

# Marketing and Religious Communication Minority Schools in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study explains Christian schools' value (minority) and it can compete with majority schools in Indonesia. The objective explains marketing and religious communication which is used by minority schools in Indonesia. This research is used descriptive - qualitative. The data collection technique was carried out by direct interview method with the marketing manager, principal, and head of the foundation. The results showed that the strength of religious values in Christian schools has affected parents choose Christian schools as formal education for their children. the communication concept of this school is words of mouth. Words of mouth build intensive interactions between parents and schools so they have clear school information. The function of marketing communication by schools to convince, confirm, eliminate uncertainty and eliminate doubts from parents about Christian schools. Words of mouth is a communication strategy that has been successfully carried out by schools to churches, communities, and organizations so parents decide their children to choose Christian schools and it's interesting and trusted.

**Keywords:** Educations, Religious, Marketing, Communication, Words of mouth, Christian

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is known for the slogan *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which is different but still one (Pursika, 2009). The diversity of culture, religion, and community tolerance in Indonesia shows that Indonesian people uphold the values of Pancasila as the basis of the state (Kusumohamidjojo, 2000). The diversity possessed by the Indonesian people is not only ethnic, racial, and cultural but also beliefs in Indonesia. Indonesia has 6 types of religion, namely: Muslim, Christian, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The majority is Muslim (87.18%) and the second, Christians (6.96%) (DKI Jakarta, 2010). The diversity of religions is adopted by the Indonesian who affects formal educational institutions. Parents choose educational institutions of academics and character for their children sometimes based on their religion. Christian schools are minority schools in Indonesia because the number of Christian is only around 6.96% but Muslims around 87.18%. Academic knowledge is taught by Christian and non-Christian schools, but the difference between them is the way of teaching and belief in God. Knowledge is refined by acknowledging the existence of God so that Christian teaches to respect God wholeheartedly for parents and children. Christian parents have responsibility based on Christian values and God's word that is expressed around the world and through God's words. Parents hope their children to be educated everywhere with the awareness truth from God includes knowledge and Jesus is the center of their life (Sianipar, 2017). The goal of Christian management is well managed so that educational institutions' better progress will make people, especially Christians, able to practice religious teaching so an attitude of love for one another can be realized in their life (Gaol, 2020). Christian schools must become institutions that are interested in the community. This effort can be achieved if the institution is supported by teachers, educators, parents, and the community as a foundation for Christian educational institutions (Kalamu, 2018). A school tries to provide a good image to attract consumers, therefore, educational institutions must be able to develop different marketing strategies so that customers are interested in using the services of the institution

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The role of schools in marketing is carrying out educational services for all levels, society and consumers (students, parents, and others) verify that the information provided by an educational institution is always growing, it is necessary to convince the public and "clients" that the educational services offered are truly relevant to their needs, carry out marketing activities so each of educational service is understood and the management of educational institutions remains to be remembered by the community and customer loyalty (Wijaya, 2008).

Parents choose Christian schools as formal education for their children so they understand the values and characters based on Christian values and the Bible. Christian schools use a curriculum that complies with government regulations and prioritizes teaching that is following Christian values. This study discusses marketing and religious communication which is used by minority schools so they can compete with majority schools in Indonesia. Otherwise, this study explains that Christian schools are a choice from parents and community so that parents decide a formal education institution for their children is a Christian school. The purpose of this study to analyze marketing and religious communication that is applied by minority schools in Indonesia.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Religious communication

Religious values are applied to educational institutions that influence consumers' decisions to choose educational institutions as places for children to get academic knowledge. Educational institutions teach religious values based on community beliefs because students will be able to have an understanding of religious knowledge and Christian values based on their religion. Believers think that religion is not only about a set of propositions but also about the practices that are carried out in the community. Faith gives reason to practice, and practice reminds and supports the belief. Religious experts have various ways of conveying religious values to society, including creating a community. Each of people can take advantage of online social networks by upholding religious communities, although the abuse of online social networks can lead to the destruction of religious communities, both physical and digital (Campbell, 2017).

Religion becomes a system of belief and organized communication that needs to interact with the changing social environment in different historical, social, and cultural. Each religious belief system contains variety and mobility (Pace, 2011). A theory of communicative action in religion allows us to uncover the content and processes, the aims and objectives of communicative-religious practice, to make differences between fundamental communicative practices, to relate them one another, to show that there is understanding, agreement, community, and solidarity, and to compare them with practice. strategic orientation to goals or own benefits (Pace, 2008).

