

Promotional Strategy and Sales Performance: Evidence from Faith-Based Social Enterprise in Indonesia

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Abstract

Background: Faith-based social enterprises play a significant role in promoting economic empowerment and community development in emerging markets. However, limited research has examined how these organizations implement promotional strategies within resource-constrained environments.

Objective: This study aims to analyze the promotional strategies employed by a faith-based social enterprise, focusing on a paving block manufacturing unit operated by an Islamic boarding school in West Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Methods: A qualitative case study approach was adopted using in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data were analyzed through an interpretative approach to identify key promotional practices and influencing factors.

Results: The findings reveal that promotional strategies remain predominantly conventional, relying on banners, brochures, and word-of-mouth through alumni networks. Although digital platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp are utilized, their use is not systematically managed. Sales performance is influenced by product quality consistency, competitive pricing, and institutional trust derived from the organization's reputation. Key barriers include limited market reach, weak targeting strategies, and low digital marketing capabilities.

Conclusion: The study highlights the need to integrate traditional promotional approaches with strategically managed digital channels. Strengthening digital capabilities while leveraging institutional trust can enhance market reach and sustainability of faith-based social enterprises.

Keywords: Promotional Strategy; Sales Performance; Social Enterprise; Faith-Based Organization; Emerging Markets

JEL Classification: M31, L26, L31

Introduction

The contemporary business landscape demands increasingly sophisticated promotional strategies as competition intensifies across all market segments. Promotional activities serve as essential communication channels between producers and consumers, fulfilling multiple functions beyond mere product introduction to encompass brand building, purchase intention cultivation, and customer loyalty maintenance. Organizations lacking well-structured promotional strategies face significant challenges in achieving market visibility, regardless of product quality or competitive advantages they may possess (Kotler et al., 2010; Suciana & Syahputra, 2023). This fundamental marketing principle applies universally across commercial

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and social enterprises, though the latter category introduces unique considerations stemming from dual value propositions combining economic sustainability with social mission fulfillment.

Faith-based social enterprises represent a distinctive organizational form that integrates religious values, social objectives, and economic activities within unified operational frameworks. Islamic boarding schools, known as pesantren in Indonesia, exemplify this integration by increasingly developing business units that serve multiple purposes: generating autonomous revenue streams, providing entrepreneurial training for students, and contributing to community economic development. These organizations occupy a unique position within the broader social enterprise ecosystem, drawing upon institutional legitimacy derived from religious authority while simultaneously confronting market competition dynamics that require professional business practices (Dees, 1998; Qomariyah & Darwis, 2023).

The production and distribution of paving blocks presents particularly relevant opportunities for social enterprise engagement in emerging economies experiencing rapid infrastructure development. As construction materials widely utilized for road paving, courtyard surfacing, and parking area development, paving blocks offer multiple advantages including installation convenience, durability, and environmental sustainability compared with alternative surfacing materials. Market demand for paving blocks demonstrates consistent growth trajectories aligned with infrastructure expansion in both urban and rural contexts throughout developing regions. However, intensifying competition among manufacturers necessitates effective promotional strategies enabling individual producers to achieve market differentiation and sustainable sales performance (Kotler et al., 2010).

This research investigates promotional strategies implemented by the paving block manufacturing unit operated by Pesantren Darul Ulum in Kubu Raya Regency, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Preliminary examination of sales data from 2025 reveals fluctuating revenue patterns, with certain months demonstrating significant increases while others experience substantial declines. These variations suggest that current promotional approaches remain suboptimal in achieving consistent market penetration. Promotional activities appear predominantly conventional in nature, with limited exploitation of digital marketing potential despite the widespread availability and adoption of online platforms throughout Indonesia (Chaffey et al., 2009).

The significance of this investigation stems from multiple considerations. First, it addresses a notable gap in the social entrepreneurship literature by examining promotional strategies within faith-based organizations operating in emerging market contexts. While substantial research explores social enterprise operations in developed economies, comparatively limited attention has been directed toward understanding how such organizations navigate promotional challenges in resource-constrained environments characteristic of developing regions (Nyssens & Defourney, 2021). Second, the study contributes practical insights for social enterprise managers seeking to enhance sales performance while maintaining alignment with organizational values and social missions. Third, the research illuminates broader patterns regarding digital transformation adoption among traditional institutions, offering implications for understanding how established organizations integrate contemporary marketing practices with conventional approaches.

