



Building a Madrasah Positive Image: How are the Strategies?

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Abstract

The image of an institution is critical, so it is essential to build a positive image in society. This research aimed to investigate the strategy of madrasah in cultivating a positive image of the institution. This research used a subjective or qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. The research was conducted in MTSN Samarinda by collecting, presenting, and confirming data. The researcher used data collection techniques of observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects were the vice principal of MTSN, Samarinda, and the students. The researcher also observed the school's social media platforms and documents, such as the school admission brochure. As for the data analysis technique, the researcher used the theories of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana to analyze data. The data credibility and validity were also ensured using triangulation. The research results show that MTs Negeri Samarinda builds the institution's image by identifying the community's needs, especially prospective students, by creating a quality Madrasah institution in various programs and prioritizing Islamic values. MTs Negeri Samarinda also maximizes student activity programs in terms of academic and non-academic aspects, including various extracurricular activities, clean Friday programs implemented from the adiwiyata program and tahfidzul Qur'an class programs. The school also maximizes all programs by publishing them on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and websites. This study highlights the importance of madrasah's strategies in cultivating a positive image of an institution in society.

Keywords: madrasah, positive image, public relations strategies

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A. Introduction

Image is the primary source for the foundation that can energize the local area of an institution, both profit and non-profit, to contribute to the value that can create a remarkable correspondence between the institution and society. Finally, any institution is required to maintain the good name of the institution in society and the image of the institution, which is a critical component of the institution (Maulana, 2020). In addition, an image is a picture in an individual's or institution's soul. The image can be terrible or negative if not enforced based on actual capacity or conditions (Khorotunniswah, 2020). As shown by Khairudin Muchtar and Dedi Hardiyani in Iva Khoirun Nisa's thesis, a good image will be a significant offering point to society; as stated by Kotler that image is thoughts, beliefs and impression messages that people transfer to an object (Nisa', 2022).

The image of an institution is critical, so it is essential to maintain good relations with the community. To maintain harmonious relations with society, effective image management will provide benefits for both internal and external parties. Ways to inspire open feelings of compassion through a positive attitude are an unquestionable necessity for school institutions that want to compete in maintaining a good image so that it is easy for schools to attract open feelings of compassion (Rusyanti et al., 2021).

According to Dudun Ubaidillah, an image is a collection of points of view and beliefs. The meaning of an image is mainly determined by how it was created. Tia Ayu Ningrum said that an image is a structure that follows the hopes and desires of a particular institution or association (Nisa', 2022). Especially in the current era, competition between institutions, in particular, is very tight and open. One way to improve the public image is to create a strategy to win and improve the institution's image in the public's eyes (Sarpendi, 2022). The more improvements, the tighter the competition in managing institutions. Starting from a branding strategy is critical for institutions (Nuraini et al., 2022