BRANDING AND DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH MUHAMMADIYAH WALIKUKUN IN THE ERA OF SOCIETY 5.0

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Abstract

The development of the Society 5.0 era requires educational institutions, including madrasas, to adapt to digital dynamics to increase competitiveness. This article aims to analyze branding and digital marketing strategies that can be applied by madrasas in facing challenges and opportunities in the current era. This study uses a qualitative approach with literature study methods and secondary data analysis. The results of the study show that strengthening branding through visual identity, superior values, and consistent narrative can build a positive image of madrasas. Meanwhile, the use of digital marketing such as educational content on social media, search engine optimization (SEO), and the consistency of data-driven "campaigns" can expand reach and interaction with the public. The combination of these two strategies not only increases the visibility of madrassas but also encourages stakeholder participation in creating a competitive education ecosystem. The implications of this research provide practical guidance for madrasah managers in designing effective communication strategies in the midst of digital transformation.

Keywords: Branding, Digital Marketing, Madrasah, Competitiveness, Society 5.0

Abstrak

Perkembangan era Society 5.0 menuntut lembaga pendidikan, termasuk madrasah, untuk beradaptasi dengan dinamika digital guna meningkatkan daya saing. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi branding dan digital marketing yang dapat diterapkan oleh madrasah dalam menghadapi tantangan dan peluang di era terkini. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur dan analisis data sekunder. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguatan branding melalui identitas visual, nilai unggulan, dan narasi yang konsisten dapat membangun citra positif madrasah. Sementara itu, pemanfaatan digital marketing seperti konten edukatif di media sosial, optimasi mesin pencari (SEO), dan konsistensi "kampanye" berbasis data dapat memperluas jangkauan serta interaksi dengan masyarakat. Kombinasi kedua strategi ini tidak hanya meningkatkan visibilitas madrasah tetapi juga mendorong partisipasi stakeholder dalam menciptakan ekosistem pendidikan yang kompetitif. Implikasi penelitian ini memberikan panduan praktis bagi pengelola madrasah dalam merancang strategi komunikasi yang efektif di tengah transformasi digital.

Kata kunci: Branding, Digital Marketing, Madrasah, Daya Saing, Society 5.0

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the sectors most affected by technological developments in the Society 5.0 era. This era is marked by the integration of technology in daily life, including in the world of education. Madrasah as an Islamic educational institution has a big challenge to remain relevant in the midst of these changes. Modern society tends to seek information about educational institutions through digital platforms, so madrasas must be able to build a

positive image through branding and digital marketing (Laily Nuril Ayunisa, 2022). Without the right strategy, madrassas risk losing competitiveness compared to public or international schools that are more adaptive to technology.

Etymologically, the term madrasah comes from the Arabic word which means "place of learning" or "educational institution". In the context of Islam, a madrasah is defined as a formal educational institution that integrates Islamic religious knowledge with general knowledge (Rahmawati et al., 2023). In contrast to Islamic boarding schools that tend to be traditional and focus on teaching the yellow book, madrasas generally have a more organized curriculum structure with a clear division of education levels such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (elementary school equivalent), Tsanawiyah (junior high school equivalent), and Aliyah (high school equivalent). The main characteristic of madrassas lies in the emphasis on the formation of people of faith and piety through a holistic educational approach (Irham, 2017).

The Society 5.0 era has transformed the global education paradigm by integrating digital technology into all aspects of learning. In Indonesia, this change requires educational institutions, including madrasas, to adapt to maintain competitiveness. However, the facts on the ground show that many madrassas are still lagging behind in terms of branding and digital marketing management compared to public or private schools (Kinanti & Trihantoyo, 2021). In fact, in the midst of increasingly fierce competition, madrasas need to build a strong image and utilize technology to attract the interest of prospective students and stakeholders. This condition indicates a theoretical gap, namely the lack of studies that integrate contemporary branding concepts, digital marketing strategies, and Islamic values holistically in the context of increasing the competitiveness of madrasas.

Longitudinal studies prove that institutions that are consistent in implementing marketing strategies based on market analysis show 25-40% higher revenue growth than their competitors. The concept of value proposition in marketing theory explains how an institution should be able to communicate different and relevant added value to the needs of the target market (Iswati et al., 2023). In an environment full of uncertainty, data-driven marketing capabilities have become the key differentiator between successful and lagging institutions. The use of big data and consumer analytics allows institutions to perform more accurate segmentation and personalization of services (Janice & Franklozadapucpredu, 2020).

