Rebranding Strategies for Educational Institutions: A Case Study of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is one of the schools that successfully increased student enrollment by 300% in the past year after appointing a new principal. This significant transformation was driven by the new principal's rebranding efforts, which introduced various modern initiatives across multiple aspects of the school to create a more distinct, appealing, and competitive image. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, gathering data through interviews, observations, and documentation to analyze the impact of these strategic changes. This study SMP Muhduta, the rebranding strategies M implemented to increase student enrollment and enhance the school's image, making it more positive, attractive, and high-quality. The findings show that the school achieved notable success in rebranding initiatives critical, including scholarship programs for orphans and underprivileged students, providing each student with a laptop to support digital learning, organizing monthly outing classes to promote experiential education, a "one-student-one-medal" program to encourage individual achievement, and the distribution of 1,000 proposals to generate interest, community involvement, and funding support. These efforts collectively contributed to a revitalized school image. They strengthened public interest, illustrating the critical role of strategic rebranding in boosting school appeal, building trust, and encouraging broader community participation in education.

INTRODUCTION

The school's image is a determinant of how the public views the school. Rebranding can improve the school's reputation, attract more students, and strengthen the relationships with policymakers, parents, teachers, and the community. The quality of the image built has the potential to radically change the culture of the institution (Xydia, 2019). The success of rebranding is not just about changing the logo or slogan. However, it includes a more profound transformation, from core values and visual identity to the academic approach and services offered (Muzellec and Lambkin 2006). School rebranding is measured from various aspects, such

as increasing the number of registrants, parents, and student satisfaction to recognition from the wider community. Successful *rebranding* also creates a sense of admiration among students, teachers, and alumni and confirms the school's position as a relevant, innovative, and competitive educational institution.

SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is facing several challenges related to the position and image of the school. First, there is the problem of general conditions, where the number of students accepted has decreased around 2019 to 2022 due to the addition of class quotas in public schools to accommodate the community's need for affordable education. Second, there is tight competition with SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Kartasura, which is bigger and famed in the regional scope, so, parents will consider sending their children to SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Kartasura. Third, another factor in the case of declining interest and trust of parents to send their children to SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is the physical building that is perceptible from the outside (highway) such as a run-down school building, uninhabitable, and like an abandoned school.

Schools realize that many things could be more optimal in the school management process, such as school achievements, learning systems, internal conditions, etc. Therefore, schools need to carry out a rebranding process to rise from the existing slump. According to Riyono (2018) in Santosa, branding in the education sector implies an effort to form a new identity through educational foundations as a form of administration, with unique commitments and values that are not the same as other institutions to influence individuals in choosing the foundation or school because they remember a particular brand image which is the main reason (Santosa and Aji, 2022). From this comprehension, we can conclude that " brand " is a product identity, while branding is a way of introducing a product to be known and integrated into the minds of consumers. So, in the context of good branding, the extraordinary character and uniqueness of the school are emphasized. Therefore, the school can focus on highlighting a particular brand that is unique and easy to remember rather than pursuing all aspects of the brand that may be too burdensome.

Educational technology innovation is a significant strategy to improve the image of schools. Schools are seen as a place to improve the quality of human resources. Humans in modern times use technology in various aspects of life. Technology-based learning is an extraordinary attraction (Santosa & Aji, 2022). Integrating technology in the learning process increases teaching effectiveness and strengthens the school's position as a modern school. The utilization of technology in schools offers a more interactive learning experience and supports students' formation of 21st-century skills.

The image of the school in terms of management is the core of the school rebranding *process*. School management is the basis for regulating the process of policy structuring and structural changes to the institution. Rebuilding the policy and structural order can be a measure to change the institution's brand entity. The practical benefits of rebranding in terms of management can increase the number of new registrants to the school, provided that it is carried out carefully, structured, and measurable (Abadi and Maharani, 2021).

Changing the name and logo is often effective in rebranding an institution. Besides that, replacing the principal with an extraordinary vision also improve the school's image. A principal who has an extraordinary vision can inspire employees at the school. Collaboration between the

principal and employees produces school values. The shift in market segmentation is considered significant for school rebranding (Arif, Soedjarwo, and Roesminingsih, 2022).

This study focuses on some efforts made by the new principal that SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura experienced a high surge of 300% in the last 1 year, which made this school come back from the slump. So, the problem of the study is how the efforts and breakthroughs made by the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura in transforming for the better in a relatively short time by knowing and analyzing the process carried out in rebranding SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura.

