

UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar's Public Relations Strategy for Branding the Islamic Science Campus: A Reflection of the Minangkabau Surau on TikTok

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Abstract

This study examines public relations strategies in building the image of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar through the social media platform TikTok. Social media is considered a crucial element in branding strategies because it provides various features that support the process, thereby enabling higher education institutions to optimize their branding efforts. The primary focus of this study is on the branding strategies implemented by the university's public relations department, which are divided into three aspects: Brand Positioning, Brand Identity, and Brand Personality. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, with data collection techniques including interviews, observations, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed descriptively through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To ensure data validity, source triangulation was conducted. The objective of this study is to identify the strategies used by the public relations team in building the university's brand. The research findings indicate that: 1) Brand Positioning Strategy. Developing TikTok content that aligns with developments in digital media and highlights the uniqueness of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar as a Campus of Islamic Studies that Embodies the Minangkabau Surau, as well as positioning the campus as a center for Islamic studies. 2) Brand Identity Strategy. Optimizing TikTok features that support the branding process and maintaining consistency in presenting informative content with attractive designs that reflect the identity of the "Campus of Islamic Studies Embodying the Minangkabau Surau." 3) Brand Personality Strategy. Implementing a brand-building process through social media in a regular and consistent manner, highlighting all relevant information about UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, and improving the perception of prospective students. This study emphasizes the importance of utilizing social media, particularly TikTok, in higher education branding strategies. Through a structured and consistent approach, the university's public relations team can build a strong and appealing image for its target audience.

Keywords: Branding Strategy, Public Relations Branding, TikTok

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INTRODUCTION

Public relations plays a vital management role in establishing and maintaining effective communication, as well as fostering understanding and cooperation between an organization and its public. Public relations also focuses on managing problems and issues, supporting management in providing information and responding to public opinion, and reinforcing management's responsibility to serve the public interest. As times change, the role of public relations has become increasingly vital, both in providing reassurance to the public and in finding solutions to the problems faced. A public relations strategy consists of efforts or tactics designed to create a lasting impact in achieving the goals of a company or institution, fostering a positive impression among customers and the broader public, introducing products or services, and enhancing public confidence in a brand's quality and value. This strategy is employed to strengthen public trust in the organization's public relations credibility. (Zahra, 2022).

One approach currently widely adopted by universities to promote their institutions is through branding. Branding serves as a tool to strengthen promotional efforts and raise public awareness, particularly among target audiences. Over time, a brand has become the institutional identity that supports promotional activities. The elements of branding are closely tied to the design that shapes the public's perception of a university's image. A brand conveys a message that reflects the institution's identity so that it becomes recognized by the public. (Setyanto et al., 2017). Social media is a platform designed to allow users to interact, share content, and connect with others online. Today, social media is extremely popular and has become an integral part of daily life for many people around the world. These platforms also serve as effective tools for promoting brands or businesses. Social media is not only used by individuals but is also leveraged by companies to market their products or services. (Damayanti et al., 2023).

One such social media platform is TikTok. This app offers a variety of engaging features, such as photos, videos, music, effects, stickers, and more, which allow users to express their creativity. From celebrities and influencers to the general public, many people use TikTok to become content creators. TikTok holds significant appeal among today's younger generation. Nearly all generations are active on this platform, making promotion via TikTok an ideal choice due to its broad target market (Fitri et al., 2021). As a medium for conveying information, the media is expected to present news that is balanced, factual, and engaging. In addition, the media must also engage the public as an active audience that receives and responds to the information provided. With the increasing number of universities—both public and private—and the advantages they offer, UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar needs to be able to compete to attract public attention.

Based on initial observations of the UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar public relations office, the various social media platforms available today make it very easy for the public to meet their daily needs. Social media serves to convey information and build positive relationships with the public. The public relations office at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar also utilizes various social media platforms such as TikTok, , Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to disseminate information. Through these social media channels, the public relations office conducts campus branding and shares information regarding various activities, such as campus promotions, outreach events, celebrations of major holidays, and awards received by UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar.

