Local Needs-based Marketing Strategies of Madrasah Aliyah in Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of local-needs-based marketing strategies at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, a Madrasah Aliyah in Warungkiara, Sukabumi, West Java, Indonesia, where educational access is often constrained in rural areas. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. The findings demonstrate that a hybrid marketing model, integrating community-based engagement with digital strategies, significantly enhances student enrollment and community trust. Traditional methods, such as religious gatherings and social events, foster strong local connections, while digital marketing, despite infrastructural challenges, broadens outreach. By aligning strategies with socio-cultural values, the madrasah strengthens its sustainability and public confidence. This research offers practical insights for optimizing marketing in Islamic schools and highlights the potential of hybrid models for global Islamic educational institutions facing similar challenges. Further studies are recommended to explore the long-term efficacy of digital marketing in rural education settings.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menggali penerapan strategi pemasaran berbasis kebutuhan lokal di MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, sebuah Madrasah Aliyah di Warungkiara, Sukabumi, Jawa Barat, Indonesia, di mana akses pendidikan sering kali terbatas di daerah pedesaan. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model pemasaran hibrida, yang mengintegrasikan keterlibatan berbasis komunitas dengan strategi digital, secara signifikan meningkatkan pendaftaran siswa dan kepercayaan masyarakat. Metode tradisional, seperti pertemuan keagamaan dan acara sosial, membangun koneksi lokal yang kuat, sementara pemasaran digital, meskipun menghadapi tantangan infrastruktur, memperluas jangkauan. Dengan menyelaraskan strategi dengan nilai-nilai sosial budaya, madrasah memperkuat keberlanjutan dan kepercayaan publik. Penelitian ini menawarkan wawasan praktis untuk mengoptimalkan pemasaran di sekolah-sekolah Islam dan menyoroti potensi model hibrida untuk lembaga pendidikan Islam global yang menghadapi tantangan serupa. Studi lebih lanjut direkomendasikan untuk mengeksplorasi efektivitas jangka panjang pemasaran digital di lingkungan pendidikan pedesaan.

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Introduction

Local needs-based educational marketing has become a key strategy to enhance the appeal of educational institutions, particularly in rural areas facing limited access and resources (Handoyo et al., 2020; Afriwanti & Pasrizal, 2021). Madrasah Aliyah (MA), as Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, struggle to sustain their relevance amid intense competition with public and private schools, which often have better facilities and more aggressive marketing strategies (Mutakin et al., 2024; Prasarnkarn, 2019; Nugroho & Santoso, 2022). Previous studies indicate that faith-based schools must align their marketing strategies with local social, economic, and cultural dynamics to compete effectively (Sari et al., 2023; Zainuddin et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, rural madrasahs face significant challenges in educational marketing, including limited technological infrastructure, low digital literacy among administrators, and poorly targeted communication strategies (Sajirun & Syah, 2020; Lestari & Hidayat, 2021). Rural communities generally prioritize religious education but increasingly demand the integration of modern skills—such as digital literacy, foreign languages, and entrepreneurship—to prepare students for the global workforce (IstiAmalia et al., 2023; Safitri, 2024; Rahmatullah, 2022). Thus, madrasahs need marketing strategies that emphasize religious values while addressing academic and practical demands relevant to globalization (Karimah et al., 2023; Hassan & Ali, 2022).

Primary challenges for rural madrasahs include limited human and financial resources, underutilization of digital technology, and inadequate internet infrastructure (Mutakin et al., 2024; Prasetio et al., 2023; Widodo & Pratama, 2021). Studies show that madrasahs failing to adopt adaptive marketing strategies tend to experience declining enrollment, threatening institutional sustainability (Ibadiyah et al., 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2021; Santika, 2023). While community-based marketing—through religious and social activities—effectively builds trust in areas with strong social bonds, this approach often fails to attract younger generations who prioritize academic quality and modern skills (Prasarnkarn, 2019; Kurniawan, 2020).

