

The Tahfidz Program and Educational Marketing Strategy: A Study of Institutional Excellence at Al Madina Islamic Elementary School, Semarang

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of the tahfidz program as a superior value in the education marketing strategy at SD Islam Al Madina, Semarang City, as well as examine the management of the tahfidz program from the perspective of Islamic education management. The phenomenon studied departs from the increasing competition of Islamic educational institutions in building an image through superior programs based on religious values. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, with participants consisting of principals, tahfidz teachers, school staff, parents of students, and the surrounding community. Data analysis uses Miles and Huberman's interactive model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that the tahfidz program is managed systematically through the POAC (planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation) function that is integrated with the school's religious culture. The tahfidz program is also positioned as a superior value in the education marketing strategy through the formation of the image of Qur'anic-based schools, strengthening legitimacy through partnerships with Pondok Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus, and the publication of spiritual value-based activities. In addition, the perception of parents and the community shows a positive response because the tahfidz program is considered an investment in children's character and spiritual education. This study concludes that the tahfidz program does not only function as a learning activity, but also as a strategic instrument in branding Islamic education that is able to increase public trust and interest. The implications of this research provide a theoretical contribution to the development of value-based Islamic education management, as well as practical implications for school managers in optimizing superior programs as an education marketing strategy.

Keywords: Tahfidz Program, Competitive Advantage, Educational Marketing Strategy, Islamic Elementary School, School Competitiveness.

Introduction

The development of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia in recent years shows increasingly competitive competition, especially in offering superior programs that are able to attract public interest. Unfortunately, competition between educational institutions that compete to market their educational products with various advantages owned by schools often occurs. The existence of this phenomenon shows that there is increasingly fierce competition among existing education service providers, therefore, inevitably education service managers must try their best to provide the best service otherwise consumers will easily look for other educational institutions that can give satisfaction and meet his expectations. (M. Dayat 2019). Islamic schools are no longer only oriented to the academic aspect, but also seek to build an institutional image through the strengthening of religious values and Islamic character. If an educational institution can provide significant added value to students, such as an excellent academic program, an innovative curriculum, or adequate facilities, it will help improve people's perception of the institution. (Cendekia Sandyakala, 2020). This phenomenon arises as public awareness of the importance of spirituality-based education increases amid the flow of globalization, the development of digital technology, and the moral crisis of the younger generation. According to Indriani et al. (2021), Islamic educational institutions are currently required to be able to build an education marketing strategy that not only focuses on promotion, but also on the quality of service and differentiation of their superior programs. In this context, the tahfidz Al-Qur'an program is one of the superior values that many Islamic schools have developed as an identity as well as an attraction for educational institutions.

The phenomenon of increasing public interest in tahfidz-based schools shows a change in the orientation of parents in choosing educational institutions for their children. If previously the community emphasized academic achievements, now the aspects of religiosity, character formation, and the Islamic environment are the main considerations in determining school choices. Research by Nurazizah et al. (2023) explains that the tahfidz program is able to increase public trust in Islamic educational institutions because it is seen as able to shape the character of discipline, spirituality, and morals of students from an early age. This condition has caused many Islamic schools to use the tahfidz program as a differentiation strategy in educational competition. In Semarang City itself, the growth of Islamic schools with

superior tahfidz programs is growing and has received great attention from urban communities who want religious and modern education for their children.

From the perspective of education management, tahfidz programs are not only understood as religious learning activities, but have evolved to become part of educational marketing strategies. Maisah et al. (2024) stated that education marketing is an institutional effort to build public trust through strengthening service quality, school culture, and superior programs that are relevant to public needs. Therefore, Islamic schools have begun to position the tahfidz program as an institutional branding to increase competitiveness in the midst of the many school options available. This strategy is carried out through strengthening the tahfidz curriculum, publishing student achievements, forming religious culture, and digital media-based promotions that display the advantages of the Qur'an memorization program. The tahfidz program then became not only a means of spiritual education, but also a strategic instrument in building the image of the school in the eyes of the community.

Empirically, the existence of tahfidz programs in Islamic elementary schools is often the main reason parents choose a particular school. The results of Ulinuha's research (2025) show that people tend to have a positive perception of schools that have religious-based superior programs because they are considered able to maintain children's moral development in the midst of the challenges of the digital era. In addition, research by Baihaqi and Miskiyah (2025) found that superior programs based on Islamic values can increase public loyalty to educational institutions while strengthening the school's reputation in the long term. This phenomenon shows that parents' decisions in choosing schools are not only influenced by academic factors, but also by the emotional, cultural, and religious values built through school programs.

