

The Leadership Strategy of Madrasah Head in Improving Prospective Students' Interest

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Abstract

This research aims to describe and analyze; strategic plans and strategic steps of the Madrasah Principal in increasing the interest of prospective students. The competitive competition encourages educational institutions to innovate in the promotion of educational services. The research object is in MIN 1 Kendal Regency. The research method used is qualitative with case study design, data collection process through observation, interviews, and document study. The results showed that the MIN 1 Kendal strategy in reminding students' interests used two methods. The first strategy of MIN 1 Kendal uses a direct promotion strategy, namely forming a socialization team through the New Student Admissions Committee (PPDB), with the command holder being the Head of the committee formed by the Head of the madrasah. The second strategy is indirect, namely through activities held outside the madrasah as an image, always taking part in existing events and competitions, and by utilizing the potential of all madrasah components, both infrastructure and electronic media. Thus, to increase prospective students' interest, the madrasah should map areas as promotion targets and move more quickly in fulfilling madrasah facilities and infrastructure.

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INTRODUCTION

Madrasa is expected to have more value capable of producing moral successors because it introduces children to religion. Madrasa is a type of Islamic educational institution with its unique dynamics, both psychologically and sociologically. Among the characteristics of madrasas in national education, as mentioned in the National Education System Act adopted (Law on National Education System number 20 in 2003), Madrasas are educational institutions characterized by the Islamic religion. From this point on, a madrasah needs special treatment.

The progress of organizing an educational institution is very dependent on the number of students. If likened to a car, the student is the fuel source of the car's driving force. The progress of educational institutions depends on students. The student is a subject as well as an object. Without the students, the learning process at school will not be realized. For this reason, schools must be able to recruit as many students as possible as a capital for the success of the learning process.

Prospective students' interest is the interest or desire of prospective students. Interest is the driving force that drives someone to pay attention to people, objects, or activities or, in other words, the reason why someone gives attention and participates more towards objects or activities. Interest is closely related to a motivating factor in a person who helps that person carry out appropriate activities. This interest is very closely related to desires, motives, encouragement, and basic needs.

The interest of prospective students in each school is undoubtedly different. They have their reasons for dropping their choices in certain schools. We often see some schools whose applicants exceed the quota, but some are less interested. School and environmental achievements are an attraction for schools to gain public trust. Customers today tend to be more intelligent, like to choose, more demanding, learn well the product services offered, low loyalty, very concerned about price,

have relatively limited time, and look for high scores (Lehtimäki, 2009; Kristiani, 2016; Heru & Haryokusumo, 2018). These conditions require educational institutions always to improve the quality and innovation of schools and improve services so that consumers feel satisfied and trusting.

The quality of madrasahs will be of particular concern to the community. They will look for madrasahs that are valued for their sons and daughters. In other words, the quality of madrasahs will be an attraction for the community in choosing madrasahs. Therefore, Madrasa must be able to compete in the current globalization of education. If the school organization's pace does not proceed, it will be abandoned by consumers because it does not sell or does not register, including personal development, scientific publications, and innovative work.

The research results at the primary school level conducted by Verdiyani (2016) show that the determinants of community interest in choosing SD Negeri Wuluhadeg are location, safety at school, school achievement, friendly and professional teachers, and free school fees. Meanwhile, the research results at SD IT Assalam show that the determinants of public interest in choosing SD IT Assalam are school safety, school achievement, religious education, learning methods, and discipline.

Meanwhile, research at the high school level conducted by Andi (2018) shows that public relations strategies to increase public interest in sending their children to SMK Negeri 2 Ponorogo can be done in four ways. The first strategy is "typical," that is, to build a reputation with expected possibilities. The second strategy is a focus, namely to become an education center that produces professional graduates. The third strategy is to improve the school's reputation. At the same time, the fourth strategy is to popularize identity, namely as a tourism school.

At the junior high school level, the results of Masitah and Syafiq's (2017) research show that imaging strategies to attract public interest to send their children to SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Surabaya can be done in two ways. The first way

is to form a good perception, including the procurement of strategic school locations, school achievement, procurement of competent teachers, the formation of high-achieving students' cognition, giving special discounts if there are siblings who attend the school. The second strategy is communication. The school chooses good communicators for PPDB activities, namely public relations law majors, teachers, alumni, and students, then establishes communication through printed media such as Matan Magazine, Surabaya Radar Koran, Jawa Pos, electronic media such as Indosiar, SBO, websites, and social networks, communicate via android application, through brochures, banners.