Globally, Islamic institutions face similar challenges in balancing religious identity with modernization demands (Hassan & Ali, 2022; Al-Faruqi, 2021). In countries like Malaysia, Pakistan, and Middle Eastern nations, rural Islamic schools struggle to remain relevant amid rapid urbanization and digitization (Khan & Rahman, 2023). Marketing strategies relying solely on local traditions often lose to institutions leveraging digital technology to expand their reach (Maulana & Fitri, 2023; Farwati, 2024). Consequently, hybrid marketing strategies combining community engagement and digital tools are increasingly seen as viable solutions for madrasahs worldwide (Rohman et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2023).

However, adopting hybrid strategies in rural madrasahs remains hindered by low digital literacy among educators, poor internet access, and insufficient funding for digital training (Lestari & Hidayat, 2021; Widodo & Pratama, 2021). Research suggests that digital marketing training for educators could improve promotional effectiveness, but implementation is often hampered by costs and infrastructure gaps (Rahmatullah, 2022; Santika, 2023). Additionally, while community-based marketing fosters local loyalty, its success depends on active community participation, which is not always consistent (Kurniawan, 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2023).

A notable research gap exists in studies examining local needs-based marketing strategies for rural madrasahs, particularly those integrating balanced traditional and digital approaches (Safitri, 2024; Al-Faruqi, 2021). This study aims to address this gap by exploring the implementation of local needs-based marketing strategies at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah in Sukabumi, West Java, focusing on curriculum adaptation, community communication, and solutions to resource and infrastructure limitations. The study assumes that a hybrid marketing model can increase enrollment and strengthen madrasah-community relationships.

The proposed local needs-based marketing strategies hold potential as a model for Islamic educational institutions worldwide facing similar challenges, such as technological limitations and the need to balance religious education with modern skills (Hassan & Ali, 2022; Khan & Rahman, 2023). By integrating Islamic values, community engagement, and digital technology, this approach could enhance the competitiveness of rural madrasahs in the global educational landscape. The study is expected to provide practical and theoretical insights to support the sustainability of Islamic education in the digital era.

Methods

This This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of local needs-based marketing strategies at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah. The case study approach was chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth, context-rich understanding of complex social phenomena in real-world settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). This aligns with the research objective of examining how the madrasah (Islamic school) adapts its marketing strategies to local socio-cultural and religious dynamics.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation of key stakeholders in the madrasah's marketing ecosystem (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample included school administrators (principal and vice-principal), parents, students, community leaders, and alumni. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning no new themes emerged from interviews and observations (Saunders et al., 2018). This process ensured data depth without redundancy.

Data collection involved methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2017) using three primary tools. First, semi-structured interviews with 12 participants focused on perceptions of local needs, integration of Islamic values in marketing, and resource-related challenges (Hassan & Ali, 2022; Widodo & Pratama, 2021). Second, participant observation during 40 hours of school activities (e.g., religious ceremonies, parent-teacher meetings) documented interactions between the madrasah and the community (Kurniawan, 2020). Third, document analysis of promotional materials, enrollment records (2019–2023), and meeting minutes assessed the alignment between marketing content and community values (Sari et al., 2023).

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Initial familiarization with 150 pages of interview transcripts and field notes led to open coding, generating 78 codes (e.g., "community trust-building," "digital literacy gaps"). These codes were grouped into five core themes: (1) balancing religious identity with modern skills (Zainuddin et al., 2023), (2) resource constraints in hybrid marketing (Santika, 2023), and (3) intergenerational communication challenges (Kurniawan, 2020). Themes were contextualized against existing literature on Islamic education marketing to strengthen conceptual validity.

Trustworthiness was ensured through four strategies. Triangulation cross-verified findings across data sources. Member checking confirmed that interpretations aligned with participants' perspectives (Birt et al., 2016), while an audit trail documented analytical decisions for transparency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researcher reflexivity, maintained through reflective journaling, minimized bias during data interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical compliance followed BERA (2018) guidelines. Participants provided written informed consent outlining research objectives and confidentiality. Identities were anonymized using codes (e.g., "P1-Principal"), and participants retained the right to withdraw without consequences.