Christians' values need to be taught in Christian education which contains the true values of the Christian faith (Rifai, 2012). Christian education has responsible for cultivating and guiding social and life values based on Christian values so that they become a truly Christian person (Enklaar, 1996). The responsibility for educating children to understand Christian values is parents (Nainggolan, 2009). Christian education teaches about salvation and the center of life in Christ Jesus and people know Jesus as the Savior who lives and begins in the family. Christian education is the cultivation of people who want to know the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit through some learning experiences in church or schools, to know God. Sunday school is a group of children who are disciplined to know Jesus Christ (Mangampa, 2020). The function of Christian education is growing human attitudes and behavior based on Christian faith in their life both schools and society, as well as Bible teachings and as well as Christian education so values to increase our understanding and belief in God. Parents educate their children from an early age by the bible and rely on God's grace so that they will have Christ's characteristics. When the relationship between parents and God is right, they will know their authority with respect for God. Good character and wisdom from God to parents in educating children to authority is very effective. Parents are successful in teaching spiritual discipline and according to the Bible, children will always walk and fear God (Willard, 1988). Christian schools have Christian values because it's not only academics but also characters based on the curriculum set by the government (Kamayuda, 2016). The Christian school started learning activities by prayer, devotion, creed. The prioritize from this school is character and next, knowledge. A character has been taught from playgroups so it can be understood and carried out by students not only at school but also at home, wherever they are (Navisah, 2016).

Christian schools ask parents to participate in activities at schools, such as Christmas, Father's Day, Passover, etc. This school requires parents to be involved in educating children in character, especially life skills (Gaol, 2020). In general, Christian schools are a part of education, that is systematic and continuous which discusses knowledge, affection, and actions of the Christian faith which includes personal relationships between humans and God (Nuhamara, 2007). Christian schools have the responsibility of educating children, caring for the environment, children's character, being responsible, honest, and humble at home or school so they get good attitudes. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 22 of 2006 concerning Content Standards of Christian religious education, it introduces God is Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so students grow in faith and belief in God (Sudrajat, 2009).

### 2.2. The role of the church

Christians do not choose a church based on the degree of pastor, building, or equipment in the building, but the truth is taught in the church (Lickona, 2012). Schools should be selected in the same way and always support Christian schools to show high standards (Sardiman, 2007). The functions of Christian schools to participate in improving qualitative or quantitative public education, and to demonstrate the gospel of the Kingdom of God; communication between the church and the community by an understanding of the purpose of a church and Christians in life (Budiyana, 2011). Christian parents have a responsibility for educating their children, starting with God's word and His words. Parents want their children to be educated wherever they are, such as at home

and school with the awareness that truth is God, including academics and Jesus Christ as the center of learning and life (Widyapranawa, 2003).

Religion makes use of different forms of communication, aimed at disclosing reality and creating community: prayer and preaching, worship and witness, reading and listening to sacred texts, singing and sharing, prophetic discourse, ritual practice, and theological reflection (Arens, 2011). A religion thus becomes an organized system of belief and communication that necessarily interacts with changeable social environments in different historical settings and different social and cultural scenarios. Religion as the power of communication Religion expresses its power of communication in its will to wield the power to dominate the event of death and build a bridge between the visible and invisible, between the determinate and the indeterminate (Pace, 2011).

### 2.3. Marketing communication

Marketing communication is a combination of theories, concepts of communication, and marketing. Marketing communication is an activity to promote products or services using communication techniques to provide information on institutions in the target market (Priansa, 2017). Marketing communication has several objectives: providing information; influencing consumers in buying or selling products and services; attracting consumers to make transactions, and reminding people to repeat purchases. Terence A. Shimp states that marketing communication is an aspect of the marketing mission and determines the success of marketing. According to Sutisna in Amir Purba et.al, marketing communication is an effort to give messages to the public, especially consumers about the different products in the market. Marketing communication tells an idea or product by using a marketing mix, which is: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, and direct marketing.

