



## Can Private Schools Overcome Promotional Limitations through a 4P-Based Digital Marketing Strategy? A Case Study in Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study:** This study aims to describe the strategies used in utilizing technology media used for marketing educational services and solutions to overcome obstacles in developing digital technology as a means of marketing educational services through digital technology by the sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school.

**Methodology:** This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection was carried out through interviews, observations, and document studies. The sources of information in this interview were the Principal, Head of the Learning Resource Center, School Media Manager, Administrative Staff and Teachers. Data analysis using miles and huberman elit using triangulation techniques, namely data triangulation and method triangulation.

**Main Findings:** The results of this study indicate that the strategy used by the st. john's private high school in utilizing digital technology as a means of marketing educational services has been running well. The strategy used by the st. john's private high school uses a comprehensive approach. The strategy used is to apply 4P (product, price, place and promotion). In addition, the consistent development process on digital media also makes the objectives of the marketing appropriate and effective and efficient. The development process is carried out to upgrade skills for PSB staff by participating in various training.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** The novelty of this research lies in the context of the use of digital technology in private educational institutions in Malaysia, especially in the Southeast Asian region which is still rarely used as an object of study.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has changed almost all aspects of life [1]-[4]. Educational institutions in various parts of the world are now required to be able to adapt and utilize technological advances in every process, not only in learning activities, but also in the management and marketing of educational services. Digital transformation has become an important strategy in expanding the reach of educational institutions to the wider community, especially in increasing the visibility and attractiveness of institutions through various digital platforms [5]-[8].

Conventional marketing of educational services that still rely on offline methods such as distributing brochures or promotional activities in the field, has now shifted towards a more modern and efficient approach [9]-[11]. Digital marketing is a strategic alternative that is not only cost-effective, but also reaches target targets more widely and quickly [12]-[16]. In the midst of the industrial revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 era, educational institutions are required to utilize social media, websites, and digital applications as active, interactive, and innovative promotional channels [17]-[21].

The use of digital media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and official websites of educational institutions has been proven to increase the reach and existence of schools [22], [23]. However, not all educational institutions have the optimal capacity and strategy in managing these digital channels. Problems such as limited human resources who understand technology, lack of creative ideas in compiling educational content, and low digital literacy are challenges that require special attention [24]-[26].

Sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school as one of the junior high school educational institutions located in a multicultural and developing environment, has great potential in utilizing digital technology to market its educational services. In a post-pandemic situation that requires educational institutions to be more adaptive to the bravery and hybrid systems, the presence of digital media is a strategic opportunity to increase the interest of prospective new students while strengthening the school's image in the community [27], [28]. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the extent to which digital media has been utilized and how effective its role is in supporting the educational marketing process at this school.

Based on the analysis of previous studies, it was found that digitalization in educational marketing has been implemented through various social media platforms and websites [29], [30]. However, in terms of management, content innovation, and the transition from manual to digital systems are still obstacles in the world of education [31]. These studies are important references for developing educational digital marketing strategies, but most of them focus on educational institutions in Southeast Asia, with little attention to similar institutions abroad, such as Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School which have different characteristics.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on st. john's private high school, which is located in the ASEAN region but has its own characteristics and challenges in managing digital marketing at the Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School. This study not only examines the use of digital media as a marketing tool, but also analyzes the local context, culture, and adaptive abilities of educators in integrating the technology. so that this study is expected to enrich cross-country studies and provide a digital marketing implementation model that is in accordance with the characteristics of cross-border educational institutions.

The urgency of this study stems from a critical research gap in developing contextually relevant and sustainable digital marketing strategies for educational institutions in the culturally diverse and resource-limited Southeast Asian region. Although the global discourse on digital transformation in education continues to grow, empirical research conducted on how secondary schools—especially in transitional economies such as Malaysia—utilize digital media for marketing purposes is still limited. This gap is significant, as it ignores the unique socio-cultural and infrastructural challenges faced by institutions such as st. john's private high school. By addressing this gap, this study not only contributes to the theoretical framework of educational marketing in an emerging context but also offers practical and measurable insights for similar schools across the region seeking to remain competitive and accessible in the digital age.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The researcher attempts to describe the data and facts found in the field systematically and in depth to gain a complete understanding of the use of digital technology media in marketing educational services at Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School.

