

Optimizing Alumnus Contributions in Public Relations Management: A Study on P4NJ's Role

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Article History:

Received: June 2024

Accepted: August 2024

Published: December 2024

Keywords:

Alumnus, Social Media,
Pesantren Branding,
Islamic Education

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Abstract: *This research focuses on the role of Alumnus and social media strategies in building reputation and branding. With a qualitative approach based on case studies, this study aims to explore how Alumnus contribute to the reputation of the institution and how social media, particularly Instagram and Facebook managed by P4NJ, support pesantren branding. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Respondents consisted of Alumnus, P4NJ administrators, and people who were directly related to pesantren activities. The data were analyzed using reduction, presentation, and verification techniques to obtain structured and valid findings. The results of the study show that Alumnus have a strategic role in supporting the reputation of the pesantren through their active involvement in promotion, fundraising, and community empowerment programs. Social media has proven to be an effective tool to support pesantren branding, with engaging visual content and active interaction creating a strong emotional connection with the audience. The combination of Alumnus involvement and the use of social media has a significant impact on increasing the positive image of pesantren at the local, national, and international levels. This research enriches the literature on Islamic education by providing new insights into the synergy between tradition and technology in building religious-based educational institutions. The implication of this research is that pesantren can utilize Alumnus as a strategic asset to support their reputation and integrate digital technology to reach a wider audience. This research also opens up space for more in-depth follow-up research related to the role of social media in Islamic education.*

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-growing digital era, the role of Islamic-based educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools is not only limited to the delivery of religious knowledge but also includes strengthening the reputation and sustainability of traditions in modern society (Cheng et al., 2022; Hart & Rodgers, 2023; Mishra & Otaiwi, 2020). One of the important aspects of this sustainability is the involvement of alums as a strategic asset of the pesantren (Briganti et al., 2024; Ogutu et al., 2023; Wilms et al., 2021). Alums not only function as a result of the educational process but also as ambassadors who represent the institution in Society (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023; Maljugić et al., 2024; Ogunfowora et al., 2021). The Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, one of the largest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, faces a similar challenge in maintaining its relevance amid the current globalization (Dakir & Umiarso, 2022; Farcas et al., 2021; Gameda & Lee, 2020). The role of alums is vital, especially when these pesantren seek to improve their reputation at the national and international levels (Antonopoulou et al., 2021; Fries et al., 2021; Idris et al., 2022). On the other hand, social media strategies are also an important key in building pesantren branding because this platform is able to reach a wider audience effectively and efficiently.

The literature shows that alums play an important role in strengthening the reputation of educational institutions. A study by Setyaningsih (2021) revealed that alum involvement in promotions, fundraising, and professional networking can have a significant impact on an institution's reputation. In addition, the strategic use of social media is able to create emotional engagement that strengthens the relationship between institutions and society (Li et al., 2023; Malik, 2022; Santoso & Yulianto, 2023). In the context of pesantren, the role of alums is rarely discussed in depth in the literature, especially in relation to social media strategies. Most of the research focuses more on the traditional role of pesantren as an Islamic educational institution (Islam et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2022; Wongkitrungrueng & Suprawan, 2024). This research aims to fill this gap by linking the role of alums and social media in building pesantren branding in the modern era, a relatively new approach in academic studies related to Islamic education.

This study aims to analyze the role of alums in strengthening the reputation of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, as well as explore how P4NJ uses social media strategies in supporting pesantren branding. Thus, this study seeks to answer several important questions: (1) How do alums contribute to the reputation and sustainability of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School? (2) How are social media, especially Instagram and Facebook, used to support pesantren branding? (3) What is the relationship between the role of alums and social media strategies in building a positive image of the pesantren? The answers to these questions are expected to provide new insights into how Islamic educational institutions can leverage internal resources and technology to achieve their strategic goals.

This research is based on the assumption that alums have a strategic role in strengthening the reputation of the institution and that social media is an effective tool for building pesantren branding in the modern era. The main argument of this study is that the active involvement of alums in promotional, fundraising, and community empowerment programs, combined with effective social media strategies, can strengthen the reputation of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School at the national and international levels. The provisional answer from this study is that alums serve as the primary ambassadors of the pesantren, strengthening the relationship between the pesantren and the wider community. At the same time, social media provides an efficient medium to expand the reach of the pesantren. The two work synergistically to build an image of a relevant, progressive, and influential pesantren in the context of modern Islamic education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach that focuses on the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School as an analysis unit. This research was conducted at the location of the pesantren in Probolinggo, East Java, with the main case involving the role of alums and social media strategies in building institutional reputation and community empowerment. The case study approach was chosen because it provides an opportunity to understand the phenomenon in depth in a real-life context, especially related to the synergy between alums, institutions, and social media. This research not only highlights the contribution of alums and the use of social media but also connects these dynamics with the social and traditional context of pesantren (Cole, 2024; Riazi et al., 2023; Spencer et al., 2021). With this approach, research can dig into richer and more detailed data on how these elements affect the sustainability and reputation of institutions.