The researcher chose TikTok as the primary platform based on its ability to reach a wider audience even without a specific number of followers since its content can

automatically appear on other users' home feeds. Social media is used not only to promote new student admissions but also to disseminate information about academic developments, various campus activities, and the implementation of the three pillars of higher education, including community service. Therefore, the use of social media has become a key strategy for conveying information to a wide audience. UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar actively uses TikTok as a communication and branding tool through its official account, @uinmybatusangkar. The content shared covers various campus activities, such as fitness exercises, public lectures, and the construction of new facilities. This strategy demonstrates the Public Relations Office's efforts to build a modern and religious campus image, in line with its identity as an Islamic campus reflecting the Minangkabau surau tradition.

The official TikTok account for UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar (@uinmybatusangkar) has 2,778 followers and 34,800 likes. This account is used to promote the campus and its academic and religious activities and has shared 156 posts. Through the TikTok platform, the public relations office of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar aims to actively engage in branding and share various information. Although this university is already well-known among the public, efforts to expand its reach and increase its appeal are still necessary. One form of branding that reflects the Minangkabau surau culture showcased on TikTok is the "Subuh Mubarak" event, held as part of the Academic and Student Culture Orientation (PBAK). This event is intended for new students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. The event involves performing the dawn prayer in congregation at the UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar Auditorium. This is intended to achieve the university's goal of becoming an Islamic science campus that reflects the Minangkabau surau tradition, while also deepening students' understanding of Islamic values. Additionally, it serves as a draw and generates positive recognition for both the university and the broader community.

Branding can be defined as a series of communication activities carried out by an institution with the goal of building a brand image that is recognized by the public. As a key element in shaping a university's image, the public relations office plays a crucial role in developing and implementing effective branding strategies. Higher education institutions must also have effective marketing functions through branding, which requires proper strategic planning so that information can be received and understood by the public. This study aims to identify the branding strategy of the Public Relations Office at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar as a Campus of Islamic Science Reflecting the Minangkabau Surau on TikTok.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher employed a descriptive qualitative research approach using descriptive methods. Descriptive methods aim to depict the conditions or circumstances of a particular group of people, objects, situations, thoughts, or ideas as they actually are. According to Bogdan and Taylor (as cited in Moleong, 2007:3), " " The paradigm in this study aims to discover and understand what causes events to occur. Knowledge derived from the constructivist approach stems from direct observation of what occurs in the field. Furthermore, in this study, the researcher will employ the constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm itself is a paradigm that stands in opposition to the notion that relies on observation and objectivity to uncover reality or scientific knowledge. This paradigm posits that the identity of an object is shaped by how

we speak about it, the language used to articulate our concepts, and the ways in which social groups adapt to their shared experiences (Mulyana, 2010).

This study employs the following data collection methods: 1) Observation, involving direct observation of the informants under study (S. Nasution, 2008:106). 2) Documentation in the form of visual materials such as photographs, sketches, and videos taken during the interview process and data collection (Sugiyono, 2012:82). 3) Interviews: This study employed semi-structured interviews, which allow informants the freedom to answer questions while remaining within predetermined boundaries (Sugiyono, 2015:73). The data sources in this study consist of primary data obtained directly from informants and secondary data obtained indirectly, for example, through other people or documents (Sugiyono, 2016). In this study, the researcher employed the interactive data analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman. This model comprises four main stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification (S. Nasution, 2005:126). To ensure the validity of the data in this study, the researcher applied the triangulation method. According to Rustanto (2015), triangulation can be defined as the process of verifying data by comparing information from various sources, using different methods, and conducted at different times.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar

According to the UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar website, the State Islamic University (UIN) Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar was formerly known as IAIN Batusangkar and, prior to that, STAIN Batusangkar—a state-run Islamic higher education institution located in Batusangkar, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra. On June 8, 2022, its status was upgraded to UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Currently, UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar has four faculties: Tarbiyah and Teacher Education; Sharia; Ushuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah; and Islamic Economics and Business, as well as one graduate program

Vision, Mission, and Objectives of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar

