

# Marketing Management of Educational Services in Improving The Image of Islamic Boarding Schools

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## Abstract:

This research focuses on marketing management by Islamic boarding schools to improve their image. This study used a qualitative approach with six respondents who were then analyzed and assessed for the validity of the data using triangulation techniques at Islamic boarding schools in Bantul Regency. The results of the study show that: 1) the management of education service delivery at Islamic boarding schools has been running effectively, as evidenced by the increase in students every year; 2) factors that enhance the image of Islamic boarding schools include community support, the role of large foundations, and the commitment of Islamic boarding schools; 3) these factors are strengthened by the 4P concept of marketing mix strategy: product, promotion, process, and people; 4) media activities have an essential role during the marketing process; 5) special programs in Islamic boarding schools can also increase public interest; 6) the characteristics of each pesantren are the main attraction for the community's interest in pesantren. Furthermore, the image of the Islamic boarding school can be formed by implementing a marketing strategy by utilizing the marketing mix concept and can be built through good communication in every coordination.

**Keywords:** *Islamic Boarding Schools, Marketing Management, Branding, Marketing Strategy*

## Abstrak:

Penelitian ini berfokus pada manajemen pemasaran yang dilakukan pesantren untuk meningkatkan citranya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendketaan kualitatif dengan enam responden yang kemudian dianalisis dan dinilai keabsahan datanya dengan teknik triangulasi di pondok pesantren di Kabupaten Bantul. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: 1) manajemen emasaran layanan pendidikan di pondok pesantren telah berjalan efektif, dibuktikan dengan peningkatan santri setiap tahunnya; 2) faktor peningkat citra pondok pesantren meliputi dukungan masyarakat, peran yayasan yang besar, dan komitmen pondok pesantren; 3) faktor-faktor tersebut diperkuat dengan konsep 4P strategi bauran pemasaran: produk, promosi, proses, dan orang; 4) aktivitas media memiliki peran penting selama proses pemasaran; 5) program-program unggulan di pondok pesantren juga dapat meningkatkan animo masyarakat; 6) karakteristik masing-masing pesantren menjadi daya tarik tersendiri bagi minat masyarakat terhadap pesantren. Selanjutnya, citra pesantren dapat dibentuk dengan menerapkan strategi pemasaran dengan memanfaatkan konsep bauran pemasaran dan dapat dibangun melalui komunikasi yang baik dalam setiap koordinasi.

**Kata Kunci:** *Workplace Spirituality, Budaya Organisasi, Produktivitas Guru, Komitmen Organisasi*

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## INTRODUCTION

Presently, the world of education faces various challenges, one of which is increasingly fierce competition (Abadi & Hidayatulloh, 2022; Dâmaso & Lima, 2020; Wahab et al., 2022); matches between institutions create the emergence of marketing strategies (Wahab et al., 2022). Every educational institution needs management to market its services. By applying marketing ideology, education has made rapid changes in meeting the needs of society (Karim et al., 2022). In marketing management, the marketing mix model is often employed in the corporate and educational fields. This marketing mix model consists of several elements; combining them will make it possible to achieve the goals determined (Işoraitè, 2016). A study revealed that marketing elements consist of "7P", including product, place, price, promotion, person, process, and proof (Ibadiyah et al., 2022). Kothler and Fox also mentioned that the marketing of educational services has four main objectives: a) realizing the institution's mission, b) increasing service customer satisfaction, c) increasing the education's attractiveness to customers, and d) improving the process of educational marketing services effectively and efficiently (Fuad, Utari, 2020).

Marketing strategies that work well and effectively will grow the public image of educational institutions (Dâmaso & Lima, 2020; Sidiq & Na'imah, 2019). To face the challenges of competing in getting students, educational institutions, thus, must have strategies and methods that focus on building the image of institutions in society (Ibadiyah et al., 2022). Marketing these services also needs to be carried out to introduce educational services to the public and attract public interest in the products of educational institutions to display the existence of education in the surrounding community (Agus R & Ummah, 2019). Indeed, educational institutions that require service marketing are public schools and Islamic boarding schools.

