



## Branding and Strategic Management to Build Student Loyalty in Islamic Education

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### Abstract

This research identifies the strategic steps involved in planning, organizing, and implementing innovative teaching programs supported by institutional branding to attract and maintain student loyalty. A qualitative approach with case studies was employed to collect data through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Strategic planning, including intensive training for ustadz/ustadzah and relevant teaching methods, creates a fun and effective learning experience for students. Organizing involves the recruitment of competent faculty, and optimal resource management supports institutional excellence. Implementing branding strategies through social media has also been proven to improve the institution's image in the eyes of students and parents. Evaluating the implementation of this strategy shows its positive impact on student loyalty, which also contributes to strengthening the reputation and sustainability of Islamic educational institutions. This research shows that the success of Qur'anic guidance institutions depends on the integration of teaching innovations, branding strategies, and sustainable branding. This strategy attracts new students and ensures their long-term loyalty.

**Keywords:** student loyalty, Islamic educational institutions, branding, organization, management strategy

## A. INTRODUCTION

As more and more Qur'anic tutoring institutions emerge, the competition to attract students is intensifying. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there are over 30,000 Islamic boarding schools and educational institutions (Munirah, 2020). Islam in Indonesia offers various Quranic guidance programs. Many of these institutions compete to provide a quality education by offering advantages such as digital curriculum, complete facilities, and innovative teaching, including technology-based tahfizh. A survey by the Islamic Education Research Institute found that around 60% of students choose Qur'anic guidance institutions that provide adequate facilities, such as comfortable learning spaces and internet access to support learning. These institutions also offer learning systems relevant to the needs of the times (Mustofa, 2019). In addition, strong branding is also an important factor in attracting the interest of students and parents; many Islamic boarding schools are actively using social media to promote their programs. Therefore, Qur'anic guidance institutions and Islamic boarding schools must manage education, teaching, and existing resources more professionally to remain competitive and maintain student loyalty.

This research has focused on various aspects thus far. For instance, Putri and Saidun (2023) emphasized efforts to raise brand awareness through effective external communication strategies in their research on public relations strategies at the Amil Zakat Al Ihsan Institute Central Java (LAZIS JATENG). Meanwhile, Anonymous (2021) discussed the marketing strategies of Islamic boarding schools, highlighting the importance of promotion and services in attracting prospective students' attention. Abdullah (2024) also analyzed the marketing mix and image at KBIHU Miftahul Ulum Lumajang, focusing on strategies to increase the institutional attractiveness. However, research that specifically discusses management strategies to increase student loyalty through increasing teaching capacity, image branding, and product branding is limited. These aspects are essential for differentiating Islamic educational institutions in an increasingly competitive environment. Quality capacity building and strong branding are key to maintaining student loyalty and increasing the competitiveness of these Islamic educational institutions in the future.

This study examines the strategy for capacity building, image formation, and product branding of Islamic education institutions, focusing on strategies to increase student loyalty in Qur'anic guidance institutions. The study aims to identify steps that can be taken to increase teaching capacity and student loyalty in Qur'anic guidance institutions through more effective and innovative teaching methods. Furthermore, the study explores strategies for managing human resources, facilities, and teaching systems to support these efforts, as well as ways to optimize institutions' comparative advantages

over others. This study also analyzes innovative teaching program implementation and product branding strategies to attract students and increase their loyalty to the institution (Haidir, 2022). Additionally, the study examines the evaluation and control of the Qur'an Institute's teaching capacity building, image branding, and branding strategies to ensure the sustainability of student loyalty and its impact on the psychological well-being of children in single-parent households. The study is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable management of Islamic educational institutions (Shabrina, 2024).

This research can be analyzed through the management theory developed by George R. Terry in his book *Principles of Management* (1958). Terry outlines the four basic functions of management—planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating—in his introductory book on management science (Suardi, 2022). In the context of Islamic educational institutions, this theory can be applied to design systematic strategies that increase student loyalty. Planning plays an important role in formulating strategies that can increase institutional capacity. These strategies include improving the quality of teaching, developing a more relevant curriculum, and improving facilities that support the learning process. Furthermore, the organizing function requires institutions to manage competent human resources, including teachers and support staff, to create an environment that supports quality education. Then, during the mobilization stage, Islamic educational institutions must mobilize all existing elements—managers, teachers, and students—to commit to improving the quality of education continuously. The evaluation stage is important for assessing the extent to which the planned strategy is implemented well and has a positive impact on student loyalty.

