

STRATEGIC MARKETING MANAGEMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

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The decline in student enrollment at Islamic educational institutions has become a serious challenge in maintaining both their existence and educational quality, including at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Pekanbaru. This condition requires structured, systematic, and adaptive marketing management that responds to social, cultural, and technological developments. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of marketing management based on the Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC) framework in enhancing the attractiveness and image of the institution. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. The research subjects consisted of school leaders, administrators, teachers, and parents who were actively involved in marketing strategies. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while maintaining validity through source and method triangulation. The results of the study indicate that marketing planning at SMP Qur'an As-Salam is designed based on its Qur'anic vision and mission, emphasizing Islamic character education, Qur'an memorization, and academic quality. In terms of organizing, the institution established a special team responsible for promotional activities, both conventional and digital. The implementation of strategies combined direct promotion (social gatherings, brochures, banners, community activities) with digital promotion (social media, websites, and educational content). Evaluation or controlling was conducted periodically through monthly and annual meetings, which assessed the effectiveness of promotional media, enrollment levels, and community satisfaction. Although the POAC-based strategy has proven effective in improving the school's image and community interest, its effectiveness is reflected in the increasing number of inquiries and student registrations, higher community participation in school activities, and more positive feedback from parents and stakeholders. The study also found limitations, including weak digital media management, lack of innovation in promotional content, and limited promotional facilities. These factors reduce the institution's competitiveness amid the increasingly intense landscape of Islamic education. In conclusion, the application of POAC-based marketing management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam has been effective in strengthening institutional identity despite the decline in enrollment. However, improvements are still needed in digital marketing, market research, and external collaboration. This study recommends continuous innovation, training in digital media management, and collaborative strategies with stakeholders to expand outreach and ensure the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions in the modern era.



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A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools play an important role in shaping the character, spirituality, and intellectuality of the Muslim generation. Since the 17th century, Islamic boarding schools have existed as unique educational institutions in the archipelago that have contributed greatly to preserving the Islamic identity of the community and producing Muslims with good character and resilience (Jallow, 2023). Pesantren have five main elements: kiai (religious teachers), santri (students), pondok (boarding houses), masjid (mosques), and pengajian kitab (religious study circles) (Hirzulloh, 2023). Collectively, these studies highlight that pesantren not only serve as centers for religious learning but also play a transformative role in character building and community empowerment. The combination of these structural elements such as kiai, santri, pondok, masjid, and pengajian kitab. forms a comprehensive educational ecosystem that integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. This holistic approach enables pesantren to maintain their relevance across generations, adapting their educational and da'wah functions to meet the challenges of modern society while preserving their traditional Islamic essence. To this day, pesantren remain as Islamic educational institutions with a dual function: educating and preaching (Rosita et al., 2024).

However, the challenges faced by pesantren today are increasingly complex. They are not only required to compete with public schools and modern madrasahs that offer academic and technological excellence but also to maintain their institutional image and credibility (Elyati, 2024). impact of globalization, changing parental preferences, and the rise of digital culture have forced Islamic educational institutions to rethink their management and promotional strategies in order to remain relevant. At the same time, strict internal regulations such as restrictions on electronic devices and mobility are often perceived by society as rigid, reducing their attractiveness to potential santri (Abdurrahman et al., 2025).

This problem is empirically evident in the declining trend of student enrollment at SMP Qur'an As-Salam over the past five years. Institutional records show a significant decrease in applicants from 146 in 2020 to only 82 in 2025, with a consistent decline in the number of admitted students as well. This phenomenon is clearly evident in the data on new student admissions at the As-Salam Quran Boarding School. According to institutional records, the number of applicants has fluctuated with a downward trend over the past five years.

Table 1. Data on the number of students who enrolled at SMPQU As-salaam Karanggan

No	Year	Applicants	Admitted
1	2020	146	131
2	2021	145	125
3	2022	129	108
4	2023	140	118
5	2024	123	109
6	2025	82	75

Source: SMP Qur'an As-Salam Karanggan (2025)

The decline shown in Table 1 demonstrates a substantial drop of more than 40% in new applicants within a five-year span. This indicates a shift in public perception and interest toward Islamic boarding schools, reinforcing the urgency to strengthen institutional marketing management (Bin Lahuri et al., 2024).. Stagnation in enrollment also reflects lingering stigma that pesantren are second-tier educational institutions compared to general schools (Tobroni, 2018). Therefore, effective and adaptive marketing management becomes a crucial factor in revitalizing the image and competitiveness of Islamic boarding schools in the modern era (Setyaningsih et al., 2025).

