

## Integrated Marketing Communication Strategy in New Student Admissions Through Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) at the Graduate Faculty of Fajar University

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the integrated marketing communication strategy as well as the inhibiting and supporting factors of the integrated marketing communication strategy in the admission of new students through the recognition of past learning at the Graduate Faculty of Fajar University. The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with a descriptive research strategy. This research was carried out at the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies of Fajar University which was carried out from October to November 2024. The informants of this research are 7 informants, namely, the coordinator of Past Learning Recognition, the Vice Dean of Postgraduate Fajar University, the Head of the Master of Communication Studies Study Program, the Head of the Master of Management Study Program, RPL students from Batches 1, 2, 3 and 4 2 people each. The results of this study show that the strategy carried out by the Faculty of Postgraduate Strategy to get new students, especially the RPL program, includes several steps, namely through advertising, social media, promotion, publicity, official website, in addition to cooperation with relevant institutions or companies is also carried out to facilitate the process of introducing and disseminating information about this program. Furthermore, the development of alumni networks through the RPL program can be an effective marketing tool because their direct experience can increase the attractiveness of the program for students. Supporting factors in the admission of new students through the recognition of past learning are the existence of an organizer's permit from LLDikti and the Ministry of Education, Research and Technology, Accreditation from Fajar University and the Study Program has been accredited B, tuition fees can be paid in installments, and good service from the entire academic community of Fajar University, especially at the Postgraduate Faculty. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors are the limitation of human resources in the Postgraduate Faculty, the long distance when the final project exam will be held, the lack of socialization carried out by the Postgraduate on the part of the Regional Government, and the need for follow-up for the regions that have been visited by the University.

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## INTRODUCTION

Higher education is organized with the principle of one systemic unit with an open and multi-meaning system, an open system is the implementation of higher education that has flexibility in the implementation, selection and completion time of programs, across units, paths and types of education, with this open system the opportunity to continue education to a higher level becomes more open.

Higher education is a continuation of secondary education which is held to prepare students to become members of society who have academic and professional abilities who can apply, develop and create science, technology and art.

Higher education is a very important factor in human life because with the existence of education it is hoped that humans can develop knowledge, skills and creativity, success in the field of education is very determined in the teaching and learning process, because humans need education because education is very important, meaning human development. Through education, humans not only get the teaching of special skills but also something more profound, namely providing knowledge, consideration and wisdom.

Continuous learning or continuing education to a higher level to develop competencies as well as career development for employees, State Civil Apparatus or the general public can be pursued in lectures either regular lectures or through the past learning reconciliation (RPL) route.

Marketing is one of the strategic functions in a company to carry out its business activities, especially when competition in the industry shows increasing intensity. Marketing is the spearhead for the company's existence in the long term. Many companies fail and go bankrupt because they fail to carry out their marketing activities effectively. Effective marketing can bring together companies and their consumers, either directly or through their intermediary markets. Thus, the company is able to effectively meet the needs and desires of its consumers. Effective marketing requires effective communication channels as well, building effective channels is not an easy task. Marketing is a company's activity to acquire, develop and retain consumers, both existing and new consumers. Therefore, successful marketing is synonymous with increasing consumer loyalty and the growth of the number of new consumers who are able to make a significant contribution to the company (Priansa, JD, 2021:29).

Referring to this statement, of course, in the field of marketing, there will be challenges in the achievement process. Where along with the development of science and technology, challenges in the world of marketing from a simple marketing role to an integrated marketing role will certainly face a series of challenges and obstacles in achieving these goals.

Based on these challenges, the interests of consumers or customers remain the main concern or main goal. Marketers work together to serve the interests and needs of their customers. To face and unravel these challenges is a way that is able to provide the best solutions for marketers in communicating well and effectively.

Similarly, in the world of Education, an integrated marketing communication strategy is needed to increase the number of students. The world of education today has been hit by the process of globalization and digitalization which requires universities, especially private universities (PTS) to always keep up with current developments with full awareness to further strengthen the implementation and management of professional management in each private university to always apply a precise strategy in promoting the strength and character of universities in achieving the targeted number of students Annually.