Islamic boarding schools are Indonesia's oldest Islamic educational institutions (Abidin, 2020). In ancient times, Islamic boarding schools were known as education with their characteristics. According to the community, Islamic boarding schools are the oldest centers of Islamic education in Indonesia, with primary roles and functions (Marzuki et al., 2020). The district also believes Islamic boarding schools are ancient institutions with traditional and backward educational backgrounds (Rohman & Muhtamiroh, 2022). For this reason, Islamic boarding schools must continually develop following the changing times to innovate and transform to experience progress and produce quality education (Khoeriyah, 2019). In an article, it was uncovered that the existence of Islamic boarding schools until now has been able to answer the challenges of the times (Arifin, 2022). In this case, advances in technology and information greatly influence Islamic boarding school education (Abidin, 2020). Islamic boarding schools, as Islamic educational institutions (Abidin, 2020), further play a vital role in supporting Indonesian people (Ibadiyah et al., 2022; Muazza et al., 2018).

Islamic boarding schools are grouped into three types: *salaf* or traditional boarding schools, *Khalaf* or modern boarding schools, and combination boarding schools, i.e., a blend of traditional and contemporary (Marzuki et al., 2020). The difference between the *salaf* and the *Khalaf* boarding schools can be seen from the study of the books (*Kitab*). In *salaf* boarding schools, learning the yellow book (*Kitab Kuning/Kitab Gundul*) is more in-depth than in *Khalaf* boarding schools (Marzuki et al., 2020). Since Islamic boarding schools have proven themselves as educational institutions capable of integrating religious education with general education (Abdullah, 2019; Abidin, 2020; Rangan et al., 2021), the *salaf* Islamic boarding schools have now turned into *Khalaf*, which can be noticed from the education offered to the community (Assa'idi, 2021). Then, aspects of the success of marketing management in Islamic boarding schools can further foster their image to the public. It can be observed from the process of new student admissions and the number of students interested in the institutions.

With public awareness of the significance of Islamic education, Islamic boarding schools as education service providers must be able to serve and provide for the community's needs well. Hence, a good marketing management strategy is needed to provide information to the public to enhance a positive image. Improving this institution's positive appearance is absolute in inter-agency competence (Ibadiyah et al., 2022). The institution's image can be formed through four aspects: 1) product/service, formed through the quality of the product and how the service is served, 2) social responsibility, institutional citizenship, ethical behavior, and community affairs, i.e., the responsibility of all parties to the institution, 3) environment, namely the existence of adequate facilities, such as office space and other spaces, and 4) communication, which can take the form of institutional advertisements, such as brochures, social media activities, and others (Sandyakala, 2020).

Furthermore, along with the times in which technology is overgrowing, the marketing of educational services must have new strategies (Wahab et al., 2022). Thus, this research focuses on how Islamic boarding schools improve their image as Islamic educational institutions through marketing strategies built. Therefore, this study provides an overview of other Islamic boarding schools to create a good image in the eyes of the public.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study revealed the marketing management strategy of education services at Islamic boarding schools with a qualitative descriptive research approach. This research's object was to the marketing manager of education services at Islamic boarding schools in Bantul Regency. Meanwhile, the subjects of this study consisted of the components of the Islamic boarding schools' structure, including the Islamic boarding schools' administrators and the Islamic boarding schools' marketing team.

Data sources in this study were obtained from primary and secondary data. Preliminary data were gained through interviews. Interviews were conducted with the leadership of the Islamic boarding schools and the marketing team. Meanwhile, secondary data were acquired from observations and

documents regarding marketing management that had been implemented. Then, the researchers used a triangulation technique to assess the data validity. Two ways can be done in the triangulation technique: source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was used to examine data obtained from various sources and then processed to conclude. The researchers then employed non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to get the same data sources simultaneously. Afterward, qualitative data analysis was carried out from in-depth interviews and described descriptively in the form of a discussion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Marketing Management of Islamic Boarding Schools

Based on the research results, service marketing management in Islamic boarding schools started with planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. Planning is the first thing that must be done to achieve a goal. In marketing, education certainly requires a plan so that the purposes of marketing programs can be adequately implemented and achieved. A program should also be designed as well as possible since good planning will minimize unwanted failures. In addition, to increase the number of students in Islamic boarding schools from year to year, Islamic boarding schools undoubtedly have quite mature plans.

