

Public Relations Communication Adaptation in Islamic University Branding for Gen Z

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Branding, Social Media, Gen Z, Higher Education

Received: 14, June

Revised : 28, June

Accepted : 31, July

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how the Public Relations Division of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, as an Islamic higher education institution, adapts its branding messages on social media to reach and build a positive image among Gen Z. The study focuses on the BHP UMS , internal stakeholders, and an analysis of UMS's social media content from January 2023 to May 2025. The method employed is a case study with a qualitative descriptive approach. The findings reveal that UMS Public Relations adapts the university's branding messages through strategies involving content, symbols, language, and formats that align with the characteristics and trends of Gen Z, without neglecting institutional values rooted in Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah. This contributes to UMS's positive image. These findings have significant implications for strengthening Public Relations' communication adaptation strategies in university branding toward Gen Z, without disregarding institutional values.

INTRODUCTION

Competition among higher education institutions in the era of globalization has increased significantly. This dynamic compels universities to develop branding strategies as a differentiation mechanism in facing competitors. In this context, universities are not only required to excel academically but also to strengthen the institution's image and identity comprehensively. University branding has become increasingly relevant due to the high intensity of competition among higher education institutions, which is further driven by a supply that exceeds market demand (Albar et al., 2022).

Branding has evolved into a strategic instrument for enhancing the competitiveness of higher education institutions in a dynamic market. The branding process is not limited to creating visual identities such as logos and slogans but also involves managing perceptions, reputation, and institutional values to be embedded in the public's mind (Stephenson et al., 2016). Effective branding practices can build emotional connections with audiences, encompassing both functional satisfaction and symbolic needs (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009). A strong and consistent perception of the institution serves as a key asset in building a positive image, which significantly influences public trust, including that of prospective students, parents, and stakeholders (Pasanea et al., 2024).

Since the mid-1990s, branding has been recognized as an essential component of institutional strategy, not only in the business sector but also adopted in higher education (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Universities worldwide have begun seeking ways to define a unique identity to distinguish themselves from competitors (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009). A similar phenomenon is also observed in Indonesia, which currently has 4,004 higher education institutions, according to 2022 BPS data. Of these, 3,820 are private universities, indicating a high level of competition and the necessity for robust branding strategies (DataIndonesia.id, 2023).

Private universities, in particular, are required to possess unique characteristics and appeal to compete effectively. Branding has become a strategic necessity to create associations, emotions, and impressions that differentiate one institution from another (Rohman, 2006). A strong brand identity enables institutions to gain public trust and loyalty, while also ensuring institutional sustainability (Yanu & Fianto, 2012).

The development of digital technology has also driven changes in the branding strategies of higher education institutions. The shift from conventional to digital approaches has become inevitable, in line with the growing role of information technology and social media in strategic communication. Its presence offers new ways of operating within the higher education system (Arifin & Herli, 2020). Today, higher education institutions actively utilize various digital platforms such as websites, social media, and online advertising to build relationships with a broader audience (Soelaiman, 2023; Elfiqi & Aesthetika, 2024). This transformation has made social media a primary communication channel capable of reaching the public more adaptively, especially the digital-native generation.

In Indonesia, 66.5% of the population is connected to the internet, and 49.9% are active social media users, with an average daily usage of 3 hours and 11 minutes (We Are Social, 2024). The high penetration of social media provides a strong rationale for higher education institutions to adopt structured and targeted digital communication strategies (Dewi & Budiwati, 2024). Social media is no longer merely a promotional tool but has become a strategic space for building institutional reputation and fostering more effective two-way communication with the public (Nugraha A. R et al., 2022).

Digital based communication strategies have now become an urgent necessity, given the shift in audience behavior towards relying more on social media to obtain information about universities (Annur, 2021). Research by Katadata Insight Center and Aku Pintar (2021) shows that 73% of prospective students use social media as their primary source of information about higher education institutions, surpassing official university websites, alumni, and even mass media (Annur, 2021).

This shift in the communication landscape brings significant implications for university public relations units. Public relations is now required not only to act as a one-way message conveyor but to transform into a strategic communication unit capable of designing, executing, and evaluating digital branding campaigns comprehensively (Gussman & Kurniadi, 2018). Adaptation to digital technology is key to optimizing the role of public relations in building strong relationships with the public (Patoni & Haryanti, 2023).

