

IMC PREFERENCES IN THE ANNUAL MARKETING PROGRAM AT BMC SCHOOL GRESIK

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Abstract:

In 2021, East Java Province, Indonesia, stood out as a leading provider of education services among the nation's 34 provinces. Private schools, predominant in East Java, surpassed their public counterparts, demonstrating early marketing efforts and innovation. BMC School in Gresik Regency, known as the "City of the Wali Songo," oversees four schools from kindergarten to junior high, emphasizing a Christian foundation and a Theology curriculum. Their annual Admission of New Students program is a crucial marketing initiative. It employs Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) strategies such as advertising, digital interactive marketing, personal selling, event marketing, sponsorship, and sales promotion. The research investigates a significant rise in new student enrollments for the 2022/2023 academic year, seeking to determine parents' and guardians' preferred IMC methods. The study employed a quantitative descriptive methodology to collect data via questionnaires. Seventy respondents – parents and guardians enrolled in BMC School Gresik – were sampled. Survey responses were weighted and averaged, revealing the preferred ranking of IMC activities as interactive digital marketing, event marketing and sponsorship, advertising, and personal selling.

Keywords: Education, Faith-Based Private School, IMC, Preference

INTRODUCTION

Education is a cornerstone for upholding the quality of a nation, and Indonesia, currently perceived as a developing country, aspires to transition into a developed nation by 2045, as stated in an article on the official website of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia (2022). One of the most critical pillars in achieving this objective is the development of exceptional human resources via education. Since 2019, Indonesia has focused on enhancing human resources through education with the National Budget (APBN) for the next five years. In line with the constitution (UUD 1945 Bab XIII, Pasal 31, ayat 1-3), the government must provide and facilitate primary education for the entire population. The positive impact of quality education and facilities on local human resources contributes to the nation's progress, as evident in the performance index where East Java Province ranked first in education, outperforming 33 other provinces, despite the challenges posed by the 2020 pandemic. One recognized, and government-approved means of education in schools in Indonesia are generally categorized into two types: state schools directly managed by the government and private schools managed by private foundations. While state schools rely on zoning based on family cards, private schools operate differently. According to the official Basic Education Data (2023), East Java Province currently has 67,310 schools, comprising 19,654 state and 47,656 private schools.

Private schools are also considered social organizations and must be known by the wider community. In essence, private schools are organizations that encompass social assemblies intentionally created by the community and sheltered by private foundations while fulfilling an equivalent function as a form of community participation to advance the nation and the country



(Norlena, 2015). Despite being regarded as social organizations, efforts are still required to introduce and disseminate the existence of these organizations to the general public, termed as social marketing communication (Wono & Aji, 2020). Communication serves as a social radar, offering assurance to others regarding the presence of disasters in a particular location (Hiram et al., 2024). The mentioned social marketing communication activities manifest the implementation of marketing communication techniques subsequently applied to the arrangement of programs in non-profit organizations, determined based on individual goals to advance personal well-being and fulfill emotional human needs (Ulfa & Marta, 2017). Through marketing, private schools as educational institutions can positively impact the quality, benefiting both external perception and the financial outcomes of the school (Fradito et al., 2020). Therefore, the choice of marketing activities a private school implements plays a significant role.

One type of marketing that private schools can use is Integrated Marketing Communication, often called IMC. By implementing IMC, this type of marketing communication integrates various communication channels, such as advertising, public relations, social media, and events, into a cohesive strategy. The success of marketing for a private school is determined by the effective type of marketing, enabling customers to understand the quality of the education services offered (Shobri et al., 2021).

Budi Mulia Christian Theology School in Gresik, well known as BMC School Gresik as the object, has conducted a total of 5 Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) activities, categorized into four dimensions: advertising, interactive digital marketing, event marketing and sponsorship, and personal selling. Social media is a marketing tool because of its swift ability to distribute information widely. Marketing on social media involves promoting products or services on various media platforms, enabling interaction between consumers and sharing promotional content within the social media community (Tjandra et al., 2024). Regarding advertising, BMC School has utilized Instagram Ads to promote content on Instagram feeds. Additionally, they have employed print media advertising by placing banners in the streets around the school area. In interactive digital marketing, BMC School uses the social media platform Instagram, maintaining an official account to publish news about school administration, student achievements, and other interactive content. In the event marketing and sponsorship dimension, BMC School organizes an annual Open House event open to the general public. In the personal selling dimension, BMC School conducts weekly visits to residential areas around the school on Saturdays to promote New Student Admission at BMC School.

