

THE EDUCATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGY IS BASED ON THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES OF PESANTREN

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Abstract :

This study describes the innovation of Islamic boarding school-based education marketing at MA Al Masduqiah. Marketing innovation is an important thing to do, considering the intense competition that is happening. This study used a qualitative approach to field research. Existing data obtained by means of observation, interviews and documentation. Informants in this study were obtained by purposive sampling technique, then get five informants. Among them are school principals, public relations department, teachers, guardians of new students, and guardians of old students. The analysis of the data uses Yin theory, that is, it does not require control over the events studied, it is enough just to observe and then explain. The research results obtained stated that Islamic boarding school-based education marketing innovation at MA Al Mashduqiah consisted of three things, namely analysis of market needs, school programs and the label of plus Islamic boarding school-based schools.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini menjelaskan tentang inovasi pemasaran pendidikan berbasis pesantren di MA Al Masduqiah. Inovasi pemasaran merupakan hal yang penting untuk dilakukan, hal ini mengingat ketatnya persaingan yang terjadi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis penelitian lapangan. Data yang ada diperoleh dengan cara observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Informan dalam penelitian ini diperoleh dengan teknik purposive sampling, kemudian mendapatkan lima informan. Diantaranya ialah kepala sekolah, bagian humas, guru, wali santri baru, dan wali santri lama. Analisis datanya menggunakan teori Yin, yaitu tidak membutuhkan kontrol terhadap peristiwa yang diteliti, hanya cukup mengamati dan kemudian dijelaskan. Hasil penelitian yang diperoleh menyatakan bahwasannya inovasi pemasaran pendidikan berbasis pesantren di MA Al Mashduqiah terdiri dari tiga hal yaitu analisis kebutuhan pasar, program sekolah dan label sekolah berbasis pesantren plus.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era, coupled with the ongoing post-virus-19 impact conditions, the conditions for various sectors have declined, and many sectors still need to get up and maintain their businesses (Rismawan et al., 2022). This also happened in the education sector, starting from the ineffectiveness of learning and the habituation of the learning process from a distance. In this prolonged multidimensional crisis, education concerns various parties because it is one of the causes of increasing spending in addition to other sectors and is burdensome for most members of society (Wijaya, 2023). The high cost of education results from increasing costs and the reduced ability of education funders. This condition continues, so various parties must adapt and choose the right strategies to promote each school with its characteristics (Ramadhan, 2022).

MA Al Mashduqiyah is an educational institution equivalent to a senior high school under the auspices of the Al Mashduqiah Islamic boarding school Patokan Kraksaan. With the label of a pesantren-based school, this school has its own uniqueness. Islamic boarding school-based schools are schools that integrate the advantages of the school education system and Islamic boarding schools (Herawati et al., 2020). In the concept of Islamic Boarding School-Based Schools, there is the concept of integrating Islamic boarding school culture into subjects, but in this case which cultures can be integrated into existing subjects (Fachrudin, 2021), adapted to the subject matter. The culture of this pesantren consists of deepening religious knowledge, boarding, obedience, exemplary, piety, independence, discipline, simplicity, tolerance, qana'ah, humility, fortitude, solidarity or mutual help, sincerity, istiqomah, sociability, cleanliness (Nabilata, 2023). The characteristics of Islamic boarding schools based on MA Al Mashduqiah are boarding houses, having other names besides MA Al Mashduqiyah, namely halqatul mu'allimin/at al-Islamiah (HAMIM)/MA Plus, having a dual curriculum, tahfidz Al-Qur'an, and Vocational Skills. This can then be used as a marketing innovation to get customers (students). Marketing is one of the main activities that need to be carried out by companies, both goods and service companies, in order to maintain the continuity of their business.

