Digital Marketing for Improving Brand Image at Al-Munawwir Komplek Q Islamic Boarding Schoolin Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to study the implementation of digital marketing to improve brand image of Al Munawwir Komplek Q Boarding School in Yogyakarta. Using qualitative approach, this research involves participative observation, in-depth interview, and documentation. The main informants are the head of the boarding school and the coordinator of media and publication division. The research results show that Komplek Q uses six digital platforms for marketing: website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, and TikTok. These platforms significantly increase the number of new students by regularly publishing the activities of the boarding school in interesting ways. The advantages of digital marketing at Komplek Q include superior programs, collaboration with alumni, and collaboration with other Islamic boarding schools. The power of digital marketing at Komplek Q is that it is fully supported by the boarding school's leaders, and it involves the whole management in all levels and the students. The uniqueness of digital marketing is in the ability of the Islamic boarding school to attract the interest of various age groups and form formal educational institutions under the auspices of the boarding school. The research concludes that effective digital marketing can significantly improve the brand image of the Islamic boarding school through well-planned and colaborative strategies.
Keywords: Digital Marketing; Brand Image; Islamic Boarding School; Digital Media; Education Marketing.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mempelajari penerapan pemasaran digital untuk meningkatkan brand image Pondok Pesantren Al Munawwir Komplek Q di Yogyakarta. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Informan utama adalah pimpinan pondok pesantren dan koordinator divisi media dan publikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Komplek Q menggunakan enam platform digital untuk pemasarannya: website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, dan TikTok. Platform ini secara signifikan meningkatkan jumlah santri baru dengan rutin mempublikasikan kegiatan pondok pesantren dengan cara yang menarik. Keunggulan pemasaran digital di Komplek Q antara lain program unggulan, kerjasama dengan alumni, dan kerjasama dengan pondok pesantren lainnya. Kekuatan pemasaran digital di Komplek Q adalah didukung penuh oleh pimpinan pondok pesantren, dan melibatkan seluruh pengurus di semua tingkatan dan para santri. Keunikan pemasaran digital terletak pada kemampuan pesantren

dalam menarik minat berbagai kalangan umur dan membentuk lembaga pendidikan formal yang berada di bawah naungan pesantren. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa pemasaran digital yang efektif dapat meningkatkan brand image pondok pesantren secara signifikan melalui strategi yang terencana dan kolaboratif.

Kata-kata Kunci: Pemasaran Digital; Citra Merek; Pondok Pesantren; Media Digital; Pemasaran Pendidikan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing in educational institution, especially Islamic boarding school, is facing challenges in attracting students' interest in digital era. The use of information technology in marketing, or digital marketing, becomes crutial to improve the institution's brand image. However, there are several limitations in the implementation of digital-media-base marketing strategies in boarding schools which affect the effectiveness of the efforts to attract prospective new students and maintain their loyalty.

Marketing is closely related with consumers and community fulfillment as users (Sekerin et al., 2018). According to Kotler & Keller (2016), marketing is define as social interaction process to achieve the goals of each party through creation, offer, and product or service exchange. The main goal of marketing is fulfilling consumers' satisfaction (Machfoedz, 2005). According to Davis, (1998), marketing is a subsystem of management information system in an organization or institution, which is a particular function in the system (Fichman et al., 2014).

In the world of education, marketing focuses on services that are intangible and do not result in possession, although their production can be related to physical or non-physical goods (Tjiptono, 2015). Marketing services in educational institutions aims to attract new students (Dliyauddin et al., 2021), achieve the vision and mission of education, and increase the efficiency of educational services marketing (Prastowo & Manunggal, 2022). Therefore, every educational institution tries to develop an effective marketing strategy, both directly and indirectly (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016)

Marketing has evolved over time, from conventional to digital approaches. Kotler & Keller (2016) define marketing as a social interaction process to achieve goals through the creation and exchange of value. Information technology and the internet have been used for e-marketing, which includes various web-based media such as blogs, websites, emails, and social media (Saura et al., 2019). Digital marketing is applied in various educational institutions to attract interest and increase student loyalty (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016).

Marketing that is adjusted to technological developments leads to digital marketing (Bala & Verma, 2018). Digital marketing uses the internet and information technology as the main tools (Saura et al., 2019). Strauss & Frost, (2009) stated that e-marketing is the process of creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging value

offerings for customers through information technology. Josua Taringan in Fika et al., (2020) added that digital marketing includes various web-based media such as blogs, websites, email, and social networks.

The digital era has made educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, try to improve their marketing through digital information technology to attract students (McIntyre & Srinivasan, 2017). Marketing factors that influence consumers, as stated by Kotler & Armstrong, (2006) with the Marketing Mix (7P) concept, include product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Promotion is the main strategy to attract consumers (Taan et al., 2021), with communication components such as sources, messages, media, and recipient responses (Siagian, 2016).