According to Supriadi and Roedjinandari (2017), the term preference refers to the response or action within an individual that indicates interest or inclination towards a particular thing. Each person has a preferred choice that automatically becomes a priority or top choice when deciding on something, which is what preference is. Like every individual, preferences vary, but when collected and analyzed, most respondents will inevitably favor the highest preference. It is supported by Hilda Yunita Wono's statement (2018), stating that preferences are created from an individual's thoughts or perspectives on a most liked product, and each person will arrange a ranking based on a situation, starting from the most liked to the least liked. Preferences are generally associated with consumer decisions in purchasing or selecting a product, service, or offer. Different backgrounds and tastes make each potential consumer's perspective unique when faced with various options. The primary impact of product preferences is to provide greater satisfaction to consumers.

METHODS





This research adopts a quantitative descriptive approach, elucidated by Yusuf (2017), as a method that explains a phenomenon, presenting its inherent patterns to yield more extensive results through various quantitative research steps. A sample, constituting 70 parents (represented by mothers) who have enrolled their children at BMC School Gresik, was drawn from a population too large for the comprehensive examination, utilizing the total sampling technique across different school levels. The sample criteria include parents or guardians aware of BMC School's IMC activities for the 2022/2023 academic year, ensuring the research's accuracy and relevance (Siregar, 2019). Data collection involves surveys and questionnaires as instruments, with surveys being quantitative studies using structured questions recorded, processed, and analyzed by the researcher (Dhaifullah et al., 2022). Primary data, collected firsthand from respondents based on actual conditions, is sourced for this study (Silalahi, 2015). Utilizing Google Forms, questionnaires with closed-ended questions and Likert scale responses are distributed to target respondents to measure their perceptions, attitudes, and opinions. The researcher utilized a weighting method based on the Likert scale to calculate the average responses of the respondents who are parents and guardians of students based on the provided questionnaire. Subsequently, these responses will be ranked to determine preferences. The Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The respondent's age range is determined by the average age of parents, especially mothers, enrolling their children at BMC School for the 2022/2023 academic year. The research aims to provide accurate, up-to-date insights aligned with the current situation. The Pearson correlation validity test is needed to aggregate all items into one variable. Then, Cronbach's alpha method is required to calculate reliability, measuring the respondents' attitudes, not in terms of right or wrong choices, with a threshold of 0.6. If the value is ≥ 0.60 , the result is considered reliable or acceptable (Priyatno, 2014).

Table 1. Samples Criteria

No.	Samples Criteria	Total
1.	Parents of playgroup's students	(8)
2.	Parents of kindergarten students	(16)
3.	Parents of elementary school students	(24)
4.	Parents of junior high school students	(22)
Number of total samples		70

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the respondents specified in this study are parents or guardians of new students for the academic year 2022/2023 exposed to BMC School's IMC activities. Respondents were selected by filling out a Google Form provided by the researcher, placed at BMC School and distributed through respective class teachers. Among the 70 respondents, 7 individuals or 10%, are aged 20-30 years, 43 individuals or 61.4%, 31-40 years, and 20 individuals or 28.6%, are above 40 years. It indicates that most respondents fall in the 31-40 age group. Regarding professions, 17 individuals, or 24.3%, are entrepreneurs, 37 individuals, or 52.9%, are employees, and 16 individuals or 22.9%, have other professions. In other words, most respondents work as employees. Additionally, 45 individuals or 64.3%, have one child enrolled at BMC School, 21 individuals or 30%, have two children, and 4 individuals or 5.7%, have more than two children attending BMC School. This implies that most respondents in this study have one child who attends BMC School.