Empirical findings show that the implementation of marketing automation combined with artificial intelligence can increase the efficiency of marketing campaigns by up to 60% (Permatasari & Adinugraha, 2021).

The fundamental problem (problem content) faced by madrasas is the limited understanding of the essence of branding. Many madrassas still consider branding to be just the creation of a logo or slogan, without realizing that branding includes identity formation, value differentiation, and management of public perception (Maulana et al., 2022). In addition, the lack of literature that discusses systematic approaches in digital marketing for madrasas, such as audience segmentation, competitor analysis, and campaign evaluation, causes many digital marketing efforts to run without careful planning. As a result, the potential of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has not been optimally utilized to promote the excellence of madrasas.

Furthermore, Society 5.0 demands not only the adoption of technology, but also the ability to create added value through the integration of science, digitalization, and religious values. Unfortunately, few madrassas have developed innovative programs such as sharia-based science labs or technology classes with an Islamic perspective, which can be a differentiator in the education market. The lack of collaboration with the community or educational influencers also weakens the position of madrasas in competition (Nilna Azizatus Shofiyyah, Haidir Ali, 2019).

It is related to the optimization of digital platforms that are still not being utilized optimally. Only 32% of madrassas have enabled business features on their social media accounts, even though a comparative analysis shows that pilot madrassas that use integrated online registration features have seen a 30% increase in conversions. The integration of an automated response system through WhatsApp Business with structured information templates has also been proven to increase the efficiency of administrative services by up to 40% (Hakiki, 2018).

This research is needed to fill the theoretical gap by formulating a contextual branding and digital marketing strategy framework for madrasas. Its practical significance lies in operational recommendations that combine modern marketing principles, digital technology, and Islamic identity, so that madrasas can not only survive but also excel in the era of Society

5.0. Through this research, it is hoped that a branding and digital marketing strategy model can be found that can be adopted by other madrasas. In addition, the findings of this research can also be a reference for stakeholders in developing technology-based education policies, as well as making a real contribution to the development of Islamic education in the digital era.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach. The qualitative method was chosen because this study aims to explore the phenomenon of branding and digital marketing in madrasas in depth. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with madrasah heads, teaching staff, and the public relations team responsible for branding and digital marketing. In addition, direct observations were carried out to see the implementation of the strategy in the field. A case study was conducted on madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun that has successfully implemented branding and digital marketing strategies. The selection of madrasas is based on their reputation in society as well as active and creative digital activities.

Additional data is obtained through document analysis, such as annual reports and madrasah social media. Data analysis is carried out by data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques to produce comprehensive findings (Abubakar, 2021). The validity of the data in this study was obtained through triangulation of sources and methods. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing data from various respondents, while method triangulation is carried out by combining the results of interviews, observations, and document analysis (Abdussamad, 2021). With this approach, it is hoped that the results of the research can provide an accurate and relevant picture of branding and digital marketing strategies in madrasas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of madrassas as an Islamic educational institution can be traced back to the Middle Ages, precisely during the Seljuk Dynasty in the 11th century. The madrasah education system at that time was developed by Nizam al-Mulk by establishing the Nizamiyah

Madrasah in Baghdad as a leading center of Islamic science. This model then spread to various Islamic territories, including to the archipelago through the process of cultural and religious acculturation. In Indonesia, madrassas began to grow rapidly in the early 20th century in response to the educational needs of Muslims who wanted to combine religious and general knowledge. Its development cannot be separated from the role of Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama which modernize the traditional Islamic teaching system (Hafidz, 2021).

In terms of curriculum, madrasas have a peculiarity in the division of learning portions. The madrasah curriculum generally consists of 30% Islamic religious subjects (such as Al-Qur'an-Hadith, Fiqih, Moral Faith, and Islamic Cultural History) and 70% general subjects according to the standards of the Ministry of Education. This composition shows the madrasah's efforts to fulfill two goals at once: to form a strong Islamic character while preparing students to face the challenges of the modern world. However, in practice, this proportion often varies depending on the vision of each madrasah and the policies of the organizing foundation (Munjiat, 2021).

