



Branding Image Strategy in Enhancing the Competitive Advantage of Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz Yogyakarta

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out the strategy of building image branding in the Islamic boarding school Bin Baz Yogyakarta. This type of research is qualitative research. Data collection techniques in this study through interviews. The data analysis technique uses Miles and Huberman qualitative analysis, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The location of this research is Islamic boarding school Bin Baz Yogyakarta. The results showed that: The Brand Building Strategy carried out by Islamic boarding school Bin Baz is through several stages as follows; Analyse the reasons for choosing a brand, Determine the branding program, Make branding activities in accordance with the program, Form a branding team, Determine the media used for branding, Increase the role of public relations in branding and Analyse parents' satisfaction with the results.

Keywords: Strategy, Branding Image, Competitiveness

A. Introduction

Competition among educational institutions is becoming increasingly intense, and marketing for educational institutions is now crucial. As education providers, institutions need to learn and take proactive actions to enhance the satisfaction of their customers, including students, parents, and the wider community. The presence of numerous educational institutions today has made the competition fierce. Yogyakarta, known as the 'City of Students,' is home to dozens of foundations engaged in education under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. According to data from ditpdpontren.kemenag.go.id, there are even 319 Islamic boarding schools in this province.

Based on these facts, the competition among educational foundations is undoubtedly intense, and therefore, 'each educational institution must differentiate its products to achieve sustainable competitive advantages' (Alwi, 2016). Building a strong image and branding is an intangible asset of great value for an institution as it signifies quality (Nashihin, H., Mafaza, N., Haryana, M., Okky, 2021), trust, and distinctiveness (Törmälä, 2018). The connection between consistency in branding strategies results in a strong brand, as stated, 'Consistent and strategic branding leads to strong brand equity' (Peloza, 2012) (Sürücü, 2019). Branding for an educational institution is a modern marketing tool aimed at attracting (Hafidz, 2021), engaging, and retaining students, as well as positioning the educational institution in a competitive environment (Robbaniyah et al., 2022) for competition (Sultan, 2019) (Romanto et al., 2022).

Quoting Sultan (2019) on statements by Keller (2002), de Chernatony, and McWilliam (1990), 'branding involves the development of consumers' emotional and rational expectations that differentiate the brand from its competitors' (Sultan, 2019). The strong emotional bond between consumers and the brand introduces a theory called the 'lovemarks theory,' as proposed by Roberts (2004), which states that 'introduced a theory about consumers' emotional attachment, called the lovemarks theory, including brand love and respect. Interestingly, the theory of lovemarks seems to be easily related in the backdrop of namebrand.'

In general, educational institutions employ various methods to demonstrate their presence (Suriadi, 2022), and the most commonly used methods include mass media, whether it is print media, electronic media, or online media (Husna Nashihin, Rani Efendi, and Suci Salmiyatun, 2020). All schools publicize their building facilities, student achievements, teacher accomplishments, extensive alumni

networks, and more to gain public trust. These activities are common branding strategies employed by educational institutions, similar to other service companies.

One of the noteworthy pesantren in Yogyakarta to study is the Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School. The community's interest in this boarding school can be demonstrated by the increasing number of students each year. According to the data obtained, the number of students in this pesantren has been consistently increasing across all levels: SU (equivalent to elementary school), SW (equivalent to junior high school), and MA (equivalent to senior high school). In 2017, the total number of male and female students reached 1,155. Then, in 2018, the number increased to 1,385 male and female students. The following year, in 2019, there was further growth, with a total of 1,599 male and female students. In 2020, the number increased again to 1,706 male and female students

