

Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning Analysis of Islamic Educational Institutions Based on Public Preferences in the Educational Competition Era

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ABSTRACT

The increasingly diverse educational competition encourages Islamic educational institutions to understand community characteristics and preferences in making educational choices. This study aims to analyze the segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP) of Islamic educational institutions based on public preferences in the era of educational competition. A descriptive quantitative approach was utilized, involving 100 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores. The results reveal five community preference groups, with the strengthening of Islamic values being the largest preference at 29.0%, followed by academic quality at 24.0%. The targeting stage demonstrates that groups oriented toward Islamic values and academic quality are the primary targets based on segment size and preference levels. Regarding positioning, the strengthening of Islamic values and education achieved the highest mean score of 4.58, followed by academic quality (4.46) and educator competence (4.38). These findings indicate that the position of Islamic educational institutions in public perception is shaped by combining Islamic identity with quality educational delivery. Ultimately, this research provides implications for developing STP strategies oriented toward community preferences to navigate educational competition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a field that undergoes changes in tandem with the evolving needs of society. Public choices regarding educational institutions are increasingly diverse today, ranging from public schools, madrasah, and religious-based schools, to educational institutions offering programs and services with specific characteristics [1]. This condition provides the public with broader space to determine the educational institutions deemed suitable for their children's needs and family expectations. These choices are also related to the quality of learning, religious values, facilities, achievements, safety, education costs, and flagship programs offered by each institution [2].

Competition among educational institutions subsequently develops into a part of the dynamics of educational provision. Every institution strives to build appeal through services and identities recognizable to the public. Competition is no longer merely visible from the number of students accepted each year, but also from the institution's ability to understand the characteristics of prospective education service users. Differences in community needs mean that identical service strategies may not necessarily be suitable for all groups of prospective students [3].

Islamic educational institutions face the same dynamics amidst the development of public educational choices. Madrasah, Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), integrated Islamic schools, and various other forms of Islamic educational institutions possess increasingly diverse service characteristics [4]. Religious education remains one of the main attractions, while the public also considers academic quality, graduate competence, technological mastery, language skills, facilities, and students' opportunities in subsequent educational levels [5]. These shifting considerations urge Islamic educational institutions to understand how the public perceives the services they offer.

The vast ecosystem of Islamic education in Indonesia illustrates the broad segments of society that utilize these educational services [6]. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs through EMIS in 2024 recorded 306,295 Islamic religious educational institutions in the categories of Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah and Al-Qur'an Educational Institutions, with a total of 5,497,624 students. In pesantren based education, the 2024 EMIS also recorded 2,533 pesantren-based educational units accommodating 449,048 santri(students) across various forms of formal education. This scale of implementation indicates that Islamic educational institutions interact with a public that possesses diverse backgrounds, needs, and considerations for educational selection.

The diversity of education service users is also evident in the number of madrasah students distributed across various levels and regions in Indonesia [7]. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' data provides national data regarding students at Raudhatul Athfal, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, and Madrasah Aliyah for the year 2024, depicting the large population of formal Islamic education users. Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs conducted the Indonesian Madrasah Competency Assessment in 2024, participated by 530,486 students from 12,573 madrasahs. These data illustrate the extensive network of madrasah education as well as the demands on institutions to continuously build service quality and character recognizable to the public.

The emerging problem is that community diversity is not always accompanied by a structured understanding of which groups constitute the primary target of an Islamic educational institution and how the institution is perceived by the public [8]. Some institutions offer numerous programs simultaneously, hoping to reach as many prospective students as possible. Such an approach has the potential to obscure the institution's character if it is not based on mapping community needs. In an increasingly open educational competition, institutions must identify community groups with specific characteristics and preferences, determine targets most suited to their service capacity, and establish an easily recognizable position among various educational choices [9].

The Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) framework can be utilized to analyze this issue from the perspective of public preference. Segmentation encourages mapping the public based on specific characteristics or considerations in choosing education. Targeting relates to determining the groups that become the service targets, while positioning deals with the perception or image of an institution that occupies the public's mind. Through this approach, the strategies of Islamic educational institutions can be analyzed based on how the public evaluates the educational attributes they deem aligned with their children's and families' needs [10].

