

BENCHMARKING

JURNAL MANAJEMEN PENDIDIKAN ISLAM

STRATEGY TO BUILD BRAND IMAGE TO INCREASE COMPETITIVENESS AT SMK SYUBBANUL WATHON SECANG

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Abstract

The decline in applicant interest and weak public trust in vocational schools pose serious challenges to vocational education in Indonesia. This study examines the brand image development strategies at SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, a pesantren-based vocational school in Magelang Regency, as well as the challenges faced in enhancing the school's competitiveness. The research subjects consisted of five informants, including the principal, vice principals for curriculum and student affairs, and several teachers directly involved in school branding activities. The object of the study was the school's branding strategies implemented in digital, academic, and religious aspects. This study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were analyzed thematically using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model and validated through source triangulation and member checking. The results indicate that the main strategies include improving the quality of vocational programs, utilizing social media, organizing student work exhibitions, engaging alumni and school ambassadors, and strengthening religious values as the school's distinctive identity. These strategies align with Keller's brand image theory, emphasizing the importance of strong, favorable, and unique brand associations. The challenges faced include limited digital human resources, minimal promotional budgets, inter-school competition, and low public awareness of the importance of school image. The study's implications contribute theoretically to Islamic education management literature and offer practical recommendations for developing branding strategies in other pesantren-based vocational schools.

Keywords: Brand image, Vocational High School (SMK), Branding strategy, Vocational education, Pesantren

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational Education or Vocational High Schools (SMK) play a strategic role in preparing a competitive and high-quality workforce that is ready to meet the demands of modern industry (Yuan & Mengmeng, 2023). The legal basis for vocational education in Indonesia is stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which affirms that vocational education aims to prepare students to work in specific fields. This is reinforced by Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010 on the Management and Implementation of Education, which emphasizes the importance of aligning education with the needs of the business world and industrial sectors (DUDI). However, in practice, many vocational schools, especially those located in semi-urban and rural areas, still face a gap between the ideal concept and the realities on the ground.

One of the main challenges faced by SMKs is the low level of public trust and the lack of interest from prospective students. Several factors influence this situation, including negative public perceptions of certain vocational majors deemed to have poor job prospects, weak promotional and publicity strategies, and the absence of a strong and appealing brand image (Kovalchuk et al., 2022). In the increasingly competitive educational landscape, brand image has become a crucial factor in building institutional appeal, loyalty, and differentiation (Rahminawati, 2023).

In the context of education, brand image refers to the public's perception and image of an educational institution—be it a school, university, or other learning center (Tran et al., 2020). This image is built through various elements such as teaching quality, available facilities, academic achievements, and the overall experience provided to students (Kusuma et al., 2022). A positive brand image can enhance an institution's appeal, strengthen stakeholder loyalty—such as that of students, parents, or prospective educators—and expand collaboration networks with various parties, including industry and government institutions (Martin & Nasib, 2021).

Effective strategies to build a school's brand image involve several steps focused on educational quality and stakeholder relationship management (Aji et al., 2022). First, the school must ensure that its vision, mission, and values align with the needs and expectations of society and related industries (Nasib et al., 2021). This can be achieved through curriculum development, teacher training, and improved quality of facilities and resources (Aji et al., 2022). Furthermore, clear and consistent communication of the school's achievements and innovations—via social media, websites, and other publicity channels—also plays a key role in strengthening the school's public image (Widyaningrum & Suryandaro, 2023). The success of promotional strategies lies not only in the media used, but also in the alignment of values, consistency of messaging, and the relevance of programs offered to societal needs (Ningsih et al., 2024). With proper management, schools can establish a positive and sustainable reputation that is not only recognized by the public but also valued by various institutions and companies connected to the education sector (Nguyen et al., 2022).

