ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES MARKETING IN PRIVATE ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN SOUTH SUMATRA: CASE STUDIES OF SMP PLUS ISLAM AL-FAHD JAKABARING AND SMP IT SYAJARUL QUR'AN GELUMBANG

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Abstract
This study aims to analyze the implementation of educational service marketing at SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd Jakabaring and SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang and identify supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of educational service marketing is carried out through four main indicators: direction, communication, motivation, and coordination. SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd excels in utilizing digital media and superior programs, while SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an faces challenges in reaching a wider market. Supporting factors include strong leadership and active participation of human resources, while inhibiting factors include limited human resources and less than optimal promotional strategies. This study contributes to the development of Islamic educational marketing theory and provides practical recommendations for similar educational institutions.
Keywords: Educational marketing, implementation strategy, Islamic schools, educational communication, marketing management

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pelaksanaan pemasaran jasa pendidikan di SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd Jakabaring dan SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang serta mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat pelaksanaan tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan pemasaran jasa pendidikan dilakukan melalui empat indikator utama: pengarahan, komunikasi, motivasi, dan koordinasi. SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd unggul dalam pemanfaatan media digital dan program unggulan, sementara SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an menghadapi tantangan dalam menjangkau pasar lebih luas. Faktor pendukung meliputi kepemimpinan yang kuat dan partisipasi aktif SDM, sedangkan faktor penghambat mencakup keterbatasan SDM dan strategi promosi yang belum optimal. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan teori pemasaran pendidikan Islam dan memberikan rekomendasi praktis bagi lembaga pendidikan sejenis.
Kata kunci: Pemasaran pendidikan, strategi pelaksanaan, sekolah Islam, komunikasi pendidikan, manajemen pemasaran

INTRODUCTION

Education as a public service cannot be separated from the importance of marketing strategies to reach the community. In the context of private Islamic schools, the existence of educational institutions is highly dependent on the effectiveness of educational service marketing strategies that are able to build trust and attract public interest. Increasingly fierce competition between schools requires each institution to manage the marketing process professionally (Kasali, 2024).

The digital era has fundamentally changed the landscape of education marketing. Schools no longer compete solely on academic grounds, but also in how they convey information, build their image, and maintain their existence in the eyes of the community. Digitalization in education marketing has become an inevitable trend, especially in attracting millennials and parents who are increasingly critical of their choice of educational institutions (Nugroho & Cahyono, 2024). Schools rely on marketing methods to attract parents in this era of fierce competition in the education industry. When looking for a good school for their children, many parents choose prestigious educational institutions (Nuraeni, 2023).

Educational service marketing is a strategic effort by educational institutions to introduce, build an image, and attract public interest in the educational services they offer. Kotler and Fox state that educational marketing includes the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of programs designed to generate a voluntary exchange of value with the target market for educational services (Wijaya, 2021). Zeithaml and Bitner in Wijaya (2021) state that service marketing is about "promising something to customers and fulfilling that promise." In the world of education, this includes conveying educational values, teaching quality, and ongoing relationships with students and parents as key stakeholders.

Two Islamic educational institutions, namely SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd Jakabaring and SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang, demonstrate different approaches in implementing educational marketing strategies. Schools located in urban areas such as Al-Fahd are more prominent in the use of digital media and promotional events, while Syajarul Qur'an in suburban areas faces challenges in expanding its market reach despite promoting integrated Islamic values. In the context of competition among private educational institutions, the ability of schools to convey their values and strengths is a crucial factor in attracting public interest. The implementation of marketing strategies is not limited to one-way promotion, but includes a series of systematic activities ranging from market identification, segmentation, target determination, to positioning the institution in the minds of consumers. Tjiptono (2019) emphasizes that the success of marketing educational services is greatly influenced by the compatibility between the values offered by the school and consumer expectations, as well as the effectiveness of the institution in managing its relationships with stakeholders.

SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd Jakabaring and SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang both offer education programs based on Islamic values, but they have different approaches in reaching out to the community. Al-Fahd, for example, makes more intensive use of digital media such as Instagram, YouTube, and websites as a means of branding and two-way communication, including presenting testimonials, activity videos, and promotions of flagship programs. On the other hand, Syajarul Qur'an relies more on a community approach and direct relationships through da'wah events, visits to elementary schools, and local partnerships. These differences in approach emphasize that marketing is not generic, but needs to be adapted to the geographical, demographic, and cultural context of the surrounding community.

