

Strategic Communication Through Immersive Technologies: Shaping UNU Yogyakarta's Future-Oriented Image in "Under the Same Sun" Exhibition

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Abstract

In the context of intensifying competition among higher education institutions to engage the digital generation, communication strategies leveraging immersive experiences have gained increasing global relevance. Immersive experiences that integrate digital technologies with emotional engagement have been recognized as effective tools for constructing institutional images that are future-oriented and adaptive to the evolving landscape of modern communication. This study investigates the communication strategy employed by Nahdlatul Ulama University (UNU) Yogyakarta to establish its image as a forward-looking educational institution through an immersive experience-based exhibition. Employing a qualitative approach, the research analyses the integration of technologies such as video mapping and interactive art installations within the new media art exhibition, "Under the Same Sun." This exhibition was selected due to its innovative use of immersive technology within the higher education sector, particularly among Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) universities. The findings indicate that immersive technology not only enhances audience engagement but also reinforces UNU Yogyakarta's positioning as a modern and adaptive institution attuned to the needs of the digital generation in the NU academic community. By delivering immersive experiences through new media art exhibitions such as "Under the Same Sun," UNU Yogyakarta strategically manages its identity as a futuristic and innovative institution. The implications of this study provide valuable insights into the role of immersive technology as an effective communication strategy in higher education branding, particularly in strengthening institutional competitiveness in the digital era.

Keywords: immersive experience, communication strategy, experiential marketing communication, university branding, Nahdlatul Ulama

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Introduction

The higher education sector is experiencing a period of intense competition and marketization. Universities, much like service-oriented organizations, are now compelled to differentiate themselves and articulate their unique value propositions to a discerning audience (Judson et al., 2008). In this environment, the concept of branding has migrated from the commercial realm to become a critical practice in academic management (Chapleo, 2015). A powerful and effectively communicated university brand is crucial for attracting top-tier students and faculty, impacting the institution's overall capacity to compete (Judson et al., 2008). Top researchers and academics are drawn to brands that promise resources, a supportive environment, and a prestigious platform for their work, thereby reinforcing the institution's intellectual capital. Meanwhile, government and industry partners are more likely to collaborate with and fund institutions that present a clear, strong, and relevant brand identity.

The imperative for strategic branding is particularly acute for Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama (UNU) Yogyakarta. According to Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Yogyakarta (2025), UNU Yogyakarta is a higher education institution operating under the auspices of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Central Board, which oversees the largest Islamic socio-religious mass organization globally, with an estimated 90 million members and followers across Indonesia. Established in 2017, UNU Yogyakarta's official vision is to become a leading professional hub and future-oriented university, positioning itself as a central meeting point for NU students, professionals, and academics focused on cultivating modern and excellent professionals (Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Yogyakarta, 2025).

However, public perception of its parent organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, is often strongly associated with traditionalism. The societal perception of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as a deeply traditionalist organization is not merely a stereotype but a resilient construct embedded in public consciousness. Bindaniji and Fuadi (2022) elucidate that the discourse of "post-traditionalism" emerged precisely as an intellectual response to this pervasive view, which categorizes NU as an entity strictly adhered to customary practices. This tension is further contextualized by Suhendra et al. (2025), who argue that NU's historical identity as the guardian of tradition often obscures its adaptive efforts, rendering it perceived as less modern despite internal drives for renewal. Consequently, this stigma influences social behavior; as Rofiah et al. (2025) observe, urban NU constituents are actively negotiating their identity, striving to construct a moderate and contemporary image to counterbalance the public narrative that frames the organization as rigidly traditional. This long-standing association can unintentionally cast a "less modern" image onto NU-affiliated institutions, potentially conflicting with UNU Yogyakarta's core vision as a forward-looking university. As a result, actively communicating the university's brand positioning to shape a desirable and future-oriented image becomes a vital strategic priority.

