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Marketing Strategic in Islamic Education: A Multidimensional Analysis of School Brand Image

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A R T I C L E I N F O

Keywords:

brand image;
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Islamic educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how educational service marketing strategies are implemented in building the brand image of MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji, Cilongok. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving the head of the *madrasah*, the vice principal for curriculum, and the vice principal for student affairs. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while data credibility was strengthened through triangulation techniques. The findings indicate that the brand image of MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji is constructed through three main elements: institutional image, student image, and service image. Institutional image is strengthened through accreditation status, affiliation with LP Ma'arif NU, flagship religious programs, and community involvement. Student image is developed through students' academic and non-academic achievements as well as religious habituation programs. Meanwhile, service image is formed through structured religious educational services, responsiveness in communication, openness to stakeholder feedback, and relational approaches in educational service delivery. The study also reveals that digital marketing channels, particularly WhatsApp and social media platforms, function not only as promotional media but also as instruments for relationship building with stakeholders. This study concludes that the successful construction of *madrasah* brand image is achieved through the integration of educational quality, religious values, social capital, responsive services, and sustainable digital communication strategies.

Kata Kunci:

citra;
pemasaran layanan pendidikan;
lembaga pendidikan Islam;
pemasaran digital;
pembentukan citra madrasah;
.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana strategi pemasaran layanan pendidikan diterapkan dalam membangun citra merek MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji, Cilongok. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala madrasah, wakil kepala sekolah bidang kurikulum, serta wakil kepala sekolah bidang kemahasiswaan. Analisis data mengikuti model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, yang mencakup reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, sementara kredibilitas data diperkuat melalui teknik triangulasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa citra merek MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji dibangun melalui tiga unsur utama: citra kelembagaan, citra siswa, dan citra layanan. Citra kelembagaan diperkuat melalui status akreditasi, afiliasi dengan LP Ma'arif NU, program keagamaan unggulan, serta keterlibatan masyarakat. Citra siswa dikembangkan melalui prestasi akademik dan non-akademik siswa serta program pembiasaan keagamaan. Sementara itu, citra layanan terbentuk melalui layanan pendidikan keagamaan yang terstruktur, responsivitas dalam

komunikasi, keterbukaan terhadap masukan pemangku kepentingan, dan pendekatan relasional dalam penyampaian layanan pendidikan. Penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa saluran pemasaran digital, khususnya WhatsApp dan platform media sosial, tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai media promosi, tetapi juga sebagai sarana untuk membangun hubungan dengan para pemangku kepentingan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembentukan citra merek madrasah yang sukses dapat dicapai melalui integrasi antara kualitas pendidikan, nilai-nilai keagamaan, modal sosial, layanan yang responsif, dan strategi komunikasi digital yang berkelanjutan.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of education in the globalization era has significantly transformed public perspectives in selecting educational institutions, including *madrasahs*. Today, society tends to be more critical and selective in determining the best educational options for their children by considering various aspects, such as academic quality, religious values, facilities, educational programs, and the overall image of the institution (Khoiruddin & Fardiansah, 2024). Consequently, *madrasah*s no longer function merely as formal educational institutions, but also as service institutions that provide educational services which must be competitive, professional, and responsive to community needs and expectations of society.

Madrasahs, particularly private ones, face considerable challenges in maintaining their existence amid the emergence of numerous educational institutions offering attractive flagship programs and competitive educational services (Khasbulloh, 2022) . One of the major challenges concerns institutional competitiveness, particularly in attracting and retaining students in an increasingly competitive educational market. Private *madrasah*s also frequently experience disparities in educational facilities and infrastructure when compared with well-established public or private schools. Limited classrooms, learning facilities, technological infrastructure, and supporting educational resources may affect the quality of services perceived by prospective students and parents. In addition, financial constraints remain a significant challenge, as many private *madrasah*s depend heavily on student tuition fees, community contributions, and limited institutional support. These conditions often restrict their capacity to develop educational programs, improve facilities, invest in human resources, and implement sustainable promotional strategies.

