



## Strategic Communication Management: Crafting a Positive Image for Madrasah Excellence

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### ABSTRACT

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This research aims to determine the management of communication strategies in building the image of madrasahs and changing the public's perspective towards MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo. The analysis uses a qualitative approach of case study type. This research focuses on communication strategies in building a madrasah sutra at MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo. The selection of a qualitative approach aims to understand communication strategies in building the image of madrasahs at MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo. The case study was chosen to focus on the case under study. The research results show that MTs Miftahul Ulum carries out two communication management, namely internal communication management and external communication management. MTs Miftahul's internal communication management has an essential impact on creating a solid organization, using personal and group communication. Communication management is also carried out to solve organizational conflicts or problems. External communication management is carried out by MTs Miftahul to maintain organizational relationships with external parties and build the image of MTs Miftahul. Relations with the government, banking, press, consumers, surrounding community, and other organizations. This research provides implications regarding the importance of educational institutions in maintaining the image of madrasahs by implementing communication strategies that impact image-building and changing society's perspective.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indeed, individuals engaged in education or overseeing educational establishments view this domain as a means of advancing their community. The construction of society through educational institutions has been crucial from historical times to the present day. MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan, Probolinggo, remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering community development through educational initiatives. As development progresses, public trust in MTs Miftahul Ulum is relatively high; this can be seen from the enthusiasm of the people who send their children to MTs Miftahul Ulum quite a lot, both residents

around the school and residents outside the Krejengan sub-district, including collaborations with institutions that are well-connected and quite numerous. The trust of other institutions to collaborate with madrasah is due to the trust of these other institutions in madrasah. Of course, the collaborations carried out cannot be separated from the field of education, which is the core or main work of madrasah itself.

Not only that, MTs Miftahul Ulum's concern regarding the development of Human Resources (HR), especially teachers, is also quite good; this can be seen from the encouragement to continue their teachers' advanced studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels through collaboration with the government, institutions or companies. Private. Things that can improve the competence and professionalism of all human resources at MTs Miftahul Ulum always receive full support to be carried out well.

Community building activities through educational institutions carried out by MTs Miftahul Ulum are an effort to answer the challenges society faces regarding advances in knowledge and technology, which continue to occur rapidly. As a form of dynamic innovation in building an intelligent and characterful society, community-building activities through education have a character that differs from community-building activities in other fields. Therefore, studying it in depth and comprehensively is interesting, considering that building society through educational institutions requires a quick response to current advances in science and technology and demands continuous innovation and breakthroughs. This also includes challenges in the form of instant behaviour, hedonism, pragmatism, corruption and other damaging behaviour that is rife in society, and this is a constructive challenge that must be answered by MTs Miftahul Ulum by preparing teachers and students who are ready and have sound principles to face these challenges. To face all these challenges, school principals, teachers and educational staff, as subjects of developing education, need to understand and master effective constructive communication patterns in dealing with communicants, in this case, their students and the surrounding community.

Communication Management and Public Relations Function Public Relations is a distinctive management function that supports developing and maintaining a common path between an organization and its public regarding communication activities, understanding, acceptance and cooperation (Ariyanti & Prasetyo, 2021; Zakiya, 2022). Furthermore, public relations activities are reciprocal two-way communication for specific interests with explicit activities (Rizquha, 2022).

Public relations has a vital role in supporting the success of every organization, both internal and external (Marpaung et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2022). Organizational goals will only be achieved if there is support from each public. Therefore, maintain good relations with them. Internal and external publics require different strategies to maintain continuity between the two (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Organizationally, the external public is outside the organization and has no direct connection (Zubaida et al. 2022; Diana & Zaini, 2023).

Public relations is one of the functions of management that forms and manages mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the external community (Supada et al., 2020). The existence of public relations in an agency or organization is essential. Public relations are all forms of planned communication that carry out internal and external roles between a community and all its audiences to achieve the same goals based on mutual understanding.

