



Building Brand Image of Madrasah Institutions through Digital Media Platform

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ABSTRACT

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The development of digital technology encourages educational institutions, including madrasas, to utilize digital platforms in building their brand image. This study aims to examine the role of digital media in building the brand image of Islamic-based madrasas, focusing on two madrasas that implement digital tahfidz and social media as branding strategies. The study uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews and observations of the use of platforms such as YouTube and social media. The findings show that digital media is effective in introducing and strengthening the brand image of madrasas, increasing visibility, and attracting public interest. The support of madrasah policies and the use of technology by managers play an important role in the success of this digital branding. Overall, the results of this study indicate that the use of digital platforms can build a positive image of madrasas, expand audience reach, and increase the attractiveness of madrasas in the era of digital transformation. The contribution of this study is to provide an understanding of the importance of digital branding strategies for madrasas in improving their brand image.

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INTRODUCTION

The brand image of educational institutions, including madrasas, is a crucial factor in gaining public trust and strengthening the existence of institutions amidst increasingly competitive global competition. In the digital era, building the image of madrasas no longer relies solely on conventional methods, but rather demands the use of modern communication technology, especially digital media platforms, as the main means of conveying the values, vision, and advantages of institutions to the public (Hafiar et al., 2024; Khatoon & Krupasindhu, 2023; Nawas et al., 2023). The phenomenon of increasing use of social media and other digital platforms has changed the way educational institutions interact with the wider community, including in shaping public perception and building institutional reputations in a more dynamic and responsive manner (Pino & Romero, 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2024; Tamanna, 2021). Madrasah as an educational institution based on Islamic values has a great opportunity to expand its reach of influence through the right digital branding strategy. Therefore, it is important to examine how the use of digital media platforms can be an effective strategy in building and strengthening the brand image of madrasahs in the current era of digital

transformation.

This research is important to show how the use of digital media platforms can be an effective strategy in building a positive image of Islamic-based educational institutions such as madrasahs. In the midst of the rapid flow of information and increasing competition between educational institutions, madrasahs are required to not only excel academically and spiritually, but also be able to communicate these advantages to the wider public (Husnidar et al., 2020). The presence of social media, institutional websites, and other digital platforms provides great opportunities for madrasahs to manage information, promote superior programs, and build intense interactions with the community (Almeida et al., 2024). In this context, managing the brand image of a madrasah through digital media is not only about visual aesthetics, but includes strategic efforts in shaping public perception of the quality, values, and identity of the institution.

The phenomenon that occurs in several madrasahs shows that there are still many institutions that have not maximized the use of digital platforms to build brand image. Many madrasahs only use social media or websites passively, just for internal announcements without a systematic and public-oriented communication strategy (Huda et al., 2020; Ramdani et al., 2021). In fact, the use of structured digital media can increase the competitiveness of madrasahs, strengthen relationships with alumni, parents, and prospective students, and display academic and non-academic achievements openly. Limited human resources, lack of training in digital branding, and minimal awareness of the importance of institutional image are challenges in themselves (Putri, 2024). This indicates a gap between the great potential of digital media and the readiness of madrasahs to utilize it optimally.

Several previous studies have discussed the importance of the role of digital media in shaping the image of educational institutions, including religious-based institutions. Research by Ruangkanjanases et al. (2022) highlighted that social media can be a strategic tool in expanding the reach of madrasah communication to the community, especially in building public trust. Meanwhile, a study from Rajas-Fernández et al. (2021) shows that the consistent use of digital media such as Instagram and YouTube can increase the visibility of madrasah programs and strengthen engagement with parents of students. Likewise, research by Bhattacharya & Faisal (2020) emphasized that digital branding is very relevant for madrasahs as a response to the increasing public demand for transparency and excellence in Islamic educational institutions. However, most of these studies focus more on the visual promotion aspect or social media activities without outlining a comprehensive strategy in building the institution's brand image in a sustainable and structured manner.

This study offers novelty by presenting a strategic and systematic approach in building a madrasah brand image through the use of digital media platforms, not only as a promotional tool, but as an integral and sustainable communication medium. The novelty of this study lies in its focus which not only observes digital activities superficially, but also analyzes how madrasahs can integrate institutional values, religious identities, and program advantages into a cohesive and attractive digital narrative. In addition, this study also positions madrasahs as entities that are adaptive

to technological developments and competitive amidst the dynamics of a digital society. Thus, this study is expected to provide new contributions to the literature on digital branding of Islamic educational institutions and offer practical guidance for madrasah managers in designing effective digital communication strategies.