The study has two key limitations. First, findings are context-specific to rural Indonesian madrasahs and may not generalize to urban or international settings. Second, despite six months of fieldwork reducing observer bias, subjective interpretation risks remain. However, triangulation and reflexivity significantly mitigated these issues.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to explore the implementation of local needs-based marketing strategies at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, focusing on curriculum adjustments, communication strategies with the community, as well as challenges and solutions in dealing with resource and infrastructure constraints. The results of this study are presented based on three main data collection techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies.

1. Curriculum Adjustment to Local Needs

One of the main findings in this study is how MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has adapted its curriculum to local needs. Based on in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers, it was found that the madrasah not only focuses on religious education, but also provides additional skills relevant to the needs of students in the modern era. One teacher stated that the upgrading of the curriculum in this madrasah was done to balance the religious aspects and practical skills. During the participatory observation, we saw how students received additional lessons on digital skills and foreign languages, which were delivered as part of the enrichment curriculum. This shows a concrete effort on the part of the madrasah to integrate religious knowledge with broader academic competencies.

Documentation collected from the school also shows that since 2022, the madrasah has developed a skills-based learning programme. This can be seen from the structured entrepreneurship training as well as additional information technology-based subjects. In the curriculum data, about 50% of the total learning hours are still allocated for religious education, while 20% is used for digital skills, 15% for foreign languages, and another 15% for entrepreneurship training. With this adjustment, the madrasah not only maintains religious values, but also ensures that its students are ready to face the challenges of an increasingly competitive world of work.

2. Communication Strategy with the Community

Communication with the community is an important part of MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah's marketing strategy. Based on interviews with the principal and parents of students, it was found that the madrasah actively uses a social approach in promoting its school. The principal stated that the madrasah uses religious activities and social events as the main medium to introduce the school to the community. In addition, regular recitations and gotong royong activities are effective means of building good relations

with the community. Parents also revealed that their involvement in school activities has increased their trust in the madrasah.

During the participatory observation, we saw how the school organised a monthly recitation event that was not only attended by students and teachers but also the surrounding community. In addition, social service activities involving students and the community become a very effective means of school promotion. The documentation study shows that the madrasah brochures and promotional materials feature community involvement as part of the school's identity. As much as 60% of communication with the community is done through religious activities, while 25% use social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook, and the other 15% through social service activities.

3. Challenges in Marketing Strategy Implementation

Although the community-based marketing strategy has proven to be effective, the madrasah still faces some challenges in its implementation. From the in-depth interview with the school principal, it is known that one of the main obstacles is the limited internet access in the area. This causes the digital marketing efforts to not run optimally. The principal mentioned that only 40 per cent of students have stable internet access at home, making digital marketing methods unreliable.

Observations also showed that technology facilities at the school are still limited and only a few teachers have the skills to manage digital media as a means of marketing the school. Documentation studies collected from the madrasah's internal reports show that another obstacle faced is the lack of community participation in promoting the school. In the data collected, it was found that 60 per cent of the neighbourhood residents knew about the madrasah through social and religious events, while only 25 per cent knew about it through social media. This suggests that community-based marketing is still the main strategy, although there is potential to expand the reach of promotion through digitalisation.

4. Solutions and Adaptation Strategies

In facing these challenges, the madrasah has started to develop some adaptation strategies. From the interview with the principal, it is known that they have started a training programme for teaching staff in digital marketing. This is done by collaborating with several educational institutions and communities to improve teachers' understanding of modern marketing strategies. The principal stated that this effort was made to ensure that the madrasah can be more active in using social media as a promotional tool.

Observations at the school also showed that the use of WhatsApp and Facebook is increasing as a medium of communication between the school and parents. Some promotional activities have also started to be recorded and shared in the form of videos to reach a wider audience. The documentation study shows that the madrasah marketing strategy report now focuses more on a hybrid approach, where traditional methods such as recitation and social service are still implemented, but are starting to be combined with the use of digital media.