At the beginning of establishing Islamic boarding schools, one of the plans was to visit more advanced and developed Islamic boarding schools. This activity aimed to learn and share experiences about the management of progressive Islamic boarding schools. This activity is still running, so student admissions in Islamic boarding schools continue to increase yearly.

The following process is organizing. Based on the research results, the marketing process in Islamic boarding schools was managed by the Home Affairs and Human Resources Division. This division consisted of several sections, covering the Public Relations section, Infrastructure and Assets section, and New Student Admissions and Media section. This organizing is a process of grouping someone to carry out tasks and responsibilities to accomplish predetermined goals (N. A. Handayani et al., 2019). One of the routine marketing activities carried out by Islamic boarding schools was New *Santri* Admissions (PSB). The task of the PSB team included planning various promotional strategies to attract public interest, such as arranging multiple places to be used as Islamic boarding school marketing targets.

The subsequent process is implementation. Marketing in Islamic boarding schools was carried out through several activity programs. The purpose of this activity was none other than the promotion of Islamic boarding schools. This marketing implementation also involved all teachers. One of the marketing program activities conducted by Islamic boarding schools was the "door to door" system, i.e., making visits to schools to conduct promotions and outreach about Islamic boarding schools.

The last management process is evaluating. Overall, the evaluation was performed by the foundation. Meanwhile, regarding the assessment for marketing itself, the public relations team conducted periodic evaluations once a

month or two months. The review of the activity itself was carried out after the training. Hence, this Islamic boarding school made it a habit to conduct periodic evaluations, starting from the smallest evaluations, such as committee evaluations, to overall assessments by the foundation.

In other words, the marketing management process has been carried out, starting from planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. The planning up to the evaluation processes play a crucial role or influence the improvement of students (Kustian et al., 2018; Mukmin, 2020). The increase in students from year to year also explained that the community was interested in the institutions in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating.

Another factor that can encourage an increase in registrants is the many excellent programs offered to the public (B. Handayani & Ismanto, 2019; Kustian et al., 2018). Based on the research results, various excellent programs at Islamic boarding schools were offered to the public, such as programs for translating the Qur'an using the *Tamyiz* method, *Tahsin*, *Tahfidz*, the use of Arabic and English in daily communication, and community service programs.

### **Marketing Strategy of Islamic Boarding Schools**

Based on the research results, apart from implementing marketing management processes, Islamic boarding schools also applied the marketing strategy concept of mix theory, consisting of product, place, price, promotion, person, procedure, and physical evidence.

Product is something offered to the community to meet their needs, while services provided to the community are in the form of the institution's uniqueness. In this study, the products offered by Islamic boarding schools to the community were quite interesting activity programs. The study results also revealed that Islamic boarding schools had several excellent programs, including the *Tamyiz*, language, *Tahsin*, *Tahfidz*, and other soft skills programs. The uniqueness or characteristics of institutions could further enhance the positive image of each institution (Štefko et al., 2015; Tovt & Pirchak, 2019). The uniqueness of each Islamic boarding school also lies in its vision and mission. Research findings also showed that Islamic boarding schools' visions and missions had distinctive characteristics. Each Islamic boarding school provided its characteristics in each institution's vision and mission and could bridge the process of educational services marketing (Fuad, Utari, 2020).

The place is an important location for the founders to pay attention to because it is also a consideration for the community in determining their chosen services (Nurman & Harapan, 2021). In this case, the Islamic boarding schools in the research location had a strategic location since they are in a religious environment by Islamic boarding schools. They are also in a very densely populated neighborhood. Being in society certainly has its positive and negative sides; on the positive side, the Islamic boarding schools received good support and encouragement from the surrounding community.

Price is one concept of the marketing mix (Kartika & Wibowo, 2022); in educational institutions, it means the community's costs to finance education (Fauziyatul Iffah, 2019). The Islamic boarding school in this research offered

prices to the community according to the products presented. The number of tuition fees set by the Islamic boarding schools was adjusted with the average for the middle class so that all people could experience being a *santri* (student) and living in a boarding school. Price is also one of the factors influencing consumers on the services offered (Kwok et al., 2020).