Michael Porter's theory of competitive advantage provides a relevant perspective on strengthening strategic management in Islamic educational institutions. According to Porter, to achieve a superior market position, an organization must choose between two main strategies: cost advantage or differentiation advantage. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, cost superiority can be achieved by providing high-quality educational services at a lower cost than other institutions (Porter, 2008). For instance, institutions can optimize their use of existing resources by reducing waste or increasing their use of technology to accelerate the teaching and learning process without compromising teaching quality. On the other hand, differentiation advantages focus on developing added value that makes the institution unique. Islamic educational institutions can build superior teaching capacity by applying innovative teaching methods, such as using technology, taking a personal approach to educating students, and integrating Islamic values into the curriculum. Additionally, branding plays a crucial role in creating differentiation for Islamic educational institutions (Bashori, 2017). Through effective

branding, institutions can promote their superior values in terms of education quality and facility offerings, attracting more students and fostering loyalty. Porter's theory of competitive advantage provides a strong foundation for designing strategies that develop effective capacity, build a positive image, and brand products to increase student competitiveness and loyalty in Islamic educational institutions.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative approach and a case study method to analyze management strategies for increasing student loyalty in Islamic educational institutions. These strategies are based on three main pillars: capacity building, image enhancement, and product imaging. This approach enables researchers to deeply understand an institution's social and cultural context, as well as the specific managerial strategies employed (Irawan, 2022). This method aligns with the findings of Haris (2023) in the *EduReg* journal, which emphasize that qualitative case study-based research deepens character-based management practices in madrasas, improving the quality of educational services. In-depth interviews will be conducted with principals, teachers, and students to explore the implementation of the strategy. This approach is supported by research by Imelia Sahda Salsabila (2024), which highlights the importance of involving all elements of the institution in creating a quality culture that increases student confidence. Observation was used to examine the interaction between managers and students, as well as institutional capacity-building activities. This approach is similar to that of Salsabila, I.S., Wahyudi, W., Nasikhin, N., Asiyah, N., & Panaemale (2025) in the *Pedagogy* journal, which utilizes observation to evaluate the effectiveness of character-building activities in the learning process. Additionally, documentation is collected from curriculum, promotional brochures, and branding policies to understand institutional approaches to building a strong image. This aligns with the findings of Bakhri (2025) in the *Deep Journal of Economics and Technology Undiksha*, which shows that the quality of an institution's image significantly impacts the education consumers' loyalty.

The use of triangulation techniques for interviews, observation, and documentation data is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the management strategy's dynamics. This is supported by findings of Salsabila, I. S., Niswah, S., and Jaya (2024), which revealed that triangulation methods are important for confirming the validity of integrative learning strategies in modern Islamic boarding schools. In this context, the researchers observe capacity-building practices, such as teacher training, student development activities, and institutional branding carried out through social media and promotional brochures. Documentation data is analyzed for consistency between the institution's vision and mission and the implementation of its strategy. A

research by Salsabilla, I., Asiyah, N., and Sutiyono (2024) examined the effectiveness of quality-based management in Islamic educational institutions. Referring to the previous approach, this study is expected to illustrate how a holistic management strategy can increase student loyalty in the long term. This research's theoretical and practical contributions will enrich the literature on Islamic educational management and serve as a reference for formulating strategies to increase the competitiveness and sustainability of Islamic educational institutions amid increasingly complex competition (Salsabilla & Ikhrom, 2024).

This study uses the data triangulation technique to ensure the validity and accuracy of the research results. To triangulate sources, data are collected from various parties involved in the management of Islamic educational institutions, including managers, teachers, and students. This method uses a combination of in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation to gain a more complete perspective on the applied management strategies. Meanwhile, time triangulation is used to collect data across different periods to observe the changes in and the sustainability of strategies implemented to increase student loyalty. Triangulation aims to reduce bias and improve the reliability of research results by verifying findings from various sources, methods, and times (Arianto, 2024). This study uses the Miles and Huberman data analysis technique, which involves three main steps: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding. During the data reduction stage, information is filtered and selected based on its relevance to the research topic (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 1984). Next, the sorted data are presented in an easy-to-understand form, such as a table or chart. Finally, conclusions are drawn by analyzing existing data to find patterns and relationships that support strategic management theory in the context of Islamic educational institutions.