One of the universities actively implementing this strategy is Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS). Through various digital channels such as Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), YouTube, LinkedIn, and Threads, UMS demonstrates its commitment to building an adaptive and inclusive institutional image, particularly in the eyes of the younger generation. UMS's achievements, which place it at the top in various national and international rankings, serve as an important asset in strengthening the institution's brand identity (Times Higher Education, 2025; CNN Indonesia, 2024).

However, in practice, the branding messages conveyed by UMS Public Relations through social media are not always uniformly received by internal stakeholders. In some cases, there is a gap between the intended message, shaped by the dynamics of social media algorithms and the demand for fast, relevant, and contextually appropriate content for the target audience and the perceptions of internal audiences. This complexity increases when the primary communication target is Generation Z, a group born and raised in the digital era, characterized by unique traits such as a preference for visual content, humorous approaches, and message authenticity (IDN Research Institute, 2024; Zarubina et al., 2024). If not addressed, this can create communication gaps that may undermine the effectiveness of institutional branding. Therefore, the ability to adapt communication becomes a crucial aspect to ensure that branding messages are optimally received and understood by various audiences.

Several previous studies have highlighted the importance of branding strategies in building the identity of higher education institutions. Balmer & Gray (2003) emphasize that branding has been a strategic element in the academic

world since the mid-1990s. In the Indonesian context, Rohman (2006) underscores that branding is a crucial necessity, particularly for private universities competing with public institutions. (Waeraas & Solbakk, 2009) highlight the importance of brand trust in establishing emotional and symbolic connections between universities and prospective students. The concept of digital branding has since evolved alongside technological advancements, prompting universities to leverage social media and other digital platforms to build strong brand narratives (Elfiqui & Aesthetika, 2024). In practice, social media now functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a strategic communication instrument (Dewi & Budiwati, 2024; Nugraha A. R et al., 2022).

However, there remains a gap in the literature that specifically addresses how communication adaptation is carried out by university public relations units particularly those in Islamic based private universities in delivering branding messages through social media to Generation Z. Most studies focus on the effectiveness of social media as a promotional tool, but few examine the adaptation of messages based on the characteristics of the target audience. Therefore, this research is important to fill that gap and to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of digital-based strategic communication in higher education, as well as practical guidance for institutions in designing effective and relevant branding strategies.

This study aims to explore how the Public Relations Division of UMS, as an Islamic based private university, adapts its branding messages through social media to reach and build a positive image among Generation Z. The main focus of this research is to identify the communication approaches used, the responses of internal stakeholders to the branding messages delivered, and the communication adaptations carried out by UMS Public Relations. The novelty of this study lies in integrating communication adaptation approaches, social media, and branding strategies within the context of Islamic-based higher education institutions targeting Generation Z in Indonesia.

THEORITICAL REVIEW

This study focuses on the communication adaptation of the Public Relations Division at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta in implementing university branding. As a conceptual guide, the research employs several theoretical approaches relevant to the topic, aiming to provide a holistic understanding of the research subject. The primary theories utilized in this study are Message Design Logic Theory, Decoding Theory, and Communication Adaptation Theory, complemented by an additional supporting theory, namely Branding Theory.

Message Design Logic Theory

Message production is the process of constructing and conveying meaning within social and cultural interactions, two contexts that influence how messages are designed. At this stage, the process of message creation is explained, whether in written, spoken, or expressive form. This explanation helps readers understand the stages of message production, as outlined in Message Design Logic theory.

Message Design Logic is a theory proposed by B.J. O'Keefe in 1997. He used the term *message design logic* to explain the thought process behind the messages we create (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). O'Keefe outlined three types of logic in message construction, ranging from the least person-centered to the most person-centered, which can be understood as follows::