The implementation of educational service marketing is not without internal challenges, such as limited competent human resources, a lack of understanding of modern marketing concepts among educational personnel, and minimal integration between marketing strategies and school management. Externally, challenges also arise from high community expectations, changing trends in educational preferences, and an increasing number of Islamic educational institutions offering similar services. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen aspects of strategy implementation such as direction, coordination between units, effective communication, and motivation of all school components so that the marketing strategy can run optimally (Handoko, 2011).

This research is relevant because it can provide a more concrete picture of the practice of marketing educational services in junior high Islamic schools using a qualitative case study approach. Through an in-depth analysis of two schools with different contexts, this study is expected to contribute to the development of educational service marketing strategies that are more targeted, sustainable, and in line with Islamic values. The results of this study can also be used as a reference for educational institution leaders in formulating marketing policies that can increase the competitiveness and sustainability of institutions amid the current dynamics of the educational environment.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to understand and analyze the phenomenon of educational marketing in depth in a natural context. The research subjects consisted of school principals, vice principals in charge of public relations, teachers, administrative staff, parents, and students who were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement and knowledge of school marketing activities (Sugiyono, 2019). Data collection techniques included direct observation of marketing and promotional activities, in-depth interviews with key informants, and documentation studies covering analysis of school documents, promotional media, and student enrollment statistics (Creswell, 2018, p. 183; Yin, 2018, p. 114). Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was tested through source and technique triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing to ensure the credibility of the research results (Miles & Huberman, 2014; Moleong, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Implementation of Educational Services Marketing at Al-Fahd Jakabaring Islamic Junior High School and Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang IT Junior High School

The implementation of educational services marketing at Al-Fahd Jakabaring Islamic Junior High School and Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang IT Junior High School has been carried out through four main indicators, namely: direction, communication, motivation, and coordination. These four indicators form the foundation of the marketing strategy implemented to increase the school's appeal to new students and maintain its existence amid competition in the education sector.

1. Direction

Direction in education marketing plays an important role in aligning the institution's vision and strategy with implementation in the field. Direction includes setting goals, dividing responsibilities, and supervising to ensure that the implementation of the promotion strategy runs effectively. Effective direction creates synergy between leaders and staff in achieving educational marketing goals (Ahmad and Muin, 2023:45).

Al-Fahd Islamic Junior High School, Jakabaring

Principal Mukhlisin stated that:

"We conduct marketing briefings regularly, at least once a month with the school marketing team... I provide guidance on the target number of registrants, the areas that need to be reached, and the strategies we will use".

Ms. Umma, a teacher, added:

"I always receive clear guidance from the principal on educational service marketing strategies."

Figure 1 Educational Service Marketing Guidance Meeting

Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang Islamic Junior High School

Mr. Aripin, Principal, said:

"I instruct the team to always emphasize the excellence of our tahfidz program and the character building of our students. This is the main selling point that we offer to the community."

Figure 2. Marketing Briefing Meeting for Educational Services

Thus, guidance at Al-Fahd Junior High School is technical and structured, strategically targeting quantitative achievements. In contrast, Syajarul Qur'an IT Junior High School prioritizes a religious approach and spiritual values in team guidance.

1. Communication

Communication is a vital element in marketing educational services, enabling the exchange of information between institutions and the community. Targeted communication can increase public trust and expand the reach of promotional messages. Effective educational marketing communication can enhance the image of an institution in the eyes of the community (Turmudi and Fatayati, 2021).

Al-Fahd Jakabaring Islamic Junior High School

Mr. Solihin, Deputy Head of Public Relations, explained:

"We ensure that all communication materials convey a consistent message about the school's identity and excellence."

Mr. Mukhlisin also stated:

"We utilize various channels, ranging from print media such as brochures to digital platforms such as websites and social media."

Figure 3. Educational Services Marketing Communication Meeting

Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang Islamic Junior High School

Mr. Ridwan, Deputy Head of Public Relations:

"Our teachers and staff are actively involved in community activities, and through these interactions, information about our school spreads naturally."

Figure 4. Educational Services Marketing Communication Meeting

Therefore**,** Al-Fahd Junior High School excels in multichannel digital communication, while Syajarul Qur'an IT Junior High School relies on face-to-face communication based on the local community

1. Motivation

Motivation is the main driver in the implementation of educational marketing strategies. In educational institutions, motivation can arise from external factors such as awards and incentives, as well as from internal factors such as spiritual values and dedication. High motivation among marketing staff can increase the effectiveness of marketing strategies and the achievement of institutional targets (Ahmad and Muin, 2023).