Marketing innovation or innovation itself is applying new sales and marketing techniques (Nurudin et al., 2022). Marketing innovation can be done by opening new markets, finding and knowing consumer needs, and repositioning products to increase sales. According to Kahn (Insiyah et al., 2023), developing new methods in marketing has led to a significant increase in organizational success. Innovation shows an organization's culture, values, and beliefs; innovation is considered to improve marketing performance. The ability to create added value for customers by carrying out various innovations is strongly influenced by employees' experience, skills and knowledge. Innovation is carried out by creating new ideas to develop production processes and product quality as part of a business strategy (Ramadhan, 2022). The marketing innovations implemented by MA Al Mashduqiyah in attracting the interest of its customers include focusing on three things, namely, the approach process, setting targets and maintaining selected targets. In this case, the location of marketing innovation is that educational marketing at MA Al Mashduqiah is no

longer focused on products but rather on interacting with selected prospects and customers. This is because, in the current era, people do not only choose by considering product quality but are more focused on the services provided by educational institutions.

Similar research on education marketing was also carried out by several researchers (Fahmi & Mujahidin, 2022) and obtained research results stated that the education marketing planning process at PP Darussalam Puncak paid close attention to the quality of educational institutions and focused on education customers, then formed committees and collaborated with alums and community leaders, then carry out an annual control plan control to facilitate the control carried out. The results of this control can be used as a reference for future marketing planning. In other words, educational marketing is carried out with the concept of marketing management. Another study with a similar theme was conducted by Hamdi (2021), who stated that marketing carried out by Islamic boarding schools must include external marketing and internal marketing. Similar research was also conducted by Bening & Munastiwi (2022), who obtained results which stated that there were five stages in marketing Islamic boarding schools, namely, first identifying the market by gathering needs, expectations, and community responses. Second, market segmentation by grouping the market into groups that have strong emotions based on quality, alums, and educators and considering religious aspects. Third, product differentiation, namely providing superior programs that differentiate other institutions. Fourth, market communication is carried out through print media, social media, and directly to parents and the community. Fifth, provide education, care, safety, health and nutrition services. The next researcher, Hasanah et al. (2021) then obtained research results which stated that in the management of institutional promotion, marketing planning, marketing organization, the formation of a marketing organizational structure, the involvement of kiai and leaders in marketing control, there was a difference in achieving marketing management targets. Research with this theme was also carried out by Sugiyanto & Santosa (2021), who stated that Islamic boarding school-based education marketing through the application of Marketing MIX (product, price, place, promotion, human resources, physical evidence and process).

From this explanation, it can be understood that many strategies can be applied in education marketing, especially in Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions. The novelty that differentiates this research from previous research lies in the concept of marketing innovation. This research focuses on several aspects of innovation carried out by MA Al Mashduqiah in the marketing of its institution. The theory that forms the basis of this research is STP marketing innovation, which is a marketing theory that prioritizes the concept of service and interaction with customers. This research aims to identify and analyze the forms of marketing innovation at MA Al Mashduqiah Patokan Kraksaan.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is included in the category of field research, in which the data were obtained from observation, interviews and documentation. The determination of informants in this study used a purposive sampling technique, so five informants were then determined, namely Inf-1AA as the head of the madrasa, Inf_3BB as the madrasah public relations officer, Inf-2CC as one of the teachers, Inf_4DD as the guardian of the new students, and EE as one of the guardians of the students at MA Al Mashduqiah. The researcher then presents a systematic explanation after going through data screening. The filtering of the data is only adjusted to the focus of the research so that it remains based on facts at the research location and can be measured both regarding objects and those related to location conditions to conclude (Nana & Elin, 2018). This research is expected to fully and thoroughly describe educational marketing innovations based on Islamic boarding schools at MA Al Mashduqiah. According to Yin, data analysis in this descriptive research does not require control over the events studied; it is enough to observe and explain (Burmansah et al., 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The era of globalization has resulted in increasingly fierce competition in all fields of business. Facing this, companies must be oriented towards marketing, where all company activities are directed to fulfil consumer desires to create satisfaction. With the fulfilment of desires that ultimately provide satisfaction to consumers, companies can be confident in losing consumers even amid many competitors.

