



# Developing Madrasah Brand Image Through Integrated Promotion Strategy: A Review of Academic Literature

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**Abstract:** The growing competition among Islamic educational institutions has encouraged madrasahs to strengthen their brand image in order to increase public trust, institutional appeal, and competitiveness. This study aims to analyze the role of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies in developing madrasah brand image through a review of academic literature. This research employed a systematic literature review method by examining scholarly articles from reputable academic databases, including Scopus, DOAJ, Google Scholar, and Garuda (SINTA), published between 2015 and 2024. The analysis was conducted through three stages: description, classification, and thematic synthesis of empirical findings related to integrated promotion and Islamic educational branding. The findings reveal that madrasah brand image is significantly influenced by three main factors: consistency of communication messages, integration of promotional channels, and credibility of communication sources. These factors shape positive public perceptions of institutional quality, values, and character. The implementation of IMC based on Islamic values strengthens not only the external image of madrasahs but also their internal identity as character-based and competitive educational institutions. This study contributes to the development of value-based educational branding and offers practical recommendations for ethical, consistent, and sustainable communication strategies.

**Keywords:** Brand Image; Integrated Promotion; Islamic Education; Madrasah Branding; Marketing Communication

**Abstrak:** Meningkatnya persaingan antar lembaga pendidikan Islam mendorong madrasah untuk memperkuat citra merek guna meningkatkan kepercayaan masyarakat, daya tarik kelembagaan, dan daya saing. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran strategi Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) dalam membangun citra merek madrasah melalui kajian literatur akademik. Metode yang digunakan adalah systematic literature review dengan menelaah artikel ilmiah dari berbagai basis data akademik bereputasi, seperti Scopus, DOAJ, Google Scholar, dan Garuda (SINTA), yang diterbitkan pada rentang tahun 2015 hingga 2024. Proses analisis dilakukan melalui tiga tahap, yaitu deskripsi, klasifikasi, dan sintesis tematik terhadap temuan empiris yang berkaitan dengan promosi terpadu dan branding pendidikan Islam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa citra merek madrasah dipengaruhi secara signifikan oleh tiga faktor utama, yaitu konsistensi pesan komunikasi, integrasi saluran promosi, dan kredibilitas sumber komunikasi. Ketiga faktor tersebut membentuk persepsi positif masyarakat terhadap kualitas, nilai, dan karakter lembaga. Penerapan IMC berbasis

nilai-nilai Islam tidak hanya memperkuat citra eksternal madrasah, tetapi juga identitas internal sebagai lembaga pendidikan yang berkarakter dan kompetitif. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis terhadap pengembangan konsep branding pendidikan berbasis nilai serta rekomendasi praktis bagi pengelola madrasah dalam merancang strategi komunikasi yang etis, konsisten, dan berkelanjutan.

**Kata Kunci:** Citra Merek; Promosi Terpadu; Pendidikan Islam; Branding Madrasah; Komunikasi Pemasaran

## INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions, including madrasahs, are currently facing increasingly complex challenges in building and maintaining a strong brand image in the public mind. The growth of educational competition, the acceleration of digital transformation, and the rising expectations of society have made institutional image an important strategic asset. Madrasahs can no longer be understood only as religious educational institutions, because they are also required to communicate their values, quality, identity, and institutional excellence in a persuasive and credible manner. Hasanah (2020) explains that madrasahs need to promote their values and educational quality in response to public expectations toward Islamic education. In this context, public perception, trust, and loyalty toward madrasahs are strongly influenced by brand image, which functions as a bridge between institutional identity and stakeholder expectations.

Educational institutions operate in a competitive and transformative environment. The dynamics of globalization, the ASEAN Economic Community, and the development of information technology require Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia to improve independence, adaptability, and competitiveness. Kotler & Keller (2016) emphasize that institutions need creative marketing strategies and clear differentiation in order to develop sustainable competitive advantages. This argument is increasingly relevant today, as digital communication has changed the way educational institutions interact with parents, students, alumni, and the broader community. Recent studies also show that digital marketing and communication strategies have become central elements in strengthening institutional visibility, stakeholder engagement, and educational brand positioning. Lim et al. (2023) underline that marketing theory and practice continue to develop in response to digital transformation and changing stakeholder behavior.

