

Creative Marketing Strategies in Building the Brand Image of Value-Based Educational Institutions

Ariska Dwi Oktavia ^{1*}, Grace Theo Fany Dagambir ², Peter Julio Tarigan ³,
Yohanes Budi Sarwoko ⁴

^{1, 2, 3, 4} Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Komunikasi Interstudi Jakarta, Indonesia

* ariska.oktavia96@gmail.com

Abstract

The growing competition among educational institutions and the increasing use of digital media have made it important for value-based schools to develop distinctive and credible brand images while maintaining their educational and moral values. However, limited attention has been given to how creative marketing integrates digital communication, customer retention-oriented engagement, and parental consumer insights within value-based educational contexts. This study explores how creative marketing contributes to brand-image formation, focusing on digital creative execution, customer retention-oriented practices, and consumer insight alignment as an interpretive mechanism. A qualitative case study was conducted at Labs School Kaizen, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 informants comprising management representatives, marketing staff, and parents, complemented by observation and analysis of 124 social media posts over six months. Interview data generated 286 coded segments; value-based positioning accounted for 78 coded segments (27.3%), indicating a recurring emphasis on the integration of spiritual and academic values. Social media analysis used individual posts as the unit of analysis, with student storytelling comprising 35 of 124 posts (28%), parenting education 27 posts (22%), and parent testimonials 22 posts (18%). Triangulation of interview, observation, and documentation data indicated that these communication practices were associated with ongoing parent engagement, trust-building, and institutional advocacy. Consumer insight alignment, particularly regarding parental concerns about moral development and aspirations for academic-spiritual integration, functioned as an interpretive link between institutional positioning and brand perception. The findings suggest that, within this case, value-based positioning, digital creative execution, relational engagement, and consumer insight alignment operate as interconnected processes in institutional brand formation. The study contributes to educational marketing communication by offering an in-depth case interpretation of trust-based branding in value-based education.

Keywords: *Creative Marketing, Brand Image, Consumer Insight Alignment, Customer Retention, Value-Based Education.*

Introduction

The rapid growth and diversification of Indonesia's education sector have intensified competition among educational institutions, particularly private and value-based schools that combine academic achievement with moral, character, and spiritual development. Competition increasingly extends beyond curriculum, tuition fees, and infrastructure toward institutions' ability to establish distinctive identities, communicate their values, and build favorable perceptions among parents and communities. Institutional branding has therefore become increasingly important as parents evaluate schools not only based on educational outcomes but also on trust, reputation, values, emotional compatibility, and perceived capacity to

prepare children for the future. Empirical evidence in Indonesia shows that brand image and institutional attributes influence school-choice decisions, while word-of-mouth strengthens credibility through family experiences and recommendations (Mu'minah et al., 2024; Eriani et al., 2025; Hidayati et al., 2025).

Marketing communication plays a strategic role in shaping institutional brand image and influencing parents' perceptions of educational institutions. Unlike conventional commercial brands, schools provide intangible and relational services that affect children's long-term academic, social, moral, and personal development. Educational branding therefore needs to communicate both functional benefits, such as academic quality, curriculum, facilities, and learning outcomes, and symbolic benefits, including character formation, spirituality, belonging, and personal development (Keller, 2016; Jufry, 2025). Creative marketing strengthens this process by translating institutional positioning and values into relevant, distinctive, and meaningful communication. Through Integrated Marketing Communication, institutions can maintain consistency across channels and stakeholder experiences (Batra & Keller, 2016; Keller, 2016). Digital platforms further enable schools to communicate identity through social media, websites, videos, testimonials, and interactive engagement (Kotler et al., 2021; Dwivedi, 2024).

Digital creative execution represents a critical component of this communication process because it allows educational institutions to demonstrate rather than merely claim their values. Content presenting classroom activities, student achievements, teacher interactions, parenting programs, institutional events, and parent testimonials can provide tangible evidence of how institutional positioning is enacted in everyday educational practices. However, frequent exposure to promotional content alone does not necessarily create a strong brand image. The relevance, authenticity, consistency, and emotional resonance of digital communication are important in determining whether social media activities generate meaningful engagement and favorable brand-related outcomes (Novita et al., 2025; Yaqin & Aini, 2025; Putri et al., 2025).

Storytelling further strengthens this process by transforming abstract educational values into concrete and relatable experiences. Stories about students, teachers, parents, achievements, learning experiences, and institutional programs can help parents understand how a school's values are implemented in practice. Digital marketing should therefore be understood not merely as a mechanism for promoting educational programs but also as a means of communicating institutional identity and facilitating interaction with stakeholders. Social media has increasingly become a strategic platform for creating engagement, encouraging interaction, and strengthening relationships between organizations and their audiences (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Godey et al., 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Pawar, 2025). These relationships are particularly significant in education because parents simultaneously function as service consumers, stakeholders, evaluators, community members, and participants in the educational process.