The data analyzed in this study are qualitative, namely in the form of words, narratives, and documents that are not classified in the form of numbers [32]-[34]. The descriptive approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the objectives of the study to describe the strategy, implementation, and perceptions of various parties regarding the use of digital technology in promoting educational services [5].

This study was conducted at sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school in Johor, Malaysia that is developing a digitalization strategy in educational services. This study involved 12 informants who were selected purposively based on their active involvement in the school's digital marketing activities. The informants consisted of 1 principal, 3 teachers, 2 social media management staff, and 6 parents of students. The main focus of this study was to analyze the strategy of using digital technology in marketing educational services at the junior high school level. The sub-focus of the study included the digital marketing strategy implemented by the school, the effectiveness and quality of digital media as a means of promoting education, and the responses of various stakeholders, especially parents, teachers, and school administrators, to the use of digital media. This focus and sub-focus structure was designed to provide a comprehensive picture of the practice and perception of digitalization of educational promotion in the context of secondary education institutions in areas with cultural complexity and limited digital resources [35].

To obtain accurate and comprehensive data, researchers use the following data collection techniques:

1. Document Study  
This study aims to obtain data on the profile of sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school, the profile of the principal, education staff, school policies in the use of digital media, and other supporting documents such as digital brochures, social media content, and marketing program reports. These documents help provide a comprehensive picture of the actual conditions that are the object of the study.
2. Interviews  
Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with the principal, teachers, social media management team, and several parents of students. The aim was to dig deeper into the benefits, challenges, and views on the use of digital technology media in promoting educational services.
3. Observations  
Observations were conducted directly on digital marketing activities carried out by the school. Researchers observed the use of social media, other digital platforms, and public interactions (comments, likes, shares) related to educational promotional content created by the school. Observation guidelines were used to ensure the consistency and validity of observations.

The data in this study were analyzed through several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The data reduction stage is carried out by filtering relevant information and in accordance with the focus of the research, so that only significant data that supports the research objectives are used. Furthermore, at the data presentation stage, the information that has been reduced is organized into narrative, matrix, or descriptive table forms to facilitate understanding and further analysis. After that, conclusions are drawn based on patterns, tendencies, or relationships found in the data during the research process.

To ensure data accuracy and validity, analysis is carried out using data triangulation techniques. This triangulation includes two approaches, namely technical triangulation and source triangulation. Technical triangulation is carried out by combining several data collection methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation studies to test the accuracy of data obtained from one source. Meanwhile, source triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained from various sources, such as school principals, teachers, social media management teams, and parents of students, in order to obtain more valid and comprehensive data.

The validity of the data in this study is maintained by applying several principles, namely credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility is achieved through the process of triangulation and cross-confirmation between data sources. Dependability is maintained by systematically recording and documenting the research process as an audit record. Confirmability is obtained by presenting physical evidence such as documentation and analytical logic that is transparent and traceable. Meanwhile, transferability is achieved through the presentation of detailed contextual descriptions so that research findings can be applied to similar contexts elsewhere.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research and data collection through interview, observation, and documentation study methods, the author processes and describes the data obtained at Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School, using systematic and easy-to-understand language. The main informants in this study include the Principal, Digital Media Team Coordinator, Teachers, Administrative Staff, and representatives of parents of students. The results of the study show that sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school has actively utilized digital technology media as a means of marketing educational services to the wider community, especially to attract prospective students and improve the school's image.

The use of digital media at this school includes various platforms such as social media (Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok), the school's official website, and instant messaging such as WhatsApp Business. These media are used to disseminate information related to educational programs, school advantages, student activities, and testimonials from alumni and parents. This makes it easier for the community or prospective customers of educational services to obtain information without having to visit the school directly, thus expanding the reach of promotion and accelerating the communication process between the school and the public.

From the data obtained through interviews with the principal and the digital media management team, it is known that the digital marketing strategy is carried out in a planned manner, with a clear division of tasks and the use of attractive visual content to build a positive image of the school. The observations made also strengthen the findings that the school's digital activities take place consistently, with a high frequency of uploads and digital interactions. In addition, the documentation study supports an increase in the number of new registrants after the school began to intensify marketing through digital media.