The sources of information for this research include alums, P4NJ administrators, and staff of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School, who are directly involved in the promotion, fundraising, and social media management. In addition, resource persons from the general public who are connected to community empowerment activities by alums are also used as data sources. Respondents were selected purposively to ensure that they had in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. The Alumnus interviewed have diverse backgrounds, including those directly involved in the "Ngaji Bareng" program and significant activities such as Haul Masyayikh. P4NJ administrators provide information related to social media strategies and their role in supporting pesantren branding. Using this approach, the study managed to capture the comprehensive viewpoints of all parties involved.

Research data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with alums, P4NJ administrators, and the community who were directly involved in pesantren activities. Observations were carried out in activities such as "Ngaji Bareng Kitab Sullam Taufiq" and Haul Masyayikh II, focusing on the interaction between Alumnus, students, and the community.

The documentation includes digital archives from P4NJ social media as well as reports on pesantren activities. Data analysis is carried out through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting relevant information from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. The reduced data is arranged in tables and narratives to present the findings in a structured manner. Verification is done by comparing data from various sources to ensure its validity and consistency.

Table 1. Resource Person Code Table

Resource Code	Information
I_A1	Alums who are involved in fundraising and promotion of Islamic boarding schools.
I_A2	Alumnus who guide the activity "Ngaji Bareng Kitab Sullam Taufiq."
I_P1	P4NJ management manages Instagram and Facebook social media.
I_P2	P4NJ management who is involved in the pesantren branding strategy.
I_M1	Local communities who participate in pesantren empowerment activities.

This resource coding table serves to maintain the privacy of the resource while guiding the source of the data in the research. When conducting an interview, each quote or information from the resource person is coded according to the table above, for example, (I_A1) for alums involved in fundraising or (I_P1) for P4NJ administrators who manage social media. All data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation is analyzed by matching these codes to produce structured and valid findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Role of Alumnus in Strengthening the Reputation of the Institution

This study found that alums of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School played a very significant role in strengthening the institution's reputation. Alums are actively involved in various activities that support the promotion of Islamic Boarding School, such as seminars, conferences, and fundraising. This activity not only aims to introduce the Islamic Boarding School to a broad audience but also to become a medium that strengthens the emotional connection of alums with their alma mater. One of the Alumnus interviewed said, "Our involvement is part of our gratitude for the education and experience we have received here." Alums not only contribute financially but also become liaisons for professional networks that help Islamic Boarding Schools establish cooperation with external parties. This is the basis for the creation of excellent programs that support the positive image of Islamic Boarding Schools at the national and international levels, which directly contributes to the improvement of the institution's reputation.

In-depth interviews with alums revealed that they are actively involved in various Islamic Boarding School initiatives designed to expand the institution's impact and reach. One of the Alumnus explained his contribution to supporting the fundraising for the construction of the new facility, which managed to attract the attention of donors.

"Through this involvement, we not only help the Islamic Boarding School but also strengthen the emotional connection with our alma mater" (I_I1). Alums also use social media, such as Instagram, to promote Islamic Boarding School activities and share their experiences as part of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School community. This strategy creates a domino effect that expands the network of Islamic Boarding Schools in various sectors. These findings show that alums play a strategic role not only as financial supporters but also as effective promotional agents in building the institution's reputation on a global level.

The results of the study confirm that the alums of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School have made a strategic contribution to strengthening the institution's reputation. Their involvement includes financial, moral, and professional networking dimensions that complement each other. Through the promotion of activities, fundraising, and the use of social media, alums help expand the reach of Islamic Boarding Schools at the national and international levels. This collaboration between the Islamic Boarding School and alums creates a synergy that not only supports the success of the institution's programs but also strengthens the emotional connection of alums with their alma mater.

P4NJ's Instagram and Facebook Social Media Strategy in Supporting the Branding of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School

Based on the analysis of Instagram (@p4njprobolinggobarat) and Facebook (PP NJ West Probolinggo Auxiliary) accounts, P4NJ actively publishes content that supports the branding of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. The content shared includes congratulations on the achievements of the pesantren, commemoration of important events, and coverage of the pesantren's internal activities. For example, the upload about PSSNJ's victory in the 2022 Kasad Cup National Santri League became one of the moments that received wide attention, with many positive interactions from the online community. In addition, this account also uses social media to show solidarity through condolences for the death of Islamic boarding school figures. This activity shows how social media is used strategically to strengthen relationships with the pesantren community and build a positive image.



