



THE ROLE OF LOCAL WISDOM IN EDUCATION BRANDING: FRAMING AS A STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore the strategy of local wisdom-based branding to enhance the competitive advantage of SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin. Branding rooted in local cultural values is expected to strengthen the identity of this educational institution and increase its appeal in the eyes of the community, especially in the face of increasingly fierce competition in the education sector. The research was conducted at SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin, located in Patokan Village, Bantaran Subdistrict, Probolinggo Regency. This location was chosen because of its community's strong adherence to local cultural values, which play a crucial role in the branding strategy implemented by the institution. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with a case study approach. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, staff, and parents, as well as document analysis related to the branding strategies that have been applied at the school. The data analysis technique employed was thematic analysis, which allows the researcher to identify and analyze significant patterns in the data collected. The aim of this study is to provide an in-depth understanding of how a local wisdom-based competitive advantage framing strategy can be implemented in educational institution branding, and how this strategy affects the image and quality of education at SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin. This study is expected to contribute to the development of effective branding strategies for other educational institutions that aim to strengthen their position amid intense competition in the educational sector. By leveraging local wisdom in their branding, schools can build a distinctive identity that resonates with the values of the surrounding community, ultimately helping them to attract more students and stakeholders. In conclusion, the findings from this research highlight the importance of local wisdom in educational branding as a means of enhancing competitive advantage. By integrating local culture into their branding strategies, educational institutions can not only improve their appeal but also ensure that their values and mission align with the needs and expectations of the community they serve.

Keywords: *Role, Local Wisdom, Educational Branding*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process that will last throughout human life. Education can foster potentials in humans and can develop these potentials in accordance with the values that exist in society. Physical potential and spiritual potential

(Komariah & Nihayah, 2023); (Usman et al., 2024). Education is a dynamic phenomenon and is an effort with noble aspirations, namely to humanize humans themselves according to their nature. This means that education is a necessity that will lead humans to become the best creatures that are meaningful to themselves and become meaningful caliphs for the lives of other creatures (Esmatt, 2024).

The main purpose of education is to educate the nation's young generation so that they are able to compete in the future (Akramova & Khalilov, 2024). In an educational institution, of course, it must have characteristics that can provide differences and colors from other institutions so that these characteristics become a brand that is easily recognized and has its own appeal to consumers (Fakfare et al., 2024). As stated by (Ghufroon, G., et al, 2023) that branding is an interpretation, a set of knowledge and recreation, this is a symbol because in this case it is not the object itself but refers to the object. Furthermore, the physical reality of products, brands and organizations, images including meaning, beliefs, attitudes and feelings towards something (Baharun et al., 2021).

The branding of educational institutions varies. The better the branding, the easier it will be for educational institutions to get consumers and attention from the community. Therefore, educational management is very important, because seeing the development and growth of education is determined by the management skills of educational institutions. This is the task of the Principal and Public Relations in particular to market educational institutions in order to get the image expected by the community (Schlesinger et al., 2023). Branding can be built through various programs and achievements that can be highlighted to outsiders and proclaimed openly. That way the School will have a good Image and be able to compete with other superior schools.

The phenomenon that occurs is that many new educational institutions have sprung up like mushrooms in the rainy season and eventually become fierce competition with old institutions, not infrequently institutions that were established earlier become second choices because new educational institutions are superior in terms of learning management, administration, services and provision of facilities and infrastructure (Suherni et al., 2023); (Al Khozaini & Mundiri, 2024). Therefore, old institutions must be able to strengthen their quality and be able to improve the quality of their institutions so that they are not left behind by new institutions that have superior innovations. This competition is carried out to get as many consumers or students as possible without forgetting the quality of education (Suyitno, 2021).

Competitiveness is the ability or advantage used to compete in a market that has a predetermined target or goal. In competitiveness innovation, continuous improvement evaluations are always carried out so that performance can be improved. KurniawanKurniawan (2021) and Suyitno Suyitno (2021) said that improving quality in improving competitiveness is an activity where the principal, educators, quality improvement teams and stakeholders strive to compete in skills, strengths, knowledge and so on through a focused strategy to improve quality by achieving a certain measure.