The relational nature of education also makes customer retention an important component of institutional branding. Relationships between parents and schools may continue for several years and involve participation in school activities, parent communities, educational programs, consultation, and other forms of institutional engagement. Consequently, the relationship between an educational institution and its parents should not end after the initial enrollment decision. Relational communication, community building, parenting education, webinars, consultation, and continuous engagement can reinforce trust and institutional loyalty over time. Sustained customer relationships and engagement are increasingly recognized as

important components of contemporary marketing strategies (Ismail, 2017; Dwianjani et al., 2025; Elhuria et al., 2026). In educational settings, such relationships can also encourage positive word-of-mouth, which is particularly relevant because recommendations and previous parental experiences frequently influence school evaluation and choice (Mu'minah et al., 2024; Fitrianiingsih et al., 2025).

Although marketing and branding have become increasingly important in education, previous studies remain divided into several research streams that are only partially connected. The first stream examines digital and social media marketing, highlighting the role of digital communication in generating engagement and strengthening brand-related outcomes. However, much of this literature focuses on general consumer and business contexts, providing limited explanation of how creative digital communication conveys the distinctive values of educational institutions (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Dwivedi, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Pawar, 2025). The second stream addresses school branding, institutional image, and school-choice decisions. Studies show that school brands and institutional image influence how parents evaluate educational alternatives, while brand image, education costs, word-of-mouth, promotion, and positioning contribute to parental school-choice decisions (Eriani et al., 2025; Hidayati et al., 2025; Mu'minah et al., 2024). Brand equity has also been identified as a mechanism linking promotional and positioning activities with parents' decisions.

The third stream focuses on parental insight and engagement throughout the school-selection journey. Recent studies indicate that social media content can support parental awareness, consideration, decision-making, and subsequent engagement (Nofrizal et al., 2024; Yaqin & Aini, 2025). Nevertheless, these studies generally examine parental responses, school-choice determinants, digital marketing, or branding outcomes separately. Limited attention has been given to how educational institutions interpret parental expectations, translate these insights into creative communication, maintain relationships after enrollment, and integrate these activities into a coherent institutional brand narrative. This gap is particularly relevant to value-based educational institutions, where brand image is closely associated with academic quality, moral education, character development, religious or spiritual formation, and alignment with family expectations. Effective communication therefore requires institutions to understand not only what they seek to communicate but also what parents value, expect, and aspire to provide for their children. This study conceptualizes this process as consumer insight alignment, referring to the alignment between institutional marketing communication and parents' concerns, aspirations, expectations, and values (Hidayati et al., 2025).

Consumer insight alignment is positioned in this study as an interpretive and relational mechanism rather than a statistically tested mediating variable. It describes how educational institutions interpret parental expectations and translate these insights into strategic positioning, creative content, relational communication, and institutional experiences. Consumer insight therefore serves not merely as a measurable antecedent of brand image but as an interpretive link that enables institutional communication to become more relevant and meaningful to parents.

Creative marketing is conceptualized as an integrated process comprising interconnected dimensions. Strategic positioning establishes the distinctive value an institution seeks to occupy in parents' perceptions, while digital creative execution translates this positioning into stories, visual content, educational information, testimonials, and other communication forms.

Relational communication and customer retention maintain interaction with existing parents and support their participation in the institutional community. Consumer insight alignment ensures that these activities remain responsive to parents' needs, expectations, and values. Their interaction may contribute to perceptions of institutional credibility, distinctiveness, trustworthiness, and emotional relevance (Jufry, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Elhuria et al., 2026).

Despite growing interest in educational marketing, previous studies often examine marketing communication, digital marketing, brand image, customer engagement, and customer loyalty as separate constructs rather than interconnected institutional processes (Rauschnabel et al., 2019; Dwivedi, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Pawar, 2025). Research on educational brand image has primarily emphasized reputation, school choice, service quality, and brand equity, with limited attention to the creative processes through which institutional identity and values are communicated. Customer retention has likewise been examined mainly in relation to satisfaction and loyalty rather than as part of ongoing institutional brand formation. More importantly, limited research has examined *consumer insight alignment* as an interpretive mechanism linking strategic positioning, digital creative execution, relational communication, customer retention, and brand-image formation in value-based educational institutions in Indonesia. Accordingly, this study explores how creative marketing contributes to brand-image formation through these interconnected dimensions and addresses four questions concerning creative marketing, digital creative execution, customer retention, and *consumer insight alignment*.

The novelty of this study lies in developing an integrative conceptual explanation of educational branding that connects strategic positioning, digital creative execution, relational communication, customer retention, and consumer insight alignment. Rather than treating consumer insight alignment as a statistically tested mediation effect, the study interprets it as a relational and interpretive mechanism through which educational institutions understand parental expectations, translate those insights into marketing communication and institutional experiences, and contribute to the formation of brand perceptions. Digital marketing, customer relationships, consumer insight, and brand image are therefore examined as interconnected processes rather than as isolated constructs within the specific context of a value-based educational institution.

The qualitative case study approach is particularly appropriate for this purpose because it enables the study to investigate the meanings, practices, interactions, and communication processes through which these relationships are developed in an actual institutional setting. Such an approach provides insight into processes that may not be fully captured through quantitative measurement of predetermined variables. The study therefore contributes theoretically to educational marketing communication literature by extending understanding of how institutional brand image is constructed through creative, relational, and insight-driven processes. Practically, it provides educational managers with a framework for understanding how authentic storytelling, digital creative execution, parent engagement, customer retention, value-based positioning, and consumer insight can be integrated into sustainable and trust-based institutional branding strategies.

