

# Implementation Sharia Marketing Management Strategy to Develop of Islamic Boarding School Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores sharia marketing management strategies in the development of Islamic boarding schools through a case study conducted at Pesantren Almiftah Lamongan. The research employs a qualitative case study approach, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that the pesantren implements a holistic and value-oriented marketing strategy grounded in the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, and public welfare throughout its marketing practices. The institution adopts a hybrid marketing model that integrates digital strategies with traditional pesantren networks, while the Kyai plays a central role as an ethical guide who positions marketing as a form of da'wah rather than purely economic activity. This study proposes a conceptual framework for Islamic marketing that emphasizes ethical, educational, and spiritual dimensions, thereby contributing both to the development of Islamic marketing theory and to practical strategies for pesantren advancement.

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## INTRODUCTION

The increasingly competitive Islamic education market, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are required to develop strong differentiation strategies. Much of the literature on marketing management of Islamic educational services discusses the harmonization of Islamic values and modern marketing strategies (Liriwati et al., 2024; Rosady, 2023). However, these studies are generally generic for Islamic boarding schools in general and have not specifically explored how Sharia values (honesty,

trustworthiness, and justice) are integrated into marketing strategies within specific local Islamic boarding schools.

Socially, the Almiiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan faces challenges in maintaining its Islamic identity while expanding its appeal to prospective students. Although student entrepreneurial empowerment has been implemented, the strategic application of sharia marketing theory to promote the institution has not been widely explored. Research by Liriwati, Ilyas, Mulyadi, Syahid, & Kafrawi (2024) discusses marketing strategies for educational services in Islamic boarding schools, focusing on harmonizing Islamic values, market segmentation, branding, and the use of social media as a promotional channel (Liriwati et al., 2024). However, this research does not specifically address local contexts such as Almiiftah and rarely emphasizes the theoretical integration of sharia principles into the institution's marketing structure.

Rosady's (2023) study of empowerment within Almiiftah Lamongan describes the empowerment of students through entrepreneurship and cooperative education. However, the primary focus was on the economic empowerment of the students, not the integration of Sharia values into the institution's overall marketing strategy. More broadly, research on sharia marketing in the context of MSMEs, micro-institutions such as Micro Waqf Banks, and the agricultural product industry (Hasan et al., 2024; Fatkhur Rohman, 2024; Permata & Rahmi Aini, 2020) demonstrates the application of sharia values in branding and marketing communications. However, there is no literature examining sharia marketing management in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as educational institutions and religious brand entities.

This study offers methodological and contextual novelty by combining a theoretical approach to sharia marketing with real-world practices at the Almiiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan. It provides a comprehensive overview of how sharia values (transparency, fairness, and trustworthiness) are integrated into the marketing mix components (educational product, price, place, and promotion) implemented by the boarding school's management. Furthermore, this study presents a holistic approach that combines digital marketing (social media, websites) with traditional community-based strategies for Islamic boarding schools, such as alumni channels, kyai networks, self-reflection, and word-of-mouth promotion. This approach is expected to All tables and figures should be cited in numerical order. produce an authentic and contextual sharia marketing model for other Islamic boarding schools.

This study aims to explain, describe, and analyze the sharia marketing management strategies used in the development of the Almiiftah Lamongan Islamic Boarding School institution, including the application of sharia marketing theory in practice and its contribution to the growth in the number of students and the reputation of the institution.

The author argues that Sharia-based marketing management can provide a sustainable competitive advantage by strengthening the Islamic identity of Islamic

boarding schools while increasing their appeal to the Muslim community. Integrating Sharia values into marketing strategies not only increases the number of prospective students but also deepens stakeholder trust in the institution's reputation and integrity. This research is significant because it provides an academic contribution in the form of a concrete model of sharia marketing strategy in the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). It also offers practical recommendations for Islamic boarding school managers who wish to combine promotional effectiveness with Islamic values. This model can serve as a reference for the development of other Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study. The qualitative approach was chosen because it can deeply explore the meanings, values, and strategies implemented by institutions within specific social and cultural contexts. Qualitative approaches allow researchers to understand how sharia values are translated into the marketing strategies of Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Meanwhile, the case study is used to examine specific, complex and contextual phenomena within a real-world setting, namely the Almiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, which serves as the sole unit of analysis in this research (Creswell, 2014). The case study was chosen instrumentally, namely to understand how sharia marketing management practices support the development of Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions.

