

EFFORTS TO BUILD SCHOOL BRAND IMAGE TO ATTRACT NEW STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the efforts of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung in building its brand image as a means of increasing the interest of new students. The approach used is descriptive qualitative phenomenological with interview, observation, and documentation techniques. The results of the study show that brand image formation is carried out through three main dimensions, namely corporate image, user image, and product image. Corporate image is built through academic and non-academic achievements, teacher professionalism, and public communication that is adaptive to digital developments. User image is formed through the development of religious, disciplined, and inclusive character, which reflects the ethical and integrity-based behavior of students. Meanwhile, product image is demonstrated through modern facilities, quality educational services, and excellent programs that are relevant to the needs of students. The synergy of these three aspects strengthens public trust, increases the number of applicants each year, and affirms SMANDA's position as a competitive and character-building educational institution in Lampung Province.

Brand Image, Interest of New Students, School Promotion

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a basic need that plays an important role in shaping the quality of human resources. In the context of globalization, educational institutions are required not only to excel in academic quality, but also to be able to present a positive brand image in order to remain trusted and sought after by the community. Brand image is an important factor because it influences public perception of the reputation and quality of educational institutions (Yusuf, 2023).

Brand image is essentially the public's perception of educational institutions, formed through experience, information, and interaction (Fauzie & Abidin, 2024). A positive image will increase public trust, while a negative image can reduce the interest of new students. The three main aspects that shape brand image include corporate image (institutional reputation), user image (character of users or students), and product image (quality of services and educational facilities) (Firmansyah, 2019, pp. 81–83). These three aspects are decisive in building the school's competitive advantage amid competition among educational institutions.

Competition in the world of education is becoming increasingly fierce, especially at the high school level. According to data from the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2025, there are more than 14,000 high schools in Indonesia, with a nearly equal proportion of public and private schools (Pendidikan Riset, dan Teknologi, Kebudayaan, 2025, p. 8).

This situation encourages every school to continuously improve its quality and strengthen its public image in order to remain the community's first choice. In Bandar Lampung City alone, there are 71 active high schools, making it the region with the highest number of high schools in Lampung Province (Lampung, 2024).

Bandar Lampung State High School 2 is one of the most popular schools, known for its outstanding academic and non-academic achievements and adequate learning facilities. However, fierce competition between public and private schools requires this institution to continue strengthening its brand image in order to maintain the interest of new students.

Based on preliminary research conducted through interviews with the Deputy Principal for Public Relations, it was found that SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung has implemented various promotional strategies such as publishing achievements through social media, involving students in external activities, and improving academic services. The preliminary research also showed that the school's image has been maintained through three main aspects. In terms of corporate image, SMA Negeri 2 is known as a high-achieving school with high credibility in the eyes of the community. In terms of user image, the students are considered polite, disciplined, and high-achieving, reflecting the positive character of the school. In terms of product image, the school provides adequate facilities and excellent programs that are relevant to the needs of students. New student admission data (PPDB) shows a significant increase from 510 applicants in 2024 to 1,220 in 2025, indicating the community's growing trust in this school.

Thus, efforts to build brand image are a strategic step in increasing the interest of new students at SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung. Through its good reputation, quality service, and sustainable promotional strategies, this school has been able to maintain its position as one of the leading educational institutions in Lampung Province.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type, which aims to deeply understand the experiences, views, and efforts of schools in building a brand image to increase the interest of new students. This approach allows researchers to explore the meanings and perceptions of research subjects based on direct experiences without manipulating the variables being studied (Prayogi & Kurniawan, 2024).

The research location was SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung, with research subjects consisting of the vice principal in charge of public relations, the vice principal in charge of student affairs, public relations staff, teachers, prospective students, and students involved in school promotion activities. The researcher acted as the main instrument in the data collection process.

The research data sources were divided into two categories: Primary data, obtained directly through interviews and observations of school officials, including the deputy principal in charge of public relations, the deputy principal in charge of student affairs, teachers, public relations staff, prospective students, and students of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung. Secondary data included official school documents and archives such as school profiles, student admission data, activity reports, promotional media, and school work planning documents.

