Marketing Communication For Colleges Through The Word- Of- Mouth Method

by Indra Budaya

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Indra Budaya[1*], Gampo Haryono[2], Afdal Chatra Perdana[3], Dona Elvia Desi[4]

[1,2,3,4]STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci
[1] indra.budaya77@gmail.com
* corresponding author

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Promotion of a university can be done using the Word-of-Mouth marketing communication method. This marketing method will use its consumers to promote its products to others. This promotion can be done using interpersonal communication. This study aims to find a model of word-of-mouth marketing communication that occurs at the STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci college. A qualitative approach through exploratory methods will be used in this study. This study then found that before deciding to go to college, the perpetrator of the communication would consider the situational and personal factors of the interlocutor. By using the communication model of Riley and Riley as its foundation, the word-of-mouth model is strongly influenced by the activities that occur between personal communication between its members.

I. Introduction

An educational institution's most basic decision is what programs and services it will offer to students, alumni, donors, and other communities. Usually, institutions provide several programs and other services. Because higher education institutions include pure services, what is provided here is a service program supported by supporting facilities such as classrooms, tables, chairs, blackboards, books and so on [9]. Winning market share in an increasingly competitive era, especially in higher education services, is not easy. This is because people are increasingly critical in assessing the quality of higher education, especially in the current era of globalization, competition seems to be without limits to the international level [11].

To make higher education services managed not only known but also in demand by prospective students as a place for education, the managers of higher education institutions must be good at communicating and marketing their higher education services. The marketing value will not be of good value without good communication [23]. The relationship between marketing and communication has a close relationship. The element of communication indeed cannot be separated in this case, especially in terms of existing promotions. How will the public know about their higher education programs if it is not appropriately communicated? Communication is at the heart of all this. The packaged communication programs have various kinds of communication mixes [15]. How to package the ideal form of communication in marketing services, especially in the field of higher education, is to depend on the policies of related parties that rely on specific marketing communication programs and what communication programs, according to the managers, are ideal for attracting prospective students so that they can receive education at their institutions [22].

Another thing that needs to be considered by managers of higher education institutions is knowing the primary source of information that helps prospective consumers in making decisions, namely impersonal sources of information. Examples of this are television, magazines, the internet and other mass media sources and sources of personal data, including the influence of oral communication or word-of-mouth, commonly abbreviated as WOM, from friends, acquaintances, family, and business relations [7]. Word-of-mouth communication has been around for a long time. Before technology development, human communication activities were only carried out at this level. WOM has initially been natural, but now it has become part of the promotion mix to support marketing activities or, in other terms Word-of-mouth Marketing (WOMM). WOMMA (Word-of-mouth Marketing

Association) defines word-of-mouth as a marketing effort that triggers consumers to talk about, promote, recommend and sell products/brands to other customers [3].

Len Short, Executive Vice President of Advertising and Brand Management at Charles Schwab, concludes another thing related to Word-of-mouth "The main idea of marketing is that word of mouth and validation of personal relationships are key, and most marketers ignore it." [4].

When related to the statement above, there are exciting things about the concept of marketing through word-of-mouth, which is an advantage for marketers when using word-of-mouth because word-of-mouth is identical to communication that is more personal or in the realm of communication science associated with interpersonal communication [20]. Word-of-mouth communication activities tend to occur because of the close relationship between the communicator and the communicant, both in the physical context and in the relationship. In general, because of that personal closeness, the communicant will believe what the communicator says [10].

Aristotle calls the character of the communicator the ethos. Ethos consists of good thoughts, morals, and intentions (good sense, good moral character, goodwill). When a communicator communicates, what matters is what he says and his circumstances. He doesn't communicate what he says, and he communicates what he is [17]. Interpersonal relationships have a powerful marketing impact. Because of strong interpersonal relationships, word-of-mouth can be trusted as one of the promotional media that can spread the existence of a higher education institution [8]. One party that does marketing through word-of-mouth is STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci through the Member Get Student program. This topic is interesting to be studied further, especially in the context of interpersonal communication seen from the side of the communicator (recommendation party) and communicant (prospective student who is now a student and was recommended through the Member Get Student program)..

II. Methods

This research will use an exploratory qualitative approach by using data sourced from various previous studies and studies that are still related or relevant to this research. The research data that the authors have successfully collected will be analyzed immediately so that the study results can be found later.