The research location is the Almiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, East Java, which was purposively selected because this Islamic boarding school is known as one of the Islamic boarding schools that develops business units and educational promotion strategies based on Islamic values. This Islamic boarding school not only carries out educational and da'wah functions, but also actively develops various sharia-based entrepreneurial activities that have the potential to strengthen the institution's competitiveness. The research subjects consisted of several key actors in the Islamic boarding school marketing system, including the Islamic boarding school leader (kyai), business unit managers (such as cooperatives or Islamic boarding school food/beverage businesses), the public relations or promotion department, senior students involved in digital marketing, and alumni who are active in assisting with promotion and recruitment of new students.

Data collection techniques were conducted through three main methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with key informants to obtain data on marketing strategies, sharia values applied in the promotion process, and challenges and opportunities faced. These interviews were semi-structured to allow researchers the flexibility to delve deeper into informants' answers (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In addition, researchers also conducted direct observations of marketing practices, including promotional

activities on social media, brochures, open house activities, and meetings with students' guardians. Meanwhile, documentation studies were used to explore official documents such as the Islamic boarding school's vision and mission, promotional guidelines, student entrepreneurial activity portfolios, and digital archives that demonstrate Islamic-based marketing narratives.

The data obtained from these three techniques were analyzed using interactive thematic analysis as developed by Miles and Huberman (2014). This process involves three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by sorting and simplifying relevant information from interviews, observations, and documentation. The data was then organized and presented in the form of thematic narratives, matrices, or direct quotations to identify patterns and interrelationships between themes. The final stage was drawing initial conclusions, which were then verified through triangulation and member checks to ensure the validity of the findings.

To ensure data validity, this study employed four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through triangulation of sources, time, and data collection methods. Transferability was maintained by explaining the Islamic boarding school context in detail so readers could assess the extent to which the research findings could be applied elsewhere. Dependability was achieved by systematically compiling an audit trail of the research process, and confirmability was ensured by maintaining researcher objectivity through critical reflection and transparent data reporting.

Furthermore, this study adhered to ethical research principles, including ensuring the confidentiality of informants' identities, honestly explaining the research objectives, and obtaining informed consent from each informant prior to conducting the interviews. All data obtained was treated with academic integrity and was not used for purposes other than this research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Integration of Sharia Values in Marketing Strategy**

The research results show that the marketing strategy implemented by the Almiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan consistently adheres to sharia principles, particularly the values of trustworthiness, honesty, and *tabsyir* (delivering good news). This was revealed in interviews with Informant 1, namely the Kyai and the main leader of the Islamic boarding school, who emphasized that all activities Promotion must reflect Islamic ethics. He stated, "We choose trustworthiness and honesty as our main principles. Marketing must not be excessive; it must be authentic and uphold the honor of the Islamic boarding school." This statement demonstrates that the Islamic boarding school focuses not only on attracting prospective students but also on upholding moral and spiritual values in conveying information to the public. The brochures, promotional videos, and social media posts reviewed during

the observation reinforce this, as they found no hyperbolic claims or commercially manipulated visualizations. The content displayed emphasized the authenticity of the educational atmosphere, worship, and the students' daily entrepreneurial activities.

Meanwhile, the promotional approach for Islamic boarding school products such as drinking water Healthy Students also based on sharia principles. Informant 2, the manager of the Islamic boarding school's business unit, explained that they use a halal-tayyib approach combined with Islamic education. He said, "Halal-tayyib products. "Healthy Students "Promoted with verses or hadiths and moral messages curated by the council of religious teachers. We want the product to convey Islamic education." This demonstrates that the values of da'wah are also internalized in the product, making marketing a means of spreading good values, not just a commercial tool. Field observations support this, as each product package contains a prayer quote, verse, or moral message reflecting Islamic values.

