

Public Relations Strategy in Improving the Branding Image of Educational Institutions

Siti Norfaizah¹, Abdul Haq², Khoirul Ulum³, Ingrid Solheim⁴

^{1,2,3}IAI At-Taqwa, Indonesia

Faculty of Psychology University of Bergen Christiesgt. 13, N-5020 Bergen, Norway

* E-mail correspondence; sfaizah780@gmail.com; abduh14888@gmail.com; k.ulumbws@gmail.com,
ingrid.solheim@psych.uib.no

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Abstract

In the era of digitalization and globalization, educational institutions face significant challenges in building and maintaining a positive branding image in the public eye. The branding image of educational institutions particularly Islamic institutions plays a crucial role in shaping public perception, which in turn influences public acceptance, the improvement of educational quality, and the active participation of various stakeholders. This study aims to explore the role of public relations (PR) strategies in enhancing the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. The method used in this research is library research, by reviewing various relevant literature sources related to public relations, branding image, and their application within the context of Islamic education. The findings indicate that integrated and consistent communication strategies are essential in establishing a credible and positive institutional image. Additionally, the use of social media, the management of social and religious activities, and alumni engagement also contribute significantly to strengthening the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. This study offers a new perspective in understanding the role of public relations in managing the branding image of Islamic educational institutions, with the hope of providing valuable insights for the development of Islamic educational management and institutional communication in the future.

Keywords

Public Relations, Brand Image, Educational



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INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly developing digital era and ongoing globalization, educational institutions throughout the world, including in Indonesia, are faced with increasingly complex challenges in building and maintaining a positive branding image or image of the institution in the eyes of the public.(Hermawan & Carnawi, 2024). The

branding image of an educational institution is not just a visual identity or logo, but more than that, namely the perception and impression formed in the public mind regarding the quality of education, the values upheld, and the credibility of the institution. A good image can influence the level of public trust, which in turn will have a direct impact on academic success, new student admissions, and even the level of community participation in activities organized by the educational institution. Therefore, the image of an educational institution must be carefully maintained and built to create a positive impression in the community.(Suhardi et al., 2024).

In the process of building an educational institution's branding image, the role of public relations (PR) is vital. PR is responsible for managing both internal and external communications to establish and maintain an image consistent with the institution's goals and values. Well-structured communication, whether through social media, publications, seminars, or media relations management, will help educational institutions project the desired image to the public, while simultaneously building trust and long-term relationships with the community.(Mely et al., 2024).

However, in many educational institutions, including Islamic educational institutions, difficulties are still found in optimally utilizing public relations strategies to improve the branding image of the institution.(Erlin, 2024)One of the main problems that often arises is a lack of in-depth understanding of the crucial role of public relations in creating a positive institutional image. This results in many institutions failing to communicate academic excellence, the moral values taught, and the competence of their management to the public. As a result, these institutions often appear less attractive to prospective students, parents, and even the general public. Therefore, more in-depth and detailed research is needed on how public relations strategies can play a role in building and strengthening the image of educational institutions, particularly in the context of Islamic education, which has its own characteristics and challenges.

Many previous studies have been conducted on public relations communication in the context of educational management. For example, research by(Yansah, 2025)This shows that a well-planned and well-thought-out public relations strategy can increase public trust in educational institutions. Another study by Sutrisno (2020) states that successful branding in educational institutions requires an integrated and systematic approach, with public relations playing a crucial role in managing public perception of the institution. However, most existing research focuses on branding image in the context of general educational institutions, with very little addressing

branding approaches in Islamic education, which presents distinct challenges and values. Research on the application of public relations strategies in building the image of Islamic educational institutions is still very limited. (Monica, 2024).

To further understand this phenomenon, this study adopts the branding theory developed by Keller (2013), which emphasizes the importance of image management through consistent and credible communication. This theory is relevant to the context of educational institutions seeking to build a strong public image. (Rizaldi Makmur, 2024). In addition, the Public Relations theory by Grunig & Hunt (1984) also serves as a reference in this research, because this theory emphasizes the importance of effective two-way communication strategies in building sustainable and transparent relationships between educational institutions and the community. (Rizaldi Makmur, 2024) In the context of Islamic education, the theory of Islamic Education Management emphasizes the importance of Islamic values in every communication activity of an institution, including in this case, in efforts to build a positive image of Islamic educational institutions through the role of public relations. (Alimuddin & Yuzrizal, 2020).

