

Marketing Strategy Implementation in Islamic Boarding Schools: A Study of 7P Marketing Mix in Blitar, Indonesia

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Abstract

Background: Pesantren as an Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, faces challenges in maintaining and increasing competitiveness in the digital era. Marketing strategies are important to attract the interest of prospective students and ensure the sustainability of the pesantren.

Research Objectives: This study aims to uncover and analyze the marketing strategies implemented by the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Blitar City and the Nurus Salam Islamic Boarding School in Blitar Regency.

Research Method: This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques were carried out through interviews, observations, and document studies, with purposive informant selection and snowball sampling. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative analysis techniques.

Research Findings: The results of the study show that the two pesantren have implemented marketing strategies through various product offerings, but do not yet have a specific strategy for determining education costs (prices). The selection of a location (place) has been carried out, with the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School benefiting more because of its strategic location. Promotions have not run optimally due to the absence of planning, limited budgets, and in-depth evaluation. Improving the quality of human resources (people) has been running, but the lack of performance evaluation is an obstacle. Physical evidence is adequate, although the Nurus Salam Islamic Boarding School still needs improvement. The education process has been running well, with the guidance of experts and regular activities.

Conclusion: This study shows that although some aspects of marketing have been in line with the theory, there is still a need for improvement and development of specific strategies to achieve more optimal results.

Novelty/Originality/Value: This study provides a comprehensive overview of the marketing strategies implemented by two Islamic boarding schools in Blitar, focusing on analyzing each element of the marketing mix and identifying areas that need improvement. This research provides practical recommendations for Islamic boarding schools in developing more effective and sustainable marketing strategies.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Islamic Boarding School, Education Management, Market Segmentation,

How to Cite:

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INTRODUCTION

Pesantren has become an important educational institution in the context of religious and moral education in Indonesia. In an era of globalization marked by fierce competition in the education sector, pesantren face challenges to improve the quality of their services and marketing strategies to attract new students (Patimah, 2021). Several previous studies have shown that pesantren can utilize a variety of product-based marketing strategies, despite the shortcomings in the price and promotion components (Hasan et al., 2023). Among the two Islamic boarding schools studied, the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has a competitive advantage due to its more advantageous strategic location compared to the Nurus Salam Islamic Boarding School.

Preliminary observations show that the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in Blitar City and the Nurus Salam Islamic Boarding School in Blitar Regency consistently implement marketing strategies every year. The increase in the interest of prospective students in these two pesantren can be considered as proof of the success of the marketing efforts carried out. The importance of marketing strategies in the context of this pesantren can be seen from the trend of increasing interest in prospective students every year.

This research focuses on the analysis of the 7P (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence) marketing mix strategy in the context of pesantren education. The products offered include a wide range of educational services, but pricing and promotions still require significant improvement (Maruhawa, 2022). In addition, the importance of improving the quality of human resources (HR) to support an effective education process is also the main highlight (Nurulliyannah et al., 2023).

The theories used in this study include the theory of marketing mix and human resource management. Marketing mix theory helps in understanding the dynamics of strategies applied in marketing pesantren education services, while HR management theory provides views on how improving the competence of teaching staff can contribute to the quality of education and services provided (Zaenudin, 2018). Based on the initial findings, there are several problems faced by the two Islamic boarding schools. They have implemented a diversified marketing strategy for service products but lack a strategy for setting education costs. In addition, the promotions carried out have not run optimally due to the absence of careful planning and limited budget. Evaluation of human resource performance is also an obstacle in improving the quality of education. Physical evidence from educational facilities is adequate, but there is still room for improvement (Nurulliyannah et al., 2023; Zaenudin, 2018).

