STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES OF AN INDONESIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY WEBSITE: A MULTIMODAL SOCIAL SEMIOTIC

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ABSTRACT

Recently, empirical investigation focusing on website analysis remains burgeoning. Conversely, research accentuating student recruitment strategies in websites is still under-researched, particularly in Indonesian private university websites. To fill this gap, this study aimed to scrutinize how a private university employed recruitment strategies through its website viewed from a multimodal perspective. The corpus of this study was a homepage website of the private university. It was collected through document analysis and analyzed with Multimodal Social Semiotics (MSS) (Kress, 2010). The findings reported that the university website provides an attractive appearance on its website, so it can attract the attention of its website visitors. Briefly, this study offers valuable insights to conceptualize, design and inform audiences from a multimodal perspective.

Keywords: A multimodal social semiotic, an Indonesian private university website, student recruitment strategies

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, the internet is a very important thing for life, with the internet we can do anything we can do, such as looking for various information, watching movies, listening to music, looking for references for assignments, and much more, but for if you look for information on the internet, the information must already be on certain web pages. A website is a collection of several pages, which aim to provide information. The information also contains the purpose of the website being created. There are various types of websites ranging from government websites, organizational websites, school websites, campus websites, and many more. The internet has become a common place for us to surf the web pages of any particular website. It gives us a lot of information within seconds. The information available on the internet is generated from multiple sources and is organized in such a way that users are given step by step procedures to access the information. The files are organized, and web pages are created which ultimately form a website.

The use of websites in educational contexts is increasing day by day. There is a great impact of technology on the educational system. The delivery of content through websites is possible due to the World Wide Web. It serves as a base for making the content available to the beneficiaries in no time. In today's era there is a great demand for education in various countries. There are various efforts done by many countries to collaborate with other universities virtually. The coordination between universities is possible due to the World Wide Web. The Web has made our life easy and we can freely collaborate. Various universities are there who are using the Web as a communication tool. The Website that works on the

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principles of the World Wide Web caters to the needs of the students virtually. The students get access to various things online with a single click. The website becomes the primary gateway for the students. It caters to the various needs of the students. The students get admission, results related information from the websites. The World Wide Web (WWW) can be considered as the main source for getting academic or research based information and thus enables us to test new methods online like conducting an analysis of the content of the website (Madhuri, Babu and Ramesh, 2010).

The Higher Education website aims to facilitate their prospective students and scholars by providing the proper guidelines on the website to help them accordingly. Nevertheless, of equal importance, a university website should at least contain that type of information that the students and its faculty members are in need of. Information like the complexities of curriculum choices and the information about the daily events and procedures that happen within a busy university campus. Therefore, usability is considered the key credential of effective higher education. website design. Maintaining institutional repositories, open access, and collaboration with other universities, online communication etc. help to increase the visibility of the particular website (Sujithai and Jeyshankar, 2013).

The university website consists of several pages containing information about the university, from the vision and mission, university profile, university address, university agenda, university faculties, majors, information about lecturers, and much more. The main function of the university must have a website, namely as a means of promotion and introduction of the university environment to the outside world. The use of this university website is also used as a place of registration, which is called online registration, this system can make it easier for people to register anywhere and anytime, and almost no university does not have an official website.

In this study, researchers examine the strategy of an Indonesian private university website in recruiting students through its website. And the strategy that researchers use is the strategy of needs through the website viewed from a multimodal perspective. Then researchers used multimodal social semiotic (MSS) By Kress (2010) method analysis: rethor, interpreter, design, ground.

Every year in Indonesia, thousands of high school and vocational high school graduates continue to receive a university education. According to the Director of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud), Indonesia has 4,700 universities and an average of 2-3 million high school and vocational high school graduates each year, but only 38% of them are admitted to higher education institutions (Nizam,2020). However, other graduates choose not to continue their higher education.

Universities are divided into 2 public universities and private universities, both public universities and private universities have their respective advantages and policies. Private universities are managed by private groups without government intervention. According to (Ahmad & Siti, 2018). Private universities are universities organized by private groups. This private university forms an organizational structure, which is a legal entity but not established by the government or the state, such as a foundation. Although private universities are largely independent of government policies, they must comply with quality standards in teaching and management (Zulfqar et al.,2016).

