

# Harmony of Local Wisdom: Building the Image of Madrasah to Increase Competitiveness

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## Abstract:

This research aims to analyze the branding image of madrasah based on local wisdom to provide a unique and attractive identity for the community in order to increase the competitiveness of madrasah. The research method used is a qualitative case study type approach. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, which includes stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The research results show that implementing Local Wisdom-Based Branding Image is carried out through several stages, including Identification of Advantages, Needs Analysis, Local Wisdom Program, and Program Evaluation. The implication of Branding images based on Local Wisdom is that madrasah can have a unique identity easily recognized by the public, become a favourite according to environmental characteristics, and improve branding according to their local wisdom.

**Keywords:** *Branding Image, Local Wisdom, Madrasah Competitiveness*

## Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang branding image madrasah berbasis kearifan lokal dalam upaya memberikan identitas yang unik dan menarik bagi masyarakat guna meningkatkan daya saing madrasah. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan datanya dilakukan melalui observasi, interview dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan model analisis data Miles dan Huberman, yang mencakup tahapan reduksi data, display data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Branding Image Berbasis Kearifan Lokal dilakukan melalui beberapa tahapan, termasuk Identifikasi Keunggulan, Analisis Kebutuhan, Program Kearifan Lokal, dan Evaluasi Program. Implikasi dari Branding Image Berbasis Kearifan Lokal adalah bahwa madrasah dapat memiliki identitas unik yang mudah dikenal oleh masyarakat, menjadi favorit sesuai dengan karakteristik lingkungan, dan meningkatkan Branding sesuai dengan kearifan lokal yang dimiliki.

**Kata Kunci:** *Branding Image, Kearifan Lokal, Daya Saing Madrasah*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is defined as a lifelong human process, being able to explore and develop physical and spiritual potential by societal values (Cinta et al., 2022). Education is a dynamic phenomenon and a noble effort to humanize humans according to their nature, becoming necessary for humans to become the best creatures and meaningful caliphs for other lives (Rozi et al., 2022; Widat et al., 2022).

The main aim of education is to educate the nation's seeds so they can compete in the future (Rizkita & Supriyanto, 2020). Every educational institution must have distinctive characteristics that make it an easily recognizable brand and have its appeal to consumers (Roziqin & Rozaq, 2018). Branding is interpretation, knowledge and recreation, which refers to objects and includes the physical reality of products, brands, organizations, images, meanings, beliefs, attitudes and feelings towards something (Lee & Chen, 2018).

The success of educational institution branding influences the attractiveness and attention of the public (Karsono et al., 2021). Therefore, educational management is crucial, and the task of the Head of Madrasah and Public Relations is to market the institution to create the desired image (Das et al., 2020). A good image can be built through superior programs and achievements, creating a Madrasah that can compete with other superior institutions (Maresova et al., 2020).

With the emergence of many new educational institutions, competition has become intense. Old institutions must strengthen their quality not to be equal to the innovation of new institutions in learning management, administration, services, and infrastructure provision (Koowuttayakorn, 2018). This competition aims to get consumers or students without sacrificing the quality of education.

Competitiveness is the ability or advantage to compete in the market with specific targets or objectives. Continuous evaluation and improvement in competitive innovation can improve performance (Akihary & Apituley, 2019). Quality improvement as an effort to increase competitiveness involves madrasa heads, teaching staff, quality improvement teams, and stakeholders competing in skills, strengths, and knowledge through a focused strategy to improve quality until it reaches a specific size (Kurniawan, 2021; Suyitno, 2021).

Implementing a branding image is essential for institutions to increase competitiveness through innovation that attracts consumers (Sergeyeva et al., 2021). The formation of branding can increase public interest and trust in madrasah (Mundiri, 2016). Therefore, educational institutions must strive to be superior to increase their attractiveness to society, especially in an era of intense competition between educational institutions (Chen, 2016).

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Miftahul Ulum, as an old institution, is facing a decline in student enrollment, indicating the need for innovation to improve quality and quality. Office holders and institutional components must collaborate to implement various efforts involving heads, teachers and student guardians. Education quality can be improved by developing quality improvement strategies by paying attention to targeted madrasa branding.