The use of digital media helps facilitate communication and interaction between consumers and producers (Pradiani, 2017). According to Gronroos in Tjiptono, (2015), service marketing must involve external, internal, and interactive marketing. External marketing includes the preparation of institutions to offer services to consumers. Internal marketing focuses on training and motivating employees to provide good service. Interactive marketing involves direct interaction between customers and employees to provide quality service.

Digital marketing is expected to increase loyalty and brand image of educational institutions (Christine & Budiawan, 2017). According to Kotler, (2003), a brand is a name or symbol that distinguishes one product or service from another. Brand image in education is a name, symbol, or impression that distinguishes an educational institution from others (Mutohar & Masduki, 2023).

Although digital marketing has been widely implemented, previous studies less focused on how digital marketing can improve brand image, especially in non-formal educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools. In addition, the potential influence of the three brand image indicators of excellence, strength, and uniqueness in the context of Islamic boarding schools has not been fully explored.

This study offers a concept of implementing digital marketing that focuses on improving the brand image of Islamic boarding schools through three main indicators: excellence, strength, and uniqueness. This concept will identify how each indicator contributes to the brand image and attracts prospective students in the digital era.

.Educational institutions must keep up with the times, including Islamic boarding schools which also play a role in community development and economic empowerment of the people (Maulana et al., 2022). The purpose of this study is to find and formulate how digital marketing can improve the brand image of the Al Munawwir Islamic Boarding School, Komplek Q Yogyakarta. This study will analyze and explain the advantages, strengths, and uniqueness of digital marketing in an effort to improve the brand image of Islamic boarding schools, as well as how this strategy can attract more students and increase their loyalty to the institution.

2. METHOD

This research aims to study how digital marketing can improve brand image of Al Munawwir Komplek Q Islamic Boarding School Jogjakarta. The research uses qualitative method, which the researchers directly involve in the field and keep on interacting with the participants (John W. Creswell, 2014). According to Moleong, (2018), a qualitative research aims to understand the phenomenon experienced by the research subjects, like behavior, perception, motivation, and action, end-to-end and descriptive in natural context.

The approach used in this research is ethnography or case study, in which the researchers present as participants and play the roles of observers (John W. Creswell, 2014). The research took was done at Al Munawwir Komplek Q Islamic Boarding School Yogyakarta with boarding school principle and the coordinator of media and publicity division

The data were collected through participative observation, in-depth interview, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2016). Document collected includes photos, audio recording, work programs data, reports, student data, and boarding school's brochures. Data analyses were done by using Miles et al., (2014) model, including data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and data verification. Validity test was done with triangulation, data checking from various sources, techniques, and times (Sugiyono, 2016).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation show that Al Munawwir Islamic Boarding School Komplek Q Yogyakarta uses digital media to market the institution through six platforms: website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok. In 2022/2023, Komplek Q, which is dominated by female students, has a total of 367 students. Figure 1 shows that the large number of students is the result of marketing and promotion through those six platforms, which aim to improve the image and attract the interest of prospective new students or the community.
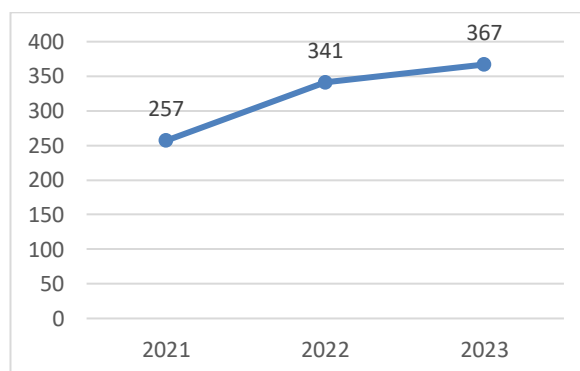

Figure 1. Graphic of the number of students in the last three years

The marketing process in the Komplek Q is not only carried out by the leaders of the Islamic boarding school, but also by all residents of the Islamic boarding school. The management structure in the Komplek Q consists of the Leaders of the Islamic Boarding School, Advisory Board, Board of Directors, Daily Management Board (Chairman, Deputy, Secretary, Treasurer), Rayon Chair, and seven divisions: the Security Division, Cleanliness and Health Division, Jam'iyyah Worship Division, Media and Publication Division, Economic Development Division, Library Division, and Student Resource Development Division, as well as the Al-Quran Study Division.

