

## Pilot Project in Educational Service Marketing Case Study: Poltekkes Kemenkes Kalimantan Timur

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### ABSTRACT

Digital transformation in educational service marketing has become a strategic necessity for enhancing institutional competitiveness, compelling educational institutions to adopt adaptive and innovative marketing strategies. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Ministry of Health (Kementerian Kesehatan/Kemenkes) branding at Poltekkes Kemenkes East Kalimantan, one of five Poltekkes designated as pilot projects. The study focuses on the optimization of Instagram as a medium for educational service marketing. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The findings indicate that digital branding implementation significantly improved institutional visibility, reflected in the increase of Instagram followers from 9,000 to 19,200 within three months. Four important findings emerged: transformation of digital strategy, academic community involvement, effectiveness of value-based content, and the gap between awareness and engagement. The study concludes that digital branding effectiveness is determined not only by content distribution but also by audience interaction quality.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of educational service marketing across multiple sectors. Contemporary educational institutions are no longer solely evaluated on academic excellence; they are equally expected to demonstrate adaptive capacity in navigating

digital transformation to strengthen institutional visibility and competitive positioning. In this context, digital media particularly social media platforms has emerged as a strategic instrument for engaging prospective students through wide-reaching and interactive communication channels. This aligns with scholarly evidence suggesting that educational service marketing in the digital era necessitates a technology-

driven, adaptive approach, in which social media functions as the primary institutional communication medium [1].

Within the domain of educational service marketing, the concept of branding has undergone a substantial transformation. Branding is no longer confined to visual identity; rather, it now encompasses a broader digital experience constructed through sustained interaction, strategic content creation, and audience perception management. Modern marketing strategies underscore the critical importance of integrating content, communication, and technology as interconnected pillars for enhancing the competitive positioning of educational institutions [1]. Furthermore, the application of the services marketing mix (7P) within a digital context has emerged as a strategic framework for building institutional image and attracting prospective students [2].

In practice, social media platforms such as Instagram have proven to be highly effective in amplifying institutional visibility and fostering audience engagement. Empirical evidence indicates that digital marketing strategies executed through Instagram are capable of significantly enhancing user interaction, provided they are supported by relevant content and responsive communication [3]. In particular, value-based content – such as educational narratives and storytelling – has been demonstrated to be considerably more effective in cultivating meaningful audience engagement compared to conventional direct promotional content.

A body of prior research has examined various strategies pertaining to educational service marketing. Several studies have demonstrated that the effectiveness of educational marketing is significantly influenced by service quality, brand awareness, and sustained institutional communication [4]. Other scholarly works have further emphasized that educational service marketing encompasses a systematic cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation as essential mechanisms for enhancing institutional attractiveness [5]. Additionally, investigations into Instagram-based marketing communication strategies

have consistently indicated that social media platforms are effective in elevating audience interest through visually engaging and interactive approaches [6].

Nevertheless, the existing body of literature is not without limitations. First, the majority of prior studies have predominantly adopted quantitative or descriptive approaches, thereby leaving the dynamic processes underlying digital branding implementation insufficiently explored in depth. Second, scholarly attention to the role of internal institutional actors such as academic communities in supporting and sustaining digital marketing strategies remains considerably limited. Third, research specifically addressing digital branding within the context of vocational health education institutions remains scarce, representing a notable gap in the current literature. An emerging phenomenon in digital marketing reveals a persistent gap between the growth of institutional visibility (awareness) and the quality of audience interaction (engagement). The expansion of audience reach does not inherently correspond to increased levels of engagement, thereby indicating the necessity of adopting strategies that are more deliberately oriented toward relational building with target audiences. In this regard, Poltekkes Kemenkes Kalimantan Timur has been designated as one of the pilot projects in the implementation of digital branding. This program encompasses the optimization of social media platforms and the active involvement of the academic community as an integral component of internal marketing strategy. However, the implementation of this program has encountered considerable challenges, particularly in terms of enhancing audience engagement and maintaining consistency in content strategy.

This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the implementation of digital-based branding in educational service marketing, encompassing the strategies employed, the processes undertaken, and the dynamics that emerge throughout its execution. From a practical standpoint, this research holds significant urgency in

providing empirical insights for educational institutions regarding effective digital marketing strategies. From a theoretical perspective, this study is expected to enrich the existing discourse on educational service marketing within the broader context of digital transformation.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Digital Branding in Education Marketing*

Digital branding refers to a strategic effort undertaken by institutions to build identity, reputation, and audience perception through digital platforms. In the context of educational institutions, digital branding has become increasingly important as competition among universities and colleges intensifies in the digital era. Educational institutions are now expected not only to provide quality academic services but also to communicate institutional values effectively through online platforms.