This is also relevant to phenomena related to the efforts made by private universities in implementing promotion strategies, new student admissions which from year to year experience increasingly sharp competition among education industry players, while the marketing arena will also be increasingly competitive. It is with this very sharp and fierce competition that requires every private university to pay attention to a very vital aspect in governance in promoting the campus of each university.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies of Fajar University answered this obstacle and at the same time became a challenge to organize lectures through the Recognition of Lamp Learning (RPL) with an implementation permit from the Ministry of Higher Education and was given a permit to accept new students in 2022, precisely in the even semester (2022-2). In the first year of implementation, in addition to Fajar University, permission was also given to other universities in LLDikti Region IX, namely Palulus Christian University (Ukipaulus) and Muhammadiyah Kendari University.

Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) provides benefits for the Graduate Faculty of Fajar University because it provides opportunities to implement the tridharma of higher education by providing wider access to education to the community, this direction is in line with the first element of the tridharma of higher education, which is education and teaching.

Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) is the recognition of a person's learning achievements obtained from formal, non-formal, informal, and/or work experience as a basis for continuing formal education and to make equivalence with certain qualifications. In carrying out past learning recognition, university leaders can form a past learning recognition (RPL) implementation unit or add the function of implementing past learning recognition (RPL) to existing units in higher education as RPL managers. Therefore, it is necessary to implement an integrated marketing communication strategy to win the market. The number of private universities that have obtained permits to operate RPL in the LLDikti IX area of South Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi and West Sulawesi totaling 30 private universities, with the increasing number of private universities that are given permits to hold past learning recognition, it is necessary to integrate various marketing communication activities that have been carried out separately, namely integrated marketing communication.

Related research from Ilham Safar, namely Improving the Quality of Human Resources: Past Learning Recognition Program Maintaining Quality with Quality-Based Technical Instructions, the results of the research show that through the socialization of new regulations regarding the implementation of new student admissions through the Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) route of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in the Directorate General of Higher Education No. 91/E/KPT/2024 conveyed several new rules related to with the simultaneous implementation of Past Learning Recognition [there is August 1, 2024, this socialization was attended by approximately 980 registered from all over Indonesia which was carried out online via virtual zoom. This activity aims to equalize perceptions between universities in implementing the RPL program. The results direct all universities to be able to understand and implement the technical instructions for the implementation of RPL.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with descriptive research types or strategies. According to (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) in Samiaji, Sarosa (2021:7) qualitative research is research that focuses on the phenomenon that is studied in its natural order and the researcher conducts research on the phenomenon thoroughly with all its complexity. In addition, according to Jaya, I Made, (2021:110) qualitative research is research that is carried out comprehensively on an object. The researcher becomes the main instrument in a qualitative research, then the results of the research are explained in the form of words obtained through valid data. This is because qualitative research emphasizes meaning more than generalization. Qualitative research is research that provides an overview of a phenomenon or situation that occurs. Phenomena in qualitative research are holistic or comprehensive. So, the data found cannot be separated.

The purpose of descriptive research is to elaborate systematically, factually and accurately about the facts and characteristics of a particular area or area. This research was used to find out how the integrated marketing communication strategy in the insurance business competition (case study of Allianz Life Indonesia insurance in North Penajam Paser Regency).

The research was carried out at the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Fajar University, which is located at Jalan Prof. Dr. Abdurrahman Basalama No. 101 Makassar. This research was carried out in October to November 2024.

This research informant serves as a source to find or obtain information about integrated marketing communication strategies in the recruitment of new students through the past learning recognition (RPL) route at the Graduate Faculty of Fajar University. To select the right informant for this research, the researcher uses a purposive sampling technique based on certain considerations made by the researcher based on the characteristics or characteristics of the informant that are known before the information is collected which includes the principles of suitability and adequacy of the informant (Sugiyono, 2014).