This research is conducted at the Bunayya Institute, a Quranic guidance institution that applies the Yanbu'a method in its teaching process. This location was chosen because of the importance of reviewing the institution's management strategies, especially those related to increasing student loyalty through teaching capacity development, image building, and product branding. With its distinctive Yanbu'a method, the Bunayya Institute seeks to provide a unique approach to the Qur'anic learning process, attracting students with its special appeal. This research is important because the institution has the potential to exemplify how managerial strategies in Islamic education, particularly in Qur'anic guidance institutions, can attract and maintain student loyalty despite fierce competition in education. The study's respondents consisted of one foundation chair, two administrators, and two students. They were selected to provide a comprehensive view of institutional management implementation and its impact on student loyalty. The research is planned to take place between November 2023 and January 2024, providing an

opportunity to observe the implementation process and progress over several months. This research is expected to provide valuable insights for developing Islamic educational management strategies in other Qur'anic guidance institutions.

### C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Strategic Planning to Increase Student Loyalty

Strategic planning is an important first step to increasing student loyalty at the Bunayya Institute. The institution's vision and mission are to educate students who excel in reading and understanding the Qur'an and who possess strong character following Islamic values (Minabari, 2023). To achieve this goal, the institution carefully plans to ensure a consistent level of quality of education by its standards. One important step is providing intensive training to the *ustadz* and *ustadzah*, who are at the forefront of the learning process. This training covers technical aspects such as *makhorijul huruf*, *shifatul huruf*, tajweed reading, and *gharib* laws so that they can properly and correctly teach the material according to the Yanbu'a method.

Teaching designed to increase student loyalty should be relevant to the needs and characteristics of each age group. For children, the approach should be fun, creative, and easy to understand. The Bunayya Institute integrates interactive learning methods, such as puzzles, sticky notes, color-coded letters, and "4 in 1" flashcards. This method is designed to create a fun learning atmosphere in which children feel comfortable and are actively involved (Asyifa, 2022). Additionally, this activity helps children memorize and understand the Quran effectively, by the principle that relevant, fun learning increases students' interest and loyalty.

Meanwhile, the approach used for adult and elderly students is more serious and in-depth. Teaching methods usually involve PowerPoint presentations specifically designed to facilitate understanding of the material. Learning for this age group focuses on deepening the *makhorijul huruf*, dissecting the laws of reading Tajweed, and understanding the various rules of *Gharib* (Aini, 2024). This approach provides a theoretical understanding and helps adult students master the practice of reading the Qur'an correctly. With this method, adult students are expected to significantly improve the quality of their reading, following the Bunayya Institute's goal of producing excellent students of all ages.

Through the existing plans, the Bunayya Institute can provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences for students of different age groups. A teaching approach that addresses the needs of students and is supported by quality *ustadz/ustadzah* training is essential to fostering student loyalty to the institution. This approach aligns with the

institution's vision and mission to produce a generation that excels in reading the Qur'an and has noble morals and a strong learning spirit. This strategy allows the Bunayya Institute to distinguish itself from other Qur'anic guidance institutions and contribute significantly to Islamic education development (Ma'arif, 2017).



Figure 1. Bunayya Institute's Vision and Mission

This strategic plan demonstrates the Bunayya Institute's dedication to achieving its vision and mission. By developing quality and relevant programs, the institution ensures that every student can progress well, following the values of the Qur'an. Steps to achieve this goal include *ustadz* and *ustadzah* training, innovative teaching methods, and attention to students' needs. Student loyalty is built through the quality of teaching and positive experiences during the learning process. Thus, the Bunayya Institute produces a superior generation of Qur'an scholars and strengthens its position as a trusted Qur'anic institution.