Overall, the results of this study show that the implementation of local needs-based marketing strategies at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has had a positive impact on the competitiveness of the madrasah. The curriculum adjustments made have increased student interest, while community-based communication remains a major strength in school marketing. However, there are some challenges that still need to be overcome, especially related to digital infrastructure and the skills of teaching staff in managing social media as a promotional tool. By continuing to develop adaptive and innovative

strategies, madrasahs can maintain their relevance amid the dynamic educational needs of rural communities.

Discussion

1. Implementation of Marketing Strategies Based on Local Needs in Madrasahs

The results showed that MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has implemented a community-based marketing strategy by adjusting the curriculum, building close communication with the community, and overcoming challenges through adaptive strategies. This finding supports previous research that emphasises that community-based marketing can improve the competitiveness of Islamic education institutions by prioritising approaches that are in line with local culture and needs (Wahyuni et al., 2021). This approach enables madrasahs to maintain their relevance amidst the challenges of social and economic changes.

This madrasah has adapted a marketing model that is oriented towards community involvement in various aspects, from curriculum development to communication strategies with the community. This strategy is in line with research (Ibadiyah et al., 2022), which highlights how the application of the 7P strategy (product, price, promotion, place, people, process, physical evidence) in Islamic education marketing can increase the number of applicants and build the reputation of educational institutions. At MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, this strategy is seen in the combination of religious education and modern skills, reflecting the local community's need for a more inclusive and adaptive education.

Close communication with the community is also a major factor in the success of this madrasah marketing strategy. The study (Farwati, 2024) asserts that direct community involvement in madrasah activities, such as recitation and gotong royong, can strengthen the school's identity as an integral part of the community. This is echoed by the findings in this study, where the madrasah actively uses social media and digital platforms as communication tools, while still maintaining the conventional community-based approach.

Despite the positive impact of community-based marketing, madrasahs face challenges in the aspect of digitalisation. Research (Mahmud, 2019) shows that limited internet access and digital literacy among the community can be a major obstacle in technology-based school marketing. This was also observed in this study, where only around 40 per cent of students have stable internet access at home, so digital marketing efforts have not been fully optimised.

To overcome this challenge, madrasahs have developed adaptation strategies by combining conventional and digital marketing methods. Based on research (Hikmah et al., 2023), the use of social media as a marketing tool has proven effective in increasing the visibility of the school among the Muslim community. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah started to implement this approach by utilising WhatsApp and Facebook as the main media to reach out to the Muslim community.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that community-based marketing remains a key strategy in attracting students and building community trust in madrasahs. Although there are challenges in implementing digital marketing, the combination of community approach and technology adaptation can be an effective solution in improving the competitiveness of madrasahs in rural areas. These findings are in line with previous research and provide insights that can be applied by other madrasahs in designing marketing strategies that are more adaptive and suited to the needs of local communities.

2. Curriculum Adjustment to Respond to Local Needs

Curriculum adjustments at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah not only maintain religious aspects but also integrate modern skills such as digital literacy and foreign languages. This integration is done as a form of adaptation to the demands of the times, where Islamic education must not only be able to form religious characters but also equip students with relevant skills for the future (Ibadiyah et al., 2022). This approach confirms that the 7P concept in education marketing, which includes product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence, has been applied by this madrasah to fulfil community expectations (IstiAmalia et al., 2023).

The madrasah curriculum is now more flexible by adjusting to the needs of students and the challenges of the globalisation era. Research (Hasriadi et al., 2023) shows that Islamic education curriculum development must be able to combine academic and practical aspects so that graduates can adapt to the times. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah implements a competency-based curriculum and life skills that enable students to gain practical experience in accordance with the needs of industry and the world of work. This model has also been implemented in various other Islamic schools as a strategy to increase the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions (Handayani & Saadah, 2019).

One important aspect of curriculum adaptation is the integration of technology in learning. Research (Lestari & Emilia, 2023) emphasises that Islamic schools that adopt a digital-based curriculum are more successful in building students' academic competitiveness and skills. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has started to implement this approach by providing training in digital literacy and the use of technology in learning, ensuring that students not only understand religious knowledge but can also apply technology in daily life.