III. Result and Discussion

A. Personal Factor

Personal factors are things related to a person's emotional/personal side. When communication activities occur, the communicator will see the figure of the interlocutor in terms of personality or closeness of the relationship so that it will be known who the party is talking to, which then affects the attraction when communicating. Many things can be related to assessing a person's personality. Still, this research is limited to examining only from the point of view of the expertise possessed by the interlocutor, belief, personality, similarity of personal characteristics and the influence of status, race and religion.

The personal factor of communicators (students/alumni) who promote STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci through the Member Get Student program turns out to have a bearing on the decision of prospective students to accept study recommendations at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci. Most interviewees said they saw the recommended figure's personality, expertise, and trust side. The communicator's personality is closely related to the level of trust of the communicant. When the view of the personality of a communicator is considered positive, the communicant will believe in the intricacies of the communicator's behavior, and the results of this study indicate that the majority consider the personality factors of communicators which impact their decision to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci.

The trust factor is also a consideration in interpersonal communication activities. Communication will not work effectively if the communicator, especially in this study, the communicant does not believe in the communicator, aka is always suspicious. Trusting the interlocutor will further improve interpersonal communication because it can open communication channels, clarify the sending and receiving of information, and expand the opportunities for recommendations to achieve their goals.

Personal and situational factors influence the extent to which we trust others. Self-esteem and authoritarianism affect trust, namely, people who have positive self-esteem will tend to trust others.

On the contrary, people who have an authoritarian personality tend to have difficulty trusting others. Likewise, with the expertise possessed by a communicator, people will judge him to have advantages so that he is more trusted with whatever he does. In general, the tendency of people who have expertise will be liked by many people. If it is associated with this research, the recommended expertise in communication and lobbying turns out to be a unique attraction. The ability to express something makes prospective students feel more motivated, especially with the achievements of the communicator, which makes students interested in studying at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci.

When associated with the similarity of characteristics and other personal factors such as race, religion, and status, people with similar values, attitudes, beliefs, socioeconomic levels, and religion ideologically tend to like each other. This can be seen from the study results that because they have the same assessment of something, the informants have a relationship with the decision of prospective students to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci. This can happen because of the tendency to like each other and the agreement in assessing a point of view in seeking knowledge.

B. Situational Factors

Situational factors are related outside the personal side of the communicator. However, these situational factors still have a relationship in undergoing the process of interpersonal communication between the communicator and the communicant. In this study, the researcher only looked at situational factors in terms of the physical attractiveness of the interlocutor, then intimacy and closeness and the rewards that would be obtained when the interpersonal communication process occurred.

Most situational factors are considered for prospective students when they receive a recommendation to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci, both related to physical attractiveness, intimacy and proximity to the recommendation. Physical attractiveness is generally seen from the point of view of a person's handsomeness or beauty. Several studies have revealed that physical attractiveness is often the leading cause of personal attraction. Beautiful or handsome people are more effective in influencing other people's opinions, but this theory does not always hold. The results showed that the communicator's physical attractiveness influenced the communicant's decision to accept the decision to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci. However, this physical attractiveness is not seen from the handsome or beautiful side of the communicator but from the non-verbal communication side when the communicator conveys the message and from the daily appearance of the communicator, who is considered normal but has a particular physical attractiveness.

Studying other situational factors in terms of proximity and intimacy, namely, when the parties conducting interpersonal communication are people who have close relationships with them, it can be ascertained that the intensity of communication is more frequent, so it is natural to cause intimacy. Robert B. Zajonc found that the more a subject saw a particular face, the more he liked it. In this study, the more often you communicate, the more mutual liking will arise between the communication actors because that mutual liking will lead to intimacy. Likewise, the closeness to the interlocutor, for example, from the side of the residence, allows communication to occur frequently, resulting in familiarity. Closeness and intimacy are closely related.

In terms of situational factors, it turns out that the majority of the physical attractiveness of the parties to be recommended has no relation to the recommendation of the recommenders' decision to recommend STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci to themselves. However, in line with the suggestion that the closeness of relationship and intimacy were related to their decision to recommend STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci.

According to the theory of Thibault and Kelley, Homans and Lott and Lott say that if you and I are very pleasant, very beneficial psychologically or economically, we will like each other. Suppose it is related to the results of the research. In that case, the recommended students are interested in being involved in the Member Get Student program because of the monetary incentives they get if they succeed in attracting prospective students to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci.

C. Interpersonal Communication Approach

The interpersonal communication approach describes the occurrence of the communication process. In conducting interpersonal communication, there is a desire for communication to run effectively. Therefore, in implementing the approach, one should consider the path to the interlocutor and the media used in conveying the message.