The importance of a branding image based on local wisdom is also recognized; it can differentiate MI Miftahul Ulum from other institutions, provide a unique identity, and strengthen the organization's cohesiveness. Local wisdom, which is now starting to be raised, provides an opportunity to integrate organizational cultural characteristics with local culture in strengthening togetherness in educational organizations (Sergeyeva et al., 2021; Mundiri, 2016).

Much research on Branding images based on Local Wisdom has been carried out to improve the image of institutions. Akhmadi (2019) emphasized that local wisdom is reflected in cultural diversity in each region, creating an image or branding easily recognized by the public. Apriliyanti, Hanurawan, and Sobri (2021) highlight the importance of involving local wisdom in organizations, especially with the involvement of student parents, which fundamentally improves communication between parents, teachers and madrasa heads.

Kurniawan and Lutfiana (2021) show that the behaviour of community members related to local wisdom can significantly contribute to providing suggestions for improvements or changes to legal regulations. Said (2018) sees local wisdom in the context of improving the quality of madrasa culture, with benefits including creating madrasa identity, strengthening commitment, and strengthening relationships with the social environment.

This research highlights Branding Image Based on Local Wisdom at MI Miftahul Ulum, with a focus on extracurricular programs (tahfidz Qur'an, scouting, khitobah) and familiarization activities (welcoming students, reciting Rotibul Haddad, and 9S). This research focuses on tahfidz activities, scouting, Rotibul Haddad reading, and 9S as aspects of local wisdom suitable for MI Miftahul Ulum's environmental conditions.

In managing madrasa branding, this research examines how Branding Image Based on Local Wisdom at MI Miftahul Ulum can effectively improve education quality. This research focuses on digging deeper into implementing Local Wisdom-Based Branding Image at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Miftahul Ulum.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative descriptive research with a case study approach. The case studies in this research investigate individuals, groups, organizations, activity programs, and so on over a certain period. This type of descriptive research aims to explore and describe social reality and variables related to the problems and units studied (Zellatifanny & Mudjiyanto, 2018). This research aims to provide an overview of Local Wisdom-Based Branding Image at MI Miftahul Ulum, a private educational institution under the Miftahul Ulum Nurul Hasan Foundation, Wonomerto, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia.

Sources of information were obtained from several informants related to the research location, including the head of the madrasah (SH-1), four teachers (MM-2, SM-3, HK-4, I-5), one TU staff (NM-6), and student guardians (FRA-7). Interviews were conducted with free, guided questions about Local Wisdom-Based Image Branding.

Data collection techniques involve three approaches: 1) participant observation, 2) in-depth interviews (in-depth interviews), and 3) documentation.

Data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, with stages of data reduction, data display, and concluding (Trisnawati & Sugito, 2020). The collected data is processed through reduction, data display and conclusions at the initial data collection stage.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Identify Advantages**

Identifying advantages is essential in understanding an institution's potential and capabilities. This introspection process helps institutions identify areas of excellence, potential and assets that can be utilized to achieve goals (Fatah et al., 2022). The MI Miftahul Ulum education centre has a strong commitment to educating the next generation who are not only academically competent but also have a strong character in politeness, the Qur'an, blessing-based excellence or (SQU Berkah), as well as extracurricular programs that are of interest to the community. The school is renowned for its excellence, making it a highly respected and recognized Islamic educational institution in the local community and society.

SH-1 highlights the superiority of the Qur'anic education approach at MI Miftahul Ulum, where the Qur'an is not just a subject but the core of all educational activities. Students receive tajwid education, understand the meaning and context of the verses of the Koran, and apply Islamic teachings in everyday life. This school is also known for its strong culture of discipline and polite attitude, creating a positive and conducive learning environment.

MM-2 added that the curriculum at MI Miftahul Ulum stands out in academic education by maintaining an approach centred on Islamic values. Blessing is the keyword, where every aspect of learning is directed towards achieving this goal. Extracurricular programs and positive habits are also the institution's advantages, raising the branding of MI Miftahul Ulum as a favourite school at the madrasah ibtidaiyah level in Wonomerto sub-district, Probolinggo Regency.

Besides the educational aspect, MI Miftahul Ulum is known for its strong involvement of parents and local communities, creating an educational environment that supports and inspires students. Leadership development and modern educational technology are also a focus, helping students become successful individuals.