These branding pressures are further intensified by the rise of the digital generation (Gen Z), whose media consumption patterns, expectations of interactivity, and preference for visually rich, participatory experiences challenge traditional modes of institutional communication. *The Art Basel and UBS Survey of Global Collecting 2025*, Gen Z has emerged as the most enthusiastic demographic, with 56% of High-Net-Worth Individuals planning to increase their attendance—surpassing both Millennials (49%) and Boomers (36%) (McAndrew, 2024). This cohort prioritizes "Instagrammability" and social interaction over static historical objects. Haqqi and Harjanto (2025) emphasize that while Gen Z finds traditional museums tedious, they

are highly responsive to tech-integrated, immersive environments (e.g., AR or Projection Mapping). Ultimately, for Gen Z, the exhibition experience supersedes the artist's identity.

In response to this branding challenge and the intensifying competition for the attention of the digital generation, UNU Yogyakarta adopted an innovative communication strategy: the "Under the Same Sun" exhibition. Conceptualized as a new media art exhibition, "Under the Same Sun" integrates immersive technologies such as video mapping and interactive art installations. It thus operates not merely as an artistic event but as a strategic communication platform that embodies UNU Yogyakarta's commitment to innovation, technological literacy, and responsiveness to contemporary modes of engagement, particularly within the NU academic ecosystem. UNU Yogyakarta has innovatively repurposed its new campus architecture—transforming functional areas such as walls, corridors, and open spaces—into a living art gallery. According to Reza (2024), this convergence of academic infrastructure and aesthetic display represents a "positive anomaly" within the Nahdlatul Ulama ecosystem. Distinguished by its rarity among non-arts institutions, the exhibition at UNU Yogyakarta engages audiences through a unique multisensory framework that invites them to sense, feel, think, act, and relate, thereby deliberately shifting perceptions from narrowly traditionalist associations.

This research investigates the communication strategy employed by UNU Yogyakarta to intentionally establish its image as a modern, future-oriented educational institution through an immersive experience-based exhibition. By analysing "Under the Same Sun" not only as an artistic initiative but as a deliberate branding instrument, the study explores how immersive technologies can enhance shifting public perceptions and strengthen the competitiveness of higher education institutions in the digital era, particularly within the network of NU universities.

Literature Review

Scholarly discussions on higher education marketing increasingly emphasize the need to manage universities as corporate brands, a shift driven by intensifying market pressures and competitive dynamics. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) argue that universities have been compelled to adopt branding concepts traditionally associated with the corporate sector, positioning themselves as distinctive and recognizable entities within an overcrowded educational marketplace. This branding imperative is not limited to visual identity or promotional slogans; it extends to how institutions strategically communicate their values, missions, and unique strengths to diverse stakeholders. Emery (1999) further highlights that university marketing performs a dual function: on the one hand, it operates as a managerial tool for achieving institutional objectives; on the other, it serves as a crucial information resource for prospective students, enabling them to make informed decisions about programs and institutional fit. This dual role underscores the importance of examining how communication strategies are designed and implemented, especially when institutions aim to project a specific, future-oriented image.

Despite recognition of the strategic importance of branding, much of the existing literature on university marketing communication remains focused on conventional, largely non-experiential methods. Studies such as Octora and Alvin (2022) typically document familiar tactics such as participation in education fairs, "school safari" visits to high schools, and broad online marketing campaigns (e.g., websites, social media posts, and digital advertisements). These activities are predominantly informational and promotional, aimed at increasing

visibility and driving enrollment, but they often do not fundamentally reimagine how stakeholders experience the university brand.

A small number of studies have now begun to explore more experiential and spatially grounded forms of marketing communication, particularly those implemented through exhibitions. Hjelde (2020), for instance, connects exhibitions to university branding, but the analysis is situated within art-focused institutions where exhibitions are a natural extension of academic practice and institutional identity. The studies suggest that exhibitions including through immersive environments can function as powerful strategic communication tools. However, their applications are largely explored in settings where exhibitions are already expected (art schools, cultural institutions) or in commercial branding contexts, rather than in non-art-specialized universities.