- 1) The vision of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar is
Integrative and Interconnected in Scholarship, Rooted in Local Wisdom, and Globally Reputable
- 2) Mission of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar
 - a) To Enhance Educational and Teaching Services Based on High-Quality, Moderate, Integrative, and Interconnected Scholarship
 - b) To improve the productivity and competitiveness of research outcomes
 - c) To improve the quality of community service
 - d) To Enhance the Productivity and Competitiveness of the University
 - e) Strengthening Good University Governance (Good University Governance)
- 3) Objectives of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar
 - a) To Produce Graduates with Comprehensive and Outstanding Academic and Professional Skills
 - b) To Produce Graduates Who Possess Noble Character, Spiritual Wisdom, Broad Knowledge, Intellectual Freedom, and Professionalism
 - c) To establish the university as a center for research and study that excels in the field of Islamic studies

- d) To establish the university as a center for the dissemination of Islamic studies and other disciplines, and to strive to apply this knowledge to improve the standard of living of the community and enrich national culture
- e) Building a Strong and Functional Network with Alumni

Profile of the Public Relations Office at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar

The Public Relations Office falls under the General, Academic, Planning, and Finance Bureau (UAPK Bureau), which is part of the Rector's Office. For example, the Acting Head of the UAPK Bureau oversees general administration, including public relations. Profile of the Public Relations Officer: Hospi Burda, S.HI., M.A., serves as a Junior Public Relations Specialist at the Bureau of General Affairs, Academic Affairs, Planning, and Finance at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Chardinal Putra, M.A., is listed as the Coordinator of Public Relations and Protocol at this institution. The Public Relations Office at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar is known for its active role in publications and communications. In 2022, the Public Relations Division of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia assessed the UIN MY Batusangkar public relations team as highly productive in enhancing institutional publications.

Key Findings

This study was conducted at the Public Relations Office of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar and involved several informants from that unit, including the Public Relations Coordinator and the manager of the university's official TikTok account. These informants will serve as the primary sources for exploring the university's branding strategies through the social media platform TikTok. Data will be collected using three research instruments: interviews, documentation, and observation. The branding strategies implemented by the Public Relations Office are divided into three parts, namely:

1. Brand Positioning Strategy

Brand positioning is a fundamental marketing strategy aimed at creating a distinct and favorable image of a product or service in the minds of consumers. Brand positioning carried out by the public relations department builds a solid foundation for a brand so that its message is well-received by the public. The public relations department's role is to highlight the strengths of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar and its unique differentiation as an Islamic science campus that reflects the Minangkabau surau tradition.



Figure 4.1

Content: "Subuh Mubarak" religious activity

Source: Screenshot from UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar's TikTok

The image above illustrates UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar's activities as an Islamic science campus reflecting the Minangkabau surau. Specifically, the Subuh Mubarak program reflects the campus's commitment to upholding Islamic values. Through the Subuh Mubarak program, the campus consistently reaffirms its commitment to these values. The campus functions as a modern-day surau—a place that combines academic learning with Minangkabau social and cultural values. It serves as an educational center that accommodates various scientific and spiritual disciplines, inspiring holistic, Islam-based intellectual growth rooted in local culture.



Figure 4.4

Post on the “Excellent” Accreditation of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar

The image above displays a congratulatory message regarding UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar's “Excellent” accreditation achievement. This type of publication strategy is used to build and strengthen brand positioning by highlighting the institution's accreditation as part of its institutional brand. This achievement is not only recognized internally but also visually communicated to the public to foster a positive image and build trust in the university.

2. Brand Identity Strategy

Brand identity serves as the strategic foundation for building a brand. By consistently combining visual, verbal, and sensory elements in a strong, , a brand is able to establish its position in consumers' minds. Brand identity is the strategic and intentional representation of a brand, encompassing visual, verbal, and emotional elements that collectively distinguish the brand from its competitors. Brand identity is the outward expression of a brand, including its name, logo, slogan, color scheme, and overall visual aesthetic. The university can build and maintain a strong, authentic image on TikTok and reach a wider audience in a relevant and engaging way by showcasing the logos of its flagship programs, its accreditation achievements at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, and other awards. This content can help build a robust brand by highlighting its strengths through these elements, as well as by presenting information in an engaging and accessible manner that makes it easier for the audience to absorb.