The excellence of "Polite, Qur'anic, Excellence Based on Blessings" makes MI Miftahul Ulum one of their area's most respected and recognized Islamic educational institutions. Identification of excellence is based on practical school management theory, identifying the factors that make schools effective, emphasizing best practices that support high academic achievement and student development (Hopkins, 2020). This research highlights the excellent management of needs and the use of local wisdom to maximize institutional excellence, creating unique characteristics in educational progress.

### **Needs Analysis**

Branding analysis was carried out to understand the community's needs for madrasah. By analyzing the surrounding community's needs, madrasahs can

create brands per environmental demands. This analysis is an essential first step to support educational programs in madrasah. Careful preparation and planning of a branding program become the basis and reference for teachers in carrying out activities that are more focused, efficient, and effective (Astuti et al., 2020; Saleha et al., 2022).

According to SH-1, the institution has been planning branding for a long time but has not had a unique program. After the internal meeting, ideas emerged to generate branding through local wisdom strategies that were by the characteristics of the madrasa. The initial step involves analyzing the institution's and student's needs by completing a questionnaire to determine an appropriate branding program.

MM-2 explained that the analysis of madrasa branding needs was carried out in two stages. First, analyzing the madrasah's needs involving all stakeholders resulted in several points, such as creating a distinctive motto and improving infrastructure. Second, student needs are analyzed based on the environment by distributing and collecting questionnaires for student specialization programs. The results are used to select local wisdom programs as madrasa branding. The following is an analysis of branding needs and its targets presented:

**Table 1. Analysis of MI Miftahul Ulum Branding Needs**

No	Needs Analysis	Type of Needs	Real Condition	Target
1	Madrasah Needs	Motto Khas dan Sarpras	The implementation of the madrasa motto as the actualization of the vision and mission has been running 90% because it is still hampered by infrastructure in the form of an outdoor sound system.	The target of this need is madrasah, because madrasah are implementing the program to realize the vision and mission of madrasah, so that as quickly as possible they complete the infrastructure needed to maximize the agreed motto of the madrasah.
2	Student Needs	Peminatan Program	Students have not yet chosen the specialization stated in the extracurricular and student habituation programs at the madrasah	All Miftahul Ulum students who will take part in the madrasa program will later form the madrasa branding

By conducting a needs analysis at MI Miftahul Ulum under the auspices of the Miftahul Ulum Nurul Hasan Tunggak Cerme Foundation, Wonomerto District, Probolinggo Regency, the madrasa can provide a reference for planning needs, which is crucial in efforts to introduce madrasa branding. If the institution can provide a targeted needs analysis, the implemented program will more easily achieve the achievement target. This way, the expected goals can be achieved, improving the institution's quality.

Needs analysis identifies and understands problems or needs that need to be addressed or fulfilled (Tere & Herdi, 2021). Needs analysis enables more informed and evidence-based decision-making and helps design appropriate interventions or solutions. A systematic and structured approach to data collection, analysis, pattern identification, and evaluation of alternative solutions

is involved in needs analysis (Nasution, 2021). The needs analysis will provide solid guidance for designing and implementing a Local Wisdom-Based Branding Image at MI Miftahul Ulum, with an in-depth understanding of the market, audience and brand values and the proper steps to achieve the goals.

### **Typical Madrasah Motto**

The typical madrasa motto plays an essential role in madrasa management and branding. As stated by KH-4, a typical motto helps articulate the vision and mission of the madrasah briefly and effectively. With inspiring phrases, the distinctive motto conveys the madrasa's goals and direction to students, staff, and the community. The distinctive motto is a characteristic that differentiates MI Miftahul Ulum from other madrasah, strengthens the madrasah's identity, and reflects the core values promoted by the madrasah. A positive and motivating motto can inspire enthusiasm and togetherness among students, staff and the community, creating a positive atmosphere in the teaching and learning process. A solid and meaningful distinctive motto can improve the image of a madrasa and its attractiveness to prospective students and parents. A motto that reflects adab, religion, achievement, excellence and dedication shows a commitment to quality education.

SM-3 emphasized that a distinctive motto can be part of a madrasa branding strategy and help increase awareness and recognition of the madrasa brand in society. A distinctive motto that reflects the positive values and goals of the madrasah can strengthen parents' involvement in supporting their children's education. A distinctive motto that inspires enthusiasm and inspiration can support and encourage students to achieve academic and non-academic achievements.

