

# UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN BUILDING BRAND AWARENESS OF SURABAYA AVIATION POLYTECHNIC

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## ABSTRACT

The intensifying competition within the vocational education sector has prompted institutions such as Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic to adopt digital marketing strategies to enhance brand awareness. This study aims to analyse the utilization of TikTok as a digital marketing tool to improve the visibility and positive image of aviation-focused vocational education institutions. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data collection techniques including direct observation of the institution's TikTok account, in-depth interviews with the public relations team, and a review of scientific journals. The findings indicate that creative, visual, and interactive content on TikTok—such as videos showcasing academic activities, alumni collaborations, and aviation education—effectively boosts audience engagement (engagement) and brand recognition. However, challenges such as the dynamic nature of platform trends, low audience participation in educational content, and resource limitations remain significant barriers. Drawing on Keller and Swaminathan's brand awareness theory, this research emphasizes the importance of content consistency, authentic collaborations with stakeholders (lecturers, students, alumni), and the evaluation of digital campaign performance to strengthen brand associations among the public. Practical implications suggest that vocational education institutions should design holistic strategies integrating creativity, trend relevance, and information transparency to expand their reach and sustain competitiveness in the digital era.

**Keywords:** *Digital Marketing, Brand Awareness, Vocational Education, TikTok, Social Media Strategy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive educational landscape, building strong brand awareness has become crucial for higher education institutions, particularly vocational schools that need to differentiate themselves in a crowded market [1]. Aviation Polytechnic of Surabaya, as a specialized institution under the Ministry of Transportation, faces increasing challenges in attracting quality prospective students amid growing competition from other aviation education provider. Traditional marketing approaches are no longer sufficient in reaching the digital-native.

Digital marketing presents a strategic opportunity for educational institutions to enhance their visibility, communicate their unique value propositions, and engage with prospective students [2]. Social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have emerged as powerful tools for brand building in the education sector due to their high engagement rates among younger demographics. The primary concern is the low brand awareness of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic among young Indonesians, despite leveraging TikTok as a

digital marketing platform. Although the institution's TikTok account (@poltekbangsby) has garnered 31.4k followers and 872.9k likes, audience engagement with the content remains suboptimal. Furthermore, rapid shifts in digital consumer behaviour, particularly among Indonesian youth, necessitate more adaptive and personalized marketing strategies [3]. Observations conducted on June 23, 2025, identified key issues in the TikTok content posted on the @poltekbangsby account.

The video uploaded on September 2, 2024, pertaining to the graduation ceremony was misaligned with the event's execution timeline, as it was published three days after the event concluded. This issue reflects insufficient strategic planning in content management, potentially undermining the perception of the institution's credibility as a professional and well-organized entity. In the context of digital marketing, the timeliness of information dissemination constitutes a cornerstone of brand credibility. Secondly, inconsistencies were identified in highlighting alumni achievements within the aviation industry, particularly in the February 8, 2025 post, which featured only a single alumni profile without subsequent related content over the following three months. Thirdly,

the video uploaded on February 15, 2025, focusing on graduate employment prospects, lacked program-specific details. Without a clear articulation of the unique value propositions of each academic program, prospective students are unable to associate the institution with their specific career aspirations, thereby diminishing the efficacy of marketing campaigns.

Based on the background outlined above, the problem statement is formulated as follows: How can the effective application of digital marketing strategies enhance brand awareness for Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic?

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1 Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and literature review to obtain comprehensive and contextual information regarding the social media presence of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic. The study analyses content expected to enhance engagement, including strategies to increase the number of followers, viewers, and likes on the institution's TikTok account.

### **2.2 Research Design**

This study commenced with the "Initiation" phase, serving as the preliminary step in establishing the research direction. During this phase, the researcher highlighted the core issue underlying the study: the persistently low level of brand awareness for Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic among the youth demographic, despite the institution's utilization of TikTok as a digital marketing platform. The next phase, "Problem Identification," represented the initial stage for identifying critical issues that formed the focal point of the research. The primary issue addressed was the low brand awareness of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic among young individuals, despite the implementation of digital marketing strategies, particularly on TikTok.

Following this, the "Observation" phase was conducted, wherein the researcher directly observed the utilization of the TikTok platform within Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic's digital marketing strategy to build brand awareness. Observations were carried out over the period from June 2024 to June 2025, focusing on the official TikTok account of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic. After the observation phase, the study proceeded to the "Interview" phase to explore the subjective perspectives of those responsible for executing the digital marketing strategy. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the public relations team managing the TikTok account of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic.

Upon completion of the interviews, the study advanced to the "Literature Review" phase. This phase

served as the theoretical foundation for understanding the concepts and practices of digital marketing and brand awareness building through the TikTok platform. In the "Data Processing" phase, the researcher processed and analysed the data collected from observations, interviews, and the literature review to produce findings that were valid and relevant to the research focus. Data analysis techniques included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification.

During the "Research Findings" phase, the primary findings were systematically presented to address the formulated research problem. Processed data from observations, interviews, and the literature review were integrated to reveal the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategy via TikTok in building brand awareness for Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic. The subsequent phase, "Conclusions and Recommendations," involved synthesizing the research results comprehensively to provide structured answers to the research problem while summarizing the main findings relevant to the research objectives. The concluding phase of this research workflow was "Completion," indicating that the entire research process had been executed thoroughly and systematically.