Islamic education marketing management has distinctive characteristics because it is not merely profit-oriented but emphasizes efficiency, creativity, and the internalization of Islamic values. In the modern context, educational marketing encompasses the seven elements of the service mix, product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and process (Mutakin et al., 2024). integration of digital platforms such as websites, social media, and online content serves as an opportunity for pesantren to highlight their flagship programs, promote student achievements, and reach a wider audience (Imroni, 2024).

Several previous studies have examined marketing in Islamic educational institutions. Wachid et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of monitoring and evaluation in educational marketing management, while Arfiana (2025) demonstrates that effective marketing strategies positively influence student enrollment. Mardia (2011) focuses on the Blue Ocean Strategy, encouraging schools to create unique value propositions beyond conventional competition. Meanwhile, Wulandari et al. (2023) highlight the role of social media in building institutional image and engagement.

Despite these valuable contributions, most prior studies have not specifically analyzed the integration of digital marketing strategies with Islamic values within the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) framework. This represents a research gap that needs to be filled, as digital transformation in Islamic boarding schools requires managerial alignment between technological adaptation and religious authenticity.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze the marketing management of SMP Qur'an As-Salam, particularly regarding the integration of digital marketing strategies with Islamic values. Specifically, this study seeks to explore how the POAC-based management framework is implemented to enhance the attractiveness and institutional image of the Qur'an As-Salam Islamic Boarding School. The findings of this research are expected to contribute academically to the development of Islamic education management literature and provide practical implications for Islamic boarding schools in designing effective and sustainable marketing strategies that align with their mission of promoting Islamic values in the digital era.

B. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach was chosen because it provides an in-depth description of the planning and supervision strategies for digital promotion activities at SMP Qur'an Assalam. The focus of the study is to understand the managerial processes carried out by the educational institution in practice.

The research subjects were determined purposively, based on the role and direct involvement of the informants in the school's promotion and marketing activities. The research subjects consisted of two people, namely H. Mochammad Suroso, S.Pd.I as Deputy Chair of the SMP Qur'an Assalam Foundation who also serves as the institution's public relations officer, and the Deputy Head of Student Affairs at SMP Qur'an Assalam. These two informants were chosen because they hold strategic positions in planning, implementing, and supervising the school's digital promotion programme.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain information related to the planning, implementation, and control of digital promotion. Observations were conducted to observe the promotion practices being carried out, while documentation was used to supplement the data in the form of activity archives, promotional media, and school reports. The data obtained was then analysed using qualitative analysis techniques, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

With this methodological design, the study is expected to provide a factual and in-depth description of how SMP Qur'an Assalam plans and implements its marketing management

strategy, as well as the challenges and opportunities it faces in the context of contemporary Islamic education.

The data obtained was then analysed using qualitative analysis techniques, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To provide a clearer understanding of the methodological flow applied in this study, the following chart illustrates the overall stages of the research process, starting from the determination of informants to data analysis and conclusion drawing.

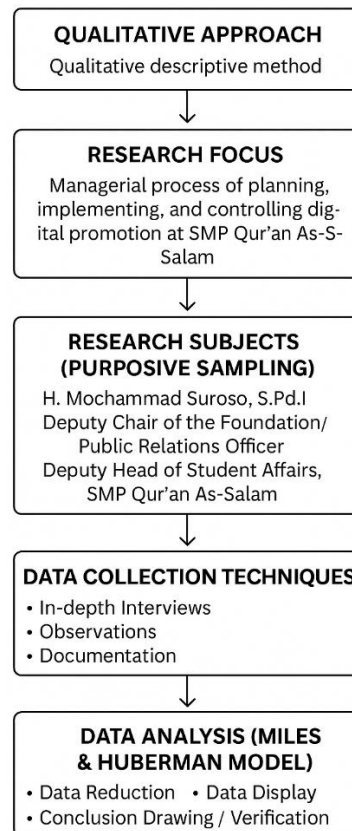


Figure 1. Research Flowchart

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Marketing Planning for Islamic Boarding Schools