This article proceeds as follows. The subsequent section reviews relevant literature examining promotional strategies, sales performance determinants, and social enterprise characteristics. Section three details the qualitative research methodology employed in data collection and analysis. Section four presents empirical findings regarding promotional practices, sales influencing factors, and implementation barriers. Section five discusses these findings in relation to existing theoretical frameworks and practical implications. The final section concludes with research limitations and directions for future investigation.

Literature Review

2.1. Promotional Strategy in Marketing Theory

Promotional strategy constitutes a fundamental component of the marketing mix, focusing specifically on communication activities designed to inform, persuade, and remind target audiences about organizational offerings. Fandy (2020) defines promotion as marketing activities aimed at disseminating information, influencing perceptions, and persuading target markets to accept, purchase, and demonstrate loyalty toward offered products or services. Effective promotional strategies require careful alignment with target market characteristics and marketing objectives, acknowledging that different promotional tools offer varying strengths and limitations across diverse market contexts (Fill & Turnbull, 2019).

The promotional mix encompasses five principal elements: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing. Advertising involves paid, non-personal communication through mass media channels, offering broad reach but limited personalization. Personal selling emphasizes individualized communication between sales representatives and potential customers, enabling detailed product explanations and relationship development at higher per-contact costs. Sales promotion includes short-term incentives designed to stimulate immediate purchase decisions. Public relations focuses on building favorable organizational image and managing stakeholder relationships. Direct marketing establishes direct connections with carefully targeted individual customers through various channels including mail, telephone, and digital platforms (Kotler et al., 2010).

Contemporary marketing theory increasingly emphasizes integrated marketing communications (IMC), which coordinates all promotional elements to deliver consistent, unified messages across multiple touchpoints. IMC recognizes that consumers encounter brand messages through diverse channels and emphasizes the importance of message consistency in building strong brand perceptions. Research demonstrates that organizations employing integrated approaches achieve superior promotional effectiveness compared with those utilizing isolated, uncoordinated promotional tactics (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). This integration proves particularly crucial in contemporary environments characterized by media fragmentation and consumer control over information exposure.

2.2. Digital Marketing and Social Media Promotion

The proliferation of digital technologies and social media platforms has fundamentally transformed promotional landscapes, offering organizations new channels for reaching and engaging target audiences. Digital marketing encompasses all promotional activities conducted through electronic devices and internet platforms, including search engine optimization, social media marketing, email campaigns, content marketing, and mobile advertising. These digital channels offer distinctive advantages including enhanced targeting precision, real-time performance measurement, interactive communication capabilities, and typically lower costs compared with traditional media (Chaffey et al., 2009; Ryan, 2016).

Social media platforms merit particular attention given their widespread adoption and powerful influence on consumer behavior. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter enable organizations to engage directly with customers, share content, respond to inquiries, and build communities around brands. Social media marketing offers opportunities for viral content distribution, user-generated content integration, and leveraging customer testimonials and reviews. However, effective social media marketing requires consistent engagement, content quality maintenance, and strategic planning rather than sporadic, ad-hoc posting (Tuten, 2023).

Research examining social media adoption among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) reveals mixed results. While many SMEs recognize potential benefits, actual implementation often remains superficial, characterized by irregular posting, limited engagement with followers, and absence of strategic planning. Barriers to effective social media utilization

include resource constraints, insufficient digital marketing expertise, and organizational culture resistance to change. These challenges appear particularly pronounced in traditional organizations and developing market contexts where digital literacy levels and technical infrastructure may be limited (Abed et al., 2015; Odoom et al., 2017).

2.3. Sales Performance Determinants

Sales performance represents the culmination of marketing activities, reflecting market acceptance levels for organizational offerings. Multiple factors influence sales outcomes, operating individually and interactively to shape purchasing decisions. Product quality emerges consistently as a primary determinant, with superior quality products generally achieving higher sales volumes and customer satisfaction levels. Quality encompasses not merely physical product attributes but also includes reliability, durability, and consistency in meeting customer expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2000).

Pricing strategy constitutes another critical sales determinant, with research demonstrating complex relationships between price levels and sales volumes. While lower prices may stimulate demand through enhanced affordability, pricing also serves as a quality signal, with excessively low prices potentially raising concerns about product quality. Optimal pricing strategies balance affordability considerations with value perceptions and competitive positioning (Ingenbleek, 2015). Context-specific factors including target market income levels, competitive intensity, and product category characteristics all influence optimal pricing approaches.