In this era, some campuses already have websites that contain information. The goal is to make it easier for students to access various information about the campus. According to Rab (2018) Websites have become a method of sharing information and interactivity around the world using the internet. The ability of a web developer is to design web pages on the internet, one of which is the implementation of university website projects. Furthermore, the quality of online design and services influences user attraction to websites. Studies have shown that the attractiveness of website design and the integrated services increases the user's interaction and satisfaction for the quality of the website, because it meets all their needs (Hasan & Abuelrub, 2011). This is the importance of website design that must follow modern times. An Indonesian private university website is a website which contains information about a university such as achievements, university history and others.

Each institution has its advantages, which become an attraction for prospective students. A study by Rust and Kim (2012) and Sheambri and Latimer (2016) both agree that a college with diverse programs, modern technology, a rich curriculum, and a well-staffed, mentorship program, customer centrism, and good services are very competitive. It became successful in the recruitment and retention of students. Not only parents, students also choose their own good schools that can take them to a higher level towards their careers. According to Pringle and Fritz (2018), the students are very particular when choosing a school; for instance, they consider whether the school has an engaging curriculum, low students-faculty ratio, internship opportunities, access to modern ICT technology, good service delivery, and the entire college experience that goes beyond career preparation. The need to consider schools as a strategy for determining the selection of good schools in student recruitment. Students consider a school with a history of reputable and varied academics programs, holistic education for the whole person, dynamic curriculum, and access to modern technology (Palmer, 2013; University of Toronto,2017).

Currently, marketing in college is no longer concentrated on university programs, but rather about the aspirations, dreams, and needs of students. Student recruiters need to focus more on understanding the characteristics and goals of prospective students (Queen's University, 2017). Recently recruitment high all time, it is imperative that current higher education recruitment strategies are effective in gaining the matriculation of students. According to Breaugh (2016), the key to effective recruitment is understanding the audience that is being recruited. For today's higher education institutions, this means an increasing understanding of Generation Z which requires different strategies to catch their attention and to gain matriculation. In this generation, technology must be mastered to successfully recruit students. The technology-centered generation is challenging college recruitment offices to innovate and think outside of the box to successfully recruit (Keller, 2012).

Multimodal social semiotics is a process to explore how meanings are created in the process. It is also structured in the communication process and the actions and products of semiotics through the use of various signs such as history, society, and culture (Kress, 2010; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016). So in the process, the meaning created is explored to understand the discourse in the website. In the process of adjustment, multimodal sets make meaning through several deliberate processes. As stated in Michelson & Álvarez Valencia (2016) that the ensemble of a multimodal organizes the process of making meaning through several processes such as selection, interaction, a configuration of communication, and representational mode.

In this study, the researchers followed the model of Kress (2010) and applied the social semiotic approach. Based on the multimodal model of Kress (2010), there are four components. There are rhetor, design, ground, and interpreter. The first one is rhetor which the initiating agent of the meaning-making process – intends to achieve a particular political purpose through the construction of signs in any communication act (Kress, 2010; Michelson & Valencia, 2016). The second is design as the translation of rhetorical intent into semiotic implementation, design is oriented to the semiotic. The designer's semiotic purpose is to shape the message, using the available representational resources (Kress, 2010). The third is to ground the messages shaped by the rethor and designer to be delivered to the interpreter (Kellner, 2012; Kartika, 2020). And the last is an interpreter which people who consume and process the information they obtain from the ground.

To analyze the strategy of recruitment of the private university, this study used Multimodal Social Semiotic (MSS) from Kress (2010). Social semiotics is concerned with meaning-making and meaning makers. It studies the media of dissemination and the modes of communication that people use and develop to represent their understanding of the world and to shape power relations with others. It draws on qualitative, fine-grained analysis of artefacts, and texts, as records of meaning-making, to examine the production and dissemination of discourses across the variety of social and cultural contexts within which meaning is made. It also describes Social Semiotics as a theoretical approach to multimodality by tracing its development from a concept used to refer to language, to broader use of social

semiotics to define a field, and to its latest developments in relation to multimodal communication.

Multimodal is a term that is used to refer to the way people communicate using different modes at the same time (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), which is defined as the use of some semiotic fashion in design product, or semiotic event simultaneously, and in a certain way these modes are combined for strengthen, complement, or exist in a certain order (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). This research is being investigated using semiotic science. Semiotics, on the other hand, is the study of meaning-making, as well as the philosophical theory of signs and symbols. In addition to examining the discourse or readings on the website, this research also examines the colors used on the website, as well as the symbols used on the website, because behind the existing symbols there must be hidden meanings.

