

STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL EDUCATION MARKETING: OPTIMIZING DIGITAL POTENTIAL AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Mohammad Habib Imroni

Universitas KH Mukhtar Syafaat, Banyuwangi
Indonesia¹²³
e-mail: roniee.rohim@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Pesantren, a traditional Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, has a significant role in shaping character and providing religious education to the younger generation. However, Islamic boarding schools are currently facing considerable modernization challenges. The rapid development of information and communication technology requires Islamic boarding schools to adapt to remain relevant and competitive in the digital era. As an institution that has been established for a long time, Pesantren is still lagging behind in utilizing technology. On the other hand, modern society relies more on digital technology and social networks to get information, interact, and make decisions, including in choosing educational institutions. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools need to carry out a strategic transformation in their educational marketing by optimizing the potential of digital and social networks. This effort is expected to increase the visibility of the pesantren, attract more new registrants, and strengthen relationships with the wider community.

This study aims to examine the strategic transformation of pesantren education marketing through optimizing digital potential and social networks. Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, face the challenges of modernization and the need to adapt to the development of information technology. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to the Sunan Ampel Banyuwangi Islamic Boarding School. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and analysis of related documents. The study results show that implementing digital marketing strategies, such as using social media, official websites, and mobile applications, can increase the visibility and reputation of pesantren among the wider community. In addition, social networks play an important role in building communities and strengthening relationships between pesantren, alumni, and prospective students. This transformation increases the number of new registrants and strengthens the identity and image of the pesantren as an educational institution that is adaptive to the changing times. This study concludes that

optimizing digital potential and social networks is an effective strategic step in marketing pesantren education. The implementation of appropriate information technology can expand marketing reach, strengthen communication networks, and support the sustainability and development of Islamic boarding schools in the digital era.

Keywords: *Strategic Transformation, Islamic Boarding School, Education Marketing.*

A. Introduction

Pesantren one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, has a crucial role in the formation of character and religious education of the younger generation. However, in today's digital era, Islamic boarding schools face great challenges to remain relevant and competitive. The development of information and communication technology has changed the way people get information and interact. This requires pesantren to adopt more modern and effective marketing strategies to attract the interest of the wider community. Based on data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the number of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia continues to grow, but many still rely on traditional methods in marketing and communication activities, so they are not optimal in reaching potential students. (Kementarian Agama, 2022)

In the context of globalization and digitalization, the use of information and communication technology is very crucial. Various studies show that the integration of digital technology in educational marketing strategies can improve the visibility and reputation of educational institutions. (Sugiharto, T., & Kurniawan, 2020) Islamic boarding schools, which have been known for their traditional teaching methods, need to explore and optimize the potential of digital and social networks to reach a wider audience and strengthen relationships with stakeholders, including prospective students, parents, and alumni. (Arifin,

Z., & Hidayat, 2019)

Pesantren that adopted a digital marketing strategy succeeded in increasing the number of registrants and strengthening relationships with alumni and the surrounding community.(Mustofa, A., & Rahman, 2021) Social networks not only serve as a marketing tool but also as a platform to build a solid and supportive community. (Wijaya, H., & Fadli, 2020) The implementation of digital technology can expand the reach of marketing and support the sustainability of educational institutions in the modern era.

From some of the opinions above, it can be concluded that in the context of globalization and digitalization, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is very important in increasing the visibility and reputation of educational institutions. The integration of digital technology in educational marketing strategies helps Islamic boarding schools and other institutions reach a wider audience, strengthen relationships with prospective students, parents, and alumni, and increase the number of applicants. Social networks are not only a marketing tool but also a platform to build a solid and supportive community. The implementation of digital technology not only expands the reach of marketing, but also supports the sustainability and growth of educational institutions in the modern era.

This research has several important benefits. First, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how pesantren can optimize the potential of digital and social networks in their marketing strategies. Second, this research will provide practical recommendations for pesantren managers to adopt and implement effective digital marketing strategies. Third, the results of this research can be a reference for other Islamic educational institutions that want to increase their

competitiveness and relevance in the digital era. Overall, this research aims to support the transformation of pesantren into adaptive and innovative educational institutions, able to compete in an increasingly competitive world of education.