Even when educational services offered by institutions appear relatively similar, branding becomes a crucial instrument that enables madrasahs to distinguish themselves from competitors. This strategy is important not merely for promotional purposes, but also for survival in a dynamic educational market. Madrasahs are expected to construct a strong brand image that can attract prospective students and parents through flagship programs, academic quality, religious values, and unique institutional characteristics. Therefore, institutional leaders are not only required to manage promotional activities, but also to develop critical, innovative, and strategic thinking in producing institutional advantages that are aligned with public needs. Contemporary branding literature in higher education also emphasizes that brand management is often challenging, yet essential for strengthening institutional positioning, identity, and communication strategy.

Madrasah branding has distinctive contextual dimensions. In addition to academic quality,

madrasahs are responsible for constructing an image that reflects Islamic values, moral formation, and character development. This characteristic differentiates madrasahs from general educational institutions and gives them a unique value proposition. Therefore, the development of madrasah brand image must involve an integrated process that transforms internal identity, such as Islamic values, curriculum, culture, and institutional behavior, into external perceptions that are relevant, credible, and attractive to the public. In an era of rapid social and technological change, madrasahs may also need to conduct rebranding when their existing image is no longer aligned with contemporary expectations. This is in line with recent findings that madrasah branding requires continuous planning, implementation, evaluation, and the involvement of all institutional members through various communication platforms.

Previous studies indicate that integrated promotion strategies can enhance brand awareness, strengthen institutional reputation, and attract new students. Rahmawati (2022) states that integrated marketing communication has a positive role in increasing brand awareness in the field of education. However, studies that specifically examine the relationship between madrasah brand image development and integrated promotion strategies remain limited. This gap is important because madrasahs require a communication model that is not only effective in marketing terms, but also consistent with Islamic ethical values. Integrated promotion in madrasahs should not be reduced to the delivery of promotional messages. It should also function as a value based communication strategy that connects institutional identity, stakeholder trust, and social legitimacy.

The rapid development of digital communication has significantly transformed marketing practices, including in the education sector. Dwivedi et al. (2023), highlight that digital and social media marketing have opened new opportunities and challenges for organizations in building engagement and trust with their audiences. In the educational context, digital platforms allow madrasahs to present their programs, achievements, values, and community contributions more widely and interactively. However, the use of digital media also requires consistency, credibility, and ethical awareness, because public trust can be weakened when institutional messages are not aligned with actual institutional practices. Recent research on digital brand trust also emphasizes that transparency, consistency, and credibility are important foundations in building trust within digital environments.

Based on these arguments, this study aims to review academic literature related to the formation of madrasah brand image through integrated promotion strategies. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive conceptual understanding of how Integrated Marketing Communication can be used to strengthen institutional image, public trust, and educational competitiveness in madrasahs. In addition, this study also offers a theoretical foundation for future research in Islamic education management, especially in the development of value based educational branding that integrates promotional effectiveness, Islamic ethics, and institutional authenticity.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology to identify, analyze, and synthesize academic findings related to integrated promotion strategies, particularly Integrated Marketing Communication, in shaping the brand image of madrasahs. This method was selected

because it provides a structured, transparent, and accountable approach to reviewing previous studies. Through this approach, the study does not merely summarize existing literature, but also evaluates patterns, conceptual relationships, and research gaps within the field of Islamic educational branding.

The research process involved collecting scholarly articles published between 2015 and 2024 from several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, and Garuda SINTA. The keywords used in the search process included madrasah brand image, integrated marketing communication in education, Islamic school promotion strategies, and educational branding. In addition, recent studies on digital marketing, communication strategies, brand trust, and stakeholder engagement were also included to strengthen the relevance of the analysis in the contemporary digital context. This inclusion is important because educational promotion today is increasingly influenced by digital interaction, institutional visibility, and stakeholder participation. Therefore, studies by Dwivedi et al. (2023) and Lim et al. (2023), were incorporated to enrich the conceptual foundation of digital based communication strategies.