In addition, skills-based learning has become a major focus in this madrasah curriculum strategy. The concept of life skills-based curriculum, as developed in research (Hayani et al., 2023), asserts that Islamic education that integrates life skills can improve students' readiness to face the world of work. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah applies this method by adding entrepreneurship and social skills training as part of the regular curriculum. This step is in line with the competency-based curriculum model developed in the study (Mujib, 2021).

In the context of Islamic education, curriculum modernization also requires adaptation to the social and economic needs of the community. Research (Zaini et al., 2022) confirms that Islamic schools that are able to adapt their curriculum to the dynamics of the local economy tend to be more successful in attracting students and gaining support from the community. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has implemented this strategy by providing skills courses based on local industry needs, such as agricultural and creative industry training for students.

Furthermore, curriculum modernization at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah also considers the importance of strengthening Islamic character in the midst of globalization. Studies (Khasanah et al., 2023) show that Islamic education that prioritizes Islamic values-based characters has a significant role in shaping students' personalities that are resilient and ready to face the changing times. In this madrasah, Islamic values are not only taught through religious subjects but also integrated in every aspect of learning, including general subjects and extracurricular activities.

Overall, the curriculum adjustments at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah reflect the need to balance religious education, academics and practical skills so that students can be better prepared to face future challenges. The implementation of a hybrid curriculum approach that combines religious education with digital and entrepreneurial skills shows that this madrasah strives to remain relevant and competitive in the modern world of Islamic

education. This model can serve as an example for other madrasahs that want to improve their competitiveness by adjusting the curriculum according to local and global needs (Ramdane & Merah, 2020).

3. Effectiveness of Community-Based Communication Strategy

Community-based marketing at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah relies on social activities such as recitation, gotong royong, and social service events to increase public trust in the madrasah. This approach has been proven effective in various previous studies. For example, (Farwati, 2024) stated that direct interaction with the community through social events can increase community acceptance of madrasah. Another study also emphasized that social media has great potential as a broader communication tool, although in the rural context, direct community engagement is still a major factor in Islamic school marketing (Afriwanti & Pasrizal, 2021).

The effectiveness of community-based communication strategies in madrasah marketing can be explained through the theory of social interaction in educational communication. Research (Fitriani et al., 2024) shows that effective communication in Islamic educational institutions contributes to improving organizational performance and community satisfaction. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has utilized monthly recitation as a means of building closer communication with the community. This strategy allows the school to not only introduce their educational programs but also strengthen emotional connections with prospective students and their parents.

Meanwhile, a study found that interpersonal communication strategies involving personal approaches, group discussions and providing real examples in the community can increase public interest in Islamic education institutions (Amiruddin et al., 2021). In this madrasah, a similar approach is applied by giving special attention to prospective students and their families, and involving alumni in school promotion activities.

However, challenges in community-based communication also need to be considered. Research (Setyaningsih et al., 2019) emphasizes that in the digital era, Islamic schools must integrate traditional communication strategies with the use of online media. This is relevant to the findings in this study, where MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has started using WhatsApp and Facebook as the main communication tools with parents and the local community. However, limited internet access in rural areas is still a challenge that needs to be overcome to optimize this strategy (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

In addition, research (Saleh et al., 2021) shows that community-based communication in Islamic education can also be strengthened through a da'wah approach. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has implemented this method by collaborating with local scholars in various religious events involving the wider community.

Another study (Mr et al., 2024) revealed that community-based education has strong historical roots in Islamic tradition and can be an effective strategy to build collective awareness of the importance of education. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah uses a similar method by getting the community to participate in school activities, such as gotong royong and social service programs. This helps to create a sense of community ownership of the madrasah, which in turn increases loyalty and support for the educational institution.

In the context of effective communication in Islamic school settings, research (Rubino et al., 2023) emphasizes that communication that prioritizes Islamic values, such as politeness, exemplarity and openness, has a significant impact in building harmonious relationships between schools and communities. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah applies this principle by prioritizing an inclusive and Islamic values-based communication approach in every interaction with the community.

