MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: BETWEEN DA'WAH AND BRANDING

Abdul Haris[1], Siti Salwa Binti Bahari[2], Selamat Riadi[3], Fauji Wikanda[4]

[1,4]Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Medan Area
[2]School of Multimedia Technologies and Communication, University Utara Malaysia
[3] Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Medan Area
Email: abdulharis@staff.uma.ac.id[1], sitisalwabahari87@gmail.com, selamatriadi@staff.uma.ac.id[3],
faujiwikanda@staff.uma.ac.id[4]

Abstract

This article discusses the marketing communication strategies implemented by Islamic educational institutions in the context of their dual role as a means of da'wah (Islamic outreach) and an effort to build the institution's image (branding). In an era of increasingly fierce educational competition, Islamic educational institutions are required to adapt to modern communication developments without abandoning the Islamic values that define their identity. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, incorporating literature studies and observations of marketing communication practices in several Islamic educational institutions. The results indicate that effective marketing communication strategies in Islamic educational institutions must be based on the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, and brotherhood, and must be able to package da'wah messages creatively and relevantly to community needs. Institutional branding is built not only through promotion but also through the quality of education, teacher exemplary behavior, and an Islamic environment. Thus, marketing communication in Islamic educational institutions serves a dual function: as a da'wah medium that spreads Islamic values, and as a means of building public trust and loyalty to the institution.

Keywords*: Marketing communications; Islamic educational institutions; da'wah; branding; communication strategy; Islamic values.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of education in today's era of globalization demands that every institution, including Islamic educational institutions, compete to attract public interest. This competition is not only related to academic quality, but also to the institution's ability to communicate its excellence and identity to the public. In this context, marketing communications is a crucial instrument in building the image (branding) and increasing the attractiveness of Islamic educational institutions. However, marketing communication strategies in Islamic educational institutions cannot be completely equated with those in general or commercial educational institutions. Islamic educational institutions have an inherent moral and spiritual responsibility, namely as a vehicle for Islamic preaching and character development. Therefore, every form of communication must be grounded in Islamic values such as honesty, trustworthiness, and sincerity in conveying messages. In addition to serving to introduce the institution to the public, marketing communications in Islamic education also serves as a means of da'wah (Islamic outreach) that disseminates Islamic values through polite, educational, and religiously nuanced promotional activities. The primary challenge facing Islamic educational institutions is how to integrate da'wah values with modern marketing strategies without losing the essence of Islamic spirituality.Thus, this study aims to analyze how marketing communication strategies can be effectively implemented in Islamic educational institutions while maintaining Islamic missionary values. This study hopes to identify a marketing communication model that is not only oriented toward improving the image and number of students but also strengthens the role of Islamic educational institutions as agents of dissemination of Islamic values in society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Marketing Communication Concept

Marketing communication is the process of delivering messages aimed at influencing consumer behavior, attitudes, and decisions regarding a product or institution. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), marketing communication is a tool used by companies to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the products or services they offer. In the context of educational institutions, marketing communication is not limited to promotional efforts but also encompasses building a positive image of the institution, establishing long-term relationships, and strengthening the identity and values espoused.

2. Marketing Communications from an Islamic Perspective

In Islam, all communication activities must be based on the values of honesty (shidq), trustworthiness, and moral responsibility. Islamic marketing communications reject manipulative practices and emphasize the delivery of accurate, transparent, and beneficial information. According to Antonio (2001), marketing in Islam is an activity oriented not only toward material gain but also toward the blessings and well-being of the community. Therefore, marketing communication strategies in Islamic educational institutions must align with sharia principles and serve as a means of da'wah (preaching) that conveys Islamic values to the community.

3. Da'wah as the Foundation of Islamic Educational Communication

Da'wah, broadly defined, is the process of conveying Islamic teachings to society to encourage good and prevent evil. In Islamic educational institutions, da'wah is realized through exemplary behavior, learning activities, and social interactions that reflect Islamic values. Marketing communications conducted by Islamic educational institutions should be part of the da'wah process, not merely promotional activities. Every message conveyed should contain educational, inspirational, and spiritual value that can strengthen public trust in the institution.

