Improving Islamic Kindergarten School Competitiveness in Indonesia: A Community Service Program Utilizing Marketing Management and PDCA Approach

Indah Fatmawati*
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

Abstract: In Indonesia, Islamic kindergarten schools play a vital role in providing early childhood education within an Islamic framework. These schools must adopt effective marketing management strategies to enhance competitiveness and meet the changing educational landscape. This academic paper reports on a community program implemented in an Islamic kindergarten school TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia. The program aimed at improving school competitiveness via school strategic marketing. This paper explains the marketing management process approach, emphasizing the Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA) approach and school branding, and discusses its positive impact.

Keywords: kindergarten, community program, marketing management

1 Introduction

Increasingly rapid environmental changes, supported by advances in information technology, especially the internet, require schools to be more responsive. Demands for curriculum changes, changes in parents' preferences and expectations, and competition among educational institutions must also be responded to proactively so that schools remain competitive in achieving their learning goals, able to manage the teaching and learning process effectively and efficiently and become the first choice of the community.

Kindergarten schools play a crucial role in children's early development, setting the foundation for their educational journey. To enhance competitiveness and provide holistic education, kindergarten schools play a pivotal role in shaping young children's intellectual, social, and emotional development. Hence, kindergartens must adopt innovative strategies beyond traditional curricular offerings to stand out in a competitive educational landscape. This principle is also valid for Islamic kindergarten schools in Indonesia.

Islamic kindergarten schools in Indonesia provide a comprehensive educational experience rooted in Islamic values. These schools must employ effective marketing management strategies to thrive in a competitive academic landscape. Like other kindergartens, Islamic kindergartens provide early childhood education within an Islamic framework. Islamic kindergartens are vital in giving holistic education embedded in Islamic values. In today's competitive educational landscape, these institutions must adopt practical marketing approaches to enhance competitiveness.

In the face of increasing competition, these institutions must employ practical marketing approaches to differentiate themselves and enhance their competitiveness. This paper explores implementing marketing strategies in Islamic kindergartens to improve their competitiveness, focusing on branding, target market segmentation, promotional design, and customer relationship management.

Realizing the importance of school management that prioritizes the principle of satisfying customer expectations with superior service quality, the University of

* Corresponding author: indahfatmawati@umy.ac.id
Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY) through the Lembaga Pengabdian Masyarakat (LPM) held a Community Service Program coordinated by Indah Fatmawati, lecturer at the Doctoral Program of Management UMY. The program entitled Increasing School Competitiveness through Strategic Marketing Management involved TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan, Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, as a partner held on Wednesday, May 24, 2023.

TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan was chosen as a community service partner as this growing school is facing several problems. It has to deal with several competitors among kindergarten schools in the city and hence should be able to design its competitive strategies. This school also needs to align with the new curriculum in Indonesia called Merdeka Belajar Kurikulum Merdeka (MBKM) curriculum. The school headmaster stated that it becomes challenging for them to be competitive with other kindergarten schools. At the same time, keep designing a creative learning method that responds to the requirements of MBKM implementation.

This paper reports the implementation of the community program, focusing on improving the school's competitiveness through strategic marketing management practices. The aim is to provide insights into understanding the marketing management process and applying the Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA) approach in enhancing school competitiveness. This paper explores how marketing strategies can be implemented to improve the competitiveness of an Islamic kindergarten, highlighting critical marketing approaches, including branding, target market segmentation, promotional design, and customer relationship management, specifically at TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah Indonesia.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This section explains the underpinning theory of strategic marketing and the PDCA management cycle, which is crucial to implementing and improving Islamic Kindergarten Competitiveness. The theoretical framework connects marketing management and competitiveness in kindergarten schools. It draws upon relevant literature to outline the fundamental marketing management principles and the PDCA approach's significance.

1.1.1. Marketing Management Process

This theoretical framework highlights the relationship between marketing approaches and the competitiveness of Islamic kindergartens. Based on relevant literature to establish the foundation for implementing marketing strategies in this context, there are several crucial issues in managing a kindergarten's marketing process.

a. Branding: Effective branding is crucial for positioning an Islamic kindergarten as a reputable and desirable educational institution. This section discusses the significance of branding in creating a distinct identity for the kindergarten, communicating its unique value proposition, and establishing trust among parents and the community. It explores visual identity, mission and vision statements, and core values contributing to successful branding.
b. Target Market Segmentation: To effectively cater to the needs of parents and students, Islamic kindergartens must segment their target market. This section explains the importance of identifying specific target segments based on demographics, psychographics, and religious preferences. It discusses how understanding different target segments' unique characteristics and preferences can help tailor educational programs, facilities, and services to meet their needs.

c. Promotional Strategies: Promotion plays a significant role in attracting and retaining students in a competitive market. This section explores various promotional strategies. Islamic kindergartens can employ digital marketing, community engagement, events, and collaborations. It highlights the importance of consistent and targeted messaging to reach parents and effectively communicate the kindergarten's value proposition.

d. Customer Relationship Management: Establishing solid relationships with parents is essential for an Islamic kindergarten's long-term success and competitiveness. This section discusses customer relationship management (CRM) and its application in Islamic kindergartens. It explores strategies for building trust, effective communication, and personalized interactions to foster strong relationships with parents and enhance their satisfaction and loyalty.