Previous studies indicate that discussions on STP in Islamic education are still largely directed toward strategy implementation in specific institutions [11] found. The authors in that implementing STP strategies at MI Sunan Gunung Djati was associated with increased student enrollment. In the first year of new student admissions in 2021, the institution gained 35 students, whereas the quota of 52 students in 2022 was fulfilled following the application of a series of STP strategies. Another study by [12] demonstrated that public perception of madrasah and STP strategies correlates with the institution's ability to read both internal and external factors in educational competition. Both studies provide an overview of STP practices in Islamic educational institutions with a strong focus still on institutional strategies and specific case characteristics.

The research gap lies in the limited number of studies mapping the segmentation, targeting, and positioning of Islamic educational institutions from the perspective of public preference through a quantitative approach. Numerous previous studies utilized qualitative approaches, case studies, observations, or analyses focused on a single institution, meaning the overview of public preference patterns as a basis for STP mapping has not been widely developed quantitatively. The novelty of this research is the use of public preference as a foundation to map groups of prospective education service users, identify relevant target characteristics, and assess the position of Islamic educational institutions based on respondents' evaluations without restricting the discussion to a single region or institution. This study aims to analyze the segmentation, targeting, and positioning of Islamic educational institutions based on public preferences in the era of educational competition.

2. METHOD

This study utilized a quantitative approach with a descriptive design to analyze the segmentation, targeting, and positioning of Islamic educational institutions based on public preferences in the era of educational competition. This approach was used to map respondent characteristics, identify trends in public preferences in choosing Islamic educational institutions, determine potential target groups, and discover the attributes that shape public perception of Islamic educational institutions. The research framework referred to the concept of Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP). Segmentation was used to group the public based on their characteristics and preferences, targeting was used to determine the community groups with the potential to be the primary targets, while positioning was used to identify the strongest attributes of Islamic educational institutions in public perception.

2.1. Respondents and Data Collection Techniques

The study involved 100 respondents who had knowledge or considerations in selecting educational institutions. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique with the criteria of being at least 18 years old, aware of the existence of Islamic educational institutions, and having been or currently involved in considering the choice of educational institutions for themselves or family members.

Data were collected using a closed questionnaire. The respondent characteristics used in the analysis included age, gender, education level, occupation, and income level. Public preferences were measured through several attributes of Islamic educational institutions, namely the strengthening of Islamic values, academic quality, educator competence, flagship programs, facilities, education costs, safety and comfort, services, and opportunities for student competency development.

Respondents' assessments used a five-point Likert scale as follows.

Tabel 1. Likert Scale Score

Score	Category
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Neutral
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

2.2 Research Indicators

The research indicators were structured based on the three main elements in the STP strategy, namely:

Tabel 2. Research Indicators

Aspect	Indicator
Segmentation	Age, gender, education, occupation, income, and main preferences
Targeting	Group size, preference level, and suitability to community needs
Positioning	Islamic values, academic quality, educators, flagship programs, facilities, costs, safety, services, and student development

Segmentation was conducted to observe community groups that have different characteristics and preference tendencies. Targeting was directed at groups with the highest level of interest and potential toward the service characteristics of Islamic educational institutions. Positioning was analyzed based on the attributes that obtained the highest assessments from the respondents.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using quantitative descriptive statistics through frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores. The analysis was conducted in stages according to the Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning framework. Respondent characteristics and segmentation results were calculated using frequencies and percentages with the formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = percentage

f = number of respondent in a specific category

N = total number of respondent

The calculation results were used to determine the distribution of respondents based on demographic characteristics and main preferences in choosing Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, the level of public preference for each attribute was calculated using the mean score with the formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

$\bar{X}$ = mean score

$\sum X$ = sum of all respondent scores

N = number of respondent

The mean scores were then interpreted using the following categories.

Tabel 3. Mean score interpretation

Interval Mean	Category
1,00–1,80	Very Low
1,81–2,60	Low
2,61–3,40	Medium
3,41–4,20	High
4,21–5,00	Very High

In the segmentation stage, respondents were grouped based on demographic characteristics and their preference tendencies toward educational attributes. The targeting stage was conducted by comparing the size of each group and its preference level. Groups with a relatively large number and indicating a high level of preference for Islamic educational services were identified as potential targets. The positioning stage was conducted by sorting all attributes based on the highest to lowest mean scores. The attribute with the highest assessment describes the strongest character in public perception regarding Islamic educational institutions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Public Segmentation Towards Islamic Educational Institutions Segmentation was conducted to identify community characteristics and preference patterns in choosing Islamic educational institutions. Respondents were grouped based on age, gender, education

level, occupation, income level, and main considerations in selecting educational institutions.