These findings confirm what was stated by Kartajaya and Sula (2006), that in the framework of sharia marketing, spiritual values such assiddiq (Honest), trust(trustworthy), and tabligh (conveying the message correctly) is the foundation of every promotional activity. Marketing not only aims to increase sales or the number of students, but also serves as part of da'wah (Islamic outreach), conveying Islamic values in a gentle, polite, and inspiring manner (Kartajaya & Sula, 2006). In this context, the marketing carried out by the Almiiftah Islamic Boarding School can be categorized as a spiritual marketing practice, namely a marketing strategy based on moral integrity and religious teachings as a differentiating advantage (Maulana & Fitria, 2020).

Furthermore, this strategy aligns with the concept of value-based marketing from an Islamic perspective, emphasized by Rahmadani and Yusuf (2021). In their view, value-based marketing in Islamic institutions is not simply about meeting consumer needs but also about delivering moral value and spiritual values that form an emotional closeness between institutions and society. Promotion of products and educational institutions must be rooted in maqāsid syarī'ah, namely safeguarding religion, reason, lineage, soul, and property, so that the entire marketing process cannot be separated from the value of benefit and blessing.

In practice in Islamic boarding schools, this integration produces a unique form of marketing communication: promotions do not display instant promises such as "students become smart quickly" or "enter the Islamic boarding school and immediately become successful", but rather highlighting the narrative of the process, struggle, sincerity, and long-term benefits of studying in an Islamic environment. One of the Instagram content reviewed, titled "Days with the Qur'an," depicts students reciting the Quran under a shady tree, without any visual effects or excessive editing. This demonstrates how authenticity, simplicity, and spirituality are the primary attractions not visual manipulation or empty promises. This also aligns with the principle of honesty in Islamic marketing according to Indiharwati et al. (2020), which

states that sharia marketing must be free from elements of *ghurur* (deception), *tadlis* (concealment of defects), and *ihtikar* (manipulative market manipulation).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Almiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan has successfully established a marketing model that is both value-driven and faith-driven. This strategy provides a unique competitive advantage compared to other educational institutions, as it relies not only on promotional content but also firmly rooted in the narrative of blessings, trustworthiness, and the values of *da'wah*, which are key attractions for the Muslim community. This model can be replicated by other Islamic boarding schools by integrating sharia values into all aspects of marketing from visual narratives and product communications to distribution and promotional strategies.

In its communication strategy journey, Almiftah Lamongan Islamic Boarding School deliberately utilizes various modern and traditional channels to build a strong, authentic, and sharia-compliant brand. Informant 3, the Islamic boarding school's public relations officer, explained that "our main strategy is to utilize social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok in an educational and spiritual way, as well as to leverage our alumni network and the community of students' guardians." He added that "we promote light-hearted Islamic preaching content and student stories so that parents feel the Islamic boarding school is friendly and educational." This strategy reflects a choice of channels that not only reach a wide audience but are also consistent with the Islamic boarding school's values of community-based and subtle Islamic preaching.

The role of alumni as brand ambassadors is also very dominant. Informant 4, an active alumnus in Jakarta, stated: "Public trust in Almiftah grows because alumni bring good values to the community, and that is the best promotion." Alumni voluntarily share testimonials in the local community, cultivating the image of the Islamic boarding school as a trustworthy and socially impactful institution. Field observations also confirmed that alumni are often seen facilitating registration events in their areas, speaking with parents of prospective students, and sharing videos of their Islamic boarding school learning experiences with their networks.

Branding with a community-based approach (community-based branding) is also carried out through various public events. For example, report, the committee for the event, said that during the last Prophet's Birthday event, the committee provided a booth for student products, registration for new students, and a session introducing the vision of the Islamic boarding school by caregivers. Observations revealed that the product booth featured educational labels, narratives of student success stories, and a session for alumni to share experiences. This approach strengthened the image of Islamic boarding schools not only as educational institutions but also as centers for mobilizing the local Muslim community.