With these problems, it is important for institutions to implement Image branding in order to be able to increase the competitiveness of institutions by bringing out superior innovations that can attract consumers (Hidayah et al., 2023). Branding is a collection of associations in the mind of a brand that is stored in the minds or memories of consumers. Then one of the impacts of branding in increasing school competitiveness is the increasing interest in entering the

community and increasing public trust. Therefore, educational institutions must continue to strive to become the most superior institutions to increase public appeal. Every parent should look for the best school for their child.

The facts on the ground at SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin are that this institution still exists to this day, which is worried by several stakeholders and all components involved, namely the indication of a decline in students who choose SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin as a place to gain knowledge. This indication can be seen in the acceptance of new students (PPDB), namely the number of registered students has not increased but is balanced with students who graduate. Thus, this indication requires all stakeholders and components of the institution to work together to innovate so that the concerns felt can be dismissed and remain optimistic in improving the quality and quality of the school.

Various efforts need to be considered and implemented by the stakeholders and all components of the school, namely from the principal, teachers and guardians to improve the quality of the institution (Mukaddamah, 2023). There are many factors that can determine the quality of education in efforts to develop strategies to improve the quality and quality of education by involving school branding (Yang et al., 2024). The branding chosen must be truly on target so that the goals can be met. In an effort to increase the popularity and reputation of the school, the school understands the importance of managing perceptions through branding based on local wisdom in the area (Suherni et al., 2023). The right branding can help distinguish elementary schools from other schools, and provide a unique and attractive identity for the community.

The culture of local wisdom in this era has begun to be raised, especially in the world of education which is interesting and able to achieve goals in establishing closer togetherness (Damopolii et al., 2024). The existence of local wisdom which is increasingly eroded by the times really needs to be brought out to maintain its existence in modern children. Community leaders always uphold the existence of local wisdom in their respective communities to introduce it to children in this era of globalization (Raflesia & Maharani, 2023). This provides an opportunity for the world of education to integrate the characteristics of organizational culture with the local culture in the area of the institution in order to strengthen the bonds of solidarity in the organization.

Many studies on local wisdom-based superiority framing strategies are able to improve institutional branding, including according to Akhmadi, (2022) who said that local wisdom is shown by cultural diversity in each region and has different ways of implementation, attitudes, and habits in an individual or ethnic group which in essence has its own characteristics, the characteristics displayed will become an image or branding in that culture so that it is easily recognized by the wider community. Furthermore, Apriliyanti, Hanurawan, & Sobri, (2021) an organization that is woven with the involvement of local wisdom culture, namely by involving all elements including the involvement of guardians, then basically the involvement of guardians provides benefits in increasing communication between parents, teachers and principals.

Kurniawan & Lutfiana (2023) also stated that the behavior of community members makes it easier to draw conclusions and make good suggestions for improving or changing legal regulations. In this case, local wisdom values occupy a very important place in community groups. Furthermore, Said (2018) said that local culture involved in an organization is carried out in improving the quality culture of schools, the benefits of quality culture are as follows; (1) Quality culture makes a clear distinction between the quality culture of school A and the quality

culture of school B, (2) Quality culture becomes an identity for schools, (3) quality culture greatly helps to grow commitment to schools, (4) quality culture can also strengthen relationships in the social environment.

The novelty in this study is the importance of a local wisdom-based superiority framing strategy in improving the branding of an organization or educational institution. This provides an attraction for researchers to study more deeply the local wisdom-based superiority framing strategy used as a weapon in managing school branding in the eyes of the community which can have an impact on improving the quality and quality of education. The focus of this study is to examine how the local wisdom-based superiority framing strategy improves the branding of SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin in the eyes of the surrounding community.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative descriptive case study (El Hasbi, et al, 2023). This type of descriptive research aims to explore and describe social realities, describing a number of variables related to the problems and units studied. This study aims to obtain an overview of the local wisdom-based superiority framing strategy in improving school branding. The research location was conducted at a private educational institution, namely the Siti Khodijah Islamic Elementary School under the auspices of the foundation, precisely in Kandangjati Village, Kraksaan District and Probolinggo Regency.