Through consistent visual design and a coherent narrative across all platforms, coupled with the use of analytics, the university has successfully built a solid reputation, increased audience engagement, and created a sustainable positive image while remaining steadfast in its fundamental Islamic values. As stated by the public relations department that manages the social media accounts:

“We maintain the consistency of the institution's visual identity, continuously improve visual quality, and ensure consistent use of the logo, colors, and design across social media. (Informant 2, Tuesday, May 6, 2025).



Figure 4.7

Examples of visual elements such as logos, colors, and typography

Source: Screenshot from UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar's TikTok

The image above shows the official logo of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, which is always used consistently by the Public Relations team. The use of this element helps strengthen public recognition of the logo, in line with the theme "Islamic Science Campus: A Reflection of the Minangkabau Surau" that was promoted when the logo was launched. By presenting campus visual content that is not only engaging and up-to-date but also has a strong identity, the Public Relations team systematically and credibly shapes the campus's image in the public eye. The campus's public relations strategy ensures that visual content on TikTok is not only aesthetically appealing but also effectively fosters a positive image and builds public trust, particularly among prospective students and their parents. The greatest challenge lies in maintaining a balance between consistency and adaptability, ensuring the brand remains relevant amid the fast-paced and distraction-filled dynamics of social media.

3. Brand Personality

In the context of public relations, brand personality is the human-like character of an institution, consistently conveyed through communication, visuals, and digital interactions. The goal is for the audience to feel as though they are speaking with a "person" from the campus who feels real and familiar. To ensure the campus's personality remains consistent across all TikTok content, a structured, research-based strategy is required. The university can build and maintain a strong, authentic image on TikTok and reach a wider audience.

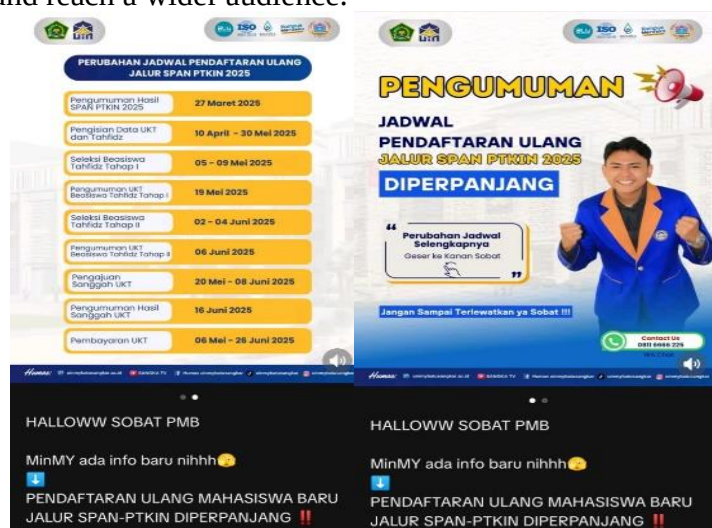


Figure 4.10

Registration Information for UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar

A consistent presentation style makes it easier for the audience to quickly recognize information and also strengthens the institution's image on digital platforms. By establishing a strong and consistent brand personality through a uniform communication style and voice, a tone appropriate to the context, as well as solid guidelines and evaluations, the university can create a brand identity that is authentic, easily recognizable, and consistent across various communication platforms. This is achieved by using a communication or writing style that resonates with the audience—such as crafting engaging captions and including hashtags—so that information spreads quickly. Additionally, for those who need further clarification, the university can direct them to learn more about UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar by featuring its existing social media accounts in every post.