This research is important to provide insight into how pesantren can adapt to changes that occur in the world of education. Better marketing skills and proper human resource management can help pesantren in overcoming the challenges faced today, as well as to increase competitiveness in the context of Islamic education in the global era (Patimah, 2021; Sholehuddin, 2012). The purpose of this study is to analyze and describe the marketing strategies implemented in Islamic boarding schools and identify the challenges that hinder the optimization of these strategies. This study also seeks to provide recommendations for both Islamic boarding schools related to more effective marketing strategies and human resource management (Hasan et al., 2023; Nurulliyannah et al., 2023).

The results of this research are expected to make a real contribution to the development of educational management in Islamic boarding schools. By studying and analyzing the marketing approaches used, as well as implementing the resulting recommendations, it is hoped that pesantren can increase the number of students, the quality of their education, and their reputation in the community (Hasan et al., 2023; Nurulliyannah et al., 2023).

METHODS

Qualitative approaches with descriptive methods are categorized as research methods that aim to understand and describe social or behavioral phenomena in depth. This research was conducted to obtain detailed and comprehensive information about the topic being studied, without changing or affecting the original circumstances of the subject (Rifa'i, 2023). This method is particularly appropriate when researchers

need to explore individual feelings, views, and experiences in a particular context, and is also useful in uncovering aspects that cannot be quantitatively measured (Adawiah et al., 2023).

The selection of data sources was selected through purposive techniques and snowball sampling. The purposive technique allows researchers to select individuals or groups who have specific knowledge or experience relevant to the topic being researched. Meanwhile, snowball sampling is used to find additional respondents through references from primary respondents, which can expand the information network. Data Collection Techniques: Data is collected through three main techniques: Interviews: Semi-structural interviews are conducted to explore the views and experiences of the subject with open-ended questions that provide an opportunity for the respondents to explain their feelings in more detail. Observation: Observations are made to record behaviors and interactions in their natural context. This allows researchers to gain a hands-on understanding of the situation being studied (Harahap et al., 2023). Document Studies: Documents related to the research topic, such as reports, archives, and other records, are analyzed to obtain additional context and data that can reinforce the research results.

Data Analysis Data analysis in qualitative research involves several important steps: Data Collection: Data collected from interviews, observations, and documents must be systematically compiled to facilitate analysis. Data Reduction: This process includes the selection of relevant information, the reduction of unnecessary data, and the organization of data for easy analysis. This reduction is important to maintain the focus of research to remain at the initial goal (Fitri et al., 2022). Data Presentation: Data that has been reduced is presented in the form of narratives or tables that make it easier to understand the patterns and themes that emerge. A clear presentation allows researchers and readers to identify important relationships and findings that are not just numbers or statistics. Drawing Conclusions: After the data is presented, the researcher analyzes the emerging patterns to draw conclusions.

This conclusion will provide a comprehensive view of the phenomenon studied based on the data that has been collected. At this stage, the researcher also conducts verification to ensure that the conclusions drawn are supported by the existing data. By following the above procedure, this study is expected to present accurate and in-depth findings about the phenomenon being studied, as well as make a significant contribution to the development of understanding in relevant fields of study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, pesantren have a crucial role in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation. This study aims to explore the application of marketing strategies carried out by two Islamic boarding schools in the context of offering educational service products. The results of the study showed that although both Islamic boarding schools (Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School and Nurus Salam Islamic Boarding School) have offered a wide range of service products, there are shortcomings in pricing and promotion strategies, which shows the need for improvement in their marketing management. These findings are expected to provide insight for the management of Islamic boarding schools to face challenges in the era of globalization.

Product Offerings (Product)

Both Islamic boarding schools have been successful in offering a wide range of educational service products, including religious lessons and life skills. This offering is part of a marketing mix strategy adapted to create value for students and their parents, consistent with findings that show the importance of religious education in reducing risky behaviors in adolescents Estrada et al. (2019). To increase the attractiveness and relevance of these service products, the two Islamic boarding schools need to continue to adapt the curriculum based on the needs of students and the community (Sulaiman, 2022).

