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Optimizing Educational Facilities and Infrastructure in the Context of Marketing Management

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Abstract

This study explores the strategic role of facilities and infrastructure optimization in enhancing educational marketing management at SMAN 30 Bone, Indonesia. The research addresses a critical gap in the alignment between physical resources and institutional promotional efforts in secondary education. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving school leaders, teachers, and students. Findings reveal that while the school has implemented relatively effective marketing strategies, the lack of adequate learning facilities and basic infrastructure such as laboratory tools, sports equipment, and religious spaces poses challenges to achieving educational excellence and stakeholder satisfaction. The optimization of both facilities and infrastructure was found to directly influence parents' and students' perceptions of educational quality, which in turn affected enrollment decisions. This study contributes to the discourse on education service marketing by highlighting the interdependence between infrastructure development and institutional image-building. The implications underscore the need for integrated planning in resource allocation, particularly for newly established schools seeking to strengthen their competitive positioning. The findings are relevant for policymakers, school administrators, and education planners aiming to enhance school attractiveness and community trust through strategic infrastructure investment.

Keywords: Educational Marketing, Facilities and Infrastructure Optimization

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, education has evolved into a globally competitive service sector, compelling institutions to adopt strategic management practices, including marketing (Kotler & Fox, 1995). The wave of globalization has intensified the need for educational institutions to differentiate themselves, not just through academic quality, but also through branding and service delivery (Marginson, 2006). Consequently, educational marketing has become central to the sustainability, visibility, and growth of schools.

In this context, facilities and infrastructure are no longer considered peripheral. They are part of the strategic assets that influence the perceived value and attractiveness of an educational institution (Earthman, 2002). Well-maintained classrooms, laboratories, sports facilities, and digital learning environments serve not only to enhance learning outcomes but also act as tangible indicators of quality and institutional seriousness (Filardo, 2016).

Marketing educational services thus involves both the intangible—such as teaching quality, leadership, and institutional culture—and the tangible, including the school's physical environment. The alignment between promotional messaging and physical reality is crucial; dissonance between what is promised and what is experienced can undermine trust and stakeholder satisfaction (Chung & Ng, 2010).

In Indonesia, especially in emerging regions, many schools face systemic challenges in meeting the minimum national standards for facilities and infrastructure (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019). These deficiencies hinder efforts to attract students, maintain stakeholder loyalty, and compete with older or urban-based institutions. Schools in rural areas are often disadvantaged in resource allocation and infrastructure development.

SMAN 30 Bone, located in a semi-rural area of South Sulawesi, exemplifies these dynamics. Although relatively new, the school has adopted proactive educational marketing practices to boost student enrollment and community engagement. However, its facilities remain uneven—while digital access and classrooms are functional, other aspects like sports infrastructure and religious spaces remain inadequate, which may affect its long-term competitiveness.

This study seeks to critically examine how facilities and infrastructure optimization supports or constrains the effectiveness of educational marketing at SMAN 30 Bone. By analyzing the interaction between physical readiness and strategic positioning, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on school management and marketing in emerging educational contexts.

Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of integrating infrastructure planning into marketing strategies. The findings are relevant for school leaders and policymakers aiming to develop educational institutions that are not only pedagogically sound but also physically credible and market-responsive (Bush & Middlewood, 2013).

METHOD

The This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how facilities and infrastructure optimization affects educational marketing management at SMAN 30 Bone. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for capturing complex social realities, contextual phenomena, and participants' lived experiences in natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary aim of this study is to understand the perceptions, strategies, and institutional practices related to the integration of physical resources and educational service promotion.

Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. These triangulated techniques ensured the validity and richness of the data (Patton, 2015). The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their roles and relevance to the research focus. They included the principal, vice principal for infrastructure affairs, teaching staff, and students at SMAN 30 Bone. The school is located in Mattanete Bua Village, Palakka Subdistrict, Bone Regency, Indonesia a semi-rural area facing infrastructural development challenges.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on core themes such as infrastructure availability, marketing strategies, and institutional priorities. Observations focused on the physical learning environment, school facilities, and how they were utilized during daily activities. Official documents, such

as infrastructure records, enrollment statistics, and promotional materials, were also examined to support the qualitative narrative.

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which involved coding, categorizing, and identifying recurring patterns and meanings across the data sources (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were developed inductively and cross-validated with raw data and field notes to ensure coherence and credibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study indicate that the optimization of facilities and infrastructure at SMAN 30 Bone has been partially implemented, with a clear distinction between essential instructional tools and broader supporting infrastructure. Classrooms were generally well-equipped with basic learning tools such as desks, chairs, whiteboards, and audio-visual aids. These components are vital for facilitating daily instructional activities and reflect minimum compliance with national educational standards.