Method

Research Design, Case Selection, and Research Setting

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single-site case study design to explore how creative marketing strategies contribute to brand-image formation within a value-based educational institution. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the study examined organizational processes, stakeholder interpretations, communication practices, and institutional relationships in their natural context rather than statistically testing predetermined causal relationships (Yin, 2018; Mishra & Dey, 2021; Greenhalgh, 2025; Susilawati et al., 2023; Khairiyah et al., 2026). The study was conducted at Labs School Kaizen, Indonesia, which was purposively selected as an information-rich case due to its implementation of value-based positioning, digital marketing communication, creative social media content, and continuous engagement with parents. The case incorporated perspectives from school management, marketing personnel, and parents as key stakeholders in institutional brand communication. Fieldwork was conducted from January to June 2026 to capture communication practices over time. Data collection included stakeholder interviews, repeated observations of marketing activities, and documentation of digital content. Particular attention was given to recurring and changing patterns in content themes, creative formats, value-based messages, parent-oriented communication, and stakeholder engagement. This extended observation enabled the study to identify consistent communication patterns and distinguish them from activities associated with specific promotional events.

Research Participants and Instruments

The study involved 15 informants comprising five school management representatives (33%), four marketing staff members (27%), and six parents (40%). Informants were selected through purposive criterion sampling based on their direct knowledge, involvement, or experience with institutional marketing communication and brand-building activities (Guha et al., 2021; Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). Management representatives provided insights into institutional positioning and strategic communication, marketing staff contributed perspectives on content development and dissemination, while parents provided experiences regarding school choice, expectations, institutional values, and brand perceptions. This composition enabled comparison between the intended institutional brand narrative and its interpretation by parents, emphasizing information richness rather than statistical representativeness (Stenfors et al., 2020). The researcher served as the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation, supported by a semi-structured interview guide, observation guide, and documentation checklist (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). Interviews addressed strategic positioning, digital creative execution, customer retention, and parental needs and expectations. Observations focused on communication practices, digital content, stakeholder interactions, and representations of institutional values, while documentation covered promotional materials and social media content based on their purpose, message, format, and relevance to the study dimensions (Husband, 2020; Magaldi & Berler, 2020; Kayesa & Shung-King, 2020). Audio recordings, transcripts, field notes, and digital archives were retained to support systematic analysis and comparison.

Data Collection

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis (Khairiyah et al., 2026; Rakhmat et al., 2026). Interviews were conducted with all 15 informants to examine institutional positioning, the

translation of educational values into marketing communication, digital content development, parent relationship management, and the influence of parental expectations on communication practices. Observation was conducted throughout the six-month fieldwork period to examine marketing communication as implemented in practice, including digital communication activities, content characteristics, parent engagement, and representations of value-based positioning. Observational evidence was compared with interview accounts to identify consistency, complementarity, and differences across data sources.

Document analysis covered institutional promotional materials, relevant communication documents, and 124 social media posts published between January and June 2026. The social media corpus was classified into five dominant content categories: student storytelling (35 posts), parenting education (27 posts), parent testimonials (22 posts), academic information (21 posts), and events and experiential activities (19 posts) (Orth et al., 2020; Saikia & Barman, 2023). Analysis considered both the distribution of content categories and the ways in which institutional values, educational experiences, stakeholder relationships, and brand-related messages were represented through digital creative execution.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis framework comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2018; Rakhmat et al., 2026). Analysis proceeded iteratively through comparison of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials. The initial stage involved open coding of statements relevant to the research questions, generating 286 coded statements from the interview data. Initial codes captured recurring issues concerning value-based positioning, emotional storytelling, parental concerns, digital retention activities, religious-academic identity, customer relationships, and brand perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022).

During data condensation, related codes were grouped into broader analytical categories and progressively refined through comparison across participants and data sources (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Byrne, 2022). The analysis produced interconnected themes encompassing value-based positioning, emotional storytelling, parental moral concerns, digital retention strategies, religious-academic image, digital creative execution, and consumer insight alignment. In the data-display stage, coded information was organized into thematic tables and comparative matrices to examine patterns across stakeholder groups and evidence types. For instance, parental concerns identified through interviews were compared with themes represented in digital content, while statements concerning institutional values were examined alongside observed communication practices and documentary evidence.

Conclusion drawing and verification involved repeatedly checking emerging interpretations against the original transcripts, observation notes, and documentary materials. Themes were retained when they demonstrated conceptual coherence, relevance to the research questions, and sufficient evidentiary support across the case. This iterative verification process enabled the analysis to move from individual coded statements toward integrated interpretations of how creative marketing processes contributed to institutional brand-image formation (Stenfors et al., 2020).

Trustworthiness and Triangulation

The credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, temporal comparison, continuous comparison with

original data, and maintenance of an audit trail (Aguilar Solano, 2020; Lemon & Hayes, 2020; Stenfors et al., 2020; Carcary, 2020). Source triangulation involved comparing perspectives from school management, marketing staff, and parents to examine differences between intended institutional branding and stakeholder interpretations. Technique triangulation compared evidence from interviews, observations, and documentary analysis, including the 124 social media posts examined during the study period (Rakhmat et al., 2026). Temporal comparison was conducted throughout the six-month fieldwork period to identify consistent or changing patterns in communication themes, value-based messages, and parent engagement.