Challenges for private Islamic schools have continued to intensify, one of which is the zoning policy implemented since the 2017/2018 academic year, which has contributed to a decline in student enrollment in private Islamic schools (Hambali, 2023; Purnomo, 2022; Sari, 2017). The combination of intense competition, unequal educational resources, and limited financial capacity places private *madrasah*s in a particularly vulnerable position. These conditions require *madrasahs* to adopt appropriate strategies for building a positive and distinctive brand image in the public sphere. It is difficult for *madrasah*s to compete effectively if they are unable to clearly communicate their institutional identity, educational quality, and distinctive values to the wider community.

The image of a *madrasah* is not merely a visual perception or slogan, but rather a representation of the values, quality, reputation, and services provided to students and society. A strong image can become a primary asset for *madrasahs* in attracting and retaining students while simultaneously building sustainable public trust (Azizah et al., 2026; Harisatunisa, 2021; Zaenal et al., 2025). In the process of shaping such an image,

educational service marketing strategies play a crucial role. Through effective marketing, *madrasahs* can widely promote their strengths, achievements, and educational services. This strategy functions not only as a communication tool but also as an institutional branding effort that reflects the institution's identity and quality (E. Arianto et al., 2025). Previous studies indicate that *madrasahs* capable of managing marketing strategies effectively tend to possess stronger public appeal and receive substantial support from parents and surrounding communities (Kango et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, many private *madrasahs* encounter difficulties in building a strong and sustainable brand. One reason is that branding is frequently understood narrowly as promotional activity rather than as a comprehensive process of managing institutional identity, stakeholder experience, service quality, and public perception. Some institutions focus primarily on attracting new students through promotional campaigns without ensuring consistency between the image communicated to the public and the actual educational experiences provided to students and parents. As a result, promotional messages may fail to generate long-term trust and institutional attachment. In addition, limited financial resources and human resource capacity often constrain the ability of private *madrasahs* to implement professional, consistent, and sustainable branding strategies. The absence of clear differentiation may also make it difficult for *madrasahs* to establish a distinctive position within an increasingly competitive educational environment. Consequently, the failure to manage institutional identity, educational services, stakeholder relationships, and marketing communication in an integrated manner may weaken the development of a positive brand image.

One *madrasah* that has successfully established a positive image through a well-directed marketing strategy is MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji in Cilongok, Banyumas. Although located far from the city center, the *madrasah* has achieved an "A" accreditation, gained numerous academic and non-academic achievements, and attracted students not only from the surrounding area but also from outside the region. This positive image has been developed through flagship programs, religious activities, active community engagement, and the utilization of digital and conventional media as promotional channels. The *madrasah's* ability to integrate institutional identity, student achievements, religious values, community relationships, and educational services demonstrates that brand image is constructed not merely through promotional communication, but also through stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of the institution.

One *madrasah* that has successfully established a positive image through a well-directed marketing strategy is MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji in Cilongok, Banyumas. Although located far from the city center, the *madrasah* has achieved an "A" accreditation, gained numerous achievements, and attracted students not only from the surrounding area but also from outside the region. This positive image has been developed through flagship programs, religious activities involving the community, and the utilization of social media as a promotional medium. The success of MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji demonstrates that appropriate educational service marketing strategies can become a key factor in building the brand image of a *madrasah*. Nevertheless, in-depth studies examining how such marketing strategies are systematically and sustainably implemented in shaping the image of *madrasah*s remain limited, particularly in community-based *madrasahs*. Therefore, based on this phenomenon, it is important to further investigate how educational service marketing strategies are systematically implemented to establish and maintain the brand image of *madrasahs*. This study aims to address this need by focusing on the marketing practices implemented at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji in Cilongok, Banyumas, as a representative case study.