The data collection technique or data source in qualitative research is data collection that is carried out in a natural setting. Primary data sources and data collection techniques are more on observation, interviews and documentation. Thus, the credibility of the data source can be shown. Data collection using purposive techniques (specific objectives) and then to test the validity of the data was carried out using the triangulation technique (comparing the results of interviews with the research object). Sampling is associated with representation/representation of the problem, not to generalize. Sampling is charged for situation, subject, informant, and time.

## Technical Data Analysis

Qualitative data collection, which generally focuses on interviews and participatory observations, makes the data analysis in the form of textual analysis of the results of unstructured field record transcripts (Jaya, I Made, 2021:162). This section describes how the process of data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing is carried out. It is described how the search and arrangement of interview transcripts, field notes and other materials is carried out, it is explained how the work, organization, breakdown and synthesis of data as well as the search for patterns, interpretation of meaning and determination of the substance to be reported. It was explained how data analysis was carried out during and after data collection with domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, component analysis and theme analysis. For multi-area case studies, it is necessary to explain how comparative analysis is conducted.

Data analysis is the process of arranging the order of data, organizing it into a pattern, category, and basic unit of description (Lexy J. Moleong, 2016). The data analysis process begins by examining the data that has been collected from the results of interviews with research subjects and observations (observations), then reading, studying and reviewing the data. With the subject of research and observation (observation), then read, studied and studied the data (Indah Ria Sulistyarini, 2012).

Based on data analysis, several stages are needed, as expressed (Miles and Huberman, 1994) in Samiaji (2021:3) with his book Qualitative Research Data Analysis, namely:

Condensing data, which is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, summarizing, and transforming raw data. Some also use the word data reduction to refer to this stage;

7) Displaying the data that has been condensed into a form to help draw conclusions;

Drawing and verifying conclusions, which is the process of concluding research results as well as verifying that the conclusions are supported by data that has been collected and analyzed;

## HADIL AND DISCUSSION

### **Integrated Marketing Communication Strategy in New Student Admissions Through the Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) route at the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Fajar University.**

There are many formulations about strategy, one of which is related to determining decisions that must be taken in dealing with competitors in a life environment that has interdependence, so there needs to be activities that are directed, especially in estimating the behavior of each other. The strategy that is set can be formulated as the determination and goals and objectives of an organization that are fundamental and long-term. The strategy that is set is the formulation of a series of actions or actions, as well as the allocation of resources needed for efforts to achieve the goals that have been set, all of these formulations boil down to strategic ideas and strategic concepts which are dreams in making players or strategic thinkers.

Morissan (2010) stated that integrated marketing communication is a marketing communication planning concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of various communication disciplines such as general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations and combines these various disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact.

The new student admission strategy begins with the concept of how to use the human resources owned by the institution more effectively in a changing environment. Strategists must be ready to select their targets in accordance with the mainstream of change, so it is necessary to analyze the implications of social changes in determining strategies. Analyze the environment to pay attention to the trends, opportunities, and threats faced. Strategic planning and strategy implementation need to be combined to achieve success. By visually and technically optimizing the website, the educational institution can increase its visibility in search engines and attract more visitors who are interested in the programs offered. Carry out socialization both personally and in government and private organizations and also design forms of cooperation both carried out by faculties and study programs. On the other hand, the efforts made are to carry out visits to several agencies and personally provide information related to lecture procedures.

The results of the study also show that the strategy carried out by the Faculty of Postgraduate Strategy to get new students, especially the RPL program, includes several steps, namely through advertising, social media, promotion, publicity, official website, in addition to cooperation with relevant institutions or companies is also carried out to facilitate the process of introducing and disseminating information about this program. Furthermore, the development of alumni networks through the RPL program can be an effective marketing tool because their direct experience can increase the attractiveness of the program for students. On the other hand, the direct efforts made by the postgraduate faculty to prospective students are to hold meetings and present related to the RPL program. The strategy carried out is in the form of planning and implementing the RPL program involving all postgraduate parties by coordinating with the RPL coordinator and referring to the rules and permits that have been granted by LLDikti Wil. IX and permission from Siera from the Ministry of Education, Research and Technology, then the strategy to attract new students is to convey the accreditation of each study program, strengthen the alumni who have completed their studies at Fajar University, implement MoU with the government and the intended companies as a form of strategy that is discussed.