1. Respondent Characteristics The characteristic distribution of the 100 respondents is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Respondents Characteristic

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	≤25 Years	18	18,0
	26–35 Years	34	34,0
	36–45 Years	31	31,0
	>45 Years	17	17,0
Gender	Male	43	43,0
	Female	57	57,0
Education	Highschool/equivalent	21	21,0
	Diploma	14	14,0
	Bachelor's	49	49,0
	Postgraduate	16	16,0
Occupation	Civil Servant ASN	19	19,0
	Private Employee	28	28,0
	Entrepreneur	25	25,0
	Others	28	28,0
Income	Low	27	27,0
	Medium	51	51,0
	High	22	22,0

Source: Research data, 2026

The 26–35 years age group is the largest respondent group, comprising 34 individuals or 34.0%. This group is followed by respondents aged 36–45 years, totaling 31 individuals or 31.0%. This composition indicates the dominance of the productive adult age group, which is in an active phase of determining various educational choices, both for themselves and family members.

Based on gender, female respondents totaled 57 individuals or 57.0%, while males totaled 43 individuals or 43.0%. In terms of education, the group with a bachelor's degree as their highest education level holds the largest number, namely 49 respondents or 49.0%. This educational level composition illustrates that most respondents possess educational experiences that can shape more diverse considerations regarding the quality and service character of educational institutions.

Regarding occupational characteristics, the private employee group and the 'others' category each have 28 respondents. The entrepreneur group consists of 25 respondents, while civil servants (ASN) amount to 19 respondents. Meanwhile, based on income levels, the medium-income group is the largest with 51 respondents or 51.0%, followed by the low-income group at 27.0% and the high-income group at 22.0%.

2. Segmentation Based on Main Preferences In addition to demographic characteristics, segmentation was conducted based on the public's primary considerations in choosing Islamic educational institutions. Respondents were asked to determine the attributes that received the most attention during the selection process.

Table 5. Segmentation Based on Main Preferences

No.	Main Preference	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	Strengthening of Islamic values	29	29,0	1
2	Academic education quality	24	24,0	2
3	Education Cost	18	18,0	3
4	Flagship Programs	15	15,0	4
5	Educational Facilities	14	14,0	5
Total		100	100,0	

Source: Research data, 2026

The results in Table 5 show that the strengthening of Islamic values is the main preference with a percentage of 29.0%. As many as 24.0% of respondents placed academic education quality as their primary consideration. These two preferences indicate that the public pays significant attention to the combination of Islamic value formation and educational quality when considering Islamic educational institutions.

Education costs ranked third with a percentage of 18.0%. Flagship programs and educational facilities obtained 15.0% and 14.0%, respectively. These differences indicate that the public does not have entirely uniform considerations in determining their choice of educational institution. Groups with a primary focus on Islamic values have different needs from those who place more consideration on academic quality, costs, or educational programs.

3. Community Segment Mapping Based on characteristics and main preferences, the community can be mapped into several segments as follows.

Table 6. Segment Mapping Based on Public Preferences

Segment	Dominant Characteristics	Main Preference	Number of Respondent	Percentage (%)
Segment A	Age 26–45 years, bachelor's degree, medium income	Islamic Values	29	29,0
Segment B	Age 26–45 years, bachelor's degree	Academic Quality	24	24,0
Segment C	Low to medium income	Education Cost	18	18,0
Segment D	Age ≤35 years	Flagship Programs	15	15,0
Segment E	Diverse ages and occupations	Educational Facilities	14	14,0
Total			100	100,0

Source: Research data, 2026.

This mapping reveals five main preference groups. Segment A is the largest group, focusing on the strengthening of Islamic values. The characteristics of this group are dominated by respondents aged 26–45 years with a bachelor's education and a medium income level. This pattern indicates an interest in educational institutions capable of providing structured religious guidance. Segment B places academic quality as the main consideration. This group consists of 24 respondents and has dominant characteristics in the productive age and bachelor's education level.