Therefore, based on this phenomenon, it is important to investigate more deeply how educational service marketing strategies are systematically implemented to establish and maintain the brand image of a *madrasah*. This study aims to address this need by examining the marketing practices implemented at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji in Cilongok, Banyumas, as a representative case study. Specifically, the study explores how institutional identity, student representation, educational services, community engagement, and marketing communication contribute to the construction of the *madrasah's* brand image.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a qualitative research approach using a case study design, as it explores a specific case and the real context of brand image at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji (Yin, 2003). This research was conducted at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji from July 2024 to November 2024. The object of this study is the efforts undertaken by the *madrasah* management to create positive perceptions or evaluations from the community. The subjects of this study include the head of the *madrasah*, the vice principal for student affairs, and the vice principal for curriculum. To ensure the credibility and contextual relevance of the data, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation (Emzir, 2018).

The data were analyzed through a process that began with data collection, followed by data reduction, which involved simplifying the data by focusing on the *madrasah's* efforts to create positive perceptions of the institution, students, and services. The data were then organized into tables to facilitate understanding and subsequently analyzed using brand image theory. The data analysis process followed the techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman and was conducted simultaneously (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data triangulation was conducted to enhance the credibility of the findings by examining the consistency of the data through comparisons across data sources and data collection techniques (B. Arianto, 2024; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interview data obtained from the head of the *madrasah*, the vice principal for curriculum, and the vice principal for student affairs were continuously compared until they reached saturation and stability. Likewise, data obtained through interviews were continuously verified through observations and documentation until the data were deemed credible and trustworthy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Brand Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU Pageraji

The findings of this study indicate that the formation of brand image at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji is not solely based on institutional identity, but is also constructed through service experiences, social interactions, and public perceptions toward members of the *madrasah* community. These findings are consistent with the perspective of Terence A. Shimp, who argues that image is formed through associations that develop in consumers' memories as a result of communication activities and experiences with a brand (Shimp, 2007a).

Table 1 illustrates how the elements of brand image at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji are constructed. There are three elements of brand image that are managed to strengthen the overall brand of the *madrasah*. Institutional image represents the impression that MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji seeks to convey through its reputation and school environment. Student image reflects the messages represented through students' achievements and school culture. Finally, service image refers to the impressions created through academic and non-academic experiences, as well as communication practices implemented at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji.

Table 1. Brand Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

Brand Image Elements	Attributes
Institutional Image	Reputation
	School Environment
Student/User Image	Student Achievements
	Student Behavior
Service Image	Academic services
	Extracurricular programs
	Communication

A. Institutional Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

The findings reveal that the "A" accreditation status achieved by MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji, along with its affiliation with LP Ma'arif NU, plays a significant role in strengthening the institution's reputation and credibility in the public eye. The accreditation is perceived as an indicator of educational quality and the institution's capability to meet appropriate educational standards. On the other hand, its affiliation with LP Ma'arif NU enhances public trust, as the organization possesses strong social legitimacy and religious identity

within the community. The combination of formal recognition through accreditation and social legitimacy through institutional affiliation shapes public perceptions that MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji is a credible, trustworthy, and reputable educational institution

Table 2. Institutional Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

Attributes	Data	Description
Reputation	The *madrasah's* 'A' accreditation status and its affiliation with Ma'arif NU strengthen its institutional credibility and public trust	MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji is perceived as a credible and trustworthy educational institution
School Environment	The *madrasah* functions as a community-accessible space for various social and organizational activities, including programs conducted by IPNU-IPPNU, Fatayat NU, Ansor, and blood donation initiatives, supported by the *madrasah's* strategic and easily accessible location.	This condition strengthens the *madrasah's* brand image by reflecting strong social capital and close engagement with the surrounding community

Table 2 illustrates the school environment at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji functions not merely as a setting for educational activities, but also as an open social space for the surrounding community. The *madrasah* is actively utilized for various social and community-based organizational activities, including programs organized by IPNU, IPPNU, Fatayat NU, GP Ansor, blood donation initiatives, and other social activities. This condition is supported by the *madrasah's* strategic and easily accessible location for the surrounding community. As stated by the Head of the *Madrasah*, "MI is an open space for community activities, such as activities organized by IPNU-IPPNU, Fatayat, GP Ansor, and blood donation programs, because of its strategic location and accessibility for the community." (Interview with the Head of the *Madrasah*).