The IMC activities carried out by BMC School will be assigned codes to facilitate weighting by the researcher. The given codes are X1 to X5. Variable X1 represents the advertising dimension using Instagram Ads to promote content on BMC School's Instagram. Variable X2 represents the advertising dimension using new students' admission banners as a print marketing medium displayed around the school area. Variable X3 represents the interactive digital marketing dimension with Instagram as a digital marketing platform, covering informative and interactive content. Variable X4 represents the personal selling dimension through home visits in the neighborhood and around the school. Finally, variable X5 represents the event marketing and sponsorship dimension by organizing the "Open House" event held annually.

Based on the weighting results of variable X1, statement X1.2 regarding BMC School's Instagram ads related to the image occupies the highest position with an average value of 2.14. Meanwhile, statement X1.3 occupies the lowest position with a value of 2.74. This information can be used to identify areas that need improvement in BMC School's advertising activities. The overall average in the weighting for variable X1 is 2.44.

In the weighting results for variable X2, it is found that statement X2.1 regarding respondents who have seen the new student's admission banner on the street they passed occupies the highest position with an average value of 2.20. On the other hand, statement X2.3 about registering a child at BMC School because of seeing the banner occupies the lowest position with an average value of 2.89. The difference in these values can be used as a reference for improving BMC School's advertising activities, especially those using print media, in the future. The overall average in the weighting for variable X2 is 2.43.

From the weighting results for variable X3, it is known that statement X3.2 regarding the informative content uploaded on BMC School's Instagram occupies the highest position with an average value of 2.01. On the other hand, statement X3.3 about wanting to enroll a child at BMC School after seeing BMC School's Instagram occupies the lowest position with an average value of 2.20. The relatively close values indicate the effectiveness of BMC School's digital interactive marketing activities. The overall average in the weighting for variable X3 is 2.09.

According to the weighting results for variable X4, it can be observed that statement X4.2 regarding the opening of interactions with teachers as marketers for BMC School through visitation occupies the highest position with an average value of 2.41. On the other hand, statement X4.3 about respondents' confidence in enrolling their children at BMC School after receiving a visitation occupies the lowest position with an average value of 2.77. The significant difference in average values indicates an imbalance of interest in BMC School's selling activities. The overall average in the weighting for variable X4 is 2.59.

In the weighting results for the last variable, namely variable X5, it can be noted that statement X5.2, regarding respondents' awareness of the student enrollment process at BMC School, occupies the highest position with an average value of 2.10. On the other hand, statement X5.3, concerning the consistency of messages at the Open House about new students' admission, holds the lowest position with an average value of 2.23. The difference in values can reference how BMC School's Event Marketing and Sponsorship activities will be organized in the upcoming years. The overall average in the weighting for variable X5 is 2.16.

Based on the weighting results of all variables, we can observe the ranking obtained after the weighting has been conducted, with each dimension being assigned its respective position. In other words, the dimension with the most negligible average weight will occupy the highest position. Conversely, the dimension with the most significant average weight will be in the lowest position. In the first position is dimension X3, interactive digital marketing using the Instagram social media

platform, receiving a weight of 2.09. The second position is held by dimension X5, which is event marketing and sponsorship through organizing an Open House event, with a weight of 2.16. The third position is occupied by dimension X2, advertising using print media by placing new students' admission banners, obtaining a weight of 2.43. The fourth position is taken by dimension X1, advertising utilizing IG Ads for promotion, receiving a weight of 2.44. The last or fifth position is held by dimension X4, personal selling through house visitations, obtaining a weight of 2.59.

The weighting data for each dimension has been provided and subsequently ranked to yield the preferences of BMC School Gresik parents, as shown in previous paragraphs. Parents' primary preference for IMC activities is interactive digital marketing (utilizing Instagram as a social media platform). BMC School extensively employs social media for information dissemination and promotion, with Instagram being a primary channel. The high average weight for statement X3.2, indicating informative content on BMC School's Instagram, supports this preference, especially among parents aged 31-40.