Public relations efforts must remain aligned with the values and the university's uniqueness, maintaining consistency with the institution's identity—as the university is characterized as an Islamic science campus reflecting the Minangkabau surau, which illustrates its commitment to integrating knowledge with local wisdom and building a global reputation. This ensures the university's image remains intact through adherence to the code of, one of which is dressing modestly and in accordance with the guidelines.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Brand Positioning

The Public Relations Office at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar has designed a creative and proactive communication strategy to reach the broader public. The PR strategy for brand building involves focusing entirely on capturing the public's attention through various strategies tailored to the public's needs and desires. They present engaging content, preserve and leverage existing local values—such as featuring content on the “Subuh Mubarak” religious activity, Islamic studies content, showcasing local culture through the traditional Minangkabau headdress known as the “tangguluk,” and posting updates on the accreditation of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar as a “Center of Excellence.”

The process of determining the differentiation of the research findings conducted by the researcher reveals that UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar offers a unique identity built upon expert faculty members, modern campus facilities, and a strong foundation in religion and local culture. The campus environment strongly reflects its identity as an Islamic Science Campus, embodying the Minangkabau surau—a traditional Minangkabau learning space. The process of defining the public relations office's differentiation is crucial for building the institution's image and competitive advantage, as the campus will continue to cultivate its unique values and strive to deliver the most positive and beneficial outcomes for the community.

The author's research findings indicate that the public relations department consistently implements innovations that are responsive to media preferences, the changing times, community needs, and the latest trends. They are highly attuned to shifts in their audience, dynamically adapting content to ensure information is conveyed accurately and meets public expectations.

2. Brand Identity

Public relations serves as a strategic guide, ensuring that all visual, verbal, and public experience elements function synergistically to shape positive perceptions, strengthen trust, and maintain image consistency—especially when the university faces challenges or crises. By consistently implementing these elements across catalogs, websites, social media, and marketing materials, the university has successfully built a strong and easily recognizable identity. This study shows that social media plays a central role in strengthening the public relations department's brand identity through key strategies such as increasing visibility and reach, and ensuring visual and verbal consistency.

Visual content is engaging yet consistently aligned with the university's identity through elements such as the logo, colors, and typography. This study shows that the university's public relations office successfully presents visual content that is not only engaging but also strong in terms of identity, systematically and credibly shaping the university's image. Their strategies include the consistent use of visual elements such as logos, colors, and typography, while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to trends and changes in the audience. This consistency strengthens the campus brand and ensures easy recognition among the general public. A systematic approach, in which brand guidelines are strictly adhered to, enables the Public Relations Office to maintain a professional image and uphold the institution's reputation. This strategy combines visual impact, a unified look, and adaptability, which together build and maintain a strong and easily recognizable institutional image.

Research conducted by the author indicates that social media, particularly TikTok, has now become the primary channel for universities to introduce and strengthen their visual identity to prospective students and parents. TikTok plays a crucial role in expanding and reinforcing the university's visual image in the eyes of its target audience. Campus public relations teams have ensured that the visual identity promoted through TikTok is not merely aesthetically appealing but is also designed to effectively build a positive institutional image. By presenting consistent visual elements and implementing informative and engaging content strategies, they have successfully enhanced the institution's reputation and public trust through constructive interactions in the comments section with prospective students and the broader community, and have received positive feedback from the audience.

In the university context, this platform is used to expand and reinforce the institution's visual identity. TikTok allows educational institutions to showcase campus culture, student activities, and institutional values in short, engaging, and relevant video formats an approach that is far more effective at reaching the younger generation than other platforms. This study reveals the significant challenges faced by campus public relations teams in maintaining brand consistency without losing their ability to respond quickly to trends. They must balance visual identity including logos, colors, and content style with the need to remain adaptive to algorithm changes, viral trends, and ever-shifting audience preferences.

Through this approach, the university maintains credibility and trust not merely by preserving its image, but by fostering a deep, positive perception and a strong digital presence. They ensure that published content aligns with the institution's values, conveys authentic, real-life stories, and encourages two-way interaction with the audience. In this way, the campus's identity is internalized in the minds of the digital public while remaining relevant to the characteristics of the TikTok platform and the needs of today's audience

3. Brand Personality

The author's research found that for public relations teams to ensure a university's brand identity remains consistent on TikTok, a systematic strategy based on research and an understanding of the audience is required. This approach helps the university create and maintain a strong, authentic image while expanding its reach to new followers. In practice, the university implements strict visual guidelines, ensuring that all content whether posters or videos aligns with its institutional identity. Content is designed to maintain a professional appearance while conveying important information, such as the new student registration schedule. This combination of visuals and videos reinforces visual consistency and makes it easier for the audience to understand the messages being conveyed. Thus, the public relations social media team does not merely post content but also actively maintains the continuity of the institution's brand and protects it from inconsistencies. This strategy ensures that TikTok posts are not only informative but also consistently uphold local values and the campus's identity both visually and narratively by showcasing the involvement of the rector, alumni, and students in building the brand personality, as well as featuring content where attire adheres to the code of conduct.