Ansor (2018), in his research, showed that the quality of education and promotion factors had a positive influence on increasing the number of students. In other words, the more both the quality of education and the more comprehensive promotion had an impact on increasing the number of students.

Saktisyahputra (2018), in his research, stated that the quality of a good tutor/teacher, various products, affordable prices, and strategic location could increase the number of students. Burhanudin et al. (2017) found that improving the quality of school services can be made by developing a strategic development plan that includes a vision, mission and goals, and programs with a clear division of tasks. A good promotion strategy can increase the number of students.

The resulting research of Sofanudin (2016) shows that the model of increasing public interest in sending their children to MI Ma'arif Grabag 1 Magelang was by having excellent programs, accustoming noble morals, many alumni are accepted at favorite institutions, had exemplary non-academic achievements, and have good academics.

Furthermore, in his research, Faizin (2017) produced a suggestion that was in formulating a marketing strategy, it should pay attention to the hope and need of students and find solutions that could improve existing marketing strategies. Thus, the purpose of this

study was to describe and analyze; strategic plan and strategic steps of Madrasa Head in increasing the interest of prospective students at MIN 1 Kendal Kendal Regency

METHOD

This research was a case study qualitative research. Sources of data and information obtained from the natural situation occur in madrassas, both from the madrasa head, mentor teacher, students' parents, or madrasa committee. The determination of informants in this study using purposive sampling techniques. Data collection techniques are carried out by observation, interview, questionnaire, documentation, and joining.

To get the data validity, researchers immediately record the interviews' results to avoid forgetting and even missing. Because interviews are conducted in an unstructured manner, researchers will make a more systematic summary of the interview results. Next, sort out which data are considered critical, doubtful, and unimportant to be grouped to become a meaningful construction. Data that is still in doubt can be asked again at the source of the data, both old and new, until they get complete clarity of both.

In this research, the credibility test was done through triangulation (source and method) and member check. The data analysis technique used was data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategies for Improving the Prospective Students' Interest

A strategy is a tool or a way to achieve goals. The strategy to increase the interest of prospective students at MIN 1 Kendal was a way for MIN 1 Kendal to sympathize with the community to give confidence to their children's education in MIN 1 Kendal.

This success could be seen through statistics on New Student Admissions (PPDB), an annual program at every school/madrasa

education institution. PPDB was carried out precisely in the even semester from March to June to fill the class I vacancies due to grade promotion and graduation of Grade VI students who had finished their studies at the Madrasa.

Admission of New Students (PPDB) was the most vital process at schools/Madrasa to recruit new students as a driving machine at madrasas. Thus, it needed a precise strategy and management in PPDB so that targets could be met. Each Madrasa had its respective strategies to offer educational services by utilizing all the resources and advantages possessed by the Madrasa. Madrasas strived to maintain quality and quantity to maintain existence in the world of education.

Improving students' quality and quantity could be used as an indicator of assessments about the credibility, achievements, reputation, and prospects of madrasas in organizing and managing education services. The reality experienced by MIN 1 Kendal in the past five years was truly extraordinary. Statistically, the results of student recruitment had increased significantly. The number of student registrants was always more than the specified quota. From this study, data and information about strategies to increase the students' interest at MIN 1 Kendal had been obtained were as follows:

Develop a Strategic Plan a strategic plan was a specific written document that contained the orientation of the results to be achieved by the organization as a basis for decision making. Strategic plans provided opportunities for employees to actively participate in every decision making in determining the organization's future. The research results from the interview at MIN 1 Kendal provided some description of madrasas' strategic plan in the short, medium, and long term. The interview result was MIN 1 Kendal in the planning strategy using SWOT analysis in determining the direction and objectives and policies to be pursued by madrasas to improve madrasa quality. It was proven by making policies regarding the completeness of facilities and infrastructure and breakthroughs in opening

superior classes, namely tahfidz, which currently had high selling points.

