

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has transformed marketing practices across various sectors, including educational institutions. The main issue addressed in this study is how strategic management leadership plays a role in optimizing the implementation of digital marketing in educational institutions. This study aims to analyze the role of strategic leadership in designing, implementing, and evaluating effective digital marketing strategies. The research method used is a qualitative approach through literature study and descriptive analysis of relevant scientific sources. The findings indicate that strategic management leadership plays a crucial role in determining the direction of digital marketing policies, enhancing institutional competitiveness, and building a positive image through the use of social media, websites, and other digital platforms. Furthermore, the success of digital marketing is highly influenced by the leader's ability to adapt to technological changes, manage human resources, and foster continuous innovation. In conclusion, visionary and adaptive strategic leadership is a key factor in the successful implementation of digital marketing in educational institutions to increase attractiveness and ensure institutional sustainability in the digital era.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, strategic management, digital marketing, educational institutions, competitiveness, digital innovation

Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah mengubah pola pemasaran di berbagai sektor, termasuk lembaga pendidikan. Permasalahan utama yang diangkat dalam penelitian ini adalah bagaimana kepemimpinan manajemen strategis berperan dalam mengoptimalkan penerapan pemasaran digital di lembaga pendidikan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis peran kepemimpinan strategis dalam merancang, mengimplementasikan, dan mengevaluasi strategi pemasaran digital yang efektif. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi literatur dan analisis deskriptif terhadap berbagai sumber ilmiah yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan manajemen strategis memiliki peran penting dalam menentukan arah kebijakan pemasaran digital, meningkatkan daya saing lembaga, serta membangun citra institusi melalui pemanfaatan media sosial, website, dan platform digital lainnya. Selain itu, keberhasilan pemasaran digital sangat dipengaruhi oleh kemampuan pemimpin dalam beradaptasi dengan perubahan teknologi, mengelola sumber daya manusia, serta menciptakan inovasi berkelanjutan. Simpulan dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa kepemimpinan manajemen strategis yang visioner dan adaptif menjadi kunci utama

dalam keberhasilan penerapan pemasaran digital di lembaga pendidikan guna meningkatkan daya tarik dan keberlanjutan institusi di era digital.

Kata kunci: *Kepemimpinan strategis, manajemen strategis, pemasaran digital, lembaga pendidikan, daya saing, inovasi digital*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought about significant changes in various sectors, including education. Educational institutions today do not merely serve as providers of academic services; they are also expected to compete effectively in attracting students through strategic marketing. Digital marketing has emerged as a strategic solution because it enables institutions to reach a wide audience through digital media such as websites and social media (Wardhana, 2022). Furthermore, digital transformation in education requires leadership capable of guiding the organization to adapt to technological changes (Silawati, 2023).

Several previous studies have examined the importance of strategic leadership within organizations. Strategic leadership plays a role in formulating a vision, managing resources, and ensuring the effective implementation of strategies to achieve competitive advantage (Hadyanee, 2025). In the context of education, strategic leadership also serves as a driver of change and innovation in addressing the challenges of the digital era (Wahyunto, 2024). On the other hand, research on digital marketing indicates that integrated digital strategies can enhance an institution's reputation and attract more students through interactive, technology-based communication (Wardhana, 2022).

On the other hand, the success of digital transformation in educational institutions is heavily influenced by leadership. Digital leadership or strategic leadership in the digital age is a critical factor in guiding organizations to adapt to technological changes. Research indicates that digital leadership plays a role in driving innovation, data-driven decision-making, and strengthening digital culture within educational organizations (Rizki, 2024). Additionally, leadership holds a strategic role in enhancing school management effectiveness through administrative innovation and the utilization of digital technology (Karim, 2025).

On the marketing side, the use of social media and digital strategies has proven effective in increasing community engagement and strengthening the image of educational institutions. Research by Lisun (2021) indicates that leadership indicators in education are closely linked to the use of social media as a marketing tool and for enhancing institutional reputation. This demonstrates that digital marketing cannot be separated from the role of leadership in managing communication strategies and the branding of educational institutions.

Although various studies have examined digital leadership and digital marketing separately, there remains a lack of research that comprehensively integrates these two aspects within the context of educational institutions. Most studies focus more on digital transformation or the partial effectiveness of marketing, without examining how strategic

management leadership serves as the primary driver in the implementation of digital marketing.