The institution's openness toward social and community activities fosters a close relationship between the *madrasah* and its social environment. This situation strengthens the *madrasah's* brand image, as the community perceives. The institution not only as an educational establishment, but also as a center of social and religious activities that maintains close engagement with the local community. Consequently, the school environment contributes to the construction of a positive image through the strengthening of social capital and the *madrasah's* active involvement in community life.

B. Student Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

The student image at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji is constructed through various academic and non-academic achievements attained by its students. The students have demonstrated accomplishments in numerous competitions, including Arabic speech contests, *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ), Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an (MHQ),* English speech contests, and Javanese speech competitions. In addition, the *madrasah* has consistently achieved success in various *Porseni and Aksioma* competitions at the regency level.



Figure 1. Trophies Reflecting Students' Academic and Non-Academic Achievements

These achievements shape public perceptions that the students possess strong academic competence, religious capability, and communication skills. Figure 1 presents a collection of trophies received by the students, providing visual evidence of their achievements across various academic, religious, and non-academic competitions. The accomplishments attained by the students function not only as indicators of successful student development, but also as representations of the *madrasah's* quality in the public sphere. Consequently, the student image is formed through public associations that characterize the students as high-achieving, religious, and competitive individuals across multiple fields.

Table 3. Student Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

Attributes	Data	Description
Student Achievements	Students of the *madrasah* have earned achievements in various competitions, including Arabic speech, *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ), Musabaqah Hifdzil Qur'an (MHQ)*, English speech, and Javanese speech contests. In addition, the *madrasah* has consistently achieved success in numerous Porseni and Aksioma competitions at the regency level	Having strong performance in both academic and non-academic domains
Student Behavior	Daily religious activities include the recitation of *Asmaul Husna* and the performance of *Dhuha* Prayer.	The implementation of routine morning programs reflects a form of spiritual branding that differentiates the *madrasah* from public schools and reinforces the institutional identity through the practical internalization of Islamic values

Table 3 illustrates the habituation of religious activities routinely implemented within the *madrasah* environment. Daily religious practices, such as the recitation of *Asmaul Husna* and the performance of *Dhuha* Prayer, have become integral components of the school culture consistently practiced by students. These activities function not only as spiritual development programs, but also as mechanisms for shaping students' religious character, discipline, and habitual practice of Islamic values in their daily lives. Such religious habituation subsequently generates positive public perceptions regarding the character of the *madrasah* students. Consequently, the student image is constructed through public associations that perceive the students as individuals who demonstrate religious behavior and good morals as outcomes of the internalization of religious culture within the *madrasah*.



Figure 2. Students Engaging in Qur'an Reading Activities

This religious culture is reflected in the Qur'an reading activity shown in Figure 2, which represents one of the *madrasah's* efforts to habituate students to engage in religious

practices as part of their daily school life. The activity demonstrates that religious values are not merely conveyed through classroom instruction, but are also internalized through routine practices and collective participation. Such habituation contributes to the formation of students' religious identity and becomes a visible representation of the *madrasah's* commitment to fostering students with strong religious character and good moral conduct. In the context of school branding, these practices contribute to the construction of a positive student image by associating the students with religiousness, discipline, and positive moral values.

C. Service Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

The findings of this study indicate that the flagship program, *Roudhotul Tarbiyatul Qur'an (RTQ)*, at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji constitutes an important component in the construction of the *madrasah's* service image. The program encompasses tahfidz as the core program, *BTA* (Qur'anic reading and writing), ubudiyah instruction, and the *Mutqin* class for students who continue Qur'anic memorization beyond Juz 30. The existence of these structured and sustainable religious educational services reflects the *madrasah's* commitment to providing educational services that correspond to the needs and expectations of the community.

Parents perceive these programs as flagship services that offer added value in developing students' religious competencies. This condition generates positive public perceptions regarding the quality of the *madrasah's* educational services, particularly in relation to Qur'anic learning and the cultivation of students' religious character. Consequently, the *madrasah's* service image is constructed through stakeholders' experiences of religious educational services that are delivered systematically and consistently.

