Jurnal Bisnis dan Pemasaran Digital (JBPD)
ISSN: 2798-3293, Vol 5, No 2, 2026, 11-23 https://doi.org/10.35912/JBPD.v5i2.6697

Digital Marketing Strategies for Elementary School Image and Competitiveness: A Systematic Review

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Article History
Received on 16 November 2025
1st Revision on 23 November 2025
2nd Revision on 05 December 2025
3rd Revision on 21 December 2025
Accepted on 04 January 2026

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to review digital marketing strategies and their role in shaping school image and strengthening competitiveness in elementary education.

Methodology: This study used a qualitative literature review method by analyzing peer-reviewed journals, books, and academic publications obtained through Google Scholar. The selection followed PRISMA-aligned procedures based on relevance, credibility, and publication recency, mainly from 2018 to 2026. Data were analyzed through content analysis, including data reduction, thematic grouping, and interpretive synthesis.

Results: The findings show that digital marketing strategies, such as social media management, official website development, content creation, and community engagement, support school image formation and competitive differentiation. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube help schools promote achievements, programs, and institutional culture to broader audiences. Official websites also strengthen credibility, transparency, and accessibility. However, implementation is often limited by low staff digital literacy, weak branding strategies, inadequate technological infrastructure, and inconsistent content management.

Conclusions: Digital marketing is an important strategic tool for improving elementary school image and competitiveness in the digital era. Its success depends on integrated planning, relevant content, appropriate platform selection, staff capability, and consistency between digital promotion and actual educational quality.

Limitations: This study is limited to literature-based analysis and does not include primary data from schools, parents, or stakeholders.

Contributions: This study extends contemporary Digital Marketing Theory by integrating digital branding, stakeholder engagement, and institutional competitiveness into a theoretical perspective on school image development in elementary education.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Educational Competitiveness, Institutional Branding, School Image, Social Media*

How to Cite: Hamid, A., Salamun, S., & Muslih, M. A. (2026). Digital Marketing Strategies for Elementary School Image and Competitiveness: A Systematic Review. *Jurnal Bisnis dan Pemasaran Digital*, 5(2), 11-23.

1. Introduction

The convergence of digital technology and institutional communication has created transformative conditions in educational management. In an era characterized by ubiquitous Internet access, pervasive social media engagement, and algorithmically mediated information discovery, the mechanisms through which schools communicate with their communities, establish institutional reputations, and compete for enrolment have undergone fundamental structural changes (Fülöp & Cifuentes-Faura, 2026). Parents and prospective students in contemporary Indonesian educational markets no longer rely primarily on geographic proximity, tuition schedules, or neighbourhood recommendations as their primary criteria for school selection. Instead, they conduct digital research browsing school websites, evaluating social media presence, reading community reviews, and comparing program offerings across multiple institutions before making enrolment decisions (Al Adaily, 2026; Barney, 1991; Eriani, Khamidi, Amalia, & Nursalim, 2025; Fadhilah & Sudarwanto, 2024).

This behavioural transformation has profound implications for elementary schools, which have historically operated within geographically bounded community trust networks, where institutional reputation has accumulated organically through generational experience, teacher relationships, and parent networks (Bouchenafa, 2026). As these traditional trust transmission mechanisms weaken due to community fragmentation, residential mobility, and the displacement of local social ties by digital ones, the capacity of schools to actively manage their institutional image through deliberate communication strategies has become a competitive necessity rather than a peripheral concern (Maxwell Ho, Tsz-lok Lee, & Lu, 2024). Schools that lack a coherent digital presence risk being systematically undervalued by information-seeking parents, even when their educational quality is objectively comparable or superior to that of digitally active competitors (Buckner & Zhang, 2025).

Education, understood from a service marketing management perspective, is inherently intangible: prospective users cannot evaluate educational quality before experiencing it, creating a high perceived purchase risk. Under these conditions of experiential uncertainty, reputation signals which digital marketing both constructs and disseminates function as primary quality proxies that mediate enrolment decisions. Schools with rich, consistent digital communication profiles create favourable pre-enrolment quality perceptions that reduce perceived risk and motivate enrolment commitment, even among families with limited prior direct experience with the institution (Hong & Hardy, 2024).