B. Method

This research was carried out for two months, starting from May to June 2024. This time frame was chosen to allow for in-depth and comprehensive data collection, as well as to allow sufficient time for data analysis and interpretation. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach and is conducted at the Sunan Ampel Islamic boarding school in Banyuwangi. The selection of this location is based on the diversity of the characteristics of the pesantren and the level of adoption of digital technology and social networks in the pesantren.

Data Sources This study uses primary and secondary data. Primary data includes in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with pesantren leaders, teachers, administrative staff, students and alumni to gain diverse perspectives on the strategic transformation of digital marketing and the use of social networks. Then Participatory Observation, an observation carried out at the location of the pesantren to directly observe the implementation of digital marketing strategies and social network activities.

Meanwhile, Secondary Data includes Official Documents such as official documents of Islamic boarding schools, annual reports and internal publications. Then academic literature such as journal articles, books, and previous research that are relevant to the topic.(Suryadi, I., & Abdullah, 2022)

Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, this

technique is used to dig up detailed and in-depth information from the main speakers, including pesantren leaders, teachers, administrative staff, students, and alumni. Participatory Observation, this technique allows researchers to directly observe the implementation of digital marketing strategies and social network activities in the pesantren environment.(Yusof, H., & Ali, 2022) Document Analysis, this technique is used to review official documents of Islamic boarding schools, annual reports, and relevant academic literature.

Data Analysis Techniques. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis methods, which involved coding the data, identifying key themes, and interpreting the findings.(Nurhadi, M., & Setiawan, 2022) This process aims to produce a comprehensive conclusion about the strategic transformation of pesantren education marketing. The source of funds for this research is funded internally by the pesantren involved in this research. In addition, several additional costs are borne by researchers independently to ensure the smooth implementation of the research..

C. Results And Discussion

Increasing the Visibility and Reputation of Islamic Boarding Schools through Digital Platforms

The results of the study show that the adoption of digital technology by pesantren significantly increases their visibility and reputation in the community. Pesantren that implement official websites, social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as mobile applications, are able to introduce their programs and activities in a wider and structured way. This digital platform allows Islamic boarding schools to share the latest information, such as daily activities, educational programs, and student achievements, thus attracting the

attention of prospective students and their parents.

As explained by the pesantren staff "The adoption of digital technology by pesantren increases their visibility and reputation. Use of the Website, social media, and mobile applications to share program and activity information more widely."

Use of the Official Website

Pesantren that have an official website can display complete and structured information about the history of the pesantren, vision and mission, educational programs, facilities, and extracurricular activities. The website can also contain the latest news, articles, and relevant educational content. With the existence of an official website, the pesantren can be accessed by a wider audience, both from within and outside the country, who want to know more about the pesantren. According to research, a well-optimized website (SEO) helps improve search rankings on search engines like Google, making it easier for prospective students and parents to find information about Islamic boarding schools. (Ghazali, N., & Shafie, 2020)

Utilization of Social Media Accounts

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube allow pesantren to interact directly with their communities. Through Facebook, pesantren can share activity updates, photos, and videos of events, as well as hold live streaming of important activities such as graduations or recitations. Instagram, with its powerful visual features, allows pesantren to showcase valuable moments through attractive photos and short videos. YouTube, as the largest video platform, can be used to upload lectures, lectures, and documentation of Islamic boarding

Volume: 2, No.2 (Nopember 2024)

school activities. The use of social media not only increases the visibility of the pesantren but also builds a closer relationship with prospective students and their parents.

Mobile Application

Several Islamic boarding schools have developed mobile applications to facilitate access to information for students, parents, and alumni. These applications usually contain features such as activity schedules, announcements, learning materials, and online administration services. With mobile apps, information can be delivered in real-time and more personalized. This makes pesantren more responsive to the needs of information from various stakeholders. (Rizal, F., & Harahap, 2021)

Dissemination of Latest Information

The digital platform allows pesantren to share the latest information about daily activities, educational programs, and student achievements quickly and efficiently. This regularly updated information helps maintain trust and community engagement. For example, the achievements of students published on social media can provide pride and motivation, both for the students concerned and for the entire pesantren community. The dissemination of this information also helps strengthen the positive image of Islamic boarding schools in the eyes of the wider community.