This study is novel in the specific context of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, which has the motto *"sekolahnya umat membangun peradaban"* as a basis for increasing public trust. This motto makes SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura unique from other schools, especially in Solo Raya. The motto is intended as a form of cadre formation through quality and superior education aimed at people with lower middle economic abilities. This study is expected to provide significant contributions to the development of educational management science, especially in the context of school leadership in improving the school's image. The results of this study can be a reference for policymakers and school leaders in efforts to increase public trust in their respective environments. Therefore, rebranding is needed to improve the quality and image of the school, because it is considered to have reached its saturation point, then it is necessary to refresh the brand by rebranding (Fauzia, 2021).

METHODS

This type of qualitative research uses a case study approach. According to Guba & Lincoln, a case study is a study that examines an event thoroughly, intensively, and repeatedly, where the event or case can cover the individual, organizational, program, system, and population levels (Santosa and Aji 2022, 80). This approach aims to describe, analyze, and analyze a unique and interesting case to study: the practice of rebranding strategies carried out by SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura (Wita & Mursal, 2022). Observation, interviews, and documentation were carried out using data collection techniques in this research.

Furthermore, the data that has been obtained will be analyzed descriptively. Descriptive analysis is a method used to understand and explain a set of events or incidents from an object impartially to carefully describe the quality of the problem being studied, by trying to obtain and convey the reality in the field entirely to reveal and know specifically about what and how it happens (Zellatifanny & Mudjiyanto, 2019) . Researchers also examine and explore all information and experience from the figures involved as the subject of the research. The data sources and subjects used in this study include the principal, educators, and other school staff at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura as primary data and other documents related to the research as secondary data sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Result

The rebranding initiatives at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura achieved the following outcomes:

1. Increased Enrollment: The school saw a 300% increase in student enrollment within one year, demonstrating the effectiveness of the implemented strategies.

2. Enhanced Community Trust: Stakeholders, including parents and donors, reported increased trust and confidence in the school's vision and leadership.
3. Scholarship Program for Orphans and Disadvantaged Students: The foster father system successfully provided full scholarships to orphans, ensuring educational access for underprivileged groups.
4. Digital Learning Integration: Through the "One Student, One Laptop" program, students gained access to digital tools, improving learning outcomes and fostering modern skills.
5. Monthly Outing Class: This program enriched students' experiential learning, improving engagement and understanding of academic concepts through practical applications.
6. Fundraising Success: The distribution of 1,000 proposals resulted in significant financial contributions, enabling the revitalization of school facilities and infrastructure.
7. Recognition of Student Achievements: The "One Student, One Medal" initiative encouraged individual accomplishments, leading to a high percentage of students achieving notable success in various fields.

Despite these successes, challenges included limited funding, operational complexities, and dependency on new leadership. Addressing these issues requires sustained effort, effective resource management, and active stakeholder collaboration.

DISCUSSION

Orphan and Dhuafa Scholarship Program (Ayah Asuh)

The highest cost of education is responded by SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura by providing full scholarships until graduation. The first finding in this study shows that the efforts made by SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura as a school for the people to build civilization are provide scholarships for students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura. In accordance with Murniasih (2009) that scholarships are used as awards given to individuals to continue their education to a higher level. There are several types of scholarships: award, assistance, athletic, and full (Murniasih, 2009). Scholarships are intended for students who have achievements and talents also who are restricted by costs.

Based on the research results, it was found that SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura provides scholarships to students who need to enter SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, the school provides full scholarships until graduation without any fees for orphaned students. The concept of providing scholarships at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is different with other schools. Schools generally provide scholarships sourced from assistance from the ministry or scholarship assistance institutions (Alshamaila et al., 2024). This differs from SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, which independently uses a foster father system. The foster father system was implemented with the idea of Mujibuddakwah as the principal. The principal and his team conducted diplomacy by looking for donors among Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah donors consist of professors, educators, and educational staff around Indonesia. The principal explained through an interview:

" *The foster father system is an idea to provide financial assistance for education for orphans, this system involves donors from Muhammadiyah and Aisyah consisting of professors, educators, and educational staff who care about the fate of the nation's children's education* " (Mujibuddakwah, Principal of Muhduta School).