Educational service marketing in the digital era requires adaptive communication strategies supported by technology-based media. Digital branding enables institutions to strengthen visibility, improve institutional image, and create emotional connections with prospective students. Social media platforms also allow institutions to shape public perception continuously through visual identity, storytelling, and interactive communication[1].

Furthermore, digital branding is closely related to institutional positioning. A well-managed digital identity helps educational institutions differentiate themselves from competitors and establish stronger credibility in the public sphere. Previous studies have demonstrated that consistent and value-based branding contributes significantly to audience trust and institutional attractiveness.

### 2.2 *Social Media and Audience Engagement*

Social media has transformed the communication pattern between institutions and audiences from one-way

information delivery into interactive engagement. Instagram, in particular, has emerged as one of the most influential platforms for educational promotion because it combines visual communication, storytelling, and audience interaction.

Emphasized that digital marketing strategies implemented through Instagram can significantly increase audience engagement when supported by relevant content and responsive communication [3]. Educational content, student activities, institutional achievements, and storytelling-based posts tend to attract stronger audience attention compared to direct promotional content.

Audience engagement in digital marketing is not solely measured through the number of followers, but also through interaction qualities such as comments, shares, saves, and participation in digital conversations. This perspective aligns with engagement marketing theory, which highlights the importance of relationship-building between institutions and audiences. Therefore, successful digital branding requires not only content distribution but also sustainable interaction management. In addition, content consistency and visual presentation are important factors influencing audience perception. Attractive design, structured posting schedules, and audience-oriented communication strengthen institutional professionalism and improve algorithmic visibility on social media platforms.

### 2.3 *Internal Marketing and Academic Community Participation*

Internal marketing is a strategy that positions organizational members as part of the institutional marketing system. In educational institutions, lecturers, students, and staff can function as communication agents who support institutional branding activities. Their involvement in sharing, commenting, and interacting with institutional content

contributes to expanding digital visibility organically.

Internal marketing positively influences organizational participation and institutional communication effectiveness [25]. Within digital branding implementation, the academic community becomes an important element in strengthening institutional credibility because audiences often perceive interactions from internal members as authentic forms of endorsement.

The role of the academic community is also relevant to the concept of participatory communication in digital environments. Active involvement from students and lecturers creates a sense of institutional ownership and contributes to strengthening online engagement. In social media ecosystems, audience interaction affects content distribution through platform algorithms, meaning that internal participation can indirectly increase institutional reach and impressions.

Nevertheless, relying solely on internal participation may create limitations in broader audience engagement. Therefore, educational institutions need to combine internal marketing strategies with external audience-oriented communication approaches to achieve sustainable digital branding effectiveness.

### 3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to understand digital branding implementation in educational service marketing[7]. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in branding activities[8].

The informants included institutional leaders, social media managers, and members of the academic community[9]. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, observation of Instagram

activities, and documentation analysis[10], [11] [12].

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking [13][14].

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of branding at Poltekkes Kemenkes East Kalimantan as a pilot project reveals a strong alignment between field-level practices and theoretical frameworks in educational service marketing, particularly within the context of digital transformation.

### 4.1 Transformation of Digital Marketing Strategy

The Empirical findings obtained through interviews with social media managers reveal a fundamental shift in the way Instagram is utilized as a marketing instrument. Initially, the platform served primarily as a channel for sharing information about institutional activities. Following the introduction of the digital branding program, however, its management became considerably more strategic. Informants noted:

*"Previously, we only posted campus activities without any clear concept. Now there is direction content must have a purpose, whether for promotion, education, or attracting prospective students." (Informants 1, 4, 5, 7)*

Observation of the institution's Instagram account revealed notable changes in content patterns, spanning visual design, posting consistency, and the types of content being published. Content that was previously documentary in nature has become more varied, encompassing educational material, academic program promotion, and employer branding. Documentary data further demonstrated a significant increase in follower count, from

approximately 9,000 in January 2026 to 19,200 in April 2026. This growth was accompanied by improvements in reach and impressions on several posted items.