### **2.3 Research Object**

This study examines the digital marketing techniques employed by Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic, with a primary focus on its TikTok-based strategy for building and enhancing brand image within an increasingly competitive landscape of specialized vocational education institutions. The institution was selected as the research object due to its status as one of Indonesia's active civil service vocational higher education institutions that strategically leverage digital media and social platforms to reach target audiences. The research encompasses a comprehensive analysis of the TikTok social media channel utilized, the marketing content disseminated, and its effectiveness in elevating brand awareness and user engagement among prospective students and stakeholders.

### **2.4 Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection constitutes a critical methodological step aimed at obtaining comprehensive and contextually relevant information pertaining to the research subject. The employed data collection techniques encompass participant observation, in-depth interviews, and systematic literature review, ensuring triangulation of empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks.

#### **2.4.1 Observation**

Systematic observation was conducted to obtain consistent and representative data using TikTok analytical tools, to determine engagement metrics

including likes, comments, and shares present in each TikTok content. The selection of TikTok as the observation subject was grounded in the platform's strategic role in building brand image and broadly reaching target consumers. Exolyt was employed as the primary analytical instrument due to its comprehensive capabilities in social listening, performance monitoring, and content analysis, enabling precise measurement of audience engagement patterns and content effectiveness. This analytical platform provides real-time data, AI-backed insights, and unmatched scale in TikTok database analysis, thereby facilitating a holistic understanding of the dynamic social media ecosystem and ensuring methodological rigor in assessing digital marketing effectiveness.

#### **2.4.2 Interviews**

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the public relations team and TikTok account managers of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic, who are responsible for the planning and implementation of digital marketing strategies. These interviews were conducted to elicit detailed insights regarding the creative processes, challenges encountered, and long-term objectives of utilizing TikTok as a campus branding tool. The semi-structured interview protocol enabled comprehensive exploration of strategic decision-making frameworks, content development workflows, resource allocation considerations, and performance evaluation mechanisms within the institution's digital marketing ecosystem.

#### **2.4.3 Literature Review**

The literature review was conducted through systematic data and information extraction via comprehensive examination of various written sources, including peer-reviewed scientific journals and the Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic's TikTok social media content. The selected literature sources were rigorously evaluated based on three primary criteria: academic credibility, relevance to the research focus, and recency of information. The reviewed literature encompassed theoretical frameworks of digital marketing as well as previous empirical studies concerning social media strategies, with particular emphasis on TikTok platform utilization in educational institution branding. This systematic review process ensured the establishment of a robust theoretical foundation while identifying research gaps that informed the methodological approach of the current study.

#### **2.5 Data Analysis Techniques**

The data analysis technique employed in this study follows the Miles and Huberman model, comprising three sequential stages, Data Reduction, Data Presentation, Conclusion Drawing. During data

reduction phase, collected and observed data undergo systematic summarization and filtering to extract core information. This reduction process is essential for facilitating researchers in selecting relevant data and proceeding to subsequent research stages. Through rigorous data condensation, extraneous information is eliminated while preserving critical insights related to digital marketing effectiveness.

Researchers present data in visual formats including images, tables, charts, and graphs. This visualization serves to enhance organizational clarity of research findings while improving comprehension of complex patterns within the dataset. The structured presentation enables systematic comparison of engagement metrics across different content categories and time periods. Upon completion of data collection, presentation, and organization, the final stage involves deriving evidence-based conclusions from the research. This process entails verifying the consistency of emerging patterns, assessing their significance, and establishing connections between observed phenomena and theoretical frameworks.

The data analysis process was augmented through the TikTok analytics dashboard of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic. The institution's TikTok platform features a live dashboard that monitors performance metrics and interaction data. This analytical approach enabled precise measurement of viewer duration, audience size, followers growth patterns, and content effectiveness, thereby facilitating a holistic understanding of the institution's digital marketing ecosystem and ensuring methodological rigor in assessing brand awareness initiatives.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Fundamental Concepts of Digital Marketing and Brand Awareness**

The integration of digital marketing and brand awareness has proven effective in strengthening the competitive position of vocational education institutions. According to Salsabila's (2024) study, the utilization of social media platforms such as TikTok to deliver relevant informational and entertaining content can enhance audience engagement while simultaneously building positive institutional image [4]. Aviation Polytechnic of Surabaya, for instance, has leveraged TikTok to showcase academic activities, alumni collaborations, and campus culture. However, challenges such as low active participation in educational content and limited transparency regarding collaboration outcomes indicate the need for more integrated strategies. By optimizing fact-based content, including alumni testimonials and career prospect information, while effectively blending entertainment with education, the institution can strengthen brand awareness while increasing applicant interest amidst intense competition [2]. This strategic

approach aligns with contemporary digital marketing principles that emphasize authentic engagement and value-driven content to establish meaningful connections with target audiences.

