



Synergy of Word-of-Mouth Marketing and Digital Branding in Educational Marketing Management in the Era of Disruption

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategic management of educational marketing implemented at MAN Mempawah to enhance the institution's competitiveness amidst digital disruption. Amidst increasing competition among educational institutions, reliance on single-channel marketing is no longer sufficient; therefore, a hybrid approach is needed. This study used a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the madrasah principal and public relations staff, participant observation of marketing activities, and documentation of digital assets. The findings indicate that: (1) Marketing planning involves meticulous market segmentation and the development of unique value propositions through academic and non-academic excellence, such as specialized technology programs and religious curricula; (2) Implementation strategies rely on the synergy between traditional Word of Mouth (WOM) and modern Digital Branding. While WOM, driven by alumni achievements and community-based social programs (e.g., free medical treatment), builds deep trust, digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube amplify this trust to a wider audience. The study concludes that the integration of "human-touch" social proof into "high-tech" digital narratives creates strong brand equity that significantly influences parental decision-making. The adaptive leadership of the madrasah principal in orchestrating these two poles is a key driver in maintaining the relevance and sustainability of madrasahs in the competitive educational landscape.

Keywords: Digital Branding, Institutional Competitiveness, Madrasah Management, Educational Marketing, Word of Mouth.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji manajemen strategis pemasaran pendidikan yang diimplementasikan di MAN Mempawah untuk meningkatkan daya saing lembaga di tengah disrupsi digital. Di tengah meningkatnya persaingan antar lembaga pendidikan, ketergantungan pada pemasaran saluran tunggal tidak lagi memadai; oleh karena itu, diperlukan pendekatan hibrida. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan kepala madrasah dan staf humas, observasi partisipan terhadap aktivitas pemasaran, serta dokumentasi aset digital. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa: (1) Perencanaan pemasaran melibatkan segmentasi pasar yang teliti dan pengembangan proposisi nilai unik melalui keunggulan akademik dan non-akademik seperti program teknologi khusus dan kurikulum keagamaan; (2) Strategi implementasi bertumpu pada sinergi antara Word of Mouth (WOM) tradisional dan Digital Branding modern. Sementara WOM, yang didorong oleh prestasi alumni dan program sosial berbasis masyarakat (misalnya pengobatan gratis), membangun kepercayaan yang mendalam, platform digital seperti Instagram, Facebook, dan YouTube mengamplifikasi kepercayaan ini ke khalayak yang lebih luas. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi bukti sosial "human-touch" ke dalam narasi digital "high-tech" menciptakan ekuitas merek yang kuat yang secara signifikan memengaruhi pengambilan keputusan orang tua. Kepemimpinan adaptif kepala madrasah dalam mengorkestrasi kedua kutub ini adalah pendorong utama dalam menjaga relevansi dan keberlanjutan madrasah di lanskap pendidikan yang kompetitif.

Kata Kunci: Digital Branding, Daya Saing Lembaga, Manajemen Madrasah, Pemasaran Pendidikan, Word of Mouth.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era marked by digital disruption, educational institutions can no longer rely solely on traditional reputations to maintain their operational continuity¹. The education sector has transformed into a highly competitive marketplace where parents and prospective students act as critical and informed consumers². Marketing management of educational services, previously considered taboo due to concerns about commercialization, has now become a vital strategic instrument³. This competition demands that institutions, particularly State Islamic Senior High Schools (Madrasah Aliyah), navigate intelligently between maintaining their religious identity and adopting technological modernity to attract public interest amidst the proliferation of international curriculum-based schools.

The era of disruption presents a dual challenge: the massive flow of information through digital platforms provides vast branding opportunities, but on the other hand, it makes consumer loyalty very fragile⁴. Misinformation or negative testimonials on social media can quickly damage an image that has been built over the years. In this noisy ecosystem, one-way (top-down) marketing strategies are starting to lose their effectiveness⁵. Modern society is more likely to trust real experiences shared by others than formal advertising. This phenomenon has re-emerged the relevance of the power of Word of Mouth (WOM) communication, which now synergizes with Digital Branding⁶.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on educational marketing, there is a crucial research gap that this research needs to fill by comparing it with three key studies.