Despite the rapid growth of digital marketing research in higher education, where institutional branding, international student recruitment, and ranking management have generated substantial scholarly attention, the literature specifically addressing digital marketing strategies in elementary school contexts remains comparatively underdeveloped (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Kisiołek, Karyy, & Halkiv, 2021). Elementary schools face distinct challenges relative to higher education institutions: they serve geographically local markets rather than national or international ones; they communicate with parent audiences rather than prospective students directly; they operate under tighter resource constraints that limit dedicated marketing personnel; and they are embedded in regulatory environments that constrain commercial promotional approaches. These contextual specificities imply that findings from higher education digital marketing research cannot be directly transposed to elementary school settings without theoretical adaptation.

In Indonesia, the competitive pressure on elementary schools has intensified markedly over the past decade. The expansion of private and Islamic school networks, which invest substantially in digital marketing and brand development, has created competitive dynamics that challenge publicly funded and under-resourced state schools, whose digital communication capabilities often lag significantly (Ikhwan, Zukhrufin, & Triyuliasari, 2025; Miswari, Mufidah, & Alpaten, 2025). In this environment, a school's ability to strategically manage its digital presence has become a direct determinant of enrollment sustainability, institutional viability, and long-term competitive positioning. However, most Indonesian elementary schools lack structured digital marketing competencies, relying instead on ad-hoc social media activity conducted by non-specialist staff without a coherent strategic direction (Ohara, 2023).

This study addresses this gap by systematically synthesizing the existing scholarly literature on digital marketing implementation in educational institutions, with a particular focus on the mechanisms through which digital marketing strategies shape school image formation and competitive positioning at the elementary level. Four research questions guided the review:

RQ1. What digital marketing platforms and strategies are most prominently documented in the educational institution literature?

RQ2. How do digital marketing strategies contribute to the formation and enhancement of the school's institutional image?

RQ3. What mechanisms link digital marketing strategy to improved school competitiveness?

RQ4. What implementation barriers systematically constrain effective digital marketing in elementary school contexts, and what organizational conditions facilitate successful implementation?

This study aims to generate an integrated conceptual synthesis that advances theoretical understanding and provides practical guidance for educational practitioners and policymakers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digital Marketing in Educational Institutions: Conceptual Foundations

Digital marketing is broadly defined as the systematic deployment of Internet-mediated technologies, including websites, social media platforms, search engines, email systems, and mobile applications, to communicate with target audiences, establish institutional identity, and influence behavioral outcomes such as enrollment decisions, community engagement, and stakeholder loyalty (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Marino-Romero, Palos-Sanchez, & Velicia-Martin, 2026). In the educational context, this definition encompasses a wide range of activities: the publication of institutional content on social media platforms, the maintenance of informative and user-friendly school websites, the production of video content showcasing educational environments and student achievements, and the management of interactive digital communication channels through which schools engage with parents, alumni, and community stakeholders. The application of marketing principles to educational institutions has a theoretical lineage extending to Kotler and Fox's pioneering work on strategic marketing for educational institutions, which established that educational service providers, like commercial enterprises, must actively manage their public perceptions, understand their target market segments, and design communication strategies calibrated to audience needs and expectations. Subsequent theoretical development in the service marketing literature refined this framework by emphasizing the distinctive characteristics of educational services intangibility, simultaneity of production and consumption, heterogeneity of quality, and high psychological involvement that create specific communication challenges and opportunities for marketing strategy design.

The transition from traditional to digital marketing in educational institutions reflects both supply- and demand-side drivers. On the supply side, the declining cost and increasing accessibility of digital communication tools have made multichannel digital marketing feasible, even for resource-constrained institutions. On the demand side, parental information-seeking behavior has migrated decisively toward digital channels: parents increasingly use Google searches, social media platforms, and institutional websites as primary information sources when evaluating school options, making a school's digital presence a precondition for market visibility (Al Adaily, 2026; Firdausiyah et al., 2026). Harbi and Maqsood (2022) synthesize these drivers in their review of digital marketing adoption in educational institutions, concluding that digitalization has moved from competitive advantage to competitive necessity institutions without functional digital marketing strategies risk systematic exclusion from the decision-making consideration sets of prospective families.