### ***3.2 Digital Marketing Strategies in Higher Education Institutions***

The strategic utilization of social media as an integral component of digital marketing has demonstrated significant potential in enhancing institutional brand awareness within the higher education sector, with TikTok emerging as one of the most relevant platforms for reaching contemporary prospective student demographics [5]. In the specific context of Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic, the implementation of such strategies necessitates a holistic and integrated approach, commencing with the identification of institutional core values and distinctive competencies, followed by the development of communicative and visually compelling content, and culminating in systematic evaluation of digital campaign performance.

The optimal utilization of TikTok is anticipated to reinforce the institution's image as a premier aviation vocational education provider that embodies excellence, modernity, and adaptability to evolving industry demands. This strategic framework aligns with the research objective of analyzing digital marketing utilization in building brand awareness for Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic, while addressing the critical need for educational institutions to leverage platform-specific analytics—such as those provided by Exolyt—to monitor engagement metrics, audience demographics, and content effectiveness in real-time. By implementing data-driven content strategies that resonate with target audiences, higher education institutions can establish meaningful connections with prospective students while differentiating themselves in an increasingly competitive educational landscape.

### ***3.3 The Impact of Digital Marketing Strategy Utilization on Student Enrolment Growth***

Digital marketing strategies not only enhance brand awareness but also directly influence prospective students' enrolment decisions, with empirical evidence indicating their dominance over traditional marketing approaches and brand image in shaping enrolment intentions [6]. The strategic implementation of digital platforms, particularly TikTok, has demonstrated significant impact on Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic's recruitment metrics, evidenced by the increase in non-regular admission applicants from 80 individuals in 2024 to 88 in 2025. This upward trajectory underscores the efficacy of digital channels in disseminating institutional values comprehensively and efficiently.

Interactive content formats such as video challenges, virtual campus tours, and behind-the-scenes

documentation foster emotional connections with prospective students, thereby enhancing brand familiarity and accelerating decision-making processes. The accessibility of academic information, campus activities, and student testimonials through digital content creates compelling engagement that resonates particularly with Generation Z's communication preferences. Consequently, optimizing TikTok as a strategic marketing platform represents a critical opportunity for Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic to strengthen its market position, improve enrolment conversion rates, and establish meaningful connections with target demographics through data-driven content strategies that leverage platform analytics for continuous performance enhancement.

### ***3.4 Challenges and Recommendations in Digital Marketing Implementation***

A significant challenge pertains to resource allocation for creating original and consistent content. The marketing team must ensure that uploaded content is not only entertaining but also informative and reflective of the institution's professional image. Consistency in posting schedules and production quality represents a critical element influencing social media algorithms and audience engagement. In practice, developing content that is both engaging and ethically aligned with institutional norms requires careful consideration, particularly for maintaining institutional reputation among diverse public audiences. As a response to these challenges, structured trend-based content management strategies need strengthening. The Public Relations team should establish a dedicated unit or assign personnel specifically focused on periodic social media trend analysis and developing flexible yet measurable content calendars.

Additionally, the utilization of interactive features such as live sessions, comment engagement, and creative templates could be enhanced to maintain audience interaction while preserving institutional identity. Adapting communication styles across different platforms (such as between TikTok and Instagram) is equally important to ensure more targeted and effective information delivery. While current activity measurement is conducted informally through comparisons of likes, comments, and follower counts, the institution should develop more systematic reporting mechanisms.

### ***3.5 Research Discussion***

Analysis of 308 TikTok contents from Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic (June 2024-June 2025) revealed critical gaps in their digital marketing strategy despite having 31.6k followers and 5.4% engagement rate. The content distribution was imbalanced across four pillars: communication (125), entertainment (123), education

(46), and collaboration (14). While communication contents provided professional visuals, they lacked academic details crucial for prospective students. Entertainment contents focused excessively on campus fun without embedding educational value, risking misperception about academic quality. Additionally, a significant scheduling mismatch was identified: posts predominantly occurred late at night (21:00-23:00), while peak engagement (5-6%) actually occurred during afternoon hours (especially Wednesdays 14:00-17:00 WIB). To enhance brand awareness among youth, the institution should rebalance content strategy by strengthening collaborative contents with industry partners and alumni, while aligning posting schedules with optimal engagement periods to maximize algorithmic visibility and audience interaction.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Despite achieving 31.4k followers and 872.9k likes on TikTok, Surabaya Aviation Polytechnic's digital marketing strategy has not fully optimized brand awareness among youth. Critical challenges include low engagement with educational content, insufficient integration of entertainment and academic information, limited use of TikTok's interactive features (duets, stitches, challenges), and inadequate measurement of collaboration effectiveness with alumni and industry partners. While the institution has successfully increased visibility through professional visuals and consistent posting, it fails to effectively address prospective students' specific information needs regarding career prospects and measurable alumni success. The analysis reveals a significant gap in emotional connection building with young audiences due to lack of personalized content and underutilization of TikTok's algorithm for viral potential. To strengthen sustainable brand awareness, the institution must prioritize interactive content optimization, integrate specific academic data, and develop fact-based narratives that balance entertainment value with substantive educational information, while implementing systematic analytics to measure campaign effectiveness beyond superficial metrics.

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