In line with this, observations by researchers at MI Miftahul Ulum show that the typical motto promoted by madrasah is "Polite, Qur'anic, Excellence Based on Blessings (SQU Berkah)." This slogan emphasizes the importance of good manners, reading and writing the Koran using the Qur'an method, focusing on Tahfidz Juz 30, and achieving academic and non-academic learning achievements. This motto has become the branding for the madrasa, reflected in how students say their words loudly, directly and confidently.

The local wisdom program in madrasah is an educational approach that utilizes local values and traditions in the learning process. The social constructivism approach can be applied by connecting students' knowledge about local wisdom with academic concepts. Teachers act as facilitators who help students build knowledge by referring to relevant local examples. This approach involves students solving real problems relevant to everyday life. In local wisdom programs, students can experience local wisdom through traditional practices or cultural activities.

It is essential to understand that implementing the Local Wisdom Program in madrasah must be contextual and to the needs of students and the local community. The integration of local wisdom must be carried out wisely and structured so that educational goals are achieved while maintaining valuable traditional values.

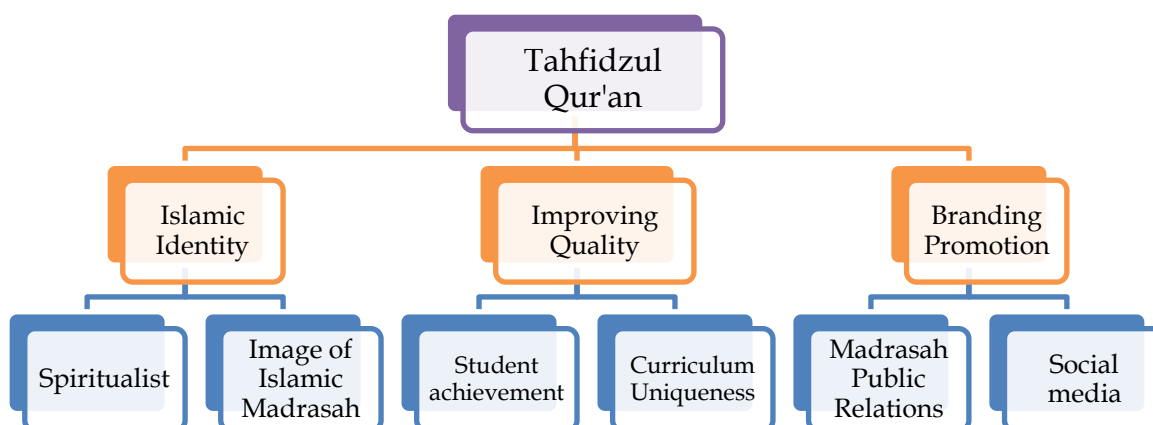
## Extracurricular Programs

Madrasah local wisdom programs are outlined in special extracurricular programs at the madrasah. Madrasah has several extracurriculars, including sports, qori', science, calligraphy, languages, scouting and tahfidz. However, about the local wisdom program, there are only two extracurricular programs that combine local wisdom because the institution focuses on these two programs, which will become the branding of the madrasah in the public arena. The following two programs are explained along with the targets of the program:

**Table 2. MI Miftahul Ulum Branding Extracurricular Program**

No	Type of Activity	Target
1	Tahfidzul Qur'an	The target is for people who have high hopes to make their children hafidz and hafidzah. In the context of this modern era, many parents place more emphasis on religious education, especially memorizing the Al-Qur'an, so this branding is very appropriate in promoting madrasah.
2	Scout	The target is a cultural community, scouting is full of local culture, integrating local wisdom into scouting activities is a positive step to educate the younger generation about the culture, values and traditions that exist in their area

The Tahfidzul Qur'an program at MI Miftahul Ulum is a unique program that aims to help students memorize and master the Al-Qur'an. This program focuses on learning and memorizing verses of the Al-Qur'an using a structured method and is supported by teachers who are competent in tahfidz (memorizing the Al-Qur'an). The Tahfidzul Qur'an program at MI Miftahul Ulum can be a powerful part of the madrasa branding strategy. The following are the advantages that can be obtained with the Tahfidzul Qur'an program, depicted in Figure 1.