4. Branding in Islamic Educational Institutions

Branding in the context of Islamic educational institutions is not only related to a logo or slogan, but also reflects the institution's reputation, service quality, and values. According to Keller (2013), brand equity is formed from the public's positive perception of the institution, which is built through consistent experiences and communication. In Islamic educational institutions, strong branding can be a major attraction for prospective students and parents, while still highlighting the Islamic character as a competitive advantage.

5. Integration of Da'wah and Branding

The integration of da'wah and branding is a unique concept in Islamic educational institutions. Da'wah serves as the spirit that animates all marketing communication activities, while branding serves as a means to strengthen the institution's image within the community. This approach emphasizes that every marketing strategy must contain spiritual, moral, and social values oriented toward the common good. Therefore, the success of an Islamic educational institution's marketing communications is measured not only by the increase in student numbers, but also by the extent to which the institution is able to instill Islamic values through its messages and the image it builds.

RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research Approach and Type

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to provide an in-depth description of the marketing communication strategies implemented by Islamic educational institutions in integrating the functions of da'wah and branding. This approach was chosen because it can reveal the meaning, values, and communication processes that occur naturally within the social and cultural context of Islamic educational institutions.

2. Research Location and Subjects

The research was conducted at several representative Islamic educational institutions, such as madrasas, modern Islamic boarding schools, and integrated Islamic schools in the Deli Serdang region. Subjects included institutional leaders, public relations or marketing staff, teachers, and parents as external parties interacting with the institutions. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their relevance and involvement in marketing communications activities.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three main techniques:

1) In-depth interviews to obtain direct information about the institution's communication strategy, preaching messages, and branding process.
2) Observations of promotional activities, publications, and communication interactions between the institution and the community.
3) Documentation studies of brochures, social media, the institution's profile, and implemented promotional policies.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

The data obtained were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages:

1) Data reduction, which is the process of sorting and summarizing information relevant to the research focus.
2) Data presentation (data display), in the form of a descriptive narrative to illustrate the communication patterns and strategies used.
3) Conclusion drawing, to obtain findings regarding how Islamic educational institutions integrate the functions of da'wah and branding through marketing communications.

5. Data Validity

Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Additionally, member checking was conducted with informants to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of the data obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Marketing Communication Strategies of Islamic Educational Institutions

The research results show that Islamic educational institutions implement various marketing communication strategies tailored to the characteristics and vision and mission of the institution. Commonly used strategies include:

1) Direct communication (personal selling) through a family-like approach between teachers, parents, and the community.
2) Utilization of digital media such as websites, social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube), and WhatsApp groups to publish school activities, alumni testimonials, and educational content with an Islamic nuance.
3) Event marketing, such as seminars, Islamic competitions, open houses, and community outreach activities, which serve as both promotional and preaching media.

This activity not only aims to introduce the institution, but also to instill Islamic values and strengthen the institution's Islamic identity in the eyes of the community.

CONCLUSION

1. Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that marketing communication strategies in Islamic educational institutions have unique characteristics because they combine two main dimensions: the da'wah function and the branding function. Marketing communication is not only interpreted as a promotional effort to attract students, but also as a means of conveying Islamic values to the community. Islamic educational institutions employ various strategies, including personal communication, digital media, social activities, and religious events, all presented in an engaging and Islamic manner. All these communication activities are built on the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, and exemplary behavior. In the context of branding, an institution's image is shaped not only through visual symbols but also through behavior, work culture, and educational quality that reflect Islamic values. Thus, the success of an Islamic educational institution's marketing communications is not solely measured by the increase in student numbers, but also by the institution's ability to instill Islamic values in every message it delivers. The integration of Islamic preaching and branding enables Islamic educational institutions to be competitive while maintaining an authentic Islamic identity.