Planning in marketing management is a fundamental stage that determines the success of management strategies for educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (Rohidin & Nugraha, 2025). According to Kotler et al., (2022), marketing planning is a systematic process of analysing market opportunities, formulating objectives, developing strategies, and implementing measurable marketing programmes. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this planning is not solely focused on commercial aspects, as in business institutions, but also encompasses the missions of da'wah (Islamic propagation), education, and community empowerment. Therefore, marketing management in Islamic educational institutions such as SMP Qur'an As-Salam serves as a crucial tool for maintaining their existence while enhancing their competitiveness amidst the competition among both formal and non-formal educational institutions.

a. Situation Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

The initial step taken by SMP Qur'an As-Salam in marketing planning is situation analysis, which includes both internal and external factors. Internally, the institution

possesses several strengths, such as a curriculum that integrates formal education with tahfidzul Qur'an programs, dormitory facilities that support character building, and teachers with strong backgrounds in both pesantren and Islamic higher education (Sari et al., 2025). However, certain weaknesses remain to be addressed, including limited technological facilities, suboptimal promotion on social media, and an admissions system for new students that has not yet been fully digitalized (Apriyanto & Hidayati, 2022).

Externally, opportunities arise from the growing demand among Muslim families for education based on the Qur'an and Islamic character in the modern era. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2023) indicate a rising interest in pesantren-based schools, particularly those integrating Qur'anic memorization with formal curricula. Nevertheless, threats emerge from negative media coverage of misconduct cases in some pesantren, which has affected the general image of Islamic boarding schools among parents. Additionally, the increasing competition among pesantren both traditional and modern requires SMP Qur'an As-Salam to establish a strong branding strategy (Hasanah et al., 2025).

b. Marketing Objectives

The findings indicate that SMP Qur'an As-Salam has set clear marketing objectives for both the short and long term. The short-term objective is to increase new student enrollment by 10–15% each academic year, while the long-term objective is to position the school as a regional center for Qur'anic education, characterized by the integration of Qur'an memorization, formal curricula, and Islamic character development. These objectives align with strategic planning theory proposed by Thoif dan Sudjanto, (2020), which emphasizes the importance of realistic, measurable, and vision-oriented goals.

c. Marketing Strategy: Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP)

In developing its marketing strategy, SMP Qur'an As-Salam applies the STP approach. Segmentation is conducted based on demographic factors (Muslim families with children of junior high school age), geographic factors (local communities around the pesantren's location as well as potential applicants from outside the region), and psychographic factors (families with strong concerns about Qur'anic education and Islamic character development) (Fachri et al., 2022).

Targeting focuses on middle to lower-middle-class families up to the middle-upper class who seek affordable yet high-quality education, with the added value of Qur'anic memorization. Positioning emphasizes the school's unique strength as a "Qur'anic school with formal education and Islamic character building," distinguishing it from general schools and traditional pesantren that only emphasize classical Islamic texts. Differentiation in educational branding is essential to attract students in a competitive market (Hishnuddin & Jazilurrahman, 2025).

d. Implementation of the Marketing Mix (7P)

Field findings reveal that SMP Qur'an As-Salam has implemented the seven elements of the marketing mix (7P):

- 1) Product: The core product is formal education based on the national curriculum integrated with tahfidzul Qur'an. Additional extracurricular programs include scouting, Qur'an recitation arts, and entrepreneurial skills.
- 2) Price: Tuition fees are relatively affordable, supported by cross-subsidization and scholarships for high-achieving students or those from underprivileged families.

- 3) Place: The school is strategically located and accessible, with facilities such as a mosque, dormitories, classrooms, and a computer laboratory, albeit still limited.
- 4) Promotion: Promotional efforts include brochures, religious activities within the community, and the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Testimonials from alumni and parents also serve as effective informal promotion.
- 5) People: Teachers, ustadz, kiai, alumni, and even active students play crucial roles in maintaining the pesantren's positive image. For example, the involvement of the student council (OSIS) in welcoming prospective students strengthens the school's branding.
- 6) Process: The student admission process remains mostly manual but is gradually shifting toward an online system to ease the application process for out-of-town candidates.
- 7) Physical Evidence: Facilities, uniforms, the religious atmosphere, and students' academic and non-academic achievements serve as tangible evidence of the school's quality.