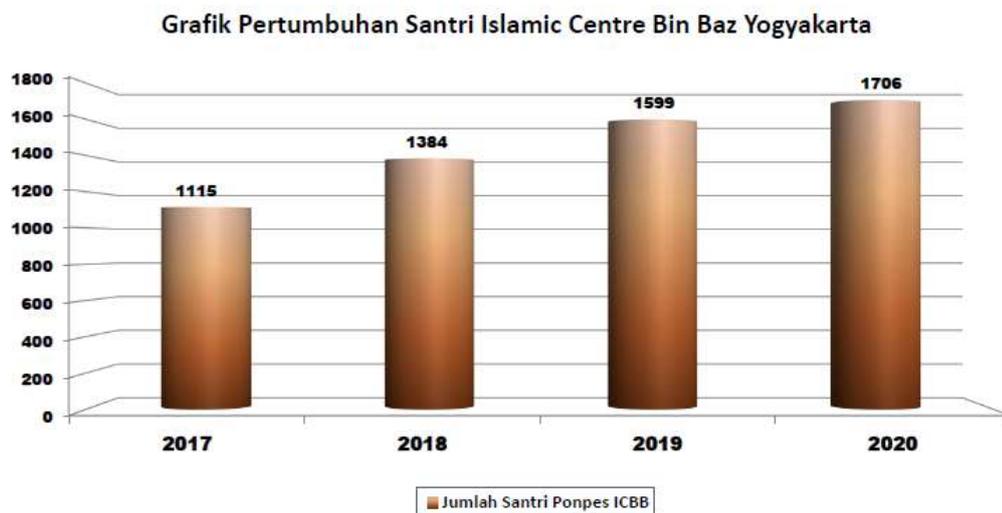


Figure 1 Growth Chart of Students at Islamic Center Bin Baz Yogyakarta

A research on branding image was previously conducted by Mr. Khoiruman Syah in 2015, which took place at the Islamic Boarding School Foundation (YPI) Al-Azhar Yogyakarta. The branding that YPI Al-Azhar Yogyakarta aimed to develop was a school that excels in the fields of science and religious studies. The branding was intended to establish Al-Azhar School as synonymous with the best quality education that equips students with beneficial knowledge in both science and religion. The branding strategy adopted by YPI Al-Azhar Yogyakarta included the development of a specialized curriculum aligned with the educational system of Al-Azhar in Egypt, providing excellent facilities and infrastructure, offering health

insurance guarantees, and actively engaging students in national competitions to enhance the school's rating (Khoiruman Syah, 2015).

Compared to previous research, the objective of this study is to understand the branding image strategies employed by Islamic Center Bin Baz Yogyakarta to enhance its competitiveness and ensure it doesn't fall behind other educational institutions. For the researcher, Islamic Center Bin Baz is one of the successful Islamic educational foundations, as evidenced by the significant increase in the number of students each year and the high level of interest from prospective students. Therefore, it is important to conduct a study on the branding image strategies of Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz to analyze the branding strategies used by the institution's management and enable it to compete with other competitors.

B. Method

In this research, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach (Nashihin 2023). According to Moleong (2015), qualitative research is defined as 'research that seeks to understand phenomena based on the experiences of the research subjects, described in words and language, utilizing various scientific methods. The data collection method used in this study was interviews. This method involves a conversation between the researcher and the research subjects, where the researcher asks questions that the subjects or a group of subjects respond to. The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz Yogyakarta. The data analysis procedure followed the guidelines provided by Miles et al. (2014). In presenting the data, the research followed a process of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The data analysis was facilitated using Atlas.ti software version 8. The purpose of using this software was to facilitate data organization, processing, and concept mapping for the research (Mahmudah, 2021).

C. Discussion

1. The Concept of Image Branding for Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School

Image branding is a strategic approach aimed at building a strong and positive image for an organization or institution, including Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. Enhancing the competitiveness Chang, Y. Y.

C. 2013). of an Islamic boarding school through image branding strategies can help attract public attention, build trust, and differentiate it from competitors.