Pesantren, as traditional Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, play a significant role in providing holistic education that encompasses religious teachings and essential life skills. This dual role is central to their marketing strategy, tailored to create value for both students (santri) and their parents. Research has demonstrated that such educational foundations contribute positively to the moral and ethical development of

youth, potentially reducing risky behaviors among teenagers (Permana et al., 2023). Additionally, the structure of pesantren education, which operates around the clock and often includes character-building activities, reinforces the notion of community and teacher role-modeling in instilling discipline and responsibility (Prasetyo, 2022).

To enhance their educational offerings, pesantren must continuously adapt their curricula in response to the evolving needs of their students and the broader community. This is consistent with modern trends in education where institutions are encouraged to embrace flexibility and responsiveness in their teaching methods (Yusuf et al., 2024). The integration of general knowledge with religious education not only increases the competitiveness of pesantren graduates but also elevates the overall quality of education provided (Aimah & Nasih, 2023). Furthermore, by incorporating community service and economic empowerment initiatives, pesantren are becoming key players in societal transformation, thus enhancing their relevance and appeal (Arifin et al., 2023).

Moreover, the importance of quality assurance and strategic management within pesantren cannot be overstated. Effective leadership within these institutions fosters a conducive learning environment and encourages participation from stakeholders, which in turn elevates educational standards (Wardi et al., 2023). The implementation of holistic educational models, which include mental health services and entrepreneurial training, equips students with critical life skills and addresses the various facets of their development (Sulaiman et al., 2018). This comprehensive strategy not only aims to enhance the educational experience but also underscores the pesantren's commitment to producing well-rounded individuals prepared to contribute positively to society.

In conclusion, the ongoing adaptation and innovation in pesantren educational practices are essential for maintaining their significance in contemporary Indonesia. By focusing on quality education, responsive curricula, and community engagement, pesantren can effectively fulfill their role as educational and moral bastions. Thus, they not only nurture religious values but also empower their students with the skills necessary for success in an increasingly complex world, ensuring their relevance well into the future (Faradiba et al., 2024).

Pricing Strategy

Both pesantren have not developed a clear and planned pricing model. This has the potential to reduce their competitiveness in the education market. Research shows that a transparent and easy-to-understand fee structure is key in improving educational accessibility (Hifza & Aslan, 2020). Alternative strategies such as subsidies or flexible payment schemes may need to be considered to attract more students, especially from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the development of a clear and planned pricing model is an aspect that is often considered less attention. The lack of a structured pricing strategy can result in a decrease in the competitiveness of Islamic boarding schools in the education market, which is currently characterized by increasingly fierce competition between various educational institutions. Uncertainty in the pricing model can create an impression of injustice among parents and students, which can influence their decision to choose a particular pesantren (Maiba et al., 2024). One strategy that can be applied is the introduction of subsidies or flexible payment schemes designed to reach students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Research shows that an approach that takes into account the affordability and needs of prospective students in the design of payment methods can significantly increase their participation rates (Li et al., 2022). For example, in the education sector, flexible payment schemes can help address affordability issues, particularly among low-income populations (Larkin et al., 2025). If pesantren implements this model, they will not only improve accessibility but also their reputation in society.

Furthermore, it is important for Islamic boarding schools to conduct market analysis to understand consumer behavior and the needs of prospective students. This approach can include the development of more focused marketing campaigns and market research to find out the appeal of their offerings (Nurhadi, 2020). Through this analysis, pesantren can formulate a more effective pricing strategy, so that the educational products they offer can be more targeted and in accordance with the expectations of service users. This is in

line with research that shows that a good understanding of market and demographic needs can increase the effectiveness of marketing strategies (Sopwandin, 2024). To increase competitiveness in the education market, pesantren also need to consider involving stakeholders in pricing and giving them space in determining the cost structure. By collaborating with parents, alumni, and the local community, pesantren can create a more inclusive and sustainability-oriented pricing model. This will not only provide a sense of belonging for stakeholders but can also strengthen the bargaining position of Islamic boarding schools in the increasingly global educational competition (Nyaga et al., 2024).

