

## Research Article

# Branding Strategies for Increasing Public Confidence in Islamic Boarding Schools

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## Abstract.

Educational institutions are currently required to implement educational innovations and strategies to attract the interest of the wider community, as are Islamic boarding schools and educational institutions. Islamic boarding schools need to implement strategies to differentiate themselves from their competitors. This research aims to examine the branding strategies carried out by Islamic boarding schools. This study uses qualitative descriptive research. Data were collected using library research and interviews with the selection of informants using purposive sampling. The results of this research indicate that the Shuffah Hizbullah Islamic boarding School Madrasah Al-Fatah Lampung and the Annida Modern Islamic boarding school have implemented a branding strategy to differentiate it from other Islamic boarding schools to attract the interest of potential consumers and the wider community. The strategy carried out by Islamic boarding schools is digital marketing through social media. The branding strategy applied by the Shuffah Hizbullah Islamic boarding school and the Madrasah Al-Fatah Lampung is “Kampung Wahyu (revelation village)”, namely a boarding school in the middle of an Islamic village. While the branding applied by the Annida modern Islamic boarding school is a modern Islamic boarding school, which combines two models of educational institutions in Indonesia. Annida has the personal branding of a Kyai or mudir (director) or boarding school leader, which makes it easier for people to recognize the Islamic boarding school. The branding strategy implemented by Islamic boarding schools is quite effective in attracting the trust of parents and prospective students.

**Keywords:** branding, public trust, Islamic boarding school

## 1. Introduction

A marketing for educational institutions is very necessary [1]. Changes in consumer behavior or community behavior patterns in choosing the best quality education for their children require educational units managing educational institutions to be able to have the best criteria and have distinctive characteristics that can improve the image of their educational institutions. School image is another term for school brand [2]. Apart from that, educational institutions are required to conduct in-depth research to ensure that the educational services they manage are relevant to the needs of parents in this modern era. Then a marketing strategy is needed so that type of education

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**Published:** 4 April 2024

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ICOLIS Conference Committee.



can be known and attractive to the wider community. Marketing strategies are needed to continue to exist and survive in this intense competition for managed educational institutions not abandoned by the public and potential “customers” [1]. Mundiri [3] in his research stated that educational institutions that are unable to satisfy user education in accordance with market needs, then these educational institutions will not exist and can result in educational institutions being unable to attract new students in sufficient numbers, and every year the number tends to decrease student.

The marketing strategies that need to be implemented by educational institutions are of course adapted to environmental developments. According to Ho [4] a uniform approach cannot be applied to school marketing strategies because each school has a unique environment. What schools need to realize is that currently schools are competing to maintain quality in order to attract new students. Therefore, institutions not only need promotion, but also build a good school branding in the community. The Branding for school of educational institutions is not just selling the name and location of the school, but also displaying an identity so that it is easily recognized and easily differentiated from other schools [1]. Branding management is that aims to build a strong brand, namely a brand with higher equity [5]. By relying on the brand, the place can be recognized and increase its frame on a national and international scale [6].

Faced with the imperatives and challenges of globalization, the world of education is currently being asked to implement innovative approaches and attraction strategies to attract the interest of parents and students and to retain existing ones. According to [7], it is important for educational institutions to present themselves in advertisements as institutions that have more value compared to other schools that prospective students might consider. The consumer choice literature suggests that without direct experience with perceived benefits, customers must rely on signals to arrive at judgments about what they are getting. Advertising and branding in the educational environment are becoming more important with the rise of profit educational institutions, parents and students are increasingly making choices about which institution they will choose based on their perceptions, not actual values [8].

A study in India conducted by Prasad revealed that the impact of changes in globalization, increasing income, and the desire for a good education, parents in India are increasingly turning to choosing international based on education for their children's education [9]. Another study conducted in Malaysia by Malik, they found that parents preferred branded K-12 schools (kindergarten to grade 12 high school) rather than choosing unknown or new schools [10]. Thus, branding can help schools differentiate themselves from other school competitors [11].