Figure 1. Photo of P4NJ's Victory in the 2022 PSSI Probolinggo Santri League Kasad Cup

P4NJ uses Instagram to display attractive visuals through photos and short video uploads, which focus on pesantren pride moments and social activities. The photo of the student's victory in the National Santri League, for example, received a positive response from followers with many congratulatory and supportive comments. Meanwhile, Facebook is used as a platform for more interactive discussions. Through the comment feature and group posts, P4NJ facilitates communication between alums, students, and the general public. Posts that include official announcements, congratulations, and coverage of important events show consistency in social media management. This strategy not only increases the digital reach of pesantren but also creates a deeper emotional connection with its community, both at the local and national levels. P4NJ's social media strategy through Instagram and Facebook has proven effective in supporting the branding of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. Engaging visual uploads and active interaction with the audience create meaningful engagement. Through social media, P4NJ is able to strengthen the identity of Islamic boarding schools as Islamic educational institutions that are adaptive to technological developments and relevant to modern society.

These results support the theory of digital communication that states that social media is a strategic tool for building emotional connections with audiences. P4NJ's Instagram and Facebook activities show how the platform is used not only to convey information but also to reinforce the positive image of the pesantren. In the context of branding, P4NJ has succeeded in utilizing social media to reach a wider audience, highlight the achievements of Islamic boarding schools, and strengthen the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and their communities. This strategy proves that a well-managed digital presence can be a key component in strengthening the branding of institutions.

Alumnus Contribution to Community Empowerment Programs

The documentation collected shows that alums of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School play an important role in supporting the community empowerment program initiated by the school. One prominent program is the activity "Ngaji Bareng Kitab Sullam Taufiq" (Figure 1), which is an Alumnus guide to strengthening religious understanding in the community. In addition, Alumnus are actively involved in major events such as Haul Masyayikh II and National Santri Day, which is a forum to strengthen the relationship between Islamic boarding schools and the wider community (Figure 2). This event is designed not only as a form of respect for the ulama but also as a momentum to strengthen the social and spiritual network between alums, pesantren, and community.



Figure 1. A Tribute of Sullam Taufiq



Figure 2. Such as Haul Masyayikh

In the activity "Ngaji Bareng Kitab Sullam Taufiq" (Figure 1), Alumnus of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School acted as teachers who guided participants in understanding the yellow book, one of the intellectual heritage of Islam. The atmosphere seen in the picture reflects the spirit of togetherness and dedication of alums in educating the community. On the other hand, Haul Masyayikh II and National Santri Day (Figure 2) show the magnificent stage that is the center of the event. This event was attended by various groups, ranging from students and alums to the general public, with a series of activities such as recitations, social discussions, and Islamic art performances. Visual documentation shows that alums play an active role as organizers and performers, making this program a form of alums' contribution to strengthening the religious traditions and social relations of the pesantren.

Alumnus of Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School play an active role in various community empowerment programs, including scientific activities such as "Ngaji Bareng" and significant events such as Haul Masyayikh II and National Santri Day. These two programs not only strengthen the relationship between the pesantren and the community but also become an important forum for alums to make social and spiritual contributions. The documentation of these two activities shows how alums maintain the relevance of pesantren in modern society.

These results support a community-based education theory that emphasizes collaboration between educational institutions, alums, and society in creating positive social change. Activities such as "Ngaji Bareng" and Haul Masyayikh reflect how Alumnus can be agents of change that bring Islamic values to the community. In addition, significant events such as National Santri Day show how pesantren traditions can continue to be relevant and significant through program innovations involving alums. These two programs are also part of the effort to brand the pesantren as a progressive center for education and community empowerment.

Discussion

The results of the research on the role of Alumnus in strengthening the reputation of the institution show that alums play a strategic role not only as financial supporters but also as effective promotional agents. The main sub-outcome of these findings is the involvement of alums in promotional activities, fundraising, and professional network building that directly supports the reputation of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. Alums act as ambassadors of the institution, leveraging their experiences to introduce the pesantren to a broader audience through social media, seminars, and other social activities. In this context, alum involvement not only contributes directly to the pesantren but also strengthens their emotional connection with their alma mater, which ultimately creates a sustainable synergy. These results show the importance of strategic collaboration between pesantren and alums in creating a strong institutional reputation, both at the national and international levels.