Multimodal can also be defined as a technical word that demonstrates how humans use a number of semiotics in the meaning-making process (Iedema,2003). from this meaning it can be concluded that this method is in line with what the researcher is studying. With multimodal, researchers can understand the meanings contained in the various symbols found on the private university website.

Meanwhile, Chen (2010) defines multimodal as any source of verbal and visual semiotics that can be used to realize type and level of dialogical involvement in a textbook. In the model of Kress (2010), there are four parts which are the focus of analyzing processes, such as rhetor, design, ground, and interpreter. The 4 parts of this method is used by the researchers to find the strategies carried out by the private university in terms of student recruitment through its website. According to Yang (2012), rhetor is one of the components of a message from a discourse that assesses all the characteristics of the audience whose interests are drawn. Design is the central to MSS model: it is here that decisions about genre, mode, discourse, and median are made. Ground is the material form of this representation constitutes the message from which the process of communication departs. Interpreter is the element of the ground that becomes a prompt to the interpreter.

METHODS

The goal of this study is to find the underlying discourse that appears in the website of a private university, located in West Java, Indonesia. The approach used by researchers is qualitative research and for the design researcher used case study. As Mitchell states in 1983, he defined a case study as a "detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general theoretical principles. To analyze the website, the researcher used Kress's MSS theory (2010).

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Based on the website that we analyzed, in the homepage there are navigations that will guide the visitors include guest as a new user for view the content easily, the content consists of the private university specific information such as identity and facilities, academics, activity news and information, cooperation, acceptance new students, social media, and contact information. In addition, this university's website has a page that promotes the campus with the Green Campus program that is also supported with green matric by Indonesian University.

Data analysis for this research continued with one procedure, researcher analyzed the website using Kress MSS (2010). The Kress' model consists of rhetor, design, ground, and interpreter that can be used for analyzing the pages of the websites, the front page is a page that we will analyze through Kress' model.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Rethor is the idea or meaning maker of the website (Kress, 2010). Rethor develops ideas that will be displayed as content on the website, then rethor construct the message or ground according to their interest and interpreter characteristic (Kress, 2010) to make the website more interesting and get interpreters' engagement. Additionally, the rethor of this university's website is the institution. the macro rethor is the name of the private University, we can see that on the first home page there is the logo and words of "Universitas Kuningan" on the top left. It refers to one of the mottos of the university, which is " *Adiuvare, Servire, Eomodo Quo* (accompany, serve and give the best)". While the micro rethor in this website is the Information System Center of the university. PSI Kuningan University is an office tasked with managing information related to the university which will later be distributed to the public.

Design is central to the MSS model: it is here that decisions about genre, mode, discourse, and medium are made (Kress, 2010). In a conversational exchange, identifying the rethor, designer, producer, and disseminator of a message seems straightforward because a single interlocutor assesses the communicative situation and designs and produces a message (Michelson K. and Valentcia J. A. A , 2016). The combination of components for the design will help the rethor to convey the message to the interpreter. Moreover, the home page of the university website combines two spaces, namely image and textual. The design of the university website is to meet the rethor's aim which is to provide information to interpreters related to the history of the university, the activities carried out, the organizers obtained, and the acceptance of new students. it will certainly attract the attention of the visitors and make a good impression on people who have visited the website.

Figure 1. Home Page 1

The picture above is the main display on home page of the university website. There are a top menu, header and menu, and a slider that shows some information, such as in that picture the slider contains sentence "New Student Admissions at Kuningan University 2021 Join Us" with a background of one of the buildings at the university. We can interpret that the university warmly welcomes to the prospective new students to join them. The evidence can be seen from the student recruitment as the main highlight of the website. And the color dominated by yellow, it shows the typical color of the university.
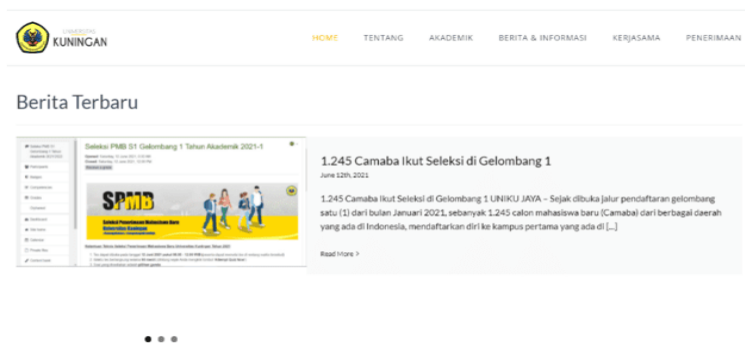
Figure 2. Latest News in the University's Website