Here are the key concepts of image branding for Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School:

a. Establishing Identity and Core Values:

Identify and articulate the core values of the boarding school, such as holistic Islamic education, diversity, tolerance, leadership, and social responsibility. Define a visual identity that reflects these values through consistent logos, colors, and design elements.

b. Crafting Consistent Messages:

Determine the messages to be conveyed to the public, such as the excellence of Islamic education, student achievements, flagship programs, or the boarding school's contributions to society. Ensure that these messages are consistent and easily understood by the target audience.

c. Developing Visual Branding:

Design promotional materials and other communication tools while considering the established visual identity, such as brochures, banners, posters, and social media content. Focus on creating visually appealing, recognizable, and impactful designs.

d. Effective Communication:

Utilize social media, websites, and other communication channels to introduce Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School to the public. Actively share relevant content, such as information about activities, student achievements, testimonials, and contributions to the community.

e. Community Engagement:

Involve the community in boarding school activities, such as seminars, discussions, trainings, or social initiatives. Create forums that enable interaction between the boarding school and the community, such as meetings with scholars or religious dialogues.

f. Collaboration and Partnerships:

Establish partnerships with educational institutions, community organizations, or relevant institutions to expand networks and enhance the image

of Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School. Seek collaborations that align with the values and goals of the boarding school.

g. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

Monitor public responses and feedback to branding efforts. Conduct periodic evaluations of branding strategies and make adjustments as necessary.

Based on the data about the Image Branding of Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz, the researcher conducted interviews with several participants to obtain the required data. The interview was conducted with Ust. Amrin Mustofa, the Mudir (director) of Islamic Center Bin Baz Yogyakarta, to gather data on branding strategies to enhance the competitiveness of the Islamic Center Bin Baz pesantren. He explained that the Islamic Center Bin Baz Pesantren is a pesantren that teaches important core values of Sharia and instills the urgency of religious knowledge, specifically the comprehensive practice of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad sallallahu alaihi wa sallam, in accordance with the understanding of the Salafus Salih (righteous predecessors) such as the companions, tabi'in, tabi' al-tabi'in, and the scholars who followed them. Strengthening the core competencies is fundamental to ensure that all students have a strong faith character and righteous actions, as well as the skills needed to face the future. The ABATA program constitutes the five core values of the Islamic Centre Bin Baz Pesantren. ABATA stands for Aqidah (faith), Arabic language, Akhlaq (morality), Tahfizh (memorization of the Qur'an), and Academics. These five elements are the main target abilities for every student, both in the pesantren activities and in the school.

Branding image strategies are planned and implemented steps to build a strong and positive image for an organization or institution, including pesantren like the Islamic Center Bin Baz in Yogyakarta. Enhancing the competitiveness of the pesantren through branding image strategies (Hafizin, H. 2022) can help attract public attention, build trust, and differentiate it from competitors. Here are several steps that can be taken to design a branding image strategy for the Islamic Center Bin Baz in Yogyakarta:

a. **Determine Identity and Core Values:**

Identify and elaborate on the core values of the pesantren, such as holistic Islamic education, diversity, tolerance, leadership, and social care. Define a visual identity that reflects these values through a consistent logo, colors, and design elements.

b. Consistent Messaging:

Define the messages to be conveyed to the public, such as the excellence of Islamic education, student achievements, flagship programs, or the pesantren's contributions to society. Ensure that these messages are consistent and easily understood by the target audience.

c. Visual Branding Development:

Design promotional materials and other communication tools while considering the established visual identity, such as brochures, banners, posters, and social media. Consider attractive design quality that is easily recognizable and leaves a lasting impression.

d. Effective Communication:

Utilize social media, websites, and other communication channels to introduce the Islamic Center Bin Baz to the public. Be active in sharing relevant content, such as information about activities, student achievements, testimonials, and contributions to the community.

e. Community Engagement:

Involve the community in pesantren activities, such as seminars, discussions, training, or social activities. Create forums that allow interaction between the pesantren and the community, such as meetings with scholars or religious dialogues.

f. Collaboration and Partnerships:

Establish partnerships with educational institutions, community organizations, or other relevant institutions to expand networks and enhance the image of the Islamic Center Bin Baz. Seek partnerships that align with the values and goals of the pesantren.

g. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Monitor the response and feedback from the public regarding the branding efforts. Evaluate the branding strategy periodically and make adjustments as needed.