A key theoretical contribution of digital marketing theory to educational management is the conceptualization of institutional communication as a two-way, interactive process rather than a one-directional promotion. Unlike traditional advertising, which broadcasts institutional messages to passive audiences, digital platforms enable bidirectional communication, in which parents, students,

and community members can respond, query, and contribute to institutional narratives (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022). This interactivity transforms schools from message senders to conversation participants, with implications for institutional credibility, trust formation, and community relationship quality. Schools that engage responsively with public inquiries and feedback through digital channels generate social capital that traditional promotional approaches cannot replicate.

2.2 Institutional Image Theory in Educational Settings

Institutional image, the aggregate of public perceptions, associations, and evaluations of an organization, is a well-developed construct in organizational communication and marketing scholarship (Hong & Hardy, 2024). In educational contexts, images perform functions analogous to brand equity in commercial markets: they enable prospective stakeholders to form quality judgments in the absence of direct experience, reduce decision-making uncertainty by providing reputation-based quality signals, and differentiate institutions competing within the same geographic or programmatic market (Kurniasari, Herdinata, & Bungin, 2025; Maxwell Ho et al., 2024).

The formation of a school's image involves multiple contributing dimensions. Academic quality perceptions, shaped by student achievement data, curriculum quality, and teaching staff competence, provide a functional foundation for image assessment. Non-academic dimensions including facilities quality, extracurricular offerings, school culture, and community relationship patterns add evaluative richness that distinguishes institutions with similar academic profiles from each other. Communication quality the consistency, clarity, and frequency with which an institution communicates about its activities, achievements, and values increasingly mediates how both academic and non-academic quality dimensions are perceived and evaluated by audiences who lack direct experiential access (Eriani et al., 2025; Gamliel & Shapira–Lishchinsky, 2023; Humaidi & Rofiki, 2025).

The relationship between school facilities and image established that physical environmental quality significantly shapes public perceptions of institutional professionalism a finding that the digital era has extended to virtual environments: schools whose digital presence is well-designed, consistently updated, and informationally rich are perceived as more professionally managed and educationally committed than those with sparse or stagnant digital profiles. The digital environment has effectively become a virtual facility whose quality conditions institutional image formation for the growing proportion of families whose primary school contact is mediated by digital channels rather than through physical visits.

2.3 Educational Competitiveness: Digital Transformation as Strategic Resource

School competitiveness an institution's capacity to attract students, retain community support, and sustain organizational vitality relative to competing institutions is increasingly determined by digital communication capabilities alongside traditional academic quality dimensions (Hart & Rodgers, 2024). The resource-based view of organizational strategy Barney (1991) applied to educational management suggests that digital marketing capabilities when valuable, rare, non-substitutable, and difficult to imitate constitute strategic resources that generate sustainable competitive advantages for schools that develop them.

Almufarreh and Arshad (2023) document the growing integration of technology into institutional management strategies across educational levels, finding that institutions that proactively develop digital capabilities generate measurable improvements in stakeholder engagement, reputation management and enrollment outcomes. Hung and Yen (2022) demonstrated in a higher education context that digital marketing enables sustainable international student recruitment by expanding geographic market reach, a principle applicable at the elementary level to local market expansion beyond traditional catchment area boundaries. Examine the effects of digital marketing strategies on educational business competitiveness and find that institutions with structured digital marketing strategies achieve significantly higher public recognition and enrollment growth than comparable institutions without such strategies.

The competitive advantage mechanism operates through three channels. First, digital marketing expands geographic information reach: Schools active on digital platforms generate awareness among prospective families residing at greater distances from the institution, effectively expanding the practical enrollment catchment area beyond physically accessible limits (Baltezarevic, 2023). Second, digital marketing enables institutional differentiation: by consistently communicating a school's distinctive identity, flagship programs, educational philosophy, and cultural character, digital content creates perceptual differentiation that motivates preference formation among families evaluating multiple comparable institutions (Miswari et al., 2025). Third, digital marketing builds community relationships: interactive digital communication creates ongoing stakeholder engagement that generates parent loyalty, community advocacy, and positive word-of-mouth referrals the organic marketing effects that compound over time into sustained enrollment advantages (Sulistianingsih et al., 2022).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative systematic literature review methodology, which involves the comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible collection, screening, and synthesis of existing scholarly publications relevant to a defined research focus. The literature review design was selected because the research objective is conceptual synthesis integrating theoretical frameworks and empirical findings across multiple studies to generate a comprehensive understanding of the digital marketing-school image-competitiveness relationship rather than primary data collection. Systematic literature reviews are recognized as appropriate and rigorous methodological approaches for generating theory-grounded conceptual frameworks when empirical primary research on a specific topic is insufficient to support meta-analytic synthesis (Luft, Jeong, Idsardi, & Gardner, 2022).