This concentration on conventional tools in higher education reveals a significant research gap. There is limited empirical investigation of how immersive exhibitions might be deployed as strategic communication instruments by universities whose primary identity does not revolve around art or design. Furthermore, little is known about how such strategies operate in institutions that must navigate complex identity tensions. For example, universities associated with religious or traditional organizations that wish to project a modern, future-oriented image to the digital generation. In these contexts, immersive technologies such as video mapping, interactive installations, and new media art have the potential not only to attract attention, but also to symbolically communicate adaptability, technological literacy, and forward-looking values.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore how immersive technologies are strategically integrated into a single-case study design, the “Under the Same Sun” exhibition, to manage and communicate Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama (UNU) Yogyakarta’s future-oriented institutional image. This specific case was selected for its unique convergence of immersive technologies—such as video mapping and interactive installations—within a religious educational institution not typically associated with new media art. By situating the inquiry within the Nahdlatul Ulama network, the research aims to deconstruct both the strategic intent behind adopting such innovations and the ways in which these technological narratives are experienced and interpreted by diverse stakeholders.

To ensure accurate and complete results, this study combines three methods: interviews, observations, and document analysis. This mix allows us to see the exhibition from multiple angles, connecting the university’s strategy with how visitors experienced the space and its modern design. By analyzing these different sources together, the research demonstrates how UNU Yogyakarta leverages immersive technology to build its positioning as an adaptive, future-oriented institution attuned to the digital generation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates three main theoretical pillars including Corporate Image Advertising Theory, Strategic Experiential Marketing Communication (through immersive technologies), and the PCDL (Positioning – Communicating – Delivering – Leveraging) branding model to explain how Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama (UNU) Yogyakarta uses an immersive new media art exhibition to transform and reinforce its institutional brand

image. By combining these perspectives, the framework adapts traditional corporate marketing theories to the specific dynamics and identity challenges of the higher education sector, particularly within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) ecosystem.

Corporate Image Advertising Theory: Framing UNU Yogyakarta as the Brand

Within the broader logic of Corporate Image Advertising Theory that frames UNU Yogyakarta's effort to communicate a forward-looking institutional identity, scholarship in marketing identifies three major perspectives for defining corporate image. The first perspective treats corporate image primarily as a perceptual construct—that is, the public's mental representation of an organization (Enis, 1967; Grönroos, 1984), or, as noted by Gray and Balmer (1998) and Schuler (2004), the figurative “portrait” people hold about a company. The second perspective expands this notion by incorporating evaluative and affective elements—feelings, attitudes, and value judgments directed at the organization (Barich & Kotler, 1991; Dowling, 1986). From this standpoint, corporate image is not limited to neutral descriptions of an organization but encompasses both descriptive impressions and evaluative reactions, creating a conceptual distinction from the purely perceptual view noted earlier (Brown & Cox, 1997). A third perspective diverges from both by framing corporate image as the network of associations and meanings that audiences link to an organization (Dowling, 1986; Keller & Aaker, 1992; Martineau, 1958).

These three approaches underscore why UNU Yogyakarta cannot rely solely on abstract messaging—such as vision statements or slogans—to reposition itself as modern, innovative, and future-oriented. Corporate image advertising theory highlights the limitation of relying solely on abstract messages or promises as shown in vision statements, slogans, and static promotional materials to reshape such perceptions. To be effective, these abstract identity claims must be translated into concrete, memorable experiences that stakeholders can directly encounter and internalize. Corporate image is shaped not only by perceptions, but also by emotions, attitudes, and deeper associative meanings; therefore, as Corporate Image Advertising Theory suggests, these identity claims must be reinforced through concrete, experiential encounters, which justifies the strategic shift toward immersive, technology-driven experiential communication. This theoretical gap opens the way for the second pillar of the framework: strategic experiential marketing communication using immersive technologies.

Immersive Technology as Strategic Experiential Marketing Communication

Smilansky (2009) conceptualizes experiential marketing communication as a dynamic approach that transcends traditional advertising by creating interactive, sensory-rich environments where consumers can forge real-time, emotional connections with a brand. The objective of this strategy is to cultivate memorable encounters that resonate on a personal level, stimulating organic word-of-mouth advocacy and securing long-term consumer support. Complementing this approach, technological advancements have equipped marketers with sophisticated instruments to construct immersive brand ecosystems (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). By integrating digital frontiers ranging from virtual and augmented reality to social media and live streaming brands can now transcend physical limitations to engage consumers through innovative, interactive dialogues.