e. Meeting and Evaluation Mechanisms

The study found that SMP Qur'an As-Salam conducts regular monthly meetings to discuss marketing and promotional programs. These meetings serve to set agendas, form committees for student admissions, and evaluate previous strategies. The involvement of all stakeholders, including the pesantren leadership, administrators, teachers, and students, reflects a participatory planning process. This is in line with the concept of participatory management in Islam, where shura (consultation) forms the foundation of decision-making (Ikhwan & Qomariyah, 2022).

f. Empirical Evidence and Best Practices

Field observations show that pesantren with well-structured marketing planning tend to grow more successfully. For comparison, Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri (Pasuruan) has built strong branding through its focus on kitab kuning studies and cooperative enterprises, while Pondok Pesantren Daar El-Qolam (Tangerang) has succeeded in attracting thousands of students through consistent digital promotion (Ikhwan et al., 2025). SMP Qur'an As-Salam attempts to adapt such practices by developing social media accounts as promotional tools, though human resource limitations remain a challenge.

g. Evaluation and Strategy Improvement

Marketing evaluation at SMP Qur'an As-Salam is conducted through monitoring the number of applicants each year, analyzing community responses, and surveying parental satisfaction. This evaluation leads to recommendations such as increasing the intensity of digital promotion, developing new flagship programs, and training staff in social media management. This corresponds with Hemsley-Brown, (2023) perspective that continuous evaluation is key to successful educational branding in competitive contexts.

The study demonstrates that marketing management planning at SMP Qur'an As-Salam has been systematically conducted through situation analysis, goal-setting, STP strategy, and implementation of the marketing mix. Despite certain limitations particularly in digital promotion and technological infrastructure the pesantren has made efforts to build strong branding through its Qur'anic programs and character development initiatives. Field evidence suggests that effective marketing strategies significantly contribute to increasing

student enrollment and strengthening the pesantren's position as a reputable Islamic educational institution (Kartiko & Rohmania, 2025).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these marketing strategies faces challenges. Empirical data indicate fluctuating enrollment numbers at SMP Qur'an As-Salam, with a sharp decline in 2025. This suggests that while marketing planning has been relatively well-implemented, certain aspects require improvement to meet community demands and address competition among educational institutions (Budiarti & Amin, 2025).

Recommendations for Improvement:

- a. **Optimizing Digital Promotion:** While social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are already in use, content quality and frequency remain limited. In today's digital era, educational branding is determined by consistency and creativity. SMP Qur'an As-Salam should adopt more modern strategies, such as producing educational content, alumni video testimonials, and live broadcasts of student activities to build stronger engagement with prospective parents.
- b. **Enhancing Technological Facilities:** Manual admissions processes pose challenges, especially for applicants from outside the region. Digitalizing the admissions system would increase efficiency and broaden outreach.
- c. **Differentiating Flagship Programs:** Beyond integrating formal curricula with Qur'anic memorization, innovation in flagship programs is needed. For instance, incorporating 21st-century skills (digital literacy, Islamic entrepreneurship, and foreign languages) alongside Qur'anic education would provide distinctive value.
- d. **Developing Marketing Human Resources:** Limited expertise in digital marketing and public relations remains a challenge. Therefore, staff training in these areas is crucial to strengthen competitiveness.
- e. **Image and Trust Management:** Negative perceptions of pesantren due to misconduct cases in other institutions must be countered by building trust through transparent management, publicizing student achievements, and adopting a humanistic approach in communication with parents.

In conclusion, marketing management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam has been relatively well-structured and systematically implemented. However, the fluctuation in enrolment particularly the sharp decline in 2025 signals the need for continuous adaptation. In line with Hemsley-Brown, (2023), the success of educational branding depends largely on the ability to adapt to market changes and evolving societal needs. By strengthening digital promotion, innovating flagship programs, digitalizing admissions, and enhancing human resource capacity, SMP Qur'an As-Salam has the potential to restore positive enrollment trends and reinforce its reputation as an excellent and trustworthy Qur'anic educational institution.

2. Organizing Marketing in Islamic Boarding Schools

After the planning stage has been formulated, the next step in marketing management is organizing. The organizing function plays a crucial role in managing available resources, both human and non-human, to ensure that marketing strategies are implemented in a more directed, systematic, and effective manner (Okolie et al., 2021).