Articles were selected based on three main criteria, namely topic relevance, methodological rigor, and suitability to the context of Islamic education. Priority was given to peer reviewed journal articles, especially those indexed in reputable national and international databases. Articles that discussed branding, integrated promotion, Islamic education, madrasah management, digital communication, and educational marketing were considered relevant to the scope of this study. Meanwhile, non scholarly sources, such as opinion articles, news reports, informal writings, and publications without clear scientific methodology, were excluded in order to maintain the academic validity and reliability of the review.

The analysis process consisted of three main stages, namely description, classification, and thematic synthesis. In the descriptive stage, the study identified the objectives, variables, theoretical perspectives, and key findings of each selected article. This stage was intended to provide an initial map of how integrated promotion and brand image have been discussed in previous studies. In the classification stage, the articles were grouped into several major themes, including the integration of Islamic values in communication, the development of institutional brand image, the use of digital media, communicator credibility, and the dimensions of integrated promotion strategies. In the final stage, thematic synthesis was conducted to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining the relationship between Integrated Marketing Communication and institutional perception in madrasahs.

Furthermore, the inclusion of recent literature on digital engagement and brand trust strengthened the analytical framework, particularly in understanding how communication strategies influence stakeholder perceptions in digital environments. Hollebeek & Macky (2022) emphasize the importance of digital content and engagement in shaping audience relationships with brands. This perspective is relevant to madrasahs because institutional communication is no longer limited to conventional promotion, but also involves continuous interaction through digital platforms, public relations activities, alumni narratives, and community participation. Thus, this review integrates both classical perspectives on Integrated Marketing Communication and contemporary developments in digital marketing and brand management.

The analysis was supported by several key theoretical frameworks, including Value Based Marketing, Brand Equity Models, and Integrated Marketing Communication. Belch & Belch (2018) explain that Integrated Marketing Communication emphasizes the coordination of various communication elements to deliver consistent and persuasive messages to target audiences. In the context of madrasahs, this framework must be understood not only as a promotional strategy, but also as an ethical and value-based communication process. Therefore, this study is analytical rather than merely descriptive, because it aims to generate conceptual insights into how integrated promotion strategies can sustainably, ethically, and professionally enhance the brand image of madrasahs.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this literature review indicate that integrated promotion strategies, particularly Integrated Marketing Communication, play a central role in shaping and strengthening the brand image of madrasahs. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, integrated promotion cannot be understood merely as a technical instrument for disseminating information. More than that, it functions as a strategic medium for communicating institutional values, moral identity, educational quality, and social reputation to the public. This means that the success of madrasah branding depends not only on the intensity of promotion, but also on the coherence between messages, institutional behavior, and the values experienced by stakeholders.

Madrasahs are able to construct positive and consistent public perceptions when communication activities are managed in a coordinated manner. Digital publications, social engagement, public relations activities, institutional publications, and alumni testimonials can strengthen the public understanding of madrasah quality when they deliver messages that are aligned with core institutional values. Integrated communication ensures that formal and informal channels do not produce fragmented narratives. Instead, every communication channel should support a unified institutional image that reflects academic quality, Islamic character, discipline, innovation, and social contribution.

The effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication in madrasahs is strongly influenced by the integration of communication channels. Institutions that optimize websites, social media, institutional publications, video content, public relations activities, and community engagement programs tend to reach broader audiences and increase institutional visibility. Digital media also enable more interactive and personal communication, allowing parents, students, alumni, and communities to develop emotional relationships with the institution. This finding is in line with Lim et al., 2023, who explain that digital based marketing practices increasingly emphasize engagement, interaction, and adaptive communication strategies.

Another important finding is the role of communicator credibility. In madrasahs, communicators are not limited to institutional leaders or official promotional teams. Teachers, students, alumni, parents, and community figures also function as representatives of the institution. Their academic achievements, discipline, moral conduct, and social contribution influence how the public interprets the quality and credibility of the madrasah. In this sense, brand image is not shaped solely by institutional messages, but also by the lived behavior of those who represent the institution. A strong promotional campaign will lose its value if it is not supported by authentic institutional practices.

The findings also show that integrated promotion strategies have both direct and indirect effects on madrasah brand perception. Direct effects appear through the messages delivered by the institution, such as information about programs, achievements, facilities, curriculum, and religious activities. Indirect effects emerge through the growth of trust, institutional reputation, stakeholder satisfaction, and community loyalty. These indirect effects are particularly important because educational branding is closely related to public trust. Parents and students do not only evaluate the attractiveness of promotional messages, but also consider whether the institution is credible, consistent, and aligned with their values.

