Value-Based Branding in Islamic Boarding Schools: Efforts to Maintain Identity in Digitalization Dynamics

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the value-based branding strategy in Islamic boarding schools as an effort to maintain traditional identity amidst the rapid flow of digitalization and globalization. Although many other educational institutions have implemented digital branding, its application in the context of Islamic boarding schools is still limited. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing case studies of two Islamic boarding schools to explore how these institutions integrate traditional Islamic values into their branding strategies through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The results of the study indicate that Islamic boarding schools have successfully combined values such as sincerity, simplicity, and social benefits in their branding to maintain relevance in the modern era, thereby strengthening character through a balance with digitalization. The findings emphasize the importance of value-based branding strategies as a research contribution in strengthening the position of Islamic boarding schools as moral and spiritual educational institutions. The study's implications suggest that implementing strategies not only enhances the competitiveness of Islamic boarding schools but also strengthens their relationships with local and global communities, thereby supporting the continuity of Islamic boarding school education in the digital era.

Keywords: *Value-Based Branding, Islamic Boarding School Identity, Digitalization*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang strategi branding berbasis nilai dalam pesantren sebagai upaya untuk mempertahankan identitas tradisional di tengah derasnya arus digitalisasi dan globalisasi. Meskipun banyak institusi pendidikan lain telah menerapkan branding digital, penerapannya dalam konteks pesantren masih terbatas. Studi menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan studi kasus pada dua pesantren dengan mengeksplorasi cara pesantren mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam tradisional dalam strategi branding melalui metode wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pesantren berhasil menggabungkan nilai-nilai seperti keikhlasan, kesederhanaan, dan kebermanfaatan sosial dalam branding mereka dapat mempertahankan relevansi di era modern sebagai bentuk penguatan karakter dengan mengimbangi digitalisasi. Temuan mempertegas pentingnya strategi

branding berbasis nilai sebagai kontribusi penelitian dalam memperkuat posisi pesantren sebagai lembaga pendidikan moral dan spiritual. Implikasi dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan strategi tidak hanya meningkatkan daya saing pesantren, tetapi juga mempererat hubungan mereka dengan masyarakat lokal dan global, serta mendukung kelangsungan pendidikan pesantren di era digital.

Kata Kunci: *Branding Berbasis Nilai, Identitas Pesantren, Digitalisasi*

INTRODUCTION

Value-based branding, especially in the context of Islamic boarding schools, has a crucial role in maintaining the identity and existence of institutions amid the rapid development of digitalization and globalization (Herzog et al., 2020; Menne et al., 2023; Surya et al., 2020). In this case, branding is carried out not only through digital media but also by prioritizing the typical characteristics of pesantren to maintain the institution's identity (Muhajir, 2022; Qizam et al., 2024; Salmaoui et al., 2025). The gap in theory in this study lies in the lack of discussion on applying value-based branding in Islamic boarding schools amid digitalization. Most previous research has focused on the general aspects of technology or marketing without paying attention to the distinctive values of pesantren (Ding & Hong, 2025; Harsanto et al., 2022; Junaedi et al., 2023). This gap has arisen in tandem with the rapid modernization of Islamic boarding schools, particularly in Indonesia, which is the hub of Islamic boarding school development. As traditional Islamic educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools remain under-researched regarding the value-based branding strategies they employ to maintain their identity in the digital era.

Therefore, value-based branding is an essential solution to maintain the identity of the *pesantren* while adapting to the current digital era. *Pesantren* that combine value-based branding with digitalization, for example, through an approach that emphasizes the value of simplicity and science, can increase community engagement and strengthen the image of pesantren (Saeed Mohammed & Mansor, 2021; Shaikh & Alam Kazmi, 2022; Sultana et al., 2025). Hidayatullah et al. (2023) and Jamilah (2021). Their research revealed that Islamic boarding schools that integrate local values in digital communication will tend to be more trusted by the wider community. Initiatives like this are not only about marketing strategies, but also a tangible proof of the *pesantren's* commitment to staying relevant while maintaining its traditional roots (Mundiri et al., 2021). By placing values at the core of their image, pesantren can strengthen their identity, increase their attractiveness in the eyes of modern society, and address the challenges of changing times.