In the first home page, the rethor give information about the latest news in the university. The top news there is about students who pass and are accepted in the selection of phase 1 become the latest information. The background of this tap uses white as before, so that the interpreter can highlight the news/information.
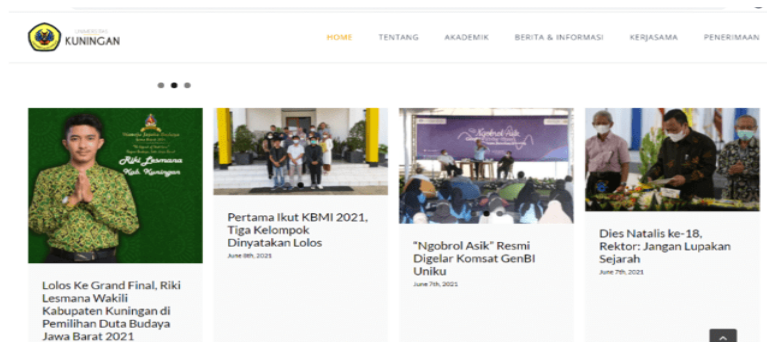

Figure 3. Web Pages about the Latest News on the Campus' Website

Beside showing news about the admission of new students, there is also information about impromptu activities by the campus, and the achievements of the university's students, as stated there "Riki Lesmana Passed to the grand final representing Kuningan Regency in the Java ambassador election "Barat 2021" and "Three groups passed the 2021 KBMI activity" it shows that there are many activities held by the campus that provide benefits for both internal and external parties. Also, many achievements are obtained by students, which means that the campus provides the best education for students so that they can get achievements and be able to compete with students from other universities. The information on this tab is very clear with the design of photos and writings that represent activities and then it is also influenced by the use of white as a background the readers can highlight the information well.

Figure 4. Academic Information on the University's Website

In the second home page is information about academics. We can see, the word of academic written by capital letters indicating the title of these tabs, then also written information that the University has 5 faculties that organize undergraduate programs and 1 postgraduate program, information is supported by illustrations of guidebooks, each of which has the title of the Faculty at Kuningan University. The chosen background color is green but it is more transparent because it is combined with the photo background of students who are discussing. The combination of these things is intended to provide interpreters with academic information about faculties and study programs at Kuningan University in an interesting way.
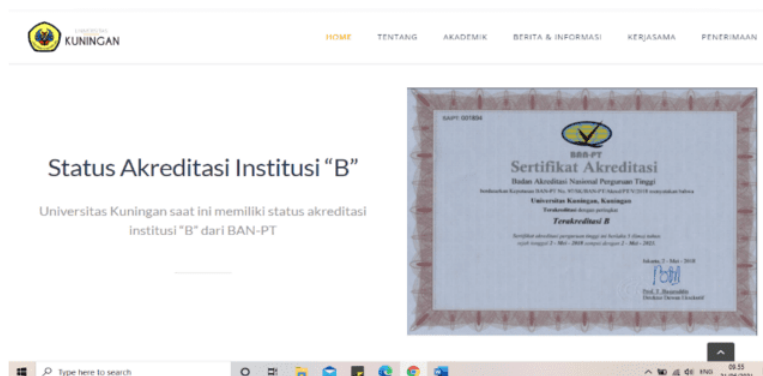

Figure 5. Information about Accreditation Status of Kuningan University

Other information in academics is about the accreditation of Kuningan University. There it is stated that the University of Kuningan has an Institutional accreditation status of "B" from BAN-PT, this is proven by the inclusion of a photo certificate for that information. We can interpret that Universitas Kuningan is a good private campus and can be side by side with other universities.