This study identifies three major dimensions of brand image in educational institutions. The first is corporate image, which relates to leadership quality, institutional reputation, innovation, governance, and public credibility. The second is product or consumer image, which refers to curriculum quality, teaching effectiveness, student satisfaction, learning outcomes, and educational services. The third is user image, which reflects the identity of students, alumni, parents, and stakeholders who are associated with the institution. These three dimensions are interconnected. For example, curriculum quality cannot be separated from leadership credibility, and student identity formation is closely related to the values promoted by the madrasah.

Message consistency is found to be a crucial factor in strengthening madrasah brand image. Communication that consistently reflects Islamic values, such as honesty, trustworthiness, sincerity, responsibility, and ethical conduct, can strengthen public trust and long term perception. However, consistency should not be interpreted only as visual similarity or repeated slogans across media platforms. In the context of madrasahs, consistency must also refer to the alignment between institutional narratives and actual practices. The values promoted through communication must be visible in the daily behavior of teachers, students, leaders, and institutional culture.

The integration of communication channels also contributes significantly to promotional effectiveness. Madrasahs that combine traditional media with digital platforms tend to gain higher levels of public engagement and visibility. Social media, websites, video content, community programs, religious events, and alumni networks can complement one another when they are managed under a clear communication strategy. Digital communication does not only expand the reach of institutional messages, but also changes the relationship between madrasahs and stakeholders into a more interactive and participatory relationship. This supports the view that modern educational branding requires dialogue, responsiveness, and continuous engagement.

From a discussion perspective, these findings affirm that Integrated Marketing Communication in madrasahs operates not only as a managerial tool, but also as a value based strategic framework. In conventional marketing, Integrated Marketing Communication often emphasizes message consistency, channel coordination, and audience reach. However, in Islamic educational institutions, the framework requires an additional dimension, namely ethical congruence. This means that communication effectiveness must be assessed not only from visibility and attractiveness, but also from the degree to which communication practices are aligned with Islamic values and institutional authenticity.

This distinction is important because madrasah branding is different from commercial branding. Madrasahs do not only promote educational services, but also communicate moral responsibility and religious identity. Therefore, authenticity becomes a central element in building trust. The public

will evaluate whether the madrasah truly practices the values it communicates. If institutional messages emphasize honesty, discipline, and Islamic character, then these values must be reflected in leadership, learning processes, student behavior, and community relations. In faith based educational institutions, behavioral authenticity is often more influential than promotional intensity.

The role of communicator credibility further strengthens the social construction of brand image. In many educational institutions, brand identity is often formed through official narratives and promotional materials. In madrasahs, however, brand image is strongly shaped by embodied representation. Teachers, students, and alumni become living carriers of institutional values. Their achievements, manners, discipline, and contribution to society become concrete evidence of institutional quality. This finding shows that a strong brand image cannot be built only through communication design, but must be supported by institutional culture and consistent value implementation.

The centrality of Islamic values is another important insight in this study. Principles such as *ṣidq*, *amānah*, and *ikhhlāṣ* provide a moral foundation for communication practices. Integrated promotion in madrasahs should therefore be understood as a form of value driven communication. It is not merely persuasive, but also performative, because it reflects the moral commitment of the institution. This extends the theoretical boundaries of Integrated Marketing Communication by showing that communication in Islamic education must combine strategic effectiveness with ethical responsibility.

Nevertheless, this value based orientation also creates certain challenges. On one side, madrasahs are required to adopt modern promotional strategies in order to remain competitive in the educational market. On the other side, they must maintain ethical integrity and avoid excessive commercialization. This tension suggests that the effectiveness of integrated promotion depends on the ability of madrasahs to balance professionalism and spirituality. Overemphasis on commercial appearance may weaken institutional authenticity, while weak use of communication technology may reduce competitiveness and public visibility.