The importance of digital branding for value-based educational institutions that adapt to digitalization lies in harmonizing it with their traditional identities to increase competitiveness and maintain public trust (Alqarni et al., 2023; Hokmabadi et al., 2024; Hosseini & Rajabipoor Meybodi, 2023). Furthermore, Wahyuni et al. (2021) and Mundiri & Manshur (2020) revealed that the public trusts institutions that highlight the values of transparency, integrity, and local

traditions in their branding strategies. They also provide linkages for Islamic boarding schools to create strong relationships with the community. Several other research explains the importance of maintaining a balance between digital innovation and the values or traditions that exist in Islamic boarding schools, and reveals the risk of identity decline for institutions that fail to integrate core values into digital media (Achruh & Sukirman, 2024; Rohmatulloh et al., 2023; Said & Sharif, 2023).

Previous studies have focused on digital branding as the primary strategy without delving deeper into the integration of *pesantren's* distinctive values with digital technology. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how pesantren can integrate value-based branding with digital strategies to preserve their identity. This offers an important contribution not only to the institutional branding literature but also as a practical guide for pesantren in facing the challenges of digitalization, and has the potential to provide new insights for other faith-based educational institutions, both in Indonesia and globally.

The novelty of this study lies in its innovative approach, which integrates the concept of value-based branding into the context of pesantren—a context rarely explored—to address the challenges of digitalization while maintaining its unique identity. This approach offers a new perspective on identity as something dynamic, enabling *pesantren* values , such as sincerity and simplicity, to be translated into a brand identity that is relevant in today's digital era. By developing a hybrid model that combines tradition and technology, this study explores the use of social media, websites, and applications as branding tools without diluting the essence of religious values. Thus, this study aims to explore how to implement value-based branding strategies at Walisongo Islamic Boarding School and Sukorejo Islamic Boarding School as a means of maintaining traditional identity amidst the rapid flow of digitalization and globalization.

Therefore, this study contributes to the field by introducing a new understanding of how to implement value-based branding in Islamic boarding schools. This topic has been rarely discussed in previous studies. This study examines how Islamic boarding schools utilize traditional values to maintain their identity amid rapid digitalization and globalization, and proposes a branding model that prioritizes the unique characteristics of these institutions. The findings can later provide practical direction for Islamic boarding schools and other value-based institutions to remain relevant in the modern era. The urgency of this study lies in the increasing threat of cultural homogenization due to digitalization, which can weaken the strength of local values if not balanced with the right strategy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. It was chosen because it allows an in-depth analysis of value-based branding practices applied in Islamic boarding schools (Ghanad, 2023; Priya, 2021; Renjith et al., 2021). This case study examines two Islamic boarding schools with different characteristics: the Walisongo Islamic Boarding School, which emphasizes traditional values, and the Sukorejo Islamic Boarding School, which focuses more on digital innovation in its branding. This design is relevant because it can explore

a deeper contextual understanding of how each *pesantren* maintains its identity amid the digital era. This type of research enables researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of value-based branding in strengthening the identity of *pesantren*, which remains relevant in changing times. The qualitative approach provides space to explore the phenomenon holistically, given that value-based branding involves religious values and traditions that cannot be generalized.

The data collection methods used in this study included in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis (Azad et al., 2021; Lai et al., 2021; Luisi & Hämel, 2021). Interviews were conducted with *pesantren* administrators, teachers, students, alums, and the surrounding community to gather their views on how value-based branding is applied and perceived. Participatory observation helps researchers directly observe interactions and activities related to *pesantren* branding. In addition, document analysis such as brochures, promotional materials, and *pesantren* policies is used to enrich the data. The research was conducted at the Walisongo Islamic Boarding School and the Sukorejo Islamic Boarding School for four months. Data credibility checks are carried out using data triangulation, where data from interviews, observations, and documents are cross-checked to ensure the consistency of the information collected. The informants used in this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informant