Figure 6. Academic Information of the University

From this web page shown in Figure 6, this university has 1 postgraduate school, 5 faculties, 19 study programs and more than 5700 students. It shows that the universities has many choices of faculties and majors that students can choose according to their interests, and then the number of students is large, which means that the university is in great demand by the public

Figure 7. Information of the University's Rank

In Figure 7, there is a graphic showing the rank of the university as a Green Campus and also the rank of the university in general in Indonesia, which from year to year showing good changes. In green campus field, the university was in position 64 in 2018 and in 2019 it was in position 54, then for University rankings in general in 2017 the university was at position 752, 2018 at position 249, and in 2019 at position 155. The combination between graphs and also the caption makes the interpreter understand more about the increasing rank achieved by the university.

Figure 8. Home Page 3

In the home page 3, such as shown by Figure 8, the rhetor provides information about cooperation. We can see the word cooperation is written in capital letters which indicates the title of the discussion. The scope of cooperation carried out by the university is national and international. This university cooperates with various institutions/agencies, both government and non-government institutions. In addition, it also cooperates with large national companies in various fields, especially the *Tri Dharma* of Higher Education. For international cooperation, this university also collaborates with several foreign universities. One of the realizations of this collaboration is the Student Exchange program. This was supported by the inclusion of a large photo showing students from various countries taking pictures in front of one of the buildings at the university.
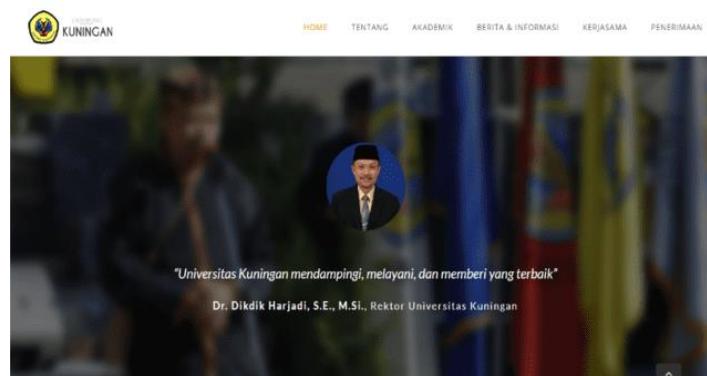
Figure 8. Home Page 4

The home page 4 (Figure 8) presents additional information about the university, as in the photo from the rector of the university along with the university's motto, "Kuningan University accompanies, serves, and gives the best". We can interpret that the inclusion of the motto on the home page is to give a positive impression on the interpreter where the university provides assistance, serves and gives the best to all the students.

Figure 9. Information about the Green Campus on the University's Website

In this section, Rethor also provides a special space about the university as a green campus. There is a photo that shows someone planting trees in the university environment. It is evidence that the university seeks to create an environmentally warm campus, and of course this activity involves all parties at the the university and will have a good effect.

Figure 10. Home Page 5

On the last home page (Figure 10), the university Rhetor shows information about student recruitment. There is the next option to find out the overall information. Before the admission of new students it is in the slider section under the top menu. We can interpret that the university is very enthusiastic about welcoming new students.

Ground: ground is the messages that are shaped by the rethor and designer to be delivered to the interpreter (Kellner, 2012). In this case, the message of this website is to promote the university, specifically to attract the attention of prospective new students to join it. The information contained on the Home page is the main point to attract visitors to study at the university. This information is also proof that the university can compete with other famous universities.

Interpreter: Interpretation takes place when any of the elements of the ground become a prompt to the interpreter (Kress, 2010). In addition, an interpreter is the person who visits the website. We can see the interpreter from the content provided by rhetor on the university website. For this website, we assume that the interpreters are students, lecturers, people who work at the university, high school students and also students from the other universities because this website can be considered as an advertisement.

Based on the result of analysis above, we can interpret that the university is one of recommended university in Indonesia. According to the information provided by the website, there are many advantages that the website could have convey. The most highlighted advantage is this university is rewarded as a green campus. It becomes a strategy from the university to recruit students. The combination of textual and pictorial in design also gives a positive effect on the interpreter, so that they carefully read each information well.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion based on the study result, it can be seen that the private university website provides an attractive appearance on its website, so that it can attract the attention of its website visitors. This can be seen from the aspects described on the website and the selection of each highlight to show the university. Looking for future research, it is necessary to comprehensively examine the meaning of rhetorical terms attached to the website. In addition, data validation and data triangulation must be performed to strengthen the analysis results. Further research should expand one perspective of analysis, but it should also expand another perspective to give broader analysis results. In addition, future research should insert an analysis of social culture and other social viewpoints to enrich the data analysis.

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