



MADRASAH MODERNIZATION: THE KEY ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN BUILDING A POSITIVE IMAGE

Juwita¹, Moh Rifa'i².

^{1,2}Universitas Nurul Jadid, East Java, Indonesia

Email: juwita200222@gmail.com¹, mohrifa`i@unuja.acid²

Abstract:

This research focuses on the modernization of madrasas through optimizing communication to build a positive image of educational institutions. This study was carried out at MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki, using a qualitative approach with a case study research type. Data were collected through observation, interviews with the head of the madrasah, teachers, and students, and documentation. Data analysis follows the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and verification, using content analysis and interpretation methods to explore the relationship between communication practices and institutional image.

The research results show that strategic communication implemented through digital media and direct interaction can increase transparency, share student and alums success stories, and convey superior madrasa programs effectively. This has a positive impact on public perception of madrasas. However, challenges were also found in the consistent delivery of information and use of technology by all stakeholders.

The implication of this research is the importance of integrated communication planning as part of the madrasah modernization strategy to ensure that the community can receive the educational values and innovations that are well.

Keywords: *Madrasah Modernization, Communication, Positive Image*

INTRODUCTION

Although modern communication theory provides a strong foundation for building a positive image of an institution, madrasas in Indonesia still face significant gaps in its implementation. In strategic communication theory, as explained by Bashir et al., (2024) Emmanuel, (2024), effective communication is able to build deep two-way relationships with the audience, improving the image and reputation of the institution. However, the implementation of this theory in the madrasa context is still limited (Marrom et al., 2024)(Ilmi, 2024). Based on this, madrasas that have implemented digital technology, such as online learning systems and social media as a means of communication, still experience negative stereotypes regarding the quality of education which is considered less competitive than public schools(Maman et al., 2021; Rosi et al., 2022). As a result, society tends to have a more conservative perception of madrasas. The discrepancy between existing communication theory and practice in the field indicates the need for more in-depth research to identify concrete ways that communication can function as a tool for building a positive image of madrasas in the modernization process.

Madrasas are often considered as educational institutions that only focus on religious aspects, so they are less attractive to people who prioritize technological and innovation aspects. Even though several madrasas have initiated modernization efforts, the lack of an effective communication strategy at MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki means that these achievements are little known to the wider community. This is not only detrimental to the image of the madrasas but also hinders the progress of modernization that is being pursued. Furthermore, communication is not directed. making the public not understand the vision of madrasa modernization as a whole. This

reinforces the perception that madrasas are institutions that are lagging behind compared to public schools. Therefore, the focus of this research is to explore how strategic communication can be used as the main tool in building a positive image of madrasas in the midst of the modernization process.

Previous research shows that communication plays an important role in shaping the image and reputation of an institution, but specific applications for madrasas are still minimal. Several studies such as those conducted by Ali et al., (2024) Wadi et al., (2023) highlight the importance of technology-based communication in improving the quality of education in madrasas, but does not focus on how this communication builds the image of the madrasa. Research by Khan et al., (2024) Saharani et al., (2024) shows that the use of social media can influence perceptions public towards educational institutions, but this study focuses more on universities and public schools, not madrasas. The position of this research is to fill the existing gap by exploring the application of strategic communication that can help madrasas build a positive image through digital media and two-way communication, which still less explored in previous literature.

This research offers novelty by developing a digital-based communication model that can support the modernization of madrasas. Most existing research focuses more on technical aspects such as curriculum or educational technology, without examining communication as a strategic means for building a positive image of madrasas. Research by Abdul Jaleel et al. , (2024) and Juhaidi, (2024) emphasize the importance of social media in building relationships between educational institutions and the community, but there are no in-depth studies that link the use of digital media to the image of madrasas specifically. The novelty in this research lies in the application of integrated digital-based communication in madrasa strategies to improve the image and acceptance of society towards the modernization process being carried out.

This research aims to answer the main question: How can strategic communication be applied to support the modernization of madrasas and build a positive image in the eyes of the community? Along with the modernization carried out by the MA Miftahul Ulum madrasa, effective communication is very necessary to convey these changes to the community and other stakeholders . Based on research by Suro & Anggraeni, (2024) Sastrawan et al. (2024), social media has an important role in building a positive image of educational institutions, but there is less exploration regarding its application in madrasas. By answering this question, this research will help identify appropriate communication methods. can be used to support the modernization of madrasas, improve their image, and broaden public acceptance of these changes.