¹ Mohamed Ashmel Mohamed Hashim et al., "Higher Education Strategy in Digital Transformation," *Education and Information Technologies* 27, no. 3 (2022): 3171–95, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10739-1>; John W. Moravec and María Cristina Martínez-Bravo, "Global Trends in Disruptive Technological Change: Social and Policy Implications for Education," *On the Horizon: The International Journal of Learning Futures* 31, nos. 3–4 (2023): 147–73, <https://doi.org/10.1108/OTH-02-2023-0007>.

² Ellen Greaves et al., "Marketing and School Choice: A Systematic Literature Review," *Review of Educational Research* 93, no. 6 (2023): 825–61, <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543221141658>; Athapol Ruangjanjanes et al., "Creating Behavioral Engagement among Higher Education's Prospective Students through Social Media Marketing Activities: The Role of Brand Equity as Mediator," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (October 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1004573>.

³ Anna B. Gilmore et al., "Defining and Conceptualising the Commercial Determinants of Health," *The Lancet* 401, no. 10383 (2023): 1194–213, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)00013-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)00013-2); Venni V. Krishna, "A I and Contemporary Challenges: The Good, Bad and the Scary," *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity* 10, no. 1 (2024): 100178, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joitmc.2023.100178>.

⁴ Julian R. K. Wichmann et al., "The Platformization of Brands," *Journal of Marketing* 86, no. 1 (2022): 109–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429211054073>; Chengming Zhang et al., "Unpacking Perceived Risks and AI Trust Influences Pre-Service Teachers' AI Acceptance: A Structural Equation Modeling-Based Multi-Group Analysis," *Education and Information Technologies* 30, no. 2 (2025): 2645–72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-12905-7>.

⁵ Mohamed Zareer and Rastko R. Selmic, "A Survey on Opinion Dynamics in Social Media Networks: Analysis, Simulation, and Control," *IEEE Transactions on Computational Social Systems*, 2025, 1–35, <https://doi.org/10.1109/TCSS.2025.3622498>.

⁶ Festim Tafolli et al., "The Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Purchase Intention through Brand Image and Brand Trust in the Fashion Industry: Evidence from a Developing Country," *Research Journal of Textile and Apparel* 29, no. 4 (2025): 1160–76, <https://doi.org/10.1108/RJTA-07-2024-0131>.

First, research conducted by Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown broadly discusses marketization in Western schools. However, these studies tend to view marketing as an administrative activity separate from the sociological roots of local communities⁷. This creates a gap in understanding how educational institutions in developing countries, particularly religious-based schools like Madrasahs in Indonesia, manage marketing while maintaining a balance between management professionalism and spiritual values without losing their commercial appeal.

Second, a study by Mazzarol emphasized that digital branding is a key determinant in global educational competition through the utilization of IT infrastructure⁸. However, Mazzarol overemphasized the technical aspects and digital reach, while underexploring the fact that in communal Eastern cultures, trust is built more through personal interactions. There is a gap in the literature regarding how impersonal digital elements can be synergized with the personal power of word of mouth (WOM) to create holistic and organic credibility.

Third, research by Riccomini et al., which examined consumer behavior in choosing educational services, showed that institutional image tends to be static⁹. These researchers did not sufficiently explore the dynamic aspects of the disruptive era, where institutional image is now heavily dependent on “daily conversations” on social media. There is no specific model explaining how successful alumni testimonials and social activities (such as community service and free medical treatment) are converted into strategic content in digital branding to respond to information uncertainty.

This research aims to fill this gap by proposing the concept of “Hybrid Synergy.” Based on field findings at MAN Mempawah, marketing strategies are no longer fragmented. The institution’s success in increasing student numbers is rooted in the principal’s ability to combine the power of alumni testimonials (WOM) with content amplification on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.

Data shows that flagship programs such as SKS (Student Credits), Robotics, and Prodistik (Prodistik) not only function as academic products but also as digital content that sparks positive conversations within the community. Furthermore, philanthropic activities such as Community Service and free medical treatment serve as physical touchpoints that build initial trust, which is then documented digitally to build a narrative of social concern. This synergy builds strong brand equity in the eyes of parents.