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, recently there have been very significant changes in the world of education since the change in the New Student Admissions (PPDB) system to a zoning system, where schools run by local governments are required to accept prospective students who live within a predetermined zone radius. The zoning system is contained in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbud) Number 14 of 2018 which replaces Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 17 of 2017. A research conducted by Dharmawan published in journal [12] with case studies of 46 private and state junior high schools (SMP), in the city of Yogyakarta revealed that the PPDB zoning system has an impact on private schools that are located close to state schools and are not located near densely populated housing, potentially losing large numbers of prospective students. The same thing was expressed by Sudarmo, who serves as deputy chairman of the Association of Principals of Private Schools (IKKS) of Middle Schools and Principal of Muhammadiyah 5 Solo Middle School, stating that the PPDB zoning system is considered unprofitable for private schools because it will be difficult to get new students. The PPDB zoning system makes private schools empty and the impact of this system is the closure of Christian Middle School 4 Solo.

The impact of this zoning policy is that many parents are confused about wanting to send their children to a quality education but are hampered by the zoning system because they have to adjust the school location to an address that matches the parent's domicile. This is what makes parents switch to sending their children to Islamic boarding schools, because currently there are many Islamic boarding schools based on educational institutions but they have advantages in other general fields besides religious education, which are under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion. Islamic boarding schools are starting to be looked at by modern-day parents, because parents don't need to worry about supervising their children in matters of education and their environment. Nowadays we can see how it is widely reported that the morals of teenage children are declining due to promiscuity, many school children are fighting against their teachers, brawls between schools that kill their opponents, use of illegal drugs and other juvenile delinquencies that can no longer be tolerated.

Islamic boarding schools are one of the private educational institutions in Indonesia that prioritize moral education and where students live together in dormitories and study under the guidance of teachers called kiai or ustadz. Apart from being known as an educational institution, this Islamic boarding school is also famous for its special non-classical religious teaching methods where a Kiyai (director) conveys knowledge about Islam to his students. The mosque is the center of all student activities either worshipping such prayer or study [13].

There are a lot of establishment of Islamic Boarding Schools in the community which either established since along time ago or just established need to implement a branding strategies to introduce to the community so that could be easily known by them. In another hand that Islamic boarding schools are not only famous as religious centers but could produced other achievements and advantages to be able to compete with other Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools educational institutions are currently competing to attract public attention so that their quality are better known to the wider community [14]. Schools such as Islamic boarding schools need to display the educational service process through the attributes of unique teaching and learning activities, quality of learning, learning satisfaction, student achievement and quality of graduates. Schools need to convey a deep impression to students and the community about the benefits of attending school in that place [15]. Branding strategies are very important for schools, especially private schools. The right of branding strategy will make the school known to the public [12].

Even sometimes even though with a limited resources such as lack of budget, lack of expertise and lack of time, it becomes an obstacle for an educational institution to develop their branding strategy. For this reason, Islamic boarding schools could determine the character they wanted to display in their branding management strategy using 12 basics principles (basic archetypes) which are commonly used in branding or marketing practices, namely starting from caregiver, creator, everyman, explorer, hero, innocent, jester, lover, magician , outlaw, ruler, and sage. The characteristics of each basic archetype were first proposed by Carl Jung in 1938 and then developed again by Mark and Pearson in 2001 until finally they were widely used as a guide in determining the character image of a brand. Mark and Pearson stated that scientifically, archetypes provide a relationship between customer motivation and product sales. Archetypal archetypes mark the fulfillment of basic human desires and motivations. Archetypes are a reflection of the culture in every human's environment. Some characters in a brand feel familiar to someone because they are part of their subconscious. This theory is part of brand personality, which has the meaning of a combination of the collective unconscious, deeply embedded personality, which resonates and functions to regulate and provide direction to human thoughts and actions [5].