Distribution efficiency affects sales through product availability and accessibility. Even high-quality products at competitive prices may achieve suboptimal sales if distribution networks fail to position products conveniently for target customers. Service quality, encompassing pre-purchase information provision, transaction efficiency, and post-purchase support, also influences sales performance through impacts on customer satisfaction and repeat purchasing behavior. Research consistently demonstrates that customer service excellence enhances both initial sales conversion and long-term customer retention (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2001).

2.4. Social Enterprise and Faith-Based Organizations

Social enterprises represent organizational forms that pursue social missions through market-based activities, blending characteristics of nonprofit and commercial entities. Unlike traditional businesses focused primarily on profit maximization, social enterprises prioritize social value creation while maintaining financial sustainability through revenue-generating activities. This dual value proposition introduces unique management challenges, as leaders must balance social mission achievement with economic viability requirements (Nyssens & Defourney, 2021).

Faith-based social enterprises incorporate additional dimensions by integrating religious values into organizational missions, operational practices, and stakeholder relationships. Islamic boarding schools operating business ventures exemplify this integration, pursuing economic independence while advancing religious education objectives and community development goals. These organizations benefit from distinctive institutional legitimacy derived from religious authority and community trust. Research indicates that faith-based organizations often enjoy enhanced credibility and stakeholder confidence compared with purely commercial entities, particularly in contexts where religious institutions maintain strong social influence.

However, faith-based social enterprises also confront specific challenges. Balancing commercial competitiveness with religious values may create tensions, particularly regarding marketing practices, competitive strategies, and stakeholder management. Limited business expertise among religious leaders and resistance to adopting professional management practices may constrain organizational effectiveness. Resource constraints frequently affect

faith-based social enterprises, limiting their capacity to invest in marketing, technology, and organizational development (Ablett et al., 2020). Understanding how faith-based social enterprises navigate these tensions and leverage their unique advantages remains an important research priority.

2.5. Research Gap and Study Objectives

While existing literature provides substantial insights into promotional strategies, digital marketing adoption, and social enterprise characteristics, significant gaps remain regarding promotional practices within faith-based social enterprises operating in emerging market contexts. Most marketing research focuses on commercial firms in developed economies, with limited attention to how social enterprises and faith-based organizations approach promotional challenges. Similarly, social enterprise literature emphasizes organizational mission and governance structures but provides limited examination of operational marketing practices.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating promotional strategies implemented by a faith-based social enterprise in Indonesia, examining how such organizations balance traditional values with contemporary marketing requirements. Specifically, the research pursues three primary objectives: (1) analyzing promotional strategies currently employed in enhancing paving block sales; (2) identifying factors influencing sales performance; and (3) examining barriers encountered in promotional implementation. Through pursuing these objectives, the research contributes theoretical insights into social enterprise marketing while offering practical guidance for managers seeking to enhance promotional effectiveness within resource-constrained, value-driven organizational contexts.

Research Methods

3.1. Research Design and Approach

This study employs a qualitative research design utilizing descriptive methodology to examine promotional strategies within a specific organizational context. Qualitative approaches prove particularly appropriate when investigating complex phenomena requiring in-depth understanding of participant perspectives, organizational processes, and contextual factors influencing outcomes. The descriptive nature of the research emphasizes comprehensive documentation and interpretation of existing promotional practices rather than testing predetermined hypotheses or establishing causal relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Tisdell et al., 2025).

The decision to adopt qualitative methodology reflects several considerations. First, promotional strategy implementation involves complex decision-making processes, organizational interactions, and contextual influences that quantitative approaches may oversimplify or overlook entirely. Second, limited prior research examining promotional practices in faith-based social enterprises within Indonesian contexts necessitates exploratory investigation to identify relevant patterns and themes before hypothesis testing becomes feasible. Third, qualitative methods enable rich, detailed descriptions of promotional activities, capturing nuances and contextual factors that numerical data alone cannot adequately represent.

3.2. Research Setting and Context

The research was conducted at the paving block manufacturing unit operated by Pesantren Darul Ulum, located in Kubu Raya Regency, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. Pesantren Darul Ulum represents a medium-sized Islamic boarding school serving approximately 300 students and offering both religious and general education curricula. The paving block manufacturing unit was established in 2020 as part of the institution's economic independence initiative, aiming to generate supplementary revenue while providing practical business experience for students.