No	Code	Specifications
1	I_KW_2024	The Islamic Boarding School Administrator provided insight into the teaching and implementation of policies in the Islamic Boarding School.
2	I_PP_2024	The caretaker of the Islamic Boarding School explained the implementation of value-based branding in the Islamic boarding school.
3	I_S_2024	Santri provides perspectives on learning experiences and interactions with teachers in the context of value-based branding.
4	I_KPK_2024	The Entrepreneurship Program Coordinator gave his views on Islamic entrepreneurship programs in Islamic boarding schools.
5	I_Ustadz_2024	Ustadz explained the yellow book-based training and the application of the book's wisdom in students' lives.
6	I_KTI_2024	The Information Technology Coordinator gave his views on using digital media for da'wah in Islamic boarding schools.
7	I_PEMD_2024	The Digital Media Extracurricular Administrator provides insight into students' involvement in managing digital content by Islamic values.

The data analysis technique employed in this study is thematic analysis, as described by Miles and Huberman (Ghartemani et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2023; Price & Smith, 2021). This technique involves three stages: data condensation, data display, and data verification. Data condensation filters relevant information from interviews, observations, and documents to find important patterns related to value-based branding strategies. Data displays present data in the form of narratives or matrices, making it easier to understand patterns and relationships between data. Verification employs data triangulation to verify the consistency of information obtained from multiple sources. These measures ensure that the data analyzed is credible and can provide a deeper and more detailed understanding of how value-based branding is implemented in Islamic boarding schools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

This study examines the application of value-based branding in Islamic boarding schools as a means to maintain traditional identities amid digitalization and globalization. Using qualitative methods and case studies, this research involves interviews with administrators, teachers, and students to identify branding strategies, such as strengthening the character of students, value-based education, the use of digital media, and collaboration with local communities, as well as analyzing the integration of Islamic values in *pesantren* branding that is relevant to the times (see Figure 1).
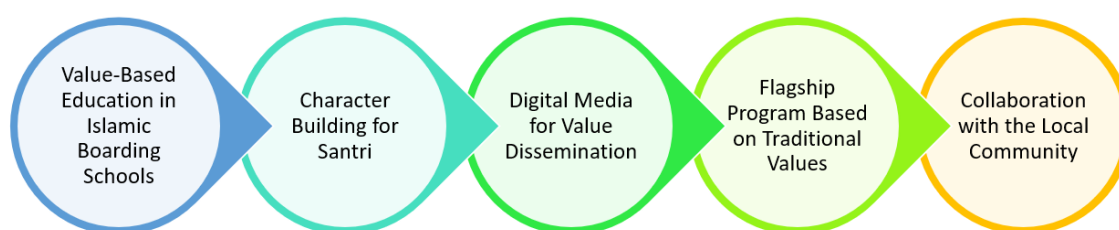
Figure 1. Value-Based Branding Strategies in Islamic Boarding Schools

Value-Based Education in Islamic Boarding Schools

Value-based education in Islamic boarding schools refers to an educational approach that integrates the moral, spiritual, and social principles of Islamic teachings. Conceptually, this education emphasizes the formation of students' character through Islamic values, including sincerity, discipline, responsibility, and social concern. The application can be observed in daily practice in Islamic boarding schools, where students are provided with academic knowledge and guided in developing noble morals through religious instruction. In the context of this research, value-based education in *pesantren* focuses on how these values serve as the foundation for the formation of student character and the central element in maintaining the identity of *pesantren* amid modernization. This approach is particularly relevant in addressing the challenges of the times, given the importance of education that focuses not only on intellectual aspects but also on moral and spiritual development.

The description of the findings above is strengthened by an interview with one of the *pesantren* administrators, who stated that value-based education is the primary foundation in forming student character. "We integrate Islamic values in the formal curriculum and daily activities of the students," (I_KW_2024). From the statement, it is known that *pesantren* provides academic lessons and instills habits such as congregational prayers, book studies, and student leadership development. This aims to create a knowledgeable generation and instill Islamic morals. The *pesantren* also organizes regular training for *ustaz* and teaching staff to improve their teaching skills with an approach based on the *pesantren's* values.