Archetypes as school branding can reveal that a school that is of interest to the public tends to be strong on the collegial side, the efficient collegial side, or the managerial side [16]. The archetype provides an illustration that a school that is branded with a strong character will have a better place in the opinion of the public [1]. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools must make every effort to manage and improve the quality

of their services so that what is promoted can be justified. Because the marketing approach requires Islamic boarding schools to analyze a teaching and learning activities, intra and extracurricular activities, educational facilities, residential facilities, facilities and infrastructure in dormitories and the teaching and learning atmosphere so that Islamic boarding school activities are always focused on improving service quality. The community's positive perception of the school brand can resulting from learning and teaching activities, increasing knowledge, and improving the school environment [17]. And there are other factors in branding Islamic boarding schools that differentiate them from other state or private schools, namely there is the personal branding factor of a leader at the Islamic boarding school which plays a role in building the image of the Islamic boarding school among the community or parents [18].

Several previous studies have discussed management strategies in strengthening the branding of Islamic boarding schools. Rizal et.al [19] in their research concluded that the marketing strategy of Islamic boarding school leaders in branding SMP IT Jihadul Muslimin NW Lando resulted in several strategic steps including publishing achievements, creating superior programs, maximizing the development of science and technology and community activities. Similar research was conducted by Maulana et.al [20], the results of which showed that the Tarbiyatul Mubtadiin Islamic boarding school has long used digital branding as a strategy for building its image and increasing the number of its Islamic boarding schools. This research also shows that digital branding is very effective in building an image and increasing the number of students at the Tarbiyatul Mubtadiin Islamic boarding school.

The research results of Halili and Rizquha [14], show that by having the pruner Islamic boarding school branding in the community, the Nurul Qarnain Islamic boarding school has attracted the attention of the community to send their sons and daughters to school and board at the Nurul Qarnain Islamic boarding school. In terms of branding, the Nurul Qarnain pruner Islamic boarding school is carried out through attributes, culture, values and personality as well as users or benefits from the existence of the Islamic boarding school with various services that can be utilized by students and the community, this is one thing that can strengthen the identity of the Nurul Qarnain Islamic boarding school.

However, all these studies have not comprehensively revealed efforts to improve Islamic boarding school branding through strengthening basic characters (archetype). The urgency is to observe further how Islamic boarding school management's efforts are in managing several characteristics of Islamic boarding schools into superior values that are worthy of being displayed to strengthen the branding of Islamic boarding schools,

so that in the future Islamic boarding schools become the choice of the consumer community to send their children to school.

South Lampung Regency is one of the districts in Lampung Province, administratively divided into 17 sub-districts, 260 villages and 4 sub-districts. Based on the number of Islamic boarding school data in South Lampung Regency, there are 135 Islamic boarding schools spread across 10 sub-districts ([emispendis.kemenag.go.id](http://emispendis.kemenag.go.id)) which provides traditional Islamic boarding school education or modern Islamic boarding school education which has a madrasah level of education. These various Islamic boarding schools are of course always trying to improve the branding of their respective Islamic boarding schools through various marketing strategies, in this case including the Shuffah Hizbullah Islamic boarding school Al-Fatah and the Annida Modern Islamic Boarding School This is done so as not to be left behind by other Islamic boarding schools in order to gain sympathy and trust from the community. Based on the background of the problem, this research will examine the marketing strategies carried out by the Shuffah Hizbullah and Madrasah Al-Fatah Islamic boarding schools and the Annida Modern Islamic Boarding School.

## 2. Research Methods

This study used descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative is a research method that can be described in the form of words and language in a natural context and by utilizing natural methods [21]. Qualitative research aims to gain insight into the construction of reality that occurs to be interpreted [22]. This research method was used to describe and analyze branding management strategies at the Shuffah Hizbullah and Madrasah Al Fatah Islamic Boarding Schools, and the Annida Modern Islamic Boarding School, as well as to describe user responses to the branding management strategies carried out by these Islamic boarding schools. The informants for this research were Islamic boarding school leaders, teachers or ustadz, staff and santri or students. To select and determine informants in this research, researchers used purposive sampling techniques.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The strategies carried out by one Islamic boarding school and another are of course the same and some are different, in accordance with the branding management carried out by each Islamic boarding school, especially as the decision maker, namely each Islamic boarding school leader as top management. Islamic boarding school leaders need to

concentrate on the quality of teaching. Poor teaching quality can generate negative word of mouth leading to poor enrollment [11]. Branding Strategy for Shuffah Hizbullah Islamic Boarding School and Al-Fatah Madrasah (Al Fatah).

