



Research Article

Digital Marketing Strategy to Increase the Interest of New Students

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Received : April 12, 2026
Accepted : June 13, 2026

Revised : May 14, 2026
Available online : July 12, 2026

How to Cite: Ilham Abdul Jalil and Ach. Nurholis Majid. (2026) "Digital Marketing Strategy to Increase the Interest of New Students", *al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, 9(3), pp. 447-458. doi: 10.31943/afkarjournal.v9i3.2397.

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Abstract. The development of increasingly sophisticated technology has affected people's habits in accessing information, marked by the abandonment of print media by switching to digital media that can be connected to fast and diverse access to information. The use of digital media for Islamic boarding schools is not only a promotional medium, but also a means of da'wah and education for the community. This research uses a qualitative approach, as well as data collection methods in the form of interviews, observations and documentation. The validity checking techniques used in this study are: source triangulation and technique triangulation. The digital strategies used by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School are personal branding of the Islamic boarding school, alumni

ambassador marketing, fast information accessibility, viral content and influencer collaborative marketing. Meanwhile, digital marketing innovations carried out by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School are in the form of optimizing the use of social media features, websites and interactive social media as well as upgrading human resources and digital media technology.

Keywords: Strategy, Digital Marketing, Improvement, Interest, New Students

INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology provides a great opportunity for educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, to increase the attractiveness and number of new student registrants through the use of digital marketing strategies (Kertajaya, 2019, p. 12). Digital marketing strategies are an important key in reaching prospective students and parents in a more effective, efficient, and innovative way. Through digital platforms such as social media, websites, and instant messaging applications, pesantren can convey information, build a positive image, and increase *engagement* which has an impact on increasing the interest in new student registrations (Bratukhina et al., 2020; Rahimi, 2023).

This research aims to examine and develop an appropriate digital marketing strategy in increasing the interest of prospective students to join the Islamic boarding school, so as to support the growth and sustainability of Islamic boarding school educational institutions in the digital era (Rowan, 2002; Yanto et al., 2023). The momentum of the presence of digital marketing should provide a great opportunity for Islamic boarding schools to increase the interest of new students through the use of digital platforms (Biswas, 2021). Digitalization allows the dissemination of information about the profile, advantages, values and identity of pesantren widely and massively (Lindsay Herbert, 2015, p. 34).

The reality is that many Islamic boarding schools have not optimally taken advantage of this opportunity, as evidenced by data from the Ministry of Religion in 2024 that there are around 30,000 Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia while there are 1,125 "Go Digital" Islamic boarding schools that follow digital literacy and only 1,615 Islamic boarding schools have succeeded in building websites (Media, 2023). Various obstacles that are the main obstacles to the application of digital marketing in the pesantren environment are the lack of human resource competence, lack of digital literacy and limited technological infrastructure (Harbi et al., 2022; Makrydakris, 2021).

As an illustration, Islamic boarding schools in East Java show significant developments every year. Data on the number of Islamic boarding schools in Sumenep reaches 411 Islamic boarding schools, if calculated throughout East Java there are 5,121 Islamic boarding schools with the number of students reaching 564,299 students, while the total number of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia reaches 30,494 Islamic boarding schools with a total number of students reaching 3.4 million students (Wakit et al., 2023). The existence of a tight competition niche makes the digital marketing of Islamic boarding school educational institutions in the circle of

the red ocean market (Kim & Mauborgne, 2014, p. 5) or competitive marketplace (Fauzan, 2024; Muttaqin, 2022).

The competition that occurs in educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, is now facing challenges in the form of the presence of digital technology that can be used as an effective marketing communication medium in increasing the positive image and trust of prospective users of educational services, where the adoption of digital technology carried out by Islamic boarding schools is relatively slow and weak (Rahimi, 2023).

The Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School specifically faces competition with other Islamic educational institutions that offer modern programs and facilities that are oriented towards practical skills and technological prowess. Innovation of digital marketing programs, facilities and strategies as an effort to win the niche market in the *red ocean market* does not only rely on traditional promotions such as the use of banners, pamphlets and alumni networks, but revolutionary efforts are needed in building a good brand image to communicate the vision, mission, activity programs and profiles of graduates later through digital media such as Facebook, namely tmialamien and MTAPrenduan, Youtube namely Viva TMI and Tahfidh AlamienTV, Instagram namely tmialamien and tahfidzalamien, Tiktok namely tmialamien and MTA Al-Amien Prenduan, TMI and MTA websites and TMI and MTA Twitter. The presence of this digital media makes it easier to access the reach of educational service users without limited distance so that messages can be conveyed widely (Sulaeman et al., 2023; Susantri, 2024).