Table 4. Service Image Elements at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

Attributes	Data	Description
Extracurricular programs	The flagship program, *Roudhotul Tarbiyatul Qur'an (RTQ)*, comprises several activities, including the tahfidz program as the core component, the *BTA* (Qur'anic reading and writing) program, and ubudiyah, which focuses on the study of daily worship practices. Additionally, a *Mutqin* class is provided for students who pursue Qur'anic memorization beyond Juz 30	The presence of structured and sustainable programs indicates the *madrasah's* institutional commitment to the in-depth development of students' religious competencies.
Communication	The *madrasah* facilitates the communication of feedback and suggestions through WA groups. The institution demonstrates responsiveness by addressing complaints and suggestions promptly, while prioritizing a family-oriented approach in delivering educational services	The service is constructed through responsiveness, openness, and relational approaches in educational service delivery

Table 4 illustrates Educational services at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji are constructed through responsiveness, openness, and relational service in the process of engaging with stakeholders. Responsiveness is reflected in the *madrasah's* ability to address parents' complaints, feedback, and needs promptly and appropriately. Openness is demonstrated through the provision of accessible communication channels, such as WhatsApp (WA) groups, which enable parents to convey criticism and suggestions directly to the institution. This openness is also evident in the regular *selapanan Ahad Kliwon* gathering, where parents, teachers, and other stakeholders are provided with an opportunity to express their feedback and suggestions. As explained by the Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Public Relations, "The *madrasah* is very open and receptive during the *selapanan Ahad Kliwon* gathering, where a question-and-answer session is provided for teachers, parents, and stakeholders to give feedback and suggestions. Feedback submitted through WhatsApp and the suggestion box is also collected and taken into consideration." (Interview with the Deputy Head of the Madrasah for Public Relations). Meanwhile, relational service is manifested through a family-oriented approach in the interactions among teachers, educational staff, and parents. These three aspects create positive service experiences that

strengthen the *madrasah's* service image as an educational institution that is communicative, responsive, and closely connected to the community.

3.2 Marketing Strategy of Brand Image MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

Tabel 5. Educational Marketing Aspects of Brand Image

Brand Image	Promotional Materials	Promotional Channels	Objectives
Institutional Image	The flagship program of the *madrasah* is *Roudhoh Tarbiyatul Qur'an (RTQ)*, which includes the Tahfidz program, Qur'anic Reading and Writing *(BTA), Ubudiyah*, and Islamic boarding school-based *madrasah* activities. Other supporting aspects include accreditation as well as educational facilities and infrastructure. The *madrasah* functions as a community-accessible space for various social and organizational activities, including programs conducted by *IPNU-IPPNU, Fatayat NU, Ansor,* and blood donation initiatives, supported by the *madrasah's* strategic and easily accessible location.	The *madrasah* promotes its image through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, as well as through banners, pamphlets, and participation in community events.	Enhancing Institutional Legitimacy and Community Trust
Student/User Image	Student Achievements Daily religious activities include the recitation of *Asmaul Husna* and the performance of *Dhuha* Prayer.	Instagram content showcasing *Juz 30* tasmi' activities and highlighting students' competition achievements	Providing Social Proof of the *Madrasah's* Educational Quality
Service Image	The service is constructed through responsiveness, openness, and relational. The presence of structured and sustainable programs indicates the *madrasah's* institutional commitment to the in-depth development of students' religious competencies.	The *madrasah* facilitates question-and-answer sessions to gather feedback and suggestions from teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Input submitted through WhatsApp groups and suggestion boxes is systematically accommodated, while complaints communicated via WhatsApp are responded to promptly	Creating perceptions of satisfaction and convenience among parents as consumers of educational services.

The findings of this study indicate that MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji constructs its institutional image through various promotional strategies that emphasize religious identity, educational quality, and social proximity to the community. The *madrasah's* promotional content primarily highlights the flagship *Roudhotul Tarbiyatul Qur'an (RTQ)* program, which includes tahfidz, Qur'anic reading and writing *(BTA),* ubudiyah, and pesantren-based *madrasah* activities. In addition, the *madrasah* also emphasizes its accreditation status, facilities, and educational infrastructure as part of its efforts to strengthen its institutional image.