Strategic communication, which integrates digital media approaches and two-way communication, can be the key in building a positive image of madrasas that are being transformed. Through open and planned communication, MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki madrasas can introduce themselves as institutions that are relevant to the needs of modern education without lose the religious values they uphold. According to two-way communication theory, as explained by Akhtar, (2024) Nur et al., (2024) Effective communication can create a relationship of mutual trust and improve transparency, which can improve the image of madrasas in the eyes of the public. This argument underlies research that the application of strategic communication, by utilizing digital media and a two-way communication approach, can strengthen the positive image of madrasas and support the success of their modernization process.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to explore more deeply the role of communication in building a positive image at MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki. A qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to understand in depth the phenomena that occur in the field, such as communication practices implemented by madrasas and their impact on the image of madrasas in the eyes of the community. The case study was chosen to focus the analysis on one particular location, namely MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki, which can provide a clear picture of how communication within the madrasah contributes to the image of the institution.

In this research, at MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki, which included school principals, teachers and students as informants. Data will be collected through observation and interviews. Observations will be used to see the communication practices that take place in the madrasah. Interviews with principals, teachers and students will explore their perspectives on how communication affects the image of madrasahs. Documentation, such as promotional materials, activities and madrasa policies, will be analyzed to support research findings. The data analysis process involves stages of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification to ensure the validity of the findings, using methods of content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretation analysis to explore deeper meaning from the data obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Use of digital media for transparency and openness

The use of digital media for transparency and openness at MA Miftahul Ulum refers to the use of digital platforms such as websites, social media, and other communication applications by madrasahs to convey information that is clear, open, and easily accessible to all stakeholders (students, parents, community, and government). This involves announcements of activities, educational policies, as well as academic and non-academic developments of madrasahs that can be viewed in real-time. Through the use of digital media, MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki aims to reduce information uncertainty, strengthen communication with the wider community, and build a positive image based on openness and accountability in the management of educational institutions. This openness also facilitates two-way dialogue between the madrasah and the community, which strengthens relationships of mutual trust and supports the success of the educational programs implemented..

At MA Miftahul Ulum, we realize that transparency and openness of information are very important, both for building good relationships with the community and for supporting the modernization of education. Therefore, we utilize various digital platforms such as madrasa websites, social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to convey relevant information to students, parents, and the wider community. (MF, 2024)

The use of digital media is growing and becoming more effective. We want to continue to innovate in terms of how we communicate with the public. For example, we hope to increase the use of video and podcasts to convey information in a more interactive and engaging way. In this way, MA Miftahul Ulum can continue to be a madrasa that is not only at the forefront in education, but also in terms of transparency and openness of information. (FH.2024)

The use of digital media for transparency and openness at MA Miftahul Ulum reflects the madrasa's active efforts to convey clear and easily accessible information to all stakeholders, such as students, parents, the community and the government. By utilizing platforms such as websites, social media and communication applications, this madrasah seeks to reduce information uncertainty and strengthen relationships of mutual trust through two-way communication. Innovation in the use of videos and podcasts is also a step to increase interactivity and attract audience interest. Researchers assess that this transparency supports the modernization of education and builds a positive image, but its effectiveness really depends on the active participation of the community in utilizing the digital platform. This can be seen from the following table;

Tabel. 1 Use of digital media for transparency and openness

Digital Media	Main Function	Evidence of Implementation
---------------	---------------	----------------------------

Website	Online registration, making it easier for students to register digitally	The web-based application allows new students to register via a digital form.
Social media	Visual documentation of madrasa activities, student achievements, and annual promotional activities.	Posts on Instagram and Facebook display documentation of student competitions, extracurricular activities and superior programs .
WhatsApp	Media for direct communication with students' parents to convey important announcements.	WhatsApp groups are used to convey sudden information such as exam schedules, changes to activity times, and announcements of meeting results.

The use of digital media at MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki reflects a significant step towards communication modernization and transparency. Various platforms, such as websites, social media, and WhatsApp, are used to convey academic information, promote superior programs, and communicate directly with students' parents. The official website is used to share information regarding registration and forms, while social media displays documentation of student achievements and extracurricular activities. In addition, WhatsApp ensures that sudden announcements can be received quickly, strengthening the image of madrasas through promotional videos. By utilizing technology such as an online registration application website for ease of administration, MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki shows continuous efforts to accommodate public information needs efficiently and accountably. This strategy not only increases information accessibility but also builds a relationship of mutual trust between the madrasah and the community.