This article aims to deeply analyze the managerial process of uniting these two marketing poles. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of an educational marketing model that combines traditional trust with digital reach. Practically, this paper guides educational leaders on how to manage authentic, transparent, and

⁷ Izhar Oplatka and Jane Hemsley-Brown, “A Systematic and Updated Review of the Literature on Higher Education Marketing 2005–2019,” in *Handbook of Operations Research and Management Science in Higher Education*, ed. Zilla Sinuany-Stern (Springer International Publishing, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-74051-1_2.

⁸ Tim Mazzarol, “Critical Success Factors for International Education Marketing,” *International Journal of Educational Management* 12, no. 4 (1998): 163–75, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513549810220623>.

⁹ Fernanda Edileuza Riccomini et al., “Innovation in Educational Marketing: A Study Applied to Brazilian Private Higher Education Institutions,” *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 34, no. 1 (2024): 95–115, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2021.1966157>.

competitive marketing communications amidst the uncertain flow of disruption. The author argues that in this era, the voices that are most heard are not simply the loudest on social media, but rather those supported by concrete evidence through testimonials and quality service.

METHOD

This research was operationalized through a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design to explore the phenomenon of marketing management in depth¹⁰. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the need to understand the complexity of human interactions and communication strategies that cannot be reduced to mere statistics. In the context of educational marketing in the era of disruption, the dynamics between social trust and digital image require keen observation of audience behavior, policies, and responses. The case study strategy allows researchers to maintain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as the decision-making process of madrasah principals in designing marketing narratives¹¹.

The research location was deliberately selected at an institution exhibiting a positive anomaly, where, amidst intense competition, the institution was able to retain and increase student numbers through a unique branding strategy. The research focused on the marketing management analysis unit, encompassing strategic planning, communication media implementation, and evaluation of the impact of the institution's image. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, present directly in the field to capture the nuances of communication and organizational culture that support the creation of marketing synergy¹².

The data in this study were sourced from two main pillars: primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key informants who possessed authority and in-depth knowledge of school policies¹³. These informants included the Principal as the strategic policymaker, the Deputy Head of Public Relations as the technical implementer of branding communications, and educational staff who manage digital assets. Furthermore, perspectives from consumers or recipients of educational services were explored to validate the effectiveness of word-of-mouth communication within the community.

¹⁰ Zainal Abidin et al., "The Principal's Strategy in Implementing Religious Moderation: An Analysis of Islamic Education Management at Sukapura State Vocational School," *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 15, no. 2 (2025): 96–104, <https://doi.org/10.24042/zqtw7916>; Ahmad Qusairi et al., "Integrating Tradition and Modernity: Educational Management Strategies," *Nidhomiyah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.38073/nidhomiyah.v6i1.1946>.

¹¹ Alolote Amadi, "Integration in a Mixed-Method Case Study of Construction Phenomena: From Data to Theory," *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management* 30, no. 1 (2021): 210–37, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ECAM-02-2021-0111>.

¹² Mohamed Ibrahim Al Ali et al., "Unveiling Dubai's Knowledge Economy: A Journey toward Enhancing Knowledge Exchange and Human Capital," *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication* 74, nos. 5–6 (2023): 1747–66, <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-06-2023-0214>.

¹³ Einat Lavee and Guy Itzhakov, "Good Listening: A Key Element in Establishing Quality in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Research* 23, no. 3 (2023): 614–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211039402>; Muhammad Taufiq et al., "Peran Kepala Madrasah Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Di Madin Daruttauhid Al-Jindrami," *Nidhomiyah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2022): 61–73, <https://doi.org/10.38073/nidhomiyah.v3i1.768>.

The data collection process was also strengthened by passive participant observation. Researchers directly observed how services were provided to the community, how social activities such as community service and free medical treatment were implemented as marketing instruments, and how daily activities at the madrasah were documented for digital content. This observation was crucial for ensuring synchronization between the reality on the ground and what was displayed on the school's social media. Extensive documentation was also collected, including strategic marketing plans, digital content archives on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, and records of academic and non-academic achievements, which are key components of Digital Branding.

Data analysis was conducted continuously from the initial data collection in the field to the preparation of the final report, adopting an interactive analysis model. The first stage was data condensation, in which researchers sorted and simplified raw data from interview transcripts and field notes into relevant units of information with a focus on marketing synergy. Data irrelevant to the Word of Mouth and Digital Branding themes was removed to sharpen the analysis. Next, the data were presented in a systematic descriptive narrative, connecting the findings to form a coherent management strategy. Finally, data validity is a fundamental aspect of this research to ensure the quality of the findings¹⁴.