Data collection techniques used interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore in-depth information about the school's strategies and obstacles in building a positive image. Observations were conducted directly in the school environment to observe promotional activities, the learning atmosphere, and social interactions. Documentation served to reinforce the research findings through written or

visual evidence, such as photos of activities, promotional reports, and the school's social media content.

Data analysis is conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three stages: Data reduction, which involves simplifying and selecting data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation, which involves compiling information in the form of narratives and tables to make it easier to understand. Drawing conclusions and verification, which involves interpreting data patterns and meanings to answer the research questions.

To maintain data validity, this study uses source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of interviews from various parties involved, while technique triangulation is carried out by combining the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. With this method, the study is expected to provide a valid and comprehensive picture of the efforts of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung in building a brand image as a leading school that is in demand by the community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Efforts to Build Brand Image in Terms of Corporate Image to Attract Students

SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung (SMANDA) is widely known as one of the leading schools in Lampung Province with a high reputation in both academic and non-academic fields. This positive image did not appear instantly, but is the result of a consistent, focused, and sustainable strategy to strengthen popularity, credibility, and public trust in the quality of education. This finding is reinforced by research (Yusuf et al., 2024), which shows that corporate image has a significant influence on people's decisions in choosing educational institutions, because a high academic reputation reflects the credibility and quality of the school. This means that academic achievement is a major factor in shaping the positive image of educational institutions.

Observations show that SMANDA actively utilizes digital technology as a means of promoting and publicizing school activities. Through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and its official website, the school displays student activities, achievements, and learning innovations in an interesting and interactive way. For example, the Smanda Run 2025 event was publicized through social media as a form of school engagement with the community as well as a means of strengthening its public image. This strategy is in line with the research results (Suharto et al., 2024) which confirms that digital promotion and school brand image have a positive relationship with prospective students' interest, because social media plays an important role in building brand awareness and public trust. Research (Aisah et al., 2024) also found that consistent social media promotion can strengthen the image of educational institutions and influence parents' decisions in choosing schools for their children.

Quantitatively, SMANDA's popularity in the digital space has increased significantly until 2025. The Instagram account @sman2.bdl has more than 13,800 followers and more than 2,400 posts with high interaction from students, alumni, and the community. The YouTube channel features more than 170 videos documenting school activities, while TikTok reaches the younger generation with creative and educational content. Facebook is used for cross-generational communication, and the school's official website serves as a center for academic information and a transparent and professional institutional profile. This finding is reinforced by research (Elmi & Amaliyah, 2025) which explains that transparency of information and professional digital communication strengthen the credibility of educational institutions, especially when supported by the open presentation of data through official websites. Thus, SMANDA's digital activities not only

serve as promotion, but also as an instrument to increase public trust in the school's professionalism.

In addition to social media, SMANDA gains public support through coverage in local online media such as Radar Lampung and Lampung Post, which regularly highlight student achievements, social activities, and alumni achievements. Public relations staff state that every student success is packaged in the form of news, visual posts, and videos, which are then disseminated systematically. This strategy has proven effective in maintaining the school's positive image in the public sphere. This is consistent with research (Masruroh et al., 2023) which emphasizes that educational marketing strategies in the digital age need to emphasize consistency in publication and public participation in order to strengthen the image of the institution and increase the competitiveness of schools.

Internally, SMANDA teachers and educational staff are seen as the “face of the school” who interact directly with students and the community. The school instills a culture of professionalism, communication, and empathy. Teachers act not only as educators, but also as mentors and motivators who understand the potential of their students. A professional attitude and humanistic service are important factors in building a positive image for the institution. These findings support the results of the study. (Baeruma & Karnawati, 2025) which states that the quality of educational services and the professionalism of teachers are key components in shaping a positive image of educational institutions, because direct interaction with the community greatly determines public perception of school quality.

Interviews with new students showed that they learned about SMANDA through junior high school teachers, peers, and the school's official social media accounts. They considered the school to be disciplined, high-achieving, modern, and tech-friendly. The school's creative and inspiring social media activities were a particular draw for prospective new students. This finding reinforced the research findings (Abdullah et al., 2024) which explains that social media plays an important role in shaping positive public perceptions of schools and significantly influences decisions about choosing educational institutions. Thus, SMANDA's digital public communications have proven effective in increasing the interest of prospective students every year.