Interviews with informants revealed that *pesantren* apply value-based education by integrating Islamic values into the curriculum and daily activities. They focus on academics while prioritizing character formation through practices like congregational prayers, book studies, and leadership training. To enhance

teaching quality, pesantren regularly train ustaz and teachers, ensuring they remain relevant. Additionally, extracurricular activities like book discussions and leadership programs help students develop critical thinking, teamwork, and confidence, reinforcing character building.

Based on the presentation of the findings above, *pesantren* implements a comprehensive educational approach that focuses on the concept of education, namely a journey that integrates Islamic values. Islamic boarding schools regularly conduct training sessions for teachers and offer self-development programs for students. Thus, teachers are trained to remain relevant in teaching Islamic values, while students are involved in activities outside the curriculum that strengthen their Islamic character. Collaboration with education experts helps to ensure that the quality of education remains high. This strategy reflects *pesantren's* commitment to creating a holistic, relevant, and value-based educational environment.

Strengthening the Character of Students

Strengthening students' character in pesantren refers to educational efforts that aim to form the personalities of students who are not only intelligent in religious knowledge but also possess noble morals and social responsibility. This character strengthening involves internalizing Islamic values in students' daily life, such as discipline, honesty, and concern for others. Its application in pesantren includes habituation in religious routines such as congregational prayers, scripture studies, and leadership development programs. This character development aims to create a generation that excels in religious studies and possesses strong morals, is prepared to face social challenges, and makes a positive contribution to society. This theme is relevant to the research focus because it reflects one of the main pillars of pesantren education: maintaining its identity and relevance in the dynamics of changing times, especially in the face of digitalization and globalization that is increasingly developing.

Strengthening the character of students is the ideal of education in Islamic educational institutions where in this case as conveyed by the caretaker of the pesantren where he said that, "We educate students to become individuals with noble character, discipline, and responsibility, because that is the key to becoming a good Muslim (I_P_2024)." One of the students also conveyed the same thing: "At the pesantren, I learned not only about religious science, but also about how I can be a person who is useful to the community (I_S_2024)."

Education in pesantren emphasizes the formation of character, including religious understanding and the development of moral attitudes and behaviors. The primary focus is on cultivating individuals with discipline, responsibility, and noble morals, which are considered essential for being a good Muslim. In addition, education in pesantren aims to equip students with social values, enabling them to excel in religious knowledge and make a positive contribution to society. This reflects a holistic approach, in which pesantren plays a role in shaping individuals who are not only academically prepared, but also socially ready, to produce a generation that is beneficial to society in the face of the challenges of an increasingly complex era. More simply, the research findings related to

strengthening students' character are partially shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Strengthening the Character of Students

Theme	Statement	Discovery Code
Habituation of Islamic Values	"We focus on strengthening students' character through daily activities that instill Islamic values."	Habituation
Moral Formation	"We always emphasize the importance of good morals in every teaching and learning process."	Indoctrination
Character Education	"At the Islamic boarding school, I learned to become a better person through the taught Islamic values."	Indoctrination
Internalization of Value	"The experience at the pesantren taught me to always maintain Islamic morals and values."	Internalization

Table 2 illustrates that strengthening students' character is achieved through various approaches, including Islamic Value Habituation, Moral Formation, Character Education, and Value Internalization. On the theme of habituating Islamic values, *pesantren* caregivers emphasize daily activities that instill Islamic values. At the same time, Moral Formation focuses more on teaching good morals by teachers during the teaching and learning process. Character Education reflects students' understanding of the importance of becoming better people through Islamic teachings. Finally, Value Internalization highlights the experiences of alumni who teach the application of Islamic values and morals in daily life. These findings indicate that the development of students' character occurs through habituation, the formation of attitudes, and the internalization of values in their lives.