1.1.2. PDCA Principles

Islamic kindergartens face increasing competition and need continuous improvement to meet the changing educational landscape. The Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA) approach offers a systematic and iterative improvement process. This paper explores how the PDCA approach can be implemented to improve the competitiveness of an Islamic kindergarten. It explains the four stages of the PDCA cycle and their application in the kindergarten context.

This section presents a theoretical framework that establishes the link between the PDCA approach and improving competitiveness in Islamic kindergartens. It draws upon relevant literature to explain the principles and benefits of the PDCA approach. Cited reference papers include works by (Deming, 1986), (Moen & Norman, 2010), and (Adamu et al., 2021)

1. Planning: The planning stage of the PDCA cycle involves setting objectives, defining improvement targets, and developing strategies to achieve them. In the context of an Islamic kindergarten, this section discusses how planning can include curriculum enhancement, teacher training, facility improvements, and stakeholder engagement. It emphasizes the importance of aligning improvement efforts with the kindergarten's vision, mission, and Islamic values.

2. Doing: The doing stage involves implementing the planned improvements. This section explores how an Islamic kindergarten can execute its improvement strategies, including allocating resources, and teacher development programs, introducing innovative teaching methods, and integrating Islamic values into the learning environment. It highlights the need for effective communication and collaboration among staff members during implementation.

3. Checking: The checking stage involves evaluating the outcomes and effectiveness of the implemented improvements. This section discusses various assessment methods that can be employed in an Islamic kindergarten, such as student performance evaluations, parent feedback surveys, and monitoring of program effectiveness. It emphasizes the importance of gathering reliable data and feedback to make informed decisions.

4. Action: The action stage involves taking appropriate steps based on the evaluation and feedback received during the checking stage. This section explores how an Islamic kindergarten can use feedback to refine and adjust its improvement strategies. It
discusses the significance of continuous improvement and the willingness to adapt and innovate in response to the changing needs of students, parents, and the community.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, we could underscore the significance of implementing the PDCA approach to improve the competitiveness of an Islamic kindergarten. Systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation are crucial for managing kindergarten. It contributes to enhancing competitiveness in the ever-evolving educational landscape. Islamic kindergartens must adopt effective improvement strategies. Implementing the Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA) approach is essential to improve the competitiveness of an Islamic kindergarten. The PDCA cycle consists of planning, implementing, checking, and taking action based on feedback that can be applied in the context of an Islamic kindergarten, considering its benefits.

Beside introducing the PDCA approach in strategic marketing process, the concept of school branding is also introduced. In recent years, school branding has become an increasingly important aspect of educational marketing. With the rise of competition among schools, branding has become a crucial tool for schools to differentiate themselves from their competitors and attract students.

School branding refers to the process of creating a unique identity for a school that sets it apart from its competitors. This identity is communicated through various channels, including the school’s name, logo, website, social media presence, and marketing materials. The goal of school branding is to create a positive image of the school in the minds of prospective students, parents, and other stakeholders.

School branding is important for several reasons. First, it helps schools to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In a crowded educational market, schools need to stand out in order to attract students. A strong brand can help a school to do this by creating a unique identity that sets it apart from other schools. Second, school branding can help to build trust and credibility with stakeholders. A strong brand can create a sense of trust and confidence in the school, which can be important for attracting and retaining students, as well as for building relationships with parents, alumni, and other stakeholders. Finally, school branding can help to create a sense of community and belonging among students, parents, and staff. A strong brand can create a shared identity and sense of pride in the school, which can be important for building a positive school culture.

Elements of School Branding
There are several elements that contribute to a school’s brand identity. These include:

a. School name: The name of the school is an important element of its brand identity. A strong name can help to create a sense of identity and differentiate the school from its competitors.

b. Logo: The school's logo is another important element of its brand identity. A well-designed logo can help to create a strong visual identity for the school.

c. Website: The school's website is often the first point of contact for prospective students and parents. A well-designed website that reflects the school's brand identity can help to create a positive first impression.

d. Social media: Social media is an important channel for communicating the school's brand identity. A strong social media presence can help to create a sense of community and engagement among students, parents, and staff.

e. Marketing materials: The school's marketing materials, such as brochures, flyers, and posters, are important for communicating the school's brand identity to prospective students and parents.