Attraction for Prospective Students and Parents

With increased visibility, pesantren is becoming better known by prospective students and parents. Clear and transparent information about educational programs and pesantren activities helps them make more informed decisions. According to research, Islamic boarding schools

387

Volume: 2, No.2 (Nopember 2024)

that utilize digital technology effectively can attract more new applicants because they can reach a wider audience and display the advantages and uniqueness of their Islamic boarding schools more prominently.(Mulyana, S., & Wahyuni, 2021)

Overall, the adoption of digital technology by pesantren plays a crucial role in expanding their reach, improving interaction with stakeholders, and strengthening its reputation as an adaptive and modern educational institution. This shows that digitalization is not only an option, but an urgent need for Islamic boarding schools to remain relevant and competitive in this digital era.

Strengthening Relationships with Stakeholders through Social Networks

This study found that social networks play an important role in building and strengthening relationships between Islamic boarding schools and their stakeholders, including prospective students, parents, alumni, and the surrounding community. Islamic boarding schools that utilize social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook Groups can communicate effectively and efficiently with their communities.

As explained by the School Teacher , "Social networks have proven to be very important to build relationships between Islamic boarding schools and policy makers. With WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook Groups, communication can be more effective and efficient."

More Effective and Efficient Communication

Social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook Groups provide a fast, easy, and inexpensive means of

388

Volume: 2, No.2 (Nopember 2024)

communication. Through WhatsApp or Telegram groups, pesantren can quickly convey important information, such as activity announcements, study schedules, and administrative information to students and parents. This reduces the time and cost typically required for communication through traditional mediums such as mail or face-to-face meetings. Suryadi and Abdullah (2022) emphasized that social networks allow Islamic boarding schools to communicate in real-time with all their members, thus ensuring that information arrives quickly and precisely.

Higher Interaction and Engagement:

Social networks allow pesantren to interact directly and personally with prospective students, parents, alumni, and the surrounding community. In a Facebook group, for example, the pesantren can post daily updates, share inspirational stories, and hold live Q&A sessions with the pesantren administrators. This not only increases engagement but also builds a solid sense of community and community. Mustofa and Rahman (2021) noted that active involvement in social networks helps pesantren to better understand the needs and aspirations of their communities, so that they can respond more effectively.

Building and Maintaining Relationships with Alumni

Alumni are an important part of the pesantren ecosystem. Through social networking platforms, pesantren can stay connected with alumni, invite them to various activities, and involve them in pesantren development programs. Alumni who feel connected and valued tend to support pesantren, both through financial contributions and participation in activities. Social networks such as LinkedIn or alumni groups on Facebook can be an effective means of building a strong professional

389

network and community.(Hartono, D., & Yusran, 2022)

Facilitating Community Discussion and Support

Social networks also serve as a platform for discussion and community support. In WhatsApp or Telegram groups, students, parents, and alumni can discuss various topics, share experiences, and provide support to each other. For example, WhatsApp groups can be used to discuss children's education issues, provide study tips, or support each other in difficult situations. Suryadi and Abdullah (2022) said that a solid and mutually supportive community can strengthen the relationship between pesantren and its stakeholders, as well as create a more conducive environment for learning and development.

Information Dissemination and Fundraising

Social networks allow pesantren to disseminate information and conduct fundraising more effectively. Fundraising campaigns can be conducted through platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, where pesantren can explain their needs and invite community members to contribute. With social networks, pesantren can reach a wider audience and gain greater support.(prasetyo, A., & Anwar, 2021)

Data Analysis and Decision Making

Social networks also provide data that can be analyzed for better decision-making. Through interaction analysis on social media, pesantren can understand the trends, preferences, and needs of their community. This data can be used to design programs and activities that are more in line with the needs and desires of stakeholders. According to Mulyana and Wahyuni (2021), the use of data from social networks helps

pesantren in developing more effective and efficient strategies.

Overall, the utilization of social networks by pesantren allows them to build stronger and closer relationships with their stakeholders. This not only helps pesantren in carrying out its function as an educational institution but also supports the growth and sustainability of pesantren in the digital era.

Increase in the Number of New Registrants through Digital Marketing Strategies

The digital marketing strategy implemented by the pesantren has proven to be effective in attracting the interest of prospective students and increasing the number of new registrants. Research data shows that pesantren that actively promote their educational programs and activities through social media and official websites have succeeded in attracting more applicants compared to pesantren that still rely on conventional promotion methods.