The foster father system connects scholarship grantee with donors. This type of scholarship assistance allows donors to know the progress of students who receive scholarships at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura. The classification of scholarship assistance is different from determining other student fees. Research conducted by Purnama, Wiharjo, and Djaksana (2021)

provides scholarships by determining the priority decision for scholarship grantee based on multiple criteria based on grades and achievements. This differs from the findings at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, which classifies scholarship grantee by classifying orphans. The purpose of this scholarship is so that orphans can continue their education.

The success of the foster father scholarship cannot be separated from the role of each teacher at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura. Findings: In the field, the principal formed an M-Team to reach all SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura donors. The M-Team comprises the principal and all SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura teachers and was formed to formulate and implement the principal's grand plan.

One Student, One Laptop Facility

The one-student, one-laptop facility is one of the more advanced ways to respond to the needs of the times. This school carries out paperless learning that utilizes digital technology to replace the use of paper in the teaching and learning process; students access assignment materials and learning resources online. In accordance with the research conducted by (Kholili et al., 2024) . The study explains that in responding to the development of the era, education must be dynamic and adapt to existing developments. Now we are facing the 21st century, which is closely related to innovation and technology.

A study by Ahmad et al. (2024) explained that improving the education process will be easily achieved with the help of technology and the internet. Through the "One Child, One Laptop" program, each student has direct access to the technological devices needed to learn effectively. Thus, students can take advantage of various online resources, collaborate with friends, and develop digital skills that very important in the 21st century.

"SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura has been conducting learning without using notebooks; this school carries a digital school program where in learning activities utilizing information and communication technology, we facilitate students with laptops; each student at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura will get one laptop that has been accessed with the internet. Students can use these facilities to support learning activities." explained (Mujibuddakwah, Principal of Muhduta).

The use of technology in education provides accessible information to help solve problems. Digital technology provides more information, communication, and connectivity to support innovation in the quality and justice of inclusive education services. Technology is needed in various schools around the world (Zulkarnain et al., 2024) . In accordance with the explanation:

(Mujibuddakwah, Principal of Muhduta School). *"The development of the era demands us to see the changes that exist, we need a strategic way to respond to the developments that happen, this program exists to respond to the development of the era where everything is digital now, schools as educational institutions must be able to adapt to the developments that exist so as not to be left behind."*

The "One Student, One Laptop" program is a step forward in responding to the needs of the modern era. Digital schools such as SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura have adopted digital technology to improve learning effectiveness and create the education process more inclusive. With laptop facilities for each student, this school has succeeded in implementing effective paperless learning. In accordance with the theory that education must be dynamic and adaptive to the development of the times. As explained by (Kholili et al., 2024) , education must be ready to adapt to the rapidly developing innovations and technologies nowadays.

Outing Class Program Once a Month

The outing class program is an out-of-class learning activity designed to provide students with direct learning experiences in a natural environment (Grimalda, Rahman, and Hermawan 2021) . This program aims to connect the theories learned in class with real-world practices so that students can understand better the material contextually (Hayudiyani et al., 2020) . In outing classes, schools usually visit educational places such as museums, zoos, historical sites, or even industrial companies to see how their knowledge is applied in everyday life immediately.

The differs with another schools, which hold outing class activities once a year or even only once at the school level, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura holds an outing class program once a month to visit the nearest educational tourism destinations in the Kartasura region and its surroundings.

" *So, the monthly outing class that we have arranged the program and schedule is a program that has a big impact on the revival of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura. Because this program make the prospective students feel happy or have fun when the study tour or outing class is held once a month. Then, the extraordinary thing is that this program is carried out without spending much money (less than 20 thousand rupiahs) and is often free of charge, depending on the destination location. This program lead they (prospective students) ask their parents to register them to attend SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura .*" (Arfin, Vice Principal of Muhduta)

With this monthly *outing class program*, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura allows students to explore the world beyond textbooks, broaden their horizons, and develop a more significant curiosity about various disciplines. Thus, the expectation from Muhduta that he wants to achieve from this activity is to help students better understand the concepts learned in class also improve social and cooperation skills through interactions with classmates in a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

The Outing Class program is the most concrete and in-depth form of learning, which allows students to learn more effectively through direct experience (Supriatna, 2018) . This improve learning process and makes students more involved so that they can understand the material better (Syam, Latief, and Syakur, 2024) . If analyzed, the outing class program compiled by Muhduta is similae with the theory described by Edgar Dale in a pyramid shape or commonly known as the term (Cone Of Experience). A more detailed explanation is presented in the following image.

