

Branding Strategy Based on Islamic Values and Educational Service Satisfaction in Increasing Community Trust in Islamic Schools in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Competition among educational institutions in the city of Yogyakarta demands that schools build a clear identity, provide educational services that meet the needs of the community, and maintain public trust. SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1 Yogyakarta develops a branding strategy based on Islamic values through the identity of "Millenial Qur'ani," which is integrated with organizational culture and educational services. This research aims to analyze branding strategies based on Islamic values and the satisfaction of educational services, public trust, and the integration of both in strengthening public trust. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation with internal and external school informants. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña through data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was tested through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The research results show that branding is built through brand personality, brand values, and brand promise, and is realized through five dimensions of service, namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Public trust is reflected in ability, integrity, and benevolence. The integration of branding and consistent service strengthens public trust.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is crucial for the sustainability of educational institutions in the current era of disruption (Mujib & Saptiningsih, 2021). As a non-profit organization focused on providing educational services at various levels, a comprehensive strategy is needed to convince the public that the educational institution not only exists but also continues to innovate to meet the demands of the times (Dayat, 2019). This effort ensures that the educational services provided are relevant to the needs of the "customers" namely students, parents, and the wider community (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). Amid the rapidly changing educational landscape, competition among schools has become very intense, making brand identity an essential element (Keller, 2020). Through branding, the community is able to identify, differentiate, and ultimately choose an educational institution based on the values it offers (Aaker, 1996). Intense competition in the basic education ecosystem in the city of Yogyakarta is a real reflection of this dynamic (Suharto & Prasetyo, 2023). Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of the DIY Province in 2025, there are 87 public elementary schools and 73 private elementary schools operating (BPS DIY, 2025). The atmosphere of extreme competition is very palpable in the Kemantren Ngampilan area, where within a radius of less than one kilometer, there are seven elementary schools vying for attention and student enrollment. In this dense "micro-competition" situation, the existence and transformation of SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1 become a positive anomaly as well as an empirical phenomenon

that is very interesting to dissect academically (Porter, 1998). Unlike new schools that generally attract attention due to the grandeur of their facilities or their new status, SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1 is an old institution established in 1947. For decades, this school experienced stagnation and had not yet succeeded in establishing itself as an outstanding institution.

However, a phenomenal turnaround occurred in 2019 when the school launched an identity innovation through the tagline "Millenial Qur'ani" (Akmalia, Danupranata, & Iswanti, 2020). This managerial step was not merely a change of slogan, but a total reconstruction of the management paradigm. The school reformulated its vision and mission by holistically integrating Islamic values, combined with modernized governance, high-level discipline, and a strong orientation toward service quality (Aini et al., 2025). The transformation efforts turned out to yield extraordinary results. Based on real observations, the level of public trust in SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1 has skyrocketed exponentially. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of regular and transfer applicants, which even prompted the implementation of a full indent system where the registration quota for the next academic year was fully filled long before the official admission period opened (Kumar & Singh, 2022). The phenomenon of behavioral trust, exemplified by the long queues of prospective students, proves that a branding strategy combined with service quality can serve as both a savior and a catalyst for competitive advantage for schools that were previously ordinary (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Studies on educational marketing management, quality assurance, and school branding have been extensively conducted by previous researchers (Kalimantara, 2016; Madani, 2020; Budiarti et al., 2023; Susilo, 2022). However, most studies generally focus on institutions that have been excellent from the beginning or research with an overly macro scope. Moreover, the measurement of public trust often relies solely on subjective perception survey instruments that are prone to bias. Therefore, this research aims to fill that research gap by offering theoretical and empirical novelties. This research specifically investigates the turnaround mechanism in old educational institutions in the micro-competition area, using behavioral trust indicators as a parameter for public trust (Sztompka, 2020), and conceptually integrates the Islamic value-based branding strategy ("Millenial Qur'ani") (Rahman & Yusof, 2022) with the five dimensions of service quality (SERVQUAL) (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

II. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study type (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). The selection of a qualitative approach is based on the need to delve into a deep understanding of the meanings, interaction processes, and social contexts underlying the success of the transformation at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1 (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In line with the constructivist paradigm of Norman K. Denzin, the researcher seeks to uncover social reality through the subjective lens of the informants to formulate empirically proven patterns of branding and service strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1, Yogyakarta, over a period of three months in 2026. The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique (Patton, 2015) combined with snowball sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) to ensure the accuracy of information from parties who are truly involved and understand the phenomenon. Internal informants include the Principal, Public Relations, and Teachers. On the external side, informants consist of Parents/Guardians who enroll their children through regular or waiting lists, as well as local Community Leaders who observe the school's reputation from the outside. Data collection was conducted comprehensively through three main methods: in-depth interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018) to explore the motivations and rationales behind each policy; participatory observation (Kawulich, 2005) to directly observe the physical aspects (tangibles), service interactions, and worship routines in the school environment;

and documentation studies of school archives (Duranti, 1997). Qualitative data analysis refers to the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1992), which consists of three continuous stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data is ensured through a series of credibility tests, including source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking against the informants' interview transcripts (Sugiyono, 2009).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Branding Strategy Based on Islamic Values

