Designing a marketing strategy with a consumer behavior approach at STIDKI Ar Rahmah Surabaya

M.H. Musyanto & G.C. Premananto

Magister Management of Economic and Business Faculty of Airlangga University Surabaya, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam (STIDKI) Ar Rahmah Surabaya has been experiencing a significant decrease in the number of participants at the test stage in new student admissions since 2015; so this has caused losses because the chances of getting qualified student candidates are getting smaller, while the costs incurred are not small. This study seeks to find a solution in order to maintain the number of registrants or increase the number of PMB test participants by designing an effective marketing strategy with a consumer behavior approach. The research was conducted using qualitative methods, interviewing applicants who did not take the test and the students to obtain primary data and analyze new student admission documents as a secondary data source. From the data obtained, a focus group discussion was carried out with STIDKI management members who were directly involved in the admission of new students, and the result was that STIDKI Ar Rahmah would focus on various efforts to (1) become a favorite campus for memorizing the Quran, (2) increase the role of lecturers in institutional cooperation and capitalize on Quran lecturers who have international qualifications, (3) involve students in marketing to schools, especially their home schools, and (4) apply a registration fee at the time of new student admission.

1 INTRODUCTION

This research was conducted at the Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam (STIDKI) Ar Rahmah Surabaya, a higher education institution with a full scholarship that was founded in 2015 with a vision to become a campus for producing imams and professional mosque managers who memorize the 30 juz Quran and help build civilization through mosques.

Since 2015, there has been a decrease in the number of test takers at the time of new student admission (NSA) as follows:

Table 1. Attendance of new student admissions test takers

Year	Registrant	Test Taker	Percentage
2015	125	90	72%
2016	251	158	63%
2017	245	112	46%
2018	306	144	47%
2019	319	123	39%
2020	410	216	53%

The magnitude of the decrease in the number of test takers is certainly very detrimental, at least in two ways: (1) the loss of potential quality students and (2) the high cost of organizing NSA. Therefore, knowing the cause of the decline in NSA test participants is important in order to increase the number of registrants and maintain this number until the NSA test stage.

1.1 *Research question/objective*

The problem focused on in this research is how to design an effective marketing strategy with consumer behavior approaches to increase the number of registrants and maintain it until the New Student Admissions test stage?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *College marketing*

The increasing need for higher education encourages each higher education institution to carry out the most effective marketing strategy to attract stakeholders. The stakeholders referred to in this case are high school graduates, parents of prospective students, funders, as well as graduates (Bialon, 2015). In order to survive and achieve the competitive advantage in a sustainable manner, universities must use a marketing framework (Hoyt and Brown, 2003) and must also be able to meet customer needs well (Kotler, 2016). Approaching the customer is very effective in identifying customer needs precisely; this can be done by using feedback from customers or prospective customers to control organizational change. Furthermore, the marketing mix (marketing mix) was effectively applied to influence the need for higher education services (Ivy, 2008).

2.2 *Consumer behavior*

Understanding consumer behavior is one of the important points in order to achieve marketing effectiveness. Understanding consumer behavior is essentially understanding “why consumers do what they do”. Marketing stimuli and environmental stimuli enter the consumer’s consciousness, and a series of psychological processes coupled with certain consumer characteristics internally influence the decision-making process and purchasing decisions. The marketer’s job is to understand what goes on in consumer consciousness from getting outside marketing stimuli to the final purchase decision. (Kotler, 2016).

2.3 *Stages of the consumer purchasing process*

The five-stage model of the consumer purchase process (Kotler, 2016) is the basis for discussing how consumers make decisions to buy products. There are five stages for a person to arrive at a decision to buy a product or service: (1) recognition of needs, (2) seeking information, (3) evaluation of alternatives, (4) purchasing decision, and (5) post-purchase behavior.

Figure 1. Stages of the consumer purchasing process (Kotler, 2016).

2.4 *Alternative evaluation and purchasing decisions*

One of the crucial stages of the five stages mentioned above is the alternatives evaluation stage. In this stage, consumers gather information regarding various preferences related to brands of the products they need and then select one. Then, the consumer intends to buy the most preferred product. There are five things the consumers consider when they are at the purchase intention stage, including the brand (dealer), amount (quantity), time of purchase (timing), and the payment method. In the context of higher education institutions such as STIDKI Ar Rahmah, what will be taken into consideration is the profile of STIDKI Ar Rahmah, the number of students accepted,

the time required for the registration process, and the school fees. After the purchase intention is formed, there are two factors that the consumers consider before making a purchase decision:

- a. The first factor is the attitude of other people. The extent to which the attitudes of others affect us will depend on two things: (1) the intensity of the negative attitudes of others toward alternatives that consumers like and (2) the motivation of consumers to obey others. The more intense the negative influence of a person on us and the closer we are to that person, the more we will take decisions according to that person's preferences and vice versa.
- b. The second factor is the factor of unanticipated situations that can arise and change the purchase intention.

Figure 2. Stages between evaluation of alternatives and purchasing decisions (Kotler, 2016).

This research will be focused on the stages from identifying needs to purchase decisions to get an idea of how the student candidates for STIDKI Ar Rahmah take decisions about choosing schools.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Secondary data*

From the new student admissions document of STIDKI Ar Rahmah Surabaya, several important things related to the research theme are observed, as shown in tables below.

Table 2. The origin of the registrant school for STIDKI Ar Rahmah Surabaya.

	ORIGINAL SCHOOL		
	MA/SMAIT/SMKIT/PP (Islamic Senior High School)	SMA (Senior High School)	SMK (Vocational Senior High School)
Percentage	75%	17%	8%

Table 3. Data sources of information for new student admissions.

	INFORMATION SOURCE					
	Brochure	School	Media	Web	Friend/Family	Others
Percentage	5%	29%	16%	5%	38%	7%

3.2 Primary data

To obtain primary data, interviews were conducted with 10 registrants of STIDKI Ar Rahmah Surabaya who did not continue to the test stage and with 14 students of STIDKI Ar Rahmah Surabaya with the following results:

1. The reasons why registrants were not present at the test stage were as follows: (1) STIDKI Ar Rahmah was not their first choice; (2) they were tied to other institutions; (3) they did not meet the minimum requirements of memorizing 3 juz Al Quran; and (4) they were not allowed by parents.
2. Regarding the sources of information for new student admissions of STIDKI Ar Rahmah, both registrants and students of STIDKI Ar Rahmah answered the following: (1) they received information from acquaintances (parents, high school alumni, and teachers), and this was the most common answer; (2) they received information from social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook; 3) they received information from the STIDKI website.
3. The most motivating factors to register with STIDKI Ar Rahmah, according to the informants' answers, were in the following order: (1) tahfizh Quran 30 juz, (2) scholarship, and (3) mosque imam.

4 RESULTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Furthermore, the data given above were used as the material in a focus group discussion (FGD), which was attended by the management team of STIDKI Ar Rahmah. The FGD decided on several marketing strategies, which were briefly described as follows:

1. STIDKI Ar Rahmah will try to become a favorite high school for memorizing the Quran.
2. Increasing the role of lecturers in institutional cooperation and capitalizing on Quran lecturers who have international qualifications.
3. Involving students in marketing the curriculum to schools, especially their home schools.
4. Applying a registration fee at the time of admission of new students.

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