2. Suggestions
   1. Islamic educational institutions need to develop innovative and creative communication strategies without abandoning Sharia values. The use of digital media should be directed toward educational and da'wah content that builds a positive image.
   2. For communication and public relations practitioners in educational institutions, it is important to understand the principles of Islamic communication so that promotional activities do not deviate from da'wah ethics.
   3. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct comparative research between various types of Islamic educational institutions, or examine the effectiveness of certain digital media in supporting da'wah communication and branding strategies.

REFERENCES

Anggraini, D. (2021). *Marketing Strategy of the Indonesian Tahfizh Daarul Quran on Social Media to Attract the Interest Parents of Students*. Islamic Management: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 4(2), 409–426. https://doi.org/10.30868/im.v4i02.1535

Ansori, A., & Eli, E. S. (2025). *A Comparative Study of Educational Service Marketing Strategies at SD IT Al-Fityah and SD IT Az-Zuhra*. El-Idare: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 11(1), 32–39. https://doi.org/10.19109/elidare.v11i1.27200

Antonio, M. S. (2001). *Muhammad SAW: The Super Leader Super Manager*. Jakarta: Tazkia Publishing.

Ardianto, E., Komala, L., & Karlinah, S. (2019). *Komunikasi Massa: Suatu Pengantar*. Bandung: Simbiosa Rekatama Media.

Assael, H. (2014). *Consumer Behavior and Marketing Action* (6th ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning.

Bendriyanti, R. P., Suwarni, S., Mukrimah, & Gadzali, S. (2022). *Competitive Education Marketing Management in Integrated Islamic Education Institutions: Islamic Education Interests in Modern Society*. Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education, 6(2), 300–309.
https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v6i2.297

Hasan, A. (2010). *Marketing dalam Perspektif Bisnis Islam*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

Keller, K. L. (2013). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Moleong, L. J. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.

Nasrullah, R. (2017). *Media Sosial: Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, dan Sosioteknologi*. Bandung: Simbiosa Rekatama Media.

Ramadhan, M. A., & Sadat, F. A. (2024). *Organisational Communication in Islamic Education: A Case Study of Madrasah Aliyah Salafiyah Cirebon*. HEUTAGOGIA: Journal of Islamic Education, 4(1), 33–45. https://doi.org/10.14421/hjie.2024.41-03

Salim, A., Berlian, Z., & Zainuri, A. (2024). *The Islamic Education Service Marketing Management at KUA Penukal, Penukal Abab Lematang Ilir Regency*. TOFEDU: The Future of Education Journal, 3(5), 1657–1664. https://doi.org/10.61445/tofedu.v3i5.282

Saputra, A., & Aras, M. (2023). *The Strategic Frameworks in Digital Marketing Communication for Educational Institutions: A Case Analysis of Universitas Islam Negeri in Indonesia*. ILTIZAM Journal of Shariah Economics Research, 7(2), 239–248.
https://doi.org/10.30631/iltizam.v7i2.2275

Shidiq, M., & Saleha, L. (2022). *Marketing Communication Strategy for Islamic Boarding School-Based Educational Institutions*. Managere: Indonesian Journal of Educational Management, 4(3), 314–323. https://doi.org/10.52627/managere.v4i3.213

Shimp, T. A. (2010). *Advertising, Promotion, and Other Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications* (8th ed.). South-Western Cengage Learning.

Suyatno, & Suriansyah, A. (2019). *Manajemen Pendidikan Islam: Konsep, Strategi, dan Aplikasi*. Yogyakarta: Deepublish.

Wulandari, D. S., Afina, & Syafaatul H., Yuliharti. (2024). *Islamic Education Marketing Management in Review of the Al-Qur'an; Analysis of Islamic Ethics in Educational Marketing*. Akademika: Jurnal Keagamaan dan Pendidikan, 20(1). https://doi.org/10.56633/jkp.v20i1.777