A theoretical approach that explains the importance of brand image in the context of educational institutions is the theory proposed by Kevin Lane Keller (2013). Keller defines brand image as perceptions of a brand formed through various associations in the minds of consumers. In the educational context, "consumers" may refer to students, parents, the community, and other education stakeholders. According to this theory, a school's brand image is shaped by how the public interprets its attributes, benefits, and uniqueness. Keller breaks down the elements of brand image into several dimensions: the type of association (including attributes, benefits, and attitudes toward the brand), the favorability of associations, the strength of associations, and the uniqueness of associations. In the context of a pesantren-based SMK such as SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang**, these dimensions are clearly reflected: attributes include vocational education combined with character development rooted in Islamic boarding school values; benefits include graduates who are both religious and competent; and uniqueness lies in its pesantren system, distinguishing it from general vocational schools.

Literature studies on educational branding have mostly focused on higher education institutions, while research on branding strategies at the Vocational High School level remains limited. Most existing studies emphasize the marketing aspects of higher

education without specifically addressing how branding strategies can be applied at SMKs to improve their competitiveness at local and national levels (Andriana et al., 2023; Kalaiganam et al., 2021; Suharno et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is still a lack of studies on the role of school management in building vocational-based educational brand images (Jia & Yan, 2024; Wu et al., 2023).

This issue is clearly experienced by SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, a pesantren-based vocational school located in Magelang Regency and managed under the Syubbanul Wathon Foundation. The school offers vocational programs such as Agribusiness of Agricultural Product Processing (APHP), Accounting and Financial Institutions (AKL), and Animation—all of which are relevant to future industry needs. Despite having strengths in Islamic values, its pesantren foundation, and strong character education, internal survey data from the New Student Admission (PPDB) committee for the 2023/2024 academic year showed that the student enrollment rate only reached 60% of the target quota. This indicates a gap between potential and reality, suggesting weaknesses in the school's promotional strategy, public communication, and image-building efforts (Nuruzzaman et al., 2024; Suryati et al., 2024).

There are several specific indicators of problems at SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, including the lack of identity differentiation compared to nearby schools such as SMK Syubbanul Wathon Tegalrejo, which is more popular despite offering similar programs; underutilization of digital and social media to build emotional connections with prospective students and parents; societal stigma toward the APHP major, which is perceived as less economically promising compared to more modern or technology-based majors; and the suboptimal involvement of alumni and pesantren networks in supporting the school's promotion and providing testimonials or positive public image.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to provide an in-depth description of the brand image development strategies implemented by SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, to identify the challenges faced and the solutions to improve the school's competitiveness and public trust. The novelty of this research lies in integrating Keller's classic brand image theory with Islamic educational approaches in the context of pesantren-based vocational schools. This study also seeks to fill the gap in the literature regarding branding strategies of Islamic educational institutions at the vocational secondary level through a contextual and applicable approach.

Theoretically, the findings of this research are expected to enrich the literature in the field of Islamic education management. Practically, they can serve as strategic references for pesantren-based vocational schools in building strong, contextual, and adaptive positioning in the face of increasingly intense educational competition.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach at SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, located in Magelang. The research subjects consist of five informants, including the principal, the vice principal for curriculum and student affairs, as well as several senior teachers. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, meaning individuals were deliberately chosen based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the school's branding strategies. The object of this study includes strategic activities and policies related to building the school's brand image. The research was conducted from December 2024 to February 2025. In this study, the researcher acted as a participant observer, directly observing the school's branding processes to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Data collection techniques

included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques, following the stages proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014)—namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To enhance the validity of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents to achieve more accurate insights. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming interview results with the informants to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation.

This research also adhered to ethical research standards by informing participants about the purpose and objectives of the study, obtaining informed consent for voluntary participation, and ensuring the confidentiality of informants' identities during and after the research process.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Strategies of SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang in Building Brand Image to Enhance School Competitiveness

Based on the findings obtained through in-depth interviews with the school principal, vice principals of curriculum and student affairs, as well as several vocational teachers at SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, supported by direct observation and school documentation, it is evident that the school has designed and implemented a variety of systematic strategies to build a strong brand image in order to enhance competitiveness amidst the tight rivalry among vocational education institutions, especially in Magelang Regency.