#### 3.1. Digital Media Utilization Strategy

Based on the results of interviews conducted at the sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school at the junior high school level. The results of the interviews that have been analyzed and presented in table form can be seen in table 1 below:

Table 1. Digital Media Utilization Strategy in Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School

Informant	Digital Media Utilization Strategy	Explanation
Principal	Comprehensive Planning Based on 4P (Product, Price, Place, Promotion)	The principal emphasized that the educational marketing strategy was designed comprehensively and structured, in line with the Ministry of Education Malaysia Digital Education Principles, to promote the excellence of the curriculum and student activities.
Teacher	Collaboration in Creating Educational Content	Teachers are actively involved in documenting student learning activities uploaded through school social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, in order to build a positive image and transparency of the learning process.
Media Manager	Digital Content Curriculation & Social Platform Optimization (FB, IG, YouTube, TikTok)	The management team selects content based on the school's weekly and annual activity plans. The main focus is on student achievement, 21st century skills, and a learning atmosphere that supports the values of Holistic Education.
Administrative Staff	Digital Distribution of Academic & Administrative Information	Staff manages registration information, academic schedules, and important notices published through the school's official website and WhatsApp Broadcast, increasing communication efficiency with parents and guardians.

The strategy for utilizing digital media at sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school was developed through collaborative roles between stakeholders, starting from the principal, head of the learning resource center, school media manager, administrative staff, to teachers. The principal acts as the main director of the strategy, by ensuring that all marketing efforts through digital media are in line with the school's vision and mission and national education policies. Meanwhile, the head of the learning resource center is tasked with designing strategic content that reflects the school's identity, such as highlighting academic excellence and student activities [36], [37]. The school media manager is technically responsible for managing various digital platforms such as websites, social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), and the school's official communication application. The school ensures that every content uploaded is consistent, interesting, and in accordance with digital ethics. The administrative staff provides administrative support, including archiving digital documents, managing student data, and ensuring responsiveness to questions from the public.

Teachers are also involved in providing materials or reports on teaching and learning activities that can be processed into interesting content for publication. All of these strategies refer to the 4P principle (product, price, place, promotion) which is adjusted in the context of education, with the aim of increasing the public's appeal to schools and building the image of educational institutions that are professional and adaptive to technological developments. This approach is not only effective in expanding the reach of promotion, but also strengthening public trust in the quality of educational services at sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school. The strategy for utilizing digital media at sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school, senior high school level, is in line with the legal framework and education policies in Malaysia. Based on the Education Act 1996 (Act 550), every educational institution is required to improve the quality and effectiveness of learning, including through technology-based innovation. This is a legal basis for supporting the use of digital media as a means of promoting educational services. Furthermore, the Digital Education Principles issued by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in 2021 firmly emphasize the importance of integrating digital technology in the learning process and school management. The use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in school promotion activities is a real implementation of this policy. In addition, this strategy also refers to the Ministry of Education Malaysia Standard Operating Procedures regarding Digital Engagement which encourages ethical and responsible management of digital media, in accordance with the principles of Digital Citizenship. Thus, all the strategies implemented by sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school are not only relevant to the needs of the times, but also have a strong legal basis in the context of Malaysia's national education policy.

### 3.2. Digital Media Management

Digital media management at sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school, is carried out systematically and adaptively to the ever-evolving technological changes. In the fast-paced digital era, digital media is seen as a dynamic organism—developing and changing like a living creature—so it requires management that is not only responsive, but also anticipatory. The biggest challenge in digital media management is how schools are able to

maintain their digital systems so that they remain relevant, safe, and effective in conveying information and promoting educational services.

Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School website as an official information center that contains various announcements, new student registration schedules (new intakes), documentation of student activities, to academic and co-curricular achievements. The website is regularly updated by the school's information and communication technology (ICT) unit. In the management process, the school also collaborates with the local educational technology community, including alumni who are active in the digital field, to ensure that the school's website and social media platforms remain innovative and competitive.

In addition, the school actively encourages the development of the capacity of human resources involved in digital media management. According to one of the school's digital media management teachers:

"The training we do is not only focused on formal courses, but also includes informal training through webinars, professional sharing, and involvement in the digital education activist community. This really helps us understand effective writing styles and techniques for presenting interesting digital content on social media."

