



Strategic Approaches to Islamic School Marketing in Predominantly Non-Muslim Regions

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ABSTRACT

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The research objectives in this study provide strategies in overcoming Islamic school marketing in a non-Muslim society. The object of this research is located at madrasah which operates in a non-Muslim community. The method used in this research is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. While collecting this data by means of observation, interviews and documentation. The data obtained were analyzed using an interactive model. This data analysis model consists of: data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. The results of the discussion of this study are the Perceptions of Non-Muslim Communities towards Islamic Schools, namely that non-Muslim communities often have negative perceptions of Islamic schools due to fears of discrimination and lack of correct information, the influence of Social Media in Marketing Islamic Schools, namely social media plays an important role in providing relevant and reliable information for parents, as well as assisting schools in delivering their marketing messages more effectively and inclusively, and Collaboration between schools is very influential in increasing understanding and respect for differences, which shows the effectiveness of collaborative projects in reducing conflict and improving relationships between students.

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INTRODUCTION

The marketing strategy of Islamic schools has caused controversy among non-Muslim communities, that the integration of universal values can strengthen its acceptability, but requires a sensitive and inclusive approach (Ani & Yusoff, 2021; Ashraf et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2022). The values and culture adopted by Islamic schools can be different from the values and culture adopted by non-Muslim communities (Arifin et al., 2024). This can lead to conflict and rejection of marketing strategies that do not take these differences into account. Islamic schools in non-Muslim communities have shown rejection due to differences in values and culture that are not taken into account in marketing strategies (Latif & Hafid, 2021; Malik, 2024; Nasution et al., 2023). The integration of universal values and the application of a sensitive and inclusive approach are essential in

the marketing strategy of Islamic schools in non-Muslim communities to overcome controversy and increase acceptability, although differences in values and culture can lead to conflict if not considered. Islamic schools located in non-Muslim communities often face challenges in attracting interest and participation from non-Muslim families (Brooks et al., 2020; Mashuri et al., 2022). Several studies have shown that Islamic schools in non-Muslim communities often struggle to reach enrollment targets from non-Muslim families, indicating the need for more effective marketing strategies (Alrasheedi & Almutawa, 2020; Haider et al., 2024; Nur-Awaleh & Mohammed, 2022). Therefore, it is important for Islamic schools to develop an inclusive marketing approach based on universal values that can be accepted by the entire community, regardless of religious background.

There has been extensive research on marketing strategies for Islamic schools in non-Muslim communities. Islamic schools operating in non-Muslim communities need to develop effective marketing strategies to attract students from various backgrounds (Husnaini et al., 2021; Mulhakim & Sembodo, 2022; Zafi et al., 2023). This has prompted research to find the best approach. Many studies have examined the challenges and solutions of marketing Islamic schools in non-Muslim communities, indicating that this is a relevant and important topic. The abundant research on marketing strategies for Islamic schools in non-Muslim communities emphasizes the importance of developing effective and inclusive approaches to attract students from diverse backgrounds.

The perception of non-Muslim communities towards Islamic schools influences the effectiveness of marketing, and misunderstandings or prejudices need to be addressed through community engagement activities and transparent marketing materials (Ambarwati & Sari, 2024; Dacholfany et al., 2020; Mulyana et al., 2022). Second, the influence of social media in marketing is significant, with platforms such as Facebook and Instagram showing increased visibility and positive interactions that help build the school's image (Gil-Fernández et al., 2021; Umair Manzoor et al., 2020). Third, collaboration between schools and various parties, including non-Islamic institutions and community organizations, plays an important role in expanding marketing reach and increasing school acceptance (Fauzi & Sastra Khusuma, 2020; Gil-Fernández et al., 2021; Zafi et al., 2023).