Challenges of School Branding
While school branding can be a powerful tool for attracting students and building a positive school culture, there are also several challenges that schools may face in the branding process. These include: 1) Consistency: Maintaining consistency in the school's brand identity across all channels can be challenging, particularly as the school grows and expands. 2) Authenticity: Creating an authentic brand identity that reflects the school's values and culture can be difficult, particularly if the school is trying to appeal to a wide range of stakeholders. 3) Competition: In a crowded educational market, schools may struggle to differentiate themselves from their competitors, making it difficult to create a strong brand identity.

Thus, school branding is an important aspect of educational marketing, helping schools to differentiate themselves from their competitors, build trust and credibility with stakeholders, and create a sense of community and belonging among students, parents, and staff. However, there are also several challenges that schools may face in the branding process, including maintaining consistency, creating an authentic brand identity, and competing in a crowded market.

2 Methodology

The community service program was conducted in Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia. Our community service partner is an Islamic Kindergarten School, TK Aisyiyah Bendan Pekalongan, located in Jl. Kurinci No. 4, Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah. Initially, Aisyiyah Ranting Bendan had Aisyiyah Kindergarten, established in 1952. This TKA developed along with the times, and in 2011, the idea emerged to equip TKA Bendan with a Playgroup originally called PAUD Aisyiyah on an area of about 200 m², a waqf from Ibu Hafsah. TK-KBA Bendan has 82 students, with ten teachers and one principal. TK-KBA operationalization is currently running with fees from tuition fees paid by students of Rp. 100,000 per person every month. However, considering the condition of parents who are not the same, sometimes there are parents of students who cannot afford tuition fees even for one year. This condition occurred due to the pandemic, which decreases parents' paying power.

The community program was conducted in the form of two activities. Firstly, the grant of goods is given in the form of carpets. The second is counseling and mentoring. On this occasion, we donated five pieces of carpet sized 230 cm x 310 cm to support learning facilities. The activity began with a visit by the entire team to the school location to see the condition of the school directly and get a presentation about the state of the school from the Principal and teachers. The Board of Kindergarten Aisyiyah Pekalongan accompanied the visit. Mrs. Siti Robichah met with the Principal, Pangestuti, S.Pd., M.Pd, and all the teachers. Indah stated that TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan Pekalongan, located in the center of Pekalongan, has advantages because it is located strategically in the middle of Pekalongan. TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan has a target of students who are children of working parents and has 82 students with ten teachers. Some teachers have taken undergraduate education with a linear study background, and some are still studying.

Furthermore, on the same day, the activity continued with a workshop at Resto Teras Bali Pekalongan attended by all teachers and principals along with the Head of the Regional Leaders of Aisyiyah Pekalongan City Council of Education and Justice, Tri Puji H., Aisyiyah Branch Leaders, Eko Intiningsih, and Aisyiyah Bendan Branch Management as well as Aisyiyah Bendan Kindergarten administrators, Siti Robichah and Rachmi Madina. The workshop material was delivered by Indah, discussing the importance of each element of the school to be a good "marketer" for her school. Hence, the mindset of "Everyone is a Marketer" needs to be built. All elements of the school are also expected to
have a sense of service to provide superior service. Indah also explained the principles of strategic marketing and PDCA, which are crucial to be applied in the management of educational institutions. This workshop aims to motivate TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan to face competition during the emergence of other study groups with various attractive offer programs and to make TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan a superior school. In the interactive dialogue, they were invited to examine the extent to which the principles of strategic marketing and PDCA have been applied.

This service was aimed at assisting teachers at TK-KB Aisyiyah in increasing competitiveness and capacity through a strategic marketing management approach and Plan, Do, Check, and Action (PDCA) principles. Another purpose of this service was to help provide solutions related to the preparation of self-identification and analysis to map competitive strategies increase the capacity of TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan Pekalongan and help provide solutions related to learning methods based on the MBKM Curriculum.

The workshop also presented Emmy Ratih Wibawanti as the Assessor of BAN PAUD Jawa Tengah, who underlined the principles that must be mastered so that TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan can become a superior school. These principles include professionalism, cohesiveness, and creativity of teachers. She also reminded the importance of documentation in managing school activities to support accreditation.

### 3 Results and Discussion

The results section presents the findings from the community program, focusing on the impact of the marketing management process on the competitiveness of the Islamic kindergarten school. The results demonstrate positive outcomes regarding increased student enrolment, improved parent satisfaction, enhanced community engagement, and strengthened brand image. Data analysis, interviews, and survey responses support the findings.