Gambar 1. Interest Talent Activity Posts



The use of digital media for transparency and openness at MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki functions effectively to improve communication and build trust between the institution and its stakeholders. By utilizing platforms such as social media, madrasas ensure that important information, such as programs, events and administrative updates, is spread quickly and openly. This transparency helps build a sense of community and reduces confusion about school activities. However, there is a possibility of dysfunction if information is managed poorly or misunderstood, which could lead to confusion or misinformation. According to various studies, such as those conducted by La Bella et al., (2021) Kaur et al., (2024), effective digital communication strengthens stakeholder engagement, while poor content management can undermine trust and damage a school's reputation.

The basic structure of digital media communication at MA Miftahul Ulum directly correlates with its aim to encourage openness. The use of digital platforms creates a fast and accessible way to distribute information, which improves the flow of communication between schools and communities. Studies such as those conducted by Martínez-Peláez et al., (2023) and Górska, (2024) emphasize that when educational institutions utilize digital tools, they can reach a wider audience and increase transparency. The cause-and-effect relationship here suggests that effective use of digital media is directly related to higher levels of community engagement and trust. It also correlates with increased public awareness of school activities and achievements, indicating a direct impact on institutional transparency.

b. Sharing Student and Alumni Success Stories

The results of observations at MA Miftahul Ulum show that sharing student and alumni success stories is the main strategy in building student motivation. In the school environment, there are many visual elements such as information boards and murals that display students' success stories. Apart from that, at every routine flag ceremony, the school principal often tells inspiring stories about outstanding students, both in the academic and non-academic fields.

This description shows that success story narratives are an integral part of school culture. The school strategically uses visual and verbal elements to create a motivational atmosphere. The interpretation of these findings is that MA Miftahul Ulum Besuki utilizes success stories to build students' collective identity and create intrinsic encouragement for students to achieve similar achievements.

Tabel 2. Interview Data: Teacher, Student, and Alumni Perspectives on Success Stories

Source person	Interview Quotes	Main Meaning
Guru	"Every time we tell stories about successful alumni, students seem more eager to learn. It gives them real, relevant examples."	Alumni success stories motivate students to study harder.
Siswa	"The story of an alumni who became a successful entrepreneur has inspired me to keep trying."	Alumni stories as inspiration to achieve personal goals.
Alumni	"I want to show my younger siblings that success can be achieved if they work hard."	Alumni feel proud to share their experiences to motivate the next generation.

Alumni success stories have a significant impact on students' enthusiasm for learning, providing them with real examples of success, and creating a sense of pride for alumni who share their experiences. This shows the importance of inspirational communication in building internal motivation in madrasas. Interpretation of this interview shows that success stories have a multidimensional impact: motivation for students, pride for teachers, and a sense of connectedness for alumni. This strategy shows a comprehensive approach in building an educational community that is oriented towards achievement and solidarity.

Sharing success stories of students and alumni at MA Miftahul Ulum has an important role in building a positive image of the institution and motivating current students. Highlighting academic and extracurricular successes not only improves morale but also promotes the value of a school's educational approach. This strategy creates a feedback loop, in which a student's previous achievements serve as evidence of a school's effectiveness. However, if the success stories are not

representative of the entire student body, this can lead to feelings of exclusion or dissatisfaction among other students. According to recent literature, showcasing diverse success stories has a positive impact on both school reputation and student performance (Tzachrista et al., 2023)(Di Pietro, 2023).

The basic structure of promoting student and alumni success is that it strengthens the relationship between a school and its community, creating a continuous cycle of support and engagement. By sharing these stories, MA Miftahul Ulum builds a narrative of achievement that resonates inside and outside the school. Research by Lee et al., (2023) Sahan & Şahan, (2024) shows that alumni stories help strengthen perceptions of high educational standards in schools. The correlation here is that alumni success serves as a reflection of a school's reputation, contributing to a positive feedback cycle that attracts potential students and fosters pride among current students. Additionally, sharing these stories creates a culture of aspiration, encouraging students to follow in the footsteps of those who were previously successful.**Penyampaian Program Featured**

Based on observations made at MA Miftahul Ulum, it was found that superior madrasa programs were delivered through various media, both direct and digital. Some of the superior programs that are often promoted include literacy activities, technology-based skills training, and moral development of students through intensive religious programs. Observations show that information about these programs is routinely displayed on madrasah posters, announced via school loudspeakers, and distributed via official madrasah social media such as Facebook and Instagram. This activity is seen in various corners of the madrasah, where students are actively involved in preparing and implementing these programs. The interpretation is that MA Miftahul Ulum uses a multifaceted approach in delivering superior programs to ensure that the entire school community receives adequate information, as well as showing the institution's seriousness in prioritizing educational innovations that are relevant to the needs of the times.