MA Al Mashduqiah carries out marketing innovations because, nowadays, all aspects of life are experiencing relatively rapid development. This is often the increasing level of human life in meeting their needs. This is a fundamental reason for a company, in particular, to create a product and service to meet the needs of the community by increasing marketing (Haryanto et al., 2022). MA Al Mashduqiah is a service company, so its marketing innovations are service oriented and influenced by interaction aspects. Even though promotion, production, distribution and pricing are essential indicators in marketing activities, only some business actors need to carry out their marketing strategies (Szafrans'Ni, 2015). The factor that often becomes an obstacle in marketing activities is the need for mastery of STP (segmenting, targeting & positioning). Most people from marketers need help understanding this, causing ignorance of who their target is, marketing mix errors, and positioning errors that cause failure.

In marketing theory, this theory is called the STP theory. Modern marketing strategies have introduced STP. to capture market opportunities (Rosyida et al., 2020). The application of this theory at MA Al Mashduqiah is as conveyed by the head of the madrasa in his interview as follows:

"There are three forms of marketing innovation carried out at MA Al Mashduqiah, including paying more attention to the needs of the community, which means providing a separate space to be able to focus on obtaining results or answers regarding what kind of educational institutions are needed and desired by the community. Then the program design began to be community-

oriented, meaning that the program being offered was deliberately designed to attract the public's interest, and the data was obtained from the results of the needs analysis earlier. Then the last one focuses on maintaining both the program and the community who have trusted this institution.

From this explanation, it can be understood that the marketing innovation implemented at MA Al Mashduqiah involves analyzing community needs, preparing programs according to needs, and maintaining programs as well as customers.

Analysis of Market Needs

Analyzing market needs is the first step in marketing innovation at MA Al Mashduqiah. This analysis is carried out by evaluating programs running before and researching matters influencing public interest in an educational institution. This was conveyed by the public relations section of MA Al Mashduqiah in his interview as follows:

"For this analysis stage, it aims to determine what programs and educational institutions are currently in great demand by the public. This was done by conducting a joint evaluation with all the students at MA Al Mashduqiah about programs that had been related previously, looking for what parts needed to be developed and which parts needed to be deleted or replaced. The second way is by conducting research using a questionnaire or interviewing several people who have been determined as samples. The sample is differentiated based on the type of work and level of knowledge from the community, both religious and general. The samples were differentiated into two categories because the type of work and parents' level of knowledge in several other studies greatly influenced the selection of schools for their sons and daughters.

From this explanation, it can be understood that analyzing marketing objects at MA Al Mashduqiah is carried out in two ways: by evaluating existing programs and conducting research with two sample categories, type of work and level of community knowledge. According to STP theory, this is included in the segmentation stage. Segmentation can be interpreted as grouping the overall (heterogeneous) market into specific groups or segments (Hendrawan, 2021). Groups or segments with similar needs, wants, behaviours, and responses require marketing (Syafii & Budiyanto, 2022). Especially nowadays, where the customer-oriented era, in very tight competition, customers are more knowledgeable and educated, and demands are constantly changing, urging companies to pay attention to segmentation issues (Zulfitri et al., 2023). Market segmentation is the process of sorting consumers according to certain conditions that the company has determined to market its products according to the wishes of consumers. In this case, the type of community segment is included in the type of segment marketing. This was conveyed by one of the teachers at MA Al Mashduqiah in his interview as follows:

"In this case, the type of segment marketing is the choice to be implemented in this institution. This is because the needs of each community are different, so here the school tries to design and organize programs according to what the customer wants. For example, people want schools within Islamic

boarding schools but also want skills like public schools, so here we are trying to integrate this. For example, even though the school is in a boarding school environment, the dress styles and skills possessed by the students here are not inferior to students in public schools."