The researcher applied comprehensive triangulation techniques, including source triangulation and technical triangulation¹⁵. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the madrasah principal with information from subordinates and data from external parties such as parents and alumni. Meanwhile, technical triangulation was conducted by checking the consistency of data generated from interviews with field observations and digital documentary evidence. Furthermore, the researcher conducted extended observations to ensure that the data obtained was not a fleeting phenomenon, but rather a consistent management pattern.

Research ethics were also upheld by ensuring the anonymity of informants when necessary and obtaining consent for any information cited. The researcher ensured that data interpretation was based on field facts without excessive subjective intervention. All stages of this methodology are designed to ensure the research results have a high level of transferability, allowing the marketing synergy model to be considered or adapted by other educational institutions facing similar challenges in the era of disruption.

The logic of this method follows an inductive flow, where theory is not used as the primary determinant, but rather as an analytical tool to dissect field findings. Thus, this methodology can capture how an Islamic educational institution transforms managerially, shifting from a traditional, closed marketing model to a modern, open, evidence-based digital

¹⁴ Nwamaka Okafor et al., "Assessing and Improving IoT Sensor Data Quality in Environmental Monitoring Networks: A Focus on Peatlands," *IEEE Internet of Things Journal* 11, no. 24 (2024): 40727–42, <https://doi.org/10.1109/JIOT.2024.3454241>.

¹⁵ Zainal Abidin and Ahmad Qusairi, "Curriculum Management Based on Deep Learning to Improve Graduate Quality," *Articles, Dirasah: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2026): 1–9; İbrahim Yaşar Kuzu and Murat Kuvvetli, "A Triangulation Method on the Effectiveness of Digital Game-Based Language Learning for Vocabulary Acquisition," *Education and Information Technologies* 28, no. 10 (2023): 13541–67, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11756-y>.

marketing model, while still maintaining the relational strength through word-of-mouth communication that has become its social identity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Marketing Planning and Market Segmentation.

Field findings indicate that marketing planning at this institution is conducted through an annual work meeting involving the principal, teachers, and school committee. The planning process begins with an in-depth identification of the characteristics of prospective students from various Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) and Junior High Schools (SMP) in the surrounding area. The principal determines that the primary marketing focus is to highlight “value-added” aspects not offered by competing public schools. The planning document reveals that the institution specifically targets a segment of the community seeking a balance between general academic achievement and deep religiosity. This planning also includes a mapping of internal strengths, with the school identifying programs such as SKS (Student Credits), Prodistik, and Robotics as key products to be “sold” to the community. Furthermore, the planning includes a dedicated budget allocation for physical promotional media, such as large billboards in strategic locations, and an operational budget for a social media management team.

Product Differentiation through Academic and Non-Academic Excellence Programs

Based on observations and curriculum documentation, this institution creates clear product differentiation as a key element in its branding. Findings indicate that the three pillars of excellence are highlighted. First, the academic field, which implements the Semester Credit System (SKS), enables students with above-average abilities to complete their education more quickly. Second, the technology field, through the Prodistik program in collaboration with renowned universities and the Robotics extracurricular activity, has achieved numerous achievements. Third, the religious field, which is the core identity of the madrasah, includes the Quran memorization program, calligraphy art, and the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) training. Field findings confirm that these programs are not merely curriculum formalities but are actively contested in various competitions as tangible evidence of the quality of educational services provided to the community.

Implementing Trust-Based Word-of-Mouth Communication

Research data reveals that traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) communication strategies remain the most influential tool in parents' decisions. Findings indicate that madrasah principals actively involve alumni in the outreach process. Alumni who have succeeded in college or the workforce serve as living evidence of the institution's quality. In the field, parents act as voluntary marketing agents, satisfied with the service and their children's character development. This communication occurs organically in residential areas, markets, and places of worship. Furthermore, direct visits to junior high schools are conducted not only to distribute brochures but also to build interpersonal relationships with prospective students and guidance counselors at the school. Community trust is also fostered through tangible philanthropic activities, such as organizing community service programs and providing free medical treatment for residents, which indirectly builds a positive image of the institution as one that cares about humanity.