The author's research findings indicate that building a strong and consistent campus brand personality is essential for developing a communication style that reflects the institution's values and maintains consistency in voice and tone across all communication platforms. Based on the author's research, strategically engaging the three main pillars students, faculty, and alumni enables a campus to design a dynamic, strong brand personality that receives widespread appreciation. These three groups play a vital role in building and strengthening the university's brand, as each is capable of presenting the institution in a unique and engaging way. Students can share authentic experiences through social media and testimonials; faculty members reinforce the institution's academic reputation and integrity; while alumni contribute success stories and professional networks that expand the university's reach. When students, faculty, and alumni are collectively and strategically active on social media, they can shape a comprehensive and multi-layered image of the university, as this form of collaboration where all three groups complement and reinforce one another supports a brand personality strategy that is inclusive, credible, and appealing to a young audience. This is not merely cultural theory; stakeholder participation has been proven to strengthen loyalty, trust, and identification with the university.

The results of the author's research indicate that campus public relations offices proactively implement brand evaluation strategies by measuring the effectiveness of content and information on social media through several systematic steps:

- a) Conducting periodic audience surveys, including surveys of social media followers, to assess whether the messages and content conveyed are appropriate, easy to understand, and reaching the target audience.
- b) Analysis of engagement metrics specifically, how intensely the audience interacts with the content, such as popularity on social media platforms.
- c) Measuring brand awareness and perception to determine the extent to which the audience recognizes the university, as well as their perceptions of the institution's reputation and image.

Campus public relations teams combine various approaches through multiple surveys to comprehensively evaluate whether their digital branding strategies are

effective. Based on these findings, they adjust their content strategies and distribution channels to optimize them and better align with the characteristics and needs of the target audience. The author's research indicates that public relations teams continuously develop the brand's personality to remain relevant and engaging by:

- a) Defining unique and differentiating values.
- b) Designing pillars of campus excellence that highlight the fusion of Islamic science and Minangkabau local wisdom such as the surau-style learning spirit and local culture that emphasize the qualities of hard work, independence, and a sense of community as well as
- c) Develop the narrative through digital storytelling by creating content that depicts real stories from the campus, highlighting the Smart Surau program, which utilizes the surau as a hub for religious, educational, and social activities equipped with technology such as Wi-Fi access, digital learning spaces, and community based programs to emphasize the fusion of spiritual values and modern innovation.
- d) Showcase the tahfizh scholarship program as a tangible manifestation of the Minangkabau Surau-Inspired Islamic Science Campus model, where scholarship recipients are not only supported academically but also encouraged to complete their studies while preserving their religious traditions.

This approach reinforces the integration of contemporary scholarship and Minangkabau local wisdom through authentic stories that can spark digital dialogue with the audience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above research, it can be concluded that the branding strategy of the Public Relations Office at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar as the "Minangkabau Surau-Inspired Islamic Science Campus" on TikTok consists of public relations strategies aimed at building the brand and establishing differentiation by positioning the institution as a Minangkabau Surau-inspired Islamic science campus and highlighting its unique strengths, with the goal of attracting prospective students. Consistency in strengthening the visual identity is maintained by strictly adhering to visual guidelines so that the logo appears in accordance with the rules. Content in the form of posters and videos is combined to create a professional look that aligns with the campus's visual identity. The strategy implemented ensures that every plan developed by the public relations team reflects the campus's values and uniqueness, in harmony with the institution's identity—namely, as an Islamic science campus that adopts the Minangkabau surau model.

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