



Facing Demographic Challenges: Marketing Strategies for Retaining and Attracting Students at SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar

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Abstract

Education is a key aspect in the development of a country. Vocational High Schools (SMK) have an important role in providing quality vocational education to the younger generation. However, like many other educational institutions, SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar is also faced with significant challenges, one of which is demographic challenges. Demographic challenges refer to changes in the demographic structure of a population, which can impact social institutions, including educational institutions. This research aims to understand the demographic challenges faced by SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar, explore alternative solutions that can be implemented, and formulate the most suitable solution for this institution. The results of the research show that the demographic challenges faced by the Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School are a decrease in the number of students in several skill concentrations, especially in the field of culinary arts, migration and urbanization of the population, which causes people's desire to study outside areas that are considered better, as well as competition with other educational institutions. To overcome these challenges, Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School needs to implement an effective and sustainable marketing strategy. This strategy must be able to increase student interest in choosing a concentration of expertise at SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar, retain existing students, and increase the competitiveness of SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar among other educational institutions. Based on the research results, an effective marketing strategy for Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School is improving the quality of education and learning, carrying out effective promotions and branding, and building collaboration with strategic partners. It is hoped that the implementation of this marketing strategy can help Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School to remain relevant and competitive in the future.

Keywords : *Challenge Demographics, Marketing Strategy, Vocational Schools*

Introduction

Education is a key aspect in the development of a country. Vocational High Schools (SMK) have an important role in providing quality vocational education to

the younger generation (Fatch, 2023; Kampuspedia, 2023). One of the vocational schools that has long contributed to the field of education in Indonesia, specifically in Lampung, is SMK S Muhammadiyah

Tumijajar, West Tulang Bawang Regency. However, like many other educational institutions, SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar is also faced with significant challenges, one of which is demographic challenges.

Demography refers to the study of human population, which includes various aspects such as population growth, age, gender, migration and urbanization (Indahingwati & Nugroho, 2020; Rijal & Tahir, 2022). Demographic challenges arise when changes in the demographic structure of the population have an impact on social institutions, including educational institutions. (Indahingwati & Nugroho, 2020). Every school must have a target for accepting new students by carrying out technical outreach directly or indirectly every year (Kustian et al., 2018; Muslih et al., 2017). At SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar, we have seen a significant change in the number of students enrolling in recent years.

Factors such as a decrease in the number of students due to less popular majors, migration and/or urbanization due to seeking the best education in urban areas, and competition with other educational institutions further complicate this situation.

A marketing strategy needs to be carried out as an appropriate exploration effort to face demographic challenges at Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School. With the concept of a marketing system, it can make it easier for schools to reach the target number of new students as desired by the institution (Penunjang et al., 2019). First, education is the foundation of society's future, and SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar is committed to providing quality education to its students. Second, demographic change is a phenomenon that has a direct impact on the funding and sustainability of educational institutions. With the concept of a marketing system, it can make it easier for schools to reach the target number of new students. A decline in student numbers can result in

financial problems and staff reductions, which in turn can reduce the quality of education provided (Halim, 2018).

In this context, it is important to find effective solutions to retain and attract students, so that Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School remains relevant and competitive in the future. Therefore, this research aims to understand the problems faced by schools in facing demographic changes, explore various alternative solutions that can be implemented, and formulate the most suitable solutions for this institution.

Demographic challenges are not only faced by SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar, but also by many other educational institutions throughout the country. Previous research (Fatch, 2023; Kusuma et al., 2016) shows that more than 70% of students are unable to recognize authentic problems in vocational learning. This is one of the factors that may have an impact on students' interest in enrolling in vocational schools. In addition, research by (Moogan, 2011; Muslih et al., 2017; Pavia, 2006) reveals that effective marketing strategies can help increase the number of student enrollment in vocational schools. By referring to these studies, we can understand the relevance of the problems we face and identify potential solutions.

The main problem that is the focus of this research is how to face the demographic challenges faced by the Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School. The objectives of this research are: to identify the factors that cause students' choice of expertise concentration at Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School, evaluate the marketing strategies that have been implemented and identify their weaknesses and strengths, explore alternative solutions to attract new students and retain existing students, formulate appropriate marketing strategies effective and sustainable to overcome demographic challenges at SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar.

It is hoped that the results of this research will provide significant benefits for the Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School and other similar educational institutions. With a better understanding of demographic issues and effective marketing strategies, SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar can take appropriate steps to maintain and increase the number of students in each specialty concentration.

In the context of this research, demographic challenges will be measured through the lack of interest in several student expertise concentrations, and new student enrollment trends and marketing strategies will be identified based on promotion, branding and communication efforts carried out by SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar. Then, its effectiveness will be assessed based on the increase in the number of students and the sustainability of the institution in the long term, thus relevant marketing strategies and solutions that can be implemented to overcome demographic challenges at SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar.