Digital Branding and Social Media Content Management

In the digital aspect, it was discovered that the institution has transformed its marketing management by establishing a dedicated social media management team. The findings indicate the integrated use of three main platforms: Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Instagram is used to display visualizations of students' daily activities and achievement posters in an instant and engaging way. Facebook is used to reach parents and senior alumni with longer, more informative narratives. Meanwhile, YouTube is used as a video gallery for the school's profile and documentation of major events. Consistently uploaded content includes documentation of competitions, extracurricular activities, and alumni testimonials. Field findings indicate a synchronization between digital content and reality; every student achievement in the real world is immediately converted into digital content within hours to maintain public awareness. This social media management also serves as a two-way communication channel, where the madrasah responds to inquiries from prospective parents through the comments section or text messages.

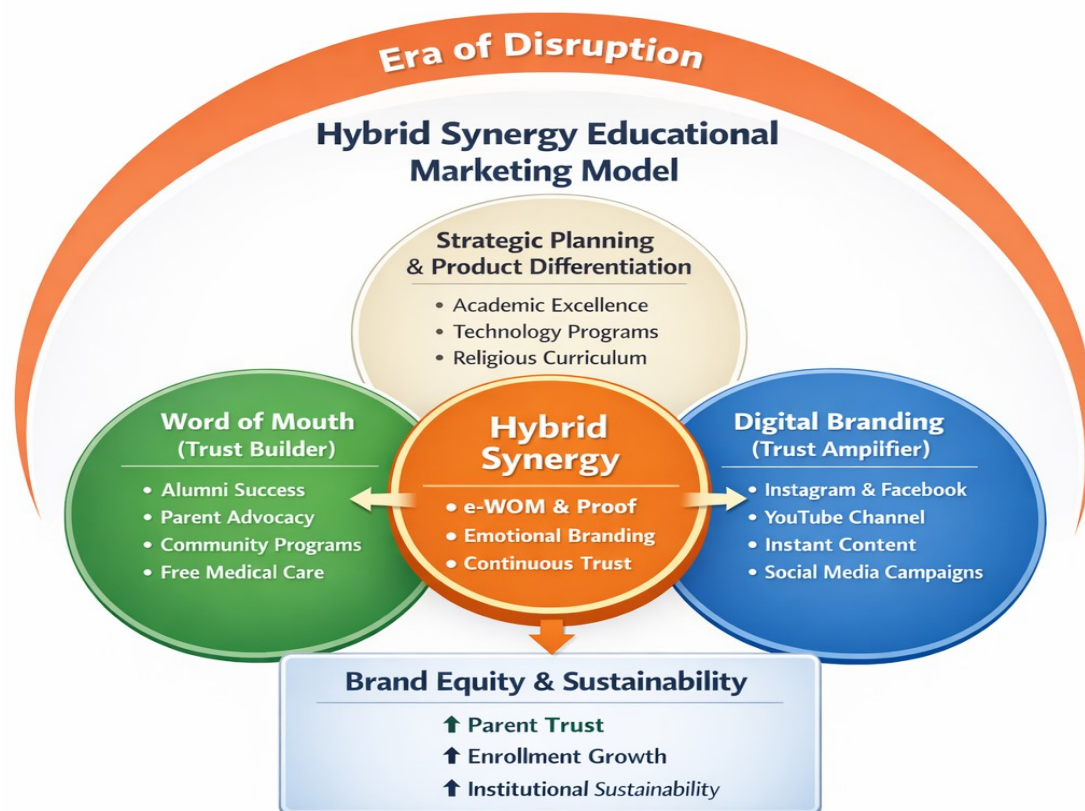


Figure 1. Hybrid Synergy Educational Marketing Model

Operational Synergy between Physical Assets and Virtual Image

The final finding relates to how institutions integrate physical presence and virtual image. Physically, schools leverage strategic locations by installing prominent visual identities such as billboards and large posters along frequently traveled roads. However, these physical posters now include QR codes or social media handles as a bridge to their digital ecosystem. The findings indicate that when people see a poster on the street, they continue their search

through the school's Instagram or YouTube accounts to validate the claims. This synergy is also evident in large school events, which are aesthetically designed to be "Instagrammable," automatically triggering students and visitors to share the moment on their personal accounts, technically expanding the reach of digital branding exponentially at no additional cost.