The image of an institution, whatever the field that is the centre of its activities, certainly needs a positive image in the eyes of other people or institutions. Image, or in English, is a set of beliefs, ideas, thoughts and impressions of society towards a particular object.

As an institution, schools as building institutions also need this excellent image. The image of a building institution can be interpreted as an image of an institution, where this image has and gives a strong impression on society; in some cases, the institution cannot regulate what kind of image it has in society.. Building a picture of a school situation is complicated because communication and information do not directly influence a person's behaviour but more easily influence how they view the environment or specific objects (Maestro et al., 2021).

The existence of public relations is closely related to the image of institutions, including buildings and educational institutions, namely schools. Public relations is a medium of communication between educational institutions and plays a role in imagining the quality of school institutions. In this way, a positive image can be built by activating the role of public relations management (communication management) in providing a good and positive school image. Improving the school's image is very important, especially the excellent image of the school in the eyes of the community so that the community knows and supports it (Ari & Prastowo, 2020).

MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo is one of the institutions that is trying to improve its educational image. The communication strategy management program is essential for MTs Miftahul Ulum to attract public sympathy and interest. This fulfils the institution's needs because it can only stand alone with harmonious relations or relationships with internal and external parties who can introduce the institution to its community.

Several researchers have widely studied research on communication strategy management. Setyaningsih (2020) believes that communication strategy management in creating school branding at SDMT Ponorogo includes Understanding and setting communication goals, selecting a communication strategy, and implementing a communication strategy. Meanwhile, Maulidiyah (2021) stated that communication strategy management in building the image of the madrasah at MTs Al Maarif 01 Singosari Malang includes Carrying out a SWOT analysis, formulating the vision and mission of the madrasa, determining communication targets. Khasanah (2020) also stated that communication strategy management in building the image of madrasah at MTsN 2 Bandar Lampung includes Implementing communication strategies, carrying out communication activities, and carrying out communication evaluations.

Based on several previous studies, Public Relations has a massive role in the sustainability of an educational institution. Therefore, researchers are interested in understanding and analyzing the communication strategies carried out by MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo to improve the institution's image.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research uses a qualitative approach of case study type. This research focuses on communication strategies in building a madrasah sutra at MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo. The selection of a qualitative approach aims to understand communication strategies in building the image of madrasahs at MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo. The case study was chosen to focus on the case under study.

The data in this study were obtained through two main techniques: observation and interviews. Observations were made to see the practice of communication strategies at MTs Miftahul Ulum directly. At the same time, interviews were conducted with six resource persons with different understandings related to the case, such as the principal, public relations, students, student guardians, alumni, and the community around the madrasah. Using diverse sources is expected to provide a comprehensive perspective on the research topic.

Data analysis in this study refers to the method proposed by Adlini et al., (2022) that the research used research on natural object conditions where the researcher is the key instrument, combined information collection, data analysis is inductive and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than about communication strategies in building madrasah sutra at MTs Miftahul Ulum Krejengan Probolinggo.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews with informants at MTs Miftahul Ulum, several data findings were obtained regarding how MTs Miftahul Ulum manages its building and educational institutions and how they relate to its communication management. There are two communication management carried out by MTs Miftahul Ulum, namely internal and external communication management.

**Tabel 1. Communication Strategy Steps in Building the Image of Madrasah**

<b>Internal Communication Management</b>	<b>External Communication Management</b>
1. Formal Communication	1. Management of External Communications with the Government
2. Informal Communication	2. Management of External Communication with the Press
3. Group Communication	3. External Communication Management with Consumers
4. Personal Communication	4. External Communication Management with the surrounding community
	5. External Communication Management with the Organization
	6. External Communication Management with Banks

MTs Miftahul Ulum Formal Internal Communication Management and optimization of communication resources by MTs Miftahul Ulum formally aims to disseminate important information within the organization (Mansyuri & Abidin, 2023). In general, internal Communication aims to align the vision and mission of MTs Miftahul Ulum, understanding the goals, work programs, and continuity of the organization, including strengthening relationships between people, which creates organizational solidity. Formal activities by MTs Miftahul Ulum are usually in the form of internal meetings, either held once a week every Tuesday or on certain days considered necessary for holding formal events. In addition to building high solidarity among all members of MTs Miftahul Ulum, it is also to resolve problems or conflicts that occur so that they can be resolved quickly and conditions can return to being conducive. Formal communication includes three aspects. First, formal channels are also called bureaucratic channels. Second, formal communication is also known as official communication. Third, each employee involved in communication plays a role according to their position and authority.