In addition, it is important to maintain the quality of education and services provided by the Islamic Center Bin Baz. By providing a good experience for the students and making a positive impact on the surrounding community,

2. Implementation of Image Branding for Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta

To implement image branding for the Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta, the following steps (Alwi, S. F. S. 2016). can be taken:

a. Situation Analysis:

Conduct a thorough analysis of the current situation, including internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats (David Hunger dan Thomas Wheelen 2003). Identify the target audience and gain a deep understanding of their needs, preferences, and expectations.

b. Brand Identity Development:

Establish the core values and unique selling propositions of the Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School. Develop a brand identity that aligns with these values and propositions, including a logo, slogan, and visual elements. Ensure consistency in the use of the brand identity across all communication materials.

c. Design Promotional Materials:

Create visually appealing and informative promotional materials, such as brochures, leaflets, and pamphlets. Use design elements that reflect the brand identity and incorporate clear and compelling messages. Include high-quality photos that depict the school's facilities, activities, and achievements.

d. Website and Social Media Presence:

Build a professional and user-friendly website for the Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School. Provide comprehensive information about the school's profile, educational programs, facilities, achievements, and latest news. Establish an active presence on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube. Share relevant content, such as articles, photos, videos, and testimonials from students and parents.

e. Special Events and Programs:

Organize special events and programs that reflect the identity and values of the Islamic Center Bin Baz Islamic Boarding School. Invite renowned scholars,

religious figures, or experts in Islamic education as speakers or contributors. Engage the local community through open houses, workshops, or religious festivals.

f. Partnerships and Collaborations:

Establish partnerships with educational institutions, religious organizations, and relevant stakeholders. Collaborate on educational programs, social initiatives, or joint projects to expand the reach and impact of the Islamic Center Bin Baz.

g. Testimonials and Success Stories:

Gather testimonials and success stories from students, parents, or alumni about their experiences at the Islamic Center Bin Baz. Share these testimonials through various channels, including the website, social media, and promotional materials. Highlight the positive impact of the school on students' personal growth and academic achievements.

h. Evaluation and Monitoring:

Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the branding strategies implemented. Collect feedback and track public perception and response to the branding efforts. Make necessary adjustments and improvements based on the evaluation results.

There are several supporting factors that contribute to the implementation of the Image Branding strategy for Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz. These factors include:

- a. Strong Vision and Mission: The existence of a clear vision and mission for the institution provides a foundation for the branding strategy. It helps in defining the unique identity and goals of the pesantren.
- b. Quality Education and Programs: Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz offers high-quality education and comprehensive programs that cater to the needs of the students. This includes a strong focus on both religious and academic education.
- c. Competent and Dedicated Staff: The presence of qualified and dedicated teachers and staff members plays a crucial role in implementing the branding strategy. Their expertise and commitment contribute to the overall reputation of the institution.
- d. Infrastructure and Facilities: Having well-maintained and modern infrastructure and facilities creates a positive impression and enhances the

overall image of the pesantren. It provides a conducive learning environment for the students.

- e. **Active Community Engagement:** The active involvement and engagement of the pesantren with the local community, parents, and alumni are important factors in building a positive brand image. This can be done through various activities, collaborations, and partnerships.
- f. **Effective Communication and PR:** A strong communication strategy and effective public relations help in conveying the values, achievements, and unique features of the pesantren to the target audience. This includes utilizing various channels such as social media, websites, and community events.
- g. **Continuous Improvement and Innovation:** The commitment to continuous improvement, innovation, and staying updated with the latest educational trends and practices are vital for maintaining a competitive edge and attracting students and parents.

These factors collectively contribute to the successful implementation of the Image Branding strategy for Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz, enabling it to stand out among other educational institutions.