While numerous studies have explored branding strategies and the role of public relations in education, there remains a gap in studies specifically addressing the role of public relations in enhancing the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. Previous research has focused primarily on general education and brand image in the commercial sector, without delving deeply into Islamic approaches to branding strategies and public relations communications. Therefore, this study offers a unique approach by focusing on Islamic educational institutions, which face unique challenges and characteristics in building their image through communication strategies based on Islamic values.

Thus, this research is expected to provide a new contribution to the literature on Islamic education management, particularly in terms of public relations strategies and branding image development for Islamic educational institutions. It is also expected to provide broader insights into how public relations can play a role in increasing public trust in Islamic educational institutions, as well as provide practical recommendations for Islamic educational institutions in managing their image through more effective and integrated communication strategies.

METHOD

This research uses a library research method, namely an approach that relies on literature studies to obtain data and information that is relevant to the topic being

researched.(Ahmadi et al., 2024)This method was chosen because this research aims to explore and analyze theories and concepts related to public relations strategies and branding image of Islamic educational institutions. The researcher will utilize secondary sources, such as books, scientific journals, academic articles, and previous research reports, that discuss the role of public relations in educational management and the implementation of branding in Islamic educational institutions.

Using a library research approach, this research focuses not on collecting field data but rather on reviewing existing literature to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between public relations strategies and the image of educational institutions. The researcher will conduct a qualitative analysis of the information gathered from the various literatures with the aim of identifying relevant theories and analyzing public relations practices that may influence the image of Islamic educational institutions.

During the data collection process, researchers will refer to literature discussing public relations theory, branding theory, and Islamic education management related to communication strategies and institutional image management. Case studies from previous research will also be analyzed to gain insight into the application of public relations strategies to improve the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. Thus, this method will provide a comprehensive overview of how public relations theory and practice can be optimized to build a positive image of Islamic educational institutions. Overall, the library research method allows this study to examine and analyze existing literature as a basis for developing a new theory regarding the role of public relations in strengthening the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. With this approach, this study is expected to provide deeper insights into effective public relations strategies for increasing public trust in Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research result

In this study, several key concepts and findings regarding public relations strategies in building the branding image of Islamic educational institutions were obtained based on the existing literature review. Based on the analysis of relevant literature, it was found that the communication strategies implemented by public relations play a significant role in shaping public perception of educational institutions, both in terms of academic aspects, religious aspects, and the social activities they undertake. Some of the key points discovered in this literature review are as shown in the following figure:



Integrated and Consistent Communication

Literature studies show that consistent and integrated communication is fundamental in building the image of educational institutions.(Mely et al., 2024)Grunig & Hunt (1984) emphasize the importance of two-way communication in public relations relations with the public, where educational institutions need to ensure that the messages conveyed to the public are clear, open, and in accordance with the values held by the institution.(Syarif Maulidin, 2024)In the context of Islamic educational institutions, communication that reflects Islamic values, honesty, and transparency is very important so that the public can feel the credibility of the institution.(Ayub Hermanto, Ammar Zainuddin, 2024).

Utilization of Social Media in Branding Image

Based on literature review, social media is becoming an increasingly important platform in marketing the image of educational institutions.(Awaluddin Siregar, 2024)Social media provides a space for building more direct relationships between educational institutions and their publics. By using social media, educational institutions can actively convey information about academic achievements, religious activities, and social programs, as well as communicate the institution's identity in a way that is more engaging and accessible to the wider community.(Ahmad Fauzan, Mirhabun Nadir, 2024).

Involvement in Social and Religious Activities

Islamic educational institutions that engage in social and religious activities that benefit the community will more easily build a positive brand image. Activities such

as community service, charity programs, and religious activities that align with Islamic principles can convey to the public that the institution is not only focused on academic education but also has a strong social responsibility.(Hermawan & Carnawi, 2024).

The Importance of Quality Education

The quality of education offered by educational institutions has a close relationship with the image of the institution.(Hermawan & Carnawi, 2024)Sanjaya (2018) emphasized that institutions that have high academic achievements, relevant curricula, and quality teaching will have a good image in the eyes of the public.(Putra & Nurfauziah, 2024)This indicates that the positive image of Islamic educational institutions is not only built through external communication, but also through internal qualities that are directly visible to the public and stakeholders.