Location Selection (Place)

The Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has advantages in terms of location, where accessibility is an important factor in attracting prospective students. Research shows that a strategic location can contribute to increasing student enrollment. Therefore, it is important for other Islamic boarding schools to evaluate their location and consider more strategic new location development options to improve access to quality education.

The Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School has a significant advantage in terms of location, which can be seen as an important factor in attracting prospective students. Accessibility is one of the key elements that contributes to the increase in student enrollment, where the strategic location not only makes it easier for students and their parents to access education, but also serves as a separate attraction for these educational institutions Fernandes & Singh (2024). Previous research has shown that educational institutions that function in an easily accessible environment tend to experience an increase in enrollment numbers (Langrafe et al., 2020). Thus, the evaluation of existing locations and the development of new, more strategic locations should be a priority for other Islamic boarding schools that want to increase their competitiveness in the education market.

A strategic location not only facilitates access, but can also affect the image and reputation of the pesantren in the eyes of the public. According to observations, Islamic boarding schools located in crowded and easily accessible areas have received a positive response from the community, which plays an important role in the student registration process. Therefore, other Islamic boarding schools need to conduct market analysis and assess the potential of new locations that may be available, taking an example from the success of the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School in increasing its enrollment through the right location strategy (Hull et al., 2019). In addition, related parties in the regeneration of Islamic boarding schools should also be involved in this evaluation process, so that the decisions taken reflect the needs and expectations of the local community.

Furthermore, strategic considerations in choosing a location must also take into account the existing infrastructure around the Islamic boarding school. The existence of public facilities such as transportation, health, and access to information technology are very important supporting factors in providing comfort for students and their parents (Liu, 2015). Research shows that the development of infrastructure around educational institutions, as evidenced in various countries, has the potential to increase the added value of services offered (Grobelna & Tokarz-Kocik, 2021). Thus, evaluating and choosing a location must be done taking into account all these aspects so that quality education is accessible to more people.

Finally, it is important for Islamic boarding schools to continue to adapt and innovate in marketing strategies that include location. By providing better location opportunities, pesantren will not only attract more students, but can also contribute to the community's alleviation of limited access to education (Vrontis et al., 2018). If the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School succeeds in taking advantage of the advantages of its location, other Islamic boarding schools must also be able to take inspiration and explore better location development options to improve access to quality and competitive education (Foreman et al., 2017).

Promotion

The promotional aspect shows that the existing strategy has not been fully optimized. Lack of planning, limited budgets, and in-depth evaluation are obstacles that need to be overcome. These findings show a gap in communication between Islamic boarding schools and their communities. For this reason, it is important to

develop a promotional strategy that includes the use of social media and other digital platforms in order to reach a wider audience (Syafaruddin, 2023).

Promotional specs at Islamic Boarding Schools show that the existing strategy has not been fully optimized, and this has the potential to hinder the ability of Islamic boarding schools to attract qualified prospective students. Research shows that careful planning, adequate budgeting, and proper evaluation are essential components of building an effective marketing strategy Kholidah et al., 2023). However, currently many Islamic boarding schools are experiencing difficulties in this regard, which results in a communication gap between the Islamic boarding school and the communities they serve. This gap can be one of the causes of the low attractiveness of Islamic boarding schools to the public, so it is important to redesign promotional strategies to be more targeted and relevant to the audience (Sueni & Putra, 2023). With the increasing development of technology and the use of social media among the public, digital marketing has become one of the solutions that offers great potential to reach a wider audience (Fauziyah et al., 2023).

The use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok in educational promotion can support the delivery of information in a more interactive and interesting way for the younger generation (Alfiansyah & Fajriyah, 2023). Social media allows pesantren to tell their stories, share testimonials from students, and provide a strong reason for parents to register their children. The analysis shows that pesantren that are active on social media tend to get more attention and interest from prospective students than those who do not take advantage of it (Alfiansyah & Fajriyah, 2023). However, to achieve success in the use of social media, pesantren need to have a clear and well-planned plan.