From this explanation, it can be understood that the type of marketing chosen by MA Al Mashduqiah is segment marketing with the consideration that every community has different needs and desires, so schools try to make this happen, for example, by holding development programs such as teaching training, teaching practice, entrepreneurship training, etc. Consumers have different wants and needs, so each has a different segment. For this reason, there are also various types of segment marketing in theory, including mass marketing, niche marketing, micro-marketing and segment marketing (Wahyuni, 2020). Segment marketing is interpreted as a form that schools already realize that every consumer has different wants, needs, perceptions, and buying behaviour (Lavianto, 2022). That way, segmentation marketing provides a choice of offers and services that suit the needs and wants of consumers at the right price for the target segment.

Then for its segmentation basis, MA Al Mashduqiah uses the concept of demographic segmentation, which means dividing consumers into several segments based on gender, education, occupation, social class, and also religion. Demographic segmentation often groups consumers (Manggu & Beni, 2021). This is because consumer needs, wants, and usage levels are closely related to demographic variables; demographic variables are also easier to measure.

School Program

The formulation of the school program is the next stage in marketing innovation carried out by MA Al Mashduqiah. Program formulation at MA Al Mashduqiah by evaluating the market analysis results needs to be carried out at the segmentation stage. This was conveyed by the head of the MA Al Mashduqiah school in his interview as follows:

"The school program here is based on the results of an analysis of community needs carried out previously. Then these results are mapped, then a program is formulated by the community's expectations and needs. For example, the community needs educational institutions that balance general and religious skills, so MA Al Mashduqiah has a special program, namely even though the school is in the madrasah category and is in a boarding school, the skills of the students are accustomed to foreign languages in their daily life, can do entrepreneurship, tahfidz program and teaching programme."

From this explanation, it can be understood that the MA Al Mashduqiah program includes foreign language habituation, entrepreneurship training, and teaching training, and the tahini program are product resulting from the results of market needs analysis at the segmentation stage. In STP theory, this is categorized in the targeting stage. Targeting is selecting products or types of services to achieve success. Implemented through an evaluation process so that one or more of these market segments can be selected. Targeting is the evaluation stage of the segmentation process and the focus of the marketing strategy in a

country, province, or group of people who have the potential to respond (Rosyida et al., 2020).

Before compiling the program, it is necessary to carry out several considerations, including the high level of opportunities, the impact on school development, costs, human resources, and target accuracy. This was conveyed by public relations MA Al Mashduqiah in his interview as follows:

"In the discussion of program formation, there were several considerations that were made, namely consideration of the impact that would result from implementing the program, then whether the chances would be high, the capabilities and abilities of the teachers here, the funding to be spent and whether the program would be right on target when it was implemented/by the expectations of society."

From this explanation, various things are considered in formulating school programs, namely impacts, opportunities, teacher competence, financing and objectives of the formulated program. When determining the target market, the factors that must be observed so that the target segment is right are (1) Segment Size, estimating the target segment's size is an important indicator of whether the market has good potential or not. Large companies will undoubtedly focus on market segments with large sales volumes. Likewise, for small companies, the main focus is the market segment with a smaller sales volume. This is to the company's ability to achieve their respective goals. (2) Segment Growth is an indicator that must be considered in determining the target market. Even though the current segment size is relatively small, it may develop into a more significant segment in the future because a positive market potential starts from a small segment. (3) Situation Analysis This situation analysis indicator is also needed carefully. This analysis relates to consumers, suppliers, and distributors. This analysis can be done using the SWOT method (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). (4) Company resources, before formulating the target market, what needs to be considered is the resources owned by the company itself. If it is cooperation with outside parties, then this needs to be taken into account because it involves the benefits and risks that will be received. (5) The cost of achieving a segment, a segment must be by the company's marketing activities. Therefore, the identification of the purpose of market segmentation needs to be done carefully. Many companies are trapped in this case. When a company has issued a large budget, but in fact, the segment is different than expected. (6) Conformity of objectives, after designing the target market segment, the company must pay more attention to the segment that has been determined. As much as possible, companies should not move to other segments because, without careful segment planning, there will be a risk of more significant losses (Putra et al., 2022).