Etymologically, the term "organizing" comes from the word organize, which means arranging or structuring the components of a system so that they become integrated and interconnected in achieving common goals (Yuliana, 2024). According to Nairi (2024), organizing in the context of management is the process of grouping people, facilities, activities, authority, tasks, and responsibilities into a unified system that operates effectively and efficiently. In other words, the organizing function ensures that each individual within the organization works according to their respective capacities and roles, complementing one another to achieve the institution's vision and mission (Sonmez Cakir & Adiguzel, 2020).

From an Islamic perspective, organizing human resources is closely tied to the concept of *insan kamil* (the complete human being). Every member of the organization is viewed as a trust (*amanah*) from Allah that must be managed wisely, in terms of both quality and quantity, so that they can provide maximum benefit for the institution (Hadi & Lari, 2024). Therefore, SMP Qur'an As-Salam not only assigns staff members based on technical needs but also considers individual potential, ethics, and competencies in relevant fields.

Field research findings indicate that organizing in marketing management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam is carried out through several strategic steps. First, the pesantren establishes an admission committee for new students. This committee consists of leaders, ustadz/ustadzah (teachers), daily administrators, and even senior students. Each member is assigned specific roles and responsibilities. For example, teachers primarily provide academic guidance and serve as resource persons for prospective parents, while senior students act as ambassadors of the pesantren by sharing their learning experiences and dormitory life.

The formation of an admissions committee is considered a key element in marketing organization. With a structured committee in place, all promotional programs can be implemented more systematically. The committee is responsible not only for admissions but also for developing publication strategies, such as distributing brochures, managing social media accounts, and organizing open house events. This reflects the principle of departmentalization in management theory, which emphasizes grouping similar activities to facilitate coordination and efficiency (Koontz & O'Donnell, 2019).

Furthermore, organizing is conducted based on the principle of collective participation. This means that teachers, administrators, students, and alumni are all involved in marketing activities. Alumni, for instance, contribute by sharing their success stories after graduating from the pesantren, which are then published through official social media platforms. In this way, the pesantren strengthens its branding in the public eye (Risuhawianto & Yuliana, 2024).

Organizing also extends to managing non-human resources, particularly budgeting. The pesantren allocates specific funds to support promotional activities, ranging from digital content production, media publications, to hosting inter-school competitions on the pesantren campus. According to the school leadership, financial allocation is an essential component of management, as marketing strategies cannot run optimally without sufficient funding (Yuwanda et al., 2023).

The findings reveal that organizing marketing management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam goes beyond task distribution; it also emphasizes the empowerment of human resources. By involving students, teachers, administrators, and alumni, the pesantren has successfully developed a more inclusive and participatory marketing system. This aligns with modern management theories highlighting the importance of empowerment, where members of an organization feel responsible for its success (Robbins & Coulter, 2021).

Moreover, organizing functions as a mechanism to minimize conflicts and overlapping tasks. With a clear committee structure, every individual understands their respective roles and responsibilities. This strategy has proven effective, as acknowledged by several administrators who noted that coordination across divisions has become more efficient due to clear role assignments from the outset.

From a practical perspective, organizing at SMP Qur'an As-Salam also serves as a medium for building public trust. The community perceives that the pesantren is managed professionally, structurally, and transparently. This perception has had a positive impact, contributing to the steady increase in new student enrollment each year.

3. Implementation of Marketing in Islamic Boarding Schools

Implementation is one of the core functions of management, playing a central role after the stages of planning and organizing. It can be defined as the concrete effort to mobilize both human and non-human resources so that previously formulated plans can be executed effectively (Siagian, 2010). According to Terry (2006), implementation is the essence of management because it is at this stage that strategies are tested in real practice. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, the implementation of marketing management is not solely oriented toward quantitative targets, such as increasing student enrollment, but also toward strengthening Islamic values, shaping the institution's positive image, and empowering the community.