These findings indicate that a transformation has occurred in the institution's digital marketing strategy, shifting from an informational approach toward one that is more strategic and deliberate. This shift reflects a broader change in the function of social media — from a one-way communication medium to a branding platform oriented toward shaping audience perception. From the perspective of educational service marketing, this aligns with the view that digital-era marketing strategies must

integrate content, communication, and an understanding of audience behavior. The substantial growth in follower count can be interpreted as a success at the awareness stage within the digital marketing framework.

This growth was further accompanied by an increase in reach and impression metrics across several uploaded content pieces. These findings are substantiated by visual documentation data presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2, comprising screenshots of the institution's Instagram account that illustrate the growth in follower count alongside key content performance indicators.

### Jumlah followers Instagram pada 5 Poltekkes Kemenkes telah mengalami kenaikan 15-25% selama masa 2,5 bulan mentoring

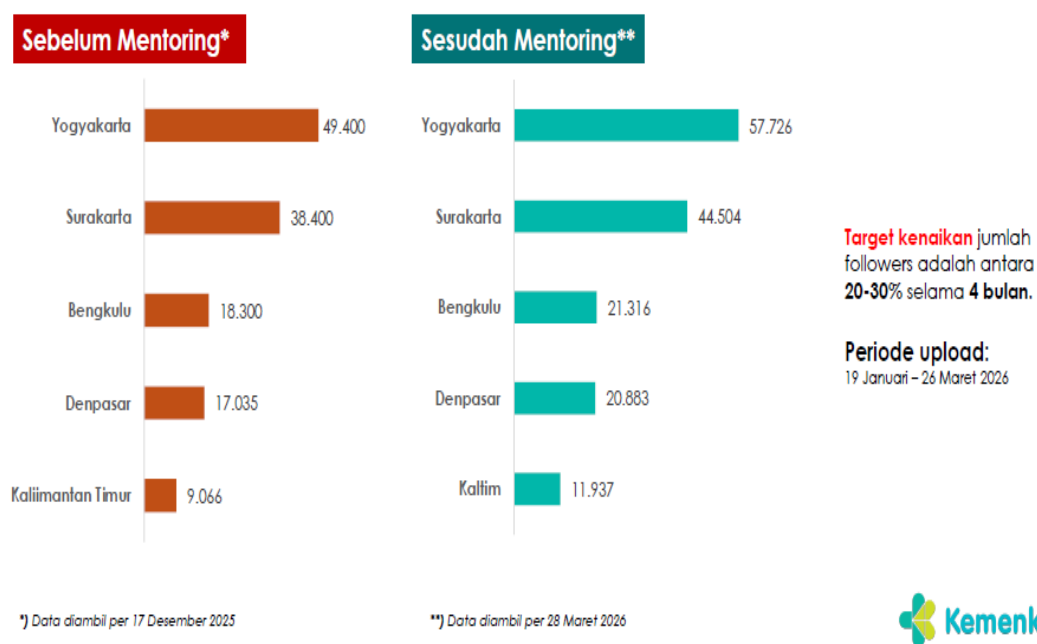


Figure 1. A 2.5-Month Mentoring Report of Poltekkes Kemenkes Kalimantan Timur Demonstrating Growth in Follower Count and Content Performance Metrics  
Source: PowerPoint Documentation of the Communication Bureau, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2026



Figure 2. Instagram Account Display of Poltekkes Kemenkes Kalimantan Timur Showing Growth in Follower Count and Content Performance in May 2026.

Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026

These findings indicate that a fundamental transformation has taken place in the institution's digital marketing strategy, shifting from a predominantly informative approach toward a more strategic and deliberately planned orientation. This shift reflects a broader evolution in the function of social media from a unidirectional communication medium to a branding platform purposefully directed at shaping audience perception.

From the perspective of educational service marketing, this condition is consistent with the view that digital-era marketing strategies must integrate content, communication, and a thorough understanding of audience behavior [15]. High-quality and contextually relevant content has been shown to cultivate trust, foster loyalty, and stimulate interest among prospective students [15], [16]. The adoption of a more structured approach to content management demonstrates the institution's deliberate effort to establish stronger positioning within the digital landscape [17].

Furthermore, the significant growth in follower count may be

interpreted as an achievement at the awareness stage within the digital marketing framework. This is consistent with the theoretical proposition that visibility constitutes a critical initial phase in capturing audience attention prior to progressing toward deeper levels of engagement [18].