The communication strategy implemented by this madrasah also reflects the results of research (Nadila & Ritonga, 2023), which shows that community-based communication

can be an effective tool in building awareness of the importance of education among adolescents and families. By continuing to develop its community-based communication strategy and gradually integrating digital technology, this madrasah can expand its marketing reach without losing its closeness to the local community.

Overall, the effectiveness of the community-based communication strategy implemented at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah proves that direct interaction with the community is still a major factor in marketing Islamic education, especially in rural areas. Although there are challenges in implementing digital strategies, the combination of traditional and modern approaches can be an effective solution in building long-term relationships with the community as well as increasing the competitiveness of madrasahs in the era of globalization.

4. Challenges in Implementing Digital Marketing in Rural Areas

Although the community-based marketing strategy has yielded positive results, the limited infrastructure and human resources in digital marketing remain a major challenge. The results of this study show that only 40% of students have stable internet access at home, so the use of digital media in marketing strategies is still limited. Research (Mahmud, 2019) shows that limited internet access can hinder the effectiveness of school marketing, especially in areas with limited technological infrastructure. In addition, research (Handoyo et al., 2020) revealed that marketing strategies in new schools face challenges in developing affordable and effective digital marketing systems.

One of the main challenges in digital marketing in rural areas is the lack of evenly distributed internet penetration. Research (Khan, 2022) highlighted that the digital divide is still an obstacle in the implementation of technology in rural areas, which has a direct impact on education marketing strategies. This is also observed in the context of MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, where the limited internet network hinders the utilization of social media as a promotional tool.

In addition to infrastructure limitations, the skills of educators and administrative staff in managing digital marketing are also a challenge. The study (Safitri, 2024) emphasizes that low digital skills among educators hinder the effectiveness of digital marketing in Islamic schools. In MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, only a small number of teachers and administrative staff have expertise in social media management, so digital marketing strategies cannot be optimally utilized.

Other research also shows that madrasahs in rural areas face challenges in building brand image through digital marketing. The study (Chotimah & Akrom, 2024) revealed that effective digital marketing can improve the image of madrasahs and attract more students, but without adequate infrastructure and human resources support, these efforts often fail to achieve maximum results.

In addition to technical constraints, social and cultural aspects also affect the success of digital marketing in rural areas. Research (Aimah et al., 2024) shows that people in rural areas are more likely to rely on recommendations from religious and community leaders than information from digital media. Therefore, digital marketing strategies that are not integrated with a community approach are likely to be ineffective.

Another challenge is related to limited resources in producing attractive digital marketing content. A study (Pujianto & Muzdalifah, 2022) revealed that digital marketing in Islamic educational institutions needs to adjust to Islamic ethical principles in order to remain relevant to the religious values adopted by the surrounding community. Therefore, madrasahs need to be more creative in developing marketing strategies that are in accordance with local cultural and religious norms.

In facing the challenges of digital marketing, madrasahs have begun to adopt several adaptation strategies. One of them is to combine digital marketing with a community-

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based approach. Research (Rizqon & Fimaisarah, 2024) emphasizes that hybrid marketing strategies that combine online and offline marketing are more effective in attracting students and strengthening community loyalty to Islamic schools.

In addition, in Sakban's research revealed that the development of technology-based marketing models needs to be supported by training for educators and administrative staff in order to optimize the use of digital media (Sakban et al., 2024). MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has started to provide basic training to educators in managing digital content and using social media as a marketing tool.

Overall, challenges in implementing digital marketing in rural areas stem not only from infrastructure limitations, but also from social, cultural and human resource factors. Therefore, madrasahs need to develop a more holistic strategy by integrating digital marketing and community-based approaches to improve the effectiveness of school promotion. With this approach, it is expected that madrasahs can be more adaptive in facing the changing times and remain able to compete in the increasingly competitive world of Islamic education.

5. Adaptation Strategies to Overcome Challenges

To address the challenges in implementing digital marketing, MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has developed adaptation strategies that include digital marketing training for teaching staff and the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook as primary communication tools. Research by Mutakin et al. (2024) suggests that combining community-based marketing with digital strategies can increase student enrolment and expand the school's promotional reach. Furthermore, a study by Haris (2024) emphasises the importance of integrating digital and traditional marketing strategies to enhance the accessibility of schools in rural areas.