This study aims to analyze the strategy of building a madrasah brand image through the utilization of digital media platforms in a planned and sustainable manner. Specifically, this study focuses on three main things: first, identifying the forms of digital media used by madrasahs in building institutional images; second, analyzing how digital communication strategies reflect the values, visions, and advantages of madrasahs; and third, evaluating the challenges and supporting factors in the process of implementing digital branding in the madrasah environment. The original contribution of this study lies in the preparation of a conceptual model that integrates Islamic values, institutional identity, and digital strategy as a framework for building a madrasah brand image effectively. This study is expected to not only enrich academic studies on branding of Islamic educational institutions, but also provide practical guidance for madrasah stakeholders in utilizing digital media to increase competitiveness and public trust in the era of digital transformation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach to explore the phenomenon of building the institutional image of madrasahs through digital platforms. Case studies were chosen because they allow researchers to deeply understand the digital branding practices that take place in the context of madrasah education without disrupting the ongoing process (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022). This approach allows analysis of the dynamics of digital communication and media management strategies used to build a positive image of the madrasah.

This study was conducted in two madrasahs that actively implement digital platforms to build their brand image. The first madrasah is located in a semi-urban area and focuses on a superior digital tahfidz program, while the second madrasah, located in a rural area, is pioneering branding through social media and educational YouTube channels. These two locations were chosen because they provide different perspectives on the use of digital media in managing institutional image and introducing the excellence of madrasahs to the public.

Data collection techniques used in this study include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and digital documentation (Soesana et al., 2023; Sulistiyo, 2023). Interviews were conducted with the madrasah principal, public relations staff, ICT teachers, and students involved in digital content creation to understand various perspectives. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe the content production process, interactions on social media, and management of the madrasah's digital accounts. In addition, digital documentation involved archives of social media uploads, the madrasah's website, and video-based promotional materials or brochures to dig up further information related to the digital branding implemented by the madrasah. These techniques allow researchers to collect rich and diverse data in understanding digital-based madrasah branding.

Data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach through the stages of data condensation, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification following the procedures explained by Thalib (2022). After the data was collected, the researcher grouped the information based on key themes, such as the type of digital platform used, visual communication strategies, and obstacles faced in implementing madrasah branding. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of sources and methods was carried out, as well as member checking to verify the accuracy of the findings obtained. In addition, peer debriefing was used to increase the objectivity of the analysis by involving other parties in the data verification process. This approach is expected to increase the credibility and reliability of the research results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study examines the use of digital platforms in building the institutional image of madrasahs, focusing on the use of online portals, cross-community messaging applications, photo-video-based visual platforms, and digital da'wah content. Through various digital channels, madrasahs can introduce flagship programs, spread Islamic values, and expand communication networks with the community. Despite challenges related to content management and technical limitations, the implementation of this digital strategy has proven effective in strengthening the image of madrasahs and building greater engagement with the community. Here is a more complete explanation:

All-Informative Online Portal

In building the institutional image of the madrasah, one of the strategic steps taken by the madrasah is the use of digital platforms as information portals connected to various academic and non-academic activities. The madrasahs studied use several digital media to introduce their values and visions, as well as provide information that is transparent and easily accessible to the public, including parents and the community. This online platform functions not only as a communication medium but also as a strong branding tool for the madrasah in introducing its achievements and superior programs. For example, the Head of Madrasah MFA, in his interview, stated, "Our online platform not only functions as a school announcement, but also as a means to demonstrate our commitment to providing quality and technology-based education."

Through an integrated online portal, the madrasah can present information in a comprehensive manner using various types of media such as articles, videos, and blogs that describe academic activities, extracurricular activities, as well as student and alumni profiles. The existence of this online portal also allows the madrasah to reach a wider audience, including prospective

students and parents outside the local geographic area. According to the Public Relations of Madrasah KL, "We utilize the website and social media accounts to showcase our academic and social excellence, such as the tahfidz program and student achievements in various competitions. We believe this can improve the image of our madrasah in the eyes of the community."

However, despite the online portals mentioned by the respondents above who said that they provide many benefits, challenges in their implementation also arise, especially in terms of consistency in content management and audience engagement. Most content managers in madrasahs expressed that even though there is a system to update information, there are still obstacles in keeping the content relevant and interesting to users. One DT teacher explained, "We sometimes find it difficult to manage the various social media accounts and portals that exist. This task often becomes an additional burden outside of our main responsibilities as teachers." This obstacle reflects the importance of providing madrasah staff with an understanding of the use and management of digital media effectively as part of a communication and branding strategy.