At SMP Qur'an As-Salam, the implementation of marketing management is carried out through two main approaches: digital promotion and direct promotion. Digital promotion is conducted through the utilization of the pesantren's official social media, the school website, and communication platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. These platforms showcase student activities, highlight the school's flagship programs, and present testimonials from parents and alumni. This approach aligns with the theory of digital marketing, which emphasizes the importance of public engagement through online platforms in order to build institutional image and increase public interest (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

In addition to digital methods, direct promotion is also implemented. This includes brochure distribution, safari dakwah visits to mosques, outreach to elementary schools, and parenting classes through regular religious gatherings and majelis dzikir with parents. This strategy reflects the concept of relationship marketing, where long-term emotional and spiritual bonds are cultivated between the pesantren and parents (John & De Villiers, 2024). By engaging parents in both religious and academic activities, the pesantren not only promotes its educational services but also strengthens emotional ties that foster loyalty and trust (Shams et al., 2024).

The implementation of marketing at SMP Qur'an As-Salam also emphasizes the active involvement of students through student organizations. Members of OSIS (student council), for instance, play a role in welcoming prospective students, sharing personal testimonies, and participating in promotional activities during open house events. This approach is consistent with Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) theory, which stresses the importance of message consistency from multiple stakeholders to build a strong institutional image (Belch & Belch, 2018). By showcasing students who are confident, high-achieving, and embody Islamic values, the pesantren offers first-hand experiences that enhance the trust of prospective parents.

Beyond promotional strategies, marketing implementation is also reflected in the pesantren's admission system. SMP Qur'an As-Salam adopts a multi-wave admission model. Each admission wave is assigned a target number of students, with selection criteria tailored to the interests, talents, and academic abilities of applicants. Early waves prioritize high-achieving candidates, while later waves are more inclusive, offering broader opportunities for the community. This strategy demonstrates the application of demand management in educational administration, balancing admission quotas and segmentation with institutional capacity while maintaining educational quality (Abidin, 2020).

Field findings reveal that the admissions committee at SMP Qur'an As-Salam operates with clearly defined task divisions. Teachers and administrators are assigned based on their competencies, such as designing digital pamphlets, handling registrations, conducting safari dakwah, or managing social media publications. This mechanism reflects participatory leadership, in which pesantren leaders not only provide direction but also accompany the promotional process and resolve challenges through musyawarah (deliberation). As noted by one research informant, obstacles encountered during promotion are always discussed

in committee meetings to ensure timely solutions and future improvements (Kemal et al., 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, promotional activities in educational institutions may also be associated with the concept of *tahadduts bin ni'mah* proclaiming Allah's blessings and favors not out of arrogance, but as a form of *da'wah* (propagation of goodness) (QS. Adh-Dhuha [93]:11). Thus, the publication of student achievements, academic milestones, and successful *pesantren* programs constitutes both a means of gaining public trust and a medium of Islamic outreach (Labib, 2022).

Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of marketing management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam is well-organized. The admissions committee performs its tasks professionally, students are actively involved in branding efforts, and *pesantren* leaders play an active role in supporting promotional activities. The combination of digital and direct strategies enables the institution to both reach a wider audience and build close emotional ties with parents. Through this comprehensive approach, SMP Qur'an As-Salam has positioned itself as an excellent, adaptive, and trustworthy Islamic educational institution amid the competitive landscape of modern education (Zulkarnain, 2023).

4. Evaluation (Controlling) of Marketing Management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Islamic Boarding School

Evaluation, or controlling, is one of the most crucial management functions in ensuring the effectiveness of marketing strategies that have been planned and implemented by educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*). Controlling is the process of setting standards, measuring actual performance, and taking corrective actions when deviations occur so that organizational objectives can be optimally achieved. In the context of educational marketing management, evaluation plays an integral role not only in assessing the effectiveness of promotional strategies but also in measuring the extent to which marketing efforts enhance public trust in the institution (Iffah & Fauziyah, 2019).

At SMP Qur'an As-Salam, marketing evaluation is conducted periodically at the end of each new student admission cycle. This evaluation covers three main aspects: (1) the institution's service delivery to the community, (2) the effectiveness of promotional and marketing activities, and (3) the alignment between implementation and previously established plans. This evaluation model reflects the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Islamic education, which emphasize continuous improvement and the involvement of all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, and parents (Afrin & Mohiuddin, 2024).