The manufacturing unit produces various paving block types including standard rectangular blocks, hexagonal designs, and decorative patterns in multiple color options. Production capacity reaches approximately 5,000 blocks daily when operating at full capacity, though actual production varies based on order volumes and raw material availability. The business serves both individual customers for residential projects and institutional clients including local government agencies and construction contractors. This diverse customer base introduces complexity into promotional planning, as different customer segments respond to different promotional approaches and messaging strategies.

3.3. Participant Selection and Sampling

Research participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling approach that deliberately selects information-rich cases relevant to research objectives. This sampling strategy proves appropriate for qualitative research seeking in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participant selection criteria emphasized direct involvement with promotional activities or purchasing decisions related to paving block sales.

The final sample comprised twelve participants across three categories. The management category included three individuals: the business unit manager responsible for overall operations and strategy development, the marketing coordinator overseeing promotional activities and customer relationships, and the pesantren administrator involved in business policy decisions. The employee category encompassed four participants including production supervisors and sales staff who interact directly with customers and implement promotional initiatives. The customer category consisted of five participants representing different customer segments: two residential customers who purchased paving blocks for home improvement projects, two construction contractors who regularly procure materials for commercial projects, and one government procurement officer responsible for institutional purchases.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection employed three complementary methods: observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. This triangulation of methods enhances research credibility by enabling cross-validation of findings and providing multiple perspectives on phenomena under investigation (Denzin, 2005).

Observation activities spanned three months during 2025, focusing on promotional activities and sales processes. Researchers visited the manufacturing site and sales area regularly, documenting promotional materials, customer interactions, and operational practices. Field notes captured observed behaviors, environmental characteristics, and informal conversations relevant to promotional practices. Particular attention was directed toward customer engagement patterns, promotional material utilization, and digital platform usage.

In-depth interviews were conducted with all twelve participants using semi-structured interview protocols. Interview guides contained predetermined questions addressing research objectives while allowing flexibility for probing interesting responses and exploring emergent themes. Management interviews explored promotional strategy development, decision-making processes, resource allocation, and performance evaluation approaches. Employee interviews examined promotional implementation experiences, customer response patterns, and operational challenges. Customer interviews investigated purchasing decisions, information sources, promotional message effectiveness, and product perceptions. Interviews ranged from forty-five to ninety minutes, were audio-recorded with participant consent, and were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Document analysis examined sales records, promotional materials, social media posts, and organizational planning documents. Sales data spanning the previous twelve months were analyzed to identify revenue patterns, seasonal variations, and relationships between

promotional activities and sales volumes. Promotional materials including brochures, banners, and digital content were reviewed to assess messaging consistency, visual quality, and information completeness. Social media activity across Facebook and WhatsApp platforms was documented, noting posting frequency, content types, and engagement levels.

3.5. Data Analysis Approach

Qualitative data analysis followed established procedures encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction involved reviewing complete datasets, identifying relevant information addressing research questions, and organizing materials into manageable segments. Interview transcripts were read multiple times to achieve familiarity with content before coding commenced. Initial coding employed open coding procedures, assigning descriptive labels to data segments representing distinct concepts or phenomena. These initial codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories reflecting thematic patterns across multiple data sources.

Data display organized coded information into formats facilitating pattern recognition and relationship identification. Matrices and network diagrams illustrated connections between promotional strategies, influencing factors, and sales outcomes. These visual representations enabled systematic comparison across participant perspectives and identification of convergent and divergent viewpoints. Conclusion drawing involved interpreting patterns, identifying explanations for observed phenomena, and relating findings to existing theoretical frameworks.

Throughout the analysis process, researchers maintained reflexivity by acknowledging their own perspectives and potential biases while seeking alternative interpretations for observed patterns. Regular team discussions among research members provided opportunities for challenging preliminary interpretations and refining analytical conclusions. This iterative, reflective approach enhanced analytical rigor and interpretation credibility.

3.6. Data Quality and Trustworthiness

Ensuring research quality in qualitative studies requires attention to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Credibility, analogous to internal validity in quantitative research, was enhanced through triangulation of data sources and methods. Information obtained through interviews was cross-checked against observational data and documentary evidence, enabling identification of consistencies and discrepancies across sources. Member checking procedures involved sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to verify interpretive accuracy and gather feedback on emerging conclusions.