Creating a Madrasa differentiation as a particular program, MIN 1 Kendal provided a unique characteristic as a differentiator in education services. The interview result showed that MIN 1 Kendal had a good relationship with students' guardians, guardians of students voluntarily form associations in each study group. It was to ease the task of the teacher in coordinating and being active in social activities. Reading the Al Quran program was held every morning before class time with non-formal clerics and non-formal clerics competent in their fields. It was as a supporter of the Tahfidz program. The tahfidz program was a hallmark of MIN 1 Kendal in producing graduates. Armed, with memorizing juz 30, it was hoped that they became children who loved the Qur'an and later became Hafidz / Hafidzlhoh Al Qur'an.

MIN 1 Kendal always held Khotmil Al Qur'an graduations at the end of the student's study period. The event was a sign that the children have memorized juz 30 and as a release event. By displaying the sixth-grade children on stage who recited juz 30 letters bil ghoib, this made the parents more confident and more rightfully proud of their sons and daughters' achievements in the field of religion. The event also became marketing with high selling points because it had shown one of the success of Madrasa in educating their students. The students' routine activities were dluha prayers, dhuhur congregational prayers, the reading of Asma'ul Husna together, a lightning boarding school in the Ramadan month, and the commemoration of Islamic religious holidays.

By Improving the discipline's culture, the implementation of discipline was emphasized to students, teachers, and employees. This result supports the Setyawan et al. (2017) research results. The researcher saw the activity of shaking hands between the teacher and students every morning at the entrance gate, and this proved that teachers and students had to be on time in going to the Madrasa. The observation showed that madrasa students had formed the character of disciplinary behavior, responsibility,

and high motivation for the task received. A high percentage of student attendance could also form a good image of madrasas, that the educational institution had a high discipline culture. One of the madrasa head's efforts in improving teacher and employee discipline was to use FingerPrint as an attendance scan tool to obtain transparent and accountable data for evaluation material.

They were optimizing extracurricular activities to improve student performance. Extracurricular development required proper supervision and control to produce optimal products. In this case, the madrasa head's stepped to maintain the activity's quality, formed an extra coordinator, and recruited extra teachers from outside who were competent in their fields. The coordinator was taken from the teacher of MIN 1 Kendal himself, who was in charge of escorting and ensuring the extracurricular path's smooth running. According to the Head of the Madrasa, the founding and development of students' talents and interests were intended to prepare students for MIN 1 Kendal in facing competitions and Olympics held by various related agencies (Education Office, Dikpora, Ministry of Religion, and others).

Tahfidz Qur'an was a superior extracurricular. The program was a development of a personal development program that all students must follow. The distinction between extracurricular tahfidz and tahfidz programs was in the orientation of the final result. If the tahfidz program only ended at juz 30, extracurricular tahfidz allowed students to memorize according to their abilities, meaning that it was not limited to juz 30 only.

Determining the cost of education was a sensitive issue in the community. Most people think that for a school in a good school building and achievement must be expensive. It turned out that this assumption did not occur at MIN 1 Kendal. This Madrasa provided free education services for all groups. It was providing scholarships for high-achieving or poor students. The purpose of freeing education costs in madrasas was to ease the community of users of educational services and even distribute

education in various aspects of the community's economy. The next goal was to tackle school dropouts for economic reasons, participate in the success of the Government's movement on 12-year compulsory education and ensure the sons and daughters of the underprivileged study in madrasas.

Improving the quality of educators, Madrasa Head's Efforts in improving the quality of educators by involving them in training/workshop upgrading, seminars, forming KKGs between groups studying inside madrasas, participating in KKG outside madrasas, competitions in the field of teacher training, writing scientific papers, allowing teachers to continue their studies and invite resource persons to give special workshops to the teacher council.

Improving facilities and infrastructure, MIN 1 Kendal's Efforts in completing facilities and infrastructure are continuously improved from year to year. It is strengthened by the existence of physical development every year. The completeness of facilities and infrastructure is an indicator that can bring the potential interest of prospective students. The importance of facilities and infrastructure places a leading position in promoting educational institutions. For this reason, the headmaster of madrasas works hard in completing, maintaining, and optimizing the use of facilities and infrastructure.

Improving the quality of the teaching and learning process, the results of an interview with the Head of Madrasa showed that one of Madrasas's strategies was through innovative curriculum development. MIN 1 Kendal was a pilot madrasa in the Ministry of Religion Kendal Regency in implementing the Curriculum 2013. The enactment of the Curriculum 2013 referred to regulations applied in the Ministry of Religion of Central Java Province. The development of the MIN 1 Kendal curriculum made a distinctive/distinguishing feature from other schools/madrasas located in habituation activities, superior programs, time management, and ICT learning that made these madrasas look attractive to the public.