- a. Expressive Logic: This logic views communication as a means of self-expression and a way to convey feelings and thoughts. Messages produced under expressive logic tend to be open and reactive, paying little attention to the needs and desires of others. In this sense, expressive logic is *self-centered* – focused on the speaker – rather than *person-centered*, which focuses on the interlocutor, as is recognized in constructivist theory.
- b. Conventional Logic: This logic perceives communication as a game played by following a set of rules. Communication, in this view, is a tool for self-expression carried out according to accepted rules and norms, including the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved. The aim is to create communication that is polite, appropriate, and in accordance with universally recognized norms. This logic functions only when all communicators within a group adhere to the established rules. It is considered successful when there is reciprocal interaction among group members. Messages under this logic are guided by prevailing rules and norms, thus exhibiting greater politeness and propriety.
- c. Rhetorical Logic: This logic regards communication as a means to change rules through negotiation. Messages designed with rhetorical logic are typically flexible, empathetic, and person-centered, focusing on the interlocutor. Speakers who employ this logic tend to reframe situations to integrate various goals such as persuasion and politeness into a cohesive whole (Morissan, 2013).

The application of this theory in the present research is intended to analyze the extent to which the branding messages designed by the Public Relations Division of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta align with or fall within one of these three categories, thereby enabling the messages to be crafted more effectively and relevantly.

Decoding Theory

Decoding refers to the audience's ability to receive a message and compare it with meanings previously stored in their memory. When an individual receives a message from another party, they perform decoding based on their perceptions, thoughts, and past experiences (Morissan, 2013). In other words, decoding is the process of translating or interpreting physical messages into a form that holds meaning for the receiver.

According to Stuart Hall (Morissan, 2013) audiences decode media messages through three possible positions:

- a. Dominant Hegemonic Position: This position occurs when the media produce a message and the audience accepts it. What the media convey happens to align with the audience's preferences (the media produce the message; the masses consume it. The audience reading coincides with the preferred

- reading). This situation reflects the audience's acceptance of the message delivered by the media, where the media communicate their message using the dominant cultural codes within society. In other words, both the media and the audience share the same dominant culture. The media must ensure that the messages they produce align with the prevailing dominant culture. For example, if the audience interprets an advertising message in the way intended by the media, it indicates that the media, the message, and the audience are all operating within the same dominant ideology.
- b. Negotiated Position: This position describes a situation in which the audience generally accepts the dominant ideology but rejects its application in specific cases (the audience assimilates the leading ideology in general but opposes its application in specific cases). In this case, audiences are willing to accept the general dominant ideology but make certain exceptions in its application, adapting it to the norms and cultural rules of their local context.
 - c. The Oppositional Position: This position occurs when the audience critically rejects or replaces the message or code presented by the media with an alternative message or code. The audience refuses the intended or preferred meaning of the message and substitutes it with their own perspective on the topic conveyed by the media.

The application of this theory in the present study is to examine how internal stakeholders at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta decode the university's branding messages designed and disseminated by the Public Relations Division. In some cases, interpretations of the branding messages do not align with the intended meaning set by Public Relations, resulting in meanings that differ from expectations. Ultimately, this decoding process can influence the effectiveness of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta's branding messages.

Interaction Adaptation Theory

The Interaction Adaptation Theory is a communication theory developed by Judee Burgoon, Lesa Stern, and Leesa Dillman. They state that when initiating communication with others, there is a general idea of what will occur, commonly referred to as the *interaction position*, the point or initial stance from which communication begins. The interaction position is determined by a combination of three RED factors: Requirement, everything needed in communication. Requirements can be biological, such as speaking loudly enough to be heard, or social, such as the need for affiliation, maintaining ongoing friendships, or managing smooth interactions. Expectation, the patterns anticipated to occur. If someone is not well-acquainted with another person, they will rely on norms of politeness and/or the purposes of the particular situation, such as the goal of friendship. If someone knows another person well, these expectations are more likely to be based on past experiences. Desire, what one hopes to achieve or what one wants to happen (Morissan, 2013).

Based on the description of the Interaction Adaptation Theory above, if there is a discrepancy between the requirements, expectations, and desires of internal stakeholders regarding the branding messages of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, the Public Relations Division will adapt according to

the three fundamental factors in the theory. These adjustments are made to ensure that the branding messages meet what is required, expected, and desired. If the initially designed branding messages fail to achieve the intended goals, Public Relations will review and modify the messages to make them more relevant and aligned with the needs of the university and its stakeholders.