Although much research has been done on Islamic education marketing strategies, most of the research still focuses on the implementation of the marketing mix, learning aspects, and improving the image of educational institutions in general. Previous research has tended to discuss tahfidz programs only as part of an educational product without delving deeper into how the program is interpreted as a superior value that influences public perception and parents' decisions in choosing schools. In addition, previous studies used more quantitative and administrative approaches so that they did not reveal much about social experiences, subjective meanings, and the process of constructing the image of institutions based on tahfidz programs. In fact, a qualitative

approach allows researchers to understand social reality more deeply through the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of educational actors. So in essence, there have not been many studies that have examined the tahfidz program as a superior value in education marketing strategies.

The research gap shows the need for a more in-depth study of how tahfidz programs are planned, organized, implemented, and evaluated as part of educational marketing strategies in Islamic schools. In contrast to previous research that focused on the implementation of marketing mix, learning aspects, and improving the image of educational institutions. In general, this study analyzes the role of the tahfidz program as a superior value proposition in the education marketing strategy at SD Islam Al Madina, Semarang City. Thus, this study provides a new perspective on the use of religious programs as a marketing instrument for educational institutions. In addition, it is also important to understand how the community and parents interpret the tahfidz program as the main attraction in choosing an educational institution. This research is important because the marketing strategy of education based on religious values is not only related to institutional promotion, but also concerns the development of public trust, social legitimacy, and Islamic school identity in the midst of modern educational competition.

Theoretically, this study uses the perspective of education management and marketing of educational services that emphasizes the importance of differentiating superior programs in building the image of the institution. In a qualitative approach, social reality is understood as the result of the construction of meaning formed through interaction between schools, parents, and society. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of informants regarding the existence of the tahfidz program as a superior value in the education marketing strategy at SD Islam Al Madina, Semarang City.

Based on this description, this study aims to: (1) analyze the planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina Semarang City; (2) describe how the tahfidz program is positioned as a superior value in the education marketing strategy at SD Islam Al Madina, Semarang City; and (3) analyze the perception of parents and the community towards the tahfidz program as an attraction in choosing Al Madina Islamic Elementary School in Semarang City. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education marketing management studies based on religious flagship programs

and make practical contributions to Islamic educational institutions in building marketing strategies that are more adaptive and in accordance with the needs of contemporary society.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The case study approach was chosen because the research focuses on an in-depth disclosure of the role of the tahfidz program as a superior value in the education marketing strategy at SD Islam Al Madina, Semarang City. Case studies allow researchers to understand social phenomena contextually through the exploration of the experiences, interactions, as well as meanings constructed by research subjects in their natural environment. According to Creswell and Poth (2021), the case study approach is used to explore a bounded system in depth through the collection of detailed and diverse data. In the context of this research, the tahfidz program is understood not only as a learning activity, but also as a social picture related to institutional strategies, public perception, and the image of Islamic schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study does not aim to measure variables statistically, but rather to understand the process, meaning, and dynamics of the implementation of the tahfidz program in the education marketing strategy. In addition, this approach is considered relevant to explore the experiences of school principals, tahfidz teachers, parents, and the community regarding their perception of the existence of tahfidz programs as the main attraction of schools as a research population. Qualitative research also provides space for researchers to obtain in-depth, naturalistic, and contextual data so that they are able to describe the social reality as a whole. This approach is in line with qualitative research on education that emphasizes the importance of interpretation of social meaning and individual experience in understanding contemporary educational phenomena (Aspers & Corte, 2021). Thus, the use of case studies in this study is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the management strategy of the tahfidz program as a superior value at Al Madina Islamic Elementary School, Semarang City.

This research will be carried out at Al Madina Islamic Elementary School, Semarang City in May 2026. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that the school has a tahfidz program which is used as one of the flagship programs in building the image and marketing strategy of the institution's education. In addition, SD Islam Al Madina Semarang City is known as an Islamic school that has

experienced an increase in public interest through the strengthening of religious programs based on tahfidz Al-Qur'an. The research subjects consisted of the principal, vice principal for curriculum, tahfidz teachers, school public relations staff, parents of students, and several surrounding communities who knew about the school's development. The determination of informants was carried out using purposive sampling techniques by considering the direct involvement of informants in the implementation of the tahfidz program and school education marketing strategies. The purposive sampling technique is used because qualitative research requires informants who are able to provide in-depth information according to the focus of the research (Campbell et al., 2020). In the data collection process, the researcher also uses the snowball sampling technique to obtain additional informants based on recommendations from the main informant if the data obtained still requires further in-depth. The criteria for informants in this study include: (1) having direct involvement in the implementation of the tahfidz program, (2) understanding the marketing strategy of school education, and (3) being willing to provide information openly related to their experiences and views. With this technique, the researcher obtained rich and in-depth data on how the tahfidz program is managed and perceived as superior value by the community and the parents of students.