One of the key strategies implemented by this madrasah is improving the digital marketing skills of its teaching staff. Research by Safitri (2024) demonstrates that digital marketing training for educational staff can accelerate the adoption of technology in school promotion and enhance the effectiveness of digital-based marketing campaigns. By providing training on social media usage and digital branding strategies, the madrasah can more actively manage engaging and relevant digital content for prospective students and parents.

Additionally, the madrasah has begun adopting a social media-based digital marketing approach as a primary strategy for attracting new students. Research by Sajirun & Syah (2020) found that the use of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram in Islamic school marketing can increase public awareness of the school's strengths and attract more prospective students. At MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, the school's marketing team has actively managed social media content, including promotional materials for flagship programmes, alumni testimonials, and coverage of school activities.

Another strategy being implemented is strengthening the madrasah's identity through digital branding. A study by Chotimah & Akrom (2024) affirms that a strong digital school image can enhance public trust in Islamic educational institutions. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has begun applying branding strategies by reinforcing narratives of the madrasah's strengths, showcasing alumni success stories, and sharing engaging academic and extracurricular activities.

Alongside digital marketing, the madrasah maintains a community-based approach by involving the local community in school promotion. Research by Aimah et al. (2024) highlights that the combination of digital marketing and direct community engagement remains the most effective strategy for improving the competitiveness of Islamic schools. Therefore, the madrasah continues to hold regular religious lectures, social service

initiatives, and other religious activities as forms of community-based marketing that foster public loyalty.

Beyond enhancing teaching staff skills, the madrasah has also optimised the use of its official website as a primary information source for prospective students and parents. A study by Rizqon & Fimaisarah (2024) confirms that a professionally managed website can enhance the appeal of Islamic schools and provide broader accessibility for prospective students outside the local area.

Another adaptation strategy involves leveraging video content as part of digital marketing. Research by Wicaksono et al. (2022) emphasises that compelling promotional videos can help boost a school's appeal and provide a more comprehensive overview of its facilities and flagship programmes. The madrasah has begun producing school profile videos showcasing its facilities, student activities, and testimonials from alumni and parents.

Regarding digital communication management, the madrasah has also implemented a WhatsApp Group system to establish more effective communication with parents and prospective students. A study by Firdaus (2023) indicates that WhatsApp-based communication in Islamic education can increase parental engagement and provide quicker, easier access to information.

Overall, the adaptation strategies implemented by MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah reflect an integrated approach combining digital and community-based marketing. By enhancing teaching staff capacity in digital marketing, strengthening branding through social media and the website, and maintaining community engagement, the madrasah can effectively address various marketing challenges in the digital era. Through this approach, the madrasah remains relevant and competitive in attracting new students while expanding the reach of Islamic education promotion in rural areas.

6. Contribution to the Development of Theory and Practice in Madrasah Marketing

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of local needs-based marketing in madrasahs. In addition to confirming previous research, this study demonstrates that the most effective marketing model for madrasahs in rural areas is a combination of community-based strategies and digital marketing tailored to local infrastructure availability. This model affirms that madrasahs should not only focus on academic and religious aspects but also on strengthening community relationships as part of a broader marketing strategy. This aligns with the research by Rahman et al. (2024), which emphasises the importance of strategic marketing planning in Islamic education to enhance competitiveness and attract more students.

Furthermore, the results of this study also contribute to modifying Islamic education marketing theory, suggesting that madrasah marketing should not only rely on the 7P marketing mix but also incorporate community participation as a key factor in successful madrasah marketing strategies. This concept has been supported by Ibadiyah et al. (2022), whose study shows that applying the 7P strategy in Islamic education marketing can increase community satisfaction and trust in schools.

Madrasah marketing in the digital era also demonstrates that technology-based strategies can be a significant differentiator in building the image and credibility of Islamic schools. Research by Safitri (2024) reveals that integrating digital marketing into Islamic education can enhance school visibility and attract the attention of younger generations. Madrasahs that implement social media-based marketing and digital branding strategies tend to be more successful in attracting new students and expanding school promotion efforts.