However, the implementation of the digital platform by this madrasah has succeeded in creating a more open and progressive impression, while also illustrating the madrasah's determination to provide education that is in line with the development of the times. Through this online portal, the madrasah not only showcases academic excellence, but also displays various student activities, so that it is able to form a positive image that can strengthen public trust. Thus, the use of an online portal that presents information in a transparent and attractive manner is one of the strategic steps in strengthening the madrasah's branding as a modern educational institution, responsive to change, and ready to compete in the digital era.

Photo-Video Based Visual Platform in Building Brand Image in Madrasah

The use of photo-video-based visual platforms in building the brand image of madrasahs through digital media has become an increasingly popular strategy. In the era of digital transformation, the use of photos and videos as a medium to convey information about the madrasah's flagship programs, academic activities, and Islamic values has proven effective in introducing the madrasah's identity to the wider community. However, there are several technical and non-technical obstacles faced by madrasahs in its implementation.

Technical constraints found in the field include the limited availability of adequate devices to record and edit high-quality photos and videos. Many madrasahs do not have adequate tools to produce professional visual materials, which ultimately affects the quality of the images delivered. In addition, the

problem of excessive file sizes and unstable internet connections are major obstacles in uploading and distributing visual materials effectively.

Table 1. Technical and Non-Technical Constraints in Utilizing Photo-Video Based Visual Platforms

Indicator	Informant
"We have difficulty uploading high quality videos due to the large file sizes."	Device Limitations, File Size
"Our devices are not good enough to shoot and edit photos and videos."	Device Limitations, Recording Quality
"The process of editing visual materials takes longer."	Time Management, Video Editing
"Lack of training in effective digital content creation."	Technology Skills, Platform Usage
"We need more time to prepare quality visual materials."	Time Management, Learning Preparation

Table 1 above shows that the main technical obstacles in using photo-video-based visual platforms are related to inadequate devices, as well as problems with file size and poor internet connection. On the other hand, non-technical obstacles are related to the lack of skills in managing and editing visual materials effectively, as well as the need for more time in preparing content to be uploaded.

In the context of building a madrasah brand image, photos and videos can be very powerful tools to introduce the identity and excellence of the madrasah in a more interesting and dynamic way. For example, videos about extracurricular activities, digital tahfidz programs, or testimonials from students and parents can strengthen the positive image of the madrasah in the eyes of the public. However, to achieve this, it is necessary to increase the capacity of human resources in managing digital platforms and creating attractive visual content.

Overall, Despite technical and non-technical constraints, the use of photo-video-based visual platforms remains effective in building the brand image of madrasahs. Therefore, it is important for madrasahs to improve the quality of the devices used, as well as provide digital branding training to social media managers. This training aims to improve skills in creating and managing attractive visual content. In addition, wise time management is also needed so that the visual content production process can run more efficiently. By considering these factors, madrasahs can maximize the potential of digital platforms in introducing and strengthening their positive image in the eyes of the public.

Cross-Community Messaging App

The use of cross-community messaging applications in two study madrasahs, namely digital tahfidz madrasahs in semi-urban areas and rural madrasahs that are active on social media, has shown a significant contribution in

strengthening communication and expanding the network of da'wah and institutional information. The use of platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook community groups has become an effective channel in reaching various elements of society, ranging from guardians, alumni, community leaders, to cross-madrasa communities. A public relations staff of the digital tahfidz madrasa stated, "The WhatsApp group of alumni and parents is very active, we regularly distribute information about activities and video content. Their response is fast and positive." This shows that the use of messaging applications as a tool for disseminating information is not only one-way, but also builds dynamic two-way interactions, thereby strengthening the community's attachment to the image of the madrasa.

Furthermore, madrasas in rural areas utilize instant messaging channels to educate the surrounding community about madrasa activities and the Islamic values they uphold. Their YouTube channels, combined with Telegram groups and comments from local Facebook communities, create interactive spaces that strengthen the position of madrasas as centers of community-based religious education. A rural madrasa teacher said, "We send video clips of ustadz lectures or students' activities via Telegram, and many are then re-shared in village groups." This strategy proves that messaging platforms are not only internal communication tools, but also horizontal branding channels that reach wider and more informal social networks.

The respondent's statement illustrates how digital communication channels, especially instant messaging applications, bridge information between madrasahs and external communities in layers. Not only limited to communication between parents and teachers, but also expanding influence to local communities, alumni, and sympathizers who actively re-distribute content. This approach allows the formation of a positive social echo chamber that strengthens the institutional narrative. Information that was previously internal has now transformed into part of public communication that strengthens the madrasah's brand image in the eyes of the public.