The adoption of digital marketing in Islamic boarding schools as a medium to introduce and communicate services, programs and brands to prospective users of educational services is expected to be able to significantly increase the interest of new students (Rajendran Nair & Kumar, 2021). However, what happened was the opposite, ma'had TMI and MTA of Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School experienced fluctuations in the number of new students every year, even though they had adopted digital marketing in practice. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the role of digital marketing for Islamic boarding school educational institutions in increasing the interest of new students.

Various information facilities that are open access without limitation by geographical location, can be optimally utilized by using an integrated digital marketing strategy to communicate and strengthen brand image in order to create positive feedback for Islamic boarding school educational institutions in increasing the interest of new students (Indrioko, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a type of field descriptive research (Chreswell, 2019, p. 7). The purpose of qualitative descriptive research is to describe various situations in the form of phenomena, conditions and situations that exist in the community, institution or organization that is the object of research (Moleong, 2016, p. 56). Data collection procedures using observation, interview and documentation techniques (Sugiyono, 2019, p. 36). The data analysis techniques used were in the form of data condensation, data presentation and conclusion drawing

(Saldaña et al., 2014, pp. 12–13). From the object of this research, it is possible to obtain a social reality that characterizes the character, model and description of the situation and condition of the phenomenon (Nursapiah, 2020, p. 98).

DISCUSSION

A. Digital Marketing Concept Carried Out by TMI and MTA Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in Increasing the Interest of New Students

Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School has adopted a comprehensive digital marketing concept in an effort to increase the interest of prospective new students. Pesantren as an Islamic educational institution that continues to strive to introduce Islamic values and the quality of pesantren education with the rapid development of digital technology. Where digital marketing seeks to introduce, communicate and build trust in Islamic Boarding Schools related to the quality and quality of educational services. The main components contained in the digital marketing element are market segmentation, targeting and positioning. From the results of the data exposure and research findings, it can be explained that the discussion of the digital marketing concept of TMI and MTA of the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in an effort to increase the interest of new students as a follow-up:

1. Customer Centric Marketing

Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School through TMI and MTA has adopted a digital marketing concept that focuses on fulfilling prospective users and users of educational services (customer centric). Adjustment to technological advances as a means to access information used by the wider community. Changes in people's behavior patterns in using technology and accessing information also affect the education sector.

An interaction strategy in digital marketing that uses an approach to the needs and desires of potential users of educational services with an understanding of the preferences of potential users of educational services to ensure that every interaction that occurs can provide a positive and relevant experience (Qiny Shonia Az-Zahra et al, 2023, p. 2). Efforts to build long-term chemistry with all prospective users of educational services based on trust and loyalty. This not only increases the satisfaction of prospective users of educational services but also encourages an increase in the interest of new students (Kotler, 2019, p. 5).

The digitization carried out by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School by transforming in 2007 has developed a website as a medium of information, documentation and promotion to meet the needs and provide convenience for prospective and users of educational services to access information in real time. The adjustments made by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School are not only limited to the media of conveying information, but also adjustments to the modern education system, educational curriculum, learning models, disciplines of daily lifestyles and extracurricular activities to strengthen the attractiveness of users of educational services.

Digital media as an effective channel must be able to display the state of the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School, both in the form of products and services in a factual manner. Among the three main components carried out by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in order to focus on customer service in the form of market segmentation in the form of people who want to receive practical and modern Islamic education, the marketing target of the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School, namely the lower middle class and the positioning made by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School as a pesantren that provides Islamic education for the Islamic boarding school with very adequate facilities at a reasonable cost Competitive.

Digital marketing is a quick response to fierce competition so as to encourage Islamic boarding school educational institutions to display the quality and quality of services to prospective users of educational services (Karimah, 2023). Digital media functions as an effective channel to communicate brand image, products, services, and boarding school activities. There are three main components in digital marketing that focus on customer centricity, namely determining market segmentation, marketing targets, and positioning (Oré-Calixtoa, 2021).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the concept used by TMI and MTA of Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School uses a customer-centric approach, where this approach prioritizes aspects of meeting needs and developing technology and information. Fulfillment aspect. The use of digital media has three functions, namely information media, documentation and promotion. Meanwhile, the main components to maximize digital marketing are by determining market segmentation, targeting and positioning.

2. Integrated Digital Marketing and Conventional Marketing

The concept of integrating digital marketing and conventional marketing carried out by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School aims to maximize efforts to increase the interest of new students by synergizing the role of alumni through the Al-Amien Alumni Big Family Association (IKBAL) and the Walisantri Association spread throughout Indonesia.