The targeting strategy used by MA Al Mashduqiah is concentrated marketing. Concentrated marketing allows companies to pay more attention to products, potentially providing greater profits (Christian, 2022). The goal is that the company can concentrate marketing according to a predetermined segment. That way, companies can save on marketing operations due to specialization in

product, promotion, price, and distribution. This is in accordance with what was said by the new santri guardian in his interview as follows:

"Initially, I got information about this institution from a neighbour, and then I searched for more information on their social media accounts, so I was interested in some of the program offers at Al Mashduqiah, especially at the Madrasah Aliyah because the Instagram flyer mentioned MA Al Mashduqiah plus tahini. Apart from that, there are still many other development programs offered. The decision to entrust my daughter here was quite economical, so it is cheap but high-quality.

From this explanation, the formulation of programs based on an analysis of market needs can save on applicable financing so that it becomes a unique attraction for the community.

Islamic Boarding School-Based School Label Plus

MA Al Mashduqiah, as a pesantren-based school, naturally has a unique impression in the eyes of the community. As a reinforcement, another uniqueness offered by MA Al Mashduqiah is the integration of the curriculum and general programs. One of the favourite programs that often gives a unique impression in the eyes of the public is the foreign language habituation program, various training programs accompanied by practice and tahini, which can be followed simultaneously by students of MA Al Mashduqiah. This was conveyed by the guardian of the students in his interview as follows:

"The first time I heard about the Al Mashduqiah MA school, the label based on pesantren and its pluses often came to my mind. Because what makes this school different and unique is the program. Even though the school is located in a boarding school, other knowledge and skills are also obtained. They are also already good at speaking foreign languages; each has teaching or entrepreneurship skills. Moreover, how come you memorize the Al-Qur'an, a unique value for MA Al Mashduqiah compared to MA-MA around it."

From this explanation, it can be understood that the unique impression captured by consumers from MA Al Mashduqiah is the label of a pesantren-based school and the plus that follows the name of this school. According to the community or customers, the existing word plus describes a unique program, namely the integration of general and religious skills that can be obtained at the same time. According to STP theory, this stage is called positioning. Positioning is an active company takes to design products and marketing mixes so that a particular impression is created in the minds of consumers (Rosyida et al., 2020). Positioning describes the product's location in the eyes of consumers and what makes it different from competing products. This positioning is an action or a way for something (product) to stick in consumers' memories, not something done with the product (Zulfitri et al., 2023). The method is used so that the product can be in the brain and imagination of consumers so that specific evaluations of products are expected by consumers (Lavianto, 2022). Positioning for companies can be used to research where competitors are and take action to put their companies in the same position as competitors or look for others. If the

company is in almost the same position as its competitors, the company needs to make a selection and look for more detailed differences.

Procurement of the program behind the plus label is also known as the differentiation technique. Suppose a company wants to be able to achieve a strong product positioning. In that case, the company needs to differentiate from others in various factors, including technology, price, target consumers, and even quality. Differentiation is the difference that the company creates to differentiate the offers made by the company from those offered by competitors (Putra et al., 2022). The positioning strategy is used to form a good evaluation of a product in the minds of consumers so that the product can be seen as superior when compared to competing products. According to Kotler (Putra et al., 2022), products that will be marketed to consumers can use several product positioning methods, including determining position by attribute (Manggu & Beni, 2021). This means that a company's product attributes are positioned prominently and superior to its competitors, including size, length of existence, and others.

CONCLUSION

From the presentation of the data, it can be concluded that the marketing innovation of pesantren-based education at MA Al Mashduqiah consists of three things: market need assessment, school programs and the label of pesantren-based schools plus. The theoretical basis used in this study is STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning). The implication of this research is as a reference for educational institutions in conducting marketing. This research is limited to what aspects are innovated in educational marketing at MA Al Mashduqiah. Therefore further research is needed both on supporting and inhibiting factors.

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