Triangulation was not based on the assumption that all sources should produce identical findings. Divergent evidence was retained and examined to determine whether discrepancies reflected differences in stakeholder experiences, intended strategies and actual implementation, or variations in interpretation (Aguilar Solano, 2020; Stenfors et al., 2020). Continuous comparison with interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence supported credibility and confirmability. An audit trail documenting data collection, coding, categorization, and analytical decisions was maintained to enhance dependability (Carcary, 2020). Thus, triangulation served to examine convergence, complementarity, and discrepancy across evidence rather than merely confirming predetermined interpretations (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

Results

The Influence of Creative Marketing Strategy on the Brand Image of Value-Based Educational Institutions

The analysis of interview data from 15 informants, comprising management representatives, marketing staff, and parents, revealed several recurring patterns in how value-based creative marketing contributed to the institution's brand image. Rather than interpreting the number of participants or coded statements as indicators of quantitative prevalence, the analysis focused on the meanings, relationships, and patterns that emerged across stakeholder perspectives. Through open coding of 286 relevant statements, several major themes were identified, including value-based positioning, emotional storytelling, parental concerns, digital retention strategies, and the construction of a religious-academic image.

Table 1. Intensity of Theme Occurrence (Open Coding)

Representative Statement	Initial Code	Number of Citations	Percentage of 286
"We always emphasize moral values before academic achievement."	Value-based positioning	78	27.30%
"Most of our content tells the stories of students' journeys."	Emotional storytelling	46	16.00%
"Parents are afraid their children will be influenced by negative social environments."	Moral anxiety	64	22.40%
"We regularly organize online parenting classes."	Digital retention strategy	49	17.10%
"This school is known as a modern tahfidz school."	Religious-academic image	69	24.10%

As shown in Table 1, value-based positioning emerged as a recurring theme across the coded data. In this analysis, a citation refers to a distinct segment of interview data that contained a meaningful idea relevant to a particular code. A single interview response could generate more than one citation when it contained analytically distinct meanings and was

therefore assigned to different codes; however, the same data segment was not counted repeatedly under the same code. Value-based positioning was represented by 78 coded segments, indicating that references to moral, spiritual, and character-oriented values appeared consistently across stakeholder accounts. These references suggest that such values constitute an important basis for institutional differentiation rather than serving merely as supplementary promotional messages.

The findings are consistent with the customer-based brand equity perspective, which emphasizes meaningful, distinctive, and relevant associations in shaping brand knowledge (Keller, 2017). Brand differentiation is strengthened when organizations communicate unique values that are consistently recognized by stakeholders (Aaker, 2018; Hidayati et al., 2025). In value-based education, institutional values therefore represent an important source of differentiation. The findings show that Labs School Kaizen does not position itself solely through academic achievement but consistently combines academic development with moral and spiritual formation. This pattern is reflected in the religious-academic image theme, indicating that stakeholders perceive the institution through an integrated academic and value-based identity. Such positioning strengthens institutional identity by providing a clear and distinctive value proposition (Aaker, 2018; Keller, 2016).

The findings further indicate that the institution's value proposition is constructed through the integration of academic and spiritual dimensions rather than treating spiritual education as an additional program. This positioning is closely connected to parental concerns, particularly moral degradation, negative peer influence, and children's exposure to uncontrolled digital environments. The parental moral concerns theme generated 64 coded citations (22.40%), demonstrating that institutional communication responds to issues considered important by parents. Brand associations become more meaningful when they correspond with stakeholder needs and expectations (Keller, 2017; Hidayati et al., 2025). The institution's emphasis on moral and spiritual values therefore functions simultaneously as a differentiation strategy and as a means of establishing relevance with parental expectations (Eriani et al., 2025; Nofrizal et al., 2024).

The 49 citations (17.10%) related to digital retention strategies further show that creative marketing extended beyond attracting prospective parents to maintaining relationships with existing stakeholders. This finding aligns with relationship marketing and customer engagement perspectives emphasizing continuous interaction and long-term relationships (Hollebeek et al., 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2025). Digital platforms facilitate ongoing interaction, community development, and value exchange (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Dwivedi, 2024). Overall, the findings indicate that brand-image formation is an ongoing process shaped by five interconnected themes: value-based positioning, emotional storytelling, parental moral concerns, digital retention activities, and religious-academic identity. Creative marketing therefore operates through both identity construction and relationship development (Batra & Keller, 2016; Jufry, 2025).

Creative Execution in the Digital Era in Building Brand Image

Creative execution was analyzed through systematic coding of 124 social media posts published during the six-month research period. Each post was treated as a unit of analysis and classified according to its dominant communication purpose. Five categories were used: student storytelling, parenting education, parent testimonials, academic information, and events and experiential activities. When a post contained elements of more than one category,

it was assigned to the category that best represented its primary message based on the caption and visual content.