Personal communication; This Communication occurs at MTs Miftahul Ulum on a personal level. Usually, it consists of two people in the organization

carrying out the communication process either face-to-face or through the media. For example, foundation administrators and teachers communicate to discuss things that are official or related to work but in a fluid or non-rigid condition. This personal communication is also between fellow foundation administrators, law teachers, and educational staff. This personal communication can be done face to face or using communication media (WhatsApp, telephone and so on) (Sa'ad & Istifa, 2020).

Group communication; This group communication is carried out by MTs Miftahul Ulum, usually between groups. Usually, in MTs Miftahul Ulum, we are more familiar with sections or divisions, for example, foundation administrators with teaching staff or teaching staff with educational staff. Communication between these divisions ensures the smoothness and success of each division in carrying out its duties (Banunaek et al., 2021).

Informal communication is carried out at MTs Miftahul Ulum, including by teachers, educational staff, committees and foundation administrators. Even though communication is informal, it is not uncommon for communication to discuss official matters, even though it is done in a relaxed atmosphere. Sometimes, various problems are discussed in this communication to find the best solution. Sometimes, the best ideas, thoughts and solutions to problems emerge in these informal meetings. This informal communication is usually carried out while eating, within the foundation or outside while travelling. This informal Communication can be done face-to-face or using existing media (Sunata, 2022).

MTs Miftahul Ulum External communication management external communication management is closely related to how MTs Miftahul Ulum manages and communicates with various parties in collaborative efforts. This collaboration can be helpful in the short and long term (Taufiq, 2023). Several important things about the image of MTs Miftahul Ulum can also be included in this external communication management. First, external Communication with the government. However, MTs Miftahul Ulum cannot be separated from its relationship with the government, whether related to operational permits or assistance from the government. MTs Miftahul Ulum seeks to build communication with the government by complying with government procedures or regulations regarding the establishment or operations of foundations, inviting relevant government parties to supervise foundation operations, access assistance provided by the government, reporting assistance or carrying out foundation operations and so on (Kurniasih, 2021).

Second, external communication with banking. Collaborating in terms of school operational assistance, the employee payroll system in the MTs Miftahul

Ulum environment, the monthly fee payment system for all students in the MTs Miftahul Ulum environment, including the student work internship program towards the end of their study period at the partner bank. Third, external communication with the press. About journalists or the press, MTs Miftahul Ulum is not allergic to the arrival of journalists or the press but is invited to collaborate or work together that is mutually beneficial to both parties in terms of, for example, reporting on achievements or activities carried out by MTs Miftahul Ulum.

Fourth, external communication with consumers. The connection with consumers is because MTs Miftahul Ulum operates in the field of building through educational institutions; the consumers here are the students' parents. With the parents of MTs Miftahul Ulum students, building open Communication is always open to parents' input or expectations, including access to direct communication, both in meetings and in an informal setting. Fifth is external communication with the surrounding community. The building owned by MTs Miftahul Ulum has a virtual concept in the sense of being united with the community so that many programs are synergized with the community, for example, the use of community mosques by students and teachers, optimization of community stalls for student snacks, social service for residents, collaboration in the use of community spaces by students and so on (Majir et al., 2022). Because of this closeness, harmonious communication between both parties continues to be carried out and pursued. Sixth is external communication with other organizations (companies). Collaborations with other parties continue to be carried out domestically and abroad of a local, national and international nature (Dwi et al., 2022).