Marketing communication is a method that is used for marketing and promotion activities of an institution to produce a characteristic and consistent image for consumers. The main point of marketing communication to consumers begins with the marketing mix (product, price, distribution, and promotion) of the institution used in attracting consumers so consumers are interested and use the products which are offered (Keller, 2007). Integrated Marketing Communication is a marketing communication concept that values the added value of comprehensive planning used in evaluating the role of communication strategies such as advertising in general, direct response, sales promotion, public relations that combines to provide maximum consistency, clarity, and impact of communication (Kotler, 2000).

Educational institutions should have a special strategy in promotion in the market and the special characteristics. The concept of marketing communication is the same as a promotional mix. Marketing activities for services or products can be carried out in several ways, including advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and word of mouth (Lupiyoadi, 2001):

(1) Advertising is marketing that uses mass media when delivering messages to customers. The purpose of advertising is to provide information, persuasion, reminder, and reinforcement advertising

(2) Personal selling is the interaction between one individual and another, face to face to create, repair, controlling or maintaining an exchange relationship with mutual benefits for both parties (Swastha & Sukotjo, 2002)

(3) Sales promotion, is a direct invitation that can be arranged to stimulate the purchase of products or services and increase the number of goods or services used by customers (Tjiptono, 2007)

(4) Public relations, the function of public relations is to form, maintain or change people's behavior towards educational institutions. Public Relations is a company or institution that is not required to deal with customers, investors, and distributors but must relate to the larger interests of the community (Lupiyoadi, 2001)

(5) Direct marketing is the relationship between the target market and creates two-way communication. This is a process in the target market in assessing and considering a decision process so that it requires repeated communication, such as telemarketing or direct mailing

(6) Word of mouth is a communication concept carried out by a person or community in an organization or collection by providing information that is related to one another. This concept is more easily accepted by the public because of the information they receive from trusted people, for example, communities, organizations, friends, family, and mass media publications.

The goal of educational marketing is a step in balancing the position of education in the era of global competition (Turmudzi, 2017). Consumers of educational institutions are influenced by various environmental factors such as the opinion of family, parents, school friends, and others. Consumer education services focus on how individuals make decisions to use available resources (time, money, effort) to purchase consumers.

Consumer studies marketing starts when marketing realizes that consumers do not always act or react as suggested by marketing theory (Lolowang, 2019). Education can give consumer needs that are processed using physical products and the interaction between service providers and service users (Hamdani, 2006). Characteristics of educational services can be received by the interaction, which relates to who, when, and where educational services are provided. The success of educational institutions depends on when and where the process is carried out (Nasution, 2004).

### 3. Research Methods

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach with descriptive research methods, literature study (Travis, 2016), and document analysis (Bowen, 2009) as the main research method. Qualitative research is the subject interpreted in its natural environment (Guba, EG, & Lincoln, 1994). In the case study, the factors related to the situation are investigated and the focus is on how they affect the situation or how they are affected by the situation (Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, 2013). The data collected is based on direct interviews. Key informants are marketing managers, principals, and minority school foundations. Primary data for this study were obtained through face-to-face interviews with marketing managers, principals, and Christian school foundations. Research data were collected through direct interviews with marketing managers, school principals, and Christian school foundations developed by the researchers. In this approach, while attitudes and momentary flexibility are limited, asking all participants in a systematic order provides an advantage in terms of minimizing interviewer influence and subjective judgment (Denzin & YS Lincoln, 2020).

### 4. Results and Discussions

Christian school, Indonesia has its characteristics in the learning process. Christian schools invite parents in educating their children. Christian schools prioritize children's character education from an early age. Christian values have been learned when children have joined schools and they should join chapel (Christian worship) with teachers once a week. It becomes a unique reference and strategy when children are joining in several events to perform and worship according to their beliefs. When parents directly in educating and observing children's growth and development, parents feel that schools also need them. Activities or events carried out by the school that always invite parents to be involved as event organizers or participants. Parental involvement creates interaction between school and parents so that this becomes a special attraction for parents.

Educational institutions do not want to make burden and responsibility on stakeholders, so school formed the school committee who are independent, transparent, democratic and trusted. The school committee is a non-structural organization formed and inseparable from school partners (Sukirno, 2006). The role of the school committee is (1) advisory agency, which is to provide suggestions, comments, and considerations related to education policies, programs, and performance criteria. Indicators provide input and considerations regarding educational policies, educational programs, performance criteria for education personnel and educational institution facilities; (2) supporting agencies, who is encouraging people to participate in the development of students, comments education, and inviting the public to participate in and support quality education programs (Rohmah, 2012). School committees have different responsibilities and roles between Christian and non-Christian schools. The school committee is in charge of communicating between parents and educators. There is a significant difference between the performance of committee administrators in Christian and non-Christian schools where on average the performance of Christian committee administrators is considered higher than the performance of non-Christian school committee administrators. Good communication is carried out by Christian schools while state schools are only done by some parents (Ayuna, 2017).