The Media and Publication Division, under the auspices of Deputy Chair II, is responsible for managing digital media. They use the six platforms above to cover and publish every activity in the Islamic boarding school according to the curriculum. This digital publication is a form of assertive communication that displays open relationships to increase motivation (Saebani & Maryono, 2019). With digital publication, Islamic boarding school activities can be informed to the public easily and quickly, so that they can create a positive image and attract the interest of the community as prospective students.

A significant increase can be seen from the number of followers and viewers on the TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube platforms of Komplek Q. Meanwhile, for the website, Twitter, and Facebook, the increase is not as rapid as the three other platforms. The graphs in Figures 2, 3, and 4 provide concrete evidence of the increase in viewers to the three social media of Komplek Q in February 2023.

Figure 2. Graphic of TikTok Viewers and Followers

Figure 3. Graphic of Instagram Visitors and Followers

Figure 4. Graphic of Youtube Viewers and Followers

The three graphs show Komplek Q's efforts to stay up-to-date with the development of the digital world. The increase in viewers and followers is as the result of contents that are always updated and interesting, covering topics around Islamic boarding schools such as Islam, education, and the aspirations of students (opinions, poetry, and short stories). According to the results of interviews with the coordinator of the media and publication division, the content uploaded always on the latest activities at the Islamic boarding school, because the moment has a particular period or time.

The Media and Publication Division manages each platform with one to two talented and interested members in their fields, making it easier for them to focus on developing and advancing their respective media. For example, on the Instagram platform, members who are experts in graphic design are needed to create content and there are also administrators to publish and respond to incoming messages from the outside community. From planning to evaluation, the Media and Publication Division always implements systematic steps every time there is an activity at the Islamic boarding school. They make a content publication schedule, choose a person in charge, prepare content at least a week before the event, and carry out the editing and publication process through the Komplek Q media as quickly as possible.

The internal efforts of the Media and Publication Division are made to follow the development of information technology with the hope of continuing to improve the brand image of Islamic boarding schools through digital media which also functions as a marketing tool. The activeness of the media and publication division is a form of habituation of the character of students in adapting to technological developments. Religious knowledge as a cognitive aspect is obtained in learning at the boarding school, while digital literacy is applied in the activities of students (Rasmuin, 2019). Furthermore, the discussion related to brand image indicators is analyzed and presented based on the results of participatory observations, in-depth interviews, and researcher documentation.

 a. **Advantages of *Digital Marketing***

The brand image owned by Komplek Q through digital marketing shows that Pondok Pesantren Al Munawwir Krapyak Yogyakarta is one of the Islamic boarding schools with the oldest Al Quran *sanad* (chain) in Indonesia. This makes it a reference

for prospective new students and the community who want to memorize the Al Quran while pursuing formal education. Komplek Q, as one of the branches of Islamic boarding schools under the auspices of Pondok Pesantren Al Munawwir, has the largest number of female students compared to other complexes. The programs offered by Komplek Q not only include Tahfidz Al Quran but also Madrasah Diniyah and various extracurricular activities that develop and train the students' potential. Therefore, prospective students can choose the appropriate program and develop their abilities at Pondok Pesantren Al Munawwir Krapyak Yogyakarta.
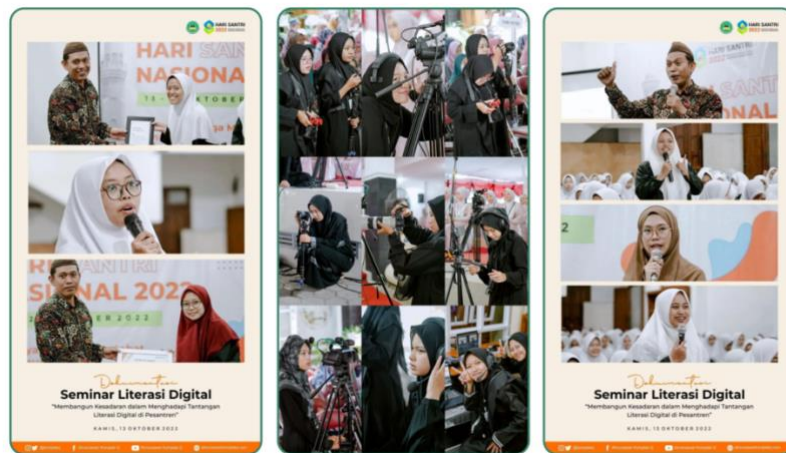

Figure 5. Digital Literacy Activity

Digital content produced by the Komplek Q media team, as seen in Figure 5, is published in the form of writing, images, videos, and reels through the Komplek Q digital media account. Programs or activities taking place at Komplek Q are often broadcasted live through Islamic boarding school digital media such as Instagram and YouTube and attract the public's attention to follow activities in the Islamic boarding school. It is proven that the frequency of live streaming has increased the number of followers of their digital media. This phenomenon is in line with the opinion of Mutohar and Masduki that gradual improvement and enhancement of the quality of institutions is an important factor in building brand image and competitiveness in Islamic educational institutions (Mutohar & Masduki, 2023).