Method

This research uses a qualitative research approach with a case study design related to adjusting the conditions of problems that occur in the field, (Zakariah et al., 2020) namely conducting research on marketing strategies to retain and attract students at the Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School, West Tulang Bawang Regency, Lampung Province, from August to October 2023.

Primary data sources were obtained through interviews with informants consisting of school principals, teachers and students, as well as other parties who could provide data. Meanwhile, secondary data sources in this research were obtained from literature books, documentation in the form of activity photo data, written data, archives at the Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School.

Data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. The data analysis technique used in this research is descriptive analysis using three stages, namely: data condensation, data presentation and data/conclusion verification (Zakariah et al., 2020).

Checking the validity of the data in this research was carried out using data credibility tests (triangulation of sources, techniques and *member checks*), transferability tests, dependability tests and confirmability tests (Susanto et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

A. Demographic Challenges Faced by Tumijajar Vocational School

Today's educational institutions are often faced with significant demographic challenges, and this can impact student numbers at that school. The demographic challenges faced by Tumijajar Vocational School, namely: there has been an increase in the number of students in one specialty concentration, namely Visual Communication Design (DKV) and a decrease in the number of students in several other skill concentrations, especially in the field of Culinary Management, so that the number of students in each specialty is not evenly distributed and some less desirable. Other challenges include migration and urbanization of the population, there is a desire among people to pursue education outside areas that are considered better (Sucipto, 2023). For example, schools in Metro City, Bandar Lampung and other cities.

The results of interviews with other sources (Riyanto, 2023) as dapodik operators regarding data on the number of students at the Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School for the last three years (2021-2023) can be seen in table 1 below:

Table 1. Data on Tumijajar Muhammadiyah Vocational School students for 2021-2023

Major	Year
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N		202	202	202
o		1	2	3
1	Technical light vehicle	306	311	272
2	Visual communication design	364	345	323
3	Motorcycle Engineering	166	197	178
4	Cullinary art	66	77	74
5	Syariah banking	85	91	94
6	Fashion	-	-	9
7	Pharmacy	-	-	27
	Amount	987	1021	977

Source: Tumijajar Vocational School Basic Education Data, 2023

Based on table 1 above, it shows that there will be an increase in the number of students in 2022, but there will be a decrease in numbers in the visual communication design major, while in 2023 there will be a decrease in almost all majors. Even though it has not decreased significantly, if this is allowed to drag on, this figure will have an impact on the sustainability and existence of the school.

Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School has taken steps by distributing questionnaires regarding the interests and talents of prospective new students so that before this becomes a prolonged problem, based on thorough consideration and study, Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School has opened a new department, namely Pharmacy and Fashion Design, in the hope that it can be a solution to improve prospective students' interest in continuing their studies at SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar.

The results of the research (Sholicha, 2018) reveal that the implementation of marketing communications in attracting prospective students to study at vocational schools where the results of the research explain that marketing communications carried out by schools, especially in the field of public relations, can attract students

through activities to accept new students. This is in line with what Asnawi conveyed (Sholicha, 2018) that superior schools offer a high reputation and quality of education, future prospects for students who graduate, and concentration options from a variety of skills so that students and parents can choose according to their talents and interests. Thus, this becomes an attraction and the school's marketing objectives by understanding people's desires can be fulfilled.

Based on the results of the explanation above, the demographic challenges faced by the Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School, namely the mobilization of the population from villages to urban areas or what is called urbanization with the assumption that education in the city will be better than in the village, even guarantees and opportunities to obtain employment are more widely open. one cause and at the same time a threat for SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar to maintain the number of students, but by taking the right steps, one of which is opening a new skills program that is of interest to prospective students, is proof that SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar has attempted to develop the right strategy to maintain stability and school quality.

B. Marketing Strategy of Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School

Stakeholder expectations by creating offers both in terms of intellectual quality and overall character formation and the facilities that have been provided because education is a complex thing that is carried out with a full sense of responsibility. (Mardiana et al., 2022).

Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School is currently led by Mr. Syamsul Hidayat, S.Pd.I., he is a very competent school principal, with an entrepreneurial spirit, namely creative,

innovative, tenacious, tough, confident, brave to take risks and skilled in branding and marketing school. This is proven by the large number of school collaborations with the business world, the industrial world, the world of work (DUDIKA), regional and central government, even reaching *public figures* . The collaborations built include those in table 2 below:

Table 2. Muhammadiyah SMKS Collaboration

No	The name is DUDIKA	Business fields
1	PT. KTB Kramayuda 3 Berlian Motor, Lautan Utama Berlian Motor, Toyota, Mitsubishi Fuso	4 Wheeled Light Vehicle
2	PT. Astra Honda Motor, PT Tunas Dwipa Matra	2 Wheel Vehicles
3	PT. Metro Madani and BSI Tulang Bawang Barat	Syariah Banking
4	Horison Hotel, Oemar Bakery, Coffee NA	Culinary/Taboga
5	Prima Media Printing Metro	Visual Communication Design (Digital Printing)
6	Asy-Syifa Medika Hospital and Mitra Keluarga Medika Clinic	Pharmacy
7	LPK Mustika Yani	Fashion