Each school has different values based on its beliefs. Religious values taught to students in Christian schools, Indonesia, as stated in the following interview excerpt:

"... all school activities begin with prayer and devotion in the morning. Every day, before the lesson started, students should have devotion with the teachers, make a creed that everything they do, do it heartily as to the Lord and based on the Bible. After that, the teaching and learning process was continued. When break time students pray together and at the end of school hours, it is closed with prayer. Once a week, a chapel service is held and parents will join as a speaker or participants. So, this school teaches Christ's character and Christian values based on the bible..."(Y1).

Christian schools start their day by pray and devotion, which are rules that are applied so students get a good habit in spiritual activities at the beginning and ending in each day of the learning process at school. But there is a chapel activity every week to remind students to keep worshiping and prioritizing Christ above all else. This is evidenced by the results of an interview with the principal:

“... yes, worship is a main activity and program of our school. It will be started in the morning. So, students and teachers will worship together in church once a week, if we do a chapel every Wednesday for one hour and after finish it, we continue the teaching and learning process, so devotion activities are changed by chapel activities. Once a month, the school invites students' parents as speakers at the chapel so the school will always work together and involve parents in spiritual activities. (Y2) ”

Worship activities held by schools routinely are carried out to grow student interest in worship and ask parents to join directly to worship in chapel activities. It has proven that Christian schools have a good relationship with parents. In addition to chapel and devotions, Christian schools also hold religious activities. This is evidenced by an interview with the Christian Foundation as follows:

“... this is a Christian school and all things are based on Christian values. This school has excelled in academic and character teaching. Schools apply character education more primarily to students. There are devotional tasks carried out with parents at home, we also hold spiritual activities such as retreats, which are 3 days of learning activities according to Christian and bible values, and we celebrate Christmas, Passover, and several spiritual activities that we hold according to Christian values and ask parents to join... (Y3)”

The informant's statement above shows that this school always teaches religious values in teaching and activities at school. The involvement of parents in the school activity program shows that Christian schools can develop and grow so it has interest to the public. However, in marketing communication applied in this school is the power of trust and words of mouth, are shown based on the results of interviews with marketing managers as below:

“... marketing has related to promotion; the parents who provide experiences to their friends or their community about our school. They tell their friends or community about all the programs, activities, Christian values, Christian activities, etc. to their friends. So newly parents told us that they never get information from the radio or social media but their community or friends recommend our school for them. So, word of mouth information about this school reaches the community or prospective parents of new students ... (Y1) ”

The informant's statement above shows that Christian schools did not make promotions from radio or social media, but they were always committed to doing what was conveyed to their parents. All of the activities which are used by the school make parents share the information about the school. So, the strength of Christian schools in attracting parents or prospective parents of the student to send their children there. The importance of integrity in school makes the trust that customers give to the school. Christian schools succeeded in instilling trust in the parents of students in educational institutions so that parents were interested and chose it to educate their children in character and knowledge (academics). And another response from the principal was that:

“... Schools get a lot of new parents who want to decide our school for their children is from words of mouth by the church who enroll their children in our school and the information conveyed is usually word of mouth. Our school has a relation with the church so if parents ask which institutions are teaching good character and academics for their children, the church will suggest it so this school has the same Christian values that are taught by the community in Sunday school and at school. They see our consistency in educating children in church and school. This strategy added value to our school and when parents are satisfied with our services, parents will tell it... (Y2) ”

Based on the informant's statement, it shows that the concept of words of mouth is the strength of a Christian school. Words of mouth is a concept in marketing communication of educational institutions that have been successfully applied in Christian schools. Information conveyed by parents or prospective parents of students, community, church, friends influences people's interest in sending their children to school. Church has relation in school so it makes parents can find easily good institutions for their children. The relation of church and schools makes school has many students, it provides by:

“...most of the parents here come from church members. This school is shaded by a church and parents should want to teach students in the growth and development process by academics and Christian values based on the bible. Teachers and schools have responsibilities at school and parents' duties at home. So, what we do in school becomes a separate role and responsibility of the school for parents. The better development of our students has made parents believe that the Christian school is the best school for their children. Students learn Christian values in Sunday school at church, they will get it too at

school and home. So, parents can find the same way to teach their children. When we do our best so it makes parents tell the school to others because new parents said that they got the information from church or their friends... (Y3). "

The church affects parents who decide to choose a Christian school for their children. All the information is based on the community or church. The concept of marketing communication is effective which is done by the school, it's word of mouth. Character and academic learning begin at home by parents and are based on values, equality, and mutual acceptance. Parents become the first major role in applying these three values. Parents hope the school teaches the same values and is even better for their children. The involvement of parents in educating children can be identified through several patterns: (1) collaboration between parents and children in doing homework, (2) attending school activities, (3) communication between parents and teachers regarding child development, and (4) the development of students outside the school environment (Bernard, 2004). The role of schools is very necessary so that parents "trust" the school in the process of building student character (Langgulang. H., 2004).

Churches and schools provide character education for students, besides schools involve parents to be responsible for the see the progress of student character. The church teaches based on the bible and Christ character and the school teach academic and character. The role of schools is considered successful when there is a collaboration between churches and schools and the involvement of parents in student development. The role of the church in educating students in academics and character is the main goal so that children educated in Christian schools are following the character of Christ. School selection is influenced by several factors: (1) school selection based on residence, (2) private schools superior to public schools, (3) school selection based on the quality of the school (economy) (Benson, M., Bridge, G., & Wilson, 2015). Furthermore, the factors that influence parents to choose Christian or non-Christian schools are the quality of teachers, the school environment, cost, religion, and safety, while the quality of teaching and the image of the school does not affect parents' decisions. However, the syllabus used by the school is taken into account by parents because it is related to the material presented by the teacher to their students (Yaacob, & et al, 2015). Meanwhile, the results of the research indicated that (1) religious communication is used by Christian school and it teaches students based on the bible and Christian values (2) the marketing communication is used by the school is the concept of words of mouth which is applied from the community, church, organization, and association of parents of students. This strategy was successfully implemented by Christian schools so that parents have confidence in Christian schools to gain excellence in academics and character. The Christian school has successfully applied the concept of words of mouth. This concept is the strength of Christian schools because parents get school information through communities, organizations, and a collection of prospective parents so that the concept of words of mouth is the right strategy for Christian schools to build parental trust in educational institutions. This concept has its strength so that information obtained by friends, community, and church can be conveyed quickly. A school that is shaded by a church has its plus points due to consistency in involving parents directly in educating their children. Schools give devotional assignments, memorize Bible verses regularly (monthly and yearly), and see the development of their life skills.

## 5. Conclusions

This research analyzes the religious and marketing communications carried out by Christian schools in, Indonesia which is a minority school but can compete with other schools and even becomes superior and attracts the public's interest. Based on the results of direct interviews with three key informants, the results of the research can be concluded as follows:

(1)The religious communication applied by this school is a Christian value as an educational institution because this school teaches religious values to students and educators. The school activities such as devotions, chapel, and spiritual activities teach students to understand and whatever they do, they do it heartily as to the Lord. The spiritual values show that this school prioritizes a character as Christ that is following religious values and is followed by excellence in academic education. Religious communication is the main point which is had by school so the school can be known by people. Parents decide to choose the school for their children because of religious communication

(2) The marketing strategy carried out by Christian schools is word of mouth because information about schools is obtained by parents through communities, organizations, churches, and trusted people. When information is received from community groups, organizations, or individuals, the trust of prospective parents will increase so that information about parents' experiences at school reaches others. Words of mouth (WOM) is interpersonal communication and one of the concepts of marketing communication that is effective in organizations, communities, and churches. The concept of words of mouth has an advantage, namely the existence of a trust, in the form of information or experience that is conveyed to one another. The words of

mouth concept serve to convince, confirm, eliminate uncertainty and eliminate doubts from parents about Christian schools. The role of words of mouth in school is the interaction, discussion, and dialogue between parents and schools so that parents have high certainty and confidence in choosing the school as a place for their children to get academic knowledge and character. In addition, the concept of Words of mouth is more accessible to the public and the information provided can be trusted because the information is received from trusted people. It is a communication strategy that has been successfully implemented by churches, communities, and organizations.

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