Promotion is something used to convey information related to service marketing to customers. Promotion is also the most powerful concept in the marketing mix (Kango et al., 2021). The more intensive the promotion is, the more effective and efficient the marketing process will be (Rukaeni et al., 2022). Promotion by the Islamic boarding schools was carried out through various activity programs and media activities, both conventional and social media. The media utilized was like media in general, i.e., mainstream and online media. The mainstream media were such as placing advertisements through magazines and radio broadcasts. Then, promotion was also conducted through social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, website, YouTube, and TikTok. Print media, such as brochures, posters, and others, were also employed.

The promotion by one of the Islamic boarding schools in Bantul also included several other exciting activities. Among the programs that were different from other Islamic boarding schools was "*Nyantri Asyik*." This activity aimed to provide opportunities and experiences for children who wanted to experience life in a boarding school, even if it was only for one day and one night. The targets of this promotional activity were prospective students domiciled in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, both from the elementary and junior high school levels. Until now, the Islamic boarding schools in Bantul have also carried out promotions using a ball-picking or "door-to-door" system by visiting local elementary and junior high schools to conduct outreach and promotion.

Furthermore, people play an essential role in marketing educational services (Sholikah et al., 2021). They must match the competencies as teachers since they also affect service to the community, thereby increasing the number of interested customers (Wahab et al., 2022). In Islamic boarding schools, in recruiting *ustadz/ustadzah* (teachers), they should have the competencies as teachers and the ability to speak Arabic and English. With teachers with skills according to the Islamic boarding schools' uniqueness, it would increase public interest in studying at Islamic boarding schools. It is because teachers with these skills could help implement excellent programs in Islamic boarding schools.

The process is for delivering educational services from institutions to the community. The process includes various aspects: the learning process, the process in Islamic boarding schools, and especially the marketing process in Islamic boarding schools. Based on research results, foundations had a crucial role in the marketing process at Islamic boarding schools. The process is also vital in controlling the achievement of student goals in academic and non-academic fields (Mahajan & Golahit, 2020).

Physical evidence is a form of facilities and infrastructure institutions provide to the community. This physical form is divided into decisions and supporting evidence (Mukmin, 2020). In this case, the physical evidence provided by the Islamic boarding schools to the community was in the form of

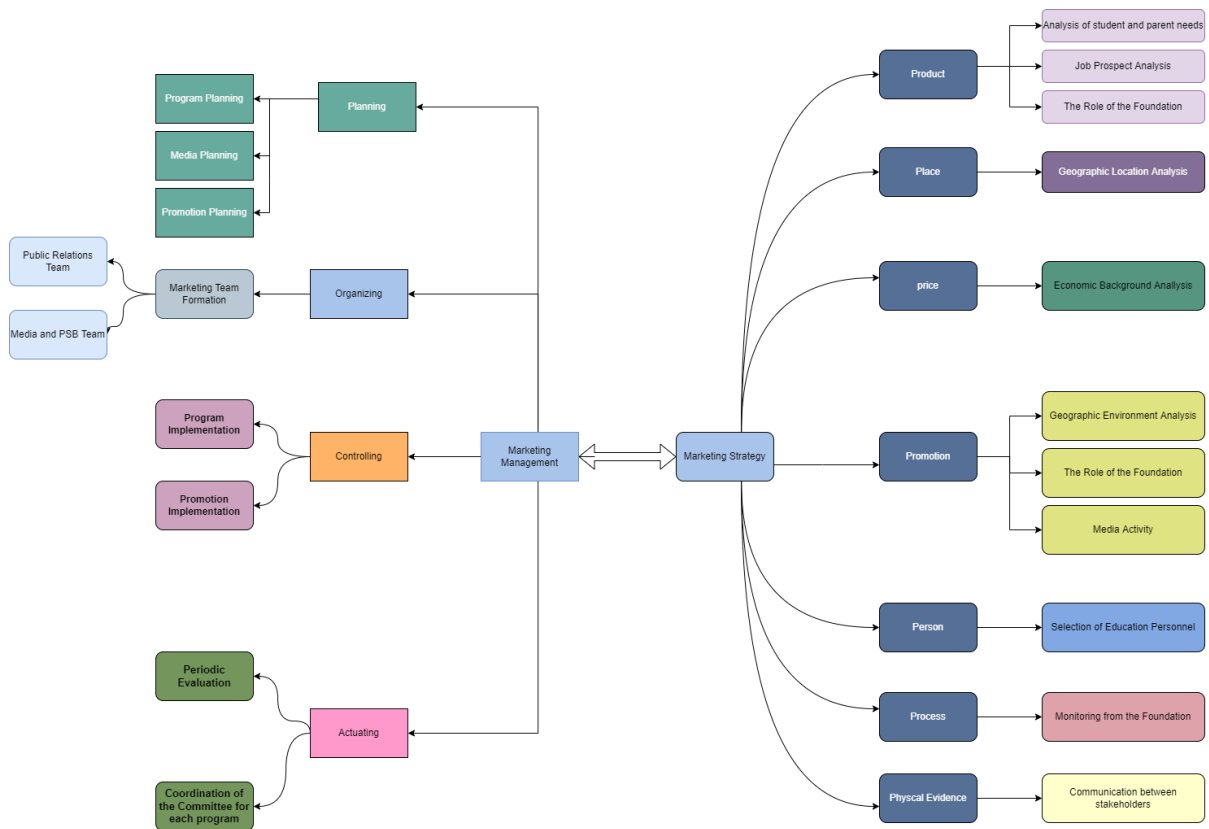
buildings and other supports that could reinforce the educational process in the Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools also carried out cooperation with other institutions to support facilities and infrastructure that did not yet exist in Islamic boarding schools.