Departing from a series of exposures related to strengthening students' character, it was found that character education in *pesantren* is also carried out through the habituation of Islamic values in daily activities, such as congregational prayers, recitations, and social activities. This activity strengthens the students' character, makes them better individuals, and prepares them to face life outside the *pesantren*. In addition, strengthening the character of students also involves a close relationship between students, caregivers, teachers, and the surrounding community. Forming this solid character ensures that students not only have sufficient religious knowledge but can also make a positive contribution to society. With this approach, students are expected to become individuals who are not only academically ready but also ready to become agents of beneficial change in society.
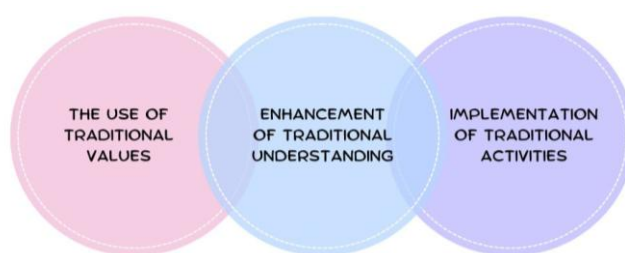
Traditional Value-Based Flagship Programs

Traditional values-based flagship programs in Islamic boarding schools refer to educational initiatives that integrate Islamic values contained in Islamic boarding school traditions to strengthen the identity and quality of education. Conceptually, this program prioritizes learning that fosters a deep understanding of the classical teachings of Islam, such as those found in the Yellow Book, and skills training by Sharia principles. This flagship program, grounded in traditional values, aims not only to enhance students' knowledge but also to shape their character, remaining relevant to the challenges of the times while preserving its traditional roots. *Pesantren* has excellent programs designed to reflect its characteristics and strengthen its identity in the eyes of the public. These programs

not only focus on academic teaching but also integrate traditional Islamic values, which form the foundation of education in Islamic boarding schools.

In an interview with the Head of Program Development, he explained, "We offer yellow book-based programs, Islamic entrepreneurship education, and life skills training by Sharia. These programs reflect the identity of the *pesantren* that remains relevant to the needs of the times without losing its essence (I_KBP_2024)." One of the most striking flagship programs is the Yellow Book-based scientific training. This program teaches students to understand classical Islamic literature, which has been the foundation of Islamic science for centuries. "We not only teach understanding of the text, but also train students to apply the wisdom of the yellow book in their daily lives, (I_Ustadz_2024). This program is the main differentiator that attracts the public's interest in entrusting their children's education to the *pesantren*. Islamic boarding schools also offer Islamic entrepreneurship education in response to modern needs. This program aims to equip students with practical entrepreneurial skills while instilling Sharia principles in business management.

Through a series of interviews conducted with some of the informants above, it was found that the education offered in *pesantren* combines traditional learning with a more modern approach, creating a balance between religious values and the needs of the times. One of the flagship programs is the yellow book-based training that teaches an understanding of classical Islamic literature. However, more than just understanding the text, this program also aims to teach students how to apply the book's wisdom in their daily lives. In addition, the *pesantren* organizes an Islamic entrepreneurship program that teaches students practical skills in the business world, while maintaining the principles of Islamic law. The success of these programs is highly dependent on collaboration between Islamic boarding schools, students, and the community, as well as continuous evaluation to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. In addition, to provide a clearer picture of the findings regarding traditional value-based flagship programs, the results are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Traditional Value-Based Flagship Programs

This traditional, value-based flagship program has a significant impact on the image of the Islamic boarding school. The community sees pesantren as an educational institution that can maintain tradition while remaining relevant to the challenges of the times. In addition, students participating in this program increased their confidence, independence, and holistic understanding of Islam. By integrating excellent programs, such as Yellow Book, Islamic entrepreneurship education, and Sharia-compliant life skills, the pesantren maintains its traditional

identity while preparing students to face future challenges. Effective collaboration between ustaz, students, and the community ensures that this program continues to grow and provide long-term benefits.

The Use of Digital Media for the Dissemination of Value

Digital media for disseminating values in *pesantren* refers to the use of information and communication technology to convey Islamic teachings and *pesantren* values to a broader audience. Conceptually, digital media effectively supports da'wah and value-based education by introducing *pesantren* as relevant institutions in the modern era without sacrificing tradition. This program involves students and educators managing digital content by Islamic values. These findings enhance community engagement and prepare students to become agents of change who effectively apply technology.