Promotion strategy, promotion, and publication were essential steps in introducing madrasas. The madrasa head's steps were to promote into two aspects, namely promotion through PPDB and promotion through activities, to support marketing's successful implementation. The headmaster of a madrasa in increasing the acceptance of prospective new students at MIN 1 Kendal by forming a PPDB work team whose membership selection specifications emphasized the aspects of ability, experience, loyalty, and attitude of responsibility to realize the professionalism of the committee team.

Job Distribution Detailed and precise description is an effort to simplify teamwork to achieve predetermined targets. In promoting activities, MIN 1 Kendal followed the drum band festival activities held both by the Education Office and the Ministry of Religion. Besides, the Head of Madrasa also said that madrasas' subsequent imaging was through activities during the commemoration of Islamic Holidays (PHBI) and National Holidays (PHBN). PHBI moments, for example, the activities of the Sacrifice, Isro 'mi'roj, Pesantren Ramadan, distribution of tithe, and Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. For PHBN, for example, activities to commemorate Kartini's Day, 17th August Ceremony, Carnival, Lighten National Education Day, Teacher's Day, and others.

Analysis of strategies to increase the prospective students' interest at MIN 1 Kendal

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that educational institutions are service activities that sell services. Schools are non-profit educational institutions engaged in educational services that serve consumers in students, students, students, and the general public (stakeholders). Educational institutions cannot be separated from marketing. The key to marketing success lies in the quality and quantity of physical and service combined through promotion. Kotler and Keller (2015) define marketing as an organizational function and a series of processes to create, communicate, and

provide value to customers and manage customer relationships to benefit the organization and stakeholders.

Strategic plan at MIN 1 Kendal used a SWOT analysis in solving problems and determining policies. Nevertheless, this analysis was not optimal because MIN 1 Kendal only prepared itself for the progress of madrasas according to ability and was based on applicable regulations without considering external threats. The slow realization of special programs and facilities and infrastructure could be a gap for other schools/madrasas to become competitors. The high public interest in quality education did not rule out the possibility of being used by the private sector by providing better services and facilities even though it was relatively expensive.

MIN 1 Kendal, in general, had two marketing strategies in increasing the interest of prospective students. These two aspects of strategy could be grouped into direct and indirect marketing strategies. The direct marketing strategy was a method of selling done directly without using an intermediary in the bargaining or buying and selling of products offered. According to Kotler & Keller (2015), direct marketing consists of direct communication with targeted individual consumers to respond immediately. Thus, marketers directly communicate with customers face to face.

MIN 1 Kendal did direct marketing by sending a PPDB socialization team to kindergarten (TK/ RA) to introduce the products offered at MIN 1 Kendal. Through the establishment of the PPDB committee as a first step in running the promotion wheel. The steps in recruiting prospective students are: 1) forming a new student admission committee covering all elements of teachers, TU staff, and school boards /committees; 2) making and installing announcements of new student admissions that were made openly. The information that should be included in the announcement included a brief description of the institution, registration requirements, registration time, registration method, registration fee, registration fee, registration selection, and the announcement of election results.

The indirect marketing strategy was a marketing method that used intermediary media in marketing to buyers. These intermediaries could be in advertisements, via the internet, public relations, and others. Marketing education services at MIN 1 Kendal used the basic concept of management functions as the basis for achieving quality madrasahs that were accountable and had high credibility. The management functions implemented by MIN 1 Kendal include strategic planning, organizing, namely the formation of a PPDB committee, direction played by the Head of Madrasa, and evaluation, which at this stage discussed the success and effectiveness of performance, clarification, and correction as a basis for providing alternative solutions to each problem encountered at the time of the activity.

CONCLUSION

MIN 1 Kendal Strategy in reminding students' interest using two ways, namely: 1) MIN 1 Kendal used a direct promotion strategy, namely forming a socialization team through the New Student Admissions Committee (PPDB), the Command holder was the Head of the committee formed by the Head madrasa; 2) Indirect strategies, through activities that are held outside the Madrasa as an image, always play a role in existing events and competitions, and by utilizing the potential of all components of madrasahs both infrastructure and electronic media.

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