The transition in content type from predominantly documentary to more varied and value-based formats also reflect the application of content marketing strategy. The development of educational and employer branding content signifies that the institution is not merely disseminating information, but is actively constructing its institutional image and cultivating emotional connections with its audience.

The development of educational content through social media has been empirically demonstrated as an effective strategy for promoting academic programs, enhancing audience engagement, and reinforcing the institution's image as an adaptive learning centre one that contributes to fostering a collaborative culture and advancing sustained digital literacy within the academic environment [19].

Accordingly, the transformation of digital branding strategy has yielded implications that extend beyond mere visibility enhancement. It signifies a broader paradigm shift in the governance of educational service marketing, moving toward an approach that is increasingly strategic, integrated, and audience-centered.

#### 4.2 Implementation of Content Strategy

Digital branding implementation at Poltekkes Kemenkes East Kalimantan was characterized by the adoption of a more structured strategy, particularly in the management of content and digital communication. Based on the interview findings, Instagram content was developed across several primary categories: promotional, educational, and employer branding. Informants confirmed:

*"The content is now categorized — some for promotion, some for education, and some to showcase campus activities to make it more appealing." (Informants 1, 6)*

*We have now implemented a content categorization system, so posts are no longer published arbitrarily. There is content specifically designated for educational purposes, and there is also content focused on promoting academic programs." (Informants 1, 2, 5)*

Within the framework of the services marketing mix (7P), this implementation reflects the adaptation of several key elements to the digital environment — including promotion

through social media, process through the digitalization of information services, and physical evidence through content visualization. These findings suggest that digital branding strategy extends beyond information dissemination to encompass the creation of value through content that is both relevant and engaging, consistent with the concept of content marketing, which emphasizes the production of valuable and relevant content distributed in a consistent manner to attract and retain target audiences, while simultaneously cultivating sustainable relational bonds between the institution and its stakeholders [20], [21].

#### 4.3 The Role of the Academic Community as internal marketing

The involvement of the academic community at Poltekkes Kemenkes East Kalimantan emerged as a contributing factor in expanding the reach of the institution's digital content. Based on interviews, this involvement did not occur spontaneously, but was instead facilitated through institutional directives encouraging the entire academic community to participate actively in digital activities:

*"We were directed to follow the official account, give likes, leave comments, and share content to our personal social media to broaden the reach." (Informants 1, 3, 4)*

Social media insight data indicated an increase in reach and impressions following the active involvement of the academic community.

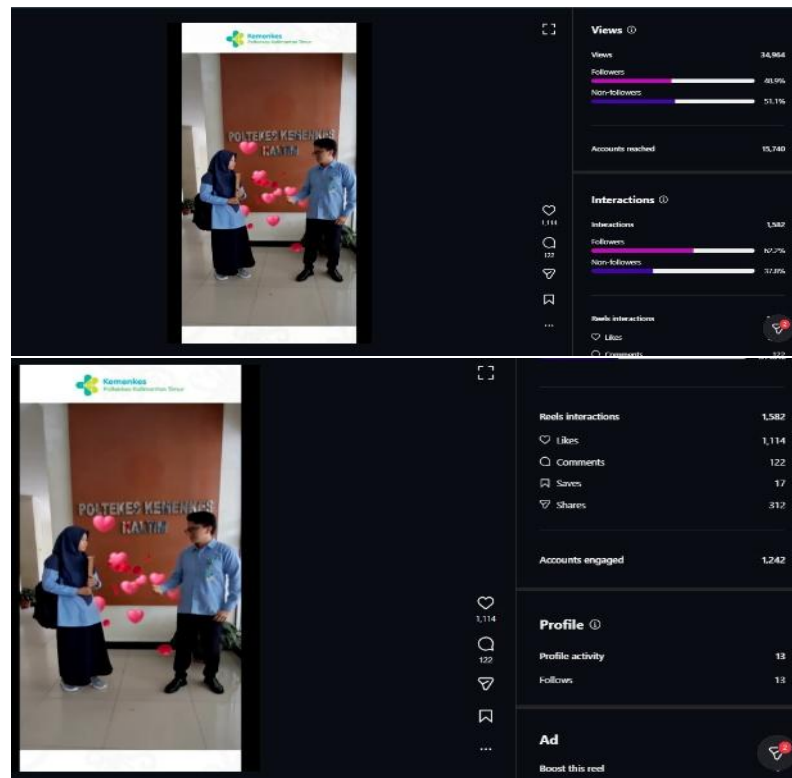


Figure 3. High Insight Metrics of Reach, Impressions, and Engagement  
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026