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Academic literature was retrieved using Google Scholar as the primary database, supplemented by targeted searches in Scopus and ERIC for education-specific publications. The search strategy employed Boolean queries combining the following term clusters: ('digital marketing' OR 'social media marketing' OR 'school website') AND ('school image' OR 'institutional image' OR 'school branding') AND ('school competitiveness' OR 'educational competitiveness' OR 'enrollment') AND ('elementary school' OR 'primary school' OR 'educational institution'). Additional searches targeted specific digital platform keywords ('Instagram education' OR 'TikTok school' OR 'Facebook school') combined with outcome variables.

Sources were evaluated against four selection criteria: topical relevance to digital marketing strategies in educational contexts; source credibility, defined as a peer-reviewed journal publication, recognized academic press publication, or institutional research report from a reputable organization; publication recency, with preference for materials published between 2018 and 2026 (approximately 85% of cited sources satisfy this criterion); and theoretical or empirical contribution, meaning the source must offer either a theoretical framework, empirical findings, or substantive conceptual analysis rather than purely descriptive commentary. Sources that failed to meet any of the criteria were excluded from the synthesis corpus.

3.3 Data Analysis: Content Analysis Framework

The retained sources were analyzed using thematic content analysis following an iterative three-stage procedure (Luft et al., 2022). In the first stage, data reduction, relevant passages, findings, and theoretical claims were extracted from each source and coded according to their primary thematic focus: digital marketing implementation modalities, school image formation mechanisms, competitive advantage generation, and implementation barriers. In the second stage, data display, the coded material was organized into thematic matrices that structured the relationships among key constructs across sources. In the third stage, conclusion drawing and verification, cross-source thematic patterns were identified, theoretical tensions noted, and convergent findings synthesized into the integrated conceptual propositions presented in Section 4. Analytical transparency was maintained through consistent source attribution and explicit identification of the theoretical frameworks underlying each

interpretive claim. The characteristics of the literature corpus analyzed in this study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of literature corpus characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Count	Percentage (%)
Publication period	2018–2026	~52 of 62	~84
	Pre-2018 (foundational)	~10 of 62	~16
Source type	Peer-reviewed journals	~48 of 62	~77
	Books / book chapters	~7 of 62	~11
	Conference proceedings	~7 of 62	~11
Primary focus	Digital marketing strategies	~24	~39
	School image / branding	~19	~31
	School competitiveness	~11	~18
	Implementation barriers	~8	~13

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Digital Marketing Implementation in Elementary Schools: Platforms, Strategies, and Practices

The literature consistently documents a multi-platform approach as the most effective digital marketing model for educational institutions. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, are the primary digital marketing channels for school communication and image-building activities (D. Cox & McLeod, 2014; Ovhal, 2025). Each platform's distinctive audience demographics and content affordances create specific communication opportunities: Instagram's visual-centric architecture favors high-quality photographic and short-video content showcasing classroom activities, student achievements, and campus aesthetics; Facebook's community-oriented architecture facilitates group communication with parent networks and alumni communities; TikTok's short-video format enables schools to reach younger audience segments and demonstrate educational culture through engaging informal content; and YouTube's long-form video affordance supports in-depth institutional storytelling through profile videos, event documentation, and educational content series (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015).

Altamira, Putri, and Samudra (2023) demonstrate in a case study of Instagram-based educational institution marketing that creative content quality is the primary determinant of engagement effectiveness schools whose content combines aesthetic quality with informational value generate significantly higher interaction metrics than those publishing lower-quality content with equivalent frequency. Evaluation of digital marketing effectiveness in higher education, which identified content relevance, visual quality, and audience alignment as the three most predictive factors of digital marketing campaign success. Ohara (2023) extends this analysis to social media's role in educational communication management, finding that consistent, high-quality social media management generates quantifiably higher community trust scores and inquiry rates than inconsistent or low-quality management, establishing a direct empirical link between social media content strategy and enrollment-related outcomes.

