



# MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN PROMOTING GRADUATES VOCATIONAL TOURISM SCHOOL TO GRADUATES USERS

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**ABSTRACT.** This research was conducted by observing the communication marketing strategy used at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang in marketing graduates to graduate users. The graduates who are the focus of this research are Human Resources (HR) in Tourism with a major in Hospitality and Restaurant. The research approach used is a qualitative study by directly observing and interviewing relevant parties, and taking data available in the field. The communication strategy used by SMK Negeri 6 Palembang takes into account the 4p (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) elements from the producer's point of view and the 4c (Consumer, Cost, Convenience, and Communication) elements from the consumer's point of view. SMK Negeri 6 Palembang directly involves consumers (graduate users), and the tourism industry in creating quality graduates (Tourism Human Resources). The results of the study show the benefits of each party, both from SMK Negeri 6 Palembang and from the Tourism Industry. SMK Negeri 6 Palembang easily creates Tourism HR by following the needs and standards of the industry because they are accompanied by the Industry. Meanwhile, the tourism industry easily recruits human resources for tourism to be placed in departments that match the qualification needs of the tourism industry, both nationally and internationally.

**KEYWORDS:** Strategy Marketing Communication; Graduates; Graduates User.

## INTRODUCTION

The President's direction in realizing Indonesia's vision for 2020-2024 is to accelerate the development of Indonesian Human Resources (HR), namely to improve the pyramid of workforce qualifications so that they become trained, skilled workers so that all of them are absorbed into industries (Cholik, 2020). Vocational High Schools (SMK) are educational institutions that produce operational workers or operator-level qualifications with Indonesian National Work (KKNI) Level II and Level III qualifications. This is expected to be able to create graduates who are skilled and under their competence with graduate users.

SMK Negeri 6 Palembang is one of the best Tourism Vocational Schools in South Sumatra, this SMK produces at least 400 graduates every year with 4 Skill Competencies, namely Hospitality, Culinary, Clothing, and Skin and Hair Beauty. Graduates of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang fulfill Industrial Needs as Operators in various Industries in South Sumatra, National, and even International Industries. These 400 graduates are expected to be accepted and adapted to the world of work or industry according to their respective expertise competencies. However, in its journey, Vocational Schools are not only creating but also Vocational Schools are expected to be able to bring their graduates to be accepted in industries that are in accordance with the skills of the students as a form of good institutional responsibility in the world of education. Because SMK produces graduates who are fresh graduates who have high loyalty and responsibility at their age. Vocational school graduates are of productive age at work. This is evidenced by the population census in 2020 which shows the age of 15-64 years reaching 70.72% of the total population of Indonesia more precisely the age of this SMK as a prospective worker in the industry is

referred to as Generation Z. SMK Negeri 6 Palembang as a producer of Tourism Human Resources (HR) plays an important role in improving the quality and quantity of Human Resources (HR) in the Tourism Industry, both in South Sumatra in particular and in Indonesia in general. In addition, the human resources produced by SMK Negeri 6 Palembang are also customer satisfaction oriented, because the level of qualification for positions for graduates of Tourism Vocational Schools is the spearhead of services that directly deal with customers and fulfill product and customer services. A good strategy is needed in promoting graduates to industries that are users of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang graduates so that graduates of this Tourism Vocational School can be accepted in the industry according to their expertise. For this reason, the author took the initiative to research this at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang, with the research title "Communication Marketing Strategy in promoting Graduates Tourism Vocational School to Graduates Users."

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### Communication Marketing Strategy

Marketing Communication Strategy includes several elements known as the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) in taking the Trust of product users. These four components are known as the Marketing Mix Method which applies not only to traditional marketing but can be done digitally. In its implementation in the new normal era, the marketing mix method is more directed to 4C (Consumer, Cost, Convenience, Communication), as Philip Kotler's criticism (Kotler, 1997) in using the 4P (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) must consider the 4C (Consumer, Cost, Convenience, Communication) because the Marketing Mix Method is product-oriented, not customer-oriented. because when the product that is formed is good it will automatically satisfy the customer. Agus Hermawan (Hermawan, 2012) stated in the marketing strategy from the seller's point of view the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion). From the consumer's point of view 4C (Customer needs, Cost, Convenience, and Communication).

