

Utilization of Social Media as An Effort to Improve the Competitiveness of Islamic Educational Institutions

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the transformation of educational marketing strategies as an effort to increase the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions. This study focuses on how the existence of Islamic educational institutions in multicultural areas. The method used in this study is qualitative research with a phenomenological research type. The results of the research data were then analyzed using thematic analysis according to Braun & Clarke. The results of the study show that social media has greatly influenced consumer behavior and has become a pioneer in educational institution marketing strategies in the current digital era. On the other hand, Institutions that successfully integrate social media into digital marketing strategies like TikTok and Instagram will tend to achieve greater success in achieving marketing goals. This study makes a significant contribution by introducing a new approach to educational marketing that is relevant to current technological developments.

Keywords: Educational Marketing, Islamic Educational Institutions, Competitiveness, Marketing Strategy

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has brought significant changes in all walks of life, social media has become an important part of people's daily lives, not only is it used as a tool for communication, it is also used as a strategic tool in various sectors, including education. (Herring, 2021; Huggins & Ritzhaupt, 2021; Selwyn & Aagaard, 2021). Realizing that technology has a big role in the world of education today, technology is widely used to improve the learning process, provide wider services to enable access to educational resources, and facilitate communication and collaboration between educational institutions and consumers. Data shows that in 2022, more than 80% of the Indonesian population will be active users of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, which is the most popular social media platform. (Nasution, 2022; Li et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2022; Rusdi, 2022).

The dynamics of competitive competition in the world of education, especially in Islamic educational institutions, mean that they have a need to differentiate themselves and increase the visibility of the use of social media (Grosser et al., 2021; Alzahrani & O'Toole, 2021; Sharma et al., 2022; Wijaya & Khoir, 2022). Social media is seen as not just a marketing tool that is appropriate in the world of education, but social media is considered important in attracting the interest of prospective students and strengthening the image of institutions (Zhang et al., 2021; Ghosh &

Kumar, 2021; Rogers, 2021; Susilawati & Astuti, 2022). Figure 1 shows the number of active social media users in Indonesia calculated from January 2014 to January 2022, stating that Indonesia is one of the countries with very active social media users.



Figure: 1 Number of Active Social Media Users

A review of the literature shows that research on educational marketing via social media has grown in recent years, but significant gaps remain. Purnomo's (2021) research shows that effective use of social media can increase student participation and parental involvement in school activities, but this research focuses more on higher education than secondary education. Meanwhile, research by Wang and Lee (2022) reveals that marketing strategies via social media can increase brand awareness of educational institutions, but does not provide a detailed picture of the internal factors that support the success of this strategy. Another study conducted by Smith (2021) highlighted the importance of content tailored to the target audience, but did not highlight how schools in developing countries, such as Indonesia, manage the challenges of implementing this strategy. The importance of digital marketing strategies in the educational context, but do not specifically examine secondary education in Indonesia which is becoming a problem is the focus of this research (Hidayat et al., 2024; Möller & Eisend, 2022). Modern marketing theory, such as Integrated Marketing Communications Theory, supports the idea that consistency and synergy in the use of various communication platforms, including social media, can increase the effectiveness of marketing messages (Eisend et al., 2021; Maulidia & Sanjani, 2023). Therefore, it is important to understand how educational institutions such as Nurul Haramain implement marketing via social media and its impact on the institution's competitiveness (Brenngman & Karimov, 2021; Merz et al., 2022; Girard et al., 2022)

Although there have been many studies examining the role of marketing via social media in the educational context, previous research has not paid special attention to Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools. Apart from that, the difference identified is that there is still not optimal analysis of internal and external factors that can influence the success of implementing social media marketing strategies as a marketing tool to the challenges and opportunities faced by institutions. So, to correct these differences, a deeper understanding is needed about the dynamics of educational marketing in this era of digitalization, especially in the context of Islamic boarding schools.