As explained by Ustadz at the Islamic Boarding School , "The digital marketing strategy of the Islamic boarding school is effective in attracting the interest of prospective students. Pesantren that are active on social media and websites attract more applicants than those who use conventional methods."

Use of Social Media for Promotion

Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide a broad and dynamic platform to promote educational programs and Islamic boarding school activities. Pesantren that are active on social media can take advantage of features such as regular posts, stories, live streaming, and paid advertising to attract the attention of prospective

Volume: 2, No.2 (Nopember 2024)

students and their parents. Interesting content, such as videos of daily activities, student testimonials, and information about the Islamic boarding school's flagship program, can increase the interest and trust of prospective applicants.

According to research by Sugiharto and Kurniawan (2020), pesantren that actively use social media for promotion have experienced an increase in the number of new registrants by up to 30% compared to pesantren that only rely on conventional promotion methods such as brochures and advertisements in print media. This shows that social media is not only effective in reaching a wider audience but also in conveying a more personal and interactive message.

Effectiveness of the Official Website

The official website of the pesantren serves as a comprehensive and structured information center. On this website, prospective students and parents can find complete information about the history of the pesantren, educational programs, facilities, extracurricular activities, and how to register. A user-friendly and informative website design can improve the user experience and help potential applicants make a decision.

Arifin and Hidayat (2019) found that pesantren that have an official website with complete and structured information experienced an increase in new registrants by 25% compared to pesantren that did not have a website or had a less informative website. Websites can also be optimized for search engines (SEO), making them easier to find by prospective students looking for information on the internet.

Advantages of Digital Promotion Compared to Conventional Methods

Conventional promotion methods, such as brochures, posters, and

Volume: 2, No.2 (Nopember 2024)

advertisements in print media, have limitations in terms of reach and interactivity. Brochures and posters can only reach people who are in the vicinity of the distribution location, while advertisements in print media are often limited to the readership of those media. Additionally, conventional methods tend to be more expensive and less flexible when it comes to measuring effectiveness.

On the contrary, digital promotion through social media and official websites allows pesantren to reach a wider and more diverse audience, including prospective students from outside the region or even abroad. Digital promotion also allows for direct interaction with potential registrants, such as answering questions on social media or through chat features on websites. According to Mustofa and Rahman (2021), Islamic boarding schools that adopt digital marketing strategies can save up to 40% on promotional costs and significantly increase the effectiveness of their campaigns.

Influence of Interesting and Interactive Content

Interesting and interactive content, such as activity videos, photos of facilities, and testimonials from students or alumni, can increase the attractiveness of the pesantren in the eyes of prospective registrants. Visual content is easier for the audience to receive and remember as compared to plain text. Short videos about daily activities at Islamic boarding schools, for example, can provide a clear picture of life at Islamic boarding schools and build a sense of trust among prospective students and parents.

According to research by Suryadi and Abdullah (2022), Islamic boarding schools that regularly post interesting visual content on social media have experienced an increase in engagement rate of up to 50%,

393

Strategic Transformation In Islamic Boarding School Education Marketing:
Optimizing Digital Potential And Social Networks

[Mohammad Habib Imroni](#)

Volume: 2, No.2 (November 2024)

which contributes to an increase in the number of new registrants. Interactive content, such as live Q&A sessions or online quizzes, can also increase engagement and build a more solid community around the pesantren.

Overall, digital marketing strategies through social media and official websites have proven to be more effective than conventional promotion methods in attracting the interest of prospective students and increasing the number of new applicants. Digital marketing not only allows pesantren to reach a wider audience but also provides tools to communicate and interact more personally and efficiently with potential applicants. The implementation of this strategy supports the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding schools in the digital era.

Support for the Sustainability and Growth of Islamic Boarding Schools in the Digital Era

This research also shows that digital transformation supports the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding schools in the modern era. By utilizing digital technology, pesantren can be more efficient in managing their operations and administration, which allows for better allocation of resources for educational activities.

As stated by the Ustadzah at the Islamic Boarding School, "Digital transformation strongly supports the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding schools. With digital technology, they are more efficient in operations and administration, allowing for better allocation of resources."

