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Digital Sports Marketing: Parental Perceptions of Promotional Effectiveness in an Indonesian Grassroots Swimming Club

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Abstract:
Social media offers grassroots sports clubs an accessible promotional channel, but evidence from parent-mediated enrollment remains limited. This study examined parents' perceptions of social media promotion at a sports club in Indonesia. A descriptive survey involved 25 of 30 parents, purposively selected because they had accessed the club's social media. Data were collected through a five-point Likert questionnaire, observation, and documentation; 22 items were retained, and Cronbach's alpha was .833. The mean score was 99.56 (SD = 3.86), with observed scores of 94–110. Ten parents (40%) rated promotion as moderately effective, seven (28%) as low, six (24%) as high, and two (8%) as very high. No respondent rated it very low. Overall, 72% rated promotion moderate or higher, while 28% reported low effectiveness. The results suggest that social media can effectively support club visibility and information dissemination. Nevertheless, parental evaluations were uneven, indicating scope for better communication. The design did not isolate indicator-level scores or establish causal effects on enrollment. Practically, clubs should provide parent-relevant information, post consistently, and respond promptly to inquiries. The study contributes a parent-centered baseline for Indonesian grassroots sport marketing; future multi-club, longitudinal research should examine links with trust and joining intentions.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a channel for sports organizations to communicate with communities, showcase activities, and attract prospective participants. This matters because grassroots clubs help children access physical activity, coaching, competition, and social interaction, yet often operate with limited budgets and personnel. Digital platforms can reduce communication costs and make information about programs, schedules, achievements, and coaches visible to families who influence children's participation. Evidence from sport marketing shows that club content type and vividness are associated with engagement, while social media strategies support relationship building and brand reach (Annamalai et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2022; McCarthy et al., 2022). Research identifies awareness, information sharing, and recruitment as perceived benefits of social media for non-professional clubs (Marthinus et al., 2025). Nevertheless, platform adoption alone does not establish promotional effectiveness. Therefore, examining parents' evaluations is important for assessing whether digital visibility meets the informational and relational needs of grassroots sports communities.

The study conceptualizes promotional effectiveness through marketing communication and social media engagement to clarify each indicator. Club recognition

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is associated with brand awareness: communication can help audiences identify and recall an organization, as shown in studies of sport-club branding (Kurniawan et al., 2024; Najwandari et al., 2025). Information delivery reflects the informational utility of digital communication; sport audiences value relevant, accessible updates (Wang, 2023; Marthinus et al., 2025). Content attractiveness draws on research showing that post format and vividness shape audience responses (Annamalai et al., 2021; Opelík et al., 2024). Trust is grounded in relationship marketing, which links credibility and reliable communication to sustained relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994); recent evidence links engagement and trust to behavioral intention (Achen & Blank, 2024; Alrwashdeh, 2025). Finally, intention to join represents behavioral intention, informed by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and recent evidence on sport-participation decisions.

The practical problem is that grassroots clubs may publish photos, competition records, and announcements without knowing whether these materials answer parents' questions before enrolling a child. For families, joining a swimming club is not simply a reaction to attractive posts: parents may need information about schedules, coaching, program suitability, facilities, safety, fees, and enrollment procedures. They may assess whether communication is responsive and transparent enough to justify trust. The manuscript describes Silimang Rokan Hulu Swimming Club as actively sharing training activities, competition documentation, student achievements, and program information. Yet, it has not characterized the effectiveness of these activities from parents' perspective. Student-number growth alone cannot demonstrate that social media caused enrollment changes, because other factors may shape participation. The central social problem is therefore not the absence of digital promotion, but uncertainty about whether existing promotion progresses beyond visibility and information provision toward parental confidence and an intention to join.