Collaboration with alumni who are members of the Al Munawwir Complex Alumni Association (Halqimuna) throughout Indonesia is also an advantage in the context of digital marketing. Halqimuna plays a role in the marketing process of Islamic boarding schools through its digital media and contributes ideas for the content of the Q Complex media platform which is then published on the Islamic boarding school website. In addition, collaboration with the media team of the Tebuireng Jombang Islamic Boarding School, which has rapidly growing digital media, also supports the argument of Marakas & O'Brien (2017) that successful businesses are able to maintain

online communities of customers, employees, and coworkers, and strengthen collaboration to provide the best experience for customers.

b. **The Strength of** Digital Marketing

The strength of Komplek Q digital marketing includes full support from the leader of the Islamic boarding school, *Ibu Nyai*, who provides positive encouragement and appreciation to students to follow technological developments. This changes the image of students from students who are behind on information to students who are technology literate. Positive messages from *Ibu Nyai* and the *ustaz-ustazah* are processed by the Media and Publication Division into digital pamphlets and media content for Komplek Q.

Islamic content about Islamic boarding schools always fills digital media platforms so that it can be consumed by people outside the Islamic boarding school. This is in accordance with Keller's statement in Sugiharto & Rahardjo, (2020) that brand strength includes products that are relevant to the institution and consistent messages conveyed through online media. Although the Media and Publication Division sometimes faces obstacles because the division members are also students, enthusiasm and competitiveness are still high. The solidarity in Komplek Q creates awareness and a sense of belonging for all members of the Islamic boarding school, which ultimately maximizes the marketing of the institution. According to Robert in Mutohar & Masduki, (2023), resolving obstacles well is a strong character that results in better performance and develops according to customer needs.

c. **The Uniqueness** Digital Marketing

The uniqueness of the brand image of Komplek Q through digital marketing can be seen from the increasing interest of new students from various kind of communities, including people who have daughters from early age to adolescence. This enables the development of institutions such as the *Madrasah Tahfidz Putri Anak* (MTPA) and the *Madrasah Tahfidz Putri Remaja* (MTPR), both of which follow formal education under the auspices of the Yayasan Pondok Pesantren Al Munawwir Komplek Q.

Each level of the institution has its own media team which is still under the auspices of Komplek Q. This is to ensure that the digital media of each level of the institution keep on developing and updating. This is to maintain the existence of the institution and meet the needs of the community. In line with Keller's argument in Sugiharto & Rahardjo, institutions that are able to convince and provide what the community is looking for will build a strong brand image. This uniqueness is not owned by every female-based Islamic boarding school. This makes the Al Munawwir Islamic Boarding School Komplek Q outstanding and different from other Islamic boarding schools. As expressed by Yunaida, (2017), institutions that are built with a good image are considered by the community in choosing a place of education for their children.

4. **CONCLUSION**

This study examines how digital media-based marketing can improve the brand image of Al Munawwir Islamic Boarding School Komplek Q Yogyakarta using three main indicators: quality, strength, and originality. According to the study, the brand image of Komplek Q increased significantly with digital marketing. Digital marketing benefits Komplek Q because it promotes activities and programs on the website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok. The presence of contemporary and entertaining content, including live broadcasts of Islamic boarding school activities, has gained the interest of social media followers and prospective students. The strengths of digital marketing include: the support of Islamic boarding school leader for digital media encourages children to innovate. Islamic content and positive messages for leaders increase brand strength through consistency. The Komplek Q's ability to attract children and adolescents and formal educational institutions under the Islamic boarding school makes it unique. Another uniqueness is that each level of educational institution has a digital media team that publishes every activity regularly and interestingly. Digital marketing improves the brand image of Islamic boarding schools and client loyalty. Komplek Q has increased visibility and increased interaction with prospective students and the community by using digital channels. Komplek Q's digital marketing strategy uses alumni and Islamic boarding schools such as Tebuireng Jombang. Collaboration allows digital media management ideas and best practices to be shared. Islamic boarding schools must adapt to These modifications are important to stay relevant and interesting to the younger generation. This study advances research on digital education marketing. The study found that digital media can boost the reputation of educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools. This study also shows that internal and external support is essential for optimizing digital marketing strategies. Further research can discuss the development of creative content, explore the best digital content for customer engagement and loyalty, measure the effectiveness of digital marketing, develop measurements and tools to better measure the impact of digital marketing on brand image and student enrollment, and conduct comparative study of Islamic boarding school digital marketing techniques with others to see the differences and overlaps.

5. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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