Managing Alumni as Branding Image Ambassadors

Educational institutions that maintain strong relationships with their alumni demonstrate that alumni can act as ambassadors, strengthening the institution's image. Alumni involvement in various activities and programs organized by the institution is an integral part of the branding process. Successful alumni who maintain strong ties with the institution can help introduce the institution to the wider community through their positive experiences.(Hakim & Rozi, 2024).

Research Discussion

In building a positive image of an Islamic educational institution, the role of public relations (PR) becomes very strategic.(Erlin, 2024)Based on the literature review, five key strategies significantly contribute to strengthening the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. These strategies are not only relevant in theory but also applicable in practice, particularly in today's digital age.

First, integrated and consistent communication is the foundation for building public perception of educational institutions. In line with Grunig & Hunt (1984), open and honest two-way communication enables a harmonious relationship between the institution and its public. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, Islamic values such as honesty, transparency, and trustworthiness are important principles that must be reflected in every message conveyed.(Karimah, 2025). Consistency in communication, both verbally and non-verbally, will build ongoing public trust in the institution.(Karimah, 2025).

Second, the use of social media has become an increasingly crucial strategy in the digital era. Social media acts as a direct bridge between institutions and the public. As explained by Sutrisno (2020), social media platforms serve not only as

information tools but also as spaces for public interaction and participation. Through engaging and informative content, institutions can convey their identity, whether in the form of academic achievements, religious values, or social activities. This makes social media an effective tool for expanding communication reach and strengthening the institution's image in real time.(Holipiah et al., 2024).

Third, an institution's involvement in social and religious activities is a strong indicator of its social responsibility. Institutions that actively participate in religious programs, community service, and other social activities tend to be more respected by the community.(Yohana, 2014)This is because the institution is considered not only to pursue academic excellence but also to care about its social environment. In this regard, such activities serve as a concrete means of conveying Islamic values while strengthening the institution's position as an agent of social change.

Fourth, the quality of education offered is one of the most essential elements in building a branding image. Sanjaya (2018) states that a positive image is not only built through external promotion, but also through the internal quality of the institution itself. Academic achievement, relevanceThe curriculum, the competence of the teaching staff, and the supporting facilities are important factors that influence public opinion. When the public sees that an institution offers superior and integrated education, trust in the institution will naturally grow.(Asy'arie et al., 2024).

Fifth, managing alumni as institutional ambassadors is an equally important long-term strategy. Successful alumni who remain emotionally and functionally connected to their alma mater have great potential to expand the institution's positive influence. They not only serve as evidence of the institution's successful educational system but can also serve as authentic spokespeople, conveying positive experiences to the wider community. The presence of alumni in various institutional activities and promotions adds strength to building a strong and trusted institutional identity.(Masrufa, 2024).

Taken together, these five points emphasize that public relations strategies for building the branding image of Islamic educational institutions must be implemented holistically and sustainably. A balance between effective external communication and superior internal quality is key to successfully building a positive public image. In today's era of openness and global competition, the success of an Islamic educational institution is measured not only by its academics but also by its ability to build emotional and social connections with the wider community.

In line with this research, several recent studies in 2025 also showed similar

results. One study found that adaptive and consistent public relations communication strategies through social media were able to strengthen the image of Islamic universities among the younger generation (Rasuli, 2025). Furthermore, the planned and sustainable use of social media contributed significantly to increasing stakeholders' positive perceptions of educational institutions (Eriani, 2025). Previous research emphasized that integrating public relations and marketing communication strategies, both digital and conventional, is effective in building the branding image of educational institutions. These findings reinforce that integrated, consistent communication, and optimization of social media and institutional activities are important factors in shaping a positive and credible image of educational institutions (Utomo, 2025).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that public relations strategy plays a strategic role in shaping the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. Integrated and consistent communication, utilization of social media, involvement in social and religious activities, improving the quality of education, and managing alumni as institutional ambassadors are five main pillars that are interrelated in building a positive image of the institution. This strategy not only focuses on external communication but also emphasizes the importance of internal qualities that reflect Islamic values, such as honesty, openness, and social responsibility. Therefore, the implementation of a holistic and sustainable public relations strategy is key to strengthening public trust and increasing the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions amidst the development of the digital era.

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