Branding Theory

A brand is a perception, thought, and feeling that arises when observing a business or product. Branding, on the other hand, is a way to ensure that the perception obtained aligns with the intended brand image. In other words, a brand represents the identity, quality, and positive attributes promised by a business or product. Branding is the effort to fulfill those promises so that the brand gains trust and, ultimately, affection from consumers (Khosuma & Angelo, 2024).

According to Cahyani (2022), a brand significantly influences the perceived quality of a product. The functions of branding are as follows:

- a. Differentiation: An institution will stand out from its competitors if it has a strong brand, allowing it to be distinguished from other brands.
- b. Promotion and attractiveness: An institution with a strong brand will have greater appeal. Brand promotion becomes easier by showcasing the brand's logo.
- c. Image building, assurance of quality, and prestige: A brand functions to establish an image by providing a recognizable identity for the institution.
- d. Market control: A strong brand can easily dominate the market. It facilitates the public's access to additional information, as the brand is more easily remembered.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at exploring meaning in depth, not for generalization, but to understand the values hidden behind the data. This approach is descriptive in nature, utilizing various methods in a natural context to obtain data rich in meaning (Yusuf, 2014; Moleong, 2007; Sugiyono, 2020). A case study method is applied to understand the adaptation of UMS Public Relations in formulating the university's branding messages. The case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the unique characteristics of the case, linking the content of branding messages to the social context in the form of internal stakeholders' responses (Pawito, 2007; Triyono, 2021; Kriyantono, 2006). This research uses a single instrument case study (Creswell, 2017) focusing on a single issue, namely the adaptation of UMS Public Relations in university branding.

The research location was determined purposively, considering the relevance of the research context and accessibility. The study was conducted at the Public Relations Division, Bureau of Public Relations and Ranking (BHP) of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, as the producer of the university's branding messages, and with internal stakeholders as message recipients. Data collection was carried out from January 2023 to May 2025, covering direct

observations and a study of internal stakeholders' responses to the published branding messages.

Data collection was conducted systematically and logically through interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were carried out to gather factual information from key informants, including the Head of Public Relations and Humed, the Marketing Team, the Social Media Team, the Head of Cadre Development and Da'wah of the Student Affairs Bureau, and the Institute for the Development of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah Boarding Schools at UMS. The interview guidelines were designed based on three research focuses: message management, message reception, and Public Relations adaptation in university branding messages. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner within the work environment of the Public Relations Division and BHP UMS, as well as through content analysis of branding messages on the official social media account @umsofficialid during the period of September 2022 to December 2024. Meanwhile, documentation collected included social media reports, brand guidelines, content uploads, and other relevant documents supporting the analysis.

The validity of the data was tested using source triangulation techniques (Sugiyono, 2020), by comparing data from multiple informants, times, and methods, then validating it through member checking to ensure that the researcher's interpretations matched the perspectives of the informants. Data analysis referred to the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and verification/conclusion drawing. This analytical process was carried out interactively alongside data collection until a final conclusion was reached that is valid and scientifically accountable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The era of digital transformation requires higher education institutions to adapt to technological advancements and increasingly complex competition (DataIndonesia.id, 2023). Institutional communication has now shifted from conventional approaches to digital strategies that are relevant, engaging, and meaningful. University public relations are no longer limited to disseminating information but serve as strategic communication units capable of designing, managing, and evaluating branding campaigns (Gussman & Kurniadi, 2018).

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, through the Bureau of Public Relations and Ranking, utilizes social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Threads as its primary channels for building an image that is academic, religious, and relatable to the characteristics of Generation Z (Dewi & Budiwati, 2024). Challenges arise because branding messages are not always uniformly received by all internal stakeholders, thus necessitating adaptation strategies tailored to audience needs.

The reception of UMS's branding messages by internal stakeholders cannot be separated from the university's fundamental identity as a private Islamic-based higher education institution. UMS consistently places Islamic values as the philosophical foundation for its educational processes and institutional development. This is reflected in its philosophy of "Scientific and

Islamic Discourse,” which not only emphasizes mastery of science, technology, and the arts but also integrates them with sincere devotion to Allah and tangible benefits for the community. This philosophy serves as the foundation for every policy, program, and communication content produced by UMS Public Relations, including branding messages disseminated across various social media platforms.