Community participation also plays an important role in strengthening madrasah brand image. Community engagement, social programs, religious activities, parent involvement, and alumni contributions function as forms of experiential legitimacy. Through these activities, the public does not only receive information about the institution, but also experiences its values directly. This supports the concept of relational branding, in which trust is developed through sustained interaction rather than isolated promotional activities. Madrasah branding therefore extends beyond institutional boundaries and becomes part of a broader social relationship.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings contribute to the development of value based educational marketing. Integrated Marketing Communication should not be positioned only as a promotional technique, but as a socio cultural process that connects institutional identity, public perception, stakeholder trust, and moral legitimacy. Kaur et al. (2024) emphasize that brand trust in digital environments is increasingly influenced by transparency, consistency, and credibility. This perspective is highly relevant for madrasahs, especially because their public image depends on both digital communication and ethical conduct.

In summary, the effectiveness of integrated promotion in madrasahs is determined by three interrelated dimensions.

### 1. Strategic integration

Strategic integration refers to the alignment between communication messages, promotional channels, institutional programs, and stakeholder expectations. Madrasahs need to ensure that websites, social media, public relations, alumni narratives, and community activities communicate the same institutional values and educational strengths.

### 2. Ethical consistency

Ethical consistency refers to the alignment between promoted values and actual institutional practices. Islamic values must not only appear in promotional content, but must also be reflected in leadership, teaching practices, student development, and organizational culture.

### 3. Social legitimacy

Social legitimacy refers to the credibility gained through stakeholder trust, communicator credibility, alumni achievements, and community participation. The stronger the public experience of institutional values, the stronger the madrasah brand image becomes.

These three dimensions determine whether Integrated Marketing Communication functions merely as a promotional activity or develops into a sustainable mechanism for building institutional trust and long-term brand equity. Digital based Integrated Marketing Communication strategies can help madrasahs build stronger engagement and more interactive relationships with stakeholders, as explained by Lim et al. (2023). However, digital effectiveness must always be supported by credibility, consistency, and ethical responsibility.

Based on the overall findings and discussion, this study concludes that integrated promotion strategies play a crucial role in developing and strengthening the brand image of madrasahs. Their effectiveness is determined by message consistency, integration of communication channels, and communicator credibility. Madrasahs that successfully implement value based Integrated Marketing Communication are able to build strong institutional identities, foster public trust, and enhance competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic educational environment. The integration of Islamic values into communication strategies not only strengthens external perception, but also reinforces internal institutional character.

Although madrasahs may face challenges related to resources, digital competence, and cultural perceptions, these challenges can be addressed through strategic capacity building, digital transformation, stakeholder collaboration, and ethical communication frameworks. Ultimately, integrated promotion in madrasahs should not be viewed merely as a marketing activity, but as a holistic strategy that combines education, communication, and da'wah. By aligning modern promotional practices with Islamic ethical values, madrasahs can position themselves as credible, competitive, and value driven educational institutions in the contemporary era.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that integrated promotion strategies, particularly Integrated Marketing Communication, play a crucial role in developing and strengthening the brand image of madrasahs. The findings show that the effectiveness of these strategies is mainly determined by message

consistency, integration of communication channels, and the credibility of communicators. Madrasahs that are able to align promotional messages with Islamic values, institutional identity, and actual educational practices can build stronger public trust and a more positive institutional image. Therefore, integrated promotion should not be understood merely as a marketing activity, but as a holistic strategy that combines education, communication, and da'wah.

The implication of this study is that madrasah managers need to design communication strategies that are ethical, consistent, and value based. Institutional promotion should involve not only official media channels, but also teachers, students, alumni, parents, and community networks as credible communicators of madrasah values. In practical terms, madrasahs need to strengthen digital communication, improve stakeholder engagement, and ensure that every promotional activity reflects the institution's Islamic character. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of value based educational branding by showing that brand image in madrasahs is shaped by strategic integration, ethical consistency, and social legitimacy.

Future research is expected to examine the implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication in madrasahs through empirical methods, such as case studies, surveys, or mixed method approaches. Further studies may also compare branding strategies among different types of Islamic educational institutions to identify variations in communication practices, stakeholder responses, and institutional outcomes. In addition, future research can explore the role of digital platforms, alumni engagement, community participation, and brand trust in strengthening madrasah competitiveness. Such studies will provide deeper empirical evidence and enrich the development of Islamic education management in the contemporary digital era.

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