These preferences illustrate public attention to the ability of Islamic educational institutions to provide learning that possesses academic quality and supports student development. Meanwhile, Segment C is more oriented toward the affordability of education costs. This group consists of 18 respondents with low to medium income characteristics. Flagship programs are the main focus in Segment D, whereas Segment E pays greater attention to the availability of educational facilities. The segmentation results show that public preferences regarding Islamic educational institutions are distributed into several groups with distinct characteristics. The strengthening of Islamic values is the largest preference at 29.0%, followed by academic education quality at 24.0%. Meanwhile, education costs, flagship programs, and facilities obtained smaller proportions. This distribution demonstrates that public considerations in choosing education do not adhere to a uniform pattern, as each group places different emphasis on educational service attributes.

These findings share similarities with previous research [13], which found that promotional segmentation is conducted through an integration of geographic, demographic, and psychographic variables. Targeting also considers previous periods' student mapping, accessibility, and sustainable relationships with the community. These results demonstrate that segmentation in educational

institutions can be formed through more than one community characteristic, allowing demographic grouping to be combined with need and preference tendencies.

Another study [14] also provided an overview of the implementation of segmenting, targeting, and positioning to attract public interest at MTsN 1 Malang City. The research results showed that marketing strategy planning was formulated through deliberation at the management level, while its implementation was carried out by opening various student admission channels and utilizing several digital media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, websites, podcasts, YouTube, and WhatsApp. This marketing management is continuously evaluated to improve strategy execution based on previous experiences.

The dominant preference for Islamic values also highlights a unique character in the competition among Islamic educational institutions. A total of 29 respondents placed this aspect as their main consideration, while 24 respondents prioritized academic quality. These two groups form the two largest segments in this study. This difference in orientation reveals that a portion of the public views Islamic education primarily as a means of strengthening values and character, whereas another group places greater emphasis on academic quality and the development of student competencies.

The segment oriented toward education costs also holds a considerably large proportion at 18.0%. This position indicates that economic considerations remain part of the selection pattern for educational institutions. Flagship programs and facilities are in the subsequent groups with 15.0% and 14.0%, respectively. This preference arrangement serves as a basis to determine which groups have greater potential as primary targets in the targeting stage.

3.2. Targeting Potential Segments for Islamic Educational Institutions

The targeting stage was conducted to identify community segments with the highest potential based on group size and preference level for the attributes of Islamic educational institutions. From the five established segments, an assessment was conducted by observing the number of segment members, dominant characteristics, and the level of attention toward educational needs.

Table 7. Identification of Segment Potential as Targets for Islamic Educational Institutions

Segment	Main Preference	Number of Respondent	Percentage (%)	Dominant Characteristic	Target Potential
A	Strengthening of Islamic values	29	29,0	Age 26–45 years, bachelor's degree, medium income	High
B	Academic education quality	24	24,0	Age 26–45 years, bachelor's degree	High
C	Education Cost	18	18,0	Low–medium income	Moderate
D	Flagship Programs	15	15,0	Age ≤ 35 years	Moderate
E	Educational Facilities	14	14,0	Diverse ages and occupations	Moderate
Total		100		100,0	

Source: Research data, 2026

Table 7 shows that Segment A has the largest size with 29 respondents or 29.0%, followed by Segment B with 24 respondents or 24.0%. Both groups possess larger proportions compared to the other segments and exhibit strong preferences for two main attributes: the strengthening of Islamic values and academic education quality. The targeting assessment was then complemented by looking at the respondents' preference levels for service characteristics deemed suitable for each group's needs. Mean scores were utilized to observe the intensity of respondent assessments toward the attributes of primary concern.

Table 8. Preference Levels in Each Segment

Segment	Dominant Preference	Mean Score	Category	Target Priority
A	Strengthening of Islamic values	4,58	Very High	Primary
B	Academic education quality	4,46	Very High	Primary
C	Affordability of education costs	4,19	High	Supporting
D	Flagship Programs	4,12	High	Supporting
E	Educational Facilities	4,05	High	Supporting

Source: Research data, 2026.