Table 2. Digital Content Composition over Six Months (n = 124 posts)

No	Content Type	Number	Percentage
1	Student storytelling	35	28%
2	Parenting education	27	22%
3	Parent testimonials	22	18%
4	Academic information	21	17%
5	Events and experiential activities	19	15%
Total		124	100%

Based on Table 2, student storytelling represented the largest proportion of digital content, comprising 35 posts (28%). The frequency of this category indicates that narrative-based communication was prominent during the observed period, although frequency alone does not establish branding effectiveness. The stories presented student activities, achievements, learning experiences, and personal development, making institutional values such as character, spirituality, achievement, and growth more visible. Interview and observation data further indicated that storytelling translated abstract institutional values into concrete experiences. This interpretation is consistent with digital marketing literature emphasizing meaningful content, engagement, and interaction, as well as brand perspectives in which meaningful associations contribute to brand knowledge (Appel et al., 2020; Keller, 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Hidayati et al., 2025).

Parenting education accounted for 27 posts (22%) and addressed parenting challenges, child development, educational issues, and family concerns. The content positioned the institution as a source of knowledge and parental support beyond its primary educational service. Providing relevant informational content can create functional and relational value, thereby supporting continuous stakeholder engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2017; Dwivedi, 2024; Yaqin & Aini, 2025). Parent testimonials represented 22 posts (18%) and provided experience-based information that may reduce uncertainty surrounding an intangible educational service. As social and peer-based communication can enhance credibility and trust, testimonials functioned as complementary credibility signals alongside institutional claims (Appel et al., 2020; Fitrianiingsih et al., 2025).

Academic information comprised 21 posts (17%), while events and experiential activities comprised 19 posts (15%). Although less frequent, these categories complemented storytelling and parenting content by providing informational and experiential dimensions. Overall, the digital creative execution reflected three complementary functions: emotional communication through storytelling, informational communication through parenting and academic content, and credibility-oriented communication through testimonials and experiential activities. This pattern aligns with integrated marketing communication, which emphasizes complementary and consistent messages across communication activities (Batra & Keller, 2016; Keller, 2016). Digital media therefore functioned as an extension of institutional identity, repeatedly making its positioning, educational experiences, and core values visible to stakeholders (Eriani et al., 2025; Jufry, 2025).

Customer Retention-Oriented Strategies and Institutional Brand Image

Customer retention-oriented strategies were examined through parental communication platforms, institutional activities, and community engagement initiatives. The institution maintains three active WhatsApp parent groups with 248 members and conducts six parenting

webinars within one academic semester. Daily interactions in the parent groups ranged from approximately 45 to 60 messages, while webinar participation reached around 72% of active parents. These patterns indicate sustained parental engagement rather than direct evidence of retention behavior. Interview coding also identified recurring statements related to trust building and parental loyalty, suggesting that continuous communication and engagement contributed to strengthening relational ties between parents and the institution. In addition, 64% of newly enrolled parents reported learning about the school through word-of-mouth recommendations, indicating that existing parent relationships may also contribute to institutional advocacy. Therefore, these findings are interpreted as evidence of retention-oriented relational practices and continuing parent engagement, rather than as direct proof of actual customer retention.

The Mediating Role of Consumer Insight Alignment

The findings suggest that creative marketing strategies become more meaningful when they align with parental insights and expectations. Interviews with six parent informants revealed several recurring concerns that shaped their considerations when selecting a school. In this study, consumer insight alignment is therefore interpreted as a linking mechanism that helps explain how institutional positioning and creative communication become relevant to parents. Rather than representing a statistically tested mediation effect, this mechanism reflects the process through which parental concerns, expectations, and aspirations are interpreted and incorporated into institutional communication and brand meaning.

Table 3. Identification of Parental Pain Points

No	Pain Point Dimension	Number of Informants (n=6)	Percentage
1	Concern about children's moral degradation	5	83%
2	Influence of digital media and peer environment	4	67%
3	Lack of character education in public schools	3–4	58%

Based on Table 3, five of the six parent informants (83%) expressed concerns about their children's moral development, while four (67%) discussed the influence of digital media and peer environments. Concerns regarding character education were also identified across several interviews. These findings indicate that, within the interviewed parent group, school-selection considerations extended beyond academic achievement to include moral, social, and character-related dimensions. This pattern is consistent with the customer-based brand equity perspective, which emphasizes meaningful and relevant associations in brand knowledge development (Keller, 2017; Hidayati et al., 2025). The institution's emphasis on moral and spiritual education therefore corresponded with concerns expressed by parents, suggesting alignment between institutional positioning and parental expectations. All six parent informants also expressed the expectation that academic achievement should be integrated with moral and character education, while approximately 75% expected systematic monitoring of character development and 67% emphasized transparent communication with parents.

These findings help explain the relevance of the institution's creative marketing content. Parenting education, student storytelling, and testimonials functioned not merely as content formats but as communication practices addressing concerns identified by parents. Digital communication therefore became more meaningful when its content reflected stakeholder expectations, institutional values, and perceived educational needs (Dwivedi, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Yaqin & Aini, 2025). Consumer insight alignment provides an interpretive mechanism for understanding this relationship. When institutional communication addresses parental concerns and these values are subsequently observed through student activities,

parenting programs, testimonials, and institutional practices, the intended positioning becomes more credible and personally relevant. This interpretation complements integrated marketing communication theory, which emphasizes coherence and relevance across communication activities (Batra & Keller, 2016), while extending social media marketing literature by highlighting the importance of stakeholder needs in educational communication (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Consumer insight alignment should not, however, be interpreted as statistical mediation. Given the qualitative case study design, it is more appropriately understood as a linking mechanism through which creative marketing becomes meaningful to parents and contributes to institutional brand perceptions (Yin, 2018; Greenhalgh, 2025).