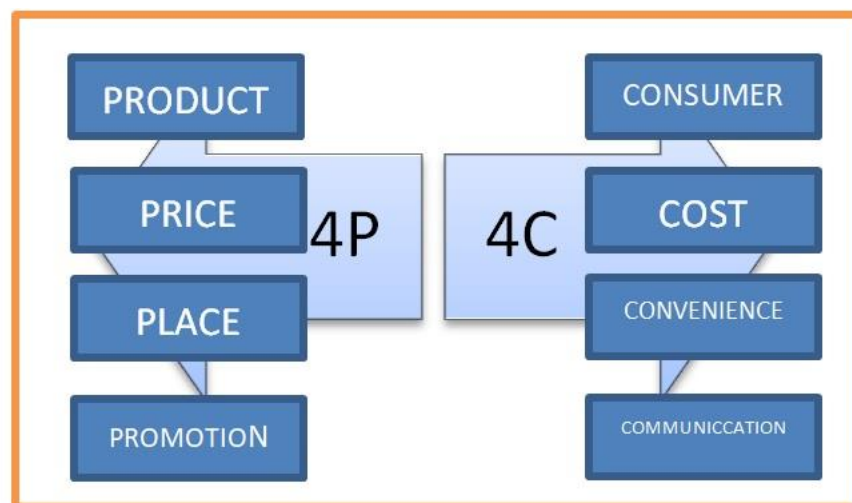


Figure 2. The 4P and 4C Elements

### Product

The product can be interpreted as a very vital object that affects the success of a company to bring in benefit (Profit). But broadly, the product is also defined as anything that can be offered to the market to

satisfy a need or want. The product itself has different characteristics, properties, and characteristics, and even adapts to market demand or product users. So a company must ensure the quality of its products in accordance with the needs and desires of customers. These products may include:

1. Quality
2. Excellence
3. Brand Name
4. Advantage
5. Level

### **Price**

The price here can be interpreted as the value of the product to be marketed, so it can be judged whether a product is worthy of being marketed or not. And also the industry that produces it does have credibility, excellence, and high quality.

### **Place**

The place can be coverage, reach, and have a clear market in marketing the products produced.

### **Promotion**

Promotion is the process of marketing a product by paying attention to media, tools, time, and goals. As well as the people who do this promotion themselves so that the promotions are carried out effectively and efficiently.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach that describes the words both written and direct. The data is taken by interview method from relevant sources for the research. And also described the use of data in the form of pictures, and words, rather than numbers (Mulyana, 2008). Data were collected using observations in the SMK Negeri 6 Palembang environment, and conducting interviews with relevant leadership elements with the required data. Starting from the Principal as Top Management, Vice of Principal, to related elements, as well as the tourism industry, in this case, the hotel as a graduates user of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

SMK Negeri 6 Palembang is one of the best Tourism Vocational Schools in South Sumatra and a reference for other Tourism Vocational Schools in South Sumatra. In the learning process, SMK Negeri 6 Palembang has a business process designed to implement and maintain a quality management system that is output-oriented or graduates. This is illustrated in Figure 1. The Business Process of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang below (Waris, 2020), starting from input from the general public to becoming graduates in this training education institution.