Transferability, addressing the extent to which findings may apply to other contexts, was promoted through thick description providing detailed accounts of research settings, participants, and procedures. Such description enables readers to assess similarities between research contexts and their own situations, facilitating informed judgments about potential transferability. Dependability concerns consistency of findings across time and researchers, addressed through maintaining detailed audit trails documenting data collection procedures, analytical decisions, and interpretive processes. Confirmability emphasizes that findings reflect participant perspectives rather than researcher bias, promoted through systematic documentation of analytical procedures and reflexive consideration of researcher influence on findings.

Results

4.1. Promotional Strategies Currently Employed

Analysis of data collected through observations, interviews, and document review reveals that promotional strategies employed by the paving block manufacturing unit remain predominantly conventional in nature, characterized by limited integration of digital marketing

approaches. The promotional mix comprises several distinct elements operating with varying degrees of coordination and strategic planning.

Traditional advertising materials constitute the primary promotional vehicle, with banners positioned at strategic locations including the pesantren entrance, main roads leading to the facility, and construction sites where paving blocks have been installed. These banners display basic product information including contact details, available product types, and competitive pricing messages. Brochures containing more detailed specifications, pricing tables, and installation guidelines are distributed at the manufacturing site and through alumni networks. However, the production and distribution of these materials occurs irregularly rather than following systematic scheduling, with new materials created primarily when existing stocks become depleted or when management perceives a need for updated information.

Personal selling represents another significant promotional component, emphasizing direct communication between sales staff and potential customers. This approach proves particularly effective for large-volume orders from contractors and institutional buyers who require detailed technical specifications, customization options, and negotiated pricing arrangements. Sales personnel, consisting primarily of pesantren staff and selected students, engage customers through telephone conversations, site visits, and face-to-face meetings at the manufacturing facility. The personal nature of these interactions enables relationship building and trust development, leveraging the pesantren's institutional reputation for integrity and reliability.

Word-of-mouth marketing through alumni networks emerges as an important promotional channel, though one operating largely organically rather than through deliberate management intervention. Pesantren alumni, numbering several thousand individuals distributed across West Kalimantan and neighboring provinces, occasionally recommend the paving block business to acquaintances undertaking construction projects. Some alumni actively promote products within their own communities, motivated by loyalty to their alma mater and confidence in product quality. However, the organization has not developed systematic approaches to cultivate and incentivize alumni advocacy, missing opportunities to enhance this valuable promotional resource.

Digital promotional activities, while present, remain underdeveloped relative to their potential. A Facebook business page was established in 2023, featuring product photographs, customer testimonials, and occasional promotional announcements. However, posting frequency proves irregular, with periods of several weeks passing without new content. Engagement with follower comments and inquiries occurs inconsistently, with some messages receiving prompt responses while others remain unanswered for extended periods. The page lacks professional branding elements, cohesive visual identity, or strategic content planning.

WhatsApp serves as another digital platform, utilized primarily for direct customer communication rather than broader promotional messaging. Sales staff maintain WhatsApp contacts with regular customers and prospects, sharing product information, responding to inquiries, and coordinating order details. However, these interactions remain largely reactive, responding to customer-initiated contacts rather than proactively disseminating promotional content or engaging potential customers. The organization has not implemented WhatsApp Business features that could enhance professional presentation and customer service capabilities.

Integration across promotional channels appears limited, with different promotional activities operating relatively independently rather than as coordinated components of a unified strategy. Banner messages, brochure content, social media posts, and personal selling approaches lack consistent branding, messaging themes, or visual identity elements. This fragmentation potentially dilutes promotional impact and creates missed opportunities for reinforcing messages across multiple touchpoints.

4.2. Factors Influencing Sales Performance

Interview and observational data reveal multiple factors that participants identify as influencing paving block sales performance, operating through various mechanisms to shape purchasing decisions and customer loyalty. These factors can be categorized into product-related attributes, pricing considerations, and institutional credibility dimensions.

Product quality emerges consistently across interviews as the primary sales driver, with all customer participants emphasizing quality considerations in their purchasing decisions. Customers specifically mention durability, dimensional consistency, color uniformity, and structural strength as important quality indicators. The manufacturing unit has developed reputation for producing paving blocks that meet or exceed industry standards, with minimal defect rates and reliable performance across diverse applications. This quality reputation generates repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, as satisfied customers return for subsequent projects and recommend products to others. As one contractor participant stated, "Quality is non-negotiable in our business. When we install inferior paving blocks, they crack within months and we face customer complaints. This supplier consistently delivers products that perform well, which protects our reputation."