This research offers a transformation of educational marketing strategies through social media in an effort to increase the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions. The difference between this research and other research is that it not only examines the success of the strategic transformation used but also examines internal factors such as creative team management and the use of technology in managing digital content. Additionally, this research

proposes a new approach that integrates content analysis with in-depth interviews to identify best practices in the use of social media by educational institutions. This novelty is expected to provide new insights and contribute to the development of more effective and adaptive marketing strategies in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

The main aim of this research is to analyze marketing strategies via social media in PP. Nurul Haramain and evaluate its impact on institutional competitiveness. By understanding the mechanisms and effectiveness of marketing strategies via social media, it is hoped that this research can make a positive contribution towards increasing the quality and attractiveness of educational institutions in Indonesia, especially in this increasingly competitive digital era. The temporary argument in this research reveals that the use of social media is a strategic need for Islamic educational institutions to compete in the digital era. Social media not only increases an institution's reach and appeal, but also enables efficiency in resource management. With the right strategy, Islamic educational institutions can strengthen their image and attract more students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type of research. A phenomenological approach was chosen because the main focus of this research was to understand the subjective experiences and perceptions of educational actors in PP. in implementing marketing strategies via social media (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2020; Smith, 2021; Bevan, 2021). This approach allows researchers to explore the meaning behind the actions and decisions taken by institutions, which cannot be explained in depth through a quantitative approach (Finlay, 2021; Zahavi, 2021; Giorgi, 2020). This qualitative research is more appropriate to use than quantitative methods because the main aim is to gain in-depth and interpretive insight into phenomena that have not been widely researched, especially in the context of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Lester, 2021; Vagle, 2021).

Data collection techniques used in this research include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The research location is PP. Nurul Haramain NW Narmada which is located on Jl. Tegal Banyu, Lembuak Village, Narmada District, West Lombok Regency, NTB. The choice of this location was based on the characteristics of schools that have implemented marketing strategies through social media intensively so that it becomes a relevant case to study. Interviews were conducted with various parties directly involved in implementing this strategy, including the school principal, creative team, teachers, and several students who were actively involved in promotional activities via social media. The number of respondents interviewed was 5 people, who were selected based on their role and involvement in the school marketing process. Apart from interviews, researchers also conducted direct observations of school social media activities, as well as analyzing content uploaded to platforms such as Tiktok and Instagram.

Table 1. Respondents

Category Informant	Information	Role in Research	Code
Head Foundation	The leader is responsible for the school's policy and strategic direction	Provide seen on school marketing policies and strategies	this
Public Relations	Team member who handles the school's external promotions and communication	Provide information on marketing tactics and promotional efforts	Hm
IT Team	Team member in charge of social media account management and content creation	Provide information regarding the type and content of content	IT
Student	People who are part of and directly experience the educational process at the institution	Provide information related to the learning experience	St

Parents of students	People who help choose schools for students	Provide information regarding reasons for choosing an educational institution	St
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The data analysis technique used in this research is thematic analysis, which allows researchers to identify the main themes that emerge from the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Nowell et al., 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2021). This thematic analysis involves several stages, namely data transcription, coding, grouping codes into themes, and interpretation of emerging themes (Clarke et al., 2022; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2021; Terry et al., 2021). This approach is effective for understanding the complexity of qualitative data because it allows researchers to explore deep patterns and relationships among identified themes, thereby providing rich and structured insight into the phenomenon being studied. Data obtained from interviews and observations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media Centers in Education Marketing

Social media is not only used as a tool to promote products and services, but also as a tool to interact directly with consumers and can also increase consumer awareness in choosing quality products or services. This is in accordance with the results of the interview given to me by Hj as head of the foundation, saying that "The use of social media as a marketing medium is very necessary, apart from the fact that we have entered the digital era, social media has become a place for institutions to show themselves to a wide audience, especially service users, which means that this becomes a benchmark for society to assess our educational institutions as institutions. quality education". As stated by HM "We as an educational institution are very open to input and criticism that we receive, we always analyze all comments that come in on the institution's social media accounts, once there is criticism or suggestions we will follow up directly"

Based on the interview results above, it shows that PP. Nurul Haramain is fully aware of the central role of social media in educational institutions, not only as a marketing tool but as a place to demonstrate the quality of educational institutions. In addition, the use of social media is identified as a strategic tool to expand reach and strengthen the school's image in the eyes of the community. To optimize this strategy, the principal has taken the initiative by establishing a special team responsible for the management of social media platforms and the content editing process, demonstrating the school's commitment to innovation and greater involvement of the wider community.

Instagram is one of the media used to disseminate information. The content presented can be in the form of photos and short videos with a duration of 1 minute and also a reels feature. Researchers conducted an interview with KY, "Because we are aware of the development of information technology and PP. Nurul Haramain is also an institution that is very open to developments in technology and information, therefore we have planned to use Instagram as a medium to publish activities in the institution since 2019"



Figure 1. PP. Nurul Haramain's Instagram

Figure 1 shows the official Instagram account of PP.Nurul Haramain. This account has 5161 followers with 393 posts, this proves that the institution is quite active on the Instagram platform as evidenced by the large number of followers, the activity on this account has many posts which show the institution's efforts to engage with the community through social media.