Figure 1. This diagram visualizes the Hybrid Synergy model implemented at MAN Mempawah, where strategic planning and differentiation of flagship programs (academic, technological, and religious) serve as the main foundation of marketing. The two main poles of Word of Mouth as a social relationship-based trust builder and Digital Branding as a technology-based reach enhancer are integrated in one synergistic ecosystem. Alumni testimonials, parent satisfaction, and social activities form organic trust, which is then consistently amplified through Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. The result is the formation of strong brand equity, increased parental trust, growth in the number of students, and institutional sustainability amidst the competitive era of disruption.

The deconstructive synergy of marketing in the era of disruption confirms that word of mouth (WOM) and digital branding are not merely additional tactics, but rather a strategic reorientation in facing educational disruption¹⁶. Field findings indicate that MAN Mempawah no longer relies on static, conventional methods, but rather builds an interlocking communication ecosystem. This in-depth intervention reveals that in the digital era, trust is the most difficult commodity to obtain yet the most crucial. When massive digital information is often questionable, the power of personal word-of-mouth testimonials serves as a verification filter for prospective parents before they believe what is displayed on their device screens.

A crucial aspect of strategic management is the ability to transform social capital, embodied in alumni and parent satisfaction, into valuable digital assets¹⁷. The strategy of engaging high-achieving alumni to promote the madrasa demonstrates the institution's understanding of market psychology; people trust living evidence more than curriculum promises. From a managerial perspective, this constitutes a profound form of "relationship marketing." When alumni's successes are shared on Instagram or Facebook, the value is amplified, transforming personal narratives into broad public opinion, thereby minimizing the geographic barriers that typically limit the reach of traditional marketing.

Competition: The existence of flagship programs such as SKS, Robotics, and Prodistik represents a form of intelligent product differentiation to break the stigma of madrasas as institutions that only focus on the afterlife¹⁸. This discussion assesses that the provision of these high-tech programs is a conscious effort to create a Unique Selling Proposition (USP). Amidst the homogeneity of secondary education services, MAN

¹⁶ Jacqueline Burgess, *Managing the Authenticity of Narrative Brands: Understanding Consumers, Fans and Audiences* (Taylor & Francis, 2026).

¹⁷ Yuyang Kang and Ka Ho Mok, "The Broken Promise of Human Capital Theory: Social Embeddedness, Graduate Entrepreneurs and Youth Employment in China," *Critical Sociology* 48, nos. 7–8 (2022): 1205–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205221088894>.

¹⁸ Imron Muttaqin et al., "Competitive Advantage Management of Madrasah In the Artificial Intelligence Era," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 4 (2025): 661–80, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i4.2292>.

Mempawah positions itself as an institution capable of integrating spirituality with digital literacy. This provides an answer to the anxiety of parents in the era of disruption who want their children to excel technologically while remaining morally sound.

Empathy Marketing through Philanthropic Activities such as Community Service (*Baksos*) and free medical treatment, as found in this study, is not merely seen as a charity, but as a highly effective “empathy marketing” instrument. In educational management, this is referred to as corporate social responsibility-based image development¹⁹. In-depth interventions show that these activities create strong emotional branding. When madrasas are present to help with economic or health difficulties in the community, the community no longer views the madrasas as transactional service providers, but rather as part of their social solution, which automatically fosters loyalty and the intention to send their children to school there.

Despite the dominance of digital branding, the use of billboards and large posters in strategic locations still plays a vital role as markers of physical presence. However, analysis shows that the role of these physical media has shifted to become a “gateway” to the virtual ecosystem. Billboards on the side of the Mempawah highway serve to attract fleeting attention, but the decision to learn more (interest & desire) occurs when the audience scans the code or searches for the school’s name on social media. This synergy proves that successful marketing management can seamlessly connect the offline and online worlds without any information gaps.

Actively managing Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube accounts by a dedicated team demonstrates managerial maturity in responding to changing consumer behavior. In the era of disruption, a school’s image is no longer determined by what is written in a brochure once a year, but rather by what is uploaded daily²⁰. This discussion highlights that consistent content regarding students’ daily achievements constitutes an effort to “continuous proof.” By regularly showcasing the learning process and competition results, madrasas are building a narrative that their excellence is a result of consistency, not chance, which in turn reduces the level of skepticism of prospective parents.