1. Improving the Quality of Vocational Programs Relevant to Industry Needs

One of the main strategies implemented by SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang is enhancing the quality of vocational programs offered by the school to ensure they remain relevant and adaptive to the needs of the business and industrial sectors (DUDI). The school offers programs such as Agro-Processing of Agricultural Products (APHP), Institutional Financial Accounting (AKL), and Animation. These programs are consistently evaluated and adjusted based on technological advancements and current industry trends. In practice, classroom learning is not only focused on theory but is also strengthened through hands-on activities, training in food and beverage processing, managing a mini bank, and skill development in design and multimedia, including graphic design and 2D/3D animation production.

Based on the latest 2024/2025 curriculum documentation, more than 80% of vocational subjects have integrated digital content and industry-based projects. Furthermore, the school actively partners with various companies in Magelang and Yogyakarta to facilitate internships (PKL) for 11th-grade students. Interview results with the principal show that in 2023, over 75% of the school's graduates secured employment within six months of graduation, in both office and service sectors.

2. Optimizing the Use of Social Media and Digital Branding

In line with developments in information and communication technology, SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang also utilizes social media as an effective digital branding tool to build a positive public image of the school. Through official social media accounts such as Instagram (@smkswsecang), Facebook, and the school's YouTube channel, the school regularly shares various positive content such as student activity documentation, academic and non-academic achievements, new student admission information, and educational content related to its vocational programs.

According to digital documentation compiled during the second semester of the 2023/2024 academic year, the school's Instagram account has gained more than 1,700 active followers with a relatively high engagement rate of about 8–10% per post. This indicates that the school's digital branding strategy has successfully enhanced its visibility and presence, not only at the local level but also reaching prospective students from outside the region.

3. Organizing Student Work Exhibitions as a Promotional Medium

Another effective strategy in building a strong brand image is organizing events such as bazaars—exhibitions of students' work from various departments—as a form of appreciation for student creativity and a direct promotional medium to the public. This activity involves multiple stakeholders, including parents, the surrounding community, and alumni. At the 2023 bazaar event, over 1,200 visitors were recorded.

According to the New Student Admission (PPDB) committee records, following this event, the number of new student applicants significantly increased to 200 within a month. This shows that student exhibitions serve not only as platforms for showcasing talent but also as effective tools in building public trust and interest in the quality of SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang graduates.

4. Establishing School Ambassadors and Involving Inspirational Alumni

To broaden promotional reach and strengthen the school's positive image among prospective students, the school formed a special team called "Duta SMK" (School Ambassadors), consisting of high-achieving students actively involved in school socialization activities. These ambassadors are trained to share information about the school's advantages, learning activities, and their personal experiences as students at SMK. Additionally, the school actively involves successful alumni in promotional events such as motivational seminars, video testimonials, and inspirational content on the school's social media platforms.

An internal survey by the 2024 PPDB committee showed that approximately 60% of new students stated they learned about and were interested in enrolling at SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang after attending school socialization activities by the ambassadors or watching alumni testimonials. This indicates that promotional approaches based on real-life experiences are highly effective in influencing prospective students' decisions.

5. Strengthening Religious Values as the School's Distinctive Character

As part of a pesantren-based educational institution, SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang emphasizes the integration of vocational education with character building and Islamic values. The distinctive religious approach inherent in pesantren education helps improve the quality of learning and builds a strong institutional identity (Hasyim, 2022). Activities such as studying classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), performing congregational prayers, and character strengthening through routine religious activities have become the school's hallmark, setting it apart from other vocational schools. These religious values are not merely part of the hidden curriculum but serve as the school's main value proposition in building its image.

A survey conducted by the 2024 PPDB committee with 100 parents of new students found that 85% of respondents cited religious values and character education as their primary reasons for choosing SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang for their children. This signifies that the school's brand image is shaped not only through academic excellence but also through consistent spiritual and moral value development.