Sport marketing research emphasizes social media use by professional teams and fan audiences. Annamalai et al. (2021), analyzing content from professional cricket clubs, found that content type was associated with responses: photographs generated likes and comments, whereas videos were shared more often. Wang (2023) reported that informational post topics can elicit engagement among audiences following National Football League teams. McCarthy et al. (2022) showed how English football clubs integrate social media into marketing strategies, including efforts to build trust and extend reach. Dias et al. (2022) examined social media marketing outcomes in sports brands, linking engagement to purchase and recommendation intentions. These studies help explain content, communication, and relational outcomes (Ichsan et al., 2022). However, their audiences are supporters, fans, or consumers, and their measures emphasize engagement, branding, or consumption intentions. Such outcomes are not equivalent to parents' judgments about a local club where the decision concerns a child's participation.

Indonesian studies have examined social media as a sports-branding instrument. Kurniawan et al. (2024) analyzed Instagram content in Indonesian football, while Najwandari et al. (2025) described a structured brand-communication strategy at a volleyball club. These studies show how organized content and consistent identity can strengthen visibility, but differ in scale from a community swimming club. Opelík et al. (2024) identified differences in Instagram communication across professional basketball clubs and highlighted the need for purposeful publication planning. Marthinus et al. (2025) addressed non-professional clubs in a multiple-case study of twelve South African rugby clubs, identifying awareness, relationship building, recruitment, storytelling, and

information sharing as benefits. Yet that study focused on club representatives' accounts rather than parents' evaluations of effectiveness. Fadloli and Wahyudi (2025) connected social media marketing with motivation, trust, and participation decisions in running events. Still, event participation differs from an ongoing, parent-mediated enrollment decision in a local youth club.

The state of the art points to a specific contextual and measurement gap, not an absence of research on sports and social media. Studies explain professional content, fan engagement, branding, and event participation; newer work considers non-professional clubs but has not resolved how parents assess promotion for ongoing youth-sport membership. This distinction matters because parents are not merely followers: they interpret information, evaluate credibility, and often authorize enrollment on their children's behalf. This study addresses the gap by assessing five dimensions together: club recognition, information delivery, content attractiveness, trust, and intention to join through exposed parents. It does not claim causation or generalize from one club to all grassroots sports. Instead, it offers a parent-centered descriptive assessment in an Indonesian swimming-club setting and examines the transferability of promotional criteria developed largely in professional, fan-oriented contexts. The results provide a useful baseline, while indicator-level comparisons and causal effects remain questions for further research.

Accordingly, the study addresses two research questions: (1) How do parents perceive the effectiveness of social media promotion at Silimang Rokan Hulu Swimming Club across club recognition, information delivery, content attractiveness, trust, and intention to join? (2) How are these perceptions distributed across effectiveness categories, and what do the results suggest for improving promotional communication? Because the research uses a descriptive survey and does not model causal relationships, it does not formulate causal hypotheses. The argument is that promotion should be evaluated multidimensionally, not by visibility alone: awareness and attractive content may introduce the club. At the same time, useful information and responsive communication are also relevant to trust and membership intention—this guides interpretation, not causal testing. The study contributes by bringing parents into sport social media research and, practically, by identifying priorities that a resource-constrained club can address. Its findings can inform context-sensitive promotion and future explanatory or comparative research.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive survey to characterize parents' perceptions of social media promotional effectiveness at Silimang Rokan Hulu Swimming Club in Indonesia. This design was selected because the objective was to summarize perceptions across indicators, not to test causal relationships or effects. Descriptive surveys suit assessments of attitudes in defined populations when sampling, item wording, and response limitations are reported transparently (Shelley & Horner, 2021; Ahmed, 2024). The questionnaire enabled comparable responses, while observation and documentation contextualized the club's promotional activities. Because the study involved one club and non-probability selection, findings are treated as a context-specific description rather than statistically representative estimates for grassroots sports clubs. Accordingly, the design emphasizes transparency and distinguishes observed scores from explanations of why parents evaluated promotion in particular ways.

