

THE ROLE OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION SERVICES

Andry Arifianto¹, Muhammad Siddiq Purnomo²

1,2 Universitas KH Mukhtar Syafaat Blokagung Banyuwangi, Indonesia

Email: Andryarif81@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to analyze the role of marketing management in strengthening the development of Islamic education services, focusing on marketing strategies that integrate Islamic values as a competitive advantage. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the role of marketing management in the development of Islamic education. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation and documentation, involving the principal, marketing team, teachers, parents and students. Data analysis used an interactive approach that included collection, reduction, presentation of data, and iterative conclusion drawing. This research explores Islamic value-based marketing strategies, challenges, and community responses to understand the dynamics of Islamic education marketing holistically. The results showed that the marketing strategy of NU Al Islami Junior High School succeeded in increasing community involvement, building a positive image, and strengthening the attractiveness of the school. The utilization of social media such as Instagram and Facebook effectively introduce the school, highlights student achievements, and builds interactive communication. This success is supported by a consistent Islamic value-based digita strategy. Promotional activities such as open houses and educational seminars strengthen the community's trust and emotional bond with the school. In addition, the application of digital technology such as school apps, webinars and video streaming facilitate access to information and creates closer relationships with parents and prospective students. This integration of Islamic values with modern approaches results in a sustainable competitive advantage in building a progressive image and being responsive to the needs of the digital era.

Keywords: Marketing management, Islamic education services, marketing strategy, digitalization institutional competitiveness.

*Corresponding Author: <u>Andryarif81@gmail.com</u>

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing management has an important role in the development of Islamic education services at NU Al-Islami Junior High School, because this school not only focuses on academic quality, but also on strengthening Islamic character and values (Rahman & Amin, 2024). In this context, marketing management serves to introduce, promote, and disseminate the educational values that exist in the school to the wider community, especially prospective students and parents. Through appropriate marketing strategies, such as the use of social media, open houses, and other promotional activities, NU Al Islami Junior High School can attract people to choose this school as a place for their children's education. In addition, marketing management also plays a role in improving the school's image and reputation in the eyes of the public (Bendriyanti et al., 2022).

Relationship management with parents, alumni, and the surrounding community is very important in creating trust and loyalty to the school (Sholikah et al., 2021). By understanding the needs and expectations of the community, marketing management can create more relevant and quality services, in accordance with the demands of the times and the development of Islamic education. Effective marketing also allows schools to compete with other educational institutions, both Islamic and general based (Safitri, 2024). As an Islamic educational institution, NU Al Islami Junior High School must emphasize the excellence of the spiritual values taught, such as discipline, noble character, and deep religious understanding (Musolin et al., 2024; Prabowo & Hafid, 2024). Therefore, the marketing strategy carried out is not just selling educational products, but also prioritizing Islamic principles in every aspect of the services provided (Tolchah & Mu'ammar, 2019; Prabowo & Khaudli, 2024).

Several previous studies have discussed the role of marketing management in the development of Islamic education services, including in pesantren-based schools and other Islamic education institutions. Research conducted by Islam & Idris, (2022) highlights how education marketing strategies can strengthen the competitiveness of Islamic schools in Indonesia. Islam & Idris state that effective marketing is not just about attracting prospective students, but also about building long-term relationships with parents and alumni. This is related to the importance of good communication in education marketing management, which can increase customer (parents) trust and satisfaction with the school. Another study by Fatmawati, (2023) examines the application of marketing in Islamic educational institutions, particularly in improving service quality and introducing the school's vision and mission to the community. Fatmawati found that Islamic schools that are successful in their marketing tend to utilize social media and information technology as a tool to get closer to prospective students and parents.

