An Exploration of ISMUBA Value-Based Marketing Management of Islamic Educational Services in Enhancing School Competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

The era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 requires Islamic educational institutions to manage service marketing strategies effectively in order to remain competitive. This study aims to analyze the management of Islamic educational service marketing at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang using a descriptive qualitative method through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of this study are expected to serve as a conceptual and practical reference for Islamic educational institutions in designing service marketing management strategies that are based on Islamic values, adaptive to digital developments, and oriented toward enhancing school competitiveness. In addition, this study seeks to explore the relationship between the ISMUBA curriculum and marketing strategies as a source of competitive advantage for Islamic schools, with a focus on analyzing meanings and real practices in the field.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology and information has required educational institutions to design appropriate marketing strategies in order to identify target markets and facilitate alignment between the educational products offered and institutional objectives.(Salsa Widya, 2022) Marketing serves as the spearhead for the long-term sustainability of educational institutions. Many educational institutions are abandoned by customers due to their failure to implement effective marketing strategies. Marketing design is not limited to consumable products alone but is also oriented toward long-term goals that emphasize user satisfaction. Effective marketing facilitates interaction between educational institutions and their customers, either directly or through intermediary markets.(Valentin et al., 2025) The primary objective of implementing educational service marketing management is to enhance customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is one of the key factors in the success of educational institutions. Customers who are satisfied with the educational services provided tend to reuse these services and recommend them to others.(Makmun et al., 2023)

Currently, education is understood as a corporate entity, in which educational institutions are regarded as production organizations that generate educational services

purchased by consumers.(Iqbal, 2019) In facing the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, Islamic educational institutions must be able to adapt to the increasingly rapid changes of the times. The term 'Industrial Revolution' was introduced by Friedrich Engels and Louis Auguste Blanqui in the mid-nineteenth century. This industrial revolution has continued to evolve over time, and the past decade can be regarded as the entry into the fourth phase, known as Industry 4.0. Each phase transition brings distinct and significant differences in terms of its applications and functions.(Sigit Hananto, 2022)

When educational institutions are viewed from a corporate perspective, they function as production organizations that generate educational services purchased by consumers. If producers are unable to market their products in this case, educational services due to quality that does not meet consumer preferences, a lack of added value for individual development, or unsatisfactory services, the educational services offered will fail to attract consumers.(Munir, 2024) A positive image becomes a highly valuable asset in the marketplace and serves as a strong foundational capital in influencing stakeholders. The elements of marketing strategy consist of the 7Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Process. These strategies are adopted from the business sector, where the concept of marketing focuses on customer satisfaction based on logical reasoning namely, if customers are not satisfied, the marketing efforts are considered unsuccessful.(Salsa Widya, 2022)

Marketing is essential for educational institutions in building a positive image. When an institution or school has a good public image, it is more likely to compete effectively.(Fathurrochman & Histori S, 2022) The development of marketing strategies must also take into account various aspects, including applicable regulations and policies. As stipulated in the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education concerning the Technical Guidelines for New Student Admissions (PPDB) in 2020, which regulates the admission of new students for Raudlatul Athfal (RA) and Madrasah (MI, MTs, MA, and MAK) for the 2020/2021 academic year. The Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Number 7265 of 2020 concerning the Technical Guidelines for Student Admissions at Raudlatul Athfal, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, Madrasah Aliyah, and Madrasah Aliyah Kejuruan for the 2020/2021 academic year mandates that the admission process be conducted objectively, accountably, transparently, and without discrimination, thereby promoting increased access to equitable educational services.(Saidah et al., 2022)

Islamic educational service marketing management has become a crucial aspect in enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of schools in the modern era. SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang, as an Islamic-based school, continuously strives to develop marketing strategies that not only highlight its curriculum but also reflect its distinctive Islamic identity. The school's efforts include utilizing its official website and social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook to disseminate information about daily activities, student achievements, and flagship programs. This approach aligns with the needs of prospective students in the digital era, where information is increasingly sought through online media.