Competitive pricing constitutes another significant sales influence, balancing affordability with quality perceptions. The manufacturing unit's pricing strategy positions products slightly below major commercial competitors while maintaining margins sufficient for organizational sustainability. This pricing approach proves attractive to budget-conscious customers, particularly for large-volume projects where total material costs represent substantial expenditures. However, participants emphasize that pricing alone does not determine purchasing decisions, with quality considerations and supplier reliability carrying equal or greater weight. Several customers note that they previously purchased lower-priced products from other suppliers but experienced quality problems justifying premium pricing for superior alternatives.

Institutional trust derived from the pesantren's religious and educational mission represents a distinctive sales influence absent in purely commercial enterprises. Multiple customers reference the pesantren's reputation for honesty, integrity, and community service as factors increasing their confidence in product quality and business practices. This trust extends beyond transactional relationships to encompass broader social connections and shared values. As one customer explained, "We know this is not just a business operation. It is part of an educational institution dedicated to serving the community. That gives us confidence that they will not compromise quality for profits or treat customers unfairly. There is accountability beyond normal business relationships." This institutional legitimacy proves particularly valuable in contexts characterized by general skepticism toward commercial entities and concerns about fraudulent business practices.

Product availability and order fulfillment reliability also influence sales, particularly for contractors operating under project deadlines requiring timely material delivery. The manufacturing unit's proximity to many customers reduces transportation costs and delivery times compared with distant suppliers. Management has implemented inventory management practices aimed at maintaining adequate stock levels for common product types while accommodating custom orders with reasonable lead times. However, raw material supply interruptions occasionally force production delays that frustrate customers and potentially redirect purchases to competitors with more reliable availability.

Customer service quality, encompassing pre-purchase consultation, order processing efficiency, and post-purchase support, contributes to sales performance through impacts on customer satisfaction and retention. Sales personnel demonstrate technical knowledge enabling them to advise customers regarding appropriate product selection for specific applications, installation techniques, and maintenance requirements. This consultative approach builds customer confidence and facilitates informed purchasing decisions. However, customer service

consistency varies depending on which staff member handles interactions, with some demonstrating greater product expertise and communication skills than others.

4.3. Barriers to Promotional Effectiveness

Analysis of interview responses and observational data identifies multiple barriers constraining promotional effectiveness and limiting sales growth potential. These barriers span resource limitations, capability gaps, and organizational characteristics that collectively hinder optimal promotional strategy implementation.

Limited promotional budget represents a fundamental constraint affecting promotional scope and quality. As a social enterprise operating within an educational institution, the paving block unit faces competing demands for financial resources, with educational mission priorities often taking precedence over business development investments. Marketing expenditure remains minimal, covering basic costs for banner production and brochure printing but insufficient for professional advertising campaigns, digital marketing tools, or promotional staff hiring. This resource scarcity necessitates reliance on low-cost promotional approaches that may lack the reach and impact of more substantial marketing investments.

Insufficient digital marketing expertise emerges as another critical barrier limiting effective social media utilization despite widespread platform availability. Current staff responsible for digital promotional activities lack formal training in social media marketing, content creation, or digital analytics. Social media posting occurs sporadically when staff find time between other responsibilities rather than following content calendars or strategic posting schedules. Content quality varies considerably, with some posts featuring professional photographs and informative captions while others utilize poor-quality images and minimal text. The organization has not employed metrics or analytics to evaluate social media performance, missing opportunities to identify effective content types and optimize posting strategies.

Geographic market concentration limits promotional reach beyond immediate regional markets, with most customers located within Kubu Raya Regency and adjacent areas. While this geographic focus aligns with practical considerations including delivery logistics and relationship maintenance, it constrains market expansion opportunities. The organization has not developed systematic approaches to extend market reach into more distant regions despite potential demand in urban centers and other provinces. Limited transportation infrastructure and high shipping costs for heavy construction materials present genuine barriers to geographic expansion, but insufficient promotional investment in potential distant markets also contributes to continued geographic concentration.

Promotional message targeting precision remains underdeveloped, with most promotional materials employing generic messages suitable for broad audiences rather than tailored content addressing specific customer segment needs and preferences. Residential customers, contractors, and institutional buyers possess different information requirements, decision-making processes, and value priorities, yet they receive essentially identical promotional communications. This lack of segmentation reduces message relevance and persuasive impact for particular customer groups who may respond more favorably to customized content addressing their specific concerns and interests.