Schmitt (1999) delineates the architecture of experiential marketing through five core dimensions that collectively shape the consumer journey. The process begins with Sense, where sensory perception stimulated by visuals, audio, and atmosphere constructs a unique

brand image, practically manifested in the gallery's layout, lighting quality, and acoustic environment (Jannah et al., 2014). This sensory foundation transitions into Feel, a dimension focused on eliciting affective responses and emotional positivity (Chouyluam et al., 2021), which is largely cultivated through the hospitality and openness of the staff (Jannah et al., 2014). Simultaneously, the Think dimension engages the visitor's intellect, encouraging creative processing and new understandings (Chouyluam et al., 2021) through innovative building design and diverse collections. These internal experiences translate into Act, which influences physical behaviours and lifestyle choices, positioning the gallery as a preferred destination for those seeking new experiences. Finally, the Relate dimension synthesizes these sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural elements to forge broader social and cultural connections (Baehaqi et al., 2022), facilitated by digital community building and dynamic interpersonal interactions between staff and visitors (Jannah et al., 2014).

In this study, immersive technologies such as video mapping and interactive art installations used in the "*Under the Same Sun*" exhibition are conceptualized as the live brand experience at the core of this strategy. The exhibition functions not merely as an artistic program but as a brand-relevant experiential platform aligned with UNU Yogyakarta's goal of presenting a future-oriented, technologically literate institutional persona. Through immersive environments, abstract identity claims such as "future-oriented," "innovative," and "digital-generation friendly" are transformed into embodied experiences: visitors move through dynamic visual projections, interact with digital interfaces, and inhabit a technologically mediated space that concretely symbolizes modernity.

Adapting the PCDL Model to University Branding

To structure and evaluate UNU Yogyakarta's branding efforts, the framework employs Ghodeswar's (2008) PCDL Model (Positioning, Communicating, Delivering, and Leveraging) adapted from corporate branding to the university context. The initial stage of this framework, Positioning the Brand (P), requires UNU Yogyakarta to clearly define its identity within the competitive educational market. This positioning is strategically formulated to address a significant challenge: overcoming the traditional perceptions associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and instead highlighting its key intangible attributes as a "Future-Oriented" and "Innovative" institution. The university's core strategic benefit is offering education explicitly tailored for the needs of the digital generation.

To translate this abstract positioning into a tangible reality, UNU Yogyakarta transitions to the Communicating the Brand Message (C) stage, which is the main intervention examined by this research. The university utilizes experiential marketing communication, realized through immersive technology in the "*Under the Same Sun*" exhibition, as the primary delivery channel. This technology essentially transforms the static message of a futuristic image into a physical, social, and emotional brand experience.

Once the brand image has been successfully communicated through the immersive experience, the subsequent stage focuses on Delivering the Brand Performance (D). This phase is crucial for ensuring that the promised experience is authentically aligned with public perception and the institution's actual service delivery. Within the context of the exhibition, brand performance is meticulously assessed through continuous feedback and monitoring mechanisms. The processes of media monitoring and social media insights are employed to collect essential data and audience insights on how the new image is perceived and internalized.

The final stage, Leveraging the Brand Equity (L), focuses on maximizing the long-term outcomes of a successful communication strategy. If the immersive communication in stage (C) proves effective, UNU Yogyakarta's "Future-Oriented" image is significantly reinforced, consequently boosting its overall Brand Equity (brand value). This enhanced value can then be strategically leveraged for institutional growth, such as establishing collaboration posts and attracting new, diverse student segments or partners, thereby strengthening its competitive advantage. In summary, the conceptual framework argues that the use of experiential marketing communication, facilitated by immersive technology, is the core mechanism within the Communication stage (C) that effectively leads to the successful shaping and subsequent Leveraging (L) of UNU Yogyakarta's desired future-oriented institutional image.