In addition, marketing strategies are also implemented through conventional methods, including brochure distribution, direct promotion to junior high schools by the New Student Admission Team officially appointed through a formal decree, and encouraging parents to provide word-of-mouth recommendations. The provision of scholarships to high-achieving students, both in academic and non-academic fields, represents a concrete effort to enhance the school's positive image. Furthermore, the ISMUBA curriculum program (Al-Islam, Kemuhammadiyahan, and Arabic Language), as a distinctive feature of Muhammadiyah education, strengthens the school's positioning as an Islamic educational institution that not only emphasizes academic achievement but also instills religious values and Islamic moral character.

"The significance of this study lies in exploring the relationship between the ISMUBA curriculum and marketing strategies as a competitive advantage of Islamic schools, with a focus on analyzing meaning and real practices in the field. Previous studies have examined related issues, particularly the role of digital information technology as a digital marketing medium for educational service institutions in introducing and improving educational image.(Prastowo, 2022) The distinguishing factor of this study lies in highlighting students' non-academic achievements, such as Tapak Suci, marching band, religious activities, and success in MTQ competitions, which serve as added value in attracting prospective students. Alumni involvement in various school activities, including sharing their success stories, provides tangible motivation for prospective students and offers concrete evidence of the quality of graduates from SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang. Moreover, in the current year, several graduates have obtained scholarships to pursue higher education in Egypt, and available data indicate a continuous increase in the number of graduates accepted into public universities each year.

However, competition among schools has become increasingly intense, as each institution seeks to showcase its strengths and distinctive characteristics in terms of curriculum, extracurricular activities, and available facilities. Therefore, SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang is required to continuously innovate its educational service marketing strategies in order to remain competitive and maintain its position as a primary choice within the community. Another challenge that must be addressed is how the school can manage social media creatively, maintain effective communication with the community, and sustain a positive image that is not only visible within the school environment but also delivers tangible benefits to the wider society. Consequently, the implementation of well-planned, measurable, and adaptive Islamic educational service marketing management has become an urgent necessity for SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang in strengthening its competitiveness and sustaining its existence as a leading Islamic educational institution.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a case study design, as its primary focus is to gain an in-depth understanding of Islamic educational service marketing management strategies at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang. The qualitative approach was selected to enable the researcher to comprehensively explore field phenomena, while the

descriptive nature aims to clearly portray the actual educational marketing practices implemented by the school. A case study design was applied because the research examines a single educational institution as the unit of analysis, allowing for a detailed description of the marketing strategies adopted, ranging from planning and implementation to their impact on the school's competitiveness. To ensure data validity, this study employs source, technique, and time triangulation, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the findings and ensuring consistency with real conditions in the field.(Sugiyono, 2017)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research findings indicate that Islamic educational service marketing management at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang is implemented in an integrated manner by combining digital and conventional marketing strategies. These strategies are not solely oriented toward increasing student enrollment but also toward strengthening the school's Islamic identity as its primary value proposition.

The marketing mix serves as a tool for implementing all aspects related to the marketing strategies launched by SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang, as emphasized by marketing expert Kartajaya (Sigit Hananto, 2022). This combination of digital and conventional strategies demonstrates the school's understanding of diverse market segmentation, where some prospective students and parents still rely on direct interaction and tangible evidence in making decisions.

Based on interviews with the informants, the findings reveal that the utilization of digital media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and the school's official website serves as the primary means of disseminating information to the public. The content presented is not limited to academic promotion but also showcases religious activities, student achievements, and flagship programs based on the ISMUBA curriculum. This indicates that the school positions digital media not merely as a promotional tool, but as a medium for building institutional image and public trust. The following statement was conveyed by the Vice Principal for Student Affairs:

"ISMUBA serves as the distinctive hallmark of education at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang. This curriculum does not merely address religious instruction but also fosters positive character development, making it the school's primary attraction in introducing itself to the community"

This statement emphasizes that the ISMUBA curriculum functions not only as a learning system but also as a core product in the marketing of Islamic educational services. The curriculum serves as a key differentiating factor that provides added value compared to other schools, particularly in the aspect of fostering students' religious character.