This study aims to provide strategies in addressing the marketing of Islamic schools in the midst of a non-Muslim community at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) NW Gelogor, Pringgarata District. The temporary argument in this study reveals that the marketing strategy of Islamic schools in the midst of a non-Muslim community involves several key aspects. In an effort to overcome this challenge, a marketing strategy is needed that is specifically designed for this

context. This study aims to provide a marketing strategy that is specifically designed to help Islamic schools overcome the challenges of attracting the interest and participation of non-Muslim families, who often have difficulty in achieving enrollment targets in non-Muslim communities.

RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this research is located in the Islamic educational institution MI NW Gelogor Kec. Pringgarata, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara which operates in a non-Muslim community. The determination of the object of this research at the Islamic educational institution MI NW Gelogor is based on several strong reasons. First, MI NW Gelogor is located in the midst of a non-Muslim community, so it faces unique challenges in marketing its institution to the surrounding community. The existence of Islamic schools in a non-Muslim-majority environment provides a rich context for examining how these school marketing strategies are designed and implemented. Second, controversies often arise related to public acceptance of Islamic educational institutions, so this research can identify and analyze various conflicts and solutions that have been implemented. Finally, the case study at MI NW Gelogor will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the marketing strategies used, and can be a reference for other Islamic schools in similar situations.

The research design uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological research design was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the subjective experiences and perceptions of various parties related to the marketing strategy of Islamic schools in the context of non-Muslim communities (Sanjani, 2024). The research will involve in-depth interviews with principals, marketing staff, teachers, students, and parents of students to explore their experiences in facing the challenges and opportunities that exist. In addition, direct observation in the school environment and the surrounding community will also be carried out to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

The sources of informants in this study include school principals, marketing staff, teachers, students, parents of students and the surrounding community. The sources of informants in the research as shown in Table 1, include various parties who have direct roles and experiences related to the marketing strategy of Islamic schools in the midst of non-Muslim communities. The principal will provide a perspective on the policies and strategic directions taken by the institution. Marketing staff will provide insight into the tactics and methods used to attract the interest of prospective students and the surrounding community. Teachers will provide views on the implementation and impact of marketing strategies on the teaching and learning process and interaction with

students. Students will provide feedback on their experiences as part of the school community and how they see the marketing efforts. Parents of students will share their views on the reasons for choosing the school and their expectations for this educational institution.

Table 1. Source of informant

Category Informant	Description	Role in Research	Code
Head School	Leaders responsible for the school's policies and strategic direction	Providing views on school marketing policies and strategies	HS
Humas	Team members who handle the school's external promotions and communications	Provide information on marketing tactics and promotional efforts	HM
Teacher	Teachers in schools who are involved in the teaching and learning process and interaction with students	Providing perspective on the impact of marketing strategies on the educational process	TC
Student	Students who are enrolled in the school and experience first-hand experience as part of the school	Share personal experiences and views on the school's appeal	ST
Student's Parents	Parents of students who choose a school for their child	Convey the reasons for choosing the school and expectations for the institution	ST
Local Community	Members of the non-Muslim community around the school site.	Providing views on the acceptance and perception of Islamic schools	LC

The data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was carried out by directly observing activities and interactions in the school environment, including promotional events, teaching and learning activities, and interactions between the school and the surrounding community. In-depth interviews were conducted with school principals, marketing staff, teachers, students, students' parents, and the surrounding community to explore their experiences, views, and perceptions regarding Islamic school marketing strategies (Faiz et al., 2023). In addition, documentation is used to collect data from various relevant documents, such as school annual reports, promotional brochures, marketing materials, photos of school activities, and other important records. By combining these three techniques, the research is expected to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data on the marketing strategies of Islamic schools in the midst of non-Muslim communities.