In an interview with the Head of the Islamic Boarding School Media Division, he explained, "Digital media is used to publicize Islamic boarding school activities, Islamic values, and inspiring stories of students to the public. We want to show that *pesantren* is an educational center that is relevant to the needs of the times, without losing its traditional roots (I_KDMP_2024)." As part of the effort to spread values, *pesantren* actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. This was revealed by the Information Technology Coordinator, who said that, "We make Islamic educational activities in the form of short videos, documentation of *pesantren* activities, and interactive studies, which are then broadcast through social media. This activity attracts the community's attention and becomes an effective *da'wah* media (I_KTI_2024)." Teachers and students are also involved in this activity. Teachers act as mentors and guide the theme and content of activities by the values of the *pesantren*. Meanwhile, students with interests and skills in the digital media field are responsible for managing these activities. "Our students are taught how to make videos that are creative but still by Islamic values. It is also a means to hone their skills in the digital age (I_PEMD_2024),".

From the interview results above, the program of using digital media to disseminate values demonstrates the *pesantren's* commitment to addressing the challenges of the times while upholding tradition. By involving teachers, students, and digital technology, *pesantren* can reach a wider community and make a positive contribution to education and da'wah. This approach not only strengthens the identity of the *pesantren* but also prepares students to become responsible and creative individuals in the face of the modern world. The pesantren hopes that this program can continue and produce a generation that utilizes technology to spread goodness and Islamic values. The following section explains the use of technology, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. The Use of Digital Media for the Dissemination of Values

Theme	Statement	Findings
Spread of Islamic Values	"Digital media is used to publicize pesantren activities, Islamic values, and inspiring stories of students to the public."	Dakwah Digital
Digital Educational	"We make Islamic educational activities in the form of short videos, documentation of pesantren activities, and	Interactive Content

Content	interactive studies broadcast through social media."	
Social Media Platforms	"This activity attracts the public's attention and becomes an effective da'wah medium."	Social Media
Blog and Website Management	"Through the official website, we also provide registration information and excellent programs, so that the pesantren is more accessible."	Official Website
Involvement of Santri	"Our students are taught how to make creative videos, but still by Islamic values."	Digital Learning

Table 3 explained that the education offered in *pesantren* combines traditional learning with a more modern approach, creating a balance between religious values and the needs of the times. One of the flagship programs is the yellow book-based training that teaches an understanding of classical Islamic literature. However, more than just understanding the text, this program also aims to teach students how to apply the book's wisdom in their daily lives. The success of programs is highly dependent on collaboration between Islamic boarding schools, students, and the community, as well as continuous evaluation to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

Collaboration with Local Communities

Collaboration with local communities in *pesantren* refers to synergistic efforts between *pesantren* and the surrounding community to develop various mutually beneficial programs. This collaboration also includes cooperation in developing value-based programs relevant to the community's needs, such as *pesantren*-based micro-enterprises and improving religious literacy. Through this collaboration, *pesantren* can strengthen their presence as educational institutions that are competitive, relevant, and beneficial to the community, while also maintaining harmonious relations with the local community. Collaboration between *pesantren* and local communities plays a crucial role in fostering mutually beneficial relationships and supporting the development of *pesantren* and its surrounding community. *Pesantren* not only serves as a center for religious education, but also contributes to various social activities that involve the local community.

One of the residents stated, "We feel closer to the *pesantren* because they often hold activities that involve us, such as recitation or skills training (I_W_2024)." The *pesantren* caregiver conveyed the same thing: "Collaboration with the local community is part of our vision to be part of the solution to various social problems that exist around us (I_P_2024)." The *pesantren* not only presents itself as an educational institution but also as an institution that actively contributes to the social development of the surrounding community.

Islamic boarding schools collaborate with local communities to create mutually beneficial synergies, focusing on community empowerment and human resource development. Activities such as skills training, joint recitation, and local economic empowerment, including building *pesantren*-based micro-businesses, are examples of how *pesantren* play a role in improving the quality of life in the surrounding community. This collaboration also strengthens the position of *pesantren* as a place that not only provides religious education but also makes a real contribution to the community's social welfare.

This collaboration also highlights the role of *pesantren* in establishing a broader social network, which extends beyond the scope of the *pesantren* itself, encompassing the community and various other parties. In addition, *pesantren* can serve as a center for social and cultural activities, providing a space for the community to engage in learning and enhance the quality of life. Therefore, this collaboration reinforces the presence of *pesantren* as an educational institution that prioritizes religious knowledge and its benefits to society.