The organizational structure of madrasas generally consists of the head of the madrasah, the teacher council, and the madrasah committee which plays a role in strategic decision-making. The management system adopts a modern school management model but with an adjustment of Islamic values. Meanwhile, the financing aspect of madrasas in Indonesia is hybrid, combining funding sources from the government (through the Ministry of Religion), organizing foundations, and community donations. This pattern causes significant variations in the quality of madrasas between one region and another (Sabil & Diantoro, 2021). In the socio-cultural context, madrasas play a dual role as educational institutions as well as centers for community development. Many madrassas in rural areas have become locomotives for social change through community empowerment programs and community studies. Another uniqueness lies in the value system developed, where the relationship between teachers and students is not only academic formal but also contains elements of spiritual and moral development (Karimah, 2018). This approach results in a typical educational climate, different from public schools in general.

Recent developments show that there are dynamics in the madrasah education system. Various policies such as the integration of madrassas into the national education system and superior madrasah programs have changed the landscape of contemporary madrasas. Modern challenges such as quality standardization, teacher competency improvement, and adaptation to scientific developments continue to be the main concerns in the development of today's madrasas. However, the essence of madrasah as a character education institution based on Islamic values is still maintained as the main spirit of its implementation (Sinaga, 2016).

Madrasah as a sub-system of Indonesia's national education system has peculiarities in terms of legality and management. The legal status of madrasas is recognized as equivalent to public schools based on the National Education System Law, but its implementation is under the guidance of the Ministry of Religion. This dualism of the system creates its own challenges in terms of quality standardization and equitable distribution of facilities. Nevertheless, madrassas have proven their significant contribution to expanding access to education, especially for Muslim communities in areas where quality education services have not been reached (Bank, 2015).

From a philosophical perspective, madrasas carry out the mission to realize the concept of tawhidic paradigm in education, which is a worldview that unites spiritual and intellectual dimensions. This approach is reflected in daily learning practices that always associate science with divine values. This characteristic distinguishes madrasas from secular education models in general, as well as being an added value in the formation of students' personalities that are intact and with integrity (Rufaidah Salam, 2021).

In the context of increasingly complex institutional competition, marketing strategy has evolved into a crucial element that determines the sustainability and growth of an organization. The resource-based view theory explains that an institution's competitive advantage does not depend only on physical resources, but rather on the ability to manage intangible assets such as reputation and relationships with stakeholders (Susanti et al., 2023). Research shows that institutions with integrated marketing strategies tend to have a better level of adaptation to changes in the business environment. The modern marketing approach

is no longer just focused on product promotion, but has evolved into a holistic relationship management system with all stakeholders (Muttaqin et al., 2022).

The development of the concept of strategic marketing emphasizes the importance of alignment between the institution's internal capabilities and external opportunities. SWOT analysis as a strategic planning tool is the basis for identifying competitive advantages that can be developed into unique positioning (Jamieson, 2011). The sustainability aspect of marketing strategy has also received special attention in the latest literature. The concept of triple bottom line (people, planet, profit) has shifted the marketing paradigm from a mere profit orientation to sustainable value creation. Research across sectors shows that institutions that integrate social, value, and environmental principles in their marketing strategies tend to earn higher levels of loyalty from consumers (Spinoglio, 2020).

Digital transformation has brought fundamental changes in the institutional marketing ecosystem. The concept of omnichannel marketing demands seamless integration between various touchpoints and consumers. Case studies in the education and professional services industry prove that institutions that successfully adopt a digital-first approach experience a significant increase in market share (Madan & Rosca, 2022). Nevertheless, the research findings also remind that technology is only an enabler, while the key to success remains in the power of strategy and creativity of execution. Adapting to new platforms such as the metaverse and artificial intelligence is a challenge as well as an opportunity for institutions to remain relevant in the future. Competitive dynamics theory underscores that marketing advantages are temporary and constantly evolving. Institutions need to develop dynamic marketing capabilities that enable the acceleration of innovation and strategy adaptation (Išoraitė, 2018). The literature review concludes that sustainability competitive advantage in the digital era can only be achieved through a combination of strategic acumen, organizational agility, and depth of market insight (Zia et al., 2021).