Efficiency in Operational and Administrative Management

Digital technology allows Islamic boarding schools to automate

394

Strategic Transformation In Islamic Boarding School Education Marketing:
Optimizing Digital Potential And Social Networks

Mohammad Habib Imroni

Volume: 2, No.2 (Nopember 2024)

various operational and administrative processes, which were previously done manually and time-consuming. For example, by using a digital-based school management system, pesantren can manage student registration, attendance, assessment, and financial administration more efficiently. This system can reduce the workload of administrative staff and reduce errors that may occur in manual data management.(Surya, I., & Mulyono, 2023)

According to research by Wijaya and Fadli (2020), Islamic boarding schools that adopt digital management systems have experienced an increase in operational efficiency of up to 40%. This allows staff to focus on more important tasks, such as curriculum development and improving the quality of teaching. This efficiency also means that more time and resources can be allocated to educational activities that are directly beneficial to students.

Improving the Quality of Educational Services

Digital transformation allows pesantren to improve the quality of the educational services they offer. By utilizing technology such as e-learning and online learning platforms, pesantren can provide more diverse and interactive educational materials. Students can access learning resources from anywhere and anytime, which supports more flexible and personalized learning.

Arifin and Hidayat (2019) noted that pesantren that integrate e-learning technology in their curriculum saw an increase in student engagement and learning outcomes. Online learning platforms allow students to learn at their own pace and get live feedback, which enhances their overall learning experience.

Optimizing Resources for Educational Activities

Strategic Transformation In Islamic Boarding School Education Marketing:
Optimizing Digital Potential And Social Networks

Mohammad Habib Imroni

With the efficiency gained from digitalization, pesantren can allocate more resources for educational activities. For example, the cost savings from reduced paper use and manual processes can be allocated to purchase better educational equipment, such as computers and educational software. In addition, staff who were previously busy with administrative tasks can focus more on teaching and developing educational programs.

Research by Mustofa and Rahman (2021) shows that Islamic boarding schools that adopt digital technology can increase investment in educational facilities by up to 30%, which contributes to improving the quality of education they offer. With better resources, pesantren can develop new programs that are more innovative and in accordance with the needs of students in the digital era.

Support for Sustainability and Growth

Digital transformation also supports the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding schools in the long term. By adopting digital technology, pesantren can more easily adapt to changes in the educational environment and market demands. For example, by utilizing social media and official websites, pesantren can increase their visibility and attract more prospective students, which is important for the growth of the number of applicants. (Utami, D., & Setiawan, 2022)

Suryadi and Abdullah (2022) showed that Islamic boarding schools that actively use digital platforms for promotion and communication have experienced an increase in registration of up to 25%. In addition, digital technology allows pesantren to build a wider network with alumni and the community, which supports their development and sustainability.

Overall, digital transformation allows pesantren to manage their

operations and administration more efficiently, improve the quality of educational services, and optimize resources for educational activities. This not only supports the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding schools in the modern era but also ensures that they remain relevant and competitive in the face of the challenges of the times.

Overall, optimizing the digital potential and social networks is an effective strategic step in marketing pesantren education, supporting their sustainability and growth in the digital era

D. Conclusion

The adoption of digital technologies such as official websites, social media accounts, and mobile applications significantly increases the visibility and reputation of Islamic boarding schools in the community. This digital platform allows pesantren to introduce their programs and activities in a wider and structured way, attracting the attention of prospective students and parents. The use of social networks such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook Groups has proven to be effective in building and strengthening relationships between pesantren and its stakeholders, including prospective students, parents, alumni, and the surrounding community. Social networks not only serve as a marketing tool but also as a platform to build a solid and supportive community.

The digital marketing strategy implemented by the pesantren has proven to be effective in attracting the interest of prospective students and increasing the number of new registrants. Pesantren that actively promote their educational programs and activities through social media and official websites have managed to attract more applicants compared to pesantren that still rely on conventional promotion methods. Digital transformation supports the sustainability and growth of Islamic

boarding schools in the modern era. By utilizing digital technology, pesantren can manage their operations and administration more efficiently, improve the quality of educational services, and optimize resources for educational activities. This ensures that pesantren remain relevant and competitive in facing the challenges of the times.

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Volume: 2, No.2 (Nopember 2024)

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