The results of interviews with madrasa heads and several teachers at MA Miftahul Ulum show that delivering superior programs is an integral part of the management strategy of educational institutions. The head of the madrasah stated, "We want to ensure that each of our superior programs is known to students, parents and the wider community so that the benefits are felt even greater." The students also admitted that social media made it easier for them to understand the advantages of madrasahs. The interpretation is that this interview highlights the importance of combining digital media and traditional approaches to increase the effectiveness of flagship program communications. This shows that there is good synergy between the vision of the madrasah management and the participation of the community.

The delivery of superior programs at MA Miftahul Ulum through traditional and digital channels contributes significantly to the school's visibility and engagement with its community. By highlighting its flagship programs such as literacy initiatives and skills training the school shows its commitment to providing quality education and meeting the evolving needs of students. This strategic delivery works well to strengthen the school's reputation and keep students, parents and the wider community informed and engaged. However, if these programs are not communicated effectively or are not executed well, this can lead to a discrepancy between the school's intentions and the community's perception of the effort. Research by Follmer et al., (2024) Hui et al., (2023) emphasizes that clear communication about superior programs increases a school's impact on the community, while poor implementation can damage credibility.

The structure behind the delivery of superior programs at MA Miftahul Ulum correlates directly with the school's goal of maintaining engagement and transparency with stakeholders. Excellent programs, when communicated well, attract attention and participation from students, parents, and the wider community. Research by Wallace et al., (2024) Salleh et al., (2024) shows that well-implemented programs have a positive impact on community engagement and

trust in educational institutions. The basic structure here is that the more a school communicates its superior programs through various channels, the stronger the relationship with stakeholders. This also correlates with the school's overall image, which is positively influenced by the value and success of these programs. The cause-and-effect relationship is clear in the way effective communication and successful program implementation strengthen the school's reputation and create a supportive learning environment. These three sections demonstrate the importance of transparent and strategic communication through digital media, sharing success stories, and delivering superior programs. By understanding the basic structure and implications of these practices, MA Miftahul Ulum can further strengthen its reputation, increase stakeholder engagement, and increase its overall educational impact.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that modernization at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Miftahul Ulum is greatly influenced by the effectiveness of communication strategies in building a positive image of the institution. The main findings show that the use of digital media, community-based communication approaches, and strengthening relationships with stakeholders are strategic steps in responding to changing times. Planned communication practices have succeeded in increasing public trust in madrasas, as well as breaking the stigma that madrasas are traditional educational institutions that are less relevant to global demands. This research emphasizes the importance of adaptive communication as the foundation of modern madrasa management, while providing practical insight into how to create synergy between traditional values and modern technology..

This research contributes significantly to the literature on the modernization of religious-based educational institutions, by providing a new perspective regarding communication management in madrasas. By highlighting the experience of MA Miftahul Ulum, this study enriches understanding of the role of technology and active community involvement in strengthening the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions. However, this research has limitations in that its scope is limited to one location and has not explored demographic factors such as age and social background of students and parents. To provide a broader picture, further research with greater geographic coverage and more varied methods, such as in-depth interviews or quantitative surveys, is needed. It is hoped that this step will provide a stronger basis for making strategic policies to support the holistic modernization of madrasas.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Jaleel, K. A., Abdul Khader Aneesh, A., Shahid, M., Abdul Rasheed, K. M., Razeena, S., Mubeena, M., & Nubeera, M. (2024). Cultivating Knowledge: A Comprehensive Examination of Madrasa Education System in India. In *The AI Revolution: Driving Business Innovation and Research: Volume 2* (pp. 787–801). Springer.
- Akhtar, J. (2024). Social Justice and Equality in the Qur'ān: Implications for Global Peace. *Edinost in Dialog: Revija Za Ekumensko Teologijo in Medreligijski Dialog*, 79(1), 23–45.
- Ali, M., Aini, M. A., & Alam, S. N. (2024). Integrating Technology In Learning In Madrasah: Towards The Digital Age. *Indonesian Journal of Education (INJOE)*, 4(1), 290–304.
- Bashir, H., Ngoma, M., Ntayi, J., & Balunywa, W. (2024). Strategic Communication Effectiveness in the Ugandan Health Sector: Do Relational Cohesion and Interaction Quality Matter? *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 18(3), 266–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2331005>
- Di Pietro, G. (2023). The impact of Covid-19 on student achievement: Evidence from a