The findings in Figure 1 above indicate that the strategic use of cross-community messaging applications has become a crucial element in forming a strong, inclusive, and contextual brand image of madrasahs in the digital era. Two-way interactions established through WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook not only accelerate the distribution of information, but also create a participatory space where the community feels directly involved in the institutional narrative of the madrasah. This phenomenon shows a shift in madrasah communication from a conventional institutional model to a digital communication approach based on social networks, which is more adaptive to the communication culture of contemporary society. Through this approach, madrasahs not only appear as

Islamic educational institutions, but also as responsive and relevant entities in the ever-growing digital ecosystem.

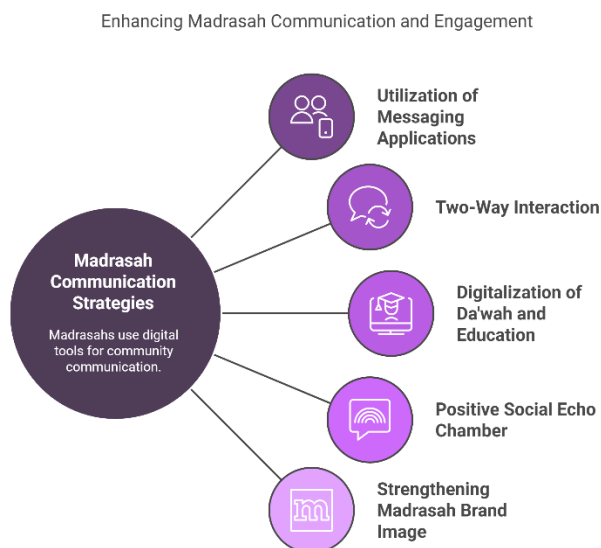


Figure 1. Cross-Community Messaging App

Thus, cross-community messaging applications have become a strategic medium in forming a more inclusive and organic institutional narrative. The communication that is established is not merely ceremonial or institutional, but rather down-to-earth and in accordance with the social rhythm of society. This application acts as a bridge between institutions and the public, allowing messages of goodness, Islamic values, and academic and non-academic information about madrasas to spread quickly and precisely. Through this approach, madrasas are able to build an image as institutions that are not only digitally responsive, but also adaptive to increasingly open and participatory community communication patterns.

Digital-Based Preaching Content

The use of digital-based da'wah content is an important strategy for the two madrasas in expanding the reach of Islamic messages, especially to the younger generation who are active in the digital space. In semi-urban madrasas, da'wah is packaged in the form of short video lectures, religious Q&A, and inspirational podcasts that are routinely uploaded to YouTube and Instagram. Meanwhile, madrasas in rural areas started digital da'wah by utilizing simple platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp status to share students' recitations, moral messages, and documentation of religious activities complete with quotes from verses or hadiths. This effort allows the spread of Islamic values to reach audiences that were previously limited by space and time.

Digital da'wah content not only functions as a medium for spreading Islamic teachings, but also becomes a strategic means in shaping the identity of madrasahs as religious institutions that are adaptive to technological developments. Through consistently developed content, madrasahs are able to strengthen the image of institutions that are open, inspiring, and relevant to the spiritual needs of today's society. This approach also reflects the role of madrasahs as centers of learning as well as the spread of inclusive Islamic values, making digital da'wah an integral part of a sustainable communication and education strategy.



Figure 2. Digital Islamic Preaching Content Production Process in Madrasah

Figure 1 above shows the systematic flow in the production of da'wah content carried out by madrasahs through digital, starting from the process of identifying and exploring Islamic themes that are relevant to students' daily lives. The themes chosen are generally contextual, such as manners in daily life, the virtues of worship, or social values in Islam. After the theme is determined, the next process is packaging Islamic messages in a visual or audio-visual format that is light, interesting, and easy to understand by digital audiences. The content is then distributed through various popular digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This entire process involves the active role of teachers as facilitators and mentors, as well as students as content creators. Support from the madrasah community, including guardians and alumni, is also an important factor in the success of content distribution. This process shows that digital da'wah requires collaboration, a deep understanding of Islamic values, and sensitivity to the characteristics of diverse audiences.