The source of information was obtained from several informants who were attached to the research location (Winarni, 2021). The informant sources were the principal (AKH-1), four teachers (LS-2, HR-3, KR-4, KH-5), one TU staff (FD-6) and guardians (GT-7). In the interview, the researcher used free, guided questions to the respondents. In this case, the researcher linked the local wisdom-based superiority framing strategy in improving school branding. Information management in interview techniques can be seen in Figure 1.1.

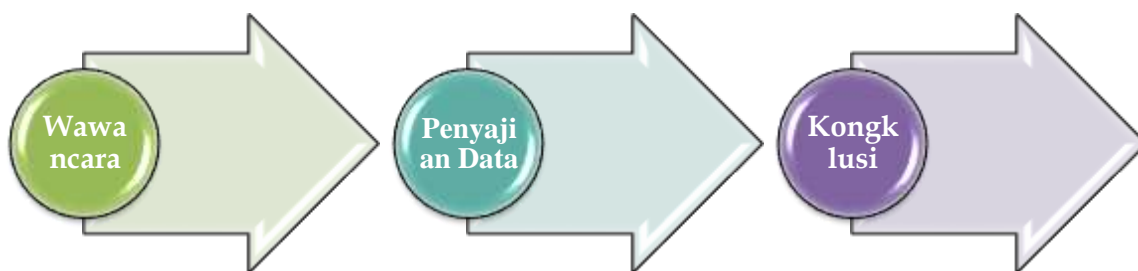


Figure 1. Information gathering techniques

The sequence of data collection techniques was carried out using observation and interview techniques (Sari, M., et al, 2023). The data analysis used by researchers is as follows: (1) Interviews; (2) Data presentation; and (3) Drawing conclusions (Conclusions) or verification. Furthermore, the data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis, which allows researchers to identify and analyze important patterns in the data obtained (Doyle et al., 2020). The analysis process begins with transcription of interview

and observation data, then continues with open coding to identify the main themes that emerge from the data.

Next, axial coding was carried out to connect the themes and understand the relationships between themes. This thematic analysis was chosen because it provides a systematic framework for understanding qualitative data and produces reliable findings (Harahap, 2020). Thus, this analysis technique supports the research objective to examine in depth the unique identity that is easily recognized by the wider community, becoming a favorite school because it is in accordance with the characteristics of the environment, it is easier for schools to improve the quality and quality of schools in accordance with the framing of local wisdom that they have.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that perception management through branding carried out with a local wisdom-based superiority framing strategy at Miftahul Arifin Islamic High School is carried out in the following ways;

Institutional Needs Analysis

Branding analysis is conducted to analyze the needs of the community environment for the school. By analyzing the needs of the school environment, the school can create a brand according to the needs of the environment, this needs analysis is prepared carefully by the institution to support the educational program in the school. This activity is the initial step taken by educational institutions to find out about branding by looking at learning styles, conditions and characteristics of the environment and will later be applied to students. Analysis of preparation and planning is very necessary before starting a new program to make it easier to implement the program. Preparation of a branding program that is prepared carefully as a basis and as a reference for teachers in implementing more focused program activities and running efficiently and effectively.

It was conveyed by AKH-1 that the branding that will be carried out by the institution has been planned for a long time but does not yet have a unique and interesting program. After holding an internal meeting of the school components, ideas emerged to revive branding through a strategy of involving local wisdom in the school environment and adjusted to the characteristics of the school. The initial step for the institution to analyze the needs that need to be prepared in managing perceptions through branding is by conducting two analyzes, the first is an analysis of the branding needs of the institution. Second, an analysis of the branding needs of students. The steps of branding needs analysis are carried out by filling out a questionnaire to see and analyze the needs of the institution and the needs of students obtained from the contents of the answers to the questionnaire.