Devito said that if you want communication to run effectively, communicators can consider the humanistic and pragmatic sides when carrying out the communication process. The humanistic side includes openness, empathy, support, and positivity, while the practical side is associated with being confident, togetherness, interaction management, expressiveness, and orientation to others.

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication will occur if there is mutual openness in the exchange of information. Besides, there is a willingness to respond honestly and frankly to the interlocutor with everything he says. The results showed that most of the recommenders and the recommended parties were quite open to each other. In addition to openness, there is also an attitude of mutual empathy among communicators, namely the ability of a person to place himself in the role or position of others. This is also illustrated in this study, where there is a sense of empathy between the communicators in understanding the position of the recommender and the recommended party so that a supportive attitude is realized among the communicators that describe a descriptive and professional attitude, namely the attitude of openness to the interlocutor. This will ultimately lead to a positive attitude towards the interlocutor when conducting interpersonal communication, making communication run more effectively.

The higher the similarity between the communicators can also cause interpersonal communication to run more effectively. There are various similarities, including experiences, values, attitudes, and behavior. This will make it easier to align the frame of mind when addressing something.

Interpersonal communication will also work effectively if confidence arises in the communicator when he delivers the message. Communicators who are not nervous, embarrassed or nervous will make the communicant feel confident with the message conveyed by the communicator. This is what the communicator must be able to address if he wants to convince the other person when he wants to get a message. In addition to the confident attitude that must arise in the communicator, the communicator also, in conveying the message, can convince the communicant with the same verbal and nonverbal language, still, create interaction management with the other person and can behave expressively in convincing the other person.

D. Program Member Get Student

The Get Student Member Program is a marketing program that provides incentives for students/alumni who successfully attract prospective students to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci. The program designed by Marketing STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci is synonymous with benefits in the form of incentives, which will be obtained by students/alumni who successfully attract prospective students.

A reward or reward is any effect that is considered positive that a person gets from a relationship. Rewards in the form of money, social acceptance, or support for the value held. The value of a reward varies from one person to another and varies from one time to another.

The majority of their responses regarding the large number of incentives that the recommendation will obtain if it attracts prospective students to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci are not extraordinary because they think this is a natural form of compensation for their work. From researchers' observations in the field, the majority seemed not very interested in being involved in the Member Get Student program. This is what STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci Marketing must address. When you want to make a program a success, it should be designed so that students are interested in participating in the Member Get Student program, which will undoubtedly be a success benefit STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci.

This phenomenon is related to the theory of social exchange (social exchange theory), which links social interactions such as trade transactions, namely, the interaction will be carried out if it has a lot of profit from costs. Thus the attraction arises in the exchange that brings a lot of profit.

Based on the explanation above, a communication model is formed called the Member Get Student Word-of-mouth Model, which describes every communicator when carrying out communication

activities. In this case, the recommender and the recommended party involved in the Member Get Student program will continue to consider the interlocutor's personal and situational factors. This is what commonly affects communicators in determining their attitudes and actions.

Member Get Student's Word-of-mouth model is certainly in line with Riley and Riley's communication model thinking. It can be said that Member Get Student's Word-of-mouth model is a specific description to clarify Riley and Riley's communication model. This can be seen from the Riley and Riley communication model, which says that he does not react immediately when a communicator carries out communication activities. However, certain factors originate from outside that also influences the response to the message received, in this case, the primary group.

The communication model (Riley and Riley) is strengthened by the Member Get Student Word-of-mouth Model when the communicator communicates. So the control of action and reaction to a message received is strongly influenced by situational factors and personal factors that can be considered part of the primary group such as friends and neighbors, as depicted in the Riley and Riley communication model.

Riley and Riley's communication model is the basic foundation of the formation of Word-of-mouth Member Get Student. Because this study focuses on its discussion, there is a difference in naming the terms of the model components with Riley and Riley's communication model.

IV. Conclusion

This study found a Word-of-mouth Communication Model in the Member Get Students program to market STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci. Interpersonal communication has a vital role in forming this model. The recommender decides to promote STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci, and the recommended party chooses to accept the promotion invitation to study at STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci. This results from interpersonal communication interactions that still consider the interlocutor's personal and situational factors. Specifically developed from the primary group factor of Riley and Riley's communication model, this model is the basic foundation in forming the Get Students Word-of-mouth Communication Model. From these findings, it can be seen that the word-of-mouth marketing communication mix plays a vital role in marketing STIE Sakti Alam Kerinci.

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