Based on field findings, it can be concluded that strengthening digital-based da'wah content provides a very significant contribution to the process of building the image or brand image of madrasahs. Madrasahs are no longer only seen as religious-based educational institutions, but also as institutions that are

proactive in spreading Islamic values through a modern and relevant approach. By utilizing digital media, madrasahs are able to reach a wider community, especially the younger generation who are more familiar with social media. This approach also provides space for students to express themselves creatively in da'wah. The success of this strategy reflects the adaptation of madrasahs to technological developments without having to abandon their traditional values. Digital da'wah is a bridge between local wisdom and the demands of the times, strengthening the position of madrasahs as centers of religious learning as well as agents of social change that are dynamic and responsive to the needs of the times.

Discussion

The findings in this study indicate that the strategic use of digital platforms by madrasahs is able to form and strengthen the institutional brand image. The madrasahs that are the objects of the study utilize various digital channels, ranging from websites to social media, as all-informative online portals that integrate communication functions, information transparency, and promotion of madrasah values and achievements. This approach is in line with the Digital Brand Communication theory by The Edge (2019), which confirms that the brand image of an institution can be formed strongly through an authentic and consistent digital narrative. This study confirms that the use of well-designed digital media not only supports informative functions, but also acts as an institutional identity that strengthens the credibility and appeal of the madrasah in the eyes of the wider community.

Furthermore, photo and video-based visual strategies play a crucial role in strengthening the audience's emotional engagement with the madrasah. The findings show that visual content, such as documentation of students' activities, parent testimonials, and digital tahfidz programs, can create a positive and dynamic impression that is more easily accepted by the public. This is in line with the Visual Branding approach according to Hedling (2020), which states that institutional image is more effectively built through symbols and visual narratives rather than text alone. However, technical and non-technical constraints such as limited devices, internet connectivity, and lack of content production skills, are still major challenges (Happonen et al., 2022; Shu et al., 2022). This study extends the literature by emphasizing that digital branding training for madrasah social media managers is needed to produce professional and consistent content.

The use of cross-community messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook groups has been proven to significantly expand the reach of madrasah communication (Wu et al., 2024). The findings show that this platform not only accelerates the dissemination of internal information such as

announcements and academic activities, but also serves as a community engagement tool that connects madrasas with alumni, community leaders, and sympathizers in various regions. This supports the concept of Participatory Branding Jain et al. (2022), where the identity of the institution is formed not only by the institution itself, but also through the active involvement of its community. This study contributes by showing that institutional narratives can spread organically and participatively through established social networks, creating a social echo chamber effect that strengthens the image of the madrasah.

Furthermore, digital-based preaching content is the main medium for displaying the religious character of madrasas that is adaptive to the development of the times (Effendy et al., 2023; Hidayatulloh & Sahid, 2020). Both semi-urban and rural madrasahs have shown initiative in delivering Islamic messages through formats preferred by the younger generation such as short videos, WhatsApp statuses, and religious podcasts. This strategy reflects the transformation from conventional da'wah to more inclusive digital da'wah, in accordance with the theory of Digital Religious Communication by Evolution (2022), which highlights the role of social media as a new space for the dissemination of spiritual values. The contribution of this study lies in the combination of da'wah strategies and branding strategies, showing that the dissemination of religious values can simultaneously strengthen the institutional identity of madrasas in the digital era.

Theoretically, this study underlines the importance of a digital-based institutional branding approach in the context of Islamic education. The image of a madrasah is no longer formed only through academic achievements or ceremonial activities, but through open communication, strong visuals, community interaction, and contextual preaching. The practical implications of this finding are the need to strengthen digital literacy, creative content training, and the development of a comprehensive digital communication strategy for all elements of the madrasah. Thus, madrasahs as Islamic institutions are not only able to compete in the realm of formal education, but also become important actors in building a progressive and relevant Islamic narrative in the midst of a digital society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the strategic use of digital media platforms has made a significant contribution to building the brand image of Islamic-based madrasah institutions in the era of digital transformation. The use of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and official websites has proven effective in introducing the identity of madrasahs, conveying Islamic values, and promoting superior programs. The advantages of

this strategy include wide audience reach, increased public participation, and efficiency of promotional costs, while the disadvantages lie in limited human resources, technological infrastructure, and the risk of uncontrolled information dissemination. Solutions that can be implemented include digital branding training, infrastructure improvement, and collaboration with external parties for stronger campaigns. This strategy contributes to a change in institutional culture that is more open and adaptive, and strengthens the position of madrasahs as relevant Islamic educational institutions in the digital era. Positive results include increased public trust, increased students, and a stronger image of madrasahs, while negative results can arise if the content is not managed properly or does not match the actual quality of educational services. Overall, the strategy of building an image through digital media has a significant positive impact as long as it is implemented in a structured manner and is oriented towards quality and Islamic values.

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