



Marketing of Educational Services in Increasing Customers at Madrasah

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Abstract

This study explores the marketing strategies of educational services and their influence on student enrollment at MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa, an Islamic junior high school in Indonesia. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observations, interviews with school leaders and teachers, and documentation analysis. The findings highlight a three-stage marketing process comprising planning (community outreach and distribution of promotional materials), organizing (establishment of a school-based marketing team), and implementation (building trust through community engagement). These strategies have proven effective in attracting new students and enhancing the institution's visibility. The study contributes to the limited literature on educational marketing in Islamic schools by offering practical insights into localized and community-centered approaches. It underscores the importance of strategic planning and relationship-building in improving public perception and institutional growth. The implications of this research are relevant for school leaders seeking sustainable enrollment strategies in increasingly competitive educational environments.

Keywords: Educational service marketing, student recruitment, community engagement, qualitative study.

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing is a social and managerial process that allows individuals and groups to get what they need and want through the creation and exchange of valuable products (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the context of education, marketing is not only interpreted as promotion, but also as a strategic process to build the image of the institution and create value for students and society. Educational institutions today need to understand that they operate in a competitive environment, where the quality of services and the uniqueness of the institution are important factors in attracting public interest (Tjiptono, 2015).

Education is a basic need of every individual that has a direct impact on the development of human potential and quality of life. Therefore, educational institutions are required to not only provide academic services, but also build strong relationships with their stakeholders through quality services and customer satisfaction oriented (Mulyasa, 2013). When the quality of service is not managed properly, public trust in educational institutions can decrease. In this case, marketing plays an important role in bridging the gap between public expectations and the offerings owned by educational institutions.

Madrasah as a form of Islamic educational institution has its own challenges in dealing with the dynamics of competition between schools. The existence of madrasahs, which is often considered as a second choice, encourages the need for an adaptive marketing strategy that is relevant to the needs of the surrounding community (Yusuf, 2019). The marketing strategy carried out must be able to introduce the typical advantages of madrasahs, such as Islamic values, moral integrity, and a religious learning environment. In addition, a local and personal approach is important so that madrasahs can adjust to the social and cultural context of the local community.

The implementation of marketing strategies in educational institutions includes several important elements, including market segmentation, positioning, product adjustment (educational services), and targeted promotion and communication. From the perspective of service marketing, education is seen as an intangible form of service, so that customer experience, relationship quality, and student satisfaction become the benchmark for the success of the marketing (Tjiptono, 2015). Therefore, the management of a school or

madrasah must be able to design and implement a comprehensive marketing strategy, not only focusing on increasing the number of students, but also building the loyalty and reputation of the institution in the long run.

Departing from this background, this study aims to examine the marketing strategy of educational services applied at MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa, a madrasah located in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. This research is important to understand how planning, organizing, and implementing marketing strategies are carried out in real terms in the field, as well as how these strategies have an impact on increasing the number of students. By using a qualitative approach, this research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to marketing management in educational institutions, especially local community-based private madrasahs.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the marketing strategies used by MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa in increasing student enrollment. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of real-life practices, social interactions, and institutional strategies related to educational service marketing within the natural context of the school environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted at MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa, located in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The selection of this site was based on its relevance to the research focus, namely a community-based Islamic school implementing structured marketing efforts. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants who were directly involved in or knowledgeable about the school's marketing strategies. These participants included the school principal, a vice principal, and teaching staff.

Data were collected using multiple methods: (1) Observation, to gain contextual insights into the school's promotional activities and engagement with the community; (2) Semi-structured interviews, to capture the perspectives of key informants on the planning, organization, and implementation of marketing strategies; and (3) Document analysis,

involving school brochures, enrollment data, and administrative records to triangulate the findings.

To ensure data quality, triangulation of data sources and collection methods was applied. Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involved data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation. The process began with organizing the raw data, followed by identifying meaningful patterns and themes related to educational service marketing. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, member checking and peer debriefing were also conducted.

This research did not formulate or test hypotheses but instead aimed to provide rich, contextualized insights. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, and securing institutional permissions before fieldwork.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study show that the marketing strategy for educational services at MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa is carried out gradually and systematically. The first stage found is marketing planning. Madrasah heads and teachers develop promotional measures informally but intensively, relying on experience and direct involvement in the community. In an interview, the principal stated that the promotion was carried out door-to-door, visiting people's homes, with the aim of introducing the advantages of madrasah and creating a personal impression to prospective students and their parents.

In addition, teachers and students who are members of the Student Council are also involved in the socialization process. They visited primary schools around the madrasah to distribute brochures and explain about the learning environment at MTs Al-Mukrimin. This shows that the planning element in marketing in this madrasah is not only carried out by the leadership, but also collaborative, involving all components of the school. This activity not only has an impact on increasing public interest, but also strengthens the students' sense of ownership of their institution.

From the results of observations in the field, it is known that madrasas do not have digital promotional media or active online platforms. Instead, they rely more on verbal communication, social relationships, and physical presence in the community as their main marketing tools. This is quite effective considering the geographical and cultural context of the surrounding community which still highly values a direct and informal approach. Madrasas position themselves as institutions that are "close to the people", and this approach is a selling point in itself.

