Studi), the guidance provided by supervisors (Pembimbing), and the impactful presentations made by faculty members (Presenter). These elements collectively contribute to shaping the institution's image and appeal. A successful academic branding strategy attracts prospective students and fosters community and connection (Lievens & Moons, 2023). The effectiveness of marketing communication strategies in academic branding is crucial for positioning an educational institution competitively in the increasingly competitive landscape of higher education (Arora & Bawa, 2022). The 4P marketing mix approach, which consists of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, is a fundamental framework for selling products

and services in businesses and has considerable academic value in the context of branding (Sucahyadi et al., 2023). In establishing their identity and brand image, educational institutions such as universities and colleges must take a holistic approach (Tanaka, 2022). The academic products provided, the cost of tuition, the institution's geographic location, and promotional activities to boost visibility and reputation are essential components for establishing and sustaining a booming academic brand image (Febriyantoro, 2020). Thus, the 4P marketing mix strategy applies to the commercial world and is the foundation for brand creation in an academic setting (Jain et al., 2022). The academic literature has centered on investigating the marketing mix for academic branding.

Nonetheless, there are scientific and empirical gaps that require further investigation. The absence of research on variations in marketing mix techniques employed by higher education institutions in diverse global and cultural contexts is noted as a research gap in the field (Ayvat & Gunturkun, 2022). Existing studies tend to be limited to specific case examples or focused on particular marketing mix elements, such as promotion fields (Akhsani et al., 2023). However, other areas, such as pricing and distribution, are less thoroughly investigated (Muharmi & Nadriati, 2023). In academic branding, the empirical gap is the lack of robust empirical facts to back existing claims and hypotheses (Baharsyah & Nurhasan, 2023). More empirical research is required to collect concrete data on the effectiveness of various marketing mix strategies in achieving academic branding goals to provide practitioners and higher education institutions with concrete guidance for developing more effective and relevant branding strategies in a competitive global education environment (Barton, 2022). To acquire a more profound knowledge of the function of the marketing mix in academic branding, it is vital to address the research and empirical gaps identified by this study.

In the framework of academic branding strategies, marketing communication plays a significant role in accomplishing study program, faculty, and university admissions objectives. Marketing communications must be meticulously crafted to attract prospective students who share the institution's identity and academic principles, integrating pertinent promotional messaging, suitable media platforms, and efficient communication methods (Prastyowati et al., 2021). Through this method, educational institutions can enhance their brand image, broaden their pool of prospective students, and accomplish their admissions goals at all academic levels, from courses to universities (Comai, 2023). As an essential component of academic branding initiatives, marketing communication is crucial in fulfilling student admission objectives established at various higher education levels, from study programs to institutions (Collins et al., 2022). In this context, marketing communications serve as a crucial instrument for promoting academic brand image and attracting potential students who share educational institutions' vision, goals, and values (John & De Villiers, 2022). By designing relevant and practical promotional messages, selecting the appropriate media platforms, and optimizing communication channels, educational institutions can increase their appeal as a desirable educational option, expand their reach to reach a diverse range of prospective students, and ultimately meet admission goals, thereby consolidating and strengthening their academic brand position within the higher education market (Sullivan et al., 2022).

The academic branding strategy implemented through the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program has assumed a central role in transforming Indonesian higher education (Irawan & Suharyati, 2023). The essential clause in this context is that MBKM is a strategy that is anticipated to favor the brand image and allure of Indonesian higher education institutions (Agnela & Yoedtadi, 2023). It provides students access to various courses at other universities, facilitates intercollegiate collaboration, and allows them to pursue their academic interests and objectives freely (Harahap, 2023). The analysis demonstrates that MBKM can enhance the quality and relevance of higher education by providing various learning opportunities and narrowing

the gap between leading and emerging universities (Shofia et al., 2023). To quantify the program's long-term impact, continual monitoring of MBKM's performance in fulfilling academic branding goals, such as reputation enhancement and student admissions, is still required (Hasanah & Tobib, 2023). In conclusion, MBKM has good potential to become a strategic tool in improving the image and appeal of Indonesian higher education institutions. However, thorough research and ongoing review are required to measure its efficacy in accomplishing the intended academic branding objectives.