This study also provides new insights into strengthening madrasah brand identity through digital marketing. Research by Chotimah & Akrom (2024) highlights that madrasahs with a strong digital presence can more easily gain public trust. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has begun implementing this strategy by showcasing alumni testimonials, broadcasting school activities live on social media, and fostering two-way communication with the community through digital platforms.

In terms of marketing practice, this study also confirms that an Islamic values-based marketing model can be an effective strategy for attracting students and building community loyalty towards madrasahs. Research by Hasan (2019) underscores that marketing based on Islamic values—such as honesty, trustworthiness, and service to the community—can shape public awareness of the importance of Islamic education. Therefore, madrasahs that adopt this values-based approach have greater potential to gain wider public acceptance.

Additionally, another contribution of this study is identifying the role of hybrid marketing in madrasah promotion. Research by Sajirun & Syah (2020) shows that combining digital marketing with community engagement can enhance the effectiveness of Islamic school promotion. MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah has begun implementing this strategy by maintaining direct community involvement through social and religious activities while developing digital media-based promotions to reach a broader audience.

In the context of Islamic education marketing, this study also underscores the importance of digital literacy among educators in managing school digital marketing. Research by Yudianto et al. (2023) emphasises that digital marketing training for teachers can improve the effectiveness of school promotion and expand the reach of Islamic education information. Therefore, strengthening digital literacy among educators can be a strategic step in madrasah marketing in the digital age.

Overall, this study makes a significant contribution to the development of madrasah marketing theory and practice by emphasising the importance of combining community-based and digital marketing strategies. By integrating community engagement, adaptive digital strategies, and Islamic values-based marketing, madrasahs can enhance their competitiveness in an increasingly competitive Islamic education landscape. The marketing model developed in this study can serve as a reference for other madrasahs seeking to optimise their marketing strategies to better align with societal needs and contemporary developments.

In summary, this research affirms that community-based marketing remains the primary strategy for attracting student interest and fostering public trust in madrasahs, particularly in rural areas. While challenges persist in digital marketing implementation, a combined approach of community engagement and technological adaptation can serve as an effective solution for enhancing madrasah competitiveness. These findings reinforce existing literature and provide practical recommendations for other Islamic educational institutions facing similar challenges in their educational marketing efforts.

Conclusion

This study examines the implementation of local-needs-based marketing strategies at MA Al-Wasilah Lil Hasanah, focusing on curriculum adaptation, community-based communication approaches, the challenges of digital marketing, and the madrasah's adaptive strategies in overcoming limited resources. The main findings indicate that a combination of community marketing strategies and gradual digital adaptation—despite infrastructure constraints—proves to be an effective approach to enhance the competitiveness of rural madrasahs. This hybrid approach not only preserves Islamic values as the foundation but also opens broader communication access to prospective

students and parents, particularly among the younger generation increasingly exposed to technology.

The key implication of this research highlights that rural madrasahs need to design marketing strategies that are responsive to local socio-cultural dynamics. While community-based approaches remain dominant in building loyalty and trust within the society, the integration of digital elements—such as simple social media use or messaging applications—holds significant potential for expanding promotional reach. The main challenges lie in the uneven internet infrastructure and digital literacy among madrasah administrators. To address these issues, digital skills training for staff and gradual infrastructure development through collaboration with local stakeholders are proposed as strategic recommendations.

The contribution of this study strengthens the theory of Islamic education marketing, emphasizing a balance between religious values and technological adaptation. The proposed marketing model does not solely focus on commercial aspects but places Islamic principles—such as honesty, transparency, and community service—at the core of every interaction. This creates a strong differentiation for madrasahs in competition with general schools. Future research may explore the application of advanced technologies, such as data analytics or artificial intelligence, in more limited contexts, and examine the long-term impacts of hybrid strategies on the financial and academic sustainability of rural madrasahs. By combining local wisdom with measured innovation, this study not only provides a practical roadmap for rural madrasahs but also enriches theoretical insights into value-based educational marketing in the era of digital transformation.

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