UMS’s branding messages are also structured around three pillars of prophetic education: humanization, liberation, and transcendence. Each piece of content is designed to represent values of virtue, intellectual freedom, and spiritual depth, as a reflection of UMS’s distinctive identity that sets it apart from other universities. In this context, branding messages must align with the spirit of transcendence and the values of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah, which form the core of UMS’s institutional vision.

Branding Message Development

UMS Public Relations strategies refer to the communication planning model proposed by Cutlip & Center (2005), which includes the stages of research, planning, action and communication, and evaluation:

- a. Research: Conducted through audience segmentation (age, geographic location, and character), with the primary target being Generation Z (16–25 years), followed by the 26–35 age group (secondary audience), and those aged 36 and above (potential audience). This stage also includes mapping strategic locations both domestically and internationally. UMS projects an image of *excitement* and *sophistication*, with the audience nickname “GenMu” to strengthen emotional closeness (Humas UMS, 2022).
- b. Planning: Structured around eight content pillars (academic and non-academic achievements, campus life, impactful campus, research and innovation, events and activities, new student admissions, community and collaboration, and internationalization). These pillars are organized within a digital editorial planner using applications such as Google Sheets and ClickUp to ensure consistency, focus, and effectiveness (Humas UMS, 2025).
- c. Action and Communication: Implemented by a structured team according to their expertise, producing content that is visually, emotionally, and culturally relevant, and tailored to audience preferences and current momentum.
- d. Evaluation: Conducted regularly using analytical tools (Sprout Social) to assess reach, engagement, and message effectiveness. High-performing content is reinforced, while less optimal content is revised.

Perceptions and Responses of Internal Stakeholders to the University's Branding Messages.

The findings of this study reveal that internal stakeholders expressed expectations that the creative approaches used by UMS Public Relations such as the use of memes, humor, and popular trends on social media should remain within the ethical boundaries of communication in accordance with the institution’s values. Several internal stakeholders voiced concerns that presenting messages in formats not grounded in institutional values could risk diminishing the image of the Islamic campus if not managed proportionally.

This indicates that the decoding process of messages by internal stakeholders is not merely passive but also reflective and critical, aligned with the value framework they uphold. As an Islamic university, there is heightened sensitivity to the symbolic meaning of every visual, narrative, and communication style employed. Therefore, UMS Public Relations must carefully navigate between the adaptive demands of Generation Z's preferences and the institutional commitment to Islamic values. Communication strategies perceived as successful by internal stakeholders are those that can maintain a balance between contemporary aesthetics and the authenticity of core values.

Dominant Hegemonic Position

No	Content	Publication Date	Type
1.	Eid al-Fitr 1446 H Greetings	30 March 2025	Single post
2.	No Need to Be Ultraman to Save the Earth	14 February 2025	Carousel
3.	Smoke-Free Campus	31 May 2025	Reels

These three pieces of content demonstrate that the success of a message being received in a dominant position is highly influenced by a communication approach that aligns with the target audience's culture. In this case, UMS Public Relations crafted messages that are not only informative but also communicative, contextual, and grounded in the university's dominant values that are familiar, relatable, and deeply ingrained in the minds of internal stakeholders thus enabling acceptance without rejection or negotiation. The alignment between media messages and the audience's value orientation is a key factor in achieving message reception within the dominant hegemonic position.

Negotiated Position

No	Content	Publication Date	Type
1.	'Aiya Susanti' Parody on Student Information	8 February 2023	Tiktok video
2.	PTMA Influencer Collaboration	15 March 2023	Tiktok video
3.	Failed SNBT, Welcome to UMS	20 June 2023	Single post
4.	Early Information on 1 Ramadan 1445 H	20 January 2024	Reels and Tiktok video
5.	Information on UMS Indonesian Idol Open Audition	4 June 2024	Single post
6.	Information on UMS Study Programs	7 May 2025	Carousel
7.	Student Tarawih Flexing Parody	26 March 2025	Reels and Tiktok video
8.	"Tung Tung Tung Sahur" UTBK Pathway PMB Information	9 June 2025	Single post

The research findings from this content indicate that internal stakeholders decode the university's branding messages created by UMS Public Relations from a negotiated position, in which they accept the substance of the messages conveyed by UMS Public Relations but provide notes or critiques regarding the visual, symbolic, and ethical presentation of the content. Internal stakeholders expect that UMS Public Relations' creative approaches such as the use of memes, humor, and social media trends remain aligned with the institution's values.

