

Public Relations and Da'wah Marketing Strategies in Islamic Educational Institutions

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Article Info

Article history:

Received July 8, 2026

Revised July 18, 2026

Accepted July 28, 2026

Keywords:

Public relations

Da'wah marketing

Public relations management

Islamic educational institutions

Institutional image

ABSTRACT

Islamic educational institutions currently face increasingly complex challenges. In addition to improving educational quality, they are expected to introduce their programs and maintain public trust. The development of information technology and competition among educational institutions have made public communication an important aspect of institutional management. In this context, public relations and da'wah marketing can serve as complementary approaches. This article aimed to examine the role of public relations and da'wah marketing in managing public relations within Islamic educational institutions. The study employs a library research method by reviewing books and journal articles related to public relations, educational marketing, da'wah communication, and Islamic educational management. The data were analyzed descriptively and analytically through collection, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis. The findings indicate that public relations plays a role in building relationships between institutions and society, while da'wah marketing provides direction so that marketing communication remains grounded in Islamic values. Both approaches can be implemented through strengthening institutional identity, delivering honest information, utilizing digital media, improving services, and developing two-way communication. Therefore, public relations in Islamic educational institutions should not focus solely on student recruitment promotion but also on building long-term relationships based on trust and public benefit.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic educational institutions play an important role in shaping the knowledge, attitudes, and character of students. Madrasahs, pesantrens, Islamic schools, and Islamic universities not only serve as places for educational activities but also become part of the social life of the community. The existence of these institutions is related to various parties, such as students, parents, teachers, alumni, the government, religious leaders, and the surrounding community. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions need to have the ability to build good relationships with their public [1].

In the current development, the community is becoming increasingly selective in choosing educational institutions. Parents not only consider the cost of education and the location of the school, but also take into account the quality of teachers, religious programs, student achievements, facilities, security, and the institution's reputation. This situation shows that the quality of education alone is not enough if it is not accompanied by the institution's ability to convey information to the public. A good program needs to be communicated properly so that it can be understood and evaluated by the public.

Educational marketing essentially does not only relate to promotional activities. Marketing also encompasses the process of understanding community needs, developing services, building satisfaction, and maintaining relationships with education service users. Kotler & Fox (1995) explain that educational marketing is related to the process of planning and managing valuable exchange relationships between educational institutions and their public. This perspective shows that educational marketing has a broader scope than merely introducing schools to prospective students [2].

In line with this, Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2006) explain that educational marketing has its own characteristics because education is a complex service and its benefits are not always immediately visible [3]. The relationship between educational institutions and the community also lasts in the long term. Therefore, marketing activities need to be supported by real service quality so that the information conveyed does not differ from the community's experience.

In the management of educational institutions, marketing has a close relationship with public relations. Public relations is a management function aimed at building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and its public [4]. Grunig & Hunt (1984) also emphasize the importance of two-way communication in public relations. Thus, public relations not only has the duty of conveying information from the institution to the public but also needs to listen to the needs, criticisms, and hopes of the public [5].

In Islamic educational institutions, this function can be developed through a da'wah marketing approach. This term can be understood as a strategy for conveying the messages, values, and benefits of Islamic education to the community using good communication planning. Marketing dakwah does not mean turning dakwah into a commercial activity, but rather emphasizes how Islamic values can be conveyed through engaging, polite, and responsible communication [6].

Da'wah communication has an important ethical dimension that needs to be considered. Muis (2001) explains that Islamic communication is related to the delivery of messages that are true, good, and responsible [7]. Therefore, the promotional activities of Islamic educational institutions should not only highlight their advantages but also consider the alignment between the information conveyed and the actual conditions of the institution. Excessive or unrealistic promotion can actually reduce public trust.

Several studies show that public relations contribute to the development of Islamic educational institutions. Jufaini, (2023) discusses the role of public relations management in the development of Islamic educational institutions, including the utilization of social media and the evaluation of communication strategies [8]. Saharani et al., (2024) also examine Islamic value-based public relations strategies in building a positive perception and attracting the interest of prospective students [9]. Meanwhile, Ilahi & Taufiqurrahman, (2023) explain that the marketing management of Islamic educational institutions is related to efforts to enhance the competitiveness and image of the institution [10].

Nevertheless, discussions regarding public relations and da'wah marketing are still often conducted separately. However, these two approaches have a strong relationship, especially in terms of communication, trust building, and value delivery. Therefore, a study is needed to discuss how both can be integrated into the public relations management of Islamic educational institutions.