LS-2's narrative explains two needs analyses in managing school branding. First, the school component conducts an analysis of the school's needs in applying branding, from the results of the discussion with all stakeholders, the school needs analysis found several points including; creating a distinctive motto that contains an impressive but easy-to-remember meaning, completing school facilities and infrastructure in an effort to optimize all learning program activities. The distinctive motto and completeness of facilities and infrastructure can be used as branding by the school towards the public arena (Madu & Kunci, 2022).

Then secondly, the school component conducts an analysis of student needs based on environmental needs, the school distributes and fills out questionnaires for the program of interest by students after being accumulated and the most answers are found, then the local wisdom program will be selected by the school in implementing learning activities and will be used as school branding.

By conducting a needs analysis in high schools, schools are able to provide references to institutions regarding urgent needs planning in efforts to embed school branding. If the institution can provide a targeted needs analysis, the planned program will be easier to achieve the target so that the expected goals can improve the quality of the institution in a better direction (Karindasari et al., 2022).

Completeness of Facilities and Infrastructure

The completeness of school facilities and infrastructure can be an important part of a school's branding strategy (Siahaan et al., 2023). Paying attention to good and complete facilities and infrastructure can reflect the school's commitment to the quality of education and the welfare of students or teachers.

Informant KR-4 said that Islamic High Schools do not forget facilities and infrastructure as an important component in supporting the school branding program. The facilities and infrastructure provided by the school include; having modern educational facilities, such as science laboratories, complete libraries, multimedia rooms, and the latest educational technology, can reflect Islamic High Schools as schools that are committed to innovative and technology-based teaching. Then comfortable and functional classrooms, comfortable, functional, and orderly classes show the school's attention to a conducive learning environment for students and improve their learning experience. Furthermore, sports and creative facilities: Complete sports and creative facilities, such as sports fields, sports halls, and other creative facilities, can reflect schools as places that support students' physical and health development (Lisnawati et al., 2023).

Multipurpose Room and Extracurricular Activities: Facilities that support extracurricular activities and multipurpose rooms that can be used for various activities, such as discussions, seminars, and performances, can reflect the school as a center for activities and character building for students. Green environment and cleanliness, namely maintaining cleanliness and greening the school environment shows the school as a friendly and environmentally friendly environment (Garing et al., 2023).

Security and safety, this school provides a safe and secure school environment that will increase the trust of parents and students in the school as a safe place to learn and develop. By ensuring the completeness and quality of school facilities and infrastructure, Islamic High Schools can create a positive and professional image as an educational institution that is committed to providing the best learning environment for students. This can increase the attractiveness and reputation of the school in the eyes of prospective students and parents, as well as increase the pride and loyalty of students and the school community.

Academic Tradition

New student acceptance ceremony, this institution has a special ceremony tradition to welcome new students who have just been accepted. This ceremony can involve giving school attributes, introducing teachers and staff, and introducing school rules and values. Some academic traditions carried out at the

institution, including; (1) Report Card Acceptance Activities which are carried out at the end of each semester or new school year, this school institution also holds report card acceptance activities involving students, parents, and teachers. In this activity, students' academic results will be announced and student achievements can be recognized. For example, in a speech or debate competition, there may be a tradition of holding a speech or debate competition between students as a means to develop public speaking skills and argumentation skills. (2) Sports Day, namely Islamic High Schools by holding an annual Sports Day or Sports Day where students can participate in various sports activities and games to increase the spirit of sports and togetherness. (3) National Education Day Celebration which is held every year, Islamic High Schools also celebrate National Education Day with various activities such as competitions, seminars, and special events to honor the world of education. (4) Social Service Activities which in practice Islamic High Schools have a tradition of involving students in social service activities as part of leadership learning and community service. (5) National Examination Training and Simulation is very important for educators and students, this activity is carried out before the National Examination, this institution also organizes training and exam simulations to help students prepare themselves better. This academic tradition is part of the school's identity and culture which can strengthen the spirit, togetherness, and pride of students, teachers, and staff at SMA Islam.