The 4P tactics described in this study, namely products or services (Produk), Study Program (Program Studi), Supervisor (Pembimbing), and Presenter, are essential components of this approach, as educational material plays an increasingly vital role in the academic context of branding. The essential clause in this context is that educational material is an excellent method for bolstering academic brand identity (Le et al., 2023). High-quality educational content contributes to developing a positive public image through the information, the study programs offered, the direction provided by academic staff, and presenters who bring educational materials (Perera et al., 2022). Analysis reveals that instructional content can influence prospective students' and other stakeholders' opinions of higher education institutions, impacting student admissions and institutional attractiveness (Riccomini et al., 2021). In conclusion, the 4P strategy approach integrating educational content as an academic branding medium has the potential to be an effective instrument for constructing a solid and relevant academic brand image in the era of competitive higher education.

The research gap in previous studies is evident in the plethora of inquiries that explicitly address educational marketing content yet lack a comprehensive analysis from the perspective of the 4P marketing strategy. The primary focus of these investigations has been on the educational content itself, overlooking the intricacies of the marketing mix. Although numerous studies delve into the nuances of educational marketing, a discernible absence exists regarding a thorough examination of how the 4Ps - Product, Price, Place, and Promotion - interplay within the context of educational institutions. Consequently, there remains an unexplored terrain in understanding the strategic marketing elements that contribute to the success or challenges faced by educational initiatives. This research aims to bridge this gap by offering a holistic analysis incorporating the 4P framework, providing valuable insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers in educational marketing.

The practical implications of this research underscore the imperative to craft educational content as a marketing strategy for educational services contextualized within the framework of the 4P marketing perspective. The core tenet of this proposition lies in aligning educational content with the principles of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, as articulated in the marketing mix. By doing so, educational institutions can strategically position their offerings to resonate effectively with their target audience. Developing educational content tailored to the 4P framework ensures a coherent and impactful approach, enhancing the overall marketing strategy for educational services. This study contends that such an integrated approach facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the market dynamics and provides practical guidance for educational practitioners seeking to optimize their marketing efforts within the ever-evolving landscape of educational services.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigates the design and implementation of academic branding initiatives. There are four primary stages to the research process. The first stage consists of data collecting and product design, in which pertinent information is acquired, and academic branding tactics are developed. The second stage is the implementation stage of branding strategies using social media when educational information is provided, and interactions with prospective students are promoted. The third stage entails reviewing and analyzing

the efficacy of academic branding methods, in which collected data is assessed to determine their impact on prospective student perceptions and student admissions. The reporting phase concludes with the presentation of study findings and recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of academic branding in the investigated environment. This research stage permits the researcher to explore an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of academic branding strategies. In contrast, the structured stages of research provide a systematic framework for identifying, implementing, and evaluating those strategies within the academic sphere under consideration. In addition, the research steps are depicted in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Research Stages

Figure 1 shows the steps of this research process. Using the case study approach in this study has numerous advantages in academic branding initiatives. Focusing on individuals' perspectives, motives, and experiences, the case-study approach allows researchers to comprehend the complex and dynamic environment of the academic branding process during the data-gathering phase. In educational content design for academic branding, the case study approach enables researchers to get profound insights into the target audience's requirements, preferences, and values to tailor the content better. Thirdly, during the evaluation phase of the academic branding strategy, the case study approach provides a more in-depth investigation of the strategy's impact on potential students' perceptions and actions, allowing for more timely and pertinent modifications. In the reporting phase, the case study approach allows for the thorough and contextual presentation of findings, which may be utilized to inform better decisions and actions in designing and implementing effective academic branding strategies. Consequently, the case study approach generates a more profound, relevant, and contextual knowledge of academic branding initiatives, which can boost higher education institutions' allure and branding success.