The activities carried out can be in the form of da'wah safaris and non-formal visits, where during the visit the members of IKBAL and HIWARI are equipped with website links, photos and videos containing the profile of the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School to then be used as a means of promotion on social media of the members of IKBAL and HIWARI respectively. This approach is termed the free-throw approach. Thus, IKBAL and HIWARI members act as effective and efficient promotional agents. The percentage increase in the interest of new students over the last three years who registered for Al-Amien Prenduan based on recommendations through social media shared by IKBAL and HIWARI members was 3% in 2022, 6% in 2023 and 11% in 2024.

Integrated marketing combines conventional marketing strategies and digital marketing to create a cohesive approach to reaching the target audience. Utilizing the strengths of these two methods can increase brand visibility, expand market reach and build strong relationships with potential users of educational services (Nathan Furr dan Jeff Dyer, 2019, p. 19). The stages that can be carried out in the concept of

integrating digital marketing and conventional marketing are to build awareness (awareness) of prospective users of educational services, create interest with the combination of social media displayed, give rise to a sense of desire characterized by an intense search for information and determine the interest of education service users from products or services through the act of registering themselves or joining (Rumondang et al., 2020, pp. 11–12).

Based on the explanation above, integrated marketing between conventional marketing that adheres to old ways that are still relevant to be used, such as da'wah safaris and informal meetings with alumni and trustees as well as more modern ways using digital marketing. The combination of the two will produce comprehensive techniques and have a big impact on increasing the interest of students at the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School.

3. Social Media Marketing

Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School uses social media as a means to facilitate access to information, communication and promotion to provide convenience for prospective users of educational services. The platform used is an application that is commonly used by people in daily life such as Youtube, Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter X and Website. In the activity of using social media in access to information, communication and promotion, it must contain three values owned by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School, namely the value of Islam, the value of education and the value of the Islamic boarding school.

The links to access TMI's social media are <https://www.youtube.com/@tmialamien>, [tmialamien](https://www.instagram.com/tmialamien), [tiktok.com/@tmialamien](https://www.tiktok.com/@tmialamien), [facebook.com/tmialamien](https://www.facebook.com/tmialamien), [twitter.com/@tmialamien](https://twitter.com/tmialamien) and <https://tmialamien.sch.id/> website links. Meanwhile, MTA's social media links are <https://www.youtube.com/@tahfidhthalmientv>, [tahfidzalamien](https://www.instagram.com/tahfidzalamien), [tiktok.com/@tahfidzalamien](https://www.tiktok.com/@tahfidzalamien), [facebook.com/MTAprenduan](https://www.facebook.com/MTAprenduan), [twitter.com/@MTAAl_Amien](https://twitter.com/MTAAl_Amien) and mta.al-amien.ac.id. Optimal use of social media to ensure that information can be conveyed widely, effectively and efficiently.

Digital marketing is a form of quick response to the fierce competition climate and requires Islamic boarding school educational institutions to show the quality and quality of educational services to the community, in this case as consumers (Karimah, 2023). Digital media is an effective channel that can be used in communicating brand image, service products and pesantren activities.

Marketing using social media which involves various uses of social media platforms such as Youtube, Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter X and Websites provides the flexibility for viewers to search and get information, integrate with the audience, build a brand image, promote products and services and increase the engagement of users of products or services (Tuten et al., 2018, p. 27). The purpose of marketing uses digital media to build a positive image, create a good image from the community that the Islamic educational institution is a superior institution (Hilmi et al., 2023; Mardius et al., 2023).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the concept of using social media by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in an effort to increase the interest of new students as a means to make it easier for prospective users of educational services to

access information, communication media and promotion. In its operational activities, the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School conducts very strict supervision of every content that will be shared on social media for public consumption, where the content to be published must contain three values, namely the value of Islam, the value of education and the value of the pesantren.

B. Digital Marketing Innovation Carried Out by TMI and MTA Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in Increasing the Interest of New Students

Digital marketing innovation is a form of creative and strategic process in an effort to create new solutions to generate greater added value through innovation processes and models, the goal is to overcome challenges and create new opportunities for TMI and MTA of Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in increasing the interest of new students. From the results of the data exposure and research findings, it can be explained that the discussion on digital marketing innovations of TMI and MTA of Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in an effort to increase the interest of new students is as follows:

1. Optimizing Social Media Use

Optimizing social media features at the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School is a strategic step to ensure that content remains relevant and innovative. The use of features such as stories and reels allows the delivery of messages through short content that is interesting and easily accessible to followers. Media centers also use hashtags such as #santrimendunia and account tagging to expand the reach of content (Harbi et al., 2022).

The quality support carried out by the Al-Amien media center team so that the quality of graphic design, audio, video and digital text obtained is maximized, so the Al-Amien media center team uses applications such as Adobe Premiere Pro, Photoshop, Canva, and Corel Draw. The Al-Amien media center team also pays attention to the upload time of each content so that the viewing history is maximized, for example the morning upload schedule between 07.00 to 10.00 and the afternoon between 15.00 and 21.00. Evaluation of criticism and suggestions is carried out to maximize efforts to optimize the role of social media while still upholding the value of Islamic education and Islamic boarding schools.