Official school websites constitute a second critical digital marketing channel, performing complementary functions to social media by providing structured, permanent, and comprehensive information (Abid, Samsu, & Jamrizal, 2025; Asrin & Utami, 2023). While social media excels at real-time engagement, emotional connection, and broad awareness generation, school websites serve as authoritative institutional information repositories containing admission procedures, academic programs, faculty profiles, facility descriptions, and contact details. Bokayev, Zhanzhigitova, Sadykova, and Balmanova (2023) document the role of institutional websites in multichannel communication strategies, finding that websites with strong informational architecture, regular content updates, and mobile-responsive design significantly enhance public trust in institutional professionalism. That web-based new student admission systems integrated with digital marketing

channels improve enrollment conversion rates by reducing administrative friction in the application process.

Beyond social media and websites, the literature documents emerging digital marketing modalities, including promotional video production and distribution (Kisiołek et al., 2021). Educational content marketing, parent communication application usage, and influencer-adjacent community leader engagement. These complementary channels extend the school's digital reach into specific audience segments parents who prefer video over text content, community members active in specific digital spaces, and stakeholders who trust peer recommendations over institutional communications diversifying the school's communication impact beyond the primary social media and website channels.

However, the implementation of digital marketing strategies in Indonesian elementary schools faces systematic structural constraints. Staff digital literacy represents the most consistently documented barrier: the majority of Indonesian elementary school teachers and administrative personnel received professional formation prior to the social media era and lack the technical skills, content strategy knowledge, and platform management competencies required for effective digital marketing implementation (Hidayat, 2026; Nanda et al., 2026). Digital transformation barriers in educational institutions identifies skills deficits as the single most prevalent implementation constraint, present in 73% of reviewed studies. Ruloff and Petko (2025) document that school principals' digital leadership orientation their active facilitation of digital capability development among staff is the strongest organizational predictor of digital transformation success, establishing personnel development as a strategic priority.

Technological infrastructure constraints constitute a second barrier category, particularly in rural and peri-urban Indonesian schools, where Internet connectivity reliability, device availability, and technical support resources may be inadequate for sustained digital marketing operations (Marino-Romero et al., 2026). Rêgo, Lourenço, Moreira, and Pereira (2024) documented the interaction between digital skills development and infrastructure availability, finding that skills training initiatives generate limited returns in environments with inadequate infrastructure, establishing that both conditions must be addressed simultaneously for effective digital marketing implementation. These infrastructure constraints disproportionately affect public elementary schools, which lack the financial resources of private school competitors to invest in dedicated digital marketing infrastructure and personnel.

4.2 Digital Marketing Strategies and School Image Formation: Mechanisms and Evidence

The literature identifies multiple mechanisms through which digital marketing strategies systematically contribute to the formation of a school's image. The most extensively documented mechanism is achievement and activity visibility: schools that consistently publish student achievement information, learning activity documentation, program highlights, and community engagement records through digital channels generate a public perception of educational quality that is directly proportional to the completeness and attractiveness of their digital representation (Eriani, Khamidi, Amalia, & Nursalim, 2025; Khofi, Suheri, Salam, Wijaya, & Mu, 2026). Humaidi and Rofiki (2025) demonstrated in their study of public relations strategies for school image-building that consistent positive information publication through digital media generates measurable improvements in community recognition and stakeholder trust over time, with effects compounding as digital content archives accumulate.

A second image formation mechanism operates through transparency signaling. The relationship between social media communication, brand image, and enrollment intentions in educational institutions, finding that transparent institutional communication the willingness to share not only achievements but also operational processes, educational methodologies, and community engagement activities generates stronger brand image effects than selective achievement promotion alone. Analysis of trust and transparency in educational management provides a conceptual explanation: transparency reduces information asymmetry between institutions and prospective stakeholders,

enabling more accurate quality assessment and thereby building more robust trust than asymmetric promotional communication that shares only positive information.

Interactive responsiveness is the third image-enhancement mechanism. The literature consistently identifies the quality of schools' responses to public digital inquiries response speed, informational accuracy, communication tone, and problem resolution effectiveness as a significant image determinant (Atika, Sintia, & Efriliyanti, 2026). Bungai, Setiawan, Putra, Sakti, and Sukoco (2024) examined the effects of digital marketing strategies on school visibility and attractiveness in educational management, finding that schools implementing two-way interactive communication protocols generate significantly higher public engagement and positive image ratings than those using one-directional publication models. This finding aligns with Harbi and Maqsood (2022) review conclusion that digital marketing's core competitive advantage over traditional marketing lies precisely in its interactive capability, which is realized only when schools actively develop responsive communication protocols rather than using digital platforms as broadcast-only channels.