The content on BMC School's Instagram showcases not only the new student's admission process but also students' learning activities, achievements, and a character education concept emphasizing Christian values. The caption style varies based on the content, adapting to the nature of the post, be it new students admission-related or highlighting academic and non-academic activities. Utilizing Instagram as the primary marketing tool provides BMC School with advantages outlined by Kotler and Keller (2016), such as reaching a broader audience, interaction with buyers, increased public awareness, and enhanced user engagement.

The second preference among parents is event marketing and sponsorship, mainly through the Open House event. This event allows parents to explore BMC School, witness student performances, and interact with teachers. The positive experience gained through Open House builds trust and connections with potential students and parents. The event is a promotional platform facilitating direct interaction to showcase BMC School's core values and educational principles.

Advertising through print media, specifically the placement of new students' admission banners near BMC School, occupies the third preference. Although most respondents see the banners, the effectiveness in persuading parents to enroll their children is less pronounced, as indicated by the lower average weight for statement X2.3. The challenge lies in ensuring the banner content aligns with the targeted audience's preferences, as visual appeal and message clarity are essential in print media advertising.

The fourth preference is advertising through digital platforms, specifically Instagram Ads (IG Ads). Despite having diverse content, including new students' admission flyers and snippets of student learning activities, the effectiveness of IG Ads needs to improve, leading to lower preference. More creativity and persuasiveness in content creation and precise targeting are crucial for better audience engagement and enrollment conversion.

Lastly, personal selling, represented by teacher visitations to residential areas, occupies the lowest preference. The direct interaction intended to build rapport with parents and showcase BMC School's offerings faces challenges. Factors such as resource limitations, the perceived invasiveness of home visits, and the shift toward digital communication contribute to the lower effectiveness of personal selling in modern marketing trends.

In summary, the preferences indicate a clear hierarchy of BMC School Gresik parents, emphasizing the importance of interactive digital marketing, event marketing and sponsorship, print media advertising, digital platform advertising, and personal selling. The findings suggest the



need for adjustments in the less preferred IMC activities to better align them with the preferences and expectations of the target audience.

Table 2. Table of SPSS Analysis Result

Variable	Mean	Validity	Reliability
X1.1	2.43	0.000	0.911
X1.2	2.14	0.000	0.909
X1.3	2.74	0.000	0.917
X2.1	2.20	0.006	0.915
X2.2	2.21	0.000	0.914
X2.3	2.89	0.008	0.917
X3.1	2.07	0.000	0.906
X3.2	2.01	0.000	0.906
X3.3	2.20	0.000	0.909
X4.1	2.59	0.009	0.915
X4.2	2.41	0.003	0.915
X4.3	2.77	0.000	0.922
X5.1	2.16	0.030	0.910
X5.2	2.10	0.000	0.909
X5.3	2.23	0.000	0.912

Source: Data Processed 2024

CONCLUSION

This research aims to understand the preferences for Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) among parents or guardians of new students in the Academic Year 2022/2023, which has seen a significant increase in the number of new students compared to the previous academic year. The goal is to use this information as an evaluation for the execution of future IMC activities and to identify the most effective and preferred IMC preferences of parents or guardians. In conclusion, the parental preferences reveal a distinct ranking among BMC School Gresik parents, underscoring the significance of interactive digital marketing as the top choice, succeeded by event marketing and sponsorship, print media advertising, digital platform advertising, and ultimately, personal selling. These results imply a necessity for refinements in the less favored IMC activities to align them better with the preferences and anticipations of the targeted audience. The IMC activity that ranks first in the preferences of BMC School parents and guardians is Interactive Digital Marketing, with a preference weight of 2.09. BMC School primarily utilizes social media, especially the Instagram platform, as its primary and focused marketing channel. The choice of Interactive Digital Marketing as the backbone of marketing is not arbitrary, driven not only by the benefits it offers, such as ease, practicality, and minimal cost but also by the segmentation of parents and guardians who are now millennials. This generation already uses social media for communication and daily information-seeking. Therefore, Interactive Digital Marketing effectively reaches a broader audience more efficiently and at a lower cost. Most parents and guardians are advised to learn about BMC School through social media, specifically Instagram.

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