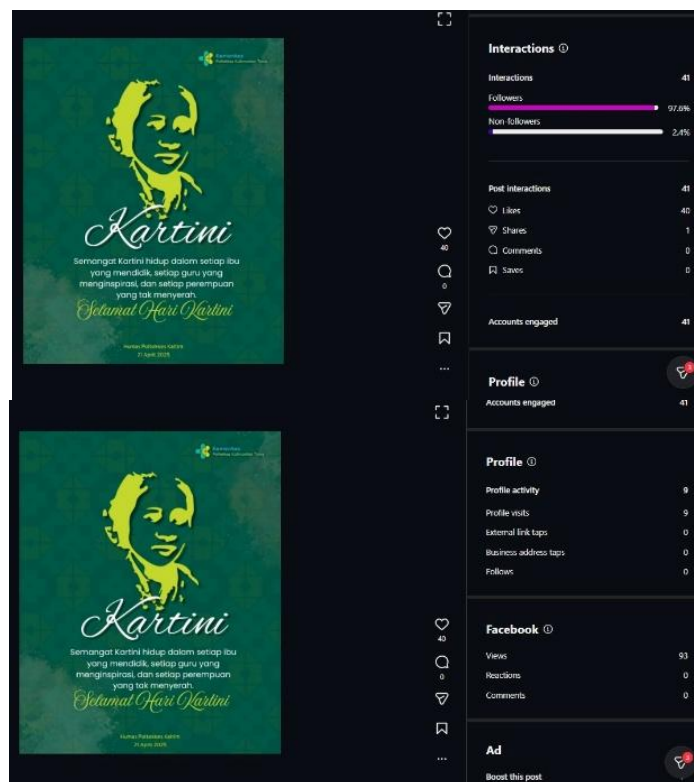


Figure 4. Low Insight Metrics of Reach, Impressions, and Engagement  
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026



Figure 5. Supporting Interaction Activity in the Form of Comments from the Academic Community

These findings indicate that the involvement of the academic community served as a catalyst for organically expanding the distribution of digital content. From a service marketing perspective, this aligns with the concept of internal marketing a strategy that positions members of an organization as integral participants in the marketing effort[1]. The interactions observed, however, were still predominantly driven by internal participation, and therefore do not yet fully reflect engagement from external audiences Within the context of digital marketing, interactions involving internal audiences play a pivotal role in enhancing both the visibility and credibility of institutional content. User engagement encompassing interactions such as likes and comments has been shown to contribute significantly to the amplification of content reach through the

algorithmic mechanisms of social media platforms [22].

#### 4.4 Impact of Digital Branding Implementation

Digital branding implementation produced a considerably significant impact on the visibility of Poltekkes Kemenkes East Kalimantan. This was reflected in a follower growth of more than 100% within a three-month period. Documentary data similarly showed improvements across reach and impressions indicators. The analysis revealed, however, that the increase in visibility had not yet been fully accompanied by a corresponding improvement in engagement quality. The interactions that occurred were still limited to basic likes and simple comments, and remained predominantly driven by the academic community.