The novelty of this research lies in its more specific focus on the role of marketing management in the context of Islamic education-based junior high schools, especially at NU Al Islami Junior High School. Most previous studies have highlighted educational marketing in general, while this research delves deeper into marketing strategies that are in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings and culture that exist in the Nahdlatul Ulama environment. This research also offers a new approach by utilizing the concept of value-based marketing, which integrates religious principles in every aspect of marketing

NU Al Islami Junior High School could potentially utilize digital platforms to reach a wider audience, including younger and tech-savvy parents (Minarti et al., 2023). The use of social media to build more personalized and interactive relationships with prospective students and parents is an approach that has not been widely explored in Islamic-based schools, especially those under NU (Shaikh & Alam Kazmi, 2022). In addition, this study examines the influence of marketing management on the quality of education services provided, with a focus on strengthening Islamic moral and character values integrated in the school curriculum and activities. This is important to ensure that the marketing strategy is not only oriented towards academic aspects, but also on the formation of student character in accordance with the principles of Islamic teachings (Budianto & Dewi, 2024; Algifari, 2024). With this approach, this research is not only relevant in the development of Islamic schools, but also provides a new contribution in the world of Islamic education that is more inclusive and connected to the times.

The main objective of this research is to analyze the role of marketing management in strengthening the development of Islamic education services at NU Al Islami Junior High School, focusing on marketing strategies that integrate Islamic values as a competitive advantage. This is important considering that Islamic education, especially in NU-based schools, has distinctive characteristics that need to be managed effectively to differentiate itself from other educational institutions. In this context, marketing management not only serves to attract new students, but also to introduce and strengthen the school's identity based on moderate, inclusive, and character-based Islamic teachings. Through this research, it is hoped that marketing strategies can be found that are not only effective in bringing in new students, but also contribute to the development of quality educational services that prioritize noble morals and religious teaching in accordance with universal Islamic principles.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply understand the role of marketing management in the development of Islamic

education services at NU Al Islami Junior High School. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to explore the perceptions, experiences and understanding of the relevant parties (school managers, teachers, parents and students) towards the implementation of marketing strategies based on Islamic values. This approach allows researchers to obtain more holistic and in-depth data about the dynamics of Islamic education marketing (<u>Dewi, 2019</u>; <u>Fitrah, 2018</u>) .

The research subjects consisted of the principal, marketing management team, teachers, parents, and some students who were directly involved in the marketing and admission process. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of marketing activities conducted by the school. The interviews will focus on the marketing strategies applied, the challenges faced, and the responses from the community regarding the uniqueness of Islamic-based schools in marketing educational services (Sari et al., 2022; Prabowo & Aimah, 2024).

Data analysis used an interactive analysis approach, which involves a simultaneous process of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In this approach, the data collected is continuously reduced to find patterns or significant relationships. Furthermore, simplified data is presented in visual or narrative form to facilitate interpretation. Conclusion drawing is done iteratively, by connecting field data to educational marketing theory and the concept of Islamic education management, so as to produce a comprehensive and applicable understanding of the role of marketing in the development of Islamic education at NU Al Islami Junior High School (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021) .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Optimal Social Media Utilization

One of the main findings is the effective utilization of social media such as Instagram and Facebook to promote NU Al Islami Junior High School. Social media has become one of the most effective marketing tools in this digital era, and education is no exception. NU Al Islami Junior High School utilizes platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to introduce the school, disseminate information about various school activities, and highlight student achievements. Social media makes it easy for parents and prospective students to access school-related information without time and place restrictions. This is particularly important given that most parents now rely more on social media to find information about the educational institutions they are considering for their children. Through social media, schools can build a closer and more interactive relationship with the community, which also supports the creation of a positive image that can strengthen the attractiveness of the school. To dig deeper into the effectiveness of using social media in marketing, the researcher conducted an interview with Informant A, the head of the marketing department of NU Al Islami

Junior High School. In his interview, Informant A explained how social media has influenced the school's image and increased parental and community involvement.

"We have long used social media as a key tool to promote NU Al Islami Junior High School. Instagram and Facebook, for example, allow us to showcase teaching and learning activities, student achievements and various excellent programs at the school. We not only post pictures and videos, but also spread content that highlights the Islamic values that we instill in the school. These social media provide easy access for parents who may be busy with their work, so they can still monitor the progress of the school and their children without having to come directly to the school."

Based on these interviews, it can be concluded that social media plays a very important role in education marketing at NU Al Islami Junior High School. By utilizing existing platforms, the school not only succeeds in attracting the attention of prospective students, but also increases parental engagement, strengthens the positive image of the school, and builds a closer relationship with the community.