Result and Discussion

The exhibition "Under the Same Sun," held from November 9 to December 15, 2024, at Galeri Seni Nusantara, UNU Yogyakarta, represents a strategic convergence of art, science, and technology within the context of an Islamic higher education institution (Liputan6, 2024). Curated by Ignatia Nilu, the event featured 23 artworks by 14 artists and collectives—including notable participants such as HONF, MIVUBI, and Paul Kiram—showcasing a diverse range of new media formats, including 13 installations, 6 projection mappings, and 4 prototypes (Indah, 2024; Reza, 2024). This exhibition focuses exclusively on new media art, utilizing the university's modern infrastructure to facilitate cross-disciplinary dialogue. It aimed to bridge the gap between traditional academic values and contemporary technological advancements, positioning the campus not merely as a religious educational facility but as a progressive hub for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) innovation.

Thematically, the findings underscore a critical re-examination of the "Human-Nature-Technology" relationship in the post-Anthropocene era. The artworks explored how connectivity and automation, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), mediate modern existence (Reza, 2024). Institutional leaders described the exhibition as a deliberate "anomaly" within the Nahdlatul Ulama ecosystem, intended to challenge stereotypes and encourage a cultural shift towards digital transformation among the *santri* (students) community (Reza, 2024). This initiative highlights the university's "Five Go" strategy, specifically "Go Innovative" and "Go Digital," reinforcing its commitment to becoming a leading professional hub.

The next section analyzes the strategic implementation of the "Under the Same Sun" exhibition through the lens of the PCDL (Positioning, Communicating, Delivering, Leveraging) branding model adapted from Ghodeswar (2008). The analysis demonstrates how immersive technology functions not merely as an artistic display, but as a calculated communication instrument to reshape the institutional identity of UNU Yogyakarta.

Positioning the Brand: Redefining Identity Through Immersive Association

The first phase of the strategy focuses on Positioning the Brand (P), where the primary objective is to define UNU Yogyakarta's identity within the competitive higher education landscape. The analysis identifies a significant strategic opportunity to rebrand the university by leveraging immersive technologies to attract a young and modern audience. As noted in the literature, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) identity often carries a strong association with traditionalism (Bindaniji & Fuadi, 2022; Suhendra et al., 2025). The "Under the Same Sun" exhibition seizes this opportunity to disrupt the narrative, creating a distinct point of difference

compared to other NU-affiliated institutions. By deliberately juxtaposing the university's religious foundation with cutting-edge new media art, UNU Yogyakarta successfully constructs a "Heritage to High-tech" perceptual shift. This positioning is not merely about aesthetics; it is a calculated move to establish Gen Z relevance, ensuring the institution resonates with a generation that values innovation and digital fluency.

Figure 1

Interactive Art Installation at Under the Same Sun



Note. Installation works like MIVUBI's Reconnected Access Memory demonstrated this synergy by merging digital gaming interfaces with social critique, thereby deconstructing the boundaries between formal institutional frameworks and fluid digital culture. (Source: UNU Yogyakarta's documentation)

To operationalize this positioning, the exhibition functions as a bridge between tangible and intangible brand attributes. On the tangible level, visitors are presented with interactive art installations and the opportunity to physically explore the UNU Yogyakarta building and facilities. This setup effectively creates a "try-before-you-enroll" mechanism, functioning as an engaging, non-intrusive campus tour that aims for higher conversion rates among prospective students. These physical encounters serve as the "reasons-to-believe" that validate the brand's promises.

Consequently, these tangible experiences cultivate critical intangible attributes. The direct interaction with technology fosters a futuristic image of UNU Yogyakarta in the minds of the audience. The fresh aesthetics and digital experiences match Gen Z's expectations, thereby cementing the university's relevance to youth. Most importantly, the exhibition builds credibility and trust. Moreover, it also shifts the perception of traditionalism once attached to the NU as the affiliation of the university to modernism and future-oriented positioning of UNU Yogyakarta. Therefore, this attempt unfolds the positioning in two steps. The first one is recalibrating the identity of UNU Yogyakarta and NU as its affiliation is predominantly traditional to be repositioned as an institution with strong religious heritage with technologically driven and future-oriented academic institutions. At the second attempt is demonstrating technological competence through a live event rather than relying on static slogans, the university provides visible proof of its modern orientation. Thus, the positioning strategy moves beyond promising a future-oriented education to demonstrating it, effectively reshaping the public's belief system regarding the university's capabilities.