Based on this *state of the art* review, the scientific novelty (*novelty*) of this article lies in its integrative approach that combines the concept of strategic management leadership with the application of digital marketing in educational institutions. This article emphasizes that the success of digital marketing is not determined solely by technology but also by leaders' ability to design strategies, manage resources, and foster sustainable innovation. The research problem addressed in this article is how strategic management leadership optimizes the implementation of digital marketing in educational institutions and the factors influencing its success in enhancing institutional competitiveness. Based on these issues, the objective of this article is to analyze the role of strategic management leadership in the implementation of digital marketing in educational institutions and to identify its contribution to enhancing institutional competitiveness and sustainability in the digital era.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review (*library research*) to address issues related to the role of strategic management leadership in the implementation of digital marketing within educational institutions. This method was chosen because the study focuses on conceptual analysis and the synthesis of relevant prior research findings. The analysis was conducted systematically to identify patterns, relationships, and the contribution of strategic leadership in supporting the effectiveness of digital marketing. The data sources used in this study were secondary data obtained from indexed scientific articles, books, and conference proceedings. The data analysis method used is qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis process was carried out through several stages, namely: (1) data reduction by filtering relevant information, (2) presentation of data in the form of systematic narratives, and (3) drawing conclusions through interpretation of the findings obtained. This analysis refers to the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020). The research procedures were carried out in stages, beginning with the determination of the topic and research question, the collection of relevant literature, the classification and selection of sources, the content analysis of the literature, and finally the compilation of the study results in the form of a scientific article. The entire research procedure is presented in descriptive sentences to systematically outline the research process. This study does not involve direct respondents as it is based on a literature review, thus it does not utilize instruments such as questionnaires or interviews. However, data validity is ensured through the selection of credible sources and a critical and comprehensive analysis process. Using this method, it is hoped that a deep understanding of the role of strategic management leadership in optimizing digital marketing in educational institutions will be obtained.

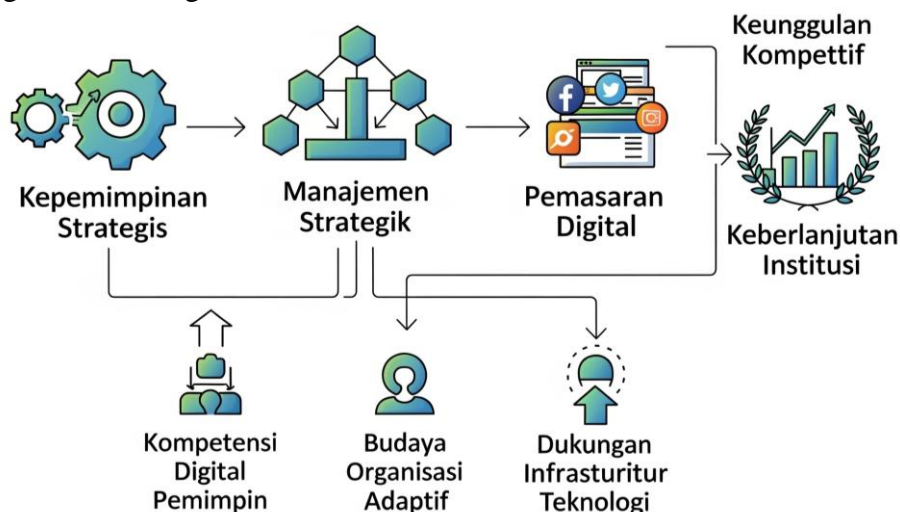
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategic leadership in the context of education refers to a leader’s ability to formulate a vision, guide an organization, and manage change to achieve long-term goals. In the digital age, strategic leadership has evolved into a form of leadership that is technology-adaptive and innovation-driven (Rizki & Suwadi, 2024). Strategic leadership functions not only as a decision-maker but also as an agent of change capable of integrating technology into educational management systems (Suratman et al., 2024).

Strategic management is the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating organizational strategies to achieve competitive advantage. In educational institutions, strategic management plays a role in determining the direction of institutional development, including in responding to the challenges of digitalization (Karim et al., 2025). The effective implementation of strategic management enables educational institutions to optimize their available resources, including in the development of digital marketing.

Meanwhile, digital marketing in education is a promotional strategy that utilizes digital technology to increase the visibility and appeal of educational institutions. Digital marketing enables educational institutions to reach prospective students broadly and interactively, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of institutional communication and branding (Wahyunto et al., 2024). Therefore, the integration of strategic leadership, strategic management, and digital marketing is crucial for enhancing the competitiveness of educational institutions. The main scientific findings of this study indicate that strategic leadership is a determining factor in the successful implementation of digital marketing in educational institutions. This addresses the research objective that the success of digital marketing is influenced not only by technology but also by leadership’s ability to manage strategy.