Integrated marketing communication implemented by Unifa postgraduate is a marketing communication concept that involves all management divisions by integrating and coordinating various communication channels such as advertising, sales promotion, publication, personal selling, and direct marketing massively and continuously to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact to get increased sales.

Regarding the direct efforts made by the Postgraduate Faculty, namely maximizing and building communication with prospective students. Socialization activities are efforts and implementation steps of the promotion strategy carried out. Socialization directly to government offices and companies, since the Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) program was implemented, socialization on an individual and group basis (team) has been carried out by reaching cities/regencies in the provinces of South Sulawesi, West Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, and East Kalimantan.

The integrated marketing communication strategy implemented by the Fajar University Postgraduate Program is very on target, proven by the interest and participants from civil servants quite a lot with the methods applied such as socialization and direct audience with the local government directly, and supported by leaflets, as well as incessant promotion through social media and no less important is accreditation recognition or equivalency of diplomas recognized by the government, information from word of mouth or ASN friends, then followed up with an audience with one of the KA. Postgraduate Study Program and cross-checking directly through the Unifa website, the integrated marketing communication strategy used is on target, but it still has to innovate and socialize every year of learning.

In general, the direct marketing and public relations system is built and strengthened by continuing to collaborate with various agencies, both government and private, then directly what distinguishes between other faculties is the consistent efforts carried out by the postgraduate party by continuing to build and expand relationships and for the time being each existing relationship still maintains the existing values of cooperation, both organizationally, personally and also in groups. Meanwhile, regarding promotion, the postgraduate department prioritizes the concept of direct marketing with personal/individual abilities as a strengthening in building relationships with the target market or between the Graduate Faculty and prospective new students.

Other efforts made are relying on concepts such as distributing brochures, advertising, and news for external targets, while to encourage the strengthening of internal marketing work, Fajar University takes a rewards system approach in an effort to obtain prospective students.

The progress of new student admissions, especially the postgraduate faculty, is the most positive progress so far in the implementation of new student admissions through the RPL route, in addition to the market is clear, the pattern that was also built by the postgraduate team in this case the Dean and the Head of the Study Program is by making direct visits to agencies, both government and private, which has been proven to effectively increase the interest of prospective new students to continue their education to Fajar University, especially to postgraduates. In addition, the efforts made are Quality of service which is a culture built in the graduate faculty in managing current students, ease of mobility, and acceleration between staff is a special attraction for students to finally convey the conditions they get.

Public relations is also carried out very strongly and has a significant influence, visits to agencies in conducting direct socialization to offices are aspects that have an important and very maximum role, advertising is carried out through various communication media and incessant promotions are communicated by the academic community not only postgraduate but also at the university level.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is a marketing communication planning concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that examines the strategic role of each form of communication. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2001:600) in Silviani and Darus (2021:79) divide the scope of IMC discussion which consists of several indicators. Where the researcher has analyzed indicators related to integrated marketing communication strategies in new student admissions through the Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) pathway such as advertising, publicity, direct sales and direct promotion.

This is in line with the theory put forward by Shimp (2003) that integrated marketing communication in which there is planning, making, unification and implementation such as advertising, sales promotion, publication, personal selling and direct marketing is a marketing communication activity that is carried out massively and continuously to the target consumers. Meanwhile, according to Kotler and Keller (2016), integrated marketing communication is a concept where a company integrates and coordinates various communication channels to send clear, consistent, and convincing messages regarding the company and its products.

### **Supporting Factors and Inhibiting Factors in Accepting New Students Through the Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) Pathway at the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Fajar University**

Based on the results of the study, supporting factors and inhibiting factors in the admission of new students can be analyzed through the recognition of past learning at the Postgraduate School of Fajar University. The researcher has underlined a number of supporting and inhibiting factors, both internally and externally from the informants, the following are the results of the analysis that the researcher can convey:

#### **Supporting Factors**

Supporting factors are everything that helps facilitate the course of an activity or factors that facilitate the behavior of individuals or groups including skills, these factors include the availability, affordability of resources and a strong desire to achieve mutually agreed goals.