The success of this entire marketing strategy is rooted in the adaptive leadership of the Madrasah Principal. As a top manager, he or she acts not only as a supervisor but also as an architect who unites various marketing elements²¹. A profound intervention in this area is that under digitally visionary leadership, bureaucratic barriers to promotion can be reduced. The Madrasah Principal in this study demonstrated the ability to allocate resources appropriately, both for technological infrastructure and for maintaining relationships with community leaders, ensuring that the Madrasah remains modern in terms of tools yet traditional in terms of values.

¹⁹ Yilkal Andualem Demeke and Jaladi Ravi, “Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility Activities on Corporate Image: Evidence from Food and Beverage Industry in Amhara Region,” *Cogent Business & Management* 11, no. 1 (2024): 2316928, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2316928>.

²⁰ Lydia Makrygianni et al., “The Double Tidal Disruption Event AT 2022dbl Implies That at Least Some ‘Standard’ Optical Tidal Disruption Events Are Partial Disruptions,” *The Astrophysical Journal Letters* 987, no. 1 (2025): L20, <https://doi.org/10.3847/2041-8213/ade155>.

²¹ Rofiqi et al., “Educational Leadership Transformation in Traditional Settings: Policy Adaptation and Distributed Authority in Indonesian Pesantren,” *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 2026, 1–19.

Information Disruption In an era where everyone can freely provide reviews, MAN Mempawah's marketing management faces the challenge of information transparency. However, by prioritizing transparency through honest documentation of activities on YouTube, the madrasah is actually mitigating the risk of negative news. This discussion found that the higher the level of public engagement on a school's social media, the stronger the school's image immunity. Active participation by parents in providing positive comments on social media is a form of Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) that can reduce public doubts about the quality of religious education.

A thorough analysis of the research location shows that the communal sociological factors of Mempawah society strongly support the effectiveness of WOM. In a culture that still values recommendations from trusted individuals, the madrasah's marketing strategy of reaching out to community leaders and alumni is highly targeted. This discussion concludes that digital technology does not replace spoken word culture, but rather accelerates it. Digital branding here serves as a stage, while WOM is the actor that breathes life into the promotion, creating a highly contextual marketing harmony with local values.

This discussion confirms that this marketing management synergy has long-term implications for the institution's sustainability. With increasing student numbers, madrasahs have greater bargaining power in developing facilities and human resource quality. This final intervention suggests that this hybrid marketing model must be continually evaluated to avoid becoming trapped by fleeting trends. The success of MAN Mempawah demonstrates that madrasahs that manage their success narrative through a combination of traditional beliefs and digital reach will always hold a special place in the hearts of the community, even amidst the most devastating disruptions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that MAN Mempawah has successfully increased its competitiveness through a hybrid strategy that synergizes the traditional power of word of mouth (WOM) with digital branding. Key findings indicate that public trust is not solely built through digital promotion, but is rooted in tangible evidence in the form of alumni achievements and "empathy marketing" programs such as community service and free medical treatment. Furthermore, product differentiation through specific programs such as SKS (Student Credits), Robotics, and Prodistik is a key determinant that distinguishes this institution from competitors. This synergy demonstrates that in the era of disruption, marketing success is determined by management's ability to translate real-world customer satisfaction into powerful narrative content on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.

This research's contribution lies in the development of an adaptive and contextual Islamic education marketing management model. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on educational management by offering the concept of "hybrid synergy," where digital technology does not replace personal interaction but rather serves as an amplifier for existing social capital. Practically, this study provides guidance for educational managers on the importance of managing brand equity through the integration of superior academic programs with consistent digital documentation. This study confirms that the visionary leadership of the madrasah principal in orchestrating the public relations and IT teams is the

key to maintaining the relevance of the institution amidst changes in the behaviour of consumers of educational services.

While providing in-depth insights, this study is limited by its focus on a single public institution, requiring caution when generalizing its findings to private institutions or regions with different cultural characteristics. Furthermore, this study primarily captures the internal management of madrasahs. Therefore, recommendations for future research include conducting comparative studies across institutions or using a quantitative approach to precisely measure the correlation between digital branding intensity and parents' decision-making. Future research should also explore the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in personalizing educational marketing strategies to address the challenges of more complex disruption.

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