Fieldwork was conducted at the swimming pool of Hotel Sapadia in Pasir Pangaraian, Rokan Hulu, Indonesia, on 26-27 May 2026. The site was selected because the club conducted its activities there and parents of enrolled swimmers were accessible. The club was a relevant single-site case because it actively used social media to share training sessions, competition documentation, student achievements, and program information. These characteristics aligned the setting with the study's focus on parents who had encountered promotional content, rather than general social media users. A field setting also made the target population identifiable and allowed data collection within a defined period. Nevertheless, contextual relevance does not eliminate the limitations of single-site research; claims are therefore restricted to this club and its participating parents. This setting supported contextual assessment of promotion.

At data collection, the population comprised all 30 parents of children enrolled at the club. Purposive sampling was used because participation required relevance to the research question and exposure to the promotional channel. Eligible respondents had to (a) accompany their children during club activities, (b) have accessed the club's social media content, and (c) use social media actively in daily communication. Twenty-five parents participated; five were excluded because they did not meet the exposure criterion or declined participation. The sample represented approximately 83.3% of the parent population, providing descriptive coverage of this club's accessible audience but not a probability sample. Criterion-based purposive sampling suits a focused inquiry, although selection effects and limited generalizability must be acknowledged (Ahmed, 2024; Shelley & Horner, 2021). This limitation guided interpretation of the descriptive findings.

Data were collected through a questionnaire, observation, and documentation. The questionnaire contained 25 closed-ended items rated on a five-point Likert scale, covering five dimensions: club recognition, information delivery, content attractiveness, trust, and intention to join. Observation and documentation contextualized questionnaire findings against the club's promotional activity and available records. Clearly defined items and consistent response options support comparability, but ambiguous wording or poorly matched response categories can introduce measurement error (Jebb et al., 2021; Shelley & Horner, 2021). Instrument studies stress clear item construction and evidence of content validity, while Likert responses require transparent scoring and interpretation (Elangovan & Sundaravel, 2021; South et al., 2022; Westland, 2022). These sources were used only to contextualize questionnaire results; no separate qualitative coding or thematic interpretation was formally undertaken.

Validity screening used Pearson product-moment item-total correlations ($r = .361$; $n = 25$; $\alpha = .05$). Items 7, 20, and 24 were removed as invalid, leaving 22 items. Cronbach's alpha was .833. Descriptive analysis summarized frequencies, percentages, minimum and maximum scores, means, and standard deviations. Categories used sample mean and SD boundaries of $M \pm 0.5$ SD and $M \pm 1.5$ SD. Given $n = 25$, alpha was treated as a consistency estimate, not proof of validity (Zakariya, 2022; Xiao et al., 2024; García-García et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 25 parents of students from Silimang Rokan Hulu Swimming Club participated in this study. Respondent characteristics were described based on gender, age, and occupation.

Table 1. Respondents' Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	10	40
Female	15	60
Total	25	100

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

As presented in Table 1, female respondents accounted for the majority of participants, with 15 respondents (60%), while male respondents comprised 10 respondents (40%). This composition mirrors the pattern commonly observed in youth sport settings, where mothers are more often the accompanying and information-managing parent. It matters analytically: the effectiveness judgments captured here largely reflect the perceptions of the household member who most directly consumes the club's information and mediates enrollment considerations, so the findings speak to the club's primary informational audience.

Table 2. Respondents' Characteristics by Age

Age Group (years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
20-30	8	32
31-40	8	32
41-50	9	36
Total	25	100

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

Table 2 shows that respondents aged 41-50 years constituted the largest age group, comprising 9 respondents (36%). Meanwhile, respondents aged 20-30 years and 31-40 years each accounted for 8 respondents (32%). This spread is relevant to promotion because platform repertoires and content preferences differ across parental age cohorts; the absence of a dominant age segment means the club's content must communicate across varied digital habits rather than toward a single generational profile.