Extracurricular Activities Memorizing the Qur'an

The Tahfidzul Qur'an Program in Islamic High Schools is a special program that aims to help students memorize and master the Qur'an periodically. This program focuses on learning and memorizing the verses of the Qur'an with a structured method and is supported by teachers who are competent in the field of tahfidz (memorizing the Qur'an). The Tahfidzul Qur'an Program in Islamic High Schools can be a very strong part of a school's branding strategy. Here are some ways this program can be used as part of school branding; (1) Strong Islamic Identity: The Tahfidzul Qur'an Program shows that Islamic High Schools are schools that are committed to integrating Islamic values and the Qur'an into the learning environment. This strengthens the school's identity as an educational institution based on Islamic teachings, (2) Excellent Academic Achievement: This program emphasizes academic achievement and memorization of the Qur'an, which can improve the image of SMA Islam as a school that focuses on academic and spiritual excellence of students, (3) Improving Student Quality: The Tahfidzul Qur'an Program helps students memorize and understand the Qur'an, which can improve the spiritual, religious, and moral qualities of students. This can be an attraction for parents who are looking for a school that cares about their children's religious education, (4) Culture of Caring for Spirituality: This program shows that SMA Islam has a culture of caring about student spirituality and supports the development of Islamic values in everyday life, (5) Uniqueness in the Curriculum: The Tahfidzul Qur'an Program is a unique feature of the SMA Islam curriculum that distinguishes this school from other schools in the surrounding area. This can attract the attention of prospective students and parents who are interested in a holistic education program, (6) Increasing Parental Involvement: This program can strengthen parental involvement in supporting the religious education and academic development of their children at school, (7) Image as a Quality Islamic School: With this program, schools can build an image as a quality Islamic school that is able to produce a young

generation that is high-achieving, has good morals, and masters the Qur'an, (8) Promotion through social media, especially Islamic high schools can use social media to promote the Tahfidzul Qur'an program and reflect the school's local wisdom culture authentically.

It is important to communicate the Tahfidzul Qur'an program clearly and authentically in the school branding strategy, and ensure that this program is implemented consistently and with quality to strengthen the school's identity and reputation as a school that excels in religious and academic education (Kusuma, 2022). Scouts (Praja Muda Karana) and can be a strong branding program for schools. Here are some ways Scouts can be used as part of a school branding strategy. In building character and leadership with scouting activities, it is an organization that focuses on developing student character and leadership. Through the activities in it, students are invited to become strong, responsible, and committed individuals to the community. Demonstrating a commitment to social care through social service programs, schools demonstrate the institution's commitment to teaching humanitarian values, social services, and caring for others.

Scout Activities

Attracting Prospective Students including; (1) The Scouting Program can be an attraction factor for prospective students who are interested in developing themselves in the areas of leadership, community service, and outdoor activities. Increasing Parental Involvement: Scouting activities often involve parents in supporting student activities. This can increase parental involvement in education and school activities. The image of an active and environmentally aware school that focuses on the Scouting program reflects the image of a school that is active, environmentally aware, and committed to holistic student development. (2) Promotion through activities and events using Scouting as part of various school activities and events can help strengthen the image of a school that is oriented towards positive and constructive activities. Improving the school's reputation through the Scouting program is carried out well and consistently, this can improve the school's reputation as a school that focuses on leadership development and social service. (3) Establishing relationships with the community, namely through the Scouting program, good relationships can be established with the local community, which can have a positive impact on the school's image in the community. Building a sense of patriotism, with the Scout Program helping students develop a sense of patriotism, love for the homeland, and a sense of togetherness with fellow Scout members. (4) Building the strength of school identity means that by having an active and well-functioning Scout program, schools can build a unique and meaningful school identity for students, staff, and the community. It is important to integrate the Scout program into the school's branding strategy in an authentic and convincing way (Sutianah & Siliwangi, 2021). By optimizing the potential and benefits of these programs, Miftahul Arifin Islamic High School can strengthen the school's identity and expand the reach of its positive image among the community.