Branding in the context of education has undergone a significant evolution from a mere visual identity to a complex value system. In the perspective of Islamic education, the branding of madrassas should reflect the integration between academic excellence and spiritual values. Research shows that educational institutions that successfully build strong brands tend to have a clear and consistent institutional narrative. This is in line with the

concept of brand equity which emphasizes the creation of positive associations in people's minds (Dhuhani, 2018). The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the landscape of education branding. Social media platforms are now the main medium in building the image of the institution. There is a case study that shows that madrassas that actively produce educational content with Islamic nuances tend to be more easily recognized by the public. The storytelling approach through short videos and infographics has proven to be effective in increasing engagement with prospective students and parents (Ramli, 2018).

The main challenge in madrasah branding is to create a clear differentiation in the midst of competition with public schools, namely through the development of brand positioning that combines the advantages of religious curriculum with science-technology competencies (Krisdiyanto et al., 2019). Unique learning experiences such as the integration of Islamic values in learning can be a strong value proposition. However, consistency of implementation is key to the success of this strategy. The concept of madrasah competitiveness in the contemporary era has gone beyond conventional parameters such as national exam scores. In the framework of Society 5.0, madrasas are required to develop educational models that are responsive to technological and social changes. Some key indicators include curriculum adaptability, educator quality, and utilization of learning technology. Comparative studies show that madrassas that have successfully transformed digitally tend to be more in demand by the millennial generation (Sadali, 2020).

Cultural factors also play an important role in building the competitiveness of madrasas. Research reveals that madrassas with the strengthening of Islamic character integrated with global competence show significant development (Angga, 2019). This approach includes the development of soft skills such as leadership and critical thinking that are framed in Islamic values. However, challenges arise in terms of quality standardization given the heterogeneity of madrassas in Indonesia. In addition, the collaboration aspect is a crucial component in increasing the competitiveness of madrasas. Strategic partnerships with the halal industry, universities, and communities can enrich students' learning experiences. Several leading madrassas have proven that structured internship and community service programs are able to increase the relevance of graduates in the job market (Muhamad

Suparji, Putri Wahyu Utami, 2021). However, its implementation requires adequate policy and infrastructure support.

On the other hand, the political dynamics of education also affect the competitiveness of madrasas in the national education ecosystem. Some experts observe that strengthening regulations and proportionate budget allocation can reduce the quality gap between madrassas and public schools. Initiatives such as digitization of administration and project-based learning are starting to show positive impacts. However, accelerating this transformation requires the commitment of all stakeholders in a sustainable manner (Karsono, Purwanto, 2021). The development of madrassas in Indonesia in utilizing technology for marketing still shows a significant disparity between urban and rural areas. Data for 2023 reveals that only about 35% of madrassas in Indonesia have an official website with full features, while most still rely on basic social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. In fact, a survey of parents of prospective students showed that 68% of respondents preferred to seek information about madrasas through digital platforms before making a registration decision (Dacholfany et al., 2024). This fact indicates that there is a gap between the community's need for access to digital information and the readiness of technological infrastructure in many madrasas.

Leading madrassas in urban areas have begun to adopt more structured digital marketing strategies. Several madrassas in big cities are actively using data analytics to optimize their marketing content, such as adjusting posting times to audience habits or using strategic keywords in online campaigns. However, field research reveals that only 12% of madrassas have a dedicated team to manage digital marketing, while most leave this task to teachers or administrative staff who do not have a specific background in the field of information technology (Dacholfany et al., 2024). This condition certainly has an impact on the effectiveness of the marketing strategy carried out. A positive trend can be seen in the use of social media as the main marketing tool of madrasas. Instagram and YouTube are the dominant platforms with the highest engagement rates, especially for madrasah profile video content, alumni testimonials, or documentation of learning activities. Unfortunately, such content is often produced sporadically without long-term planning, making it difficult to build

consistent branding. Without strategic measures, madrassas risk lagging behind in the increasingly competitive digital era.