Digital media management is not only about the technical skills of the manager, but also includes updating technological equipment and selecting content concepts that are in accordance with the needs of target users (target audiences), especially parents and the general public. The school also pays attention to the use of visual design, upload scheduling strategies, and managing interactions with the audience as part of efforts to maintain a professional and progressive school image.

This holistic approach is in line with the Malaysian Digital Education Policy (KPM, 2021), which emphasizes the importance of integrating technology in managing and delivering educational information [38], [39]. With consistent and strategic management, sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school digital media is not only an internal communication tool, but also an effective marketing tool for educational institutions in the digital era.

### 3.2. Barriers to Leveraging Marketing in a Digital World

Advances in information and communication technology have driven significant changes in marketing patterns, including in the education sector. In the digital era of the 21st century, most of the global community has utilized smart devices to access information and establish communication. This development creates new opportunities in the marketing strategies of educational institutions, including sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school, Malaysia.

The transformation of marketing media from conventional forms such as physical prints to digital marketing has enabled the dissemination of school information to a wider audience. Information published through digital media can be accessed globally and in real-time, thus expanding the reach of school promotion. If done consistently, digital marketing can increase the number of prospective students who are interested through attractive visual content and narratives that are easy for parents and the general public to understand.

Sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school implements various digital marketing strategies to improve its image and appeal. One traditional form that is still maintained is Word of Mouth Marketing (WoMM) or word of mouth marketing. This strategy emerges through positive testimonials from parents of students or alumni to prospective new users. As one senior teacher explained:

"Many parents send their children to Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School because they hear positive experiences from their relatives or neighbors. These testimonials give them high confidence before making a decision."

However, although the WoMM method is effective in building trust, its scope is still limited within certain community environments and cannot reach a wider audience digitally.

The second strategy is to establish strategic collaboration with lower schools around the Malaysian region, especially schools that have similar values or curriculum approaches. Sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school actively strengthens collaboration through transition programs and the introduction of school values such as honesty, discipline, tolerance and togetherness. One principal stated:

"We emphasize basic values in every school activity related to morals, cooperation and holistic development of students. This is also an important aspect in establishing networks with other institutions."

Good relations with mass media and public officials also help increase the school's exposure. Sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school was visited by local community leaders who expressed their appreciation for the conducive learning atmosphere and pleasant school environment. This momentum was also reported by several digital media and increased the school's visibility on internet search pages.

The implementation of digital media is the main marketing strategy of Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School. This school uses social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as an official website that is regularly updated. Digital media allows information such as registration schedules, flagship programs, and documentation of school activities to be presented in an attractive and interactive format. According to the school's digital media coordinator:

"Information technology helps us build a progressive school image. We use digital platforms not only to share academic achievements and co-curriculum, but also to eliminate the negative stigma about religious-based schools that are said to be outdated or not open to modern technology."

By utilizing the power of visuals, choosing aesthetic graphic designs, and conveying information concisely and clearly, the school's social media is able to reach a wider community. Interesting content not only increases the level of interaction (engagement), but also forms a positive perception of the school.

However, the use of digital media also has challenges [38]-[41]. Managers must have competence in content design, narrative management, utilization of social media algorithms, and maintaining consistency in upload frequency [42], [43]. In addition, an understanding of changing digital trends is needed so that school marketing strategies remain relevant.

### 3.2. Effectiveness of Using Digital Media in Marketing Educational Services

The use of digital media as a marketing strategy for educational services at the Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School has shown a positive influence, both on increasing the accessibility of information and the growth in the number of students. However, this effectiveness is not only measured by the quantity of output (number of students or social media followers), but also by how this digital strategy is implemented systematically by actively involving human resources and students. The following is a summary of the findings in table form:

Table 2. indicators of digital media effectiveness in Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School

Aspects Assessed	Description of Findings
Increase in the number of social media followers	There has been a significant increase in the number of followers of the school's official Instagram and Facebook accounts over the past 3 years (2022–2024).
Student engagement in digital content	Students are directly involved in producing digital content (graphic design, short videos, and captions), increasing the frequency and quality of uploads.
Human resources motivation for digitalization	Educators and staff show high motivation in learning digital technology and supporting the school's marketing strategy.
Increase in the number of new students	There is an increasing trend in new registrants in 2022 and 2023, although it decreased in 2024 due to external factors (post-COVID).
Constraints faced	The decrease in the number of students in 2024 was due to parents' preference for schools that are closer and more economical.
School adaptive strategy	The school routinely evaluates its marketing strategy and improves HR training to be more adaptive to the dynamics of technology and society.

