

# AN ANALYSIS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN RESPONSE TO DIGITAL DISRUPTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of technology and digital media has changed how Catholic schools interact and communicate. This study analyzes two schools—Santa Familia Elementary in Bangka Belitung and Santo Nikolaus High School in Manado—to explore their digital marketing strategies. It examines key aspects such as sales promotions, advertising, public relations, direct marketing, school activities, and the experiences of school community members. The study also identifies challenges these schools face in adapting to digital disruption. Using a constructivist paradigm and a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research incorporates document analysis, online interviews, and a literature review. Findings reveal that both schools acknowledge digital disruption and understand the importance of leveraging digital media to stay competitive. They are actively embracing digital transformation by focusing on social media engagement. Their communication strategies emphasize content creation, including visual, textual, and multimedia formats, aligned with six key aspects of integrated marketing communication. This approach helps them connect with their audiences and maintain adaptability in the evolving digital landscape.

## INTRODUCTION

As social beings, humans have an inherent need for communication, making it a fundamental aspect of life that cannot be avoided. Communication serves as a basic mechanism through which individuals interact with others to achieve various objectives. It can take multiple forms, including individual, interpersonal, and group communication. Additionally, communication can be conducted on a broader scale, particularly through mass

media. In the modern era, various communication channels leverage diverse media platforms, facilitating the efficient dissemination of information to the public. The rise of new media, particularly digital media, has accelerated and simplified information exchange. However, despite its advantages, digital media also presents certain challenges and drawbacks that society must navigate.

Among the various factors contributing to the decline of Catholic educational institutions in Indonesia, one of the key aspects identified for further research is how these institutions are responding to digital disruption. Digital disruption is a phenomenon that transforms conventional societal practices and activities into digital-based systems. It represents a significant shift from traditional methods to new, technology-driven approaches. Digital disruption is widely used as a shorthand label to describe digital innovation phenomena -- often without paying enough attention to the properties of digital, disruptive, and innovative (Baiyere & Hukal, 2020). This disruption replaces outdated, physically reliant technologies with digital innovations, offering greater efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and speed while introducing entirely new advancements. The ability of technology to deliver real-time information has significantly influenced human perception and cognition (Amir, 2018)

During the Indonesian Catholic School Conference, held from January 10-12, 2020, at Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta, Mgr. Robertus Rubiyatmoko highlighted several key points related to digital communication: (1) Catholic educational institutions will endure if there is strong synergy with stakeholders; (2) Rapid changes in the era necessitate adaptation by Catholic educational institutions; (3) The era's changes impact the educational sector, particularly in terms of patterns of thinking and knowledge; (4) The number of students in Catholic educational institutions is declining. In light of the phenomena discussed at the conference, the researcher argues that Catholic schools must focus on "making peace" with the digital world. This involves leveraging digital platforms effectively as a means to communicate the advantages of Catholic schools to the public in Indonesia. (Harian Jogja, 2020)

Over time, Catholic educational institutions in Indonesia have experienced a decline, as evidenced by the closure of numerous schools. Dr. Heri Setiawan, S.T., M.T., Chairman of the Indonesian Catholic Scholars Association (ISKA) Palembang Branch,

remarked in an interview with Sonora FM Palembang, "The current phenomenon demonstrates that Catholic schools and educational institutions are increasingly being abandoned, with many having already closed. This indicates that the condition of these institutions is less than optimal, both internally and externally." (Sonora.Id, 2022). Catholic educational institutions are under significant pressure, and their challenges in adapting to contemporary changes have contributed to their gradual erosion amidst the evolving socio-cultural landscape.

Among the various factors contributing to the decline of Catholic educational institutions in Indonesia, the primary factor that the researcher deems most significant for further investigation is how these institutions are addressing digital disruption. Specifically, the researcher aims to explore the role of digital disruption through the use of internal social media as a key marketing communication strategy implemented by Catholic schools.