In addition to digital strategies, the research findings also indicate that SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang continues to maintain conventional marketing strategies, such as brochure distribution, direct visits to junior high schools through the New Student Admission Team, as well as recommendations from parents and alumni. This combination

reflects the school's understanding of community characteristics that still require direct interaction and tangible evidence when making educational decisions.

The school's competitive advantage primarily lies in the presence of the ISMUBA curriculum (Al-Islam, Kemuhammadiyahan, and Arabic Language), which serves as a distinctive hallmark of Muhammadiyah educational institutions. This curriculum not only imparts religious knowledge but also cultivates strong Islamic character, thereby providing educational product differentiation that is not offered by other general schools. The Islamic identity promoted by the school becomes a unique attraction for communities seeking education grounded in moral and religious values.

The novelty of this study lies in highlighting the role of the ISMUBA curriculum (Al-Islam, Kemuhammadiyahan, and Arabic Language) as a distinctive feature of Muhammadiyah educational institutions. In addition to this distinctive curriculum, students' achievements across various fields further strengthen the school's competitiveness. In this regard, SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang actively disseminates information about its advantages related to student achievements, as expressed by the principal as follows:

> "We actively participate in both academic and non-academic competitions. Many of our students have won awards in MTQ, arts, sports, marching band, and other fields. This creates a positive image that our school is capable of competing. This image also serves as one of our strategies to promote to the community that our school is equally competitive"

SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang is widely recognized for its active participation in various academic and non-academic competitions, such as MTQ, arts, sports, Tapak Suci, and marching band. These achievements contribute to building a positive image that affirms the school's excellence not only in religious education but also in the holistic development of students' potential. Alumni involvement also plays a significant role in the school's marketing strategy. Successful alumni, both at national and international levels, are positioned as role models who inspire prospective students. For instance, graduates who have obtained scholarships to pursue higher education in Egypt or have been admitted to reputable public universities serve as concrete evidence of the quality of education provided by the school. From a marketing perspective, alumni function as brand ambassadors who enhance the school's credibility in the eyes of the community.

In this study, the researcher identified significant challenges. Competition among schools in Palembang has become increasingly intense, with many schools offering modern facilities, international programs, and aggressive digital branding. This condition was conveyed by one of the school staff members, who stated as follows:

> "Our greatest challenge is to continuously innovate and transform our mindset in order to develop, while still preserving the school's identity. At present, we are striving to find further innovations that can strengthen our distinctive characteristics and reshape our mindset so that we can continue to grow without losing the school's core identity"

This condition requires SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang to continuously innovate, both in managing digital content and in strengthening its institutional identity in order to

maintain its attractiveness. Another challenge lies in maintaining consistent service quality so that public expectations are consistently met.

To address these challenges, the school seeks to strengthen communication with the community through more creative and interactive digital content. In addition, the strategy of providing scholarships for high-achieving students has been expanded to attract more families to enroll their children in the school. Another effort involves strengthening networks with external institutions, including higher education institutions and Muhammadiyah organizations, in order to enhance opportunities for student development. Consequently, marketing is not solely focused on promotional aspects but also encompasses building public trust through demonstrable service quality.

The findings of this study also reinforce the perspectives of Islamic educational marketing scholars that the success of educational institutions is determined by their ability to integrate religious values with modern marketing strategies. A strong Islamic identity serves as a moral foundation, while digital innovation functions as a means to reach a broader audience. This demonstrates that Islamic educational marketing management cannot operate solely through conventional approaches but must remain adaptive to technological changes without losing its fundamental values.

Thus, it can be concluded that Islamic educational service marketing management at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang has successfully integrated digital and conventional strategies, strengthened competitive advantage through a distinctive curriculum, student achievements, and alumni involvement, and effectively adapted to competitive challenges in the digital era. The implementation of well-planned marketing strategies grounded in Islamic identity has proven to enhance the school's positive image, increase its attractiveness in the eyes of the community, and sustain its existence as one of the leading Islamic educational institutions in Palembang.