The success of madrasah branding begins with the formulation of a strong and different core message. Madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun as a case study has succeeded in building a unique identity through the tagline "Madrasah Unggul Based on Intellect, Morals and Technology" which is consistently reflected in all its communication activities. This main message succeeded in distinguishing the madrasah from its competitors because it combined traditional Islamic values with modern competencies, creating a clear positioning in the minds of the people. In the aspect of creative content, this study found that madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun madrasah that actively produces visual content tends to reach young audiences more easily. Short videos of 1-3 minutes that show students' daily activities such as digital tahfiz programs or science practicum with an Islamic approach have been proven to get high engagement. Testimonials of alumni who are now successful in certain professional fields are also mainstay content that is able to build the trust of prospective parents of students.

This research also reveals the importance of a systematic approach in managing madrasah digital content. Data shows that madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun implements calendar-based content planning with a composition of 70% educational materials, 20% institutional achievements, and 10% interactive content. This has an impact on an average increase in engagement of 45% in one semester. This proportional division allows madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun to remain consistent in conveying core values while responding to the dynamics of stakeholder information needs. Analysis of demographic data reveals significant patterns of audience behavior. The measurement results showed that 72% of website visits occurred at 18.00-21.00 WIB with an average duration of 4 minutes and 32 seconds, while social media interaction actually peaked during school break hours (10.00-12.00 WIB). These findings indicate the need for different content scheduling strategies based on the platform and the characteristics of its audience. Meanwhile, digital optimization through SEO provides results for madrasah online visibility. Madrasah that routinely publishes articles with strategic keywords such as "the best modern Islamic boarding school" or "intellect-based Islamic school"; "moral-based Islamic schools";

"technology-based Islamic schools" experienced an increase in organic traffic by 40-60% in a period of 6 months. The use of analytics tools such as Google Analytics helps madrasah teams understand the behavior of website visitors, including the most desirable content and the main sources of traffic.

The main challenge faced by madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun is the limitation of human resources who master digital marketing professionally. The lack of operational budget is also an obstacle in producing consistently high-quality content. However, the study found a solution opportunity through collaboration with local universities for teacher training programs or student internships majoring in digital communication. In the context of digital capacity building, the research documents innovative collaboration models between madrasas and universities. This mutually beneficial partnership scheme allows madrassas to gain access to digital training and infrastructure without significant cost burdens, while universities through internships gain a trial space for edtech products based on Islamic values.

The case study of Madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun shows how an integrated approach can yield real results. Through a #NgajiKoding campaign that combines religious learning with basic programming, the madrasah managed to increase its Instagram followers from 500 to 4,000 within 8 months. An equally important aspect that emerged in the research was the existence of sharia filters in every digital content. Madrasah ibtidaiyah muhammadiyah walikukun formed a special team to ensure all promotional materials were in accordance with Islamic values, from the selection of images to the narrative used. This approach is an added value that strengthens the image of madrasah as an institution that is consistent with its Islamic identity.

This research shows that the digital transformation of madrassas does not only require the adoption of technology, but rather a change in mindset in communicating with stakeholders. The balance between digital innovation and the preservation of Islamic values is the main key in building a madrasah that is relevant in the modern era while still maintaining its main characteristics as an Islamic educational institution. A crucial aspect that emerges in the in-depth analysis is the need for an integrated approach in the digital transformation of madrasas. This transformation is not only about technology adoption, but also requires a

paradigm shift in content management, strategic scheduling, and collaborative ecosystem building. The findings of this study further confirm that the success of madrasah digitalization depends on the balance between technological innovation and the preservation of Islamic values as the foundation of institutional identity.

CONCLUSION

The competitiveness of madrasas in the Society 5.0 era is highly dependent on the ability to manage branding and digital marketing professionally. The implementation of branding and digital marketing strategies in an integrated manner can increase the competitiveness of madrasas in the Society 5.0 era. Islamic values must be the foundation of communication strategies to distinguish madrasas from other educational institutions. Through strengthening a consistent brand identity and Islamic-based superior values, madrasas are able to build positive differentiation in the midst of educational competition. On the other hand, the use of digital marketing, such as creative content on social media, SEO optimization, and data-driven strategies, allows madrasas to reach a wider audience and increase interaction with the community. The collaboration between strong branding and an adaptive digital approach not only strengthens the institution's reputation but also encourages the active participation of stakeholders in the development of madrasas. These findings provide practical implications for madrasah managers to adopt digital communication innovations while maintaining religious values as a strategic foundation. Through branding and digital marketing strategies, madrasas can remain relevant and competitive in answering educational challenges in the future.

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