In addition, there is also a program driven by the school, namely the existence of a language club on a basic scale that has an important goal to integrate local wisdom in branding authentically and not just as decoration. Branding efforts related to local wisdom must be based on appreciation and respect for local culture, as well as active involvement from the community and other related parties.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation is carried out as a form of observation of programs that have been implemented (Setiawan & Hamdan, 2019). By conducting an evaluation, the institution can find out how far the program has developed. This evaluation can also see the shortcomings of the program which can later be used as a reference for improvement in the next step. By having a reference obtained from the evaluation, the institution will redesign the next planning in an effort to improve and strengthen the branding image program through the implementation of an inclusive education program whose goal is to increase the competitiveness of the institution.

Evaluation includes (1) creating standards to assess quality and deciding whether the standards are relative or absolute, (2) collecting relevant information, and (3) applying the standards to determine value, quality, benefits, effectiveness, or significance. IF2 emphasized that the purpose of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which the program's achievement level (Dian et al., 2023) is against the desired target. Through this evaluation, it is also possible to see community respondents' enthusiasm for the institution's program that is currently being promoted in this institution.

A broader definition is that program evaluation is a process to determine the decision areas with certainty, select the right information, collect and analyze the information that will be presented in the form of data that is useful for decision makers. In line with the previous definition, program evaluation is interpreted as a process to explain, collect and disseminate information to describe or understand a program, or make decisions related to the program (Bahari, 2021). Based on field observations, evaluations are carried out as objectively and systematically as possible on an intervention that is planned, ongoing or has been completed. From this evaluation, a comparison of the realization of input, output, and outcome against plans and standards can be found. The evaluation results are obtained during the monitoring activities. Moreover, the evaluation also assesses the results or products that have been produced from a series of programs as a basis for making decisions about the level of success that has been achieved and the next actions needed.

YY said that the evaluation is carried out once a month by holding an internal school meeting attended by the principal, head of the foundation, committee and all teachers, to provide input on the program that is already running. Of course, by still adhering to the initial goal of increasing the competitiveness of the madrasa which is displayed with a positive image package in the institutions in the surrounding environment. MA as a guardian also makes a full contribution by being involved in evaluating the inclusive education program in the institution for our children, we as guardians are very intense in asking about the development of the child and we also provide direct troops to the teacher if there is an imbalance in our child such as lack of enthusiasm for following lessons, being lazy to go to school etc., then we find out by always coordinating with the class teacher and the assistant teacher.

By conducting continuous evaluation, the institution can increase the capacity of the program to be more upright towards the goal. Good cooperation between school components and related parties, especially parents in evaluation activities can manage the program more conducive and more organized in determining the targets to be achieved, namely increasing school competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study highlights the importance of local wisdom-based branding strategies in increasing the competitive advantage of SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin amidst increasingly tight competition in the education sector. In the current social context, many educational institutions are trying to attract public attention with various innovations, but not all of them are able to maintain their identity and inherent cultural values. SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin has successfully demonstrated that integrating local wisdom into institutional branding can strengthen the school's image, making it better known and appreciated by the community, especially those who are close to traditional values.

In reality, people are now increasingly selective in choosing educational institutions, not only considering academic quality, but also the relevance of the institution to the cultural values they adhere to. In the midst of globalization that often erodes tradition, awareness of the importance of cultural preservation is increasing. SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin, which is located in an area with a community that still upholds local wisdom, is able to take advantage of this to build a strong appeal for prospective students and parents, who are looking for an education that respects and integrates local culture.

The qualitative descriptive research method with a case study approach provides an in-depth understanding of how local wisdom-based branding strategies can be implemented and have a positive impact on the image of schools. The results of the study indicate that people tend to choose educational institutions that not only offer academic quality, but are also in line with their local cultural values. The success of SMA Islam Miftahul Arifin in creating a strong identity through local wisdom-based branding is evidence that cultural elements can be a significant differentiator in the increasingly competitive world of education.

Overall, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into how educational institutions can utilize local wisdom to strengthen their position amidst fierce competition. Local culture-based branding strategies not only enrich the educational experience, but also build closer relationships between schools and the surrounding community. This shows that education that is able to integrate modernity and local cultural preservation has great potential to develop and survive in a highly competitive education market.

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