The data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles and Huberman in model (Zuhdi et al., 2024), which is an interactive model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawn. First, the collection of experience descriptions is carried out by collecting data from the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, which are then organized to gain a deep understanding of the informants' subjective experiences related to Islamic school marketing strategies. Furthermore, descriptive analysis is carried out by assessing and categorizing the information obtained to identify the main patterns and themes that emerge from the data. The final stage is the identification of the essence of the experience, where the researcher extracts and formulates the essence of the experience reported by the informant, in order to understand the deep meaning of the marketing strategy applied. Through this analysis technique, the research is expected to provide in-depth and comprehensive insights into the marketing strategy of Islamic schools in the context of non-Muslim communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic School Strategies on Non-Muslim Community Perceptions

Islamic schools in the midst of non-Muslim communities need to develop inclusive and communicative strategies. MI NW Gelogor is located in a community with religious diversity, the implementation of inclusive and communicative strategies is very important. First, schools can emphasize the competitive quality of education, not only in religious studies but also in widely recognized general subjects. Providing transparent information regarding the curriculum and a holistic approach to teaching can help reduce concerns about potential religious bias. In addition, Islamic schools must actively promote the values of diversity and tolerance, both through educational programs and extracurricular activities involving various community groups. Holding open dialogue, interfaith cooperation, and involving non-Muslim families in school activities can build trust and show that Islamic schools are a welcoming and open environment for all students, regardless of their religious background.

"I at MI NW Gelogor am well aware of the importance of building good relationships with all members of the community, including those who are non-Muslims. We have endeavoured to emphasize that the education we offer focuses not only on the study of the Islamic religion, but also on a high-quality general curriculum. We also publicly provide information regarding our learning programs to ensure transparency and reduce concerns about religious bias. (I-HS, 14/5)"

The results of the interview show that MI NW Gelogor has a high awareness of the importance of establishing good relations with the entire surrounding community, including with non-Muslim communities. The school understands that in order to reduce the concerns and negative perceptions of non-Muslim families, they need to emphasize that the education they offer is not only limited to the teachings of Islam, but also includes a high-quality general curriculum. Demikain points to the school's efforts to strike a balance between religious education and general education, which can provide broad benefits to all students, regardless of their religious background.

"we regularly hold cultural activities and social events that invite participation from various community groups, including non-Muslim families. For example, we hold an annual event 'Cultural Day' where students present performances showcasing the cultural and religious diversity of Indonesia. We also work closely with religious leaders and local communities to hold interfaith dialogues. This helps to create a more inclusive environment and strengthens the good relationship between the school and the community. (I-HM, 17/5)"

The interview argument describes the strategy implemented by MI NW Gelogor to build better and inclusive relationships with the surrounding community, including non-Muslim families. The school actively organizes cultural activities and social events involving various community groups. One example is the annual 'Culture Day,' where students perform performances that reflect the cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia. The activity not only educates students about plurality in society, but also shows the school's commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

The concept shows that MI NW Gelogor proactively implements a comprehensive strategy to build positive relationships with the surrounding non-Muslim community. Madrasah not only focuses on providing high-quality education that includes both general and religious curricula, but also seeks to address potential negative perceptions by ensuring transparency in its teaching approach. By holding cultural activities such as 'Cultural Day' and establishing interfaith cooperation through dialogue and community involvement, MI NW Gelogor has succeeded in creating an inclusive environment. This shows that madrasahs not only function as a place of academic learning, but also as social agents that are active in promoting diversity, tolerance, and harmony between religions.

The Use of Social Media as a Marketing Strategy

The use of social media in MI NW Gelogor as a marketing strategy can be an invaluable tool to expand the reach and increase the visibility of the school in the midst of a diverse community, including non-Muslim families. By utilizing electronic social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, MI NW Gelogor can promote school activities, such as cultural events, educational programs, and student achievement more broadly. Social media allows schools to interact directly with parents and the community, answer their questions, and build a positive online community. As such, it also provides an opportunity to target ads and content relevant to the local demographic, reinforcing MI NW Gelogor's reputation as an open and high-quality educational institution.

"We recognise that social media is an invaluable tool to expand our reach and increase the visibility of our school, especially in a diverse community environment like here. Madrasas utilize social media to promote various madrasah activities, including cultural events, educational programs, and student achievements. (I-HS, 14/5)"

Almost half of parents admit to using social media to read reviews and get recommendations before making decisions about their child's education.