The observations and interviews reveal that collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and local communities has a positive impact on both parties. *Pesantren* receives support in various ways, including providing human resources, implementing educational programs, and offering more effective social coaching. In this case, local communities, on the other hand, get direct benefits through new skills, increased religious understanding, and economic development based on local potential. This collaboration fosters a more harmonious environment, supporting the development of Islamic boarding schools and their surrounding community. Thus, this collaboration plays a significant role in fostering closer relationships between Islamic boarding schools and the community and has a broad impact on social and educational development in the region.

Discussion

This research examines the application of value-based branding in Islamic boarding schools in the face of digitalization and globalization. Key findings suggest that *pesantren* use value-based strategies to maintain their traditional identity. This strategy includes strengthening students' character through Islamic value-based education, using digital media for da'wah, and collaborating with local communities to support the development of Islamic boarding schools. Value-based education in *pesantren* emphasizes the integration of moral and spiritual principles into the curriculum and daily activities, encompassing religious knowledge and the development of students' character and social skills. In addition, the *pesantren* is also trying to introduce Islamic entrepreneurship programs to prepare students to face the challenges of the times.

These findings contribute to the existing knowledge about value-based education in the context of Islamic boarding schools, which have often been perceived as traditional forms of education that have not evolved in response to contemporary demands (Abubaker et al., 2022; Begum et al., 2021; Mohidem & Hashim, 2023). This research supports the idea that value-based education, which integrates moral and social aspects, can be an effective strategy in maintaining the relevance of *pesantren* amid modernization (Sarkowi et al., 2025). The findings on the use of digital media for disseminating Islamic values also expand the existing understanding of how *pesantren* utilize technology to strengthen da'wah, a topic that has not been widely explored in *pesantren* literature (Hasbullah et al., 2022; Ansori et al., 2022; Sultana et al., 2025). This research addresses gaps in the literature regarding the application of technology in faith-based education. It introduces the contribution of *pesantren* in social and economic development through collaboration with local communities (Mundiri & Muthmainnah, 2021).

These findings align with the theoretical framework of value-based education that emphasizes the importance of integrating moral and spiritual principles in education (Menne et al., 2023; Qizam et al., 2024; Salmaoui et al., 2025). The approach applied by *pesantren* in shaping the character of students through religious and social habits supports the theory of character education, as researched by Muhajir (2022), which focuses on the formation of moral attitudes through education. Nonetheless, these findings challenge a more academically oriented theory of education by showing that learning in *pesantren* is not only limited to intellectual knowledge but also includes developing personality and social skills. The theoretical contribution of this research is to introduce a more holistic concept of Islamic education, encompassing spiritual, social, and intellectual values, to produce a generation ready to face the challenges of the times.

This research highlights how *pesantren* can maintain their traditional identity while remaining relevant to the times by applying value-based branding that integrates Islamic values-based education, strengthens the character of students, and utilizes digital media. These findings enrich the literature on *pesantren* education by providing a new understanding of how they can adapt to the challenges of digitalization without losing their traditional roots. This research also highlights the importance of collaboration between *pesantren* and local communities in strengthening the existence of *pesantren* as an institution that serves not only as a center for religious education but also as a hub for social and economic empowerment. Thus, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of value-based education theory and the implementation of technology in Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the application of value-based branding in Islamic boarding schools as they face the challenges of digitalization and globalization, and how these strategies help maintain their traditional identities. The main findings reveal that *pesantren* institutions employ an approach that integrates Islamic value-based education, fosters students' character development, utilizes digital media, and collaborates with local communities to maintain the relevance and sustainability of their educational offerings. The implications of this study include the importance of policies that support the integration of technology in *pesantren* education and strengthening collaboration between *pesantren* and the community to increase social impact. In addition, this research opens up opportunities for further research on the influence of digital media in religion-based education and the role of *pesantren* in social empowerment. Overall, this study enriches the literature on value-based education and the contribution of *pesantren* in answering the challenges of the times without sacrificing tradition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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