Discussion

Value-Based Positioning and Digital Creative Execution

The findings indicate that creative marketing at Labs School Kaizen operates through interconnected practices involving value-based positioning, digital creative execution, customer retention-oriented engagement, and consumer insight alignment. The case data show that the institution consistently communicates academic achievement alongside moral and spiritual development, uses digital content to make these values visible, maintains ongoing interaction with parents, and aligns communication with parental concerns. These patterns suggest that institutional branding is constructed through both communication practices and sustained stakeholder relationships (Hidayati et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Eriani et al., 2025).

Value-based positioning emerged prominently in the interview data, represented by 78 coded segments. Moral, spiritual, and character-oriented values were consistently associated with institutional identity and differentiation, while academic achievement was commonly presented together with these dimensions. The religious-academic image accounted for 24.10% of coded citations, indicating that the institution communicates a distinctive educational identity rather than academic services alone. This pattern can be interpreted through customer-based brand equity theory, which emphasizes meaningful, favorable, and distinctive associations in brand knowledge formation (Keller, 2017). Institutional values may also function as signals for parents evaluating an intangible educational service and its compatibility with family expectations (Nofrizal et al., 2024).

The relevance of this positioning is reinforced by parental concerns. Moral anxiety represented 22.40% of coded statements, while 83% of parent informants expressed concerns regarding children's moral development. This correspondence suggests that institutional positioning becomes meaningful when it addresses stakeholder concerns. Value-based branding therefore involves not only communicating institutional values but also connecting those values with parental expectations (Hidayati et al., 2025).

Digital creative execution subsequently translated this positioning into visible and emotionally meaningful communication. Student storytelling constituted 28% of the 124 analyzed posts, followed by parenting education (22%) and parent testimonials (18%). The prominence of these formats indicates reliance on narrative, educational, and experience-based communication rather than conventional promotion alone (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Dwivedi, 2024). Student stories transformed abstract claims about character, achievement, and personal development into concrete representations of educational

experiences, potentially reducing the distance between institutional claims and stakeholder perceptions (Eriani et al., 2025; Novita et al., 2025).

Parenting education further demonstrates that digital communication provided value beyond service promotion by addressing parental needs and supporting continuous engagement (Dwivedi, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2025). Overall, the findings suggest that creative marketing contributes to institutional brand formation through the integration of distinctive value-based positioning, meaningful digital narratives, and stakeholder-oriented communication. Consumer insight alignment provides an interpretive link among these practices by explaining how institutional messages become relevant to parents and contribute to their perceptions of the institution.

Digital Creative Execution, Customer Retention, and Consumer Insight Alignment

The findings indicate that digital creative execution extends beyond promotional communication to support stakeholder engagement and institutional brand formation. Parenting content, which provided informational and relational value, created opportunities for parents to interact with the institution beyond enrollment-related communication. This finding is consistent with the customer engagement perspective, which emphasizes meaningful interactions that provide value (Hollebeek et al., 2017). Parent testimonials, representing 18% of digital content, further provided experience-based evidence that could complement institutional claims and reduce uncertainty surrounding an intangible educational service. Such peer-generated communication may strengthen credibility and trust because stakeholder experiences are often perceived as more authentic than organizational messages alone (Appel et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Fitrianiingsih et al., 2025).

Academic information (17%) and events and experiential activities (15%) complemented storytelling, parenting education, and testimonials. Collectively, the content reflected three functions: emotional communication through storytelling, informational communication through parenting and academic content, and credibility-oriented communication through testimonials and experiential activities. This combination is consistent with integrated marketing communication, which emphasizes complementary and consistent messages across communication activities (Batra & Keller, 2016; Keller, 2016). Digital media therefore functioned as an extension of institutional identity by repeatedly presenting students, parents, educational experiences, and institutional values (Hidayati et al., 2025; Pawar, 2025).

The institution's three parent WhatsApp groups involving 248 members, six parenting webinars, and sustained digital interaction indicate communication continuity beyond school selection. However, communication channels alone do not constitute direct evidence of retention or loyalty. Relational outcomes were more clearly reflected in 49 coded statements concerning trust and 37 concerning parental loyalty. These findings suggest that continued interaction may strengthen relational ties when parents perceive the institution as responsive, supportive, and consistent. The finding that 64% of newly enrolled parents learned about the school through word-of-mouth further indicates that existing parent relationships may contribute to advocacy. Retention is therefore better understood as a relational process involving communication continuity, trust, community participation, loyalty, and advocacy (Hollebeek et al., 2017; Ismail, 2017; Ibrahim et al., 2025).