Table 1.
Strategies of SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang in Building Brand Image

No.	Strategy	Main Activities	Success Indicators	Supporting Data
1	Improving the Quality of Vocational Programs	Curriculum aligned with industry, digital training, internships (PKL)	Graduates absorbed into industry, students master up-to-date competencies	75% of graduates employed in industry (2023)
2	Digital Branding through Social Media	Active on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube	High engagement, increase in new student applicants	1,700+ Instagram followers, 8–10% engagement rate
3	Student Work Exhibitions	Vocational product bazaar	Increase in applicants, participation of industries and local community	1,200 visitors, 200 new applicants after the event
4	School Ambassadors & Inspirational Alumni	School socialization to junior high schools, alumni seminars, digital testimonials	Recognition from new students who learned about the school from ambassadors/alumni	60% of new students knew about the school from alumni or ambassadors
5	Strengthening Religious Values & Islamic Character	Islamic book study sessions, congregational prayers, daily religious activities	Positive perception of students' character by parents	85% of parents chose the school due to its religious values

Source: Interviews and internal documentation of SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, 2025.

Challenges Faced by SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang in Building Brand Image and Efforts to Overcome Them

In its effort to build a strong brand image to enhance institutional competitiveness, SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang faces various internal and external challenges. Based on in-depth interviews with the principal, vice principals for curriculum and student affairs, several teachers, and supported by field observations and documentation, several prominent obstacles were identified in the process of strengthening the school's image. However, the school has shown proactive and adaptive responses to these challenges through systematic and collaborative strategies.

1. Limited Human Resources Skilled in Branding and Digital Technology

One of the main challenges is the lack of teaching and administrative staff with competencies in school marketing, branding, and digital media. Many teachers are still focused on conventional teaching methods and are not yet familiar with using digital tools for promotional purposes.

According to the Vice Principal of Curriculum, only around 3–4 teachers and staff actively manage the school's social media accounts and digital promotional content. As a result, content distribution is often inconsistent and unable to adapt to ever-changing social media algorithms.

To address this, the school has organized internal training sessions and collaborated with alumni working in digital marketing to provide technical guidance. As a result, within the past year, there has been noticeable improvement in the quality and consistency of promotional content posted weekly on the school's official accounts.

2. Limited Budget Allocation for School Branding

Another significant challenge is the limited budget specifically allocated for promotional and branding activities. Most of the school's operational funds are directed

toward teaching needs, facility maintenance, and student activities. As a result, marketing efforts often rely on the voluntary support of teachers and the public relations team.

As a solution, the school has begun forming partnerships with businesses and industry (DUDI) and engaging alumni to sponsor branding-related activities such as printing banners, brochures, and school merchandise. In addition, free platforms like social media, Canva for design, and YouTube for publishing promotional videos are utilized to minimize costs without sacrificing message quality.

3. Increasing Competition from Other Schools

Externally, the school faces growing competition from other vocational institutions, both public and private, which are also actively innovating and developing their branding. Many schools in the Magelang area have adopted digital technology for promotions, introduced new vocational programs, and strengthened their image through social media.

To respond, SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang implements a differentiation strategy by highlighting its religious values, Islamic character, and practical vocational training integrated with the pesantren (boarding school) environment. The school also emphasizes daily character-building programs such as classical Islamic book studies (kitab kuning), congregational prayers, and reinforcement of student discipline and responsibility. These values form the school's unique identity, consistently promoted across all media channels.

4. Low Public Awareness of the Importance of School Branding

Many parents, especially from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, still lack awareness of the importance of choosing schools based on brand quality or institutional reputation. Teacher interviews revealed that most prospective parents still choose schools based on proximity, affordability, or traditional influence from relatives or neighbors.

To address this issue, the school actively engages in personal outreach to prospective students and parents through socialization visits to junior high schools and involves alumni as role models. These sessions include testimonies from alumni who have succeeded in the workforce or pursued higher education, serving as tangible evidence of the benefits of studying at SMK. This strategy has proven effective in improving public understanding and interest, as seen in the increase in student applicants from outside the school's usual catchment area over the past two years.