The institutional transformation at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1 is not merely focused on visual aspects or logos, but rather on the reconstruction of identity rooted in religious teachings (Alserhan, 2021). This school's branding strategy is dissected into three main dimensions that form the brand: brand personality, brand values, and brand promise (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2022). Kepribadian Merek. The brand personality of this school is represented through the tagline "Millennial Qur'ani," which encompasses five main characteristics: religious, disciplined, professional, humanistic, and adaptive to the times (Rahman & Yusof, 2022). These characters are not engineered merely for the sake of brochures, but are truly embodied as the heartbeat of the daily lives of the school community (Burmam & Zeplin, 2019). Parents confirm that this Islamic personality is genuinely felt through positive changes in their children's attitudes and discipline at home. This phenomenon proves the thesis that brand personality in Islamic education is a manifestation of behavior, not just a communication promise (Alserhan, 2010). Branding strategy is supported by intrinsic values that serve as guidelines in all academic policies and activities (Urde, 2003). Values of religiosity, integrity, and social concern are translated into flagship programs such as Tahfiz Al-Qur'an classes, project-based learning, and philanthropic activities. Teachers ensure that there is no dichotomy between the development of academic achievement and character building (Temporal, 2011). Everything is integrated, making Islamic values the spirit that underlies every educational process (Hassan & Shamsudin, 2023). The brand promise upheld by the school is to provide global-quality educational services without uprooting the students' religious roots (Gustafsson, 2018). This commitment is realized with a very high consistency between the published information and the reality experienced by students and parents. This openness of information eliminates expectation bias and builds realistic expectations, which, when fulfilled, will foster strong trust (Alhouti, Johnson, & Holloway, 2021).

SERVQUAL-Based Service Satisfaction

The success of a branding strategy will not be sustainable without being supported by excellent service operations (Oliver, 1997). The implementation of "Millennial Qur'ani" is reflected in the fulfillment of the five dimensions of service quality (SERVQUAL) (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Cheng & Chien, 2022; Zainuddin & Aziz, 2022): Tangibles (Physical Evidence). The community gets a positive first impression through the condition of the school's representative facilities and infrastructure. The well-arranged physical appearance full of Islamic nuances serves as an initial guaranty (tangible cue) of the institution's professionalism. Reliability. The school demonstrates a superior level of reliability by consistently implementing educational programs, academic calendars, and worship habituation activities. This consistency proves that the school is reliable and upholds its trustworthiness (Al-Nashwan, 2021). Responsiveness. Humanistic and efficient service has become a work culture for staff and teachers. The existence of a digital communication channel managed responsively accelerates the flow of information and the resolution of complaints, reflecting the values of *ihsan* and *rahmah* in public service (Mansour, 2021). Assurance (Guarantee). A sense of safety and public confidence is fostered through the continuous

improvement of teachers' competencies and the professionalism of educational staff. Outstanding achievements serve as an assurance that this institution is managed by capable human resources. Empathy (Empati). The highest dimension of this service quality is realized through a deep understanding of the individual conditions and needs of each child. A personal approach to students and close familial relationships with the committee and parents make the school a "second home," strengthening emotional bonds (Rather & Hollebeek, 2021).

Public Trust The pinnacle of the blend of captivating branding strategies and unparalleled service satisfaction is the establishment of public trust manifested in real actions (behavioral trust). This trust is constructed through three main elements of the Integrative Model of Organizational Trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995): Ability. The public's perception of the principal's managerial competence, the pedagogical quality of teachers, and student achievements shapes the belief in the institution's ability. The public acknowledges the school's real capacity to produce graduates who are intellectually smart and spiritually strong (Foroudi, Cuomo, & Foroudi, 2022). Integrity The community highly trusts this school because the management has proven to be transparent, honest in promotions, and loyal to the "Millennial Qur'ani" vision. This trustworthy attitude dispels public skepticism, affirming that the institution prioritizes quality and honesty (Alserhan, 2022). Benevolence (Care/Kindness). Trust is perfected by the good intentions and genuine concern of the school for the well-being of its students. Consistent moral guidance proves that this institution is driven by altruism, not merely transactional obligation.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on a series of analyzes and discussions, it is concluded that the branding strategy based on Islamic values is very effective in boosting service satisfaction and public trust at SD Muhammadiyah Purwodiningratan 1. First, the "Millennial Qur'ani" branding successfully created a strong brand personality, values, and promise. Second, that robust identity has been perfectly translated into the service satisfaction standards (SERVQUAL). Third, the convergence between a clear identity and superior service quality has given rise to complete public trust. Trust based on ability, integrity, and benevolence crystallizes into a massive form of behavioral trust, such as the high rate of incoming mutations and the operation of the pre-registration system for years to come amidst very tight regional competition.

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