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method. This method was chosen because the discussion in the article focuses on concepts, theories, and previous research findings related to public relations, educational marketing, da'wah communication, and the management of Islamic educational institutions.

The data sources used are academic books and scientific journal articles relevant to the research theme. The selection of sources is made by considering the relevance of the discussion, the credibility of the publisher or journal, and their contribution to the study. The references used include literature on public relations, educational marketing, Islamic communication, and educational institution management.

Data collection is carried out through several stages, namely searching for appropriate sources, reading the literature, noting important ideas, and grouping information based on themes. After that, the data is analyzed descriptively-analytically. The analysis is conducted by comparing concepts, understanding the relationships between ideas, and compiling the study results in the form of synthesis.

The focus of the analysis in this research includes four aspects, namely the concept and function of public relations, educational marketing, da'wah marketing, and the integration strategy of the three in managing public relations for Islamic educational institutions. Because this research is a literature study, the results obtained are in the form of conceptual understanding and synthesis from various sources, not field research results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Role of Public Relations in Managing the Public Relations of Islamic Educational Institutions

Based on the literature review, public relations has a broader role than merely conveying information or documenting the activities of the organization. Public relations is part of the management function related to communication planning, public relations management, reputation building, and evaluation of public response [11]. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, public relations holds an important position because the sustainability of the institution is not only influenced by internal quality but also by the level of trust and relationships built with the community.

Cutlip (1962) explains that public relations is a management function aimed at building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its public. The concept is relevant to be applied in Islamic educational institutions because the institution's public is not limited to prospective students, but also includes parents, students, teachers, educational staff, alumni, the surrounding community, the government, and other parties with an interest in the institution [4].

Each public group has different information needs. Parents, for example, need information about the quality of learning, education costs, safety, character development, and student progress. Meanwhile, the surrounding community can pay more attention to the social contributions, openness, and involvement of the institution in community life. These conditions indicate that public relations management needs to be based on an understanding of the characteristics and needs of each public.

Public relations also play a role in reducing the information gap between institutions and the community. When the community receives clear information about programs, policies, activities, and educational services, the potential for misunderstandings can be minimized. Conversely, limited communication can lead the community to have perceptions that do not align with the actual conditions. Therefore, the communication carried out by public relations needs to be open, informative, and sustainable.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) emphasize the importance of two-way communication in public relations practice. This principle can be applied through parent communication forums, complaint services, satisfaction surveys, discussion forums, or dialog activities with the community. Through two-way communication, the institution not only conveys information but also receives feedback that can be used to improve service quality [5].

Jufaini (2023) shows that public relations management can support the development of Islamic educational institutions through stakeholder relationship management, social media utilization, and communication strategy evaluation [8]. Thus, public relations need to be positioned as part of the institution's strategic management, not just as the executor of publication activities. The institution's reputation is ultimately not only formed through the positive information published but also through the public's experience when interacting directly with the institution.

3.2. Educational Marketing as an Effort to Enhance Institutional Competitiveness

Educational marketing is a process carried out by institutions to understand the needs of the community while also conveying the benefits of the educational services they offer. Kotler and Fox (1995) explain that educational marketing is related to the creation of valuable exchange relationships between educational institutions and their public. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, the concept of value has a broader scope because it not only relates to academic aspects and facilities but also to moral development, strengthening religious values, discipline, and character building of students [2].

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) explain that educational marketing has specific characteristics because education is a complex service and involves a long-term relationship between the institution and the community. In other words, the community does not only evaluate the institution based on the information or promotion received, but also based on the experience during interactions with the institution. Therefore, educational marketing needs to go hand in hand with improving service quality [3].

Ilahi and Taufiqurrahman (2023) explain that marketing management in Islamic educational institutions can be used to enhance the competitiveness and image of the institution. These strategies can be implemented through strengthening the institution's identity, conveying program information, improving service quality, and utilizing communication media that meet the community's needs [10].

The findings indicate that Islamic education marketing should not only be aimed at increasing the number of students. Marketing should also be directed toward building satisfaction, trust, and long-term relationships with the community. Thus, the success of marketing cannot be separated from the quality of education provided by the institution.

In this context, the institution's image is one of the important aspects. Image can be formed through various information received by the public, but a strong image requires support from real quality. If the information conveyed through marketing activities does not match the institution's conditions, a gap may arise between public expectations and reality. Conversely, an institution that has good quality but is unable to communicate its advantages may also be less well-known to the public.