"I use social media because it is easier and faster to get the latest information. On social media, I can read reviews from other parents and see the recommendations they give. This really helps me in making decisions about the right school for my child. (I-ST, 18/5)"

The results of the interview above stated that social media makes the process of getting the latest information easier and faster and by reading reviews from other parents, it is very helpful in making decisions about the right school for their child. The analysis of the interviews and information shows that MI NW Gelogor's use of social media as a marketing strategy plays a crucial role in expanding the reach and increasing the visibility of the school in diverse communities. Parents use social media to read reviews and get recommendations before deciding on an education for their child.



Figure 1 Marketing Platform Process Chart

The marketing process by Figure 1, in the marketing strategy at MI NW Gelogor begins with media content, namely the creation and publication of relevant content such as information about school events, educational programs, and student achievements. The content is then disseminated through various social media. Choosing the right platform allows MI NW Gelogor to reach a wider and more diverse audience. Furthermore, the content published on this platform attracts the attention of the Public for Interest audience who show interest through interactions such as likes, shares, and comments. This allows parents and the community, including non-Muslim families, to easily access the information they need and show interest in the madrasah.

Inter-School Collaboration

Collaboration between schools as a form of marketing is an effective strategy to expand the reach and increase the visibility of educational institutions. By working together on various activities, such as cultural events, seminars, or educational programs, MI NW Gelogor can leverage synergies to attract greater attention from the community. The collaboration not only introduces the school to new audiences, but also builds a positive reputation through strengthening a shared image supported by useful activities. By hosting joint events involving various schools, they can engage parents and prospective students, expand their networks, and increase community engagement. Additionally, this collaboration allows schools to leverage shared resources, such as facilities and staff, and share effective marketing materials. In this way, schools can achieve higher enrollment targets and strengthen their brand in the education market.

"I believe that collaboration between schools is an effective strategy. We often hold events together with other schools, such as seminars, workshops, or cultural events. This helps us to expand our marketing reach and introduce MI NW Gelogor to a wider audience(I-HS,14/5)"

The results of the interview highlight the belief that collaboration between schools is an effective marketing strategy for MI NW Gelogor. The informant stated that the school routinely holds various events together with other educational institutions, such as seminars, workshops, and cultural events.

"this collaboration is very helpful in increasing the visibility of our school. For example, when we hold cultural events with other schools, we attract attention not only from event participants but also from the wider community. This strengthens our reputation and helps attract parents and

prospective students (I-HM, 17/5)"

The argument explains that collaboration between schools, especially in the form of joint cultural events, significantly increases the visibility of MI NW Gelogor. The informant emphasized that through activities such as cultural events, the school not only attracts direct attention from event participants but also from the wider community. This means that events held together with other schools have a greater impact than just involving the participants who attend, but also have the potential to affect public opinion and perception in general. This kind of collaboration not only strengthens the reputation of MI NW Gelogor but also plays an important role in attracting the interest of parents and prospective students. As shown in Table 2, it illustrates the achievement indicators of marketing strategies through collaboration between schools.

Table 2 Marketing Strategy Achievement Indicators

Indicator	Description	Measurement Method	Target
Increased Marketing Reach	How wide is the reach of inter-school collaborative marketing	Number of followers and engagement on social media, website visit statistics	20% increase in 6 months
Number of Joint Events	Number of events or activities held with other schools	List of events that have been held	4 events per year
Parent Involvement	Parent participation rate in collaboration events	Parent satisfaction and attendance surveys	30% of parents are involved in every event
Positive Feedback	Positive response from the community and parents regarding collaboration	Social media reviews and testimonials, satisfaction surveys	Minimal 80% feedback positif
Addition of New Registrants	Number of new registrants affected by collaboration	New student enrollment data and collaboration impact analysis	15% increase in 1 year
Strengthening the School Brand	Increasing brand awareness and positive image of the school	Brand sentiment analysis, increase in mentions and shares	25% increase in 6 months
Effectiveness of Marketing Materials	The quality and impact of marketing materials resulting from collaboration	Evaluation of marketing materials, audience feedback	Positive rating above 85%

The concept of using inter-school collaboration as a marketing strategy shows that this approach has significant potential in expanding the reach and increasing the visibility of the school. By holding joint events such as seminars, workshops, and cultural events, MI NW Gelogor can reach a wider audience and strengthen the school's reputation in the community. This collaboration not only

increases parent and community engagement but also positively influences new student enrollment. Through achievement indicators such as increased marketing reach, number of joint events, and positive feedback, it is clear that collaboration can be effective in attracting prospective students and strengthening the school's brand.