As a result of an interview with the head (Mudir) of Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school, he said that Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school has its own brand in society, namely community Islamic boarding schools and their hamlets or villages are known as “Kampung Wahyu (village of revelation)” because Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school has Islamic greeting culture when meeting fellow students, meeting teachers, and also the surrounding community. Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school is also known for its comfortable and beautiful environment. The main strategy is of course to continue and to improve the quality in terms of services to the community, improving the quality of education in terms of academic and non-academic achievements, as well as morals. Because Islamic boarding school graduates are known as individuals with good morals.

Apart from that, graduates of Madrasah Aliyah (Islamic High School) at Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school can continue to well-known universities on the island of Sumatra, Java and abroad. Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school regularly uploads activities via online media such as Instagram (@alfatahlampung.id), Tik Tok (pondok al Fatah Natar Lampung), YouTube (Al-Fatah Lampung TV), news media that collaborate with Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school such as; mirajnews agency, mirajnews tv, ukhuwah Al-Fatah Rescue, Aqsa Working Group, and the personal website of the Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school ([www.alfatah.net](http://www.alfatah.net)).

From the results of interviews with the Head of the Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school, improving the quality of Al-Fatah students are by regularly participating in competitions held by the Ministry of Religion and other parties such as; Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran (competitive of Recitations of the Holly Quran) at district, provincial and national levels, science competitions held by the Ministry of Religion, karate and tapak Suci competitions at district-national levels, and other competitions to improve the quality of students. To improve the quality of education, Al-Fatah Islamic Boarding School has long built international cooperation in the field of education, such as with Malaysia, Sudan, Palestine and Thailand. The chairman of Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school is aware that currently Islamic boarding schools have many competitors, which requires Islamic boarding schools to continue to improve and innovate to increase the quality of education and the number of students. In the future, Islamic boarding schools will develop technology-based services so that student guardians have comfort, one of which is by creating a student monitoring application that can be used on smart

phones and also collaborating with Bank Muamalat in terms of payment of school administrations.

Currently, Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school has educational institutions starting from PAUD (early childhood education), Kindergarten, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, Madrasah Aliyah, LTA (Institute for Tahfidz Al-Qur'an and Higher Education [23]). The Al-Qur'an tahfidz institution is the flagship of other programs at Al-Fatah. In 2023, the total number of students will be 1,465 students. In the new academic year 2023/2024 Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school Fatah accepted 340 students. This shows that the branding strategy carried out by Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school is efficient in attracting the interest of parents or students.

However, researchers see that there are several points that need to be improved by the Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school so that it can increase competition with other Islamic boarding schools, especially those in Lampung province. Lack of application of foreign languages such as Arabic and English as the image of Islamic boarding schools that use languages other than Indonesian. This is because the use of foreign languages has not been emphasized at the Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school. Researchers also suggest that Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school create a conducive environment for applying foreign languages in a special environment.

To strengthen the branding of Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school as a community Islamic boarding school. The researcher also suggested that the Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school collaborate with local residents to place its students to live together with the ustadz who live around the Islamic boarding school. So that the students, apart from studying religion, also learn to increase their sensitivity towards the people around them. Annida Modern Islamic Boarding School Branding Strategy. This Islamic boarding school, which was founded in 2011, has been unique since its inception. The Annida modern Islamic boarding school is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (DIKNAS), different from most other Islamic boarding schools which are under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion. It is not without reason that this is done, the main thing is to be able to maximally implement the curriculum set by the Annida modern Islamic boarding school. Annida's modern Islamic boarding school applies DIKNAS reference learning and adds references to Islamic religious books that have been established by the Islamic boarding school.

The results of an interview with one of the supervisors of the Annida modern Islamic boarding school, namely Ustad Hidayaturrahman, he said that in the context of teaching moral education to students which are a characteristic of Islamic boarding schools, all



students are taught to behave or have good manners towards teachers by always respecting the teacher or ustadz and a little lowering the body when walking in front of a teacher or ustadz. This has been widely implemented by Islamic boarding schools, especially in the Java Island. And it is Indonesian culture that upholds the principle of courtesy, especially towards older teachers.