Organizational culture characteristics also influence promotional practices, particularly regarding technology adoption and change receptivity. As a traditional religious educational institution, the pesantren emphasizes values including modesty, community service, and educational mission prioritization that sometimes create tensions with aggressive marketing approaches. Some stakeholders express concerns that intensive promotional activities might appear inconsistent with institutional religious character or detract from educational mission focus. These cultural considerations contribute to conservative promotional approaches and resistance toward more assertive marketing tactics employed by commercial competitors.

Finally, limited performance monitoring and evaluation systems constrain promotional strategy refinement and improvement. The organization lacks systematic procedures for assessing promotional effectiveness, tracking which activities generate customer inquiries or purchases, or evaluating return on promotional investments. Sales data are recorded and reviewed periodically, but these reviews rarely involve detailed analysis linking sales variations to specific promotional initiatives or market conditions. This absence of systematic evaluation prevents evidence-based promotional planning and inhibits learning from experience to enhance future promotional efforts.

Discussion

5.1. Promotional Strategy Patterns in Faith-Based Social Enterprises

The findings from this investigation illuminate several important patterns regarding promotional strategies within faith-based social enterprises operating in emerging market contexts. The predominance of conventional promotional approaches, limited digital marketing integration, and reliance on institutional legitimacy as primary competitive advantages reflect broader challenges confronting traditional organizations navigating contemporary marketing environments. These patterns merit detailed examination in relation to existing theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence from related contexts.

The heavy reliance on traditional promotional methods including banners, brochures, and personal selling aligns with research documenting slow digital adoption among SMEs and social enterprises in developing economies (Odoom et al., 2017; Ramdani et al., 2013). Several factors contribute to this pattern beyond simple resistance to change. Resource constraints limit capacity to invest in digital marketing tools, training, and dedicated staff time required for effective social media management. Insufficient digital marketing expertise among existing personnel creates capability gaps that organizations lack resources to address through recruitment or training initiatives. Organizational cultures emphasizing traditional values and conservative approaches may view aggressive digital marketing as inconsistent with institutional character or mission.

However, this reliance on conventional methods introduces significant limitations in contemporary marketing environments increasingly characterized by digital information consumption patterns, particularly among younger demographics. Research consistently demonstrates that integrated approaches combining traditional and digital channels achieve superior promotional effectiveness compared with isolated channel strategies (Ryan, 2016; Tuten, 2023). The organization's current approach risks missing opportunities to reach potential customers who primarily discover and evaluate products through online searches and social media rather than physical promotional materials or personal networks.

The findings regarding institutional trust as a significant sales influence provide empirical support for theoretical arguments about legitimacy and credibility as distinctive assets for faith-based organizations. The pesantren's reputation for integrity, community service, and religious commitment generates stakeholder confidence extending beyond normal commercial relationships. This trust capital reduces customer risk perceptions, enhances credibility for quality claims, and facilitates relationship development. Such advantages prove particularly valuable in contexts characterized by information asymmetries between sellers and buyers, where customers face difficulty verifying product quality before purchase and after-sales service reliability.

However, the research also reveals that institutional legitimacy alone proves insufficient for achieving optimal sales performance, particularly as competition intensifies and customer expectations evolve. Quality and pricing competitiveness remain essential, with institutional trust serving as differentiating factor among similarly positioned alternatives rather than compensating for product or pricing deficiencies. This finding suggests that faith-based social enterprises must maintain professional business practices alongside leveraging institutional

advantages, avoiding assumptions that religious affiliation automatically ensures market success.

5.2. Digital Marketing Adoption Challenges

The limited effectiveness of digital promotional activities despite platform availability warrants particular attention given the growing importance of digital channels in contemporary marketing. While the organization has established social media presence through Facebook and utilizes WhatsApp for customer communication, the implementation lacks systematic planning, consistent execution, and performance monitoring characteristic of professional digital marketing practices. This pattern reflects common challenges documented in research examining social media adoption among SMEs and traditional organizations (Abed et al., 2015; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021).

Several interconnected factors contribute to suboptimal digital marketing performance. Insufficient expertise represents a primary barrier, with staff lacking training in content creation, engagement strategies, or analytics interpretation. Without understanding best practices for different platforms, optimal posting frequencies, content types generating engagement, or methods for converting followers into customers, organizations struggle to achieve meaningful results from digital investments. Resource constraints exacerbate expertise gaps, limiting capacity to hire specialized digital marketing personnel or access professional training programs.