Table 2.
Challenges and Solutions of SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang in Building Brand Image

No.	Challenge	Description	Solution/Strategy
1	Limited Human Resources in Branding & Digital Marketing	Very few teachers/staff understand digital promotion; content is inconsistent and lacks appeal	Internal training, alumni mentorship in digital marketing, improved consistency in school social media posts
2	Limited Budget for School Promotion	No dedicated budget for branding activities like video production or event coverage	Partnerships with industries and alumni sponsorship, use of free digital platforms (Canva, YouTube, social media)
3	Fierce Competition with Other Vocational Schools	Many other schools offer strong branding, new programs, and active social media presence	Differentiation through Islamic values, classical book learning, pesantren-based vocational education, consistent promotion of the school's unique strengths

No.	Challenge	Description	Solution/Strategy
4	Low Public Awareness of School Brand Importance	Parents often choose schools based on proximity or tradition, not brand or quality	Alumni success stories, direct socialization to junior high schools, promotional videos to boost public trust

Source: Interviews and internal documentation of SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang, 2025.

Discussion

In today's increasingly competitive educational landscape, brand image is no longer a complementary element but a strategic component in determining the success of educational institutions, including vocational schools (SMKs). Based on the findings, the strategies implemented by SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang align closely with Kevin Lane Keller's (2013) brand image theory, which emphasizes that brand image is formed through various associations stored in consumers' memory. These associations include four key dimensions: type, strength, favorability, and uniqueness. A strong brand image fosters consumer loyalty, reinforces positive institutional perception, and enhances overall brand communication effectiveness (Keller, 2013).

First, the school's efforts to improve the quality of vocational programs and actively partner with industry and business sectors (DUDI) reflect the formation of strong functional associations in public perception. Vocational programs such as APHP, AKL, and Animation are positioned as relevant to industry needs, thereby forming benefit associations with high favorability and strength. A study by Ningsih et al. (2024) confirms that the direct connection between vocational schools and industries significantly enhances public perceptions of such institutions. The fact that over 75% of graduates are absorbed into the workforce within six months further strengthens these associations. This supports Keller's (2013) assertion on the importance of forming strong and valued associations in line with consumer expectations to build a positive school brand image.

Second, the use of social media as a digital branding tool facilitates the consistent formation of both emotional and informative associations. Through visual narratives of student activities, alumni testimonials, and academic information, the school constructs positive perceptions that align with Keller's dimension of favorability. This is supported by Widyaningrum & Suryandaro (2023), who state that consistent digital communication via social media significantly contributes to building a strong school brand image. Posting consistency and high engagement rates serve as indicators of success in reinforcing brand image through digital platforms. This aligns with Keller's (2013) notion that systematic and repeated brand communication is crucial for strengthening associations and enhancing brand accessibility.

Third, the organization of student work exhibitions and participation in external events strengthens association strength through direct experiences. Community interaction with student outputs creates experiential associations that increase the school's appeal beyond formal academic boundaries. This finding resonates with Martin & Nasib (2021), who argue that community involvement in educational institution activities enhances loyalty and trust toward the school brand. Keller (2013) highlights that associations formed through direct brand interaction—especially pleasant and meaningful experiences—tend to leave stronger, more enduring impressions in consumer memory.

Fourth, engaging student ambassadors and alumni as brand ambassadors reinforces trust-based associations. Testimonials from successful alumni offer authentic and credible associations. Tran et al. (2020) noted that prospective students' perceptions are highly influenced by alumni success stories and peer-to-peer endorsements. According to Keller, associations built through real experiences and relatable figures significantly shape a

trusted brand image, as consumers are more inclined to believe information from sources perceived as authentic and experienced.

Fifth, the integration of Islamic values and pesantren-based systems in vocational education positions SMK Syubbanul Wathon uniquely compared to other vocational schools. This approach creates unique brand associations that highlight spiritual and moral identity as a core differentiator. Aji et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of incorporating Islamic values into vocational-based Islamic education to build a distinctive and strong position in local competition. Keller (2013) also underscores that uniqueness is a key element in effective positioning, as it helps consumers distinguish the brand from competitors and provides both rational and emotional reasons for preference.