TikTok is a short video platform that allows users to freely imagine their ideas and express them in the form of short videos. The video can then be shared with all TikTok users in various parts of the world. So far, the TikTok application has several advanced and cool features that attract many business people and digital marketers to learn interesting facts about TikTok and grow their millennial customers, a Chinese social network and music video platform that was launched in September 2016. With many features the application has TikTok, this application is one choice as a promotional medium. Research (Kristia & Harti, 2021).

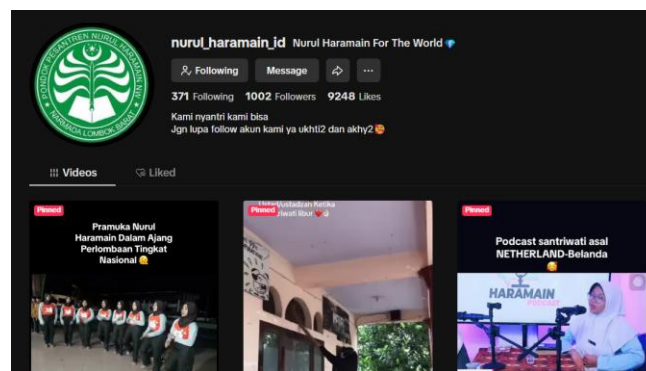


Figure 2 Tiktok PP. Nurul Haramain

TikTok by Figure 2 has become one of the most popular platforms at the moment, PP. This is proven by the Tiktok account which already has 1002 followers and if you look at the number of posts that have been uploaded, which is 64 posts, this shows that the institution is quite active in posting activities via the Tiktok account. Reports show that the institution may still be in the early stages of developing a broader base. followers of this platform. TikTok users at school also realize the importance of social media in supporting marketing and communication strategies with a wide audience.

The content on Tiktok or Instagram is more or less the same, containing activities carried out by students at PP. Nurul Haramian, there are differences in the types of content uploaded to the Tiktok and Instagram platforms. If Instagram only displays activities related to the formal learning process and boarding school activities. The Tiktok platform is more diverse because most of its users are Gen-Z, and the content created follows existing trends, for example content about a day in my life for students during the holidays.

Table 2. PP.Nurul Haramain's Social Media Platform for the Last 3 Months

Social media	followers	Amount of Content	Like	Viewer
Instagram	5161	393	5409	16.540
Tiktok	1002	64	1431	9.185

The Table 2, it can be seen that in the last three months the Instagram account experienced more views than the Instagram account, this happened because PP. already has a reels feature that helps a wider audience, Instagram has its own logarithm so that videos or uploads can be made seen by more people than his own followers. Indirect The reach over the last three months is quite large compared to the use of socialization informationThe team uses conventional methods, such as distributing brochures and pamphlets. Based on the research results above, it can be concluded

that Strategic Use of Social Media, PP. Nurul Haramain utilizes various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to expand the reach of information and support their marketing strategy. Each platform was selected based on content characteristics: Instagram: Used to share photos and short videos about daily activities. TikTok: Used for short video trends and creative content targeting the younger generation, especially Gen-Z. Utilizing multiple platforms allows institutions to tailor content to different audiences, increase reach, and strengthen relationships with the community.

The Influence of Specific Social Media Platforms

Instagram is often used as a platform for visual promotions. At the PP Nurul Haramain educational institution, they use several social media including Instagram and Tiktok. As stated by IT as the IT Team said, "We use almost all social media platforms to update all activities in the institution, so each social media has its uses, to update students' daily activities we usually use Instagram, for long videos we usually use YouTube, and We have also just started using Tiktok, for Tiktok we usually upload video compilations for one day's activities."

Public Relations (PR) at PP. Nurul Haramain plays a pivotal role in managing the institution's presence on social media. According to an interview with a member of the PR team, "Our main goal in utilizing social media is not only to promote the institution but also to build trust and transparency with parents, students, and the broader community. Social media has become an effective tool to showcase the unique aspects of our educational environment and maintain strong communication."

The PR team emphasizes the importance of consistency and quality in content creation. They work closely with teachers, students, and the IT team to curate content that reflects the institution's values and achievements. "We ensure that every post aligns with our vision and mission, and we always strive to highlight the positive impact of our programs," said the PR member.