The limitations of this research lie in its focus on examining academic branding strategies within the specific context of the Information System Study Program at the Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya. The primary scope entails a detailed investigation of branding initiatives within this particular academic program, potentially restricting the generalizability of findings to broader institutional contexts. While the research provides valuable insights into the nuances of academic branding within the given program, its applicability to other disciplines or university settings may require additional research for a more comprehensive understanding. Acknowledging these limitations is crucial for maintaining the transparency and contextual relevance of the study. In conclusion, future research endeavors may broaden the inquiry scope to encompass various academic programs and institutions, ensuring a more robust and widely applicable examination of academic branding strategies.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Academic branding as a communication strategy plays a pivotal role in capturing the interest of prospective students. The primary objective is establishing an academic institution's distinct and compelling identity, enticing potential students through a multifaceted approach. Universities can effectively communicate their unique value proposition and competitive advantages by developing a robust academic brand. This could be achieved through targeted marketing initiatives, highlighting notable faculty achievements, cutting-edge research endeavors, and state-of-the-art facilities. Furthermore, academic branding is crucial for institutions to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive educational landscape. The success of such strategies lies in their ability to resonate with the aspirations and expectations of the target audience, fostering a sense of connection and relevance (Spais & Paul, 2021). In conclusion, a well-crafted academic branding strategy not only attracts the attention of prospective students but also establishes a lasting impression, contributing to the overall success and reputation of the educational institution.

One form of communication strategy for academic branding involves the creation of educational digital content. The primary objective is to leverage the power of digital platforms to disseminate informative and engaging content that reflects the academic institution's values and expertise. Educational content, such as online courses, webinars, and interactive tutorials, is decisive for showcasing the institution's intellectual capital and thought leadership. By offering valuable insights and knowledge, academic institutions can position themselves as authoritative sources within their respective fields (Albinsson et al., 2020). This genre of educational content not only enhances the institution's visibility, establishes credibility, and fosters a sense of community engagement. In conclusion, the development and dissemination of educational digital content represent a strategic approach to academic branding, contributing to establishing a robust online presence and cultivating a positive institutional image, as shown in the figure below.

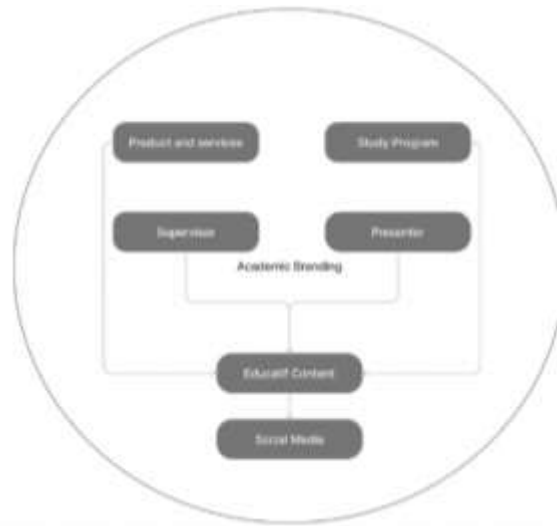


Figure 2. Academic Branding Design Through Education Content for the Information System Department

Figure 2 describes how academic branding through educational content confronts distinct challenges in the digital era. The main objective is strategically positioning educational institutions by disseminating high-quality content across digital platforms. In this context, one prominent challenge is the saturation of digital spaces with a plethora of content, making it difficult for institutions to stand out. Consequently, universities must devise innovative and compelling content that imparts knowledge and

resonates with the target audience. The rapidly evolving technological landscape also challenges updating and adopting emerging digital tools for effective communication. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach, incorporating data analytics to understand audience preferences and trends. In conclusion, while academic branding through educational content offers significant opportunities, navigating the challenges in the digital era demands strategic adaptability and a keen understanding of the evolving dynamics of online communication.

Using media-sharing networks represents a strategic avenue for enhancing Academic Branding. The primary objective is to leverage these platforms' widespread reach and interactive nature to communicate an institution's unique identity and academic offerings (Bonilla Quijada et al., 2022). By strategically disseminating content through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn, universities can engage with a diverse audience, showcasing their educational expertise and fostering a sense of community (McAlister et al., 2023). This is particularly crucial in an era where digital presence significantly influences perceptions. Moreover, dynamic and visual media-sharing networks enable institutions to present their academic achievements, faculty expertise, and campus life compellingly (Riccomini et al., 2021). The strategic use of these platforms facilitates increased visibility and establishes a more relatable and authentic connection with prospective students. In conclusion, incorporating media-sharing networks as part of Academic Branding initiatives is pivotal for adapting to contemporary communication trends and effectively conveying the distinctive features of an educational institution, as shown in the figure below.