The data collection technique in this study was carried out through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data. Semi-structured interviews are used because they provide the flexibility for researchers to explore informant answers more broadly without stepping out of the focus of the research. Interviews were conducted directly to school principals, tahfidz teachers, public relations staff, parents, and the community using pre-arranged interview guidelines. Interview questions focused on planning, organizing, implementing, evaluating tahfidz programs, education marketing strategies, and public perception of the school's flagship programs. In addition to interviews, the researcher also conducted participatory observations on tahfidz learning activities, school promotion activities, religious culture, and social interactions that occurred in the school environment. Observations were made to obtain empirical data on the implementation of the tahfidz program in daily school activities. Documentation is used as a supporting technique in the form of collecting data from school brochures, school social media, photos of activities, tahfidz curriculum documents, student achievement archives, and new student admission data. To maintain the validity of the

data, this study uses source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing interview data from various informants, while method triangulation is carried out through comparison of interview data, observations, and documentation. In addition, researchers also apply member checking by asking informants to double-check the results of the interview to ensure that the data matches the experiences they convey (Stahl & King, 2020). The technique is carried out so that the research data has a high level of credibility and validity.

The data analysis in this study used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The data reduction stage is carried out by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and grouping data from interviews, observations, and documentation according to the focus of the research. At this stage, the researcher selects relevant information regarding the implementation of the tahfidz program, education marketing strategies, and public perception of schools. Furthermore, the data that has been reduced is presented in the form of narrative descriptions, matrices, and thematic categorization to make it easier for researchers to understand the relationships between data systematically. The presentation of data is carried out continuously during the research process so that researchers can see patterns, tendencies, and relationships between tahfidz program management strategies and the school's attractiveness in the eyes of the community. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions and verification of the data. Conclusions are obtained through the process of interpretation of research findings which are then verified repeatedly with field data to ensure consistency and validity of the information. Interactive model analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to conduct the analysis process simultaneously from the beginning of data collection until the research is completed (Miles et al., 2020). By using these analysis techniques, this research is expected to be able to produce in-depth, systematic, and in accordance with the social realities that occur at Al Madina Islamic Elementary School, Semarang City regarding the role of the tahfidz program as a superior value in educational marketing strategies.

Results and Discussions

Planning, Organizing, Implementing, and Evaluating the Tahfidz Program at SD Islam Al Madina Semarang

The tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina Semarang City is designed as an integral part of the school's vision in forming a Qur'anic generation that has a balance between academic intelligence and spiritual character. Based on the results of the research, the program planning stage is carried out systematically through the preparation of memorization targets, adjustment of learning methods, and the integration of the tahfidz program with Islamic school culture. The planning is not only focused on achieving the quantity of memorization of students, but also on the formation of religious habits in daily life. The school sets memorization targets based on the ability level and class level of students so that the learning process takes place realistically and gradually. In addition, program planning also involves collaboration with Pondok Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus as a partner institution that provides learning modules, evaluation standards, and pedagogical direction in the management of tahfidz programs. The principal explained that the existence of the collaboration aims to maintain the quality of students' memorization in accordance with the standards of the central school. These findings show that tahfidz program planning is carried out not only as an additional school program, but as the main strategy in building the identity of a superior and trusted Islamic educational institution in the community.

In the planning process, schools also consider the psychological aspects and age development of elementary school children. Based on the results of interviews with tahfidz teachers, the memorization target is arranged in stages so that students do not feel burdened in participating in the program. The tahfidz teacher said that the learning approach is carried out through habituation, repetition, and emotional approaches so that children feel comfortable when memorizing the Qur'an. In addition, religious activities such as the recitation of Asmaul Husna before learning begins are part of the strategy to create a spiritual atmosphere that supports the tahfidz process. The results of observations show that the religious atmosphere in the school environment is built consistently through the use of salam, joint prayer, and daily muroja'ah before the lesson begins. From the perspective of education management, this condition shows that tahfidz program planning is not only related to the technical preparation of learning, but also includes the development of a school culture based on Islamic values. Research by Rizkiyah and Fadlilah (2022) explains that the success of tahfidz programs in elementary schools is greatly influenced by the institution's ability to build a consistent religious culture and support the Qur'an learning process from an early age.

The stage of organizing the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina is carried out through the formation of a work structure that involves various elements of the school collaboratively. Based on the results of the research, the school formed a tahfidz program management team consisting of the principal, tahfidz coordinator, tahfidz teacher, homeroom teacher, and school staff who have their respective roles in supporting the implementation of the program. The principal functions as the main person in charge of directing program policies, while the tahfidz coordinator is in charge of setting schedules, memorization targets, and monitoring student achievements. Tahfidz teachers are responsible for direct memorization coaching, while homeroom teachers support religious habituation in the classroom environment. The division of duties is carried out to ensure that the tahfidz program does not run partially, but becomes part of the school education system as a whole. The results of the interviews showed that coordination between teachers was carried out regularly through weekly evaluations related to the development of students' memorization. In addition, the school also builds active communication with parents through reports on children's memorization progress and home learning consultations.