The supporting factors in the admission of new students for the RPL pathway at Unifa postgraduate can be seen from the success and achievement of trust in managing the first batch is a strong capital, then the culture that is built in providing services to students becomes a superior aspect and becomes a differentiator from other campuses, the system and registration model to the selection based on the information system is a convenience and the last is synergy and quality management in the Pasaca undergraduate program is a priority and remains a concern.

Other supporting factors in the admission of new students for past learning recognition (RPL) include ease of access to information, the reputation of the postgraduate faculty with accreditation to two (2) Study Programs, namely the Master of Communication Sciences and the Master of Management with a rating of B, as well as the Accreditation of Institutions, which is rank B, strengthened by the permission of the organizer from the Ministry of Education, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia and also the flexibility of programs that allow students to work while studying, as well as support from companies or agencies that provide scholarship or cooperation opportunities, Supporting factors in the admission of new students through the recognition of past learning (RPL) route are evidenced by the support and cooperation of campus leaders

and the entire team from the postgraduate faculty, ease of accessing information both on social media and other digital platforms.

In addition, other supporting factors that make students interested in attending lectures are the recommendation from LLDikti region IX regarding the implementation of past learning recognition learning (RPL), then do not interfere with student work and activities during the implementation of learning activities, the work experience of each student can be recognized or recognized as a substitute for courses, the payment of cheap reactive tuition and can be paid in installments, The work experience of each student can be recognized and equated with several courses according to the provisions, as well as the credibility of a trusted campus.

In addition, other supporting factors are qualified lecturers who are experienced and competent in their fields, good accreditation and curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the job market, flexible lecture schedules, lectures take place in a hybrid manner and the opportunity to shorten study time through the recognition of work experience and the friendliness and good service of the entire academic community of Fajar University Postgraduate University.

### **Inhibiting Factors**

Every work done by an individual or organization will face a process called an obstacle, where with these obstacles an organization or individual will become better by evaluating and correcting all shortcomings that are inhibiting factors. An obstacle or obstacle is something that is the cause or because only the goal or desire cannot be realized.

In addition to the factors that support the admission of new students through the past learning recognition (RPL) pathway, there are also inhibiting factors, the following are the results of research related to inhibiting factors:

The inhibiting factor is the condition of work overload received by the postgraduate team, especially the service of telephone, which sometimes makes the response model late or even neglected.

The inhibiting factor is a condition that affects the slowdown of an activity to run well, this can be seen from the target or target that cannot be met along with the obstacles in its implementation, such as the lack of socialization carried out by the Postgraduate at the Regional Government, human resources in the Postgraduate are still lacking, consultation on assignments is maximized if through online guidance and a reasonable distance Far from doing the final project exam, there are still minimal study programs in the Postgraduate so that the option to find a linear study program with a diploma is limited, besides that another inhibiting factor is the lack of understanding of prospective students related to past learning recognition (RPL), promotional activities are increased

### **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of an integrated marketing communication strategy has been well implemented through personal selling and sales promotion, direct marketing and advertising and publicity.

Supporting factors in the admission of new students through the recognition of past learning are the existence of an organizer's permit from LLDikti and the Ministry of Education, Research and Technology, Accreditation from Fajar University and the Study Program has been accredited B, tuition fees can be paid in installments, and good service from the entire academic community of Fajar University, especially at the Postgraduate Faculty. Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors are the limitation of human resources in the Postgraduate Faculty, the long distance when the final project exam will be held, the lack of socialization carried out by the Postgraduate on the part of the Regional Government, and the need for follow-up for the regions that have been visited by the University.

### **SUGGESTION**

Socialization activities related to new student admissions through the recognition channel so that the university and faculty intensively carry out socialization through advertising, direct sales, sales promotion, publicity, and personal sales through social media platforms and direct visits to various agencies.

It is better to take advantage of advances in science and technology, either through personal social media or other media by creating content or story telling about lectures through the recognition of past learning (RPL) channel creatively and innovatively, which can be an effective and economical solution in conveying information to the public.

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