## **METHOD**

In this study's literature review, the researcher draws upon the following theories:

### **1. Marketing Communication Theory**

Communication is a symbolic and transactional process through which individuals navigate their environment by establishing relationships and exchanging information to influence attitudes and behaviors. It involves the transmission of messages from a sender to a recipient. With rapid advancements, communication has evolved and expanded across various fields. One significant area is marketing communication, which plays a crucial role in social interactions.

Marketing communication refers to a strategic effort designed to disseminate information, influence perceptions, persuade audiences, and reinforce awareness of a company and its products. Ultimately, it aims to foster acceptance, drive purchases, and cultivate customer loyalty. (Tjiptono, 2015)

The continuous developments and adaptations in communication have contributed to the growing acceptance of integrated marketing communications in the field of marketing. Integrated marketing communication is a strategic concept implemented by companies to carefully coordinate their communication channels, ensuring the delivery of clear, consistent messages that effectively persuade consumers about the company and its products. (Armstrong et al., 2023)

## 2. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing refers to a comprehensive and strategic set of marketing practices that leverage digital technologies to promote products, services, or brands in an increasingly connected and digitalized world. It is characterized by its targeted, measurable, and interactive nature, which allows businesses to engage directly with their audiences in real-time and gather valuable insights on consumer behavior.

The core objectives of digital marketing include enhancing brand visibility, shaping consumer perceptions and preferences, and ultimately driving both traffic and revenue across various online platforms. To achieve these goals, digital marketing employs a diverse range of tactics, such as search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, social media engagement, email campaigns, and paid advertising, among others. These strategies are underpinned by data-driven analysis, enabling marketers to track performance, measure outcomes, and optimize campaigns for maximum effectiveness.

By leveraging digital channels, organizations can extend their reach to a broader, often global, audience, enabling them to engage with potential customers across diverse geographic regions. This expansive reach is complemented by the ability to create highly personalized experiences, tailored to individual preferences and behaviors through the use

of data analytics and targeted marketing strategies.

Additionally, digital marketing offers a cost-effective alternative to traditional marketing methods, allowing businesses to allocate resources more efficiently while achieving measurable outcomes. This approach not only enhances customer engagement but also enables organizations to optimize their marketing efforts in real-time, adjusting strategies based on immediate feedback and performance metrics. As a result, digital marketing empowers businesses to achieve a higher return on investment (ROI) and greater overall effectiveness in their marketing campaigns.

Conceptually, digital marketing aligns with traditional marketing; however, the key distinction lies in the tools and platforms utilized.

Sanjaya as cited in (Romadlon et al., 2020) stated that digital marketing encompasses marketing activities, including branding, that utilize various web-based media such as blogs, websites, email, AdWords, and social networks, all of which influence consumer purchasing intentions. .



**Picture I.** Digital Marketing Illustration  
(Wati et al., 2020)

The illustration above demonstrates that digital marketing is interconnected with various aspects, enhancing its overall efficiency and effectiveness.

As depicted in Picture 1, it is evident that several key components constitute a

digital marketing strategy, including understanding the nature of the business, identifying competitors, analysing customer demographics, defining primary objectives, and comprehending company operations (Wati et al., 2020)

It has been found that 12% of audience use internet once a week, 19% of the respondents use 2 to 3 days a week, 30% of the respondents use 1 or 2 hour a day and the remaining 39% of users are accessing internet more than 3 hour a day. It is understood that the new media and its technology is an emerging trend in communication which attracts almost all the people, if they have knowledge of computers (Jothi et al., 2011)

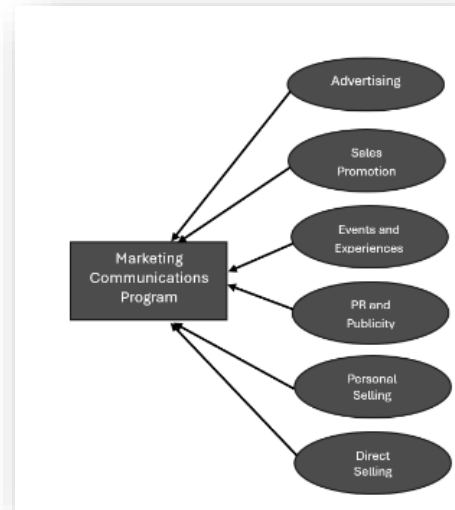
### 3. New Media Theory

New media has become an integral part of everyday life. Young consumers frequently engage with it due to its accessibility and seamless integration into their daily routines. Unlike conventional media, new media—such as the internet—offers a selective feature that enables users to tailor content to their specific needs.