Theoretically, this communication and branding strategy is consistent with the ideas of spiritual branding and social marketing in sharia literature. Nasution (2021)

emphasizes that branding Islamic educational institutions is not merely visual aesthetics; it must convey inspiring moral values and Islamic identity. Similarly, Tasmara (2015) explains that promotional communications in the context of Islamic business must be honest and non-manipulative, and must strengthen social bonds with consumers. In this case, Islamic boarding schools do not simply sell educational services but share spiritual values and commitments with the community. This approach is also complemented by the theorybrand touchpoints from the Zaadul Muslim Taklim Assembly (Nuris & Murtono, 2025), that every interaction—whether through social media, alumni, or community activities—acts as a touchpoint that shapes public perception and loyalty.

Thus, the Islamic boarding school's public relations strategy can be interpreted as spiritual and communal branding, where the boarding school combines digital power, personal alumni networks, and communal activities to build trust, emotional bonds, and a moral reputation. This approach not only increases visibility but also strengthens the boarding school's legitimacy as an institution that lives alongside the community with authentic values of civility and religiosity.

### **Sharia Marketing Mix**

The research findings show that the Almiftah Lamongan Islamic Boarding School consistently applies the 4P marketing mix model which has been modified according to sharia principles, namely Product (product), Price (price), Place (place), and Promotion (promotion each element of this strategy is explicitly built on the values of justice, honesty, and benefit that are the foundation of Islamic economic activity.

In terms of product, Informant 2, as the Islamic boarding school's business unit manager, explained that the educational services offered are not only oriented towards mastering religious knowledge, but also towards developing the students' character and skills. He stated, "Students are not only taught the scriptures, but also manners, teamwork, and business skills." Field observations support this, as evidenced by the students' routine activities in the Islamic boarding school cooperative, entrepreneurship training, and involvement in the management of the Islamic boarding school's drinking water products. This demonstrates that the Islamic boarding school's "product" is holistic touching on spiritual, intellectual, and life skills aspects. In the literature on sharia marketing, this aligns with the thinking of Indiharwati et al. (2020) who emphasize that products in sharia framework must provide benefits, not cause harm (*maḍarāt*), and contain elements of *maslahat*.

In terms of pricing, Islamic boarding schools employ a cross-subsidy model. Students from well-off families are charged the normal price, while those from underprivileged families receive discounts through scholarships based on zakat and alms from alumni. This scheme reflects the values of justice and balance in Islam, where pricing is not solely profit-oriented, but also considers benefits and blessings. According to Khairunnisa (2010), pricing strategies in sharia marketing emphasize not only competitiveness and profitability but also the principles of social justice and equal

access for the community. This system also builds a sense of ownership among alumni and guardians of students towards the sustainability of the Islamic boarding school.

Place (place) as the third element in the marketing mix is maximized by building partnerships with large mosques in various cities as information centers and registration posts for new students. This strategy reduces dependence on a single physical location and leverages the Muslim community network to expand reach. Observations show that registration brochures and banners are placed on the noticeboards of partner mosques, and regular religious study activities are used as a means of socializing the Islamic boarding school program. This is consistent with the principle of inclusive sharia distribution and community partnerships, as conveyed by Nurcholifah (2014), that distribution in Islamic marketing should not be exclusive or create gaps in access to information.

Promotion strategy (promotion) is actively conducted using a digital approach, directly supervised by students and young alumni who have received media management training from the Islamic boarding school. The content presented includes light Islamic preaching videos, alumni testimonials, and daily student stories, consistently uploaded to Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Informant 3, stated that the public response was very positive because the messages communicated contained spiritual and educational values. This strategy reflects the spirit of ethical and responsible promotion, as outlined by Kartajaya and Sula (2006), who argued that promotion in an Islamic context must avoid information manipulation and emphasize truth, benefits, and compliance with sharia principles.

Thus, the sharia marketing mix practices implemented at Almiiftah Islamic Boarding School are not simply an adaptation of the 4P concept into an Islamic context, but rather the development of a strategy with profound and spiritual value. Products are designed not only to meet educational needs, but to shape the whole person. Prices are not simply determined by the market but are assessed based on the principle of benefit. Distribution is carried out through community networks, not through commercial domination. Promotion is developed as a means of preaching and education, not visual manipulation. This model can serve as a reference.