Figure 3. Digital Education Content for Information System Final Project

Figure 3 describes integrating digital education content, which is paramount in the context of an Information System final project. The primary objective is to employ advanced technological tools and platforms to enhance the learning experience, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of information systems concepts. Leveraging digital education content, such as interactive tutorials, online simulations, and multimedia presentations, can supplement traditional instructional methods (Bhagal-Nair, 2023). These tools provide students with dynamic and engaging learning materials and enable them to interact with the subject matter more effectively. Incorporating digital education content in an Information System final project is not merely a means of adapting to technological trends but a strategic approach to cultivating critical thinking skills and technological proficiency. In conclusion, integrating digital education content in the context of an Information System final project is essential for equipping students with the requisite skills and knowledge to navigate the complexities of contemporary information technology landscapes.

The effectiveness of educational video content employing storytelling techniques is paramount in enhancing the learning experience. The primary objective is to harness the power of narrative structures to convey complex information in a compelling and relatable manner. By incorporating storytelling elements, such as engaging narratives, character development, and thematic arcs, educational videos can captivate the audience's attention and facilitate a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Eger et

al., 2021). These techniques foster a more enjoyable learning experience and aid in information retention. Using storytelling in educational video content is not merely a stylistic choice but a strategic approach to making academic material more accessible and memorable. In conclusion, the efficacy of educational video content is significantly heightened when employing storytelling techniques, as it bridges the gap between information dissemination and meaningful comprehension, thereby enriching the overall learning process, as shown in the figure below.

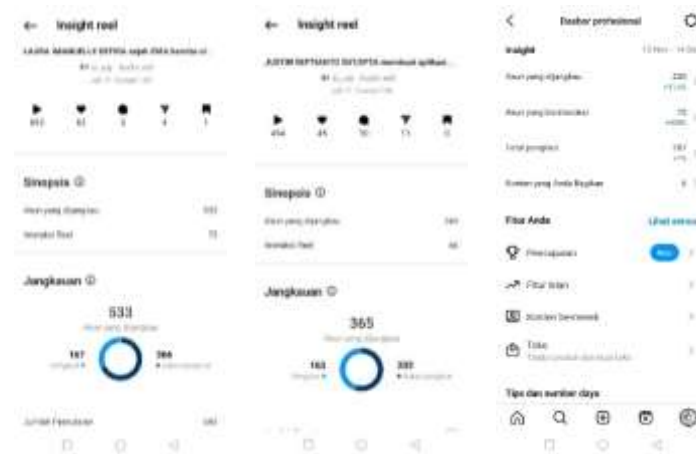


Figure 4. Analytic Dashboard for Social Media (Instagram)

Figure 4 indicates that utilizing an analytic dashboard for media network sharing is instrumental in evaluating viewer engagement and estimating the reach of system users. The primary objective is to employ data analytics tools to extract meaningful insights into user behavior, preferences, and interaction patterns within the media-sharing network. Through the analysis of metrics such as viewership duration, click-through rates, and user demographics, institutions can understand the effectiveness of their content and the extent of their audience penetration (Asif et al., 2022). In supporting this, the analytic dashboard aids in identifying popular content, refining future strategies, and tailoring educational materials to align with the target audience's preferences. The integration of analytic dashboards enhances the efficacy of media network sharing and provides a data-driven foundation for informed decision-making in educational content dissemination (Ho & Law, 2022). In conclusion, the analytic dashboard is a valuable tool for assessing and optimizing the impact of media network sharing, thereby contributing to a more strategic and tailored approach to reaching and engaging system users.

The findings of this research underscore the pivotal roles of products or services, study programs, supervisors, and presenters as the key components, often referred to as the 4Ps, in the context of academic branding, particularly within the Information System Study Program at the Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya. The primary objective is to investigate the influence of these components on the overall branding strategy and perception of the academic program. Through a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between the quality of educational offerings, the reputation of the study program, the guidance provided by supervisors, and the efficacy of presentation, the research reveals their collective impact on shaping the distinctive identity and appeal of the Information System Study Program. This research contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of academic branding within a specific institutional context. It emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the 4Ps as integral elements in shaping academic identity. In conclusion, recognizing the significance of these components is essential for institutions aiming to strategically position and enhance their academic programs' reputation.