SMANDA also maintains its credibility through information transparency, academic supervision, teacher performance evaluations, and infrastructure improvements. National A accreditation and cooperation with universities, the business world, and training institutions are clear evidence of the school's commitment to educational quality and professional management. Research (Meriç & Öz, 2025) supports this finding by stating that institutional transparency and continuous evaluation are key factors in maintaining public trust in educational institutions.

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that the development of the corporate image of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung is the result of synergy between academic reputation, teacher professionalism, and digital communication strategies that are adaptive to technological developments. This finding is in line with various studies that confirm that the image of modern educational institutions is formed through a combination of academic reputation, information transparency, and consistent and participatory digital interaction. With this strategy, SMANDA has succeeded in maintaining its reputation as a leading school with integrity, transparency, and high competitiveness in the digital era.

Efforts to Build Brand Image in Terms of User Image to Attract Students' Interest

User image is a description of the character, lifestyle, and social status of students as users of educational services. In the context of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung

(SMANDA), this image is an important aspect that helps strengthen the school's reputation in the eyes of the community. Through character building, instilling positive values, and various extracurricular activities, SMANDA has succeeded in presenting a profile of students who are not only excellent in academics but also have polite, disciplined, and ethical personalities.

Based on interviews with the Deputy Principal for Student Affairs, the formation of a positive image of students is carried out systematically through character education that is integrated with the school's vision and mission, namely "Religious, Characteristic, Intelligent, and Inspirational." These values are applied in every school activity, both academic and non-academic. Every student is accustomed to exhibiting polite behavior, responsibility, and concern for the surrounding environment.

The character building program is implemented through routine activities such as Lampung Mengaji, Kamis Literasi, Doa Bersama, and Jumat Ceria. Through these activities, students are trained to have discipline, responsibility, empathy, and social sensitivity. Observations show that these activities have received positive appreciation from the community because they reflect the character of students who are moral, ethical, and socially concerned. These findings reinforce the results of the study (Salsabila et al., 2025), which shows that character education effectively shapes students' personalities through the internalization of moral values, religiosity, and positive social behavior at school, creating students with excellent character who are easily recognized by the wider community. Thus, character building at SMANDA not only shapes disciplined behavior, but also creates a moral identity for students that strengthens the school's image in the public eye.

In addition to instilling character values, extracurricular activities also play an important role in shaping a positive lifestyle and strengthening the image of SMANDA students as an active and accomplished generation. The school offers a variety of activities such as the Student Council, Scouts, Red Cross, Paskibra, Rohis, sports clubs, as well as arts and culture clubs. Based on interviews with supervising teachers, these activities provide a space for students to develop their interests, talents, and values of leadership, responsibility, and solidarity. Students who are active in organizations demonstrate high self-confidence and become role models for their peers. This is in line with research findings (Sulastri & Siti, 2023), which emphasizes that the school environment and structured activities play a significant role in shaping students' character and social behavior, including discipline, collaboration, and leadership skills.

The involvement of SMANDA students in various academic and non-academic competitions also reinforces their image as high-achieving and productive students. School records show that students are active in science, sports, arts, and social activities at the regional and national levels, which contributes to a positive public image of the school. Interviews with new students show that SMANDA students are known to be polite, high-achieving, and highly socially-minded. They describe the school atmosphere as harmonious, respectful, and inclusive, despite the students coming from diverse social backgrounds. This reflects the strong culture of equality at SMANDA, where all students are given equal opportunities to develop. These findings are consistent with the results of the study (Pramana & Trihantoyo, 2021), which states that character building through school activities can significantly improve students' discipline, responsibility, and moral motivation. Thus, the positive image of SMANDA students in the eyes of prospective new students demonstrates the success of the character building strategy implemented by the school.