Source: Tumijajar Vocational School Collaboration Archives, 2023

The collaboration mentioned above is carried out for student internships, teacher internships, business collaboration, skills

competency tests, curriculum alignment, resource persons, capital participation, donations, absorption of graduates as an effort to increase student competency in line with DUDIKA's needs in terms of providing labor, so that graduates ready to work either as an entrepreneur or independently. In this way, each concentration of expertise has advantages that are attractive according to the interests and talents of prospective students. This was done by the school principal in order to overcome the gap in the number of applicants in each expertise concentration.

The results of the research above are in line with research (Fathurrochman et al., 2021; Sholicha, 2018) that the implementation of school marketing activities cannot be separated from several factors that influence the achievement of success. These factors are internal conditions originating from the school, including human resources (teaching and educational staff, facilities and infrastructure, students, and school programs) while external factors are collaboration, especially with the wider community, the business world, the industrial world and the world of work.

The application of the marketing strategy above fulfills three basic marketing components, namely 1) *integrated marketing*, meaning a marketing strategy that involves all elements/channels, 2) *create customer satisfaction* , a strategy that creates customer satisfaction with a product or service, and 3) *a profit* , where you have to manage *customer-impinging resources* , (resources that influence customers), (*policies*) policies, (*activities*) activities, and market segmentation because these factors will provide a reference for the resulting choices of service users (Kustian et al., 2018; Mardiana et al., 2022).

The results of an interview with the Deputy Head of Curriculum, Mr. Sucipto S.Pd., regarding the selection of expertise concentrations, explained that there were

several expertise concentrations that were less popular, and after going through various studies related to infrastructure, human resources and DUDIKA Partners, finally Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School decided to open concentration of new skills and prospective students interested in the concentration of pharmacy and fashion skills. To fulfill these expectations, SMKS Muhammadiyah opened a new concentration of expertise in accordance with the wishes of the community as an effort to attract student interest.

Apart from adding new skill programs/majors, the school marketing strategy carried out by the Head of Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School in an effort to maintain and attract students' interest in continuing their education at the Vocational School is: 1) creating excellence, including providing the best buildings, facilities, facilities and infrastructure. for the convenience and completeness of the learning process, creating a school profile, collaborating with Fuso, Mitsubishi to support the practice of students and teacher apprentices, and creating a *brand*; 2) implementing differentiated learning; 3) provide resource persons who are reliable, expert and competent according to their existing field of expertise; 4) building a collaborative network with DUDIKA both locally, nationally and even internationally, including in efforts to absorb graduates; 5) carry out promotions/advertisements on several brochures, banners, social media and websites, for example, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube; and 6th) always pray for the continuity and existence of the school until it reaches the desired target in accordance with the school's vision, namely "*Religious, Excellent, Ready to Work*".

The findings above are strengthened by the many collaborations that have been carried out by SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar, to date there have been 110

collaborations with partners/DUDIKA in terms of curriculum alignment, student internship practices, resource persons, teacher internships, assistance with infrastructure and the absorption of graduates (Sucipto, 2023).

Based on the findings above, promotional and marketing activities carried out by SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar aim to introduce the wider community to the profile and advantages possessed by SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar. Apart from that, with this promotional technique the reach of information can spread more widely and quickly.

The research results (Kustian et al., 2018; Penunjang et al., 2019; Ramadina et al., 2021)state that without a good and appropriate educational marketing strategy, it is certain that the educational institution will not develop rapidly. One way to avoid this is by utilizing social media in marketing strategies. Thus, it can be concluded that in educational marketing strategies, social media is considered very influential for marketing or promotional activities of an educational institution. Currently, many schools are using social media as an important means of marketing their schools. With social media, people can easily get access to find out the school's profile, the superior programs offered by the school, and what activities are held at the school.

Conclusion

Muhammadiyah Tumijajar Vocational School is facing demographic challenges, decreasing the number of students in several skill concentrations . To overcome this challenge, the school has taken strategic steps, including opening new departments, namely pharmacy and fashion design and implementing various effective marketing strategies.

The school's marketing strategy involves integrating all marketing elements, creating customer satisfaction, partnering with business and industry, carrying out

effective promotions through social media, and providing differentiated learning according to student interests. Additionally, a competent principal plays an important role in managing marketing strategies and establishing strong partnerships.

With this strategy, SMKS Muhammadiyah Tumijajar hopes to maintain student interest, improve the school's reputation, and ensure the sustainability and existence of the school in the future. Furthermore, it is important to continue to monitor student interest trends, collaborate further with industry and the business world, develop learning programs that suit students' interests and needs, to ensure sustainability of the Tumijajar Muhammadiyah Vocational School.

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