The strategy carried out by Annida Islamic Boarding School is to introduce it to the community first through Foundation colleagues, then social media such as Instagram (@ppm.annida\_official), YouTube (Alfian Husin Foundation), Facebook (Annida Modern Islamic Boarding School) and the Islamic boarding school's personal website (ppm-annida.business.site). The Annida modern Islamic boarding school also carries out outreach to elementary schools. The main advertising is social media Instagram, always updating the activities of students and Islamic boarding schools. The content presented is made as attractive as possible so that regular consumers, parents, guardians and other potential consumers are interested. Then the next strategy is that teachers or ustadz at Annida Islamic boarding school are required to write interesting articles and upload them on the internet so that people can read them.

The Annida modern Islamic boarding school has the advantage of personal branding which indirectly becomes a strategy for introducing the Islamic boarding school. The mudir or head of the An Nida modern Islamic boarding school and chairman of the Foundation, namely Dr. Ir. H. Firmansyah Y.A., MBA., MSc, is the Chancellor of the Darmajaya Lampung Institute of Informatics and Business, who is also a preacher or cleric who often speaks in Islamic studies and also on YouTube channels. The second, the founder of the Annida modern Islamic boarding school, namely Ustad Hidayatullahman, S.Pd.i, is a speaker on Islamic studies on television and YouTube channels. Ustad Hidayatullahman is also the author of the book *Tatbiqi Method* which is well known among the people of Lampung province in particular. The *tatbiqi* method is a method of studying the Al-Qur'an and a method of studying the content of the verses of the Al-Qur'an. The personality of a good ustadz, kiai or Islamic boarding school leader can play a role in building the image of an Islamic boarding school [18]. This is also the reason parents or guardians of students choose an Islamic boarding school because they see or know the personal figure of the ustadz, kiai or Islamic boarding school leader.

In 2023, the number of students at the Annida Islamic boarding school will be 663 students consisting of Junior High School (SMP) and Senior High School (SMA), who come from various regions. This shows that the branding strategy carried out by the Annida Islamic boarding school is quite effective in attracting the interest of

parents or students. In order to improve the quality of education, the supervisors of the Annida Islamic boarding school always carry out evaluations on improving the quality of education and teaching staff. The evaluation concept applied is the concept of “kargozali” imitating the concept of the Temboro Islamic boarding school, “kargozali” means reporting the activities that we have carried out. Then, after every morning prayer, an evaluation of the reporting of the students’ activities is carried out. Students also always take part in events or competitions at provincial and national levels to improve the quality of education and to become known to the public. The Annida modern Islamic boarding school also has a program to create a Qur’anic feel not only for its students but also for all ustadz and all educational staff within the Annida modern Islamic boarding school environment.

#### 4. Conclusions

A branding strategy for Islamic boarding school educational institutions is very necessary. Because currently there are many Islamic boarding schools present in society. Islamic boarding schools need a strategy to differentiate them from other Islamic boarding schools, so that they can attract the interest of modern parents and be sought after by prospective students. From the results of research conducted at the Shuffah Hizbullah Islamic Boarding School/Madrasah Al-Fatah Lampung and the Annida modern Islamic boarding school in South Lampung Regency. Show that Islamic boarding schools have implemented marketing and branding strategies to attract the interest of parents or prospective students, namely by marketing through social media and improving services and the quality of the Islamic boarding schools they manage. Islamic boarding schools also have their own branding strategies, such as the “Kampung Wahyu” (village of revelation) branding at the Al-Fatah Islamic boarding school because it has a conducive environment and is integrated with the community. Then the branding applied by the Annida modern Islamic boarding school is a modern Islamic boarding school branding which combines two different Indonesian government educational institutions. Annida’s modern Islamic boarding school also has the personal branding of a kiai, mudir or leader of the Islamic boarding school. The researcher’s suggestion is to develop research at a broader level, so that it can describe more clearly the differences between each existing Islamic boarding school. Researchers also suggest comparing with other educational institutions apart from Islamic boarding schools, so that they can compare which educational institution has better quality.

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