SMANDA instills the principles of equality and fairness in all students regardless of their economic background. According to the Public Relations Staff, the school provides equal opportunities in both academic and non-academic activities, as well as providing

educational assistance and scholarships for both high-achieving and underprivileged students. This principle creates an inclusive and equitable learning environment, builds solidarity among students, and strengthens mutual respect. These efforts are reinforced by research (Pradhan & Naik, 2024), which emphasizes that inclusive education is the basis for achieving equality and social justice in schools, which directly contributes to the formation of a positive image of educational institutions.

The Deputy Principal for Student Affairs emphasized that students at Bandar Lampung State High School 2 act as “ambassadors for the school's image.” Before participating in extracurricular activities, they are equipped with ethics, responsibility, and ways to interact with the community. Observations show that students are able to apply the values of politeness, responsibility, and social ethics in various external activities. This indicates that student image is shaped not only through internal guidance, but also through social interactions that strengthen the school's reputation as an institution that produces graduates with character and social awareness. These findings are in line with research (Anjarwani & Hermawan, 2025) on character education that emphasizes the importance of instilling values, the role of teachers, and contextual learning in shaping students' moral behavior in society.

The image of SMANDA is not only reflected in its active students, but also in the achievements and accomplishments of its alumni. Alumni are a true representation of the quality of graduates produced by the school and an indicator of the success of the education system implemented. One inspiring figure is Rahmat Mirzani Djausal, a 1998 SMANDA alumnus who currently serves as the Governor of Lampung and Chairman of the SMANDA Alumni Association (IKA) for the 2025-2029 period. During SMANDA's 60th anniversary celebration, he emphasized the importance of alumni being role models and contributing to society. Additionally, the Alumni Gotong Royong program and the SMANDA 98 Silver Reunion event are tangible evidence of alumni's commitment to providing scholarships, supporting educational equity, and strengthening the school's social network. Research (Hilmi, 2021) supports this finding by stating that alumni involvement in promotion, fundraising, and social activities plays an important role in strengthening the image of educational institutions in the public eye. In fact, the success of the Smanda Old Star 1993 team in achieving third place nationally in the 2025 High School Legend National Softball Tournament shows that alumni contribute not only in the social sphere, but also in sports and institutional pride.

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that the user image of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung is built through systematic character building, productive extracurricular activities, an inclusive learning environment, and the influential role of alumni in the community. This finding reinforces the theory that the user image of a school is not only shaped by the academic achievements of its students, but also by the integration of character values, positive social behavior, and the contribution of alumni in building the school's reputation. With consistent development strategies and the support of an active alumni community, SMANDA has succeeded in shaping the image of its students as a religious, characterful, intelligent, inspiring generation that makes a real contribution to society.

Efforts to Build Brand Image in Terms of Product Image to Attract New Students

Product image is the public's perception of the quality of education services offered by SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung (SMANDA). This image is built through a combination of the school's excellent attributes, tangible benefits for students, excellent service, and consistent quality assurance. Based on the results of the study, SMANDA shows that all

aspects of educational services, from facilities and academic programs to service systems, are designed to create a quality learning experience that is oriented towards the needs of students.

In terms of facilities, documentation and observation results show that SMANDA has 30 active buildings used for learning and academic support activities, including classrooms, science laboratories (Physics, Biology, Chemistry), computer laboratories, multimedia rooms, guidance counseling rooms, school health units, cooperatives, GSG, and a school mosque. Based on infrastructure data for the 2024/2025 academic year, the school has 129 computers, 221 LCD projectors, 210 air conditioners, 334 student desks, 380 teacher chairs, and more than 100 literacy and sports facilities. Each classroom is equipped with a Smart TV and a digital-based learning system that supports interactivity and learning comfort. The clean, green, and orderly school environment reinforces SMANDA's image as a leading educational institution that is adaptive to technological developments. These complete facilities not only increase comfort but also strengthen the community's perception of the quality of SMANDA's educational services. These findings are in line with research (Lestari et al., 2023) which states that modern and complete school facilities have a positive effect on increasing enrollment of new students and positive perceptions of school quality. Thus, facilities are a strong foundation for creating a superior and competitive product image.