Table 3. Respondents' Characteristics by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Civil servant	8	32
Farmer	5	20
Entrepreneur	3	12
Housewife	7	28
Others	2	8
Total	25	100

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

As shown in Table 3, civil servants represented the largest occupational group, with 8 respondents (32%), followed by housewives with 7 respondents (28%), farmers with 5 respondents (20%), entrepreneurs with 3 respondents (12%), and other occupations with 2 respondents (8%). This heterogeneity implies unequal windows of engagement with social media: parents in time-flexible occupations may browse content throughout the day, whereas those with field- or business-bound schedules may engage episodically. Occupational diversity therefore offers a plausible backdrop for the within-sample variance in effectiveness ratings examined later in this section.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire initially consisted of 25 items. Validity testing was conducted using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation with an *r*-table value of 0.361.

Table 4. Validity Test Results

Item	r-count	r-table	Result
1	0.450	0.361	Valid
2	0.411	0.361	Valid
3	0.371	0.361	Valid
4	0.385	0.361	Valid
5	0.603	0.361	Valid
6	0.413	0.361	Valid
7	0.329	0.361	Invalid
8	0.498	0.361	Valid
9	0.568	0.361	Valid
10	0.486	0.361	Valid
11	0.448	0.361	Valid
12	0.438	0.361	Valid
13	0.519	0.361	Valid
14	0.550	0.361	Valid
15	0.430	0.361	Valid
16	0.514	0.361	Valid
17	0.501	0.361	Valid
18	0.462	0.361	Valid
19	0.445	0.361	Valid
20	0.263	0.361	Invalid
21	0.530	0.361	Valid
22	0.615	0.361	Valid
23	0.448	0.361	Valid
24	0.220	0.361	Invalid
25	0.374	0.361	Valid

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

The validity test demonstrated that 22 of the 25 questionnaire items were valid, as their r-count values exceeded the r-table value of 0.361. Items 7, 20, and 24 were classified as invalid because their r-count values were 0.329, 0.263, and 0.220, respectively. The three invalid items were excluded, leaving 22 valid items for subsequent analysis. Because the r-count in this procedure represents each item's correlation with the total scale score, the three exclusions indicate that these items shared insufficient common variance with the overall construct, most plausibly because their wording was ambiguous or overlapped semantically with better-performing items addressing the same dimension. Each indicator retained at least four of its five items, so conceptual coverage of all five promotional-effectiveness dimensions was preserved; the main analytical consequence is that the composite score became slightly more strongly weighted toward the better-discriminating items.

Table 5. Reliability Test Results

Reliability Statistic	Value
Number of items	22
Sum of item variances	12.02759
Total variance	60.13333
Cronbach's Alpha	0.833
Interpretation	Reliable

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

The reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.833 for the 22-item composite, which exceeds the contemporary 0.70 benchmark (Taber, 2018) and indicates good internal consistency for measuring the effectiveness of social media promotion. Because the validity procedure reported in Table 4 is an item-total correlation analysis, Table 4 simultaneously provides the scale's item-total statistics: every retained item correlated with the total score above the 0.361 criterion, with coefficients ranging from 0.371 to 0.615. Reliability was assessed at the composite level because the five indicators were designed as complementary facets of a single construct rather than as independent subscales. We nevertheless acknowledge that reporting dimension-level reliabilities would further strengthen the psychometric transparency of the instrument, and we return to this point in the research agenda.

Descriptive Results of Social Media Promotion Effectiveness

The effectiveness of social media promotion was assessed using the questionnaire responses from 25 respondents. The analysis included the minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Social Media Promotion Effectiveness

Statistic	Value
N	25
Minimum	94
Maximum	110
Mean	99.56
Standard deviation	3.86

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

Table 6 shows that the respondents' scores ranged from 94 to 110, with a mean of 99.56 and a standard deviation of 3.86. The mean score indicates that respondents generally perceived social media promotion by Silimang Rokan Hulu Swimming Club positively.