On the other hand, the *madrasah* is positioned not only as a formal educational institution, but also as an open social space for the surrounding community. This is reflected in its involvement in various social and community-based organizational activities, including programs organized by IPNU, IPPNU, Fatayat NU, GP Ansor, as well as blood donation activities. This condition is supported by the *madrasah's* strategic and

easily accessible location, which strengthens social interaction between the institution and the surrounding community. In disseminating its institutional image, the *madrasah* utilizes both digital and conventional promotional channels. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are used to communicate information regarding programs, activities, and achievements to the public. In addition, promotional efforts are also carried out through banners, pamphlets, and participation in community events. These promotional activities demonstrate that the *madrasah's* marketing strategy is directed toward strengthening institutional legitimacy and enhancing public trust in the *madrasah* as a credible Islamic educational institution that maintains close engagement with its social community.

Table 5 also demonstrates that similar promotional media are utilized in the construction of student image. The *madrasah* employs social media, particularly Instagram, to showcase various student activities, such as Juz 30 *tasmi'* sessions and students' achievements in various competitions. These publications function as visual communication media that display the outcomes of student development programs to the wider community. Such content serves not only as documentation of school activities, but also as an instrument for shaping positive public perceptions regarding the quality of the *madrasah's* education. Consequently, the student image is constructed through tangible representations of students' quality that are publicly communicated as part of the branding strategy of the Islamic educational institution.

To support the marketing strategy of service image, the *madrasah* provides various communication channels to gather feedback from stakeholders, including question-and-answer sessions, WhatsApp groups, and suggestion boxes. These channels allow teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to share criticism, questions, and suggestions openly. Complaints submitted through WhatsApp are responded to promptly by the *madrasah*, thereby creating a responsive and participatory communication pattern between the institution and parents. This service strategy is directed toward fostering perceptions of satisfaction and convenience among parents as users of educational services. Communicative, open, and responsive service experiences generate positive public perceptions regarding the quality of the *madrasah's* services. Thus, the *madrasah's* service image is constructed through stakeholders' experiences of interaction quality, the institution's attentiveness to users' needs, and the *madrasah's* commitment to delivering humanistic and community-oriented educational services.

DISCUSSION

A. Social Capital-Based Marketing in Building the Brand Image of MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

The brand image practices implemented at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji demonstrate that the strength of institutional image is constructed through flagship programs that embody the institution's core values and identity. In Strategic Brand Management, Kevin Lane Keller (2013) argues that differentiation constitutes a crucial aspect of brand image development. The differentiation established by the *madrasah* is not merely intended to distinguish itself from other institutions, but also to preserve its core identity as an Islamic educational institution. This finding aligns with the Strategic Brand Concept-Image Management model proposed by Park et al., (1986) which emphasizes that a strong image is not formed through sporadic product differentiation. In other words, image development must be carried out systematically and consistently.

MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji also implements a social capital-based marketing approach by positioning the school environment as an accessible space for community organizations such as IPNU-IPPNU, Fatayat NU, and Ansor. As argued by John Field Field, J. (2003) social capital developed through networks and trust can strengthen institutional legitimacy. The openness of the *madrasah's* facilities and infrastructure creates a community hub that enhances the community's emotional attachment to the institution. Such findings are consistent with Cahyanto et al. (2025) , who highlight the role of institutional core values, educational practices, and school environments in building identity and brand image in Islamic schools. At MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji, community engagement and religious practices provide observable expressions of institutional identity, connecting the *madrasah's* educational mission with the social environment in which it operates. Consequently, the branding process no longer operates as a one-way

communication effort, but rather emerges from reciprocal and organic relationships between the *madrasah* and the community.