3.3. Dakwah Marketing as a Communication Approach Based on Islamic Values

Dakwah marketing in this study is understood as an approach to delivering messages, values, and benefits of dakwah through planned communication strategies. This approach combines marketing principles with dakwah values so that the communication carried out not only aims to introduce the institution but also to provide understanding and benefits to the community.

Dakwah is essentially an activity that invites people toward goodness. Therefore, the application of da'wah marketing in Islamic educational institutions needs to pay attention to the values of honesty, politeness, exemplary behavior, responsibility, and usefulness. Muis (2001) explains that Islamic communication has an ethical dimension that emphasizes the importance of conveying messages correctly and well. This principle is important because the communication of Islamic educational institutions is not only related to image but also carries Islamic identity and values [7].

Dakwah marketing can be realized through various activities, such as the dissemination of educational program information, publication of religious activities, parenting seminars, Islamic studies, social activities, dissemination of educational content, and various other positive activities through digital media. These activities not only introduce the institution's programs but can also serve as a means to demonstrate the values that form the foundation of educational administration.

The approach of da'wah marketing also demands consistency between the message conveyed and the institution's practices. If the institution communicates the value of honesty, for example, then that value must be reflected in its services, administrative management, learning processes, and the behavior of its educators. Thus, da'wah marketing does not stop at promotional activities, but is also related to exemplary behavior and community experiences.

In that context, marketing dakwah should not be understood as an effort to commodify dakwah. The term is more appropriately used to describe a strategy for delivering messages and the benefits of Islamic education in a planned, communicative, ethical manner, and in accordance with the needs of society. With this approach, the institution's promotional activities can also serve as a means of public education.

3.4. The Relationship Between Public Relations and Da'wah Marketing

The results of the literature synthesis show that public relations and da'wah marketing are interconnected in building relationships, conveying information, and enhancing public trust in Islamic educational institutions. However, both have different emphases. Public relations focuses more on managing relationships with the public, institutional communication, and reputation, while marketing dakwah emphasizes conveying Islamic values, educational messages, and the benefits of education to the community.

The integration of these two approaches can produce an institutional communication pattern that is not only informative but also educational and valuable. For example, when the institution publishes a character development program for students, the information conveyed should not only explain the time and form of the activities. The information should also explain the program's objectives, the values instilled, and the benefits for the students' development.

Thus, public relations can function as a bridge between the internal quality of the institution and public perception. Public relations convey information about the institution's programs and services, while da'wah marketing provides value orientation to ensure that the information reflects the principles of Islamic education. This integration shows that the institution's communication is not only aimed at gaining public attention but also at building sustainable relationships.

That relationship is becoming increasingly important because society today has wide access to various sources of information. The community can compare programs, services, facilities, institutional culture, and the experiences of parents and students through various media. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions need to build consistent communication between the messages conveyed and the reality of the services provided.

3.5. Utilization of Digital Media in Public Relations and Da'wah Marketing Management

The development of digital media provides opportunities for Islamic educational institutions to reach the community more widely and quickly. Information about learning activities, student achievements, religious programs, social activities, new student admissions, and various educational services can be conveyed through websites, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms.

However, the use of digital media is not sufficient by merely uploading activity documentation. Institutions need to pay attention to the content of the message, visual quality, information consistency, and the ability to respond to questions and comments from the public. Digital media should not only function as a bulletin board but also as a space for communication and interaction between the institution and the public.

Saharani et al. (2024) show that Islamic value-based public relations strategies can be used to build a positive perception and attract the interest of prospective students. The findings show that communication combining Islamic values with public relations strategies has the potential to support the image of educational institutions [9].

Rivaldy et al. (2023) also discuss the importance of utilizing social media in building the reputation of Islamic primary education. Social media can be used to showcase the institution's culture, the quality of activities, student achievements, and social contributions to the community. Thus, the public relations content of Islamic educational institutions should not only consist of announcements but can also include educational stories, student experiences, social activities, alumni achievements, good practices of teachers, and various information that benefits the community [12].

The use of digital media also needs to pay attention to Islamic communication ethics. The information conveyed must be accurate, not excessive, not misleading, and should not create an image that does not align with the institution's actual condition. That principle is important for maintaining public trust in the long term.