Media in external communication make press realizations of activities or achievements within the MTs Miftahul Ulum environment and send them to the media, usually large media in the Probolinggo area. Also, utilize official speeches to socialize the MTs Miftahul Ulum program, whether it has been carried out or yet to be carried out. Creating brochures, either digital or printed on paper, related to seminars or new student admissions is often done. Making posters or banners for seminars and training activities or accepting new students digitally and manually is also a frequent choice (Maula, 2023). Apart from that, inviting members of the media to attend and get an explanation of the programs that will be carried out by MTs Miftahul Ulum and regularly holding social services for residents in the form of free food distribution, health checks, skills training and so on. Exhibitions of student work products are always carried out by inviting various parties to view them in the hope that good communication will be established with various parties through the creative works produced by

students so that they can build a positive image of students and the institution (Thomas & Oktavianti, 2021).

Utilizing mass media and establishing good relationships between institutions is a strategy to introduce schools as development and educational institutions to the broader community. This is due to the function and effects of the mass media used by schools. Likewise, collaborating with several companies and other institutions is more than merely fulfilling material education needs. More than that, it is an effort to create an image (in a positive sense) so that the public recognizes this institution. For example, cooperation carried out with government institutions, from an image point of view, the public will see it as a credible school because it collaborates with the government, as well as cooperation with several other large companies that are already known to have a good image (Sodik, 2023).

Utilizing new media MTs Miftahul Ulum, do not make sure to make profile videos or various activities uploaded on YouTube. This is a necessity nowadays, where everyone is very close to this new media. In improving a school's image or introducing the institution, making a video profile is crucial in this digital era (Fadhilla & Pradana, 2023).

The current generation (digital natives) is always looking for something they want to know or know about via the internet, and one of the most frequently used media is YouTube. MTs Miftahul Ulum made this video as a strategy for this. The uploaded video contains information about the school and various student activities, achievements, and several subjects in the school's curriculum. Apart from the subjects studied in public schools, videos of activities such as pencak silat, activities in nature, and activities using modern technology are shown. Several teacher profiles were also uploaded to the YouTube content (Nursikin & Nugroho, 2020). Uploading videos on YouTube effectively shows a positive image of this building and educational institution and is a communication strategy that has been developed. Strategy is an integrated part of planning, where planning is a management function. This opinion can be translated as saying that strategy is a process that determines the steps in decision-making and can have a long-term impact. This public relations strategy is carried out to achieve various goals, one of which is improving a good image, for example, so that the institution or organization becomes better known, which ends in increasing interest among the people who are its targets or target market. Public relations strategies can have various impacts, such as positive and negative impacts. Therefore, public relations must understand the conditions from various aspects and prepare various other strategies if one does not run smoothly (Islam et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSION

Indeed, there is a significant level of interest in plus schools in major urban centres, where additional religious lessons form the core of the curriculum. Despite reservations about the high costs associated with education at these institutions, numerous individuals, when questioned, affirmed their strong enthusiasm for plus schools. Schools bearing the distinctive "plus" designation possess inherent value and boast additional advantages compared to establishments merely adhering to standard educational protocols. While certain schools, particularly Islamic plus schools, command lower fees than their plus counterparts, an intriguing reversal occurs—these more affordable institutions garner less interest. Some individuals even perceive schools with comparatively lower fees as commonplace, taking pride in entrusting their children to such establishments. In addressing this, giving students a deeper comprehension of the nuanced dynamics between expensive and economical educational expenses without compromising their intrinsic personal quality is imperative. Recognizing that quality formation is an inherent process, schools represent a modest facet in the more extensive construction of character. Should students persist in this perspective, the communication management overseen by the public relations function at MTs Miftahul Ulum serves as a conduit to align thoughts with public perceptions regarding the establishment and educational institutions of this nature. Multiple communication strategies, both internal and external, have been effectively deployed, with the integration of new media setting MTs Miftahul Ulum apart from its counterparts. At the very least, the envisioned portrayal underscores that MTs Miftahul Ulum and its affiliated schools can stand shoulder to shoulder, if not surpass, plus schools and conventional educational institutions.

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