According to Dale, more concrete (direct) experiences tend to improve understanding and retention of information better than abstract experiences (Zulfiati, 2014) . So, the Outing Class Program is one of the learning methods that provide direct learning experiences to students (KA Putri, Putri, and Maranatha, 2023) . In the context of Edgar Dale's cone of experience, Outing Class is located at the bottom of the cone, namely direct experience. By being directly involved in this kind of activity, students learn through theory or textbooks and experience the concepts being studied.

The following are several points of analysis on how the outing class at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura can be implemented according to Dale's theory:

1. Real and Concrete Experience: Outing class allows Muhduta students to experience authentic learning situations directly. For example, in history lessons, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura visited the Radya Pustaka museum, De Tjolomadoe and the Triwindu traditional market, which are still located in the Kartasura region. In this case, Muhduta students conducted observations in the open air, so they not only read or see pictures, but also conducted direct observations. This is in accordance with Dale's fundamental principle, which states that real and concrete experiences significantly impact learning.

2. Interaction with the Environment: Students learn by interacting directly with their environment. In outing classes, students can engage in activities involving more senses, such as touch, sight, hearing, and even smell (Manik and Khadijah, 2024) . This will improve Muhduta students' understanding of the subject matter, because the experience is more accurate than just listening to explanations or looking at pictures.

3. Facilitating Active Learning: In the outing class, students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura are focused on active participation, such as completing assignments in the field or conducting experiments. This active participation allows students to be more involved, in accordance with Dale's theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct activities in the learning process.

4. Higher Learning Retention: Based on Dale's cone of experience, learning experiences that involve more senses and hands-on activities tend to increase students' retention or memory of the material being learned. In Muhduta's outing class held once a month, students have a greater chance of remembering information because they learn it through concrete and direct experiences (Pohan et al., 2022).

So based on Edgar Dale's learning theory analysis, the outing class program initiated by SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is one of the most effective methods in providing concrete learning experiences that are important in improving student understanding and retention. This outing class program can also be integrated with abstract learning forms, for example, by asking students to make written reports or presentations after the activity. This can help them connect direct experiences with higher abstract concepts. Teachers can create more holistic and practical learning by combining direct experiences from outing classes with abstract learning.

The "One Student, One Medal" Program

Student talent development programs have become an inseparable part of developing student potential and the quality of educational institutions. Schools are a place to achieve academic achievement, and many people also make schools a choice for non-academic achievement (Purnama et al., 2023) . However, unlike schools in general, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura has its own uniqueness in fostering the achievements of its students. As can be seen from the program's name, "one student, one medal," this program aims to produce all its students, not only talented students but also students who have not found their talents, to have championship achievements.

The observation results show that 97% of the total number of students excel, and the remaining 3% have not achieved this because they are students in the ABK (Special Needs Children) category. This percentage is proof of the real success of this one student, one medal program.

The achievement of the program's objectives cannot be separated from the intensive coaching of educators at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura. Arfin, the deputy head of curriculum at SMP Muhduta, said during an interview:

"*We mobilize all teachers according to their fields to develop students' interests and talents. Every student has their intelligence and uniqueness. After identifying interests and talents, students will be trained and directed to participate in special activities that suit their interests and talents. Students are prepared to be able to compete in competitions and win medals or achievements.*" (Arfin, Head of Muhduta Curriculum).

This statement is very relevant to the Multiple Intelligence theory by Howard Gardner, which states that, in essence, every child is intelligent. This view opposes that intelligence is only

seen from the IQ factor. Gardner sees intelligence from various dimensions. Every intelligence that a child has will lead the child to achieve success (Berliana and Atikah, 2023) .

Based on this theory, researchers found that in the "one student one medal" program, teachers' role in facilitating each student's intelligence is very important. If this is fulfilled, the child will develop optimally. The teacher's efforts in implementing the "one student one medal" program go through several stages, namely:

1. Identify potential student interests and talents.
2. Intensive mentoring and training every week
3. Implementation of action plan to participate in the competition
4. Monitoring and Evaluation of the program

The achievement of the number of outstanding students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is a positive indication that the "one student one medal" program and the coaching carried out at the school are effective. This reflects the adoption of successful strategies, such as increasing focus on talent development, improving the quality of teaching, or implementing programs. Thus, schools can build a strong reputation in producing outstanding students, which in turn can attract more prospective students and gain positive support from the school community and parents.