According to Larry Keeley, optimizing the use of social media features through innovation emphasizes on improving every content created so as to produce quality, attractive content that is in accordance with the needs of consumers or service users (Larry Keeley et al, 2013, p. 11). Optimizing the use of social media features as a strategic step to improve performance and effectiveness on various platforms. By utilizing features such as stories, reels and relevant hashtags, messages can be conveyed through short content that is interesting and easy to access for followers and expand the reach of the audience. Types of content that have development features in the form of blog articles, videos, infographics and e-books (Schaffner, 2016, p. 16).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the innovations carried out by the media center team are in an effort to optimize social media features to

ensure that the content presented remains relevant and innovative. The use of reels and stories features adjusts the needs and habits of people who like to watch short-form videos. Optimizing social media features as a strategic step in increasing the effectiveness of the platform.

2. Interactive Websites and Social Media

The development carried out by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in supporting the media center team through an interactive digital platform to increase the involvement of educational service users. Al-Amien's media center team designed a website and social media that allows direct interaction through instant messaging on various platforms such as live streaming on Tiktok, Youtube and Instagram as the most widely used social media platforms by the public. The interactive digital platform aims to provide feedback to prospective users of educational services which is expected to be a bridge to access information needed by prospective users of educational services about the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School.

According to Larry Keeley, customer engagement innovation seeks to build close interactions with service or product users so that it is not only to introduce but also to build emotions to increase loyalty. For example, building a digital community that can be used as a promotional medium. And network support in innovation can be in the form of efforts to build networks or collaborate with partners who have a mutual benefit impact so that value is created to expand the partnership network (Larry Keeley et al, 2013, p. 11).

The relationship that Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School continues to build with education service users and guardians is to create a sense of trust in the form of integrated services through WhatsApp channels with the Santri Administration System (SAS), functioning as access to information and communication media between the guardians and the Al-Amien Islamic Boarding School both at TMI and MTA and guardians can monitor the daily activities of their children at the Al-Amien Islamic Boarding School Seizure.

Larry Keeley also explained the importance of service as something that must continue to be upgraded in quality to create added value in order to provide the best experience for service and product users. For example, an online-based new student registration service (Larry Keeley et al, 2013, p. 15).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School develops an interactive digital platform to increase the involvement of users of educational services. Through the Al-Amien media center team, it seeks to initiate a website and social media that allows direct integration through direct messages and live streaming on various platforms such as Tiktok, Youtube and Instagram. In addition, a WhatsApp channel is also provided that is connected to the Santri Administration System (SAS) to facilitate communication between the guardian and the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School, allowing for intense communication to monitor the daily activities of the students.

3. Upgrading Human Resources and Digital Media Technology

The innovation carried out by the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School through the Al-Amien media center team to continue to be committed to improving

the quality of human resources through technical training for the media team to deepen photography skills, videography, editing applications, design applications and knowledge about digital marketing. In addition, improving the quality of equipment for the Al-Amien media center team such as high-resolution cameras, editing computers, drones and updated editing applications, aims to support the accessibility and connectivity of the Al-Amien media center team program.

Keeley explained the importance of human resources in structural innovation related to efforts to restructure institutions or organizations in resource management in order to create a lean, adaptive and efficient organization. For example, forming a special team for digital marketing and digital integration to various lines of organizations or institutions. In addition, innovations to improve product performance can improve the features and quality of products or services to increase the attractiveness of potential service users or consumers in general. Of course, innovation in order to produce quality products requires advanced and quality technology (Larry Keeley et al, 2013, p. 11).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the innovations carried out by the Al-Amien media center team are to affirm the commitment in an effort to improve the quality of human resources with technical training for the development of the quality of human resources. Technical training is conducted related to photography, videography, design and digital marketing training. In addition, to improve the quality of editing results, the Al-Amien media center team also upgraded equipment ranging from digital cameras, high-resolution camera lenses, computers, drones and editing applications. Everything is done as a form of manifestation of commitment to be at the forefront and professional in the field of pesantren media.

CONCLUSION

The concept of digital marketing used by TMI and MTA of Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in increasing the interest of new students by adjusting to technological developments and people's behavior patterns that are increasingly dependent on digital media, the digital marketing concepts chosen are customer centric marketing, integrated digital marketing and conventional marketing and social media marketing.

Digital marketing innovations carried out by TMI and MTA Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School in increasing the interest of new students focus on utilizing various digital platforms to reach viewers such as optimizing the use of social media features, websites and interactive social media as well as upgrading human resources and digital media technology.

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