Communicating the Brand Message: The Brand Experience

In the Communicating the Brand Message (C) stage, the findings indicate a deliberate departure from conventional advertising toward experiential marketing communication. UNU Yogyakarta utilizes the exhibition as its primary channel to transmit its value proposition. Consistent with Smilansky's (2009) theory, the use of immersive technology here is not cosmetic but strategic; it transforms the static positioning statement of being "future-oriented" into a dynamic live brand experience. Instead of simply telling the audience that the university is modern, the exhibition allows them to inhabit modernity. Through video mapping,

interactive installations, and curated new media art, the university communicates its brand message in a language native to the digital generation: one characterized by interactivity, visual richness, and emotional engagement.

The university also engages visitors across Schmitt's (1999) experiential dimensions, inviting them to *Sense* the digital atmosphere and *Feel* the modern ambiance. This approach aligns perfectly with the media consumption patterns of the digital generation, who prioritize interactivity and visual richness over passive information. Furthermore, the communication strategy adopts an omnichannel approach. The physical immersive experience serves as a "content factory," generating visually capturing material that is amplified through digital channels, public relations, and live broadcasts. This ensures that the brand message of innovation reaches beyond the physical visitors, creating a ripple effect across the broader digital ecosystem.

Figure 2
E-poster of Under the Same Sun



Source: UNU Yogyakarta's documentation

Here, immersive technology is not an accessory but a strategic vehicle that transforms the relatively static positioning statement ("future-oriented university") into a physical, social, and emotional brand experience. Through video mapping, interactive installations, and curated new media art, the university communicates its brand message in a way that is consistent with the digital generation's expectations for interactivity, visual richness, and emotional engagement. Then, UNU Yogyakarta utilizes the other marketing communication channels to amplify the live brand experience through digital channel, advertising, public relations, and live broadcast, which the brand experience becomes content for the broader campaign message.

In parallel with digital dissemination, the strategic execution of public relations and media handling played a critical role in legitimizing this brand transformation. Rather than relying solely on standard press releases, the media handling strategy prioritized experiential media relations, inviting journalists and news editors to witness the immersive technology firsthand. This approach was crucial in shifting the editorial narrative; by enabling the media to directly experience the convergence of tradition and modernity, the resulting coverage moved beyond simple event reporting to in-depth stories about institutional innovation. This earned media served as a powerful third-party endorsement, providing objective validation of UNU Yogyakarta's future-oriented claims. By successfully framing the exhibition as a newsworthy milestone in the modernization of Islamic higher education, the PR strategy effectively broadened the stakeholder reach, influencing not only prospective students but also parents,

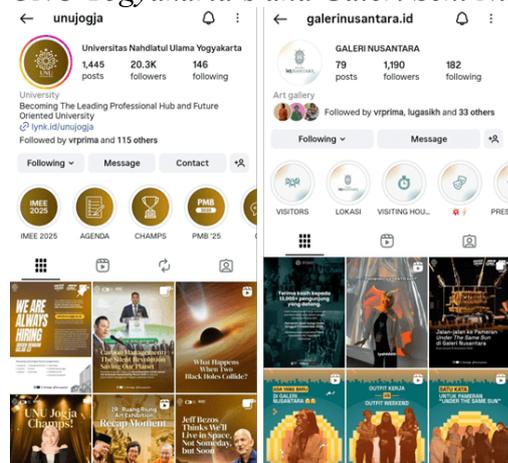
industry partners, and policymakers who rely on credible news sources for institutional assessment.

Delivering the Brand Performance: Validating the Promise

Once the immersive exhibition communicates the desired image, the Delivering the Brand Performance (D) stage focuses on the critical task of verification, ensuring that the brand promise aligns with observed performance and public perception. In the context of this study, UNU Yogyakarta measures its delivery not through academic rankings alone, but through social media insights and media monitoring that reflect real-time public sentiment.