The organization of the tahfidz program also shows that there is a strong social involvement between the school and the students' families. Parents are not only positioned as recipients of educational services, but also as school partners in supporting the success of the tahfidz program. Based on the results of interviews with several parents, schools routinely provide information about memorization targets, student development, and memorization assistance methods at home. This condition shows that the success of the tahfidz program is not only determined by the learning process at school, but also by family support in maintaining the consistency of children's memorization. Research by Huda and Anshori (2023) explains that parental involvement is one of the main factors for the success of tahfidz education at the elementary school level because children need continuous emotional reinforcement and assistance. In this context, the organization of the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina shows the integration between the school system and the family environment in building Qur'anic culture for students.

The implementation of the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina is carried out routinely every day through a learning approach that adjusts students' abilities. Based on the results of observations, tahfidz activities are carried out in the morning before general learning begins so that the condition of students is still in a state of focus and

conduciveness. The methods used in learning include talaqqi, muroja'ah, and gradual memorization deposits to tahfidz teachers. The tahfidz teacher explained that the repetition approach is the main strategy in maintaining the quality of students' memorization because elementary school age still requires consistent habituation. In addition, teachers also use a motivational approach by giving appreciation to students who show good memorization development. The results of the study show that the tahfidz learning process takes place in a relaxed but disciplined atmosphere so that students do not feel pressured in memorizing the Qur'an. This situation shows that schools are trying to build a fun and meaningful learning experience for students.

The implementation of the tahfidz program at this school is not only oriented to memorization, but also to the formation of the Islamic character of students. Based on the results of observation, students are accustomed to maintaining manners towards teachers, time discipline, and having responsibility for the memorization that has been given. The tahfidz teacher said that tahfidz education must be accompanied by the formation of morals so that the values of the Qur'an are not only memorized, but also applied in daily behavior. One form of habituation can be seen from the culture of greetings, joint prayers, and students' respectful attitude to teachers in the school environment. Research by Nurfadillah et al. (2021) states that effective tahfidz education not only produces good memorization skills, but also shapes students' religious behavior and discipline through a continuous habituation process. In this context, SD Islam Al Madina shows that the implementation of the tahfidz program is part of the Qur'an-based character education strategy.

The implementation of the tahfidz program is also strengthened through akhirussanah activities which are an evaluation agenda as well as appreciation for students' memorization achievements. Based on the results of the research, the akhirussanah activity was carried out by presenting the Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus Pond as a form of monitoring the quality of the school tahfidz program. In this activity, students were asked to show memorization directly in front of teachers, principals, parents, and other invited guests. One of the parents said that the activity gave a sense of pride as well as confidence that the school was really serious in fostering students' memorization. The presence of the boarding school also provides symbolic legitimacy that the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina has qualities that are directly connected to trusted tahfidz institutions. This condition shows that evaluation activities not only function as a measurement of learning outcomes, but

also as a medium to strengthen the image of the school in the eyes of the public.

The evaluation stage of the tahfidz program is carried out on an ongoing basis through daily monitoring, weekly evaluation, and end-of-semester evaluation. Tahfidz teachers record the progress of each student's memorization to find out their achievements, obstacles, and muroja'ah abilities. Based on the results of the interviews, the evaluation was carried out not only to measure the number of memorization, but also to see the quality of reading, tajweed, and consistency of students' memorization. The principal explained that program evaluation is an important part of maintaining the quality of tahfidz learning so that it remains in accordance with the school's vision. In addition to internal evaluations, the school also received input from Pondok Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus regarding the quality of learning and student achievements. Research by Safitri and Maulana (2024) states that continuous evaluation in the tahfidz program is important to maintain the quality of memorization and ensure that the learning process runs according to the Islamic education standards that have been set.

The findings of the study show that the evaluation of the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina is not only oriented to the academic aspect, but also to the formation of public trust in educational institutions. Evaluation activities involving parents and the boarding school create transparency in the educational process so that the community can see firsthand the development of students. Based on the results of interviews with parents, their involvement in akhirussanah activities gives confidence that schools have a high commitment to maintaining the quality of Islamic education. This situation shows that the evaluation of the tahfidz program has a social function as a form of institutional accountability to the community. Research by Latifah and Karim (2022) explains that school openness in the evaluation process of Islamic education programs can increase public loyalty and trust in educational institutions.