2. Promotional Activities that Increase Community Engagement

One aspect that is the focus of educational marketing at NU Al Islami Junior High School is promotional activities that directly involve the community, especially prospective students and parents. Activities such as open houses, educational seminars, and various community events are not only a place to introduce the school, but also to build closer relationships with the community. In the world of education marketing, community involvement is very important, because it creates a sense of trust and gets to know more about the vision, mission and quality of education offered. By holding events such as open houses, prospective parents can directly see the school facilities, interact with teachers, and explore the educational values upheld at the school. This activity has proven to be effective in creating opportunities for schools to demonstrate their commitment to educating the younger generation in accordance with the principles of moderate Islamic education and character.

To obtain further information about this promotional strategy, the researcher conducted an interview with Informant S, the coordinator of promotional activities at NU Al Islami Junior High School. In the interview, Informant S provided in-depth insight into the impact of promotional activities on increasing community involvement.

"We see that our promotional activities, such as open houses and seminars, are very effective in attracting public attention. We not only invite prospective students and parents, but also the surrounding community who want to know more about our education system. Open houses, for example, provide an opportunity for parents to see first-hand how our school manages learning that integrates Islamic values in daily life. In addition, the educational seminars we hold provide an understanding of the importance of character-based education that we implement at NU Al Islami Junior High School."

The results of these interviews show that promotional activities that directly involve the community, such as open houses and seminars, play an important role in building a closer relationship between NU Al Islami Junior High School and the community.

Through these activities, the community can better recognize and understand the quality of education offered by the school and strengthen parents' trust in the school. This active involvement also creates a stronger emotional bond between the school and the community, which ultimately results in an increase in the number of new applicants and parental loyalty.

3. More Interactive Implementation of Digital Marketing

In recent years, education marketing has evolved rapidly with the utilization of more interactive digital technology. SMP NU Al Islami has adopted this trend by integrating various digital platforms to facilitate direct communication and real-time interaction between the school and parents and prospective students. The application of these technologies, such as the school's mobile app, webinars and video streaming, allows the school to host live information sessions, answer parents' questions and provide a deeper understanding of the school's curriculum and activities. In this way, parents who may be busy or far away from the school can stay abreast of important information about the school's progress without having to be physically present. In addition, the use of digital platforms provides an opportunity for prospective students to see first-hand how the school manages learning and extracurricular activities, as well as how the school integrates Islamic values in daily life.

To confirm the application of this technology, the researcher conducted an interview with Informant F, the digital marketing coordinator at NU Al Islami Junior High School. In the interview, Informant F explained in detail how the school utilizes digital technology to introduce educational services in a more interactive manner.

"We are well aware of the importance of adapting to technological developments. Therefore, we started utilizing the school's mobile app and other digital platforms such as webinars and video streaming to introduce the school to the community. With the mobile app, parents can easily access information related to school activities, announcements and activity schedules in real-time. In addition, webinars and video streaming allow us to hold live information sessions, which makes it easier for parents to interact with the school, ask questions about the curriculum or the excellent programs we offer, and get immediate answers without having to come to the school."

From these interviews, it can be concluded that the implementation of more interactive digital marketing at NU Al Islami Junior High School has had a positive impact. By using technology that allows direct and real-time interaction, the school can increase the involvement of parents and the community in activities and information related to education. This not only facilitates communication, but also strengthens the relationship between the school and parents, as well as building a modern and technology-adaptive image of the school.

Discussion

1. Optimal Social Media Utilization

The findings show that the utilization of social media by NU Al Islami Junior High School, especially through Instagram and Facebook platforms, has been an effective marketing strategy in building a positive image, attracting prospective students, and increasing parental involvement. In the context of education marketing, this success can be interpreted as the application of digital marketing communication principles, where social media not only serves as an information channel, but also as an interaction tool that supports a two-way relationship between the school and the community. This strategy is in line with marketing communication theory that emphasizes the importance of message consistency, emotional appeal and interactivity to build trust and engagement.