The new media communication is recognized as a novel and dynamic approach that paves the way for enhanced and sophisticated knowledge discovery, learning, problem-solving, and efficiencies in decision making in the world today (Mojaye & Msughter, 2022).

New media refers to telematic media, encompassing electronic technological devices that offer distinct advantages and functionalities compared to traditional media. These electronic media devices operate within an interconnected system that collectively enhances functionality and performance. This system includes various components, such as technology systems, transmission systems, miniaturization systems, information storage and retrieval systems, and image presentation systems, all of which have been advanced through computer technology (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

Based on the theoretical framework outlined above, this study focuses on the marketing communications program by referencing the six aspects presented in Picture 2.



**Picture II.** Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy (Hermawan, 2012)

As illustrated in Picture 2, the six key aspects of the marketing communications program will serve as the foundation for discussion and conclusions. Through this research, it is anticipated that the implementation of digital marketing strategies can address the challenges faced, with a particular focus on six key aspects: advertising, sales promotions, events/experiences, public relations and publicity, personal selling, and direct marketing.

This study employs both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data are derived from interviews with informants relevant to the research topic. The research subjects were purposefully selected by the researcher. Secondary data sources include books, journals, and articles pertinent to the study's focus on marketing strategies, digital media, and digital disruption.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth online interviews and secondary data analysis. Interviews were conducted online using applications such as Zoom or Google

Meet, considering that the resource persons were located in various provinces across Indonesia. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to 1 hour per informant.

The data analysis technique follows the Miles and Huberman model, which involves three key steps: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification (Miles & Huberman, 2018). Researchers identify and select sources from each research subject based on their specific roles and responsibilities within the institution.

These sources include the head of the foundation or the school director, who provides insights into the institution's overall governance and strategic direction; the principal, who oversees the academic and administrative operations; representatives from the promotion or public relations department, who handle the institution's external communications and image management; and representatives of students' parents, who offer perspectives on parental involvement and student welfare.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that secondary schools face challenges and obstacles in responding to the phenomenon of digital disruption. This situation necessitates that research subjects adjust their existing marketing communication strategies accordingly.

Both research subjects have utilized various digital communication channels (Instagram, Website, WhatsApp, and Facebook), which can be analyzed through the following aspects:

1. **Advertising.** Digital media run by both schools displays a variety of content, including students' daily activities, student achievements, and the activities of teachers and school staff. One of the goals is to provide a positive image of the school to the public with the intention of being a form of school promotion.

2. **Sales Promotion.** Digital media offers various features that can help increase student enrolment by effectively reaching and engaging the target audience. One of the strategies to achieve this goal is by providing the public with information about the various activities conducted at the school. At Santa Familia Elementary School, highlighting the activities of the educational staff plays an important role in this effort. These staff-related activities are considered valuable content, offering a fresh variation from the routine student-focused content.

3. **Events and Experiences.** Digital media plays a crucial role in communicating and promoting a variety of internal school activities. It serves as an effective platform for sharing information about events such as academic competitions, extracurricular activities, classroom learning experiences, and notable student achievements. By utilizing social media channels, the school can present a dynamic and up-to-date account of its educational environment. In addition to showcasing student accomplishments, digital media also highlights the experiences of educators, offering a more holistic view of the school community. These experiences are shared through posts, photos, videos, and other digital content, which not only inform the public but also foster a sense of connection and engagement with both current and prospective students and their families. Through these platforms, the school is able to demonstrate its commitment to academic excellence, student development, and a vibrant, collaborative educational experience.