The fourth mechanism, professional competence signaling, operates through the quality of the digital content itself. Fauzi, Sanjani, Zaini, and Lateh (2025) analyzed the influence of social media on public relations as a reputation reinforcement tool for educational institutions, finding that content quality (visual aesthetics, linguistic accuracy, and informational depth) functions as a signal of institutional professionalism that shapes image perceptions independently of the information content itself. Schools with well-produced, accurately written, and attractively designed digital content generate quality associations that transfer to their educational service perceptions even among audience members who have no direct experiential basis for quality evaluation. Analysis of trust dynamics in digital education communication establishes the complementary constraint: when digital communication quality is high but actual service quality does not meet the expectations created, trust crisis dynamics emerge that are particularly damaging to institutional image because digital records of past communications create evidence trails.

The literature also identifies important contingency conditions that moderate the effects of digital marketing. Mulawarman and Yahya (2025) demonstrate that educational service quality management functions as a necessary complement to a digital marketing strategy: schools that develop a strong digital presence without corresponding educational quality improvements generate unsustainable image enhancements that eventually collapse under the weight of stakeholder experience disconfirmation. This finding establishes a theoretical proposition with direct practical implications: digital marketing strategy and educational service quality management must be developed as complementary strategic investments rather than as substitutes.

4.3 Digital Marketing and School Competitiveness: Evidence and Strategic Implications

The relationship between digital marketing and school competitive positioning is documented across multiple dimensions of competitive advantage in the literature. Market reach expansion is the most directly observable competitive benefit: schools with active digital marketing programs generate awareness among potential families at greater geographic distances than those relying on physical proximity and local social networks for enrollment (Baltezarevic, 2023). Mulawarman and Yahya (2025) document in their study of digital promotion strategies for educational institution image that schools implementing multi-platform digital promotion achieve measurably broader geographic awareness penetration than those without digital promotion with direct implications for enrollment catchment expansion in competitive local educational markets.

Institutional differentiation the capacity to establish a distinctive identity that motivates preference formation among families evaluating comparable institutions is a second competitive mechanism that has been extensively documented in the literature. In educational markets where many schools offer broadly similar academic programs and facilities, digital marketing creates a differentiation space by enabling schools to communicate distinctive cultural characteristics, educational philosophies, flagship programs, and community orientations that are difficult to represent through conventional promotional channels. Ikhwan et al. (2025) analyze marketing management in Islamic school contexts

and find that institutions developing clear digital brand identities achieve significantly better competitive positioning than those without defined institutional identities a finding transferable to elementary school contexts where distinctive school cultures can serve as differentiation assets.

Community relationship quality is a third competitive dimension through which digital marketing generates advantages. Sulistianingsih et al. (2022) examine the role of school autonomy in competition and collaboration, establishing that schools with strong community relationships generate internal enrollment stability and external referral networks that provide sustained competitive advantages over schools with weaker community connections. Taufik and Mulyanto (2025) document that transparency and accountability in digital communication positively influence parental trust and loyalty, establishing that digital marketing investments generate returns not only in new family acquisition but also in incumbent family retention, reducing enrollment volatility and improving revenue predictability.

Ruziyeva (2026) synthesizes evidence from multiple integrated marketing strategy analyses and concludes that educational institutions achieving the strongest competitive positions combine digital marketing with complementary educational quality investments, a finding convergent with the service quality-image complementarity identified in Section 4.2. This integration requirement challenges simplistic 'digital marketing as a competitive solution' narrative by establishing that digital marketing generates sustainable competitive advantage only when it accurately communicates and amplifies genuine educational quality rather than substituting for it.

Schools that have successfully integrated digital marketing into their competitive strategies demonstrate several shared organizational characteristics: designated digital marketing responsibility (whether a dedicated staff member or a defined role within existing personnel), structured content calendars that maintain publication consistency, platform-specific content strategies that leverage each channel's distinctive affordances, and formal feedback loops that use engagement metrics and community responses to refine subsequent communication strategies (Sadikov, 2025). These organizational practices suggest that digital marketing competency is not merely a technical capability but an organizational capacity a routinized institutional practice embedded in management systems whose development requires deliberate cultivation beyond individual staff skill-building (Yunanto, Apsari Sugiat, & Ariyanti, 2025).