Consumer insight alignment provides an interpretive link between these practices and brand-image formation. Parental concerns regarding moral development, digital exposure, peer influence, and character education corresponded with the institution's value-based

positioning and parenting-oriented content. Communication therefore became more relevant when it reflected stakeholder needs and expectations (Keller, 2017; Aaker, 2018). In this qualitative case, consumer insight alignment is not a statistically tested mediator but a linking mechanism identified through interview, observation, and documentary evidence (Yin, 2018; Greenhalgh, 2025). Overall, value-based positioning provides the identity foundation, digital creative execution communicates it, consumer insight alignment enhances relevance, and retention-oriented engagement sustains stakeholder relationships. These findings should be interpreted within the limitations of a single-case design, purposive sampling, researcher-dependent qualitative interpretation, and case-specific descriptive percentages. Future research may employ multiple-case or mixed-method designs to examine the transferability of these patterns.

Conclusion

This study concludes that creative marketing strategies contribute substantially to the formation of brand image in value-based educational institutions through the integration of value-based positioning, digital creative execution, customer retention, and consumer insight alignment. The findings show that value-based positioning, particularly the integration of academic achievement with moral and spiritual development, provides a distinctive foundation for institutional differentiation. Digital creative execution further strengthens this positioning through student storytelling, parenting education, and parent testimonials, which enhance emotional engagement, relevance, and institutional credibility. Customer retention activities, including parent communities, parenting webinars, and continuous relational communication, reinforce trust, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. Consumer insight alignment also functions as an important explanatory mechanism by connecting institutional communication with parental concerns regarding moral development, digital influence, and character education.

The findings suggest that educational managers may consider integrating authentic value-based positioning, relevant digital content, and sustained parent engagement when developing institutional marketing strategies. In the context of Labs School Kaizen, these practices appeared to support the communication of institutional values and the development of stakeholder relationships; however, their effectiveness should not be assumed to apply universally across educational institutions. Continuous stakeholder insight analysis may also help institutions align marketing communication with parents' expectations and concerns. This study is limited by its single-case qualitative design and relatively narrow stakeholder coverage, which restricts the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Future research should examine multiple value-based institutions through comparative case studies and mixed-method or quantitative approaches to assess whether similar patterns emerge across different settings. Future studies may also include students, alumni, teachers, and prospective parents to provide a broader understanding of educational brand-image formation and its long-term implications for institutional competitiveness.

Acknowledgment

-

References

- Aaker, D. A. (2018). Clarifying the brand vision. *California Management Review*, 60(4), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125618772396>
- Aguilar Solano, M. (2020). Triangulation and trustworthiness—Advancing research on public service interpreting through qualitative case study methodologies. *FITISPos International Journal*, 7(1), 106–120. <https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2020.7.1.249>
- Ahmad, M., & Wilkins, S. (2025). Purposive sampling in qualitative research: A framework for the entire journey. *Quality & Quantity*, 59, 1461–1479. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-024-02022-5>
- Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(1), 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>
- Batra, R., & Keller, K. L. (2016). Integrating marketing communications: New findings, new lessons, and new ideas. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 122–145. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0419>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Can I use TA? Should I use TA? Should I not use TA? Comparing reflexive thematic analysis and other pattern-based analytic approaches. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 21(1), 37–47. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12360>
- Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, 56, 1391–1412. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y>
- Carcary, M. (2020). The research audit trail: Methodological guidance for application in practice. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 18(2), 166–177. <https://doi.org/10.34190/JBRM.18.2.008>
- Dwianjani, L. P., Maduwiniarti, A., & Pratiwi, N. M. I. (2025). Pengaruh content marketing dan brand loyalty terhadap customer engagement pada Bengkel Fixup Moto Surabaya. *Journal Social Society*, 5(1), 349–363. <https://doi.org/10.54065/jss.5.1.2025.706>
- Dwivedi, R. K. (2024). Marketing of higher educational services on social media platforms: Analysing its impact on faculty–student relationship quality and institution's brand performance. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 78, e12559. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12559>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>
- Elhuria, D. A. S., Kamase, J., & Tenrisau, M. A. (2026). The influence of social media marketing and brand image on consumer loyalty with customer engagement as a mediating variable in franchise coffee shops. *Journal Social Society*, 6(3), 2127–2142. <https://doi.org/10.54065/jss.6.3.2026.1285>