The correlation between Alumnus engagement and the reputation of the institution can be explained through a stakeholder relations approach, where Alumnus are considered strategic assets that have a significant impact on the development of the institution. These findings support previous research by Skrefsrud (2022), which highlighted that well-managed emotional relationships between institutions and alums can result in significant contributions, such as fundraising and promotion of institutions. The study also found that social media is an important tool in expanding alum networks and building their engagement more broadly, as supported by the study of (Dendi Yuda et al., 2023; Garg, 2020; Shah Bukhari et al., 2022). This correlation further emphasizes that the reputation of educational institutions, especially those based on traditions such as pesantren, depends not only on internal programs but also on the active participation of alums in various strategic activities.

The results of research related to Instagram and Facebook social media strategies by P4NJ show that social media has become a very effective tool in supporting the branding of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. A key sub-outcome of these findings is how P4NJ leverages engaging visual uploads and content consistency to build an emotional connection with the online community. The documentation of PSSNJ's victory in the National Santri League, for example, has a positive impact on creating a sense of community pride for the Islamic boarding school. In contrast, condolences to the Islamic boarding school leaders show solidarity and emotional attachment. This activity proves that social media can be used strategically to integrate traditional values with the needs of modern society while reaching a wider audience.

The correlation between the use of social media and pesantren branding lies in the consistency and relevance of the content published. This research is in line with the findings of Basir et al. (2023), who stated that the success of branding on social media depends on a planned, data-driven approach. In the case of P4NJ, Instagram is used to highlight eye-catching visuals, while Facebook is used to build deeper communication. This strategy shows that social media can be an effective tool for bridging Islamic traditions with modern society. These results also underscore the importance of the role of social media as a medium that not only conveys information but also builds strong emotional connections between institutions and their communities.

The implications of the contribution of alums in the community empowerment program show that the alums of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School play a central role in maintaining the relevance of the pesantren in modern society. The main sub-outcome of these findings is the involvement of Alumnus in activities such as "Ngaji Bareng Kitab Sullam Taufiq" and Haul Masyayikh II & National Santri Day, which not only strengthens the social relationship between pesantren and the community but also preserves Islamic scientific traditions. This activity shows how alums can become agents of change who bring Islamic values to the broader community. In addition, alum involvement in these programs shows that pesantren can be a model of community-based educational institutions that contribute to positive social change.

The correlation between alum engagement and the sustainability of Islamic traditions demonstrates the importance of collaboration between educational institutions, alums, and society. This research supports the findings of Aladsani (2022), who states that community-based collaboration can create sustainable social impact. Alums of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School not only play a role as facilitators but also as the main driving force in various community empowerment activities. These findings suggest that pesantren traditions can remain relevant through program innovations involving alums, strengthening its position as a progressive center of Islamic education. Thus, this research provides a new perspective on how pesantren can continue to develop and make a real contribution in the modern era.

Theoretically, the findings of this article make an important contribution to enriching the literature on Islamic education, especially in terms of the role of alums and social media in building the reputation of Islamic boarding schools. This research connects traditional concepts, such as the role of alums in strengthening social relationships and community development, with the use of digital technologies, such as social media, to expand the reach and influence of pesantren at the global level. Practically, these findings guide Islamic boarding schools and other Islamic-based educational institutions to utilize alums as strategic assets in promotion, fundraising, and community empowerment activities. In addition, consistent and effective use of social media can be an important tool to strengthen pesantren branding, build an emotional connection with the audience, and increase visibility in the digital world.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals the strategic role of alums and social media in strengthening the reputation and building the branding of the Nurul Jadid Islamic Boarding School. Alums, through their active involvement in fundraising, institutional promotion, and community empowerment programs, play a central role as agents of change and ambassadors of the Islamic boarding school. They not only make financial contributions but also expand the professional network of pesantren through participation in activities such as seminars, conferences, and social activities. Social media, especially Instagram and Facebook, managed by P4NJ, are effective in creating emotional engagement and building a positive image of the pesantren. This strategy not only shows the adaptation of pesantren to technological developments but also highlights the traditional values of pesantren that are relevant to the needs of modern society. This research strengthens the understanding that collaboration between alums, institutions, and social media can be a strategic sustainability model for Islamic-based education in the era of globalization.

The main contribution of this research lies in the presentation of innovations in the use of social media in supporting the branding of institutions based on Islamic traditions and the emphasis on the role of alums as drivers of change. This research enriches the literature by introducing new perspectives on the importance of synergy between tradition and modernity in Islamic education while paving the way for further research in this area.

Although this study provides significant insights, there are several limitations, such as the limited scope of one pesantren and observations of specific social media platforms. These limitations can be addressed through future research involving other educational institutions, additional social media platforms, and broader approaches to demographic variables, such as gender and age. Further research is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture to understand the dynamics of alum relationships, social media, and educational institutions in shaping the reputation and sustainability of institutions in the future.

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