B. Service Responsiveness as a Strategy for Building Educational Consumer Loyalty

The findings can be discussed in relation to Odoom (2025) , whose study emphasizes transparency and consumer education as relevant mechanisms in brand reputation and engagement within sustainable digital marketing. Although Odoom's research focuses on a different sector, the emphasis on transparent communication provides a useful conceptual point of comparison. In the *madrasah* context, accessible communication channels and opportunities for stakeholder participation may help sustain trust and strengthen relational ties. From a social capital perspective, these relationships represent resources that can support the *madrasah's* reputation within its community.

Educational institutions as service providers possess unique characteristics due to the intangible and inseparable nature of educational services (Wijaya, 2016). Consequently, the performance of educational services is largely evaluated through service interactions and interpersonal relationships that occur during the service delivery process (Keller, 2001; Kotler & Lee, 2006; Wijaya, 2016). The complaint-handling system and two-way communication through WhatsApp implemented by MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji reflect the implementation of Relationship Marketing theory proposed Michael J. Baker (2003). In the context of educational service marketing, high responsiveness contributes to the creation of positive brand experiences that influence perceptions of satisfaction (Salam & Kristanto, 2025). Such satisfaction subsequently leads to parental loyalty and generates positive word-of-mouth promotion (Kelley & Turley, 2001; Salam & Kristanto, 2025).

C. The Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Channels in Building the Brand Image of MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji

The effectiveness of digital marketing channels at MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji demonstrates that Islamic educational marketing strategies are no longer limited to one-way information dissemination, but have evolved into media for interaction and relationship-building with stakeholders. The utilization of WhatsApp as a communication channel enables the *madrasah* to establish responsiveness, openness, and relational service through rapid, transparent, and participatory communication among the institution, teachers, and parents. These findings are consistent with the perspective of Shimp (2007b) who argues that marketing communication functions to create positive associations in consumers' minds through continuous experiences and interactions.

In this context, digital channels function not merely as promotional media, but also as instruments of relationship marketing that strengthen emotional closeness between the *madrasah* and the community (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Prompt responses to complaints, the accommodation of feedback through WhatsApp groups and suggestion boxes, as well as the provision of dialogue spaces, indicate that educational services are positioned as a two-way communication process oriented toward stakeholders' needs. This finding further reinforces the perspective Keller (2001) which emphasizes that intangible services are evaluated through interpersonal relationships. Consequently, these interaction patterns strengthen the *madrasah's* service image, as the community experiences educational services that are communicative, responsive, and easily accessible.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital marketing is reinforced by the substance of the services offered by the *madrasah*, particularly through structured and sustainable religious programs. These programs serve as tangible evidence of the institution's commitment to developing students' religious competencies, ensuring that the messages communicated through digital media are not merely symbolic, but are supported by concrete educational practices. Therefore, the effectiveness of digital marketing channels lies not only in their ability to disseminate information, but also in their capacity to build trust, satisfaction, and positive public perceptions regarding the quality of the *madrasah's* educational services.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the brand image of MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji is systematically constructed through the integration of institutional image, student image, and service image within the framework of educational service marketing. Institutional image is strengthened through accreditation status, affiliation with LP Ma'arif NU, flagship religious programs, and the *madrasah's* active engagement with the surrounding community. Student image is formed through students' academic and non-academic achievements, as well as the implementation of consistent religious habituation programs that cultivate disciplined, religious, and high-achieving student characteristics. Meanwhile, service image is developed through structured religious educational services, responsiveness in communication, openness to stakeholder feedback, and relational approaches in educational service delivery.

The study further reveals that digital marketing channels, particularly WhatsApp and social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, play a strategic role not only in disseminating information, but also in building interaction, trust, and emotional relationships with stakeholders. The effectiveness of these channels is reinforced by the consistency between promotional communication and the actual educational services experienced by the community. This study concludes that the construction of *madrasah* brand image is not solely determined by promotional activities, but also by the institution's ability to create meaningful educational experiences, maintain social legitimacy, and establish sustainable relationships with the community. The case of MI Ma'arif NU 1 Pageraji indicates that educational marketing in Islamic educational institutions becomes more effective when it integrates religious values, social capital, service responsiveness, and digital communication into a coherent and sustainable branding strategy**.**

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