Each social media platform is used strategically to achieve specific communication objectives. Instagram remains the top platform for visual storytelling due to its popularity among students and parents. The PR team collaborates with graphic designers and photographers to create posts that are visually appealing and resonate with their audience. "We find that parents and prospective students are drawn to the vibrant and dynamic visuals we post, so we put extra effort into making them engaging and meaningful," the PR member added.

TikTok, a relatively new platform in their strategy, is used to appeal to a younger audience. "TikTok allows us to create fun and relatable content. By compiling daily activities or highlighting special events in short, entertaining videos, we can connect with students in a way that feels natural and engaging," explained the PR member. The PR team believes that TikTok can be a powerful platform to showcase the lively and interactive aspects of student life at the pesantren.

The results of the interviews that have been conducted show that PP. Nurul Haramain uses social media according to the content to be created. Direct observation conducted at PP. Nurul Haramain shows that the use of social media is optimized for various promotional and communication purposes. Instagram is the main media used to share interesting visual moments, such as teaching and learning activities, religious events, and documentation of students' achievements. Posts on Instagram tend to have an aesthetic design with informative captions, so that they can attract the attention of prospective students and their parents. In addition, the use of features such as Instagram Stories and Highlights is also used to provide real-time information and save important content so that it can be accessed at any time.

In addition to Instagram, TikTok has also begun to be used as a new platform to reach a younger audience. Short videos uploaded on TikTok are generally compilations of students' daily activities, creative activities, and moments of togetherness at the Islamic boarding school. The use of an interesting and easy-to-understand short video format helps Islamic boarding schools to expand their reach while creating a more modern and relevant image in the digital era. This combination of strategies shows that PP. Nurul Haramain not only uses social media for communication, but also as an effective branding tool among digital audiences.

Successful Education Marketing Strategy Through Social Media

Institutions that successfully integrate social media into digital marketing strategies will tend to achieve greater success in achieving marketing goals, including brand awareness, consumer engagement and sales. Of course, this success cannot be separated from the strategies that have been prepared and implemented. The results of the interview with ST as the student's parent when he was asked what made the decision that convinced his daughter to go to school at PP Nurul Haramain, "I sent my child to school here in Pondok because at that time I was interested because I heard from a neighbor whose child went to school there, then I looked at their social media accounts too, I saw a lot of activities displayed there, I felt that later my child would learn a lot of things. the new one, besides that also because of PP. "Nurul Haramain is also one of the Islamic boarding schools which is very well known in Lombok, NTB in particular."

Another guardian, Mr. ST, said that, "I send my children to this boarding school because it is a modern Islamic boarding school which is famous for its excellence in the fields of language and technology". The results of the interview above are supported by data that there is an increase in students registering at PP.Nurul Haramain. Apart from that, if you look at the institution's website, all activities are integrated with the system, making it easier for consumers and students when they want to access related activities and even about storing goods. This is in line with the results of an interview with one of the students with the initials ST who is also an administrator, "While studying at Nurul Haramain I felt happy because there were many activities that I could do, and now it has become very easy, for example when we elect the board of students for student organizations, it is not like before because now there is a system that has been created from the boarding school."

Based on this, it can be concluded that both parents and students had a good experience with PP.Nurul Haramain. So far, the education marketing strategy through social media has had a significant impact. Through analysis of research carried out at PP.Nurul Haramain, this research provides an illustration of how social media platforms such as Tiktok and Instagram can be effectively integrated into educational marketing strategies, replacing conventional methods such as pamphlets and brochures which are less efficient.

The results of this research offer practical guidance for other educational institutions in adopting digital technology to promote their quality and achievements, as well as showing the importance of establishing a dedicated team skilled in digital content management to achieve broader results and impact audience reach. Therefore, this research enriches the educational management literature by providing a marketing model that is relevant and adaptive to technological developments, while underlining the important role of social media in supporting the strategic goals of educational institutions. This research makes a significant contribution to education management by highlighting the application of social media-based marketing strategies as an innovative approach to increasing the visibility and competitiveness of educational institutions in the digital era.

The results of research observations at PP. Nurul Haramain show that social media is not only used as a communication tool, but also as the main means to build an image and attract prospective students and parents. Activities such as documentation of teaching and learning activities, religious events, and student achievements are routinely uploaded to platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok. The content displayed is designed in a modern and attractive style, adapting to current digital trends. Apart from that, there is digital system integration on the Islamic boarding school's official website which allows easy access for users, such as activity information, the system for selecting student organization administrators, and services related to storing goods. This observation confirms that the adaptation of technology and digitalization is one of the strategic advantages that supports educational marketing at PP. Nurul Haramain.