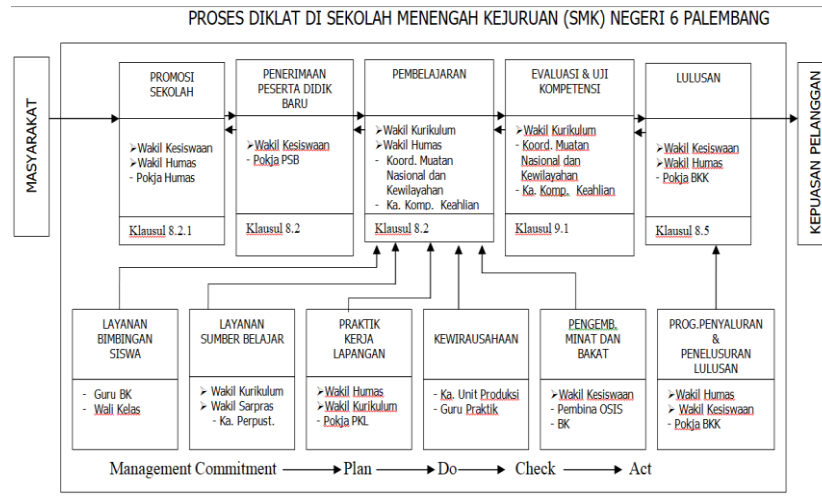


Figure 2. Business Process

In order, graduates can be empowered according to their expertise competencies. So, the Vice-principal of Student Affairs, Vice Principal of Public Relations Affairs, and Special Job Fair Task Force (BKK) must carefully use marketing strategies with the 4p and 4c elements in promoting graduates of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang to graduates users. Users of vocational graduates, especially those majoring in Hospitality and Catering, are in the Tourism Industry such as Hotels and Restaurants.

### Product and Consumer

The products here are graduates of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang who become Human Resources (HR) Tourism for Hotels and Restaurants in South Sumatra. SMK Negeri 6 Palembang has many advantages, both as an institution that implements the International Standard Organization (ISO) 9001:2015, has Excellent Accreditation and a Vocational High School that creates Human Resources (HR) Tourism fresh graduates with KKNI Level II Hospitality and KKNI Level II Catering which the industry desperately needs. Level II is the operator level in the qualifications stipulated in Presidential Regulation No. 8 of 2012 (Presiden RI, 2012) and Regulation of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia No. 5 of 2022 (Badan et al., 2022) concerning the Implementation of the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework in the Hotel and Restaurant Sector. In addition, in producing graduates, it also applies a competency-based curriculum. This competency refers to the Indonesian National Work Competency Standards (SKKNI) which is registered by the Ministry of Labor of the Republic of Indonesia and includes assessment standards for places of practice and equipment used at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang.

These products or graduates of Tourism Vocational Schools are expected to become Competent Tourism HR. To achieve Competent Graduates which include Skill, Attitude, Knowledge, Vice Principal of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang in the field of public relations, through the Special Job Fair Task Force for SMK Negeri 6 Palembang surveyed the satisfaction of graduate users such as The Excelton Hotel, Novotel Hotel, Zuri Group Hotel, Wyndham OPI Hotel, R.M. Pagi Sore, Brasserie Bakery, etc. As well as involving graduates users validating a curriculum that is in accordance with the industry, accepting internships for students at SMK Negeri 6 Palembang, industrial classes, guest teachers (industry) as a form of marketing strategy for the Vice Principal of Vocational Public Relations affairs in promoting graduates as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which bind each other as a symbiotic mutualism between the SMK producing graduate products and the graduate users (Hotel and Restaurant Industry) in producing qualified and competent graduates.

## **Price and Cost**

Graduates of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang have a high selling point, this is evidenced by a certificate of competence as a certificate accompanying a diploma school where the certificate is issued by the National Professional Certification Authority (BNSP) which officially has the authority to certify human resources in Indonesia based on Presidential Regulation No. 10 of 2018 (Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2018). This competency certificate is registered with the Ministry of Labor. In addition, this certificate also proves that these graduates are competent in the KKNI Level II Hospitality Certification Scheme and KKNI Level II Catering. And this competency certificate is used as a requirement for graduate users (such as hotels) in the accreditation process for determining the stars of a hotel, which requires the HR in the hotel to have a competency certificate from the National Professional Certification Authority (BNSP) in accordance with their field of work.

## **Place and Convenience**

SMK Negeri 6 Palembang is an affordable place for the Hotel and Restaurant Industry. The reach that is easily achieved is a form of convenience for the Hotel and Restaurant Industry, especially for the Industry involved in SMK Negeri 6 Palembang in producing competent and quality graduates. This industry makes SMK Negeri 6 Palembang a place that provides Human Resources (HR) when they need a lot of personnel to serve customers at events with large parties. SMK Negeri 6 Palembang is the right place to provide daily workers (DW). Because the Industry knows about the graduate products produced by SMK Negeri 6 Palembang, the Industry can easily recruit graduates to be placed in their Industry. And this convenience is used by SMK Negeri 6 Palembang because the industry is indeed a partner in forming graduates. In addition, the industry feels comfortable serving foreign guests because SMK Negeri 6 Palembang also applies the Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC) which refers to the ASEAN Common Competency Standard for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) which is agreed upon and recognized by ASEAN countries as a trust for Hotel and Restaurant Industry in serving tourists from abroad. The main key in the hospitality business is to create people who are ready to serve guests with all their hearts (Haryono, 2015).