In addition to facilities, academic quality and flagship programs are important elements in building product image. SMANDA has developed various programs such as research classes, science olympiad training, SNBT (National Selection Based on Tests) guidance, literacy programs, and soft skills development that train critical, collaborative, and communicative thinking skills. Based on an analysis of official school documents over the last three years (2023–2025), there has been a significant increase in the number of students accepted into state universities (PTN), both through SNBT and SNBP. The University of Lampung (UNILA) is the main destination for the majority of graduates, while several other students have successfully entered renowned universities outside the region and abroad. This success reinforces SMANDA's product image as a school that provides tangible benefits to students through focused and effective learning quality. These findings are in line with research (Rohani, 2022) which confirms that systematic management of flagship programs improves student achievement and the attractiveness of schools in the eyes of prospective students.

Dalam aspek pelayanan prima, SMANDA menerapkan prinsip “3S” (Senyum, Sapa, Polite) in every interaction between school members, parents, and the community. In the New Student Admission (PPDB) process, the school provides direct and online services through its official website and social media to facilitate access to information. Based on the interview results, prospective students and parents rated SMANDA's PPDB service as friendly, fast, and transparent, creating a professional yet humanistic impression. In addition, teachers play an active role as mentors and motivators through Guidance Counseling (BK) and academic mentoring services to help students overcome learning and personal obstacles. This approach to service builds community trust in the quality of SMANDA's services. This is in line with the results of the study (Norhikmah et al., 2025) which found that the quality of school services has a significant impact on parents' decisions in choosing a school for their children. Thus, excellent service at SMANDA is not only an administrative aspect, but also an effective strategy in strengthening the positive image of educational institutions.

To maintain the quality of education, SMANDA regularly conducts learning evaluations, academic supervision, and teacher training in order to continuously improve competence. SMANDA teachers actively participate in In-House Training (IHT), the HaBeGe Learning Community, and training in modern learning technologies. The school

has also received an A accreditation, which is proof of national recognition of the quality of education it provides. On the other hand, cooperation with universities, training institutions, the business world, and alumni strengthens the quality assurance system and the relevance of learning to the needs of the times. These quality improvement efforts are in line with research (Milati & Mulyani, 2021) which shows that school accreditation has a significant effect on parents' level of trust and decision-making when choosing a school, as it is considered an objective indicator of educational quality assurance. With accreditation and continuous innovation, SMANDA has been able to maintain its image as a leading school with a high academic reputation and professionalism.

Overall, the results of the study show that SMANDA's product image is built through the synergy between the excellence of its physical facilities, academic quality, excellent service, and a sustainable quality assurance system. These findings reinforce the theory that a school's product image depends not only on academic achievement but also on service quality, program innovation, and consistency in maintaining public trust. Thus, SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung has successfully presented a positive image as a professional, adaptive educational institution that is oriented towards the needs of its students. This strong product image reflects the community's trust in the quality of education provided by SMANDA, while also serving as a major attraction for prospective new students and proof of the school's success in providing high-quality, character-building, and nationally and globally competitive educational services.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung's efforts to build a brand image to increase the interest of new students were carried out through three main dimensions, namely corporate image, user image, and product image.

1. Corporate Image is built through academic and non-academic achievements, teacher professionalism, and active public communication on social media and external activities. This strategy has succeeded in fostering public trust and strengthening the school's reputation as a credible and adaptive educational institution at the forefront of developments.
2. The User Image is formed through the development of religious character, discipline, and ethics in students, as well as support for social activities, extracurricular activities, and the active role of alumni. This makes SMANDA students known for their achievements, integrity, and positive contributions to society, while strengthening the school's image in the public eye.
3. Product Image is realized through comprehensive facilities, excellent academic and non-academic services, and flagship programs such as research classes and college guidance. Quality evaluation, A accreditation, and external cooperation further strengthen the quality of education, making SMANDA a professional and trusted school.

Overall, SMA Negeri 2 Bandar Lampung has successfully established a strong brand image through the synergy between its corporate image, user image, and product image. This positive image has increased public trust and has had a tangible impact on the increase in the number of applicants each year. With its good reputation, quality services, and outstanding student character, this school has been able to maintain its position as a leading and highly competitive educational institution in Lampung Province.

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