Therefore, the concept of a marketing mix strategy has been carried out in educational institutions to improve the image of educational institutions (Labaso, 2019). By applying this concept, institutions could provide information to the public through product innovations to meet the needs and demands of the community.

### **Image of Islamic Boarding Schools**

Based on the research findings, the Islamic boarding schools' image was formed through several factors: dedicated support from the community and parents, support from foundations, and commitments maintained by each Islamic boarding school; thus, the existence of Islamic boarding schools in society remains good. Parental support is necessary to develop an institution's image (Usatenko, 2021). Various excellent programs to meet the needs of society at this time were, for example, memorizing and translating the Qur'an, proficiency in Arabic and English, and many other programs. Then, Islamic boarding schools also tried to continuously maintain commitments so that the surrounding community continued to trust the institution. In addition, the positive image of the institution has two aspects that become the public's trust in the institution: 1) having the ability to meet the community's needs and desires and 2) being able to give trust to the community with commitments carried out (Mukhlison Effendi, 2021). The commitment, in this case, was that the institutional programs provided to the community should continue to be carried out so that the community continues to trust the institution.

In conducting their programs, Islamic boarding schools also collaborated with other institutions. Besides, in conducting marketing programs, especially during promotions, Islamic boarding schools collaborated with various outside agencies (Jedrzejczyk, 2021). Collaboration with the community also dramatically influences the excellent image of educational institutions (Usoh et al., 2020). It is also consistent with the statement that an institution's image can be formed through four aspects: 1) product/service, formed through the quality of the product and how the service is served, 2) social responsibility, institutional citizenship, ethical behavior, and community affairs, i.e., the responsibility of all parties to the institution, 3) environment, namely the existence of adequate facilities, such as office space and other spaces, and 4) communication, which can take the form of institutional advertisements, such as brochures, social media activities, and others (Sandyakala, 2020). This research is expected to provide a model of Islamic boarding school marketing in improving its image.



**Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Management and Marketing Strategy to Improve the Image of Islamic Boarding Schools**

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that 1) marketing management of education services in Islamic boarding schools has been running effectively, as evidenced by increased students annually; 2) the factors increasing the image of Islamic boarding schools encompassed the support from the community, the substantial role of foundations, and the commitment of Islamic boarding schools; 3) these factors were strengthened by the 4p concept of the marketing mix strategy: product, promotion, process, and person; 4) media activity had an essential role during the marketing process; 5) excellent programs in Islamic boarding schools could also increase public interest; 6) each Islamic boarding school's characteristics was the main attraction for the community's interest in Islamic boarding schools. Further research is how Islamic boarding schools can make quality the focus of improving their image

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