4. **Public Relations and Publicity.** Through the diverse range of content shared by both schools, their publications serve a key public relations function. The goal of these communications is to shape the perception of parents and the broader community, ensuring they understand



that the schools prioritize not only academic achievement but also non-academic development. This approach highlights one of the unique aspects of both institutions, emphasizing the holistic nature of their educational programs. By showcasing a balance between academic rigor and extracurricular involvement, the schools aim to convey that their focus extends beyond traditional classroom learning, fostering well-rounded individuals. The strategic use of digital media helps reinforce this message, positioning the schools as institutions committed to the overall growth and development of their students.

5. **Personal Selling.** Personal selling remains an essential strategy employed by both schools to engage with prospective students and their families. However, in response to evolving communication trends, the traditional personal selling process has adapted to the digital age. Instead of relying solely on in-person interactions, both schools now utilize WhatsApp as a primary medium for personal selling. According to various sources, WhatsApp has emerged as one of the most effective and widely used digital channels for direct communication. This platform allows for personalized, real-time interactions, enabling the schools to respond quickly to inquiries, provide detailed information, and build stronger connections with potential students and their families. By leveraging WhatsApp, the schools are able to maintain the personal touch integral to the selling process while also embracing the convenience and efficiency of digital communication. The selection of media and the active involvement of individuals are influenced by social, psychological, and individual characteristics. (Herna, 2022)
6. **Direct Marketing.** Digital media plays a pivotal role in direct marketing, particularly in the context of student

admissions for both schools. Both institutions leverage their digital platforms to actively promote and communicate with potential students and their families. To effectively reach their audience, the schools consistently engage with their digital media channels by posting content 2-3 times per week. This regular content upload helps maintain visibility and keeps the school's offerings at the forefront of the audience's attention. Additionally, the schools make full use of the features available on these platforms, such as targeted ads, interactive posts, and engaging multimedia content, to further enhance their marketing efforts. By utilizing these tools, the schools are able to directly reach prospective students, providing them with timely and relevant information to aid in their decision-making process.

In relation to the aspects mentioned above, both schools face similar challenges, particularly concerning limited Human Resources (HR). One significant issue arising from this limitation is the absence of a dedicated department responsible for managing the schools' digital media platforms. As a result, the responsibility of maintaining and updating digital content often falls on a few individuals, which can lead to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in digital communication. Furthermore, there is a lack of training programs focused on the development and effective use of digital media tools.

This gap in training not only affects those directly in charge of digital media management but also impacts other educators who could benefit from understanding how to effectively integrate digital media into their teaching practices. The absence of accessible, easy-to-apply training resources further hinders the schools' ability to fully leverage digital media for educational and promotional purposes.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results presented, several key discussions emerge that warrant further examination:

### **Awareness of Digital Disruption**

Both Santa Familia Elementary School and Santo Nikolaus High School demonstrate a strong awareness of the phenomenon of digital disruption and its potential impact on education. The schools recognize that digital transformation is not just a trend, but an essential shift that requires them to evolve in order to remain competitive and relevant in an increasingly digital world.

They understand the importance of integrating digital media into their daily operations, both for enhancing the learning experience and for staying connected with the school community. By embracing this shift, the schools are positioning themselves to meet the challenges posed by digital disruption and to ensure they remain adaptable in the face of future technological advancements.

### **Effective Utilization of Digital Media**

Digital media plays a pivotal role in the educational and promotional strategies of both Santa Familia Elementary School and Santo Nikolaus High School. Both institutions consider digital media essential to their ongoing operations, seeing it as an invaluable tool that offers numerous benefits. Key advantages include its visual appeal, which helps capture the attention of a wide audience, and the variety of content that can be shared, such as images, videos, and interactive posts, which serve to engage students, parents, and the community in meaningful ways.

Additionally, the effectiveness of digital media lies in its ability to deliver news and information in real-time, ensuring that updates reach the audience promptly and efficiently. This ability to disseminate timely information is especially important in the context of academic schedules, events, and administrative announcements. The schools' focus on these aspects demonstrates their commitment to utilizing digital media not only as a tool for communication but also as a

means to enhance the overall educational experience.

The use of Instagram is not only limited to one-way information dissemination, but also allows direct interaction with followers through comments, likes, and direct messages. (Ja'afar & Walisyah, 2024)

### **Importance of Content Detail in Digital Media**

Digital media will play a crucial role in the success of both schools, provided that careful attention is paid to every detail of the content being published. Both Santa Familia Elementary School and Santo Nikolaus High School share a common practice of meticulously curating and refining their content before it is shared on digital platforms.