The establishment of a dedicated budget for marketing purposes in digital is very important, including in terms of content, the use of digital advertising, and the training of human resources to manage the platform efficiently (Murtadlo et al., 2023). In addition, continuous evaluation of the impact of the implemented promotion strategies is also needed so that pesantren can make appropriate adjustments based on community response and existing technological developments. In this context, the involvement of students as ambassadors of Islamic boarding schools on social media can also be a creative and effective strategy, so that they play a role in promoting campus life and the values taught at Islamic boarding schools (Rochman, 2023).

In the end, it is important for Islamic Boarding Schools to take these challenges seriously in an effort to maximize their market potential. Collaboration with third parties or professionals in the field of digital marketing can be a very useful strategic step in optimizing promotional aspects (Qisthi et al., 2024). Thus, the use of social media and other digital platforms will help Islamic boarding schools reach a wider audience, increase competitiveness, and ultimately make a greater contribution to improving the accessibility of quality education for students (Gadha et al., 2024).

Improving the Quality of Human Resources (People)

Progress in improving the quality of human resources has been made, but without proper performance evaluation, the effectiveness of these improvements becomes suboptimal. Research shows that strengthening teacher capacity is very important to maintain quality education (Arif et al., 2022). Therefore, pesantren must focus on continuous training and evaluation systems that can support the professional development of teaching staff.

Improving the quality of human resources (HR) in Islamic boarding schools has indeed been implemented, but without proper performance evaluation, the effectiveness of these improvements becomes suboptimal. (Sari et al., 2024), strengthening teacher capacity is the key to maintaining quality education. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, teachers not only act as educators, but also as mentors and inspirers for students. Therefore, it is important for Islamic boarding schools to have a holistic evaluation system that is able to comprehensively measure various aspects of teacher performance (Sari et al., 2024). Without systematic evaluation, teachers' potential in developing innovative learning methods can be hampered. To achieve sustainable professional development, pesantren need to focus on training and evaluation systems that support teacher development. The training must include various relevant teaching methods as well as new skills that are in line with the demands of the times, such as information and communication technology for digital learning (Kamilia & Wahyudin, 2021).

Research shows that structured professional development for teachers, including learning observation, evaluation of learning outcomes, and data analysis, greatly contributes to improving educational outcomes and fulfilling curriculum objectives (Susilaningih et al., 2023). By creating a collaborative and interactive training environment, pesantren can facilitate knowledge exchange between teachers and improve their skills significantly. Furthermore, proper performance evaluation can be an effective tool to encourage teacher motivation. Constructive evaluation, where feedback is given clearly and focuses on aspects that can be improved, can help teachers feel more engaged and committed to their teaching process (Hardinata et al., 2024). In this context, the evaluation system should be designed to include and integrate E-learning technology or digital-based learning platforms to facilitate a more effective and accessible evaluation process (Kamilia & Wahyudin, 2021). That way, the data generated from the evaluation can be used as a basis for further training program adjustments.

Finally, by integrating continuous training and data-driven evaluation systems, pesantren can significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning. This will not only benefit students as recipients of education, but also provide long-term benefits for Islamic boarding schools in improving their status in the educational community and strengthening public trust in this Islamic educational institution (Sholeh, 2023). With the right approach, pesantren can produce educators who are not only qualified but also professionals, who are ready to contribute to building a better future generation.

Physical Evidence

Although the Nurul Salam Islamic Boarding School has adequate physical evidence, there are still areas that need improvement. A good physical environment can increase comfort and positive responses from students and parents. Studies show that good facilities have an effect on the learning experience and attractiveness of educational institutions.