3.6. Institutional Image, Public Trust, and Service Quality

The image of an educational institution is a representation or perception of the community regarding the quality and identity of the institution. However, a good image cannot be separated from the quality of service. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) explain that educational marketing needs to pay attention to the complex characteristics of educational services that occur in long-term relationships. Therefore, communication and marketing strategies must go hand in hand with the improvement of service quality [3].

In Islamic educational institutions, a strong image needs to be supported by the quality of learning, teacher competence, religious guidance, facilities, administrative services, and good institutional governance. Public relations has the responsibility to communicate that quality to the community, while the institution's management is responsible for ensuring that the communicated quality is truly realized.

Promotion without quality can create a gap between public expectations and reality. Conversely, good quality without effective communication can lead to the public not understanding the institution's advantages. Therefore, the management of public relations and marketing in preaching needs to be balanced between external communication and internal improvement.

Public trust can also be built through the institution's openness to criticism and feedback. Institutions that provide space for dialog show that the community is not only positioned as recipients of information but also as part of the educational stakeholders. Thus, the relationship that is built can evolve from mere communication to participation.

3.7. Strategy for Integrating Public Relations and Da'wah Marketing

Based on the synthesis of the literature, the integration of public relations and da'wah marketing in the management of public relations in Islamic educational institutions can be carried out through several strategic stages.

First, mapping the public and community needs. The institution needs to identify the public groups that are the target of communication, such as students, parents, alumni, the community, the government, and institutional partners. Each group has different information needs, so the communication strategy must be tailored to the characteristics of each public.

Second, the formulation of the institution's identity and message. The institution needs to determine its core values, strengths, character, and the message it wants to convey to the public. That identity must be reflected in the vision, educational programs, institutional culture, teacher behavior, administrative services, and communication with the public.

Third, the implementation of value-based communication. Information about the institution's programs and services is conveyed through media that align with the public's characteristics. In the process, the institution needs to prioritize honesty, politeness, transparency, and usefulness. Communication is not only aimed at attracting attention but also providing information and education to the public.

Fourth, strengthening relationships and public participation. Institutions need to open dialog spaces through parent meetings, discussion forums, satisfaction surveys, complaint services, and social activities. Public participation can be a source of information for institutions to understand the needs and expectations of the community.

Fifth, evaluation and service improvement. Evaluation is conducted by considering community responses, parental satisfaction levels, social media interactions, public perception, and student development. The results of the evaluation are then used to improve communication strategies and enhance the quality of educational services.

The five stages indicate that public relations and da'wah marketing can be positioned as complementary parts in the management of public relations in Islamic educational institutions. Public relations provide a framework for managing relationships and reputation, while da'wah marketing offers a value and ethical orientation in message delivery. Both can be directed toward building open, educational, and sustainable communication.

Overall, the study results indicate that the management of public relations in Islamic educational institutions cannot be carried out solely through publication or promotion activities. Public relations need to be positioned as a strategic function that connects the internal quality of the institution with the needs and perceptions of the community. Meanwhile, da'wah marketing can provide value character in the communication process so that the institution's promotion is not only oriented toward increasing the number of students but also toward conveying the benefits of education, building trust, and strengthening relationships with the community.

Thus, the integration of public relations, educational marketing, and da'wah marketing can form a more comprehensive communication management pattern for the institution. The success of these strategies still depends on the alignment between the messages conveyed and the actual quality provided by the institution. Therefore, effective communication needs to be accompanied by improvements in the quality of learning, human resource competencies, services, governance, character building, and the strengthening of Islamic values in the life of the institution.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature study, it can be concluded that public relations and da'wah marketing have a complementary relationship in the management of public relations in Islamic educational institutions. Public relations play a role in building and maintaining relationships between the institution and the community, while da'wah marketing provides direction to ensure that the marketing communication process remains grounded in Islamic values.

The integration of both can be achieved through strengthening the institution's identity, delivering honest information, utilizing digital media, two-way communication, improving service quality, and continuous evaluation. The strategy shows that the public relations of Islamic educational institutions should not only focus on promoting student admissions but also on building trust and long-term relationships with the community.

Thus, the success of da'wah marketing is greatly influenced by the alignment between the message conveyed, the quality of services provided, and the Islamic values embodied in institutional practices. Subsequent research can examine the implementation of these strategies through field studies, such as investigating the management of public relations social media, public perception, or the effectiveness of value-based Islamic communication on the image of educational institutions.

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