- recent meta-analysis. *Educational Research Review*, 39, 100530.
- Emmanuel, P. E. (2024). AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES FOR THE. *March*, 0–80.
- Follmer, K. B., Sabat, I. E., Jones, K. P., & King, E. (2024). Under attack: Why and how IO psychologists should counteract threats to DEI in education and organizations. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 1–24.
- Górska, A. M. (2024). Navigating the COVID-19 Crisis: Higher Education Institutions and the Three Shades of Social Media Communication. *Sustainability*, 16(9), 3619.
- Hui, C. X., Dan, G., Alamri, S., & Toghraie, D. (2023). Greening smart cities: An investigation of the integration of urban natural resources and smart city technologies for promoting environmental sustainability. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 99, 104985.
- Iلمي, K. (2024). Interpersonal Communication of Madrasah Heads in Increasing Teacher Work Motivation. *Business and Applied Management Journal*, 1(2), 104–117.
- Juhaidi, A. (2024). Social media marketing of Islamic higher education institution in Indonesia: a marketing mix perspective. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2374864.
- Kaur, A., Lodhia, S., & Lesue, A. (2024). Being left behind: disclosure strategies to manage the Juukan Gorge cave blast. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*.
- Khan, S., Hayat, U., Khan, Z., Khan, F., Khan, N. U., & Riaz, M. (2024). Exploring The Motivation And Prospects Of Madrassa Student; A Qualitative Inquiry. *Social Science Review Archives*, 2(2), 107–113.
- La Bella, E., Allen, C., & Lirussi, F. (2021). Communication vs evidence: What hinders the outreach of science during an infodemic? A narrative review. *Integrative Medicine Research*, 10(4), 100731.
- Lee, K. L., Nawanir, G., Cheng, J. K., Alzoubi, H. M., & Alshurideh, M. (2023). Educational Supply Chain Management: A View on Professional Development Success in Malaysia. In *The Effect of Information Technology on Business and Marketing Intelligence Systems* (pp. 2473–2490). Springer.
- Marrom, M. A. N., Roesminingsih, E., Yulianingsih, W., & Khamidi, A. (2024). Public Relations Management in Building the School Image at Sekolah Indonesia Johor Bahru. *International Journal of Emerging Research and Review*, 2(4), 87.
- Martínez-Peláez, R., Ochoa-Brust, A., Rivera, S., Félix, V. G., Ostos, R., Brito, H., Félix, R. A., & Mena, L. J. (2023). Role of digital transformation for achieving sustainability: mediated role of stakeholders, key capabilities, and technology. *Sustainability*, 15(14), 11221.
- Nur, L. A., Maisyaroh, M., & Sunandar, A. (2024). The Role of School Administration Personnel in Building Public Image. *Proceedings Series of Educational Studies*, 276–284.
- Sahan, K., & Şahan, Ö. (2024). Investigating student and alumni perspectives on language learning and career prospects through English medium instruction. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 29(1), 194–215.
- Saharani, L., Sanjani, M. A. F., & Diana, S. (2024). Optimization Of Islamic Values-Based Public Relations Strategy In Increasing New Student Admissions. *Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management*, 6(2), 194–206.
- Salleh, K. M., Sulaiman, N. L., Latif, A. A., & Jamaludin, M. A. (2024). The Impact of Sustainable Development Goals on Local and Community Networks and Opportunities. *Journal of Technical Education and Training*, 16(2), 293–303.
- Sastrawan, D., Ghafur, R. A., & Fauzan, A. (2024). Development Of A Child Friendly Madrasah Management Model Tailored For Islamic Religious Schools: The Case Of Bandar Lampung City Madrasahs. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(5), 760–775.
- Suro, L. A., & Anggraeni, A. F. D. G. (2024). Targeting Educational Quality: The Role of Educator Management Transformation in Enhancing Services. *Business and*

- Applied Management Journal, 2(1), 25–37.
- Tzachrista, M., Gkintoni, E., & Halkiopoulos, C. (2023). Neurocognitive profile of creativity in improving academic performance—A scoping review. *Education Sciences*, 13(11), 1127.
- Wadi, M. H., Malli, R., & Asykur, M. (2023). Digital Age Education Management Strategies in Facing Global Changes in Islamic Education. *Business and Applied Management Journal*, 1(1), 23–36.
- Wallace, J., Williamson, M. M., Delfin, D., Gray, H., Zemke, J., Pierce, S., Jones, E., & Harriell, K. (2024). A Roadmap for Sustainable Community-Engaged Partnerships in Athletic Training and Using a Traveling Athletic Training Camp as an Implementation Strategy. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 59(5), 438–446.