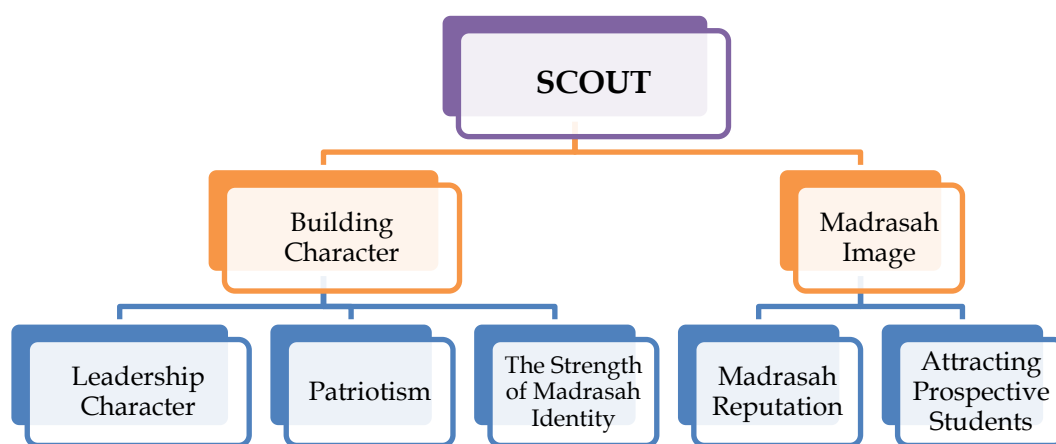
**Figure 1. Involvement of the Tahfidzul Qur'an Program in Madrasah Branding**

Based on interviews with informants, MI Miftahul Ulum demonstrated a solid commitment to integrating Islamic values and the Koran in the Tahfidzul Qur'an program. This step strengthens the identity of madrasah as Islamic educational institutions, fosters a culture of spirituality, and produces students who support Islamic values in everyday life. Islamic identity creates an image of

madrasah as quality institutions that produce young people with noble characters, mastering the Koran and achieving achievements.

The Tahfidzul Qur'an program also improves the quality of students, especially in spiritual, religious and moral aspects. This is attractive to parents looking for a religiously focused education. The quality of students can be seen through academic and non-academic achievements and memorizing the Koran, creating the image of MI Miftahul Ulum as a madrasah that focuses on academic and spiritual excellence.

Apart from that, the Tahfidzul Qur'an program is a vital branding promotional element. Through the involvement of public relations and the use of social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook, MI Miftahul Ulum can promote its programs and reflect local wisdom culture authentically. It is essential to communicate the Tahfidzul Qur'an program clearly and authentically in the madrasa branding strategy, maintaining consistency and quality to strengthen MI Miftahul Ulum's identity and reputation as a superior madrasa in religious and academic education. The second program, scouting (*Praja Muda Karana*), is a strong point in MI Miftahul Ulum's branding strategy. With their basics, madrasah implement scouting as part of their branding strategy.



**Figure 2. Scout Program Involvement in Madrasah Branding**

MM-2 said that Scout extracurricular activities can shape student character by focusing on leadership development (Kartikasari & Mujib, 2020). Through these activities, students are encouraged to become firm, responsible and committed individuals to society. The Scout program also helps students develop a spirit of patriotism, love of the country, and a sense of togetherness with fellow Scout members.

With an active and effective Scout program, MI Miftahul Ulum can strengthen its madrasah identity and create an image of a madrasah that is active, environmentally conscious, and committed to holistic student development. Promotion through activities and events involving Scouts can strengthen the image of madrasah as institutions oriented towards positive and constructive activities. The promotional image of Scouts also contributes to increasing the reputation of madrasah, especially in developing leadership and social service to students.



On the promotional side, the image of Scouts at MI Miftahul Ulum can be an attraction for prospective students interested in developing themselves in leadership, community service and outdoor activities. By optimizing the potential of the Tahfidzul Qur'an program and scouting program, MI Miftahul Ulum can strengthen the identity of its madrasa and increase its positive image among the community. As stated by Rufial (2022), the potential of exciting and unique educational institutions can attract consumer interest in these institutions.

### **Islamic Character Habituation Program**

The habit of reading "Rotibul Haddad" is carried out intensively and continuously at MI Miftahul Ulum. Rotib refers to a series of words or verses that reflect on the greatness of Allah or ask for His blessings. This dhikr, created by Imam Abdullah bin Alawi Al-Haddad, is a means of getting closer to Allah and asking for His protection and blessings (Danendra & Rahmawati, 2022). Rotibul Haddad involves verses from the Koran, prayers, and praise to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad, which can be read individually or in groups at certain times.