Overall, the results of the study show that the management of the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina Semarang City reflects the implementation of the education management function which includes integrated planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. The tahfidz program is not only positioned as a religious learning activity, but also as an instrument for the formation of religious culture, student character, and school institutional identity. The partnership with Pondok Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus is an important factor in strengthening the

legitimacy of the quality of the program in the eyes of parents and the community. In addition, the involvement of teachers, parents, and the school environment in supporting the tahfidz program shows that there is a social synergy that strengthens the success of Qur'an-based education. These findings show that systematic management of tahfidz programs can be a relevant model of Islamic education in answering the needs of modern society for children's character and spirituality education from an early age.

Tahfidz Program as a Superior Value in Education Marketing Strategy

The results of the study show that the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina, Semarang City is positioned as the main identity of the school in building a marketing strategy for religious value-based education. The school not only displays the tahfidz program as an additional activity, but makes it an institutional feature that distinguishes Al Madina Islamic Elementary School from other elementary schools in Semarang City. Based on the results of interviews with the principal, the tahfidz program is designed to be the "spirit of the school" that reflects the vision of Islamic education based on Qur'anic characters. This can be seen from the integration of tahfidz activities with daily school culture, such as the reading of Asmaul Husna before learning, muroja'ah together, the habit of greetings and prayers, and the strengthening of Islamic morals in student activities. The results of observations show that the school's religious identity is not only built through formal symbols, but also through daily practices that are consistent with all school residents. In the context of education marketing, this condition shows that schools build an institutional image through real experiences that are felt directly by students and parents. This strategy shows that religious values are used as the main force in attracting public trust in Islamic educational institutions. Research by Kholis and Prasetyo (2022) explains that Islamic schools that are able to build religious culture consistently tend to have a stronger institutional image and are trusted by the public than schools that only rely on administrative promotions or physical facilities.

The tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina also serves as a form of institutional differentiation in the face of increasingly competitive educational competition. Based on the results of the research, the school utilizes the tahfidz program to build a positioning as an Islamic elementary school that not only excels in academic aspects, but also in the formation of character and spirituality of students. One of the

teachers said that "parents are now more selective in choosing schools because they want their children to be not only smart, but also have a strong religious foundation." The statement shows that the public's need for religious value-based education is increasing amid social changes and the challenges of digital technology development. The results of the school's documentation show that the tahfidz program is often displayed in brochures, social media, and school public activities as a form of strengthening the institution's image. However, the marketing strategy carried out by the school is not excessively commercial, but rather emphasizes on proving the quality of the program through students' memorization achievements, religious culture, and community involvement in school activities. The vice principal also said that "Every PPDB is opened, which initially had a quota limit, so it exploded, where parents of students registered their children at SD Islam Al Madina because in this school it is only the first school in Semarang City that partners with Pondok Yanbu'ul Quran, it is also one of the plus values for us". Research by Firmansyah and Dewi (2023) states that a differentiation strategy based on religious programs is one of the effective approaches in increasing the competitiveness of Islamic schools because it is easier for people to build trust in institutions that have a clear and consistent religious identity.

The akhirussanah activity is one of the important strategies in strengthening the branding of education at SD Islam Al Madina. Based on the results of observation and documentation, the activity not only functions as an evaluation of students' memorization, but also as a medium for publication of the quality of the school tahfidz program to the community, especially to the parents of students because at the end of the ussanah will be witnessed directly by the participants who attend the forum. One of the special guests was the presence by Mr. Kyai from Pondok Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus in the akhirussanah activity which had a very strong symbolic influence on the public's perception of the quality of the school. So indirectly, parents view the direct involvement of the boarding school as proof that the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina has reliable learning standards and is connected to a reputable tahfidz institution in Semarang City. One of the parents said that "we feel more confident because the children are guided by a method that is directly connected from the Yanbu cottage." The statement shows that the symbolic legitimacy of partner institutions is an important factor in building public trust in schools. From the perspective of education marketing, social legitimacy has a great influence on shaping the loyalty and image of the institution in the eyes of the public. Research by Nuraini

and Saputra (2024) explains that cooperation between Islamic schools and Islamic boarding schools or tahfidz boarding schools can increase the credibility of the school's flagship programs while strengthening the perception of the quality of education among urban Muslim communities.

In addition to formal school activities, the education marketing strategy at SD Islam Al Madina is also built through an emotional and relational approach with the community. Based on the interview results, the school prioritizes interpersonal relationships with parents rather than advertising-based promotions or commercial campaigns. Teachers and schools actively build communication with parents regarding the development of students' memorization, children's behavior, and religious activities carried out at school. The results of observations show that the relationship between schools and parents is quite close because of the similarity of values in building Islamic education for their children. This condition creates a sense of belonging and emotional attachment of the community to the school. In the context of marketing educational services, emotional relationships built through communication and trust have a stronger influence than formal promotional strategies alone. Research by Wibowo and Khadijah (2021) explains that people's loyalty to Islamic schools is often formed through emotional experiences and social relationships that schools build with students' parents. Therefore, the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina is not only an educational product, but also a medium for the formation of social relations and public trust in Islamic educational institutions.