Efforts in Distributing 1.000 Proposals

A proposal is a form of work plan that is to be submitted. According to (Ratang and Ugun, 2021) . A proposal is a formal document that outlines a plan for a particular project or endeavor. A proposal is basically a request for approval, funding, or support (YH Putri and Mavilinda, 2021) . The program for distributing 1000 proposals carried out by SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta is an initiative to obtain financial support from various parties, especially from lecturers at the University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS).

The 1000 Proposals Program at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura stands out as a unique initiative in educational fundraising, different from other school operational assistance. This approach is characterized by scale, focus, profound innovation, and continuous evaluation to build a more comprehensive network. This program reflects the school's courage and innovation in improving the quality of education through collaboration and can inspire other institutions. According to Arfin R. Irfani, S.Pd., deputy head of curriculum, this program shows how schools can take the initiative to achieve better educational goals. As a further explanation of this program, Arfin R. Irfani, S.Pd., deputy head of curriculum at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, stated in an interview:

" *The funds successfully obtained amounted to approximately 300 million for the program that has been implemented for constructing the front facade of the SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura building. The use of 100% of the funds is used for the construction process, because of the 300 million for the construction process alone is still lacking, so it cannot be allocated to other activities, so it is fully for the construction process at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, more precisely revitalization because it is not building from scratch, but repairing the existing building.*" (Arfin, Vice Principal of Muhduta School)

Management of education funds directly impacts the quality of schools, especially in terms of facilities and learning resources. Many schools need help carrying teaching and learning activities optimally due to financial problems, paying teacher salaries and procuring learning facilities. Financial management is needed to ensure the smooth running of the learning process, which functions as a guideline in the management and allocation of education funds (Lias Hasibuan, Kasful Anwar Us, 2021) .

When analyzed, the statement above is in line with the theory of Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist famous for his contribution to the theory of organizational change through the "Unfreeze-Change-Refreeze" model. This model explains the existence of forces that struggle to maintain the status quo and the drive to make changes (Hayadi et al., 2024) . In the context of change management, Kurt Lewin's model provides a practical framework for analyzing the dynamics of change at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, primarily related to the building revitalization project. This model consists of three main stages:

1. Unfreeze

     This stage involves the preparation and introduction of the changes to be made. At SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura, unfreeze was marked by submitting a proposal approved and accepted by the relevant parties. This process also involved fundraising that successfully raised around 300 million rupiah. In this stage, the principal and management team conveyed a vision to make the school an inclusive educational institution, accessible to all groups, both those who are able and those who are not. This approach is essential to overcome resistance and prepare all parties for the changes to come.

2. Moving

     After the unfreezing process, the moving phase begins, where the strategy for building construction is finalized. The funds collected are fully utilized for building revitalization, demonstrating management's commitment to achieving the set goals. Here, an important role is demonstrated by the treasurer, Mrs. Sarah, who is responsible for the use of funds. The project implementation focuses on repairing and beautifying the building to make it more attractive to prospective students and parents. Communication and transparency in fund management minimize the potential for holding back changes.

3. Refreeze

     The final stage is refreezing, where the changes that have been achieved are internalized and maintained. After the revitalization project is completed, a fund accountability report is prepared and submitted by the treasurer to the principal, who then reports it to the Muhammadiyah branch leadership. This process ensures accountability and confirms SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura's commitment to transparency and good management. With the revitalization of the building, the school is expected to attract more students, create a better learning environment, and ultimately achieve the school's vision as an educational institution that builds civilization.

The application of the Kurt Lewin Model in managing the building revitalization project at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura shows the importance of each stage of change. From preparing all parties to accept the change to implementing and maintaining the results, this model provides a practical guide for sustainable change management. With the right strategy and transparent reporting, the school can continue contributing to inclusive and quality education in Kartasura.

The change process that occurred at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura can be said to have succeeded in following Kurt Lewin's change model. The school was able to go through all three stages of change well, starting from identifying problems, planning, and implementing changes, also consolidating and integrating changes. This success cannot be separated from all stakeholders' commitment and hard work.

CONCLUSION

Facing problems that almost closed the school, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is committed to rebuilding the school's image to becoming a leading school in the Kartasura residency. Before 2023, SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura was a non-leading school. The foundation responded to this condition by replacing the old principal with a principal who had achievements in the school he previously led. The principal aims to rebrand SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura into an informatics school. The informatics school is the long-term goal of SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura. The principal and all school employees are trying to achieve this goal. The rebranding process by SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Kartasura is currently on a positive trend with various extraordinary efforts are being made.

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