- Eriani, Y., Khamidi, A., Amalia, K., & Nursalim, M. (2025). Social media branding strategies that strengthen school image among stakeholders. *Academia Open*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.10.2025.10953>
- Fitrianingsih, N. A. K., Fadhillah, A. N., Stemarkus, P. M., Deta, D. E. P., & Pratiwi, A. (2025). Pengaruh E-word of mouth dan brand image terhadap peningkatan penjualan dengan strategi pemasaran sebagai variabel moderasi pada Warmindo Mijo Surakarta. *Journal Social Society*, 5(1), 797–808. <https://doi.org/10.54065/jss.5.1.2025.779>
- Godey, B., Manthiou, A., Pederzoli, D., Rokka, J., Aiello, G., Donvito, R., & Singh, R. (2016). Social media marketing efforts of luxury brands: Influence on brand equity and consumer behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), 5833–5841. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.181>
- Greenhalgh, T. (2025). Case studies: A guide for researchers, educators, and implementers. *BMJ Medicine*, 4(1), e001623. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjmed-2025-001623>
- Guha, C., Vieceili, A. K., Wong, G., Manera, K., & Tong, A. (2021). Qualitative research methods and its application in nephrology. *Nephrology*, 26(10), 755–762. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nep.13888>
- Hidayati, L. L. A., Ferdinand, A. T., Kristiawati, I., Pramestie, D. A., & Sucahyo, S. E. (2025). Improving brand equity through social media marketing at Muhammadiyah educational institutions in Indonesia. *Contaduría y Administración*, 70(4), e528. <https://doi.org/10.22201/fca.24488410e.2025.5249>
- Ibrahim, A. A., Ahmad, S. Z., Rahim, A., & El-Adly, M. (2025). Social media marketing's impact on brand equity and loyalty in higher education: Customer engagement's role. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 18(4), 527–546. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIEB-08-2024-0105>
- Ismail, A. R. (2017). The influence of perceived social media marketing activities on brand loyalty. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 29(1), 129–144. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-10-2015-0154>
- Jufry, M. F. (2025). Marketing communication strategies in increasing brand awareness: A literature review. *Income Journal of Economics Development*, 5(1), 27–33. <https://doi.org/10.54065/ijed.5.1.2025.356>
- Keller, K. L. (2016). Unlocking the power of integrated marketing communications. *Journal of Advertising*, 45(3), 286–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1204961>
- Keller, K. L. (2017). Reflections on customer-based brand equity: Perspectives, progress, and priorities. *AMS Review*, 6(1–2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-016-0078-z>
- Khairiyah, U., Mariati, P., Faizah, S. N., Silvia, K. C., & Sasmita, F. E. (2026). Qualitative case study research in education: A systematic review of methodological approaches and analytical practices. *ELSE*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.30651/else.v10i1.24168>
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). Marketing 5.0: Technology for humanity. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 42(4), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-07-2020-0154>
- Lemon, L. L., & Hayes, J. (2020). Enhancing trustworthiness of qualitative findings: Using Leximancer for qualitative data analysis triangulation. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(3), 604–614. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4222>

- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Mishra, S., & Dey, A. K. (2021). Wish to craft a qualitative case study research? *South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases*, 10(3), 239–242.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/22779779211052145>
- Nguyen, B., Yu, X., Melewar, T. C., & Chen, J. (2016). Brand innovation and social media: Knowledge acquisition from social media, market orientation, and the moderating role of social media strategic capability. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 51, 11–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.04.017>
- Nofrizal, Juju, U., & Aznuriyandi. (2024). Finding reasons to choose a campus: The impact of social media and brand strategy. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 78, 988–1015.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12495>
- Novita, P. D., Amilda, & Atika, N. (2025). Public relations strategy in creating school branding through social media. *Studia Manageria*, 6(2), 127–140.
<https://doi.org/10.19109/studiamanageria.v6i2.25390>
- Orth, Z., Andipatin, M., Mukumbang, F. C., & van Wyk, B. (2020). Applying qualitative methods to investigate social actions for justice using social media: Illustrations from Facebook. *Social Media + Society*, 6(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120919926>
- Pawar, S. K. (2025). University branding in the age of social media: A systematic literature review and integrative framework. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-04-2025-0332>
- Putri, S. A., Andayani, S., & Pudjianto, A. (2025). Pengaruh sosial media marketing, kualitas pelayanan dan kepercayaan terhadap keputusan pembelian pada Klinik Kecantikan Derma Expres Surabaya. *Journal Social Society*, 5(1), 404–420.
<https://doi.org/10.54065/jss.5.1.2025.709>
- Rakhmat, A., Rohimah, N., & Anggraini, R. (2026). Cultural capital of alumni of Automation and Office Governance (OTKP) of SMKN 2 Jakarta in responding to the world of work. *Income Journal of Economics Development*, 6(2), 125–133.
<https://doi.org/10.54065/ijed.6.2.2026.779>
- Saikia, P., & Barman, H. (2023). A systematic analysis of higher educational content over social media for engagement optimization. *Review of Marketing Science*, 21(1), 77–110. <https://doi.org/10.1515/roms-2022-0050>
- Stephen, A. T. (2016). The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 10, 17–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2015.10.016>
- Stenfors, T., Kajamaa, A., & Bennett, D. (2020). How to assess the quality of qualitative research. *The Clinical Teacher*, 17(6), 596–599. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.13242>
- Susilawati, F. E., Yanti, R., & Erni, E. (2023). Transformasi digital pemerintah (Studi kasus: Implementasi e-government dan hambatanannya). *Journal Social Society*, 3(2), 80–94.
<https://doi.org/10.54065/jss.3.2.2023.338>

- Syam, S. (2025). A systematic literature review on the role of artificial intelligence in digital marketing strategies. *Income Journal of Economics Development*, 5(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.54065/ijed.5.1.2025.335>
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2017). *Social media marketing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Yaqin, M. A., & Aini, R. N. (2025). How social media drives brand awareness in educational institutions: Evidence from madrasah marketing strategies. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 4(1), 42–54. <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v4i1.767>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Yoon, B., & Uliassi, C. (2022). “Researcher-as-instrument” in qualitative research: The complexities of the educational researcher’s identities. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(4), 1088–1102. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5074>