In comparison, previous research by <u>Ebrahim</u>, (2020) shows that social media is effective in creating dialog and building brand trust, including in the education sector. In the context of Islamic education, studies by <u>Ozukum</u>, (2021) also emphasize that the use of social media that accentuates religious values can be an important tool to attract the attention of communities that share similar values. The findings confirm that the success of NU Al Islami Junior High School is not only based on informative content, but also on the school's ability to align content with Islamic values, which is a differentiator in the education marketing competition.

The use of social media by NU Al Islami Junior High School demonstrates the effectiveness of the strategy of "engagement marketing," where active engagement of the audience through comments, direct messages, and other interactions is able to strengthen emotional connections and loyalty to the school. As such, this strategy reflects the social capital theory of <u>Keller et al., (2020)</u>, which emphasizes the importance of social networks in building trust and collective cooperation. By continuing to utilize these platforms innovatively, the school can optimize its appeal and expand its impact within the community.

2. Promotional Activities that Increase Community Engagement

Promotional activities such as open houses, educational seminars, and community events at NU Al Islami Junior High School have proven to be effective strategies in increasing community involvement. These promotions not only introduce the school physically, but also serve as a means of direct interaction that builds community trust in the school's vision and mission. Open houses, for example, provide an opportunity for parents to evaluate the facilities, communicate with teachers, and understand the Islamic values-based learning system implemented at the school. Education seminars also broaden parents' horizons about the importance of character-based education, emphasizing the school's role in educating the younger generation holistically.

This strategy is in line with the theory of consumer engagement in marketing, where direct experience and personal interaction create emotional bonds that strengthen loyalty and trust. According to Maulana, (2024), promotions that actively engage

audiences are more effective in building long-term relationships than just passive information delivery. This is also supported by the views of Rivaldy et al., (2024), which states that community involvement in Islamic-based education strengthens social relationships and trust in these educational institutions. Through these promotional activities, NU Al Islami Junior High School succeeded in increasing the community's understanding of the school's excellence while broadening its appeal, which had a positive impact on the number of new applicants and parental loyalty.

3. More Interactive Implementation of Digital Marketing

The implementation of interactive digital marketing at NU Al Islami Junior High School demonstrates the school's adaptation to technological developments in facilitating communication and interaction with parents and prospective students. By utilizing the school's mobile application, webinars, and video streaming, the school creates a more efficient and accessible information channel in real-time. This allows parents, especially those with time or distance constraints, to stay connected with the latest information on school activities, announcements, and educational programs. Webinars and video streaming sessions are an effective medium to explain the school's curriculum and flagship activities in person, providing an opportunity for parents to ask questions and get immediate feedback without having to be physically present. This strategy reflects digital marketing communication theory that emphasizes the importance of interactivity and accessibility to build stronger relationships with audiences. As a comparison, a study by Ramadiansyah & Pradhana, (2024) shows that the use of digital platforms that enable real-time interaction increases audience to trust and engagement in a variety of contexts, including education. In the case of SMP NU Al Islami, this approach not only strengthens relationships with the community, but also builds the school's image as a modern institution that is responsive to the needs of parents and students. This creates important added value in the education marketing competition, while ensuring the school remains relevant and adaptive in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from the results and discussion shows that the marketing strategy implemented by NU Al Islami Junior High School has succeeded in increasing community involvement, building a positive image, and strengthening the school's appeal. The utilization of social media such as Instagram and Facebook have been an effective tool to introduce the school, highlight student achievements, and build interactive relationships with the community. This success is supported by a consistent, relevant and Islamic values-based digital communication strategy, which becomes the school's competitive advantage. In addition, promotional activities such as open houses and educational seminars provide opportunities for the community to interact directly with the school, creating trust and strengthening the emotional bond between the school and the community. This shows the importance of an approach that actively engages the audience to build loyalty and trust.

The adoption of digital marketing technologies such as school mobile apps, webinars and video streaming reflects the school's ability to adapt to the digital age. These technologies not only facilitate access to information, but also create interactive communication channels that strengthen relationships with parents and prospective students. The overall strategy indicates that NU Al Islami Junior High School can integrate traditional Islamic values with modern marketing approaches, resulting in a sustainable competitive advantage in the context of value-based education. This strategy also contributes significantly to the establishment of a school image that is progressive, inclusive and responsive to the needs of society in the digital era.

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