Beyond strategic strengths, this study also identifies four main challenges in brand image development, which can be analyzed using Keller's (2013) framework, particularly in the strength and favorability dimensions.

First, the limited human resources (HR) skilled in digital branding strategies hinder optimal social media and visual content management. This supports findings by Purnomo (2020), who notes that low digital literacy among educators is a major obstacle in educational branding efforts. In Keller's framework, this weakness affects association strength, as inconsistent brand messaging results in weaker, less memorable associations. However, the school's efforts to conduct internal training and collaborate with alumni working in digital marketing reflect an adaptive and relevant strategy for rebuilding stronger associations.

Second, the lack of a dedicated budget for branding activities presents a structural barrier in brand image development. Kurniawati & Wulandari (2021) found that many private vocational schools lack specific funding for promotional efforts, making branding reliant on individual initiatives or external sources. In Keller's favorability dimension, public perception may decline when brand communication quality suffers due to financial constraints. Nonetheless, creative initiatives—such as utilizing free platforms (social media, Canva, YouTube) and securing sponsorships from alumni and industry partners—help maintain positive associations despite limited resources.

Third, intensifying competition among educational institutions, especially those with strong financial backing and digital promotion, presents a challenge in maintaining the school's position in the public mindset. This aligns with Suharno et al. (2020), who state that school competitiveness is determined by the institution's ability to uniquely position itself amidst similar educational offerings. In Keller's framework, this relates to uniqueness: without clear differentiating values, schools are easily overshadowed by competitors. The school's strategy of religious and pesantren-based differentiation is a concrete response to reinforce positioning and maintain unique associations.

Fourth, the low public awareness of the importance of school branding affects brand communication effectiveness. Many parents choose schools based on proximity or cost, rather than image or quality. This is echoed in Rahminawati's (2023) findings, which suggest that public perceptions of schools remain practical and traditional, not yet shaped by strategic brand considerations. According to Keller, this indicates weak cognitive and emotional associations in consumer minds. Interpersonal outreach, alumni testimonials, and socialization efforts at junior high schools are strategies to rebuild more emotionally and socially relevant associations.

In conclusion, despite these significant challenges, SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang demonstrates resilience and progressive capacity in addressing them. Collaborative efforts, local potential optimization, innovative promotional strategies, and value-based differentiation are key strengths that not only reinforce the school's brand image, but also enhance its institutional competitiveness in a sustainable manner.

CONCLUSION

The brand image development strategy at SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang is carried out through five complementary main approaches: improving the quality of vocational programs, optimizing social media, organizing student work exhibitions, involving alumni and school ambassadors, and strengthening religious values as a distinctive characteristic of the pesantren-based school. These strategies consistently reflect the dimensions of brand image according to Keller, namely strong, favorable, and unique associations, thereby shaping a positive perception and distinguishing the school from similar educational institutions.

Challenges such as limited human resources in the digital field, minimal promotional budgets, intense competition with other vocational schools, and low public awareness of the importance of school image have been successfully addressed through internal training, collaboration with alumni, and personalized communication approaches. The results of this study show that branding strategies designed contextually and based on values can sustainably strengthen the competitiveness of pesantren-based vocational schools in facing increasingly complex educational competition.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that SMK Syubbanul Wathon Secang continue to strengthen its human resource capacity in digital media management and visual communication, as well as establish a dedicated branding team responsible for maintaining the consistency of the school's identity in the public sphere. Collaborative efforts with business sectors, alumni, and the pesantren network should also be expanded as alternative sources of funding for branding initiatives. In addition, an educational approach to the community through direct socialization and alumni testimonials—can increase awareness of the importance of choosing a school based on its image and quality.

The success of the strategies implemented by this school can also serve as a model for other pesantren-based vocational schools in building a competitive and appealing brand image.

For future researchers, it is suggested to develop similar studies in different regional contexts, using quantitative approaches to measure the impact of brand image on school choice decisions. Additionally, exploring the role of local values and pesantren wisdom in shaping the positioning of Islamic vocational education institutions could further enrich both the academic and practical contributions to the development of branding management in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

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