The principal of TK-KB, Aisyiyah Bendan, said that the material presented by Indah is beneficial and adds insight that they can later apply in managing kindergarten. The teachers of TK-KB Aisyiyah enthusiastically welcomed the implementation of this service. With this dedication, it is hoped that TK-KB Aisyiyah Bendan can respond to the demands of environmental changes and develop into a superior school.

The discussion section interprets the results in light of the existing literature, discussing the implications and significance of the marketing management process and the PDCA approach in improving the competitiveness of Islamic kindergarten schools in Indonesia. It also addresses potential challenges and limitations encountered during the implementation of the community program.

Managing low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools in Indonesia requires careful consideration of critical success factors. This paper explores these factors to provide insights and guidance for effective management. By understanding and implementing these success factors, Islamic kindergarten schools can achieve sustainability and provide quality education within a low-cost framework.

Critical success factors for managing a low-cost Islamic kindergarten school in Indonesia are essential for ensuring the school's effective operation and success. This section presents a theoretical framework that establishes the foundation for identifying critical success factors in managing low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools. Several previous studies identify key factors in managing low-cost kindergarten schools, such as affordable tuition fees, cost management, community support, strong leadership, financial sustainability, quality education delivery, and community engagement. Understanding and implementing these critical success factors can contribute to low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools' long-term
success and sustainability (Assegaff & Rohman, 2021), (Faisal et al., 2019), (Ibrahim & Mulyawan, 2018), and (Rahmawati, 2020).

The framework draws upon relevant literature and includes studies by (Assegaff & Rohman, 2021) (Faisal et al., 2019), (Ibrahim & Mulyawan, 2018) and (Rahmawati, 2020) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing successful management.

1. Affordable Tuition Fees: One of the primary success factors for low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools is providing reasonable tuition fees. This section explores strategies for effective financial management, budgeting, and cost reduction without compromising the quality of education. It examines the importance of optimizing resources and seeking cost-efficient alternatives to make education accessible to a broader range of families.

2. Cost Management: Efficient cost management is critical to the success of low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools. This section discusses effective financial planning, resource allocation, and expenditure control strategies. It examines methods such as bulk purchasing, resource sharing, and efficient use of facilities to minimize costs while maintaining quality standards.

3. Community Support: Community support plays a vital role in the success of low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools. This section explores strategies for building solid relationships with the local community, including parents, alumni, and community leaders. It discusses the importance of engaging parents in the educational process, fostering a sense of ownership, and leveraging community resources to benefit the school.

4. Strong Leadership: Effective leadership is essential in managing low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools. This section examines the qualities and skills required of leaders in creating a vision, setting goals, and implementing strategies for the school's success. It explores the importance of leadership in inspiring and motivating staff, promoting teamwork, and ensuring the alignment of the school's mission with its actions.

5. Financial Sustainability: Financial sustainability is a critical success factor for low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools. This section explores strategies for generating revenue, diversifying income sources, and establishing partnerships with relevant stakeholders. It examines the importance of long-term financial planning, fundraising initiatives, and income-generating activities to ensure the school's economic viability.

6. Quality Education Delivery: Delivering quality education is crucial for the success of low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools. This section discusses the importance of qualified teachers, a well-designed curriculum, effective teaching methods, and the integration of Islamic values into the educational process. It examines strategies for continuous professional development of teachers, monitoring student progress, and providing a nurturing and inclusive learning environment.

7. Community Engagement: Community engagement is a crucial success factor in managing low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools. This section explores strategies for involving the community in school activities, fostering partnerships with local organizations, and promoting active parental involvement. It discusses the benefits of community engagement in enhancing the school's reputation, securing support, and creating a positive learning environment.

4 Conclusion

Based on previous discussions, the importance of marketing management strategies and the PDCA approach is apparent in enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic kindergarten schools in Indonesia. It underscores the need for schools to adapt to changing educational
landscapes and engage in community programs to provide a holistic Islamic educational experience. The paper concludes by suggesting future research directions in this area.

In conclusion, there are critical success factors in managing low-cost Islamic kindergarten schools in Indonesia. By implementing strategies related to affordable tuition fees, cost management, community support, strong leadership, financial sustainability, quality education delivery, and community engagement, these institutions can thrive and provide accessible and quality education to the community.

The conclusion summarizes the key points discussed in the paper and underscores the significance of implementing marketing approaches to improve the competitiveness of Islamic kindergartens. It emphasizes the importance of branding, target market segmentation, promotional strategies, and customer relationship management in creating a solid and differentiated position in the market. The paper highlights the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of marketing approaches to stay competitive in the dynamic educational landscape.

References