Although the composite analysis treats the five indicators jointly, the item-level evidence in Table 4 permits an indirect, dimension-level reading. All five items measuring club recognition (item-total correlations of .371-.603) and all five measuring content attractiveness (.430-.550) survived validity screening without loss, whereas the information-delivery, trust, and intention-to-join blocks each lost one item (r = .329, .263, and .220, respectively). This pattern suggests that recognition- and attractiveness-related perceptions were the most coherent among parents, while perceptions along the relational and behavioral dimensions trust and intention to join were more heterogeneous. This interpretation is consistent with the moderate overall classification and with the presence of a sizeable low-rating minority reported below. A formal disaggregation of descriptive means by indicator was beyond the analytical scope of the present dataset; the constraint is acknowledged in the limitations and addressed in the recommended research agenda.

To facilitate interpretation, the effectiveness scores were subsequently classified into five categories based on the mean and standard deviation, following the criterion described in the Research Methods (boundaries at M ± 0.5 SD and M ± 1.5 SD).

Table 7. Distribution of Social Media Promotion Effectiveness Categories

Category	Score Interval	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very low	< 93.77	0	0

Low	93.77-97.63	7	28
Moderate	97.63-101.49	10	40
High	101.49-105.35	6	24
Very high	> 105.35	2	8
Total		25	100

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

Table 7 indicates that the largest proportion of respondents was classified in the moderate category, comprising 10 respondents (40%). This was followed by the low category with 7 respondents (28%), the high category with 6 respondents (24%), and the very high category with 2 respondents (8%). No respondents were classified in the very low category. This distribution warrants closer inspection: nearly a third of parents clustered in the low band, a level of within-sample divergence that aggregate reporting alone would conceal.

When the moderate, high, and very high categories are combined, 18 respondents (72%) provided a positive assessment of the effectiveness of social media promotion. However, 7 respondents (28%) remained in the low category, indicating that the promotional strategy has not yet reached an optimal level of effectiveness. This within-sample divergence deserves as much analytical attention as the central tendency. The demographic profile reported in Tables 1-3 offers plausible, though formally untested, explanations: the sample's occupational heterogeneity implies unequal windows of exposure to social media content, while the predominance of mothers suggests that judgments of effectiveness are anchored in informational gatekeeping whether posts deliver the concrete, operational information such as schedules, programs, and enrollment procedures that the accompanying parent needs. Because the descriptive design did not include subgroup comparisons, these interpretations remain indicative; cross-tabulating effectiveness categories against demographic characteristics is identified as a priority for future analysis.

Discussion

The findings indicate that social media promotion at Swimming Club was perceived as moderately effective (M = 99.56, SD = 3.86). Ten parents (40%) fell in the moderate category, seven (28%) in the low category, six (24%) in the high category, and two (8%) in the very high category; none rated overall effectiveness very low. Although 72% were classified as moderate or higher, the 28% low-rating group signals uneven audience experience. This pattern accords with sport-marketing research describing social media as a means of increasing visibility and distributing information (Dias et al., 2022; McCarthy et al., 2022; Ichsan et al., 2022). However, previous evidence often concerns fans of professional teams, whose engagement differs from parents evaluating a club for their children. The results therefore extend discussion toward grassroots promotion without implying that social media caused enrollment growth.

The findings should be interpreted alongside research on content design and audience response. Annamalai et al. (2021) showed that sport-club content type and vividness were associated with different engagement behaviors, while Wang (2023) found that informational topics in NFL Instagram posts could elicit engagement. Research on professional basketball recommends purposeful Instagram communication (Opelík et al., 2024), and Indonesian football research illustrates Instagram content's role in sustaining club communication (Kurniawan et al., 2024). These studies support the relevance of content quality and information delivery, but the survey reports a composite

score rather than separate means for its five indicators. Consequently, it cannot establish that recognition or attractive content performed better than trust or intention to join. This distinction matters: the moderate classification describes overall parental perceptions, while indicator-level strengths require additional descriptive statistics and should not be inferred from item-validity results.