The Nurul Salam Islamic Boarding School, even though it has various adequate physical facilities, still has certain aspects that need improvement. A good physical environment, such as comfortable learning facilities, adequate worship facilities, and sufficient recreational areas, can increase the comfort of students and create a positive response from their parents. Research shows that the quality of good physical facilities has a significant effect on the learning experience of students and can be an additional attraction for educational institutions Syafe'i (2017). In this context, pesantren that want to compete in the education market must be aware of the importance of a physical environment that is conducive to an effective learning process. Good facilities not only increase comfort but also create an atmosphere that supports learning and social interaction among students. Previous studies have shown that educational facilities that are considered sufficient are able to encourage students to actively participate in learning activities and other extracurricular activities (Supriyati & Bahri, 2020).

Therefore, it is important for Islamic boarding schools to assess and identify areas that are still less than ideal, as well as make the necessary improvements in order to provide a better educational experience. For example, if there are inadequate classrooms or lack of accessibility for students, the pesantren needs to consider reengineering the facility to improve services. Furthermore, effective communication with parents and prospective students is also an equally important aspect. Research shows that parents tend to prefer educational institutions that provide transparency in communication regarding facilities, educational programs, and activities carried out in pesantren (Waluyo et al., 2021).

Nurul Salam Islamic Boarding School needs to adopt a promotional strategy that highlights the facilities they have and how these facilities can support the character and academic development of students. This can be done through social media and digital platforms that can reach a wider audience. In conclusion, to increase the attractiveness and quality of education offered, Nurul Salam Islamic Boarding School needs to focus on fulfilling and improving their physical facilities. Through improving the quality of facilities, improving communication with parents, and effective marketing, pesantren can strengthen their position in the world of education and attract more students. This overall strategy is designed not only to meet the needs of good education but also to create a positive environment for all stakeholders involved in the educational process (Nursyifa et al., 2024).

Educational Process

The existing educational process is carried out well, shown by guidance from experts and regular activities. Structured learning activities can create a better educational experience for students. Research emphasizes the importance of efficient process management in creating a productive learning environment.

The educational process carried out at the Nurul Salam Islamic Boarding School proves its performance through guidance from experts and regular activities. With an orderly structure in learning activities, pesantren can create a better educational experience for students. Research shows that the effectiveness of learning process management is very important to create a productive learning environment and support the intellectual growth of students (Freilich et al., 2020). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the educational process does not only include the teaching of religious material, but also involves the development of character, morals, and life skills, all of which require a systematic and sustainable approach.

The importance of guidance from experts, such as teachers and academic advisors in Islamic boarding schools, can help students to better understand and apply the knowledge gained (Rapanta et al., 2020). Experienced and trained teachers can provide the right guidance for each student, taking into account their diverse learning backgrounds and needs. It also contributes to the effectiveness of the learning process, where students can express opinions and get constructive feedback in a supportive atmosphere (Park et al., 2020). At the same time, structured activities, such as group discussions, worship practices, and social projects, provide students with the opportunity to learn from first-hand experience and internalize the values taught (Grbavac & Mandić, 2024).

In addition, research shows that efficient process management is not only limited to teaching in the classroom, but also includes the management of extracurricular activities that touch various aspects of students' lives. For example, planning social and religious activities involving communities outside the pesantren can increase the involvement of students and provide them with the opportunity to apply the values taught in a broader context (Nurdin & Rasyid, 2022). An inclusive environment like this encourages students to socialize and learn from each other, thus broadening their horizons and experiences.

Finally, the implementation of a good system in the management of the educational process at the Nurul Salam Islamic Boarding School is very important to ensure the quality of education provided. By integrating expert guidance, structured activities, and efficient process management, pesantren not only improve the learning experience of students, but also contribute to the development of a quality generation. Thus, pesantren can meet people's expectations for quality education, equipping students with the necessary skills and character to face future challenges (Dianovi et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight the importance of a holistic marketing strategy in the context of pesantren education. Although product offerings exist, the big challenge lies in pricing, promotion, and HR performance evaluation. Therefore, the development of a more integrated strategy is urgently needed to increase the attractiveness of Islamic boarding schools and the quality of education provided to students. Reflection on existing policies and practices can bring positive changes to these two pesantren and contribute to the development of better Islamic education in Indonesia.

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