Figure 1. Model of the Integration of Strategic Leadership, Strategic Management, and Digital Marketing in Educational Institutions



The synthesis of this literature review has produced a conceptual model that illustrates the key factors for the successful implementation of digital marketing. This model is shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates the Model of Strategic Management Leadership Integration in Digital Marketing Implementation. This model demonstrates that Strategic

Leadership and Strategic Management are two central, mutually reinforcing components that serve as the strategic planning framework and the primary driving force within an organization. The synergy between these two components is aimed at optimizing Digital Marketing as an implementation tool to build the institution's image and appeal. The simultaneous integration of these three components will result in the sustainable enhancement of an educational institution's competitiveness. The success of implementing this model is also influenced by three supporting factors: leaders' digital competencies, an adaptive organizational culture, and technological infrastructure support.

Scientifically, this phenomenon occurs because strategic leadership serves as the primary driving force within an organization. Leaders with strategic vision are able to effectively integrate digital technology into marketing systems. This trend indicates that the higher the level of strategic leadership competence, the more optimal the implementation of digital marketing becomes. This finding aligns with the research by Rizki and Suwadi (2024), which states that digital leadership enhances organizational performance through technology-based innovation. Additionally, Suratman et al. (2024) also found that digital leadership significantly influences educational transformation.

The second finding indicates that strategic management serves as a systematic framework for implementing digital marketing. Without thorough strategic planning, digital marketing tends to be ineffective and unsustainable. Scientifically, this can be explained through the concept of strategic management, which emphasizes the importance of alignment between organizational vision, resources, and executed strategies. Digital marketing integrated into strategic management enables educational institutions to build a strong positioning in society.

Research by Karim et al. (2025) indicates that digital-based strategic management can enhance institutional competitiveness through innovation and efficiency. Meanwhile, Wahyunto et al. (2024) found that well-planned digital marketing can enhance the image and appeal of educational institutions. This comparison indicates that previous research tended to focus on either strategic or technological aspects separately, whereas this study found that the integration of both is a key factor in success.

The third finding indicates that several factors influence the success of digital marketing implementation, namely: (1) leaders' digital competence, (2) an adaptive organizational culture, and (3) technological infrastructure support. Scientifically, this trend occurs because digital transformation is a systemic process involving various organizational elements. Leaders' digital competence is a primary factor because leaders serve as strategic decision-makers. If leaders possess high digital literacy, the implementation of digital strategies will be more effective. Additionally, an organizational culture open to change will accelerate technology adoption. This is supported by Akhmad's (2024) research, which states that resistance to change is a major barrier in the digital

transformation of education. Meanwhile, Zawacki-Richter et al. (2020) emphasize that an organization's readiness to adopt technology is crucial to the success of digital innovation.

The findings of this study indicate that strategic leadership, strategic management, and digital marketing are three interrelated components in enhancing the competitiveness of educational institutions. The implication of these findings is that the success of digital marketing cannot stand alone but must be supported by visionary leadership and a robust strategic management system. Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept that strategic leadership serves as the primary driver in an organization's digital transformation. Furthermore, this study offers a new contribution by integrating the concepts of strategic leadership and digital marketing within a single educational management framework. Practically, the implications of this research are that educational institution leaders need to enhance their digital competencies and develop technology-based marketing strategies. Furthermore, educational institutions need to foster an adaptive organizational culture and provide infrastructure that supports the implementation of digital marketing.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that strategic management leadership plays a central role as a determining factor in the success of digital marketing implementation in educational institutions. Scientific findings indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing does not solely depend on the use of technology but is determined by leaders' ability to formulate strategic direction, integrate resources, and manage organizational change adaptively. Thus, the research objective to analyze the role of strategic leadership in the implementation of digital marketing has been achieved.

Furthermore, this study found that the integration of strategic leadership, strategic management, and digital marketing is key to enhancing the competitiveness of educational institutions. Strategic leadership serves as the primary driver, strategic management as the planning and control framework, and digital marketing as the implementation tool for building the institution's image and appeal. The synergy of these three aspects generates sustainable competitive advantage in the digital era. Other findings indicate that the success of digital marketing implementation is influenced by leaders' digital competencies, an adaptive organizational culture, and technological infrastructure support. These factors form a digital ecosystem that determines the effectiveness of the implemented marketing strategies. As a follow-up, further research is recommended to develop an empirical study involving field data to test the relationship between strategic leadership and the effectiveness of digital marketing in a more measurable way. Additionally, future research can expand the scope of variables, such as student satisfaction, loyalty, and institutional sustainability, as outcomes of the implemented digital marketing strategies.

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