SM-3 revealed that the recitation of Rotibul Haddad at MI Miftahul Ulum was carried out every morning at 06.30 WIB, receiving a positive response from the parents. This habit will likely train students to dhikr as an approach to Allah, providing added value that may not be found elsewhere.

9S Culture at MI Miftahul Ulum is the concept of character formation through nine basic principles represented by words that start with the letter 'S'. This concept aims to create a comfortable and conducive madrasah environment. Among the 9S principles are smile, greet, be polite, pray, sholawat, shodaqoh, shoes, and trash.

The implication of the ADDIE theory (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) in this needs analysis is that the institution has implemented four Keller factors: attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. Keller's findings support institutional practices of analyzing student needs and creating relevant programs that build student confidence. However, in the field, there is an additional factor: a vertical approach to getting closer to Allah and achieving positive branding. The implication obtained is to provide extra strength to the institution to achieve the goals of student academic development and positive branding of MI Miftahul Ulum.

### **Program Evaluation**

Evaluation is a form of observation of programs that have been implemented. The evaluation process helps institutions understand the extent of program development and identify deficiencies that can become a reference for improvement in the next step. With guidance from the evaluation results, institutions can redesign plans to improve and strengthen image branding programs through the implementation of inclusive education to increase the institution's competitiveness.

Evaluation includes creating quality assessment standards, collecting relevant information, and applying standards to determine value, quality, benefits, effectiveness, or significance (Mahmudi, 2011). The purpose of the

evaluation is to ensure the level of program achievement towards the desired targets and measure community enthusiasm for the institution's programs.

Program evaluation at MI Miftahul Ulum is carried out objectively and systematically regarding ongoing or completed interventions. Evaluation includes comparing input, output and results against predetermined plans and standards. Evaluation results are integrated with monitoring activities during the program.

SH-1 explained that the evaluation was held monthly at an internal madrasah meeting involving the madrasah head, head of the foundation, committee and teacher council. The focus of the evaluation is to provide input to improve programs that are already running and achieve the initial goal, namely increasing the competitiveness of madrasah by creating a positive image.

FRA-5, as student guardians, actively contributed to the evaluation of the program for using local wisdom as branding in the institution. They monitor children's development, provide direct input to teachers, and coordinate closely with the school.

I-5, as MI Miftahul Ulum Public Relations emphasized, continuous evaluation can increase the program's capacity towards its goals. Good collaboration between madrasa components and student parents in evaluation activities makes the program more conducive and focused, focusing on increasing the competitiveness of madrasah.

Structured institutional management, from needs analysis to program evaluation, makes MI Miftahul Ulum superior and one of the favourite schools in Probolinggo. Branding Image Based on Local Wisdom has helped improve the quality of institutions, as evidenced by the high level of public interest, increasing number of students, and achievements in both academic and non-academic fields.

## CONCLUSION

An institution must build a positive image early to maintain continuity and improve quality. This positive image is essential to strengthen public perception of the institution, form a positive stigma, and choose it as the best place to guide students' development. Branding Image Based on Local Wisdom at MI Miftahul Ulum is an effective strategy for attracting public interest in choosing this institution as the leading choice for their children's education. The program is carried out according to targets, increases the institution's competitiveness, and gives a new colour to MI Miftahul Ulum.

Local Wisdom-Based Branding Image at MI Miftahul Ulum creates a positive image. It attracts public interest by focusing on exclusive religious education, local wisdom, and superior programs such as tahfidzul Qur'an, scouting, Rotibul Haddad reading, and 9S practice. This makes the institution known as a provider of quality education and a cultivator of high spiritual values. The institution's motto, which emphasizes politeness, Qur'anism and blessing-based excellence (SQU Berkah), reflects the institution's unique identity. The favourable implication of the Local Wisdom-Based Branding Image is that MI Miftahul Ulum is a favourite among parents in choosing a place for their children's education, is widely recognized, and is considered capable of producing a quality academic and spiritual generation. This branding image, which is closely linked to

local values, creates an image of the institution as a quality place that positively contributes to students' development. However, it should be remembered that this approach may only be generalized to some madrasah educational institutions due to their different characteristics and environments. Therefore, further research is needed to understand the different cases and characteristics more deeply.

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