There are several factors that can hinder the implementation of the Image Branding strategy for Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz. These factors may include:

- a. **Limited Resources:** Insufficient financial resources, lack of technological infrastructure, and limited manpower can hinder the implementation of an effective Image Branding strategy. Adequate resources are necessary to carry out branding activities, develop marketing materials, and maintain an online presence.
- b. **Resistance to Change:** Resistance from internal stakeholders, such as management, teachers, or staff, can pose a challenge to the implementation of the branding strategy. Some individuals may be resistant to change or may not fully understand the benefits of branding, which can slow down the process.
- c. **Lack of Awareness and Understanding:** If the target audience, including students, parents, and the local community, has limited awareness or understanding of the branding efforts, it can impede the success of the strategy. Effective communication and education about the purpose and benefits of branding are crucial.

- d. **Negative Public Perception:** If the pesantren has previously faced negative publicity or has a reputation issue in the community, it can hinder the implementation of the branding strategy. Overcoming negative perceptions and rebuilding trust may require additional efforts and time.
- e. **Competitive Environment:** The presence of other well-established educational institutions in the area can create a highly competitive environment. Standing out and differentiating the pesantren's brand from others can be challenging, requiring unique positioning and value propositions.
- f. **Lack of Consistency:** Inconsistency in implementing branding activities can weaken the overall brand image. It is important to have a consistent and cohesive approach in all branding efforts, including messaging, design, and communication channels.

External Factors: External factors such as changes in government policies, economic conditions, or societal shifts can also impact the implementation of the branding strategy. These factors may be beyond the control of the pesantren but can affect its image and positioning. Identifying and addressing these factors can help overcome the barriers to implementing the Image Branding strategy effectively. It requires a proactive approach, effective communication, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

The Image Branding strategy for Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz offers several advantages that can contribute to its success. Some of these advantages include:

- a. **Differentiation:** Effective branding allows Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz to differentiate itself from other pesantren and educational institutions. By showcasing its unique values, offerings, and strengths, it can stand out in a competitive environment and attract the attention of potential students, parents, and the community.
- b. **Reputation Enhancement:** Through strategic branding, the pesantren can enhance its reputation and build a positive image in the minds of its target audience. A strong brand image associated with quality education, strong religious values, and a nurturing environment can increase trust and credibility among students, parents, and the community.
- c. **Increased Enrollment:** A well-executed Image Branding strategy can attract more students to enroll in Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz. A positive brand image and reputation can create a perception of excellence and make the

pesantren a preferred choice among parents seeking a holistic education for their children.

- d. **Community Engagement:** Branding efforts can help strengthen the pesantren's relationship with the local community. By actively promoting its activities, achievements, and community involvement, the pesantren can establish itself as a valuable and contributing institution, fostering goodwill and support from the community.
- e. **Alumni Engagement:** Effective branding can create a sense of pride and loyalty among alumni, encouraging them to stay connected and engaged with the pesantren. Alumni can become valuable ambassadors, promoting the pesantren's brand and contributing to its growth and development.
- f. **Partnerships and Collaborations:** A strong brand image can attract potential partners and collaborators, including educational institutions, organizations, and sponsors. These partnerships can provide opportunities for knowledge sharing, resource mobilization, and joint initiatives, further enhancing the pesantren's offerings and impact.
- g. **Long-term Sustainability:** Building a strong brand image and reputation can contribute to the long-term sustainability of Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz. A positive brand perception can lead to increased support, donations, and funding opportunities, ensuring the pesantren's continued growth and development.

It is important to note that the success of the Image Branding strategy relies on consistent implementation, effective communication, and delivering on the promises and values associated with the brand.

D. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, data processing, and analysis conducted by the researcher regarding the branding image strategy of Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz Yogyakarta, it can be concluded as follows the branding image strategy implemented by Pondok Pesantren Islamic Center Bin Baz Yogyakarta includes the following steps; analyzing the reasons for brand selection, determining the branding programs, implementing branding activities aligned with the programs, establishing a branding team, selecting the appropriate media for branding, enhancing the role of public relations (PR) in branding, and analyzing parental satisfaction with the outcomes.

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