## 2. Organizing as a Pillar of Institutional Quality

Organization is a fundamental aspect of managing educational institutions such as Bunayya. As a Qur'anic institution that uses the Yanbu'a method, implementing an organizational structure is a strategic step to ensure smooth operations and the achievement of educational goals. At Bunayya, organizing focuses not only on human resource management but also on the drafting of work structures, dividing tasks, and coordinating all elements of the institution effectively. The implementation process

begins with recruiting competent and dedicated teaching staff to produce quality students (Mantara & Wanto, 2022). This process is a key to building the institution's reputation and increasing student loyalty.

The Bunayya Institute carries out its recruitment process openly. Prospective teachers are required to submit documents such as a curriculum vitae (CV), Yanbu'a or *Shahadah* certificates (if applicable), and other supporting documents. Having a Yanbu'a certificate is an added value because it demonstrates that prospective teachers understand Bunayya's learning methods. After the administrative selection process, those who meet the criteria will be invited to the interview stage. This stage is designed to evaluate technical abilities, such as the ability to read the Quran, understand Tajweed, and teach the Yanbu'a method. Additionally, the interview provides an opportunity to explore prospective teachers' vision, including what they want to contribute to Bunayya's development.

At Bunayya, the selection process emphasizes not only technical competence but also the moral and ethical commitment of prospective teachers. During interviews, candidates will be asked about their teaching methods, how they plan to deliver material to students of different ages, and how they intend to contribute positively to the institution. This is important because teachers are responsible for both transferring knowledge and serving as role models for students. Bunayya's competitive, selection-based organization ensures that every faculty member who joins is capable of supporting its vision and mission of producing excellent, loyal students.

After the recruitment process is complete, the next step is to organize the internal structure to ensure that each faculty member can carry out his or her duties effectively. This organization involves clearly defining duties, from teaching to administrative responsibilities. For instance, some teachers use interactive methods to teach children, while others use an in-depth approach to teach adults. Additionally, regular meetings are held to discuss student development, challenges in the learning process, and potential solutions. This coordination enables Bunayya to continue developing and delivering quality Qur'anic educational services and strengthening student loyalty and public trust in the institution.

### 3. Implementation of Teaching Programs and Branding Strategies at Bunayya Institute

Bunayya Institute implements innovative teaching programs designed to meet the learning needs of students of different ages and backgrounds. For younger students, the teaching method is more oriented toward interactive games. Learning activities include compiling *hijaiyah* letter puzzles, singing educational songs, and matching letters and meanings by sticking paper on the board. This approach is intended to enable children to

learn in a way that is fun, receptive, and relevant to their developmental stage (Suwarsih & Nirmala, 2019). Additionally, this method helps build a strong foundation in reading the Qur'an while instilling Islamic values from an early age. For adult and elderly students, the teaching method focuses on developing a deep understanding of *makhorijul huruf*, the rules for reading the Qur'an, and structured reading practice. Media such as PowerPoint presentations, learning videos, and handbooks are used to ensure maximum understanding and meet learning needs holistically.

In terms of branding, the Bunayya Institute is taking strategic steps to increase its visibility and attract public interest. One of these strategies involves collaboration with the Semarang City Archives and Library Service (Arpus) on a reading program. The program, called "Qur'anigo to School Literacy," integrates literacy activities and is held routinely in schools, including SDN Ngaliyan 1. During the program, the Bunayya Institute introduces its innovations, such as the 4-in-1 flashcard. This creative learning tool was developed by the institution itself. The flashcards attract students' attention and strengthen the institution's identity as a center for Qur'anic educational innovation. Additionally, participants receive vouchers for learning, and reading classes as a token of appreciation and an effective promotional medium.

Social media use is also an integral part of the Bunayya Institute's branding strategy. Learning videos and documentation of institutional activities are regularly posted on Instagram and TikTok. This content not only educates the wider community, but also strengthens the institution's image as creative and modern. The Bunayya Institute's social media presence helps reach a wider audience, including the younger generation, who actively use digital platforms. Additionally, the institution has consistently participated in various prestigious competitions. Recently, they won second place at the Java and national levels with the theme "Qur'ani Generation." This achievement increases the institution's credibility and expands its network and recognition at the national level.