Trust and intention to join matter when social media addresses parents making decisions about children's sports participation. In sport, Fadloli and Wahyudi (2025) found that trust and motivation were associated with participation decisions in running events, while Alrwashdeh (2025) reported relationships among social media marketing, brand trust, engagement, and purchase intention in e-commerce. Achen and Blank (2024) likewise linked social-media brand engagement with relationship quality and intentions in professional sport. These findings support the view that digital promotion involves more than exposure; relational judgments matter. Nevertheless, the Silimang study was descriptive and did not test mediation, prediction, or causal effects. Its contribution is to show how parents rated promotional effectiveness in a grassroots setting, while providing a rationale for future studies to test whether credibility, interaction, and informational usefulness relate to trust and membership intention within this parent-mediated grassroots setting.

Theoretically, the study broadens the context in which sport social-media promotion is assessed by shifting attention from fan engagement and commercial branding toward parent-centered evaluation of a grassroots club. Marthinus et al. (2025) highlighted awareness, relationship building, recruitment, storytelling, and information sharing among non-professional rugby clubs, although their analysis focused on club representatives rather than parents. Research on Jakarta Pertamina Energi illustrates social media use for sport-brand communication (Najwandari et al., 2025), while Hariawati and Loisa (2024) describe Instagram's role in developing a local basketball club's brand image. These studies support social media's relevance but reveal audience and outcome emphases. Practically, the moderate rating and low-category minority justify reviewing whether posts answer parental questions about schedules, coaching, programs, fees, facilities, and enrollment. A content calendar, timely replies, parent testimonials, and calls to action may make communication more useful and responsive.

The study's novelty lies in applying a five-dimension assessment club recognition, information delivery, content attractiveness, trust, and intention to join to parents exposed to social media promotion at an Indonesian grassroots swimming club. This provides a contribution to a field shaped largely by professional sport and fan engagement. Rai et al. (2025), reviewing 203 studies, identified limited theoretical integration and gaps in cross-cultural coverage, including Asia and Africa; the Indonesian case responds to that contextual gap. Its practical impact is not proof that promotion increases membership, but a baseline for improving parent-facing communication and planning informative content. Interpretation remains bounded by the single-site design, 25 respondents, purposive sampling, and composite analysis. Future research should report indicator-level means and reliability, compare clubs and platforms, interview parents with low ratings, and link longitudinal engagement records with inquiries and enrollment to examine mechanisms more rigorously.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media promotion at Swimming Club was perceived as moderately effective, with a mean score of 99.56 (SD = 3.86); 40% of parents

reported moderate effectiveness, 28% low effectiveness, 24% high effectiveness, and 8% very high effectiveness. The most important lesson is that digital visibility and information dissemination alone may not be sufficient to establish parental trust and encourage membership intentions; promotional communication must also address parents' informational needs and support credible, responsive relationships. Theoretically, this study contributes to sports marketing literature by extending the assessment of social media promotional effectiveness to a grassroots swimming club in Indonesia, where parents constitute a decision-relevant audience rather than conventional sports fans. Practically, the findings suggest that clubs should provide relevant information about training programs, schedules, coaching, facilities, and enrollment procedures, while maintaining consistent content and interactive communication. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its descriptive design, single-club setting, purposive sample of 25 parents, and lack of separate descriptive statistics for each indicator; therefore, its findings cannot establish causal relationships or be generalized broadly. Future research should examine multiple grassroots sports clubs, analyze each promotional dimension separately, incorporate qualitative interviews with parents, and employ longitudinal or explanatory designs to investigate how content quality, communication responsiveness, and trust relate to membership intentions.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript. The authors conducted all aspects of the study independently and objectively.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

AI-assisted technology was used solely to support language refinement, grammar checking, and improvement of manuscript readability. The authors reviewed and verified all AI-assisted outputs and take full responsibility for the manuscript's accuracy, originality, and integrity.

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