Al-Fahd Islamic Junior High School, Jakabaring

Mr. Mukhlisin also stated:

"We give special rewards to teams that succeed in attracting a significant number of prospective students."

Mrs. Mukharoma Ananda Alfi, Head of Administration:

"The administration team is very supportive in providing the best service to prospective students and managing documents well."

Figure 5 Educational Services Marketing Motivation Meeting

Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang Islamic Junior High School

Mrs. Elvin Ariska, Head of Administration:

"We consider marketing to be part of our mission. Every interaction is an opportunity to do good deeds, so we work with sincerity."

Figure 6. Marketing Motivation Meeting for Educational Services

Jadi, SMP Al-Fahd memotivasi melalui insentif dan target, sedangkan SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an menekankan motivasi spiritual dan keikhlasan dalam kerja dakwah.

1.   Koordinasi

Koordinasi yang baik antara berbagai pihak dalam lembaga pendidikan memastikan pelaksanaan strategi pemasaran berjalan lancar. Tanpa koordinasi, kegiatan promosi bisa berjalan tidak sinkron dan melemahkan kekuatan lembaga. Koordinasi yang efektif dapat menghindari konflik dan meningkatkan efisiensi dalam kegiatan pemasaran (Ahmad dan Muin, 2023)

Al-Fahd Islamic Junior High School, Jakabaring

Mr. Solihin said:

"We have brand identity guidelines, and all promotional materials must be approved in advance to maintain consistency."

Figure 7. Marketing Coordination Meeting for Educational Services

Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang IT Junior High School

Mr. Ridwan stated:

"Our branding is carried out with a personal approach. Every teacher can directly promote the school with local adjustments."

Figure 8. Education Services Marketing Coordination Meeting

So, coordination at Al-Fahd Junior High School is more structured and centralized, while at IT Syajarul Qur'an Junior High School it is more flexible and family-based.

A. Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Implementation of Educational Services Marketing

1. Supporting Factors

Supporting factors in educational marketing include strategic location, community support, excellent programs, and the use of effective promotional media. Schools with strong facilities and networks tend to attract more public attention. Digital marketing-based promotional strategies can increase the interest of prospective new students (Sya'adah, 2024).

SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd Jakabaring

a. Strategic location

b. Modern facilities

c. Specialized and professional promotional team

d. Active digital media

SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang

a. Strong religious values

b. Support from community leaders

c. Positive image in character building and Al-Qur'an

Thus, the supporting factors at SMP Al-Fahd are more technological and structural in nature, while at SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an they are value- and community-based.

2. Supporting Factors

Behind their marketing efforts, every school faces challenges and obstacles. These obstacles can range from fierce competition and limited funds to suboptimal promotional strategies. These obstacles need to be identified early so that schools can develop appropriate corrective measures (Lusitania et al, 2024:62).

SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd Jakabaring

a. Stiff competition between private schools

b. Limited promotional budget

c. Tuition fees considered high by some members of the community

SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an Gelumbang

a. Competition with free public schools

b. Lack of digital promotion

c. Suboptimal brand awareness

SMP Al-Fahd faces obstacles in terms of competitiveness and costs, while SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an faces more limitations in terms of resources and branding.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of educational service marketing at Al-Fahd Islamic Junior High School in Jakabaring and Syajarul Qur'an Islamic Junior High School in Gelumbang has different approaches but both aim to strengthen the image of the institution and attract new students. SMP Plus Islam Al-Fahd tends to use structured strategies through the use of social media and professional coordination, while SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an focuses on Islamic values and social closeness with the community. The four main aspects of marketing—guidance, communication, motivation, and coordination—have been implemented by both schools in accordance with their respective characteristics. SMP Al-Fahd emphasizes targets, incentives, and digital media in its implementation, while SMP IT Syajarul Qur'an prioritizes spiritual values and community-based direct interaction. This reflects the adjustment of strategies to the resources and social background of the school. The supporting factors for successful marketing include facilities, human resources, and strong promotional media for Al-Fahd Junior High School, as well as religious strength and social networks for Syajarul Qur'an IT Junior High School. The main obstacles faced revolve around budget constraints, competition from other institutions, and the suboptimal digitization of promotion, especially in pesantren-based schools.

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