The Bunayya Institute's implementation of integrated teaching programs and branding strategies reflects the institution's commitment to providing relevant and effective learning opportunities and building a strong reputation within society. Through the integration of teaching innovations, strategic collaborations, and digital media utilization, Bunayya Institute has successfully attracted public interest and increased student loyalty. This approach strengthens the institution's position amidst competition and ensures the optimal achievement of its vision and mission.

#### 4. Evaluation and control of teaching capacity-building strategies and institutional branding

Implementing evaluation and control is an important stage in ensuring that the strategy of increasing teaching capacity and branding the institution's image can run smoothly with the objectives and have a sustainable impact on student loyalty. At the Al-Qur'an Institute, the evaluation is carried out thoroughly by involving several parties, including the Daily Management Board (BPH), teachers, and student guardians. BPH carries out internal evaluations periodically, both offline and online, to monitor implemented programs. During these evaluations, the BPH analyzes the success of program implementation, identifies obstacles, and determines if any parts of the program need improvement, replacement, or discontinuation. This step aims to ensure that the program remains relevant to the institution's vision and mission as well as to the needs of students.

In addition to internal evaluation by BPH, teachers who play a direct role in implementation also carry out evaluation. Teachers report on their progress in achieving teaching outcomes and the challenges they face in the classroom. These reports are submitted to the relevant institution's head or management for further discussion. This process provides an accurate picture of the field, enabling the institution to respond quickly to emerging needs. For instance, if students have difficulty understanding learning materials, teachers can suggest ways to design more interactive methods or simplify the material without compromising its essence.

Student guardians are also involved in the evaluation process to provide an outside perspective. They can provide feedback regarding their child's development through formal or informal forums. Some guardians may share that their child is having difficulty understanding the material. This information is then evaluated to improve the teaching approach. Additionally, input from student guardians helps to understand public perception of the institution, which is important for strengthening its image and branding. This process fosters close collaboration between institutions, teachers, and student guardians to ensure holistic program success.

Through evaluations and controls involving various parties, the Qur'an Institute ensures that its strategies remain relevant, adaptive, and effective in responding to students' needs and the dynamics of Qur'an education. The evaluation results showed an improvement in teaching quality, reflected in increased student satisfaction and participation in learning programs. Additionally, this evaluation strengthens the institution's image by providing increasingly responsive, high-quality services (Ramadhan & Hidayat, 2024). The collected data show that a consistent evaluative

approach directly impacts student loyalty. Students feel more valued and believe in the institution's commitment. The data also confirm that the Qur'an Institute is oriented toward short-term results and seeks to maintain quality continuity through professionalism and increased competitiveness in the face of the increasingly complex challenges of Qur'an education.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This research emphasizes the importance of strategic management in fostering student loyalty to Islamic educational institutions. A holistic approach enables institutions to strengthen their internal capacity by improving human resource competence, developing a curriculum based on Islamic values, and providing adequate learning facilities. This strategy directly impacts the student learning experience, which forms the basis for long-term loyalty. Consistent institutional branding also plays a significant role in shaping positive public perception. Academic and spiritual excellence, such as integrating Islamic values into learning, student achievement in various events, and an active alumni network, attract prospective students and parents. Therefore, this research makes a practical contribution by formulating a strategy to increase student loyalty with two main focuses: improving the quality of the learning experience and strengthening the institution's image. These two focuses must be managed synergistically to support the institution's sustainability. However, the findings of this study are limited. First, the study was conducted at only one Islamic educational institution and included a limited number of informants—five people, consisting of one foundation chairman, two managers, and two students. These limitations make the research results contextual and unable to be generalized to other institutions with different characteristics. Involving just two students reduced the diversity of perspectives, especially regarding firsthand experience with the applied strategies. Therefore, further research involving more informants from various backgrounds, such as students from different levels, alumni, and parents, is recommended. This research should be conducted in several institutions that vary in size, geographical location, and program orientation. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as large-scale surveys, can improve the validity and reliability of the findings. In conclusion, strategic management integrated with Islamic values that focuses on student satisfaction and is supported by the right branding strategy is an important pillar in building student loyalty. This strategy supports the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions and strengthens their role in producing generations with integrity who contribute positively to modern society.

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