Figure 5. Engagement Status of First and Second Videos in YouTube Analytic Dashboard

In the context of this study, the primary objective of academic branding strategies is to augment student enrollment and promote educational services that align with student preferences. The overarching goal centers on branding initiatives to attract a larger student population to the academic institution. This is achieved by strategically communicating the institution's unique qualities, educational offerings, and values, tailored to resonate with the preferences and aspirations of the target student demographic (Gurrieri & Finn, 2023). In supporting this, academic branding endeavors aim to establish a positive institutional image that attracts prospective students and fosters a sense of connection and alignment between the educational institution and the needs of its student community (Mai To et al., 2022). In conclusion, the emphasis on student enrollment and satisfaction underscores the strategic importance of academic branding in aligning educational services with the preferences of the student body.

As a communication strategy, academic branding plays a pivotal role in marketing the Information System study program to captivate the interest of prospective learners. The primary objective is strategically positioning the program to attract and engage students by effectively communicating its unique qualities (Lubis et al., 2023). This is achieved by highlighting the distinctive features of the Information System study program, such as cutting-edge curriculum, renowned faculty, and opportunities for practical application. Through targeted communication channels, academic branding creates a compelling narrative that communicates the educational offerings and resonates with the aspirations and preferences of the prospective students (Rahmanita et al., 2023). Academic branding is a dynamic tool to establish a positive perception of the Information System study program, fostering a sense of connection and relevance among potential learners. In conclusion, the strategic deployment of academic branding is instrumental in shaping the program's image and ultimately influencing the decision-making process of prospective students in favor of enrollment.

Table 1. Challenges of Marketing Communication for Academic Branding

Challenges	Description
Intangibility of Educational Services	Communicating the value of educational experiences, knowledge acquisition, and personal growth.
Diverse Target Audience	Catering to the varied needs and expectations of students, parents, faculty, and potential employers
Market Competitiveness	Standing out among competing institutions by emphasizing unique offerings and advantages
Technological Evolution	Adapting to and effectively utilizing evolving technologies for communication and outreach
Increasing Skepticism	Overcoming skepticism towards traditional marketing messages by building trust and credibility

Table 1 describes the challenges of marketing communication for academic branding strategy. Based on the case study, the interest of prospective students in educational content related to the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (Independent Learning, Independent Campus) program is multifaceted. The primary attraction lies in the program's emphasis on providing students with greater autonomy and flexibility in tailoring their learning experiences. This resonates with the evolving preferences of

contemporary learners who seek personalized and self-directed educational pathways. Additionally, the prospect of engaging with innovative teaching methods, modern technologies, and real-world applications, as facilitated by the Merdeka Belajar initiative, contributes to the appeal. The positive reception of educational content associated with the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka program underscores the growing importance of learner-centered approaches in higher education. The interest of prospective students in this program manifests a shift in educational paradigms towards more individualized and dynamic learning experiences. Otherwise, the challenges inherent in marketing communication strategies within education are multifaceted (Cooper et al., 2023). The main concern centers on the unique nature of educational services, which are intangible and often require a more nuanced approach to branding. In navigating these challenges, educational institutions must grapple with effectively conveying the value of their offerings (Kerr et al., 2023). This involves communicating tangible aspects, such as curriculum quality and faculty expertise, and emphasizing intangible elements, like the learning environment and institutional culture.

4. CONCLUSION

The marketing communication strategy of the Information System Study Program at the Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Atma Jaya, through educational content, proves to be highly beneficial in academic branding, effectively capturing the interest of prospective students. The primary emphasis is crafting informative and engaging educational content highlighting the program's unique features and academic offerings, including the MBKM. This strategy aligns with the preferences of contemporary learners who seek personalized and relevant information. The success of this approach lies in its ability to disseminate valuable insights about the Information System program and establish a meaningful connection with the target audience. As institutions vie for attention in the competitive academic landscape, the strategic utilization of educational content emerges as a potent tool in shaping a positive perception and attracting the interest of potential students. The practical implications of this research underscore the imperative to craft educational content as a marketing strategy for educational services contextualized within the framework of the 4P marketing perspective.

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