Discussion

In English, the term *pemasaran* is referred to as *marketing*, a word that has been adopted into the Indonesian language. The term *pemasaran* originates from the word *pasar*, which means *market*.(Makmun et al., 2023) Kotler and Keller, as cited in Adam, define marketing as an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers, as well as managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization.(Iqbal, 2019) Marketing management in the context of educational services is a social and managerial process aimed at obtaining what is needed and desired through the creation of offerings and the exchange of valuable products with other parties in the field of education. Essentially, marketing in the educational sector involves offering the quality and excellence of educational institutions as well as promoting the holistic development of students' character.(Sintasari & Afifah, 2022)

The educational service marketing mix will be successful when its elements are interconnected and mutually influential. These activities must be integrated effectively and efficiently so that educational institutions can achieve better outcomes(Sintasari & Afifah, 2022). In this fast-paced and highly competitive digital era, the image and reputation of educational institutions are no longer built solely on academic quality. Information

transparency, institutional engagement in the public sphere, and the ability to establish strategic communication with the community have become crucial factors in shaping public trust and interest.(Novriansyah et al., 2025)

When examined through the lens of marketing management theory, the strategies implemented by SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang align with the concept of the service marketing mix (7Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence). The product is reflected in the ISMUBA curriculum and flagship programs, promotion is carried out through both digital and conventional channels, people are represented by the roles of teachers and alumni, while physical evidence is demonstrated through student achievements and school facilities. The balance among these elements indicates managerial awareness in maintaining customer satisfaction as the primary objective of educational service marketing.

A school's image emerges when several dominant factors significantly influence the competitiveness of an educational institution. These factors include the following. First, location. In general, educational institutions seek locations that are easily accessible and well connected to other sectors; therefore, location becomes a form of comparative advantage in competing with other institutions. Second, value superiority. This includes advantages related to the implemented curriculum, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, as well as collaborative partnerships. Third, community needs. In many cases, parents have various reasons for enrolling their children in particular educational institutions, with one of the most prominent reasons being quality, particularly in terms of the learning process and its outcomes.(Fajry et al., 2024)

Educational marketing strategies have a significant impact on schools, particularly in terms of the marketing mix. Through these impacts, schools are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn enables them to determine how to upgrade their systems or improve quality in order to compete with rival institutions. Indirectly, the implementation of educational marketing strategies also provides a marketing concept that can be understood not only by members of the school community but also by the wider public.(Saidah et al., 2022) Educational service marketing management can be carried out by analyzing current community needs, as the primary focus in marketing any product is the community.(Aguustina, 2021)

Some of these strategies include the provision of a strategic marketing mix that can attract prospective consumers, namely offering high-quality products, competitive pricing, strategic location, attractive promotion, competent human resources, productive operational processes, and tangible physical evidence of the service.(Prastowo, 2022) To address these challenges, the school seeks to strengthen communication with the community through more creative and interactive digital content. In addition, the strategy of providing scholarships for high-achieving students has been expanded to attract more families to enroll their children in the school. Another effort involves strengthening networks with external institutions, including higher education institutions and Muhammadiyah organizations, in order to enhance opportunities for student development. Consequently, marketing is not solely focused on promotional aspects but also encompasses building public trust through demonstrable service quality.

Fundamentally, education, as a service-oriented institution, must establish a culture of quality to meet the evolving expectations of customers. Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia are therefore required to implement Total Quality Management (TQM), which emphasizes continuous improvement and customer satisfaction, in order to achieve excellence and succeed in global competition.(Alfaini Uspari et al., 2024)

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Palembang has effectively implemented Islamic educational service marketing strategies by integrating digital and conventional promotional approaches. Social media platforms and the school website are utilized to expand the reach of information dissemination, while brochures, direct visits, and parent recommendations continue to be employed to strengthen relationships with the community. The school's competitive advantages lie in its distinctive ISMUBA curriculum, students' academic and non-academic achievements, and alumni involvement, which serve as indicators of quality as well as brand ambassadors.

The main challenges faced include competition among schools and maintaining consistency in digital media management. Nevertheless, through continuous innovation, alumni empowerment, and the strengthening of service quality, the school has been able to sustain a positive image and enhance its competitiveness as a leading Islamic educational institution in Palembang.

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