### **The Role of Kyai in Marketing Strategy**

In the context of the Almiiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan, the role of the Kyai extends beyond educational and spiritual aspects to formulating the institution's strategic marketing direction. Research findings indicate that the Kyai plays a key role as a guardian of values, a director of promotional communications, and a symbol of the institution's integrity in public perception. In an interview, Informant 1, a Kyai and head of an Islamic boarding school, emphasized that promotional strategies must not deviate from the ethical boundaries of sharia. He said: "We're not just ordinary traders, but preachers. So, we shouldn't lie to our parents or dramatize the situation." This statement demonstrates direct oversight by the Islamic boarding school leadership over the substance, form, and methods of

promotions conducted by the public relations team, students, and alumni. Observations revealed that every promotional material, including digital videos and printed brochures, consistently included quotes or remarks from the Kyai, both narratively and visually, thus reinforcing the religious message being conveyed.

This role is theoretically rooted in the concept of charismatic leadership in Islamic education, where the Kyai plays a central role in shaping the social legitimacy of Islamic boarding schools. As explained by Zarkasyi (2020), the charismatic leadership model in Islamic boarding schools forms a strong symbolic and affective relationship between the Kyai and the community. The Kyai is positioned not only as an institutional manager but also as a guardian of the morals and noble values of the Islamic boarding school that cannot be replaced by any modern communication tools. Therefore, the presence of the Kyai in every promotional material is not merely a formality, but also a brand authority which contains spirituality, beliefs, and traditional values that live within the Islamic boarding school community. This is evident when the promotional narrative is not technocratic, but instead uses gentle preaching language, avoids empty promises, and consistently conveys educational messages such as "Learn to seek the pleasure of Allah, not just a degree".

The presence of Kyai also serves as a balance between professional management and the sustainability of the Islamic spirit in marketing strategies. Amidst the demands of digitalization and modern branding, Kyai remain at the forefront in directing promotions to avoid imitating conventional business strategies full of manipulation and hyperbole. Within this framework, Islamic boarding school marketing becomes a da'wah activity carried out with the intention of conveying benefits, not merely reaching consumers. This approach is consistent with the principles of sharia marketing outlined by Sula and Kartajaya (2006), which state that Muslim marketers should avoid *gharar* (ambiguity), *tadlis* (misinformation), and *pride* (deception), and making honesty and trust the basis of communication.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the sharia marketing management strategy at the Almiftah Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan does not solely rely on increasing the number of students or conventional promotions, but rather is an integrative process of Islamic values, the spiritual leadership of the Kyai, and a modern, ethical managerial approach. The implementation of the sharia marketing mix (4Ps)—product, price, place, and promotion—is carried out with full awareness of the principles of justice, honesty, and benefit. The educational products offered emphasize the integration of knowledge, manners, and skills, while the cross-subsidy-based pricing strategy reflects the distribution of social justice in Islamic education.

Promotion is conducted through an educational digital approach, supervised by a team of students and young alumni, and reinforced with an Islamic narrative delivered directly by the Kyai, the moral authority and symbol of the pesantren's

credibility. The Kyai's role in the marketing strategy has proven crucial in maintaining ethics, conveying the message of da'wah, and building a deep emotional connection between the pesantren and the community. This strengthens the model.charismatic branding based on spirituality and integrity.

Conceptually, this research presents novelty in the form of a model.sharia hybrid marketing, namely the synergy between traditional approaches (community, alumni, partner mosques) and digital (social media, da'wah content), which operate harmoniously within the framework of sharia values. This model positions Islamic boarding schools not only as formal educational institutions but also as agents of da'wah and carriers of rahmatan lil 'alamin values within society.

These findings provide a theoretical contribution to the development of sharia marketing literature in the Islamic education sector, as well as offering a practical contribution in the form of strategies that can be replicated by other Islamic boarding schools in developing their Islamic education. institutions professionally without losing their religious identity. Islamic boarding schools that combine sharia ethics with digital innovation have proven capable of building public trust, community loyalty, and holistic institutional sustainability.

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