In the organizational aspect, it was found that the organizational structure of the madrasah also facilitated this marketing strategy. No special team was formally formed, but the responsibility for promotion was shared among the head of the madrasah, homeroom teachers, and the student council administrators. The principal plays the role of the main coordinator, while teachers and students carry out field activities. Although it is not written in the official structure, this practice shows that madrasah organizations are quite adaptive and flexible in managing marketing tasks.

The organization also includes internal strategies to maintain good relations between school residents. During promotional activities, teachers not only introduce academic facilities or programs, but also emphasize aspects of character building and religious education. This is the main selling point of madrasas which is believed to be a differentiator from other institutions. The messages conveyed during the promotion emphasized spiritual excellence, discipline, and a conducive learning atmosphere.

Furthermore, at the implementation stage, the madrasah actively involves itself in various social activities of the community, such as religious activities, recitations, and village events. This involvement is not solely a form of worship or social service, but also serves as a cultural marketing channel. By building an image as an institution that is present in people's lives, madrasas form strong emotional connections with potential educational customers.

One concrete example of implementation found is the "Safari Ramadan" activity which involves teachers and students to give lectures and compensation to mosques in the surrounding villages. This activity not only increases the existence of the madrasah, but also

shows the social and religious values that are upheld by the institution. This activity is seen by the community as a positive indication that madrasahs play an active role and bring social benefits, thereby strengthening the image of the institution.

In addition, an interview with one of the teachers showed that the harmonious relationship between the madrasah and parents is one of the determinants of parents' decisions in choosing a school. The madrasah seeks to build two-way communication with parents through homeroom forums, joint recitations, and community-based information systems. This reinforces the finding that the implementation of marketing is not only in the form of product promotion, but also involves the maintenance of long-term relationships with educational consumers.

Data from internal madrasah documents also show an increase in the number of new students in the last three years, even without paid advertising or digital promotion. This indicates that marketing strategies based on relationships and social closeness are highly effective in areas with communal characteristics. Parental satisfaction and informal dissemination of information through word-of-mouth have proven to be the main strength of marketing in this madrasah.

Overall, the results of this study show that the marketing strategy of educational services implemented by MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa is non-commercial, participatory, and value-based. The approach used emphasizes emotional closeness, social services, and the collective participation of school residents and the community. This strategy has succeeded in increasing the number of students, building a strong image, and strengthening the position of madrasahs as a relevant and accepted institution in the community.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the marketing of educational services at MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa is greatly influenced by the local social and cultural context. The door-to-door approach, the involvement of students and teachers in promotion, and participation in community social activities reflect the community-based marketing model. This is in line with the concept of relationship marketing which emphasizes the importance

of building long-term relationships and trust with customers (Grönroos, 2004). In the context of education, this relationship is not only transactional, but also emotional and spiritual, especially since madrassas carry a strong religious mission.

The marketing strategy carried out by the madrasah also shows compatibility with the service marketing triangle (Zeithaml et al., 2018), which emphasizes the integration between strategies, staff, and systems. At MTs Al-Mukrimin, the active involvement of principals, teachers, and students in the promotion process reflects the synergy between internal elements that strengthens the external strategy. Although it does not use a formal or technology-based approach, madrassas are able to create an effective marketing system through consistency of messages, value suitability, and participation of all school residents.

The advantage of this strategy also lies in its adaptation to the social characteristics of the surrounding community which is more responsive to a personal approach than mass promotion. In a communal society, direct presence and interpersonal relationships are the main factors in building trust (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, relationship-based strategies such as home visits, joint recitations, and involvement in village activities have proven to be more impactful than modern promotional methods such as social media or digital advertising which are often irrelevant to the target segment in the region.

However, while this strategy is effective in a local context, it is important to be mindful of its potential limitations. The reliance on social relations and face-to-face activities has limitations in terms of reach and scalability. In the digital era, educational institutions face demands to also be present in virtual spaces. Therefore, developing a hybrid marketing strategy which combines traditional approaches with digital marketing can be a long-term solution that expands the reach of madrassas without neglecting value-based approaches that have proven to be effective.

Finally, this research makes an important contribution to the development of the literature on marketing educational services, especially in the context of community-based Islamic institutions. The findings reinforce the understanding that a successful marketing strategy does not always have to be complex or expensive, but it must be culturally and socially relevant. Madrassas such as MTs Al-Mukrimin show that limited resources are not

an obstacle as long as the strategies used are in harmony with the values of the community and managed collaboratively.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that MTs Al-Mukrimin Guppi Bulukasa employs an effective community-based marketing strategy grounded in personal engagement, local cultural values, and collective participation. Through direct interactions such as house-to-house visits, school outreach by students and teachers, and involvement in local religious and social events, the institution builds trust and strengthens its relationship with the community. These efforts contribute significantly to increasing student enrollment and enhancing the school's public image.

The strategic involvement of internal stakeholders including the principal, teaching staff, and student organizations reflects a participatory model of marketing, where the whole institution works collectively to achieve promotional goals. This model proves particularly relevant in rural or traditional contexts where interpersonal relationships are more influential than digital outreach. The success of these grassroots efforts suggests that education marketing should be tailored to fit local norms and values to be truly effective.

While the current strategies have yielded positive outcomes, their sustainability and scalability remain limited in the face of broader digital trends. Thus, the study recommends integrating these local approaches with digital communication tools to extend reach and ensure long-term competitiveness. This research contributes valuable insights into how Islamic educational institutions can design culturally grounded and context-sensitive marketing strategies to thrive in dynamic and competitive environments.

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