Discussion

A person's perception and attitude are influenced by the interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Escario et al., 2020; Fauzi & Sastra Khusuma, 2020; Nguyen & Ng, 2020). In this context, the negative perception of non-Muslim communities is influenced by the lack of information and direct experience with Islamic schools. Non-Muslim communities often worry that their children may face challenges in social integration when attending Islamic schools (Dacholfany et al., 2020; Haider et al., 2024; Mulyana et al., 2022). These concerns are usually rooted in the assumption that Islamic schools tend to emphasize Islamic religious teaching, which may not be fully in line with the cultural background and beliefs of non-Muslim children.

Especially if the school does not actively promote the values of diversity and tolerance, non-Muslim families may feel that their children will have difficulty feeling accepted or having the space to express their own identities (Sanjani et al., 2023). As a result, this perception can create a sense of discomfort and reluctance for them to enroll their children in Islamic schools, even though the schools may have a good academic reputation. Strong promotion of inclusivity and interfaith dialogue in the curriculum and school activities can help overcome these concerns and build trust from the non-Muslim community.

Social media plays a vital role in providing relevant and reliable information to parents, as well as helping schools to deliver their marketing messages more effectively and inclusively (Ashfield & Donelle, 2020; Brauer et al., 2021; Tariq et al., 2022). Social media as a marketing strategy is able to reach a wider audience, including non-Muslims, by presenting inclusive and educational content about school programs and activities (Atiqah et al., 2020; Gil-Fernández et al., 2021; Umair Manzoor et al., 2020). This allows them to target marketing messages to different groups of people, including non-Muslims who may not be reached through traditional marketing methods. Surveys show that parents are increasingly using social media to seek information about schools and educational institutions (Fauzi & Sastra Khusuma, 2020; Frey et al., 2022; Nguyen & Ng, 2020).

Evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing materials and increasing brand awareness also shows that collaboration can improve the school's image and achieve ambitious marketing targets (Maulidia, 2023). Overall, the strategy

of inter-school collaboration provides broad benefits and can be a powerful tool in educational marketing. Collaboration between Islamic and non-Islamic schools in joint events or projects has been shown to be effective in reducing misunderstandings and building better relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim communities (Akrim, 2022; Berger, 2021; McLaren et al., 2021). Joint activities provide opportunities to learn about cultural and religious diversity.

This knowledge helps students appreciate differences and reduces tensions or conflicts that may arise from ignorance. The findings of this study suggest that collaboration between schools, including Islamic and non-Islamic schools, can be an effective marketing strategy to expand the reach and increase the visibility of schools. By holding joint events such as seminars, workshops, and cultural events, schools can build a positive reputation in the community and increase parental and community involvement. The study also shows that this collaboration is not only beneficial in terms of marketing but also in building better relationships between different communities, as well as reducing misunderstandings and conflicts through a better understanding of diversity.

CONCLUSION

This research can be concluded that MI NW Gelogor can effectively increase its visibility and reputation through inclusive and communicative strategies, utilizing social media, and collaborating with other schools. Inclusive strategies that emphasize the quality of education and curriculum transparency help address negative perceptions in non-Muslim environments, while the use of social media expands reach and builds positive online communities. Collaboration between schools strengthens marketing networks, attracts new audiences, and improves the school's image through joint activities. By integrating these three approaches, MI NW Gelogor can not only improve the perception of non-Muslim communities, but also strengthen the school brand, increase student enrollment, and create a more inclusive and well-connected educational environment.

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