This attention to detail ensures that the content not only aligns with the schools' educational goals but also fosters a positive public perception. The schools aim to present well-packaged, high-quality content that resonates with their audience. To achieve this, they adopt an effective and efficient workflow, which enables them to produce content that maximizes its impact. The ultimate goal is to enhance the school's image and reputation, which, in turn, contributes to the school's enrollment process. By continuously improving their content and presentation, the schools expect to see a steady increase in new student admissions each year, reflecting the growing success of their digital marketing efforts.

### **Digital Media Supporting Key Communication Aspects**

The digital media platforms used by both schools generally support six essential aspects that form the foundation of their digital communication strategies. These aspects serve as a reference for the schools in shaping their approach to digital media, guiding their decisions on how to engage with the audience and promote their activities effectively.

While the schools have made significant progress in integrating digital media into their operations, there is still room

for optimization. Some aspects, such as content reach, audience engagement, and overall digital presence, can be further enhanced to achieve greater impact. By refining these strategies, both schools can better leverage their digital media platforms to achieve their long-term goals, ensuring that they remain competitive and effective in reaching their target audience.

### **Lack of Specialized Personnel and Digital Media Expertise**

A common obstacle faced by both schools is the shortage of personnel or specialists specifically trained in digital media. This limitation significantly affects their ability to produce high-quality content, both in terms of visual appeal and the substance of the material.

The current staff involved in digital media management often lack the advanced skills required to create content that meets the evolving demands of modern digital communication. As a result, the content produced may not fully align with contemporary trends in digital media, which are crucial for engaging today's digitally-savvy audience.

Additionally, there exists a segment of the community that does not regularly use digital media, making it challenging to reach this audience and effectively disseminate content. The gap in digital access for these individuals further complicates the schools' ability to ensure that their messages are universally accessible.

### **Challenges in Content Creation and Shifts in Learning Practices**

Both schools face ongoing challenges in creating digital content that is more engaging, visually appealing, and diverse. The current content often remains static and lacks creativity, relying on monotonous images or simple videos, which may not capture the audience's attention or encourage interaction.

According to sources, there is also a trend towards a reversal in learning practices, where there is a growing preference for more traditional, non-digital approaches, such as

the use of paper-based materials and face-to-face instruction. This shift may be attributed to the negative effects associated with excessive digital media use, including potential issues with screen time and the impact on students' focus and well-being.

As a result, both schools are faced with the challenge of balancing the benefits of digital media with the need for more holistic and well-rounded educational experiences.

### **Marketing Communication Strategy in the Face of Digital Disruption**

In response to the challenges posed by digital disruption, both schools have developed a marketing communication strategy that revolves around the effective use of various digital media platforms. These include WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and their official website.

By actively engaging with these four types of digital media, both schools are able to maintain a consistent online presence and communicate with their audience in multiple ways. Each platform is utilized to its full potential, leveraging the unique features offered by each medium—such as WhatsApp for direct communication, Instagram and Facebook for visual engagement, and the website for detailed information and official updates.

Through a combination of compelling visuals and well-crafted text or captions, the schools aim to create content that resonates with their audience. This integrated approach is designed to enhance the effectiveness of their communication efforts, ensuring that their messaging remains relevant and impactful in an era of rapid digital transformation.

The goal is that this comprehensive strategy will help the schools navigate the complexities of digital disruption and maintain a strong connection with their target audience.

### **CONCLUSION**

Both schools have made efforts to implement their communication strategies despite challenges, especially in human



resources and expertise. However, they must be ready to overcome growing obstacles in the digital era.

To strengthen their approach, it is recommended that both schools establish a dedicated team or department to manage their digital media presence, rather than assigning it as an additional task to existing staff. This would ensure a more strategic and consistent approach. Additionally, ongoing training programs should be introduced to enhance digital media skills, not only for those directly managing it but also for educators, fostering a more digitally competent school environment.

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