The irregular posting patterns and inconsistent engagement with follower communications reflect time availability constraints common among small organizations where individuals juggle multiple responsibilities. Digital marketing requires sustained attention and regular activity to build follower bases, maintain engagement, and convert interest into sales. Sporadic activity generates limited results, as followers lose interest and algorithms reduce visibility for inactive accounts. Research emphasizes that social media success demands consistent commitment rather than occasional attention (Tuten, 2023).

The absence of performance monitoring prevents learning and continuous improvement essential for digital marketing success. Unlike traditional advertising where measuring specific impacts proves challenging, digital platforms provide detailed metrics regarding content reach, engagement rates, click-throughs, and conversion patterns. However, accessing and interpreting these metrics requires technical knowledge and analytical capabilities. Without systematic monitoring, organizations cannot identify which content types resonate with audiences, optimal posting times, or which platforms generate sales leads, preventing evidence-based strategy refinement.

5.3. Implications for Social Enterprise Marketing

These findings offer several important implications for understanding and enhancing promotional effectiveness within social enterprises, particularly those operating in emerging markets or rooted in traditional institutional contexts. The results suggest that faith-based social enterprises possess distinctive assets including institutional legitimacy and stakeholder trust that provide competitive advantages. However, realizing these advantages requires complementing traditional strengths with contemporary marketing capabilities.

First, the research demonstrates that social enterprises benefit from developing integrated promotional strategies that combine conventional and digital approaches rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive alternatives. Traditional methods including banners, brochures, and personal selling retain value for reaching certain customer segments and building personal relationships. However, digital channels offer complementary capabilities for expanding market reach, engaging younger demographics, and providing convenient information access. The optimal approach integrates these channels in mutually reinforcing

ways, with traditional materials directing customers to digital platforms for additional information while social media promotes physical locations and personal consultations.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of strategic planning and systematic execution in digital marketing, contradicting assumptions that social media presence alone generates promotional benefits. Effective digital marketing requires content strategies, posting schedules, engagement protocols, and performance monitoring systems. Social enterprises seeking to leverage digital channels must invest in developing these capabilities through training, hiring specialized personnel, or engaging external consultants. The alternative of maintaining superficial digital presence through sporadic activity generates minimal benefits while consuming resources that could be deployed more effectively.

Third, the research emphasizes that institutional legitimacy, while valuable, requires ongoing cultivation through quality performance, ethical practices, and stakeholder engagement. Trust capital erodes when organizations fail to deliver on promises or when quality lapses disappoint customer expectations. Faith-based social enterprises must actively maintain institutional reputations through consistent quality, transparent operations, and genuine commitment to social missions. Marketing communications should authentically reflect organizational values rather than exploiting religious affiliations for commercial advantage.

Fourth, the findings suggest that customer segmentation and targeting precision merit greater attention in social enterprise marketing. Different customer categories possess distinct needs, preferences, and decision-making processes that generic promotional messages may address inadequately. Developing segment-specific content and distribution strategies enhances message relevance and persuasive impact. This targeting precision proves particularly important for resource-constrained organizations needing to maximize promotional investment efficiency.

Conclusions

This investigation examined promotional strategies employed by a paving block manufacturing unit operated by an Islamic boarding school in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Analysis of qualitative data collected through observations, interviews, and document review reveals several significant findings regarding current promotional practices, sales influencing factors, and implementation barriers.

Current promotional strategies remain predominantly conventional in character, emphasizing traditional media including banners, brochures, and personal selling through established networks. Digital platforms including Facebook and WhatsApp are utilized but lack systematic planning, consistent execution, or professional management. Integration across promotional channels remains limited, with different activities operating relatively independently rather than as coordinated components of unified strategies.

Three primary factors influence sales performance: product quality consistency, competitive pricing strategies, and institutional trust derived from the pesantren's religious character and community reputation. These factors operate interactively, with quality and pricing establishing competitive viability while institutional trust provides differentiation among similarly positioned alternatives. Customer testimonials emphasize that purchasing decisions reflect assessments across all three dimensions rather than singular priority consideration.

Multiple barriers constrain promotional effectiveness including limited budgets, insufficient digital marketing expertise, geographic market concentration, underdeveloped message targeting, organizational culture characteristics, and absent performance monitoring systems. These barriers interact to restrict promotional scope, quality, and impact, preventing optimal market penetration despite product competitive advantages.

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