4.4 Implementation Barriers and Success Conditions: An Integrative Framework

The literature synthesis reveals a consistent set of barriers constraining digital marketing implementation effectiveness in elementary school contexts, which can be organized into four categories: First, human capital constraints: the dominant barrier across the reviewed literature is the deficit in staff digital marketing competencies encompassing social media management skills, content creation capabilities, strategic communication planning, and digital analytics interpretation (Nanda et al., 2026; Ruloff & Petko, 2025). This barrier is particularly acute in elementary schools, where smaller staff sizes mean fewer personnel who can be assigned digital marketing responsibilities and where professional development resources are more constrained than in larger secondary or tertiary institutions.

Second, strategic capacity constraints: Many schools implement digital media without a structured branding strategy, clear communication objectives, or defined target audience profiles (Ohara, 2023). This strategic vacuum produces activity-oriented digital media use documenting events for their own sake rather than impact-oriented communication designed to build specific image associations and generate enrollment-related behavioral outcomes. The absence of strategic framing also makes it difficult to evaluate digital marketing effectiveness, as schools without clear objectives lack benchmarks against which to assess whether their digital activities generate intended outcomes.

Third, infrastructure constraints: Reliable internet connectivity, adequate devices, technical support availability, and digital security systems constitute physical infrastructure prerequisites for effective digital marketing that remain unevenly distributed across Indonesian elementary school contexts

(Hidayat, 2026). Infrastructure constraints may be particularly severe in rural and remote districts, where schools need competitive differentiation advantages but face the greatest obstacles to digital marketing implementation. Fourth, consistency and sustainability constraints: Digital marketing effectiveness depends critically on publication regularity algorithms favor active accounts, audiences expect periodic updates, and image formation requires cumulative exposure over time (Bungai et al., 2024). Schools whose digital marketing is managed as an additional duty by already burdened teaching staff inevitably face sustainability challenges: content publication becomes irregular during busy teaching periods, platforms go dormant during holidays, and strategic momentum is lost in personnel transitions. This consistency challenge requires organizational solutions, including content planning systems, cross-coverage protocols, and potentially volunteer or parental community support for content creation, rather than merely individual motivation appeals.

Against these barriers, the literature identifies several organizational and contextual conditions that facilitate effective digital marketing. Leadership digital vision principals who recognize digital marketing as a strategic priority and actively allocate resources to its development is the strongest facilitating factor documented in the literature (Hidayat, 2026; Ruloff & Petko, 2025). Community digital engagement parent and community member populations with high social media engagement who actively follow and share school digital content creates a self-reinforcing network effect that amplifies the reach of school digital marketing investments beyond what institutional channels can achieve (Atika et al., 2026). Content-service quality alignment ensuring that digital communication accurately represents the educational experiences students and families actually receive is the sustainability condition without which other facilitating factors cannot generate a lasting competitive advantage (Prima, Mulawarman, & Yahya, 2025).

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

This systematic literature review concludes that digital marketing has become a strategic necessity for educational institutions, particularly in strengthening school image and competitive positioning. Digital marketing contributes through achievement visibility, transparency, interactive communication, and professional content presentation. Its effectiveness is strongest when digital communication is aligned with real educational quality and supported by consistent institutional management.

5.2 Research Limitations

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature, which may not fully represent actual digital marketing practices in elementary schools. In addition, much of the available literature focuses on higher education, requiring contextual interpretation when applied to elementary school settings.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future research should conduct empirical studies on digital marketing practices in elementary schools, including the effects of posting frequency, content type, platform choice, and online engagement on enrollment, parent satisfaction, and school competitiveness. Comparative studies between public and private schools, urban and rural schools, and schools with different resource capacities are also recommended.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the researchers and scholars whose published works provided valuable insights and theoretical foundations for this study. Appreciation is also extended to the academic community for its contributions to advancing knowledge on digital marketing, school image, and competitiveness in elementary education.

Author Contributions

AH contributed to conceptualization, research design, methodology, data collection, data analysis, and writing of the original draft. SS contributed to supervision, validation, interpretation of findings, manuscript review, and editing. MAM contributed to literature review, data curation, formal analysis,

manuscript revision, and final approval of the article.

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