## **Promotion and Communication**

Communication is the key to the promotion carried out by SMK Negeri 6 Palembang in marketing its graduates to the Tourism Industry (graduate users). Communication that is built by involving the industry is a good marketing strategy in planning the graduates needed by the industry from the initial process of entry, learning process, and graduating with skill, attitude, and knowledge. This strategy is evidenced by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which includes Teacher and Student Internship Activities, Visiting Teachers, Industrial Classes, and Curriculum Validation, Hotel Tours for students, and recruitment of alumni to become employees in Industry. In addition, to involving the industry, SMK Negeri 6 Palembang also uses social media facilities, alumni associations, and other media. In marketing its graduates, SMK Negeri 6 Palembang through the Special Job Fair Task Force (BKK) which is registered with the Labor Office of the City of Palembang, this BKK is part of the South Sumatra BKK Forum which makes a data collection application for *SIKAMJA* alumni, initiated by the South Sumatra Education Office, especially in the Vocational School. The BKK Forum also collaborates with the Education Office and the Labor Office in promoting SMK graduates in South Sumatra according to their respective fields and expertise. In addition, at the BKK School, SMK Negeri 6 Palembang also has a special secretariat to serve the industry which directly comes to the school to recruit the required workforce. So, BKK SMK Negeri 6 Palembang must have graduate data that are ready to be placed and in accordance with their majors.

## **Feedback**

Marketing Communication Strategy by involving the industry by paying attention to the 4p and 4c elements is a profitable strategy for both parties so that the school as a graduate printer (Tourism HR) can easily distribute graduates to the industry. Likewise, the tourism industry is easy to recruit and place tourism human resources in the industry, because they already know the human resources to be recruited and placed through the process of involving the industry in determining learning standards and graduate standards produced by SMK Negeri 6 Palembang. There is an element of balance on both sides; the 4p element is taken from the producer's point of view while the 4c is taken from the user's points of view which are related to each other.

## **CONCLUSION**

Marketing Communication Strategy is very much needed in promoting graduates of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang, thus SMK must be selective in choosing a strategy so that the strategy used is effective and efficient. Because only SMK Negeri 6 Palembang produces Tourism Human Resources (HR), there are many Tourism Vocational Schools in South Sumatra and there is even a Tourism Polytechnic which is directly under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. This encourages SMK Negeri 6 Palembang to continue its achievements by paying attention to the 4p and 4c elements.

Suggestions and recommendations follow in this research for various parties involved in improving the quality and competence of graduates. For SMK Negeri 6 Palembang, what needs to be done is to maintain the quality and competence of graduates. First, always maintain the consistency of the competencies of existing graduates, teachers, and assessors. Second, always maintain good relations with industry, especially in involving improving the quality of graduates. Third, the school should detail the cooperation program in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) related to competencies to be achieved through teacher internships and student internships, because this MoU is one of the outputs of the communication strategy used by the school. Fourth, the school through the BKK of SMK Negeri 6 Palembang should always update Tracer-study information in placing graduates in the industry in the form of graduate data, competence, and the industry that employs them. Fifth, trying to respond immediately to every industry need as a graduate user by updating information on industry needs, for example, the industry party in involving curriculum validation recommends that schools creating graduates not only need hard skills but the industry needs soft skills which include language skills, integrity, loyalty, and responsibility, as well as other soft skills inherent in their respective competencies and expertise.

For the tourism industry as a graduate user, first, play an active role in the process of forming the competence of Tourism Vocational High School graduates as a means of recruiting and developing tourism human resource competencies. Second, provide input, and objective direction for the needs of graduate profiles that are in accordance with industry and the times, as well as technological needs. Third, provide rewards or rewards to schools and graduates who are worthy of the applicable provisions. Fourth, make the school a partner in improving services in the industry. Fifth, bring the industrial atmosphere to the Tourism Vocational School so that it makes industrial culture, a culture for every daily activity at school. Fifth, the industry should also respond well to the wishes of the Tourism Vocational School, especially as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

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