The strategy implemented by the Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School shows that effective digital marketing does not only depend on the existence of social media platforms, but also on the synergy between content, human resources, and student involvement. The sustainability of this strategy is strengthened through periodic evaluations and digital training tailored to the needs of the school. Despite experiencing a decline in the number of students due to external factors, the Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School was still able to maintain its existence with an adaptive and participatory approach. This is a model that can be adopted by other Islamic educational institutions in optimizing digital marketing.

The use of digital media as a means of marketing educational services at the Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School, Malaysia, showed a fairly high level of effectiveness. The results of the study showed that student involvement in the production of social media content contributed greatly to the sustainability and quality of the information published. By involving students, the content produced becomes more creative and relevant to the target audience, namely fellow students and prospective parents. This strategy has been shown to increase follower engagement and expand the reach of school publications on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

In addition, the high motivation of the school's human resources (HR), including teachers and administrative staff, in learning and utilizing digital technology also strengthened the success of this marketing strategy. The spirit of adapting to the digital era encourages schools to continue to evaluate the content strategy and types of media used [45], [46]. This makes digital marketing at Sultanah engku tun aminah vocational school not only informative, but also interactive and representative of the institution's image.

However, the effectiveness of digital media is not entirely free from challenges [47]-[49]. This study also found that the number of new students has decreased in the last year, due to external factors such as parents' preference for schools that are more affordable in terms of cost and location [50]-[52]. However, this decline did not stem from the failure of the marketing strategy, but rather from post-pandemic conditions and the dynamics of the community's economy. This shows that a good marketing strategy still requires synergy with institutional policies and broader socio-economic conditions.

These results are in line with previous research findings showing that social media can be an effective means of increasing branding and the number of registrants in Islamic educational institutions, especially if the content is developed in a participatory manner [53]. Another study by Fajri et al. [54] also emphasized the

importance of student involvement in digital marketing because it can bridge promotional language that is more attractive and easily accepted by the younger generation. Both studies strengthen the findings in this study that active participation and support from human resources are key factors in the success of a school's promotional digitalization strategy.

The novelty of this study lies in the geographical and cultural context raised, namely the Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School in Malaysia. This study provides a new perspective on how educational institutions outside Malaysia, especially in urban Malaysia, are able to implement digital marketing strategies adaptively. This study also adds a dimension of student involvement as creative actors in the promotion strategy, not just as objects of information targets, which has not been studied in depth in the context of secondary schools in Southeast Asia.

This study can be implemented as a model for a digital marketing strategy based on active student participation and strengthening human resource capacity in other educational institutions. Schools that have limited funds for conventional promotion can adopt this digital approach efficiently. However, this study has limitations in the scope of institutions that only focus on one school, so the generalization of the results is still limited. Further research can be conducted with a comparative approach in several Islamic schools in Malaysia or other Southeast Asian countries in order to obtain broader and more representative results.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of digital technology media in the marketing strategy of educational services at Sultanah Engku Tun Aminah Vocational School has had a positive impact on the visibility and image of the school in the midst of the era of global digitalization. The digital strategy implemented, although simple, is able to reach a wider range of prospective students and build more effective communication with parents and the community. This finding suggests that religious-based schools can also adopt an adaptive and contextual digital approach in accordance with the values they embrace. Academically, this study contributes to the theoretical framework of digital engagement in religious-based schools, especially in the context of developing countries with complex cultural and digital infrastructure challenges such as Malaysia. These findings broaden the understanding of how religious educational institutions can transform through a strategic digital approach. In the future, this research can be developed through comparative studies across ASEAN countries to explore best practices and similar challenges in a regional context. In addition, expanding the scope to the Senior High School level is also important to understand how digital strategies can differ based on the level of education and more complex demographic characteristics of students.

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