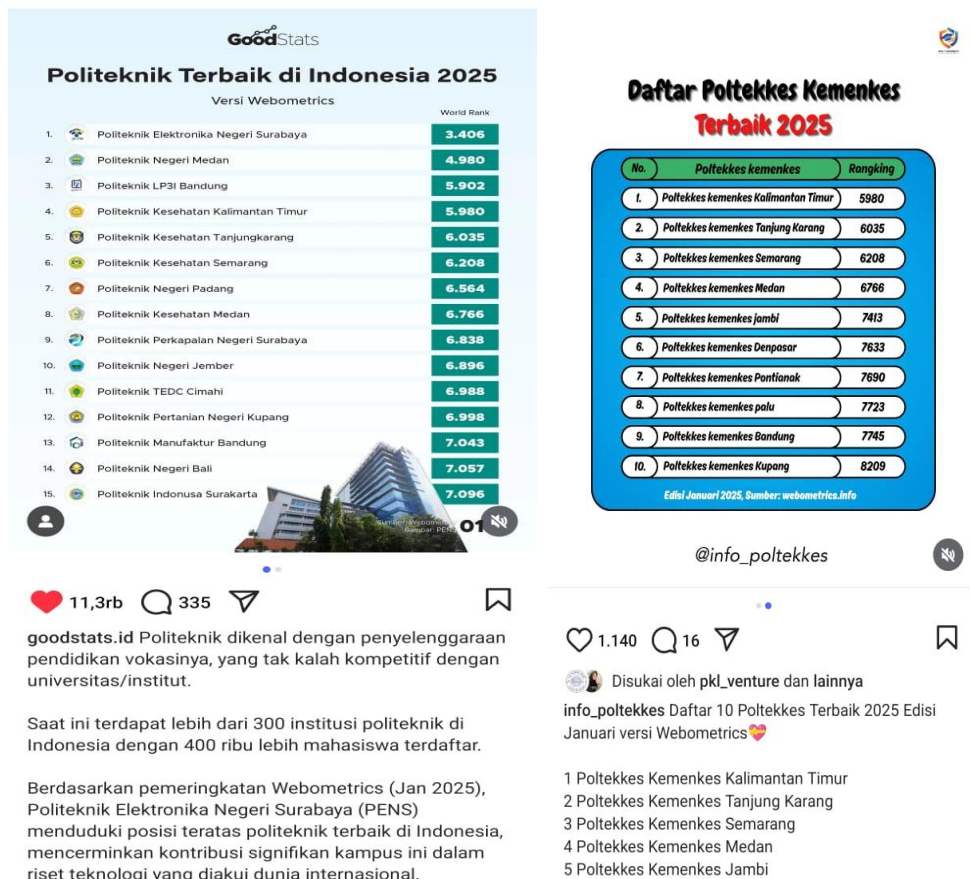


Figure 6. The Impact of Implemented Branding Strategies  
Source: Researcher's Documentation, 2026

These findings point to a discernible gap between awareness and engagement wherein the growth of the audience has not been matched by deeper forms of involvement. From a digital marketing perspective, this is a frequently observed phenomenon when strategies prioritize content distribution over relationship-building with the audience[23]. While digital branding implementation has succeeded in raising visibility, further strengthening of engagement strategies remains necessary to develop more sustainable relationships with the audience.

**4.5 Supporting factors and implementation challenges**

The success of digital branding implementation at Poltekkes Kemenkes East Kalimantan was supported in part by mentoring activities conducted within the pilot project program. Based on the interview findings, this mentoring

provided clearer direction regarding content strategy, social media management, and the strengthening of academic community participation. Informants stated:

*"After the mentoring, we had a much better understanding of how to manage content and what strategies needed to be applied." (Informants 1, 2, 3, 7)*

The guidance provided through mentoring covering content management, communication, and internal participation reflects a process of capacity building within the organization. The success of digital transformation depends substantially on organizational readiness, including the competence of human resources in managing technology and integrated digital strategies [24].

The challenges observed including inconsistency in content publication and fluctuations in content

performance indicate that digital branding implementation is an inherently dynamic process requiring sustained management [25]. The relatively low level of engagement in comparison to established targets indicates that the strategies currently implemented remain concentrated at the initial stage of digital marketing, namely awareness generation. Within the digital marketing framework, this condition reflects a suboptimal management of audience relationships. The effectiveness of digital marketing is not solely measured by reach; it is equally determined by the institution's capacity to foster sustained interaction through bidirectional communication [27].

The comparatively low engagement rate relative to established targets suggests that the implemented strategy remains focused on the initial stage of digital marketing, namely awareness generation.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The implementation of digital-based branding at Poltekkes Kemenkes East Kalimantan reflects a discernible shift in educational service marketing toward a more planned, integrated, and audience-oriented strategy. More structured content management, combined with the active involvement of the academic community as

part of an internal marketing approach, has contributed to strengthening the institution's visibility within the digital sphere. The increase in follower count, content reach, and impressions indicates progress at the awareness stage. However, these gains have not yet been fully accompanied by deeper audience engagement, revealing a persisting gap between visibility and interaction. This suggests that the further development of engagement strategies warrants focused and sustained attention. Mentoring served as a supporting factor in enhancing social media management capacity, though challenges remain particularly with regard to content consistency and the optimization of interaction with external audiences. Strategic directions recommended for improving digital branding effectiveness include the development of storytelling-based content, the strengthening of two-way communication, the utilization of data analytics, and the diversification of digital channels. The scope of this study is limited to a single institution, and as such, the findings are not readily generalizable.

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