Figure 3

UNU Yogyakarta's and Galeri Seni Nusantara's Official Instagram Account



Data analysis reveals a significant increase in followers from the period preceding the event, accompanied by a surge in content views and positive media coverage. These metrics serve as tangible proof that the exhibition did more than just entertain; it effectively amplified the institution's reach and solidified the "Future-Oriented Image" amongst young generations. This alignment between the strategic intent and the audience's digital response indicates that the university successfully minimized the gap between its projected image and the public's reality, thereby authenticating its brand performance.

Figure 4

UNU Yogyakarta's Got 11 Collaboration Posts With More Than 8.500K Views



Leveraging the Brand Equity: Sustaining Long-Term Value

The final stage, Leveraging the Brand Equity (L), concerns the long-term strategic utilization of the value generated by the exhibition. The study finds that “Under the Same Sun” was not a transient event but a generator of enduring brand assets. The exhibition successfully leveraged brand equity by facilitating collaboration posts with top influencers. These collaborations created a digital footprint that is continuously viewed by the public long after the physical event has concluded, extending the lifecycle of the brand message. If the immersive communication in the previous stages is effective, UNU Yogyakarta’s desired “Future-Oriented” image is significantly strengthened. Consequently, at this stage, the immersive exhibition and the positive image it generates functions as a springboard for broader institutional growth. The enhanced brand equity attracts not only prospective students but also potential strategic partnerships, positioning the university to capitalize on its modern identity for future academic and professional expansion.

The analysis of this Leveraging stage confirms the success of UNU Yogyakarta’s theoretical transition from merely conveying abstract messages to the formation of a concrete collective memory. While the initial stage of Corporate Image Advertising Theory demands a shift from static vision slogans to tangible experiences, this stage functions as a locking mechanism that transforms momentary immersive experiences into a permanent network of associations. The existence of a digital footprint from influencer collaborations ensures that the institution’s “mental portrait” (*perceptual construct*) does not fade after the event concludes but is continuously reproduced to shape sustainable public perception. Consequently, the generated brand equity is not merely an accumulation of affective impressions but has transformed into a strategic asset that validates the “Future-Oriented” identity as an institutional reality, rather than just a promotional promise.

Conclusion

This research concludes that the “Under the Same Sun” exhibition transcends the boundaries of a conventional art event, functioning instead as a sophisticated strategic communication instrument designed to reposition UNU Yogyakarta. The study demonstrates that immersive technology serves as a catalyst for a paradigm shift in university branding: moving from a declarative approach (passively telling the audience about values) to an experiential approach (allowing the audience to sense, feel, and embody those values).

This strategic transformation manifests through three interconnected dimensions that collectively reposition the university. First, the exhibition serves as an experiential bridge, reframing the institution’s traditional religious heritage into a narrative of ethically grounded innovation, thereby harmonizing faith with a future-oriented technological identity. This positioning is reinforced by the unique synergy between GLAM and STEM ecosystems, a cross-disciplinary approach that signals intellectual agility and proves the university’s relevance to the digital generation. Finally, grounded in embodied learning and Corporate Image Advertising Theory, the immersive format transcends traditional display to function as a strategic communication tool, effectively translating institutional values into cognitively and emotionally resonant experiences that prioritize active engagement over passive instruction.

Ultimately, this study offers significant practical insights for higher education branding, particularly for religious-affiliated institutions in Indonesia. It validates that modernizing a traditional brand does not require abandoning its roots. Instead, by leveraging immersive

technologies and experiential marketing, institutions can construct a narrative where tradition and future-oriented innovation coexist, thereby strengthening their competitiveness in the digital era.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that ChatGPT and Gemini AI were used in the preparation of this manuscript solely for minor linguistic refinement, including grammar correction, small sentence-level adjustments to improve clarity, and translation. The software was not used to conduct analysis, create substantive content or draw conclusions. The intellectual content, interpretations and conclusions presented in this manuscript are entirely the author's own.

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