However, some deficiencies were observed in specialized facilities. Several science laboratories particularly for physics lacked up-to-date equipment, limiting the school's ability to deliver effective practical learning experiences. Likewise, the school's sports equipment was found to be inadequate, with students lacking access to essential items for basketball and volleyball. This has implications not only for physical education but also for student well-being and the school's ability to present itself as a well-rounded institution.

The infrastructure assessment also highlighted several limitations in the school's non-instructional facilities. The absence of a proper musollah (prayer room), organizational meeting rooms, and standard athletic fields suggests that the school has yet to fully address the broader infrastructural needs of its student population. These limitations were perceived by students and staff as barriers to creating a fully engaging school environment.

Despite these shortcomings, the school has made notable progress in digital infrastructure. The establishment of a digital library and access to computer laboratories, supported by government funding, indicates a positive trajectory. These improvements

enhance the school's appeal to tech-savvy students and demonstrate a strategic effort to modernize educational delivery, particularly in response to the digital learning demands accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of educational marketing management, the school has employed various promotional strategies to attract new students. These include active social media campaigns, direct outreach to local junior high schools, and community engagement. The principal and staff emphasized that personal communication and localized promotional efforts were key to boosting enrollment, especially given the school's geographic disadvantage and competition from nearby institutions.

The school's positioning strategy was more value-driven than incentive-based. Unlike some private competitors, SMAN 30 Bone did not offer material rewards to attract students. Instead, it emphasized values such as quality education, personal development, and moral integrity. This differentiation strategy resonated with local communities seeking public education aligned with ethical and academic standards.

Stakeholder feedback highlighted mixed perceptions. While parents and students expressed satisfaction with the school's academic commitment and teacher performance, some concerns were raised regarding incomplete facilities. Nonetheless, there was a strong consensus that the school had improved significantly over the past three years and was on the right path toward becoming a competitive public institution.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that school facilities and infrastructure play a strategic role in shaping the effectiveness of educational marketing management. While SMAN 30 Bone has made meaningful progress in basic instructional provision and digital infrastructure, it still faces key limitations in specialized and support facilities. These findings align with Earthman (2002), who argued that the physical condition of educational facilities is directly linked to student motivation and institutional credibility. The absence of certain infrastructure components weakens the school's ability to create a fully engaging learning environment, thereby limiting its attractiveness in the eyes of potential students and parents.

Educational marketing in this context is not merely about communication and promotion it is deeply intertwined with the school's ability to deliver visible, high-quality services. As Kotler and Fox (1995) emphasized, the marketing of intangible services, such as education, relies heavily on tangible cues to shape stakeholder perceptions. SMAN 30 Bone's investment in digital infrastructure demonstrates an understanding of this principle; however, the gap between digital progress and physical limitations creates a fragmented institutional image that may confuse or dissuade potential enrollees.

The school's value-driven positioning strategy represents a conscious choice to differentiate itself from competitors through educational quality and moral values rather than financial or material incentives. This approach reflects the principles of ethical marketing in education (Chung & Ng, 2010), where institutional integrity and long-term impact are prioritized over short-term enrollment numbers. However, in the context of rising educational competition, particularly from private institutions offering immediate benefits, this strategy must be balanced with continued improvements in infrastructure to remain competitive.

Stakeholder feedback, as captured through interviews and observations, suggests that trust in the institution is strong but conditional. Parents and students value the school's commitment to academic development and personal guidance, but they also expect ongoing improvements in physical learning environments. This underscores the dual nature of educational satisfaction driven by both pedagogical quality and facility standards (Filardo, 2016). Without consistent infrastructure enhancements, the school risks eroding the gains made through marketing and relationship-building efforts.

From a broader perspective, the findings support the call for integrated school development planning that includes both strategic marketing and infrastructure investment. In emerging educational settings like SMAN 30 Bone, where resources are limited and competition is increasing, institutional growth depends not only on internal leadership but also on systemic support from educational authorities. This research advocates for a more holistic school improvement model one that aligns branding, pedagogy, and infrastructure under a unified strategic vision.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the optimization of school facilities and infrastructure significantly influences the effectiveness of educational marketing, particularly in emerging school contexts such as SMAN 30 Bone. While the school has made commendable strides in implementing strategic marketing initiatives and upgrading digital infrastructure, persistent gaps in physical and support facilities continue to pose barriers to student satisfaction and institutional competitiveness.

The findings reinforce existing literature on the importance of aligning physical resources with institutional branding and educational service delivery. The school's reliance on value-based positioning—emphasizing quality and ethical education—has created a strong foundation for stakeholder trust. However, to maintain and expand its market appeal, infrastructure development must progress at the same pace as marketing innovation and pedagogical improvements.

Overall, this research underscores the need for integrated planning in school development, where facilities management, marketing strategies, and stakeholder engagement function cohesively. Policymakers and educational leaders are encouraged to adopt holistic improvement models that consider infrastructure not merely as support, but as a core component of educational excellence and institutional identity.

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