Oppositional Position

No	Content	Publication Date	Type
1.	Student Activities	4 December 2025	IG story

The content elicited a critical response from internal stakeholders in an oppositional position. This rejection was concretely demonstrated through stakeholders' requests for the post to be taken down, as a corrective measure against representations deemed inappropriate.

The findings of this study indicate that UMS's identity as a private Islamic-based university is a factor influencing the reception of branding messages. Positive responses emerge when the messages conveyed contain spiritual and moral values rooted in UMS's prophetic philosophy, while critical responses arise when there is a perceived potential distortion of meaning that deviates from those values.

Public Relation Communication Adaptation in University Branding Messages.

Based on the Interaction Adaptation Theory (Burgoon), *requirements* serve as the primary foundation for designing adaptive communication. Changes in information consumption patterns in the digital era particularly among Generation Z and internal stakeholders indicate a need for fast, relevant, and informative content. UMS Public Relations responds to this by developing content pillars covering academic/non-academic achievements, campus life, impactful campus initiatives, research and innovation, events and activities, new student admissions, community and collaboration, as well as internationalization, all of which are tailored to the institution's identity and values.

Audience *expectations* are shaped by social norms and experiences. Generation Z seeks communication that is casual, visually up-to-date, and responsive to trends, while internal stakeholders emphasize the importance of representing Islamic and Kemuhammadiyah values. They also expect a balance between informative, emotional, and identity-based messages, along with equitable content segmentation that reaches all segments of the academic community.

Audience *desires* reveal two main focal points. Generation Z expects emotional connection through humanistic messages, appealing visuals, and interactive content, whereas internal stakeholders are oriented towards strengthening UMS's image as an excellent and reputable university. This requires UMS Public Relations to continuously adjust visual formats,

communication styles, and message substance to align with the aspirations of both groups.

The integration of requirements, expectations, and desires (RED) demonstrates that UMS Public Relations is able to maintain the relevance of its branding communication strategy holistically, not only informative and representative but also addressing emotional, symbolic, and institutional value dimensions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that the development of UMS Public Relations branding messages is carried out systematically, adaptively, and research-based—beginning with audience trend analysis and continuing through the production of content relevant to Generation Z. The messages combine the university's identity and strengths with creative touches, humor, and appealing visuals, grounded in the values of *Scientific and Islamic Discourse* as well as three core principles: Humanization, Liberation, and Transcendence.

UMS Public Relations tends to employ rhetorical message design logic, integrating flexibility and creativity to ensure messages are persuasive and contextual while fostering emotional closeness with the audience. Most internal stakeholders are positioned within the negotiated category, accepting the main ideology but adjusting it to align with institutional values and providing feedback to ensure the messages remain consistent with Islamic identity. From the perspective of the Interaction-Adaptation Theory, communication adaptation is carried out by adjusting content strategies, symbols, language, and formats to remain relevant to Generation Z trends, such as humor, memes, and storytelling, without omitting messages that reinforce UMS's positive image. The values of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah are presented creatively and humanistically, positioning UMS as a modern Islamic university that is adaptive to digital communication culture.

Overall, an adaptive communication strategy based on audience research and a deep understanding of stakeholders has successfully strengthened UMS's branding position, enhanced visibility, and built a positive image of the university in the digital era.

Based on the above discussion, the following recommendations can be made:

- a. For UMS Public Relations, it is essential to continuously strengthen communication adaptation strategies by aligning with the evolving characteristics of Generation Z, maintaining the values of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah, and prioritizing a flexible and contextual approach. Regular evaluations of message reception, through stakeholder feedback and content performance analysis, are crucial to minimizing meaning gaps.
- b. For Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta as an institution, it is important to fully support the Public Relations function through strengthening human resources, enhancing the capacity of the creative team, and facilitating the production of innovative and strategic content.

FURTHER STUDY

For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the focus, for instance by comparing Public Relations adaptation strategies in branding across various universities, particularly private Islamic based institutions targeting Generation Z or by conducting longitudinal studies. A quantitative approach may also be employed to measure the impact of Islamic value-based branding messages on public perceptions or university choice decisions.

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