Structured and professional content management is supported by a dedicated team in digital management, which ensures that every activity can be published in a consistent and relevant manner. Activities such as promotional campaigns through Instagram Stories, daily video compilations on TikTok, and detailed information on the website show that PP. Nurul Haramain has succeeded in utilizing various digital platforms to strengthen their appeal. This not only increases engagement with the audience, but also provides a positive user experience, both for students, parents, and the general public looking for information about the institution.

Discussion

Implementing educational marketing strategies through social media is one solution that helps educational institutions PP. use social media so that goals and information about education are conveyed more quickly and on target. Digital marketing involves all forms of marketing activities carried out via the internet, such as via websites, social media, email and other online platforms that may be used (Dolega et al., 2021).

This will make it easier for institutions or individuals to interact with consumers directly and create greater opportunities to build strong ties and increase consumer confidence in the products or services they will use (Rather et al., 2024). Global development is dynamic and continues to show rapid progress in all aspects of life which will have an impact on social changes that occur among society (Wong et al., 2022). Educational institutions use data and analytics from social media to personalize marketing messages and increase consumer engagement (Kumar et al., 2024).

Instagram is a social media that specializes in sharing photos and videos, uploading photos or videos accompanied by captions and hashtags (Dameria Girsang, 2021; Nova Lusnia, 2021). The IPB International Promotion Team had already used social media as one of the marketing strategies used, and had been planning it since 2015, this was proven by IPB International joining Instagram in May 2015 (Yayang Rahmanita, 2023).

Social media considering the massive development of technology and changes in consumer behavior where the younger generation is increasingly dependent on the information they get through digital platforms. (Goh et al., 2022; Alshehri et al., 2021; Norman & Paramansyah, 2024). Without appropriate and effective marketing strategies, educational institutions will be at risk of losing their competitiveness in attracting new students and maintaining a positive image in the eyes of society (Geyser et al., 2021; Chang et al., 2022). Social media content is information and entertainment presented on social networking media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and so on created by a person or individual, a company and organization, its placement on social networking media platforms allows for more direct interaction with users, thereby realizing the effect The full range of social media content must also be oriented towards that target group (Huang, 2020).

Almost all social media platforms have a significant impact, but it is also found that some platforms have a stronger influence on marketing strategies which greatly influence consumers' viewpoints (Suttikun & Mahasuweerachai, 2023; Ni & Cheng, 2024). The use of social media as an educational marketing tool has become an effective strategy in increasing the competitiveness of institutions. A study by Kaput (2022) stated that social media allows educational institutions to build closer relationships with their audiences through relevant and interactive content. This is in line with the findings at PP. Nurul Haramain, where platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok are used strategically to convey daily activities, achievements, and the atmosphere of the Islamic boarding school in an interesting way. The use of visual content and short videos not only increases user engagement but also creates a positive image that can attract prospective students and strengthen the identity of the institution in the digital era. Adjusting content based on the characteristics of each platform also shows a deep understanding of digital consumer behavior, as emphasized in research by Grewal et al. (2021), which highlights the role of social media in building trust and loyalty to brands.

CONCLUSION

The influence of social media in digital marketing transformation was revealed as a very significant aspect. An in-depth analysis of the role of social media, especially platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Youtube, highlights its impact as a major catalyst in changing the marketing paradigm. The research results show that social media has substantially influenced consumer behavior and pioneered the marketing strategies of educational institutions in today's developing digital realm. Through research methodology from existing literature, we succeeded in illustrating the central role of social media in achieving digital marketing goals. Thus, this research provides new insights regarding the dynamics of marketing transformation in the digital era driven by the presence of social media, confirming the importance of adapting to these developments to achieve success in modern marketing strategies.

This research makes a significant contribution by introducing new approaches in educational marketing that are relevant to current technological developments. By showing how social media can be integrated into educational management strategies, this research enriches the existing literature by offering a more adaptive and modern marketing model. However, this research also has limitations, especially related to the limited scope of one particular educational institution. These limitations open opportunities for further research that could include different types of educational institutions, geographic variations, and analysis of differences in impact based on audience demographics, such as gender and age. Further research is needed to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth picture, so that it can become a stronger basis for developing more effective and inclusive education marketing policies and strategies in the future.

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