Segment A obtained the highest mean score of 4.58. This group demonstrates a very high level of attention to the strengthening of Islamic values in educational institutions. Segment B follows with a mean score of 4.46 on the academic education quality attribute. Both segments have relatively large group sizes and preference levels categorized as very high. Segments C, D, and E continue to show high preference levels for their respective attributes. The difference lies in their smaller group sizes compared to the two main segments. The group oriented toward education costs has a mean score of 4.19, while preferences for flagship programs and facilities obtained mean scores of 4.12 and 4.05.

3.3. Positioning of Islamic Educational Institutions Based on Public Preferences Positioning was analyzed to identify the attributes that most strongly shape public perception of Islamic educational institutions. Assessments were made on nine attributes reflecting the character of educational services, including Islamic values, academic quality, educator competence, flagship programs, facilities, education costs, service security, and opportunities for student competency development.

Table 9. Positioning Analysis Results of Islamic Educational Institutions

Rank	Attribute	Mean Score	Category
1	Strengthening of Islamic values and education	4,58	Very High
2	Academic education quality	4,46	Very High
3	Educator competence	4,38	Very High
4	Environmental safety and comfort	4,31	Very High
5	Opportunities for student competency development	4,27	Very High
6	Institutional flagship programs	4,18	High
7	Services for students and parents	4,14	High
8	Affordability of education costs	4,12	High
9	Availability of educational facilities	4,05	High

Source: Research data, 2026.

Table 9 shows that the strengthening of Islamic values and education obtained the highest mean score of 4.58. These results indicate that Islamic identity is the strongest attribute in respondents' perceptions when evaluating Islamic educational institutions. The next position is occupied by academic education quality with a mean score of 4.46 and educator competence at 4.38. Environmental safety and comfort obtained a mean score of 4.31, while opportunities for student competency development reached 4.27.

These latter two attributes indicate that the public also pays attention to the educational environment and the institution's ability to support student development during the educational process. Flagship programs obtained a mean score of 4.18, followed by services for students and parents at 4.14. The affordability of education costs scored 4.12, while educational facilities ranked last with a mean score of 4.05. Despite being ranked last, all attributes received assessments ranging from high to very high categories.

Table 10. Positioning Mapping Based on Attribute Groups

Positioning Dimension	Main Attribute	Mean Score
Islamic Identity	Strengthening of Islamic values and education	4,58
Academic Quality	Academic education quality	4,46
HR Quality	Educator competence	4,38
Educational Environment	Safety and comfort	4,31
Student Development	Opportunities for competency development	4,27
Program Differentiation	Flagship programs	4,18
Service Quality	Services for students and parents	4,14

Affordability	Affordability of education costs	4,12
Facility Support	Availability of facilities	4,05

Source: Research data, 2026.

Based on this mapping, the positioning of Islamic educational institutions in public perception is primarily shaped by a combination of Islamic identity, academic quality, and educator quality. These three attributes obtained the highest scores, indicating that the public places religious character and educational implementation quality as fundamental parts in forming their perception of an institution. When linked with the previous segmentation and targeting results, there is a consistent pattern across all three STP stages. The largest segment originates from the group prioritizing Islamic values, and this group also achieved the highest preference level in the targeting stage. In the positioning analysis, the strengthening of Islamic values and education once again ranked first with a mean score of 4.58.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that public preferences regarding Islamic educational institutions can be mapped through the Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) approach. The segmentation results reveal five main preference groups, with the group prioritizing the strengthening of Islamic values being the largest segment at 29.0%, followed by academic education quality at 24.0%. In the targeting stage, these two groups become the primary targets due to their larger segment sizes and very high preference levels. The positioning analysis indicates that the strengthening of Islamic values and education obtained the highest mean score of 4.58, followed by academic education quality (4.46) and educator competence (4.38). This pattern illustrates that public perception of Islamic educational institutions is primarily shaped by an Islamic identity that goes hand-in-hand with academic quality and the competence of educators.

Islamic educational institutions need to conduct periodic mapping of public preferences to understand evolving needs and considerations in educational selection. The strengthening of Islamic identity can be established as the institution's primary character while maintaining focus on academic quality, educator competence, environmental safety, and the development of student competencies. Future research can expand the number of respondents and develop analyses based on the characteristics of different Islamic educational institutions so that public segmentation, targeting, and positioning patterns can be depicted more comprehensively.

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