The results of the study also show that the success of the marketing strategy based on the tahfidz program is influenced by the school's ability to build a spiritual experience that is directly felt by students and parents. Based on the results of the interviews, many parents feel that the change in their child's behavior after participating in the tahfidz program is the main reason they trust the school. Parents see an increase in discipline, worship habits, and children's love for the Qur'an after studying at Al Madina Islamic Elementary School. One of the students' guardians said that "children are now more diligent in praying, like to repeat their own memorization at home, and are more polite to parents." The findings show that the success of education marketing is not only determined by promotional strategies, but also by the quality of experience perceived by users of educational services. From the perspective of Islamic education marketing, spiritual experiences are a form of added value that is difficult to find in other public schools.

Research by Syamsuddin and Hidayah (2022) found that religious experiences felt by students and families are the dominant factor in shaping public satisfaction and loyalty to tahfidz-based Islamic schools.

Overall, the results of the study show that the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina Semarang City has been successfully positioned as the main superior value in the marketing strategy of school education. The tahfidz program is not only an institutional identity, but also an instrument for the formation of religious image, social legitimacy, and public trust in schools. The marketing strategy carried out by the school is more built through proving the quality of the program, religious culture, emotional connection with the community, and the symbolic legitimacy of Pondok Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus as a partner institution. These findings show that Islamic education marketing based on religious values has more profound power than conventional marketing strategies that only highlight academic facilities and achievements. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, the tahfidz program has developed into a symbol of the moral and spiritual quality of schools that are able to answer the needs of modern society for Qur'an-based character education. Therefore, a tahfidz-based education marketing strategy can be a model for the development of Islamic educational institutions that are relevant to the social and cultural needs of the Muslim community today.

Parents' and Society's Perception of the Tahfidz Program as a School Attraction

The results of the study show that parents' perception of the tahfidz program at Al Madina Islamic Elementary School, Semarang City, tends to be very positive because it is seen as able to provide a balance between academic education and the formation of Islamic character. Based on the results of the interviews, most parents chose the school not solely because of academic achievements, but because of the tahfidz program which is considered to be able to become a spiritual foundation for children from an early age. Parents view religious education, especially learning the Qur'an, as an important need in the midst of social changes and technological developments that are considered to increasingly affect children's behavior. One of the parents said that "We feel that children today face a lot of influence from the environment. Therefore, we hope that they have strong religious provisions so that they can distinguish between good and bad things." The statement shows that the tahfidz program is perceived as a form of moral protection as well as a long-term investment in education for their

children. The results of the observation also showed that parents had a fairly high level of involvement in tahfidz activities at school, such as attending akhirussanah activities, monitoring the development of children's memorization, and accompanying muroja'ah at home. This condition shows that the tahfidz program not only builds educational relationships between schools and students, but also creates emotional attachment between schools and families. Research by Ramadhani and Yusuf (2022) explains that parents' positive perception of tahfidz-based Islamic schools arises from the belief that Qur'anic education is able to form religious character and strengthen children's moral control in the midst of the development of the digital era.

Apart from being a means of spiritual education, the tahfidz program at Al Madina Islamic Elementary School is also perceived by parents as a medium for the formation of children's discipline and responsibility. Based on the results of the interviews, many parents saw changes in their children's behavior after participating in the tahfidz program, especially in terms of worship habits, manners, and study time management. Parents consider that the routine of muroja'ah and memorization deposits trains children to be more disciplined and responsible for the tasks given by the teacher. One of the parents said that "children are used to waking up early for muroja'ah and are more enthusiastic about learning because they feel they have memorization targets." The results of the observations also showed that religious culture in schools influenced students' social behaviors, such as the habit of greeting, respecting teachers, and maintaining the ethics of talking to peers. The findings show that the tahfidz program is perceived not only as a memorization activity, but also as a character education process that takes place in a sustainable manner. From a socio-educational perspective, this condition shows that people are beginning to view Islamic schools not just as a place for the transfer of knowledge, but as a space for the moral and spiritual formation of children. Research by Fauziah and Rahman (2023) found that parents tend to choose tahfidz-based schools because they believe that habituating the Qur'an can improve children's discipline, self-control, and positive behavior in daily life.