Findings from observations and interviews indicate that the promotional activities carried out by SMP Qur'an As-Salam such as *safari dakwah* at mosques, school outreach visits, brochure distribution, and social media publications received positive responses from the community. However, compared to previous years, the number of applicants has declined. This suggests that the promotional strategies have not yet been fully effective in building a strong institutional image and attracting greater public interest in enrolling their children.

Evaluation is also conducted through internal committee meetings after each promotional phase. These meetings discuss challenges encountered in the field, such as limited funding for broader outreach, insufficient utilization of digital media, and low participation of some parents in parenting activities. These challenges then become points of reflection for improving strategies in subsequent admission periods. This practice aligns with feedback control theory, which underscores the importance of using information and feedback from program implementation as the basis for managerial decision-making (Kotler et al., 2023).

In terms of service quality, the community perceives SMP Qur'an As-Salam as providing friendly and informative responses to prospective parents who inquire via telephone or visit the pesantren in person. This aspect is critical, as in educational service marketing, service quality is a key factor influencing parental decision-making (Zeithaml et al., 2018). In interviews, one newly enrolled parent stated that the pesantren's prompt responses to their inquiries were among the primary reasons for choosing SMP Qur'an As-Salam.

Furthermore, the evaluation strategy at SMP Qur'an As-Salam also involves parents through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining mutual rights and responsibilities. This MoU functions as a form of quality control and accountability, ensuring that parents feel engaged in maintaining educational standards. This approach reinforces the concept of relationship marketing, which emphasizes building long-term relationships with customers in this case, student guardians (John & De Villiers, 2024).

From an Islamic perspective, evaluation and controlling in management can be linked to the principle of *hisbah*, which refers to supervision to ensure that activities remain aligned with Sharia and the noble goals of Islamic education. This principle resonates with QS. Al-Hasyr [59]:18: "O you who believe, fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent forth for tomorrow." This verse provides a theological foundation for the necessity of evaluation in educational management, ensuring that activities remain directed toward producing a generation with strong morals and competitiveness.

The findings of this study reveal that while the marketing strategies of SMP Qur'an As-Salam were generally well-implemented, they did not result in an increase in new student enrollment. However, the efforts did contribute to enhancing the institution's positive image in the community. Periodic evaluations helped administrators identify supporting factors, such as the active role of OSIS in promotional activities, as well as obstacles that require improvement, such as limited digital media outreach. Thus, the marketing management of SMP Qur'an As-Salam can be categorized as structured and well-directed.

In conclusion, this discussion highlights that the controlling function in pesantren marketing management plays a vital role in ensuring the sustainability of effective promotional strategies, maintaining service quality, and building public trust. The findings confirm that the success of marketing in Islamic educational institutions should not be measured solely by the number of new students but also by the quality of relationships with the community and adherence to Islamic values in every managerial process.

5. Implications of Marketing Management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam Islamic Boarding School

The findings of this study indicate that parents of students (*wali santri*) expressed satisfaction, ranging from "satisfied" to "very satisfied," with the quality of education at SMP Qur'an As-Salam. This highlights that the success of the pesantren cannot be separated from the synergy of all stakeholders—school leaders, teachers, students, and parents in building an educational system that meets societal expectations. This effort is realized through the visionary leadership of the school principal and the active involvement of the pesantren community in marketing strategies and institutional image-building.

Education at SMP Qur'an As-Salam is designed in an integrated manner, combining religious sciences with general subjects. Consequently, graduates are not only proficient in Islamic knowledge but also competitive in the national education system. This integrative model of education has become a major attraction for prospective parents, as it addresses the needs of modern society for a balance between religiosity and academic competence. It also demonstrates that the school's marketing strategy prioritizes internal quality improvement, which is then projected outward as a positive institutional image.

The tangible implications of marketing management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam can be observed through the fulfillment of quality assurance indicators, improvement of teacher competencies, and the successful mastery of Qur'anic recitation skills by students using the Yanbu'a method. Additionally, the implementation of 13 quality assurance aspects serves as an internal guideline for maintaining academic and moral standards. The success of graduates ranging from admission to prestigious high schools, achievement-based scholarships, to becoming young preachers in society further supports the claim that quality-driven marketing strategies are more effective than promotion focused solely on image-building.

