Optimizing Islamic Boarding School-Based Branding to Increase the Reputation of Islamic Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The main objectives of this research are to identify effective branding strategies, understand the impact of implementing Islamic boarding school-based branding on the university's reputation, and explore the role of Islamic boarding school values in building a positive image of the institution. **Method:** The method used in this research is a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. **Results:** The research results show that integrating Islamic boarding school values in the curriculum, using social media for promotion, and collaborating with alums and Islamic boarding school figures are effective branding strategies in improving the university's reputation. Implementing these strategies has succeeded in increasing the attractiveness of Qomaruddin Gresik University in the eyes of prospective students and the wider community and strengthening alum loyalty. This research also found that Islamic boarding school-based branding can provide a strong and unique identity for the university, differentiating it from other Islamic universities. **Novelty:** This research emphasizes a holistic approach to optimizing Islamic boarding school-based branding, focusing not only on promotional aspects but also on integrating Islamic boarding school values in all aspects of university operations.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding school-based higher education has developed into an institution ready to face the global era. In facing the challenges of globalization, these institutions must not only maintain high-quality education but must also be able to compete at the international level. Building a brand image through various efforts to improve institutional quality manifests strong competitiveness. A good image allows Islamic boarding school-based universities to stand out among the many higher education options available, attracting interest not only from within the country but also from prospective students, lecturers, and international partners (Broucker, 2021).

Success in building a positive brand image can significantly impact a college's ability to attract high-quality students and experienced faculty from various parts of the world (Saurombe, 2020). This not only enhances the academic environment by providing diverse international perspectives and experiences but also increases the diversity on campus. Furthermore, collaboration with international partners can facilitate new opportunities for research, exchange programs, and innovative curriculum development (Sun, 2023). Thus, Islamic boarding school-based universities can more easily adapt to changes and demands in global education.

Building branding at Islamic boarding school-based universities must use a holistic approach. Pesantren, Indonesia's oldest Islamic educational institution, has a rich and robust heritage in shaping its students' character and Islamic knowledge. However, in

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