The positive perception of the public towards SD Islam Al Madina is also influenced by the school's partnership with Pondok Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus as a tahfidz institution that has a strong reputation in the Muslim community. Based on the results of the interviews, parents felt more confident in the quality of the tahfidz program because the school

uses methods, modules, and evaluation systems that are directly connected to the central boarding school. The presence of the caregiver of the boarding school in akhirussanah activities is seen as a form of supervision as well as quality assurance for the quality of students' memorization. One of the students' guardians stated that "we believe because this school does not run alone, but there is direct assistance from the Yanbu cottage." The statement shows that the symbolic legitimacy of partner institutions has a great influence in building the perception of school quality in the eyes of the public. In the context of marketing Islamic education, institutional legitimacy is an important factor in increasing public trust in schools. The results of observations show that the surrounding community also knows Al Madina Islamic Elementary School as a school that has religious characteristics and strong relationships with well-known tahfidz institutions. Azizah and Mubarak's research (2024) explains that the cooperation between Islamic schools and Islamic boarding schools or tahfidz boarding schools can increase public perception of the quality of education due to the association of religious values, Islamic scientific traditions, and institutional reputations that have been trusted by the public.

The community around the school also views the tahfidz program as a social identity that distinguishes SD Islam Al Madina from other schools in Semarang City. Based on the results of observations, schools are known as educational institutions that have a strong religious culture and a disciplined learning environment. This perception is formed through various school activities that involve the community, such as akhirussanah activities, tahfidz graduations, and students' religious habits in daily life. The presence of religious-based public activities creates a fairly close social relationship between the school and the surrounding community. One of the community leaders said that "The children from Al Madina Islamic Elementary School seem to be more used to reading the Qur'an and even though they are still young, they can already memorize the verses of the Qur'an so the community has a good view of this school." The statement shows that the success of the tahfidz program is not only measured by the number of students memorized, but also by the social impact seen in their daily behavior in the community. Research by Mahendra and Salsabila (2021) found that a consistent religious culture in Islamic schools can improve the social image of institutions and strengthen people's emotional relationships with the educational institution.

The results of the study also showed that parents' perception of

the tahfidz program was influenced by their concerns about the challenges of the development of the digital era and changes in the behavior of the younger generation. Based on the results of the interviews, many parents feel that formal education is not enough to shape a child's character without strong spiritual reinforcement and moral supervision. Therefore, the tahfidz program is seen as an educational solution that is able to provide a balance between science and religious values. The results of the observation also show that the school actively builds communication with parents regarding the behavioral and spiritual development of students. This condition strengthens the public's perception that schools are not only responsible for the academic aspect, but also for the formation of children's morals. Research by Harahap and Fitriani (2022) states that the increasing public interest in tahfidz-based Islamic schools is influenced by parents' needs for education that can be a moral fortress for children in the digital era and cultural globalization.

Overall, the results of the study show that the perception of parents and the community towards the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina Semarang City was formed through a combination of program quality, school religious culture, institutional legitimacy, and social experiences directly felt by the community. The tahfidz program is perceived as a symbol of Islamic education that is not only oriented to the ability to memorize the Qur'an, but also to the formation of character, discipline, and morals of students. The partnership with Pondok Yanbu'ul Qur'an Kudus further strengthens public trust in the quality of education provided by the school. In addition, the success of schools in building emotional relationships with parents through intensive religious and communication activities is an important factor in increasing public loyalty to these educational institutions. These findings suggest that the attractiveness of Islamic schools in the modern era depends not only on academic facilities and achievements, but also on the school's ability to build spiritual and religious cultural values that are relevant to the social needs of contemporary Muslim society.

Discussion

The findings of this study affirm that the formation of millennial Muslim identity in Indonesia cannot be understood through the lens of a linear shift from tradition to digital modernity. More than a mere transition, this process constitutes a negotiation that unfolds simultaneously and in a multilayered manner. Religious identity within this group emerges as the outcome of a dialectic between the stability of

cultural-traditional values and the dynamics of the new social spaces afforded by information technology. This is consistent with Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which affirms that cultural identity is always produced within the third space, where meaning is never final but is continuously negotiated through complex symbolic encounters (Easthope, 2013).

The structural persistence of primary social structures in validating individual identity is clearly evidenced by these findings. The variable of ascribed identity reaches 83.92% and same family bonds reaches 80.63%. The dominance of these figures indicates that despite the high dependence of the millennial generation on the digital ecosystem, their identity legitimacy remains strongly rooted in emotional relations and direct social experiences. This phenomenon intersects with the theory of primordialism, which views identity as an entity that tends to remain fixed and bound to social origins that were established long before the era of digitalization.

An even more striking finding is the discontinuity between the intensity of technology use and participation in digital religious discourse: engagement with religious issues on social media falls to the lowest point (57.76%). This pattern indicates that for millennial Muslims, digital media is more utilized as a channel for communication and knowledge distribution than as a source for the formation of fundamental religious values. Digital space thus functions as an additional arena of articulation, while the foundation of identity continues to rest on patterns of social interaction directly rooted in religion and local culture.