Moreover, the development of extracurricular programs adapted to contemporary needs such as Qur'anic memorization (*tahfiz*), Qur'anic recitation (*tilawah*), Islamic arts, and information technology skills has become an integral part of the school's marketing strategy. These flagship programs, with measurable indicators of success, enhance the institution's attractiveness and perceived value among prospective parents. Thus, the marketing strategy of SMP Qur'an As-Salam is not only promotion-based but also innovation- and differentiation-based.

From an Islamic perspective, the school's approach to educational marketing aligns with the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law), which emphasize achieving the welfare of the community. Islam underscores the importance of education grounded in revelation (Qur'an and Hadith), empirical reasoning (*burhānī*), and spiritual experience (*irfānī*) as foundations for developing well-rounded individuals (*insān kāmil*). The first revealed command, Iqra' (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1–5), provides an essential basis for Islamic educational management strategies, in which "reading" is understood not only as textual literacy but also as observation, analysis, and skills development. Accordingly, SMP Qur'an As-Salam views educational marketing as inseparable from enhancing both intellectual and spiritual quality among students.

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad's hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim about utilizing life opportunities before five conditions (youth, health, wealth, free time, and life) offers theological guidance for educational institutions to optimize their potential. This is reflected in SMP Qur'an As-Salam's strategy of strengthening teacher capacity through training, seminars, and professional forums (MGMP and KKG). Hence, educational marketing is not merely oriented toward increasing student enrollment but also toward enhancing internal capacity to ensure the institution remains competitive and relevant.

This study also highlights differences from several previous works. DiMartino & Jessen, (2016) found that educational marketing management in Western contexts often faces serious challenges such as unprepared stakeholders, unclear promotional messages, and budget diversion from academic needs to promotional activities. In contrast, SMP Qur'an As-Salam emphasizes balancing promotion with academic quality improvement, thereby minimizing the risks of budget misallocation.

Meanwhile, Goh et al. (2017) stressed the importance of understanding external student needs as the basis for designing promotional strategies. The present study adds a new perspective: marketing does not only prioritize external needs but also strengthens internal collaboration among the school community (teachers, students, and parents) as social capital for gaining public trust. Thus, marketing management at SMP Qur'an As-Salam is a hybrid model that combines an inside-out approach (internal quality strengthening) with an outside-in approach (adapting to market demands) (Iffah & Fauziyah, 2019).

Similarly, Adamba (2020) in Ghana emphasized the role of building a positive institutional image to increase competitiveness. However, the difference lies in the point of focus: Adamba's research highlighted external factors and student behavior, while the findings of

this study emphasize internal institutional factors particularly leadership, teacher involvement, and parental participation as dominant components of the marketing strategy.

Practically, these findings imply that pesantren must develop systematic and well-planned marketing strategies rather than being merely reactive to market dynamics. The messages communicated should be honest, accurate, and reflective of the actual quality of educational services to preserve institutional credibility in society. Furthermore, integrating Islamic values into every marketing activity from planning, organizing, to evaluation distinguishes pesantren as not only educational institutions but also centers of moral and spiritual formation.

By adopting a holistic marketing strategy encompassing planning, organizing, promotional implementation, and periodic evaluation, SMP Qur'an As-Salam has succeeded in building public trust, expanding outreach, and balancing market demands with the mission of Islamic education. This strategy ensures that Islamic educational institutions remain relevant, competitive, and firmly rooted in the integrity of Sharia values while facing the challenges of educational globalization.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, this study concludes that the marketing management of SMP Qur'an As-Salam has been systematically implemented following the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) framework. The institution demonstrates clear planning through defined objectives such as increasing public interest and trust by promoting flagship programs—Qur'anic memorization (tahfidz), character education, and the integration of religious and general curricula. The participatory management structure, involving school leaders, teachers, students, and parents, supports effective implementation through both conventional and digital promotion channels. These efforts have successfully enhanced the school's public image as a Qur'an-based educational institution that is credible, integrated, and responsive to community expectations.

For future improvement, it is recommended that SMP Qur'an As-Salam strengthen its digital marketing strategy by optimizing social media platforms, developing creative content, and maintaining an active and informative school website. Further research may explore the quantitative impact of digital marketing innovations on student enrollment trends or compare the effectiveness of POAC-based marketing in different Islamic educational institutions. Such studies will enrich the literature on Islamic education management and provide valuable insights for enhancing sustainable and competitive marketing strategies in the digital era.

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