From the perspective of hybridity, the high level of interaction with the co-religious community (91.98%) and with the same ethnic group (80.15%) indicates that digital space is utilized as a medium to more adaptively reproduce group identity. This pattern opens a space for renegotiating traditional values when confronted with global discourse and digital religious practices. This process produces an identity that is ambivalent in nature: on one hand, millennial Muslims preserve tradition as a foundation; on the other, they demonstrate a strong reliance on the digital ecosystem as a medium of expression (Bamualim et al., 2018).

Variations in findings across different sample cities—such as Padang and Palembang, which possess distinctive socio-cultural configurations—reinforce the argument that the constructivist approach is relevant for understanding identity as a response to symbolic

structures that are geographically and historically specific. Locality in this context is not marginalized by the currents of globalization; rather, it becomes an active space where identity negotiation continues to unfold (Astuti, 2017) (Thompson, 2019). Millennial Muslims thus emerge as relational products between local values and global influences that continuously interact in a dynamic manner (Bamualim et al., 2018).

Ultimately, identity hybridity among millennial Muslims in Indonesia does not merely indicate fragmentation or identity crisis, but rather reflects the reflexive capacity of subjects to respond to digital transformation without relinquishing the symbolic roots that have shaped them (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2017; Bamualim et al., 2018). Digitalization does not erase the roots of religiosity, but rather drives the emergence of forms of religious practice that are more complex and contextual. Millennial Muslim identity exists in a state of becoming—a process of becoming—in which the marriage of traditional values and digital modernity forms a unique entity that distinguishes them from previous generations, particularly in terms of the speed of adaptation and the capacity for negotiation with contemporary religious phenomena.

Studies that harbor suspicion that digitalization has the potential to uproot traditional values and replace them with a new, uniform culture (Schaefer, 2015; Mannheim, 1929) need to be reconsidered in the context of Indonesian millennial Muslims. The findings of this study actually demonstrate that the construction of traditional cultural and religious values proceeds in parallel with modernization—mutually supporting and reinforcing one another, rather than in a mutually negating relation. In certain situations, millennial Muslims cannot detach themselves from the traditions that have shaped their consciousness and worldview (Breuner, 2011), while in other situations, they are highly dependent on digital devices as part of the rhythm of daily life. It is precisely this condition that demands further in-depth inquiry to understand the patterns of millennial Muslim identity development in the future (Bamualim et al., 2018; Ichwan et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This research shows that the tahfidz program at SD Islam Al Madina Semarang City has an integrated strategic role in three main aspects, namely program management (POAC), educational marketing strategies, and the formation of positive public perceptions. In terms of management, the tahfidz program is managed systematically through

memorization target-based planning, collaborative organizing between principals, teachers, and parents, the implementation of religious habituation-based learning, and continuous evaluation involving internal and external school parties. This integration shows that the tahfidz program is not only instructional, but also an educational system that is structured and oriented towards the formation of the Islamic character of students.

In terms of education marketing, the tahfidz program has proven to be a core value proposition that distinguishes SD Islam Al Madina from other elementary schools. The school does not only use a conventional promotional approach, but emphasizes more on proving quality through learning practices, religious culture, and institutional legitimacy of the Holy Qur'an Yanbu'ul Pond. This shows that educational marketing strategies based on religious values are more effective in building the image and competitiveness of institutions than a material-based approach alone. Thus, the tahfidz program doubles as an educational instrument as well as an institutional branding strategy.

In terms of public perception, this study found that parents and the community responded very positively to the tahfidz program because it was considered to be able to answer the needs of character education in the midst of the challenges of the digital era. The tahfidz program is perceived as a spiritual investment that forms discipline, morals, and children's love for the Qur'an. In addition, the involvement of credible partner institutions strengthens the level of public trust in the quality of schools, thereby strengthening public loyalty and interest in choosing these educational institutions.

Theoretically, this study enriches the study of Islamic education management by showing that tahfidz-based flagship programs can function as a strategic instrument in educational marketing and institutional image formation. Practically, these findings provide implications for Islamic school managers to optimize religious programs not only as learning activities, but also as a strategy to strengthen the identity and competitiveness of schools. In terms of policy, the results of this research can be a consideration for Islamic education policy makers in encouraging the development of Qur'anic character-based schools that are integrated with the needs of the community.

The study also has limitations on focusing on a single location and specific social contexts, so the results cannot be generalized widely. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine the comparison of the implementation of tahfidz programs in various Islamic schools

with different characteristics, as well as explore more deeply the role of digital marketing in strengthening the branding of schools based on religious values. In addition, longitudinal studies are also needed to see the long-term impact of the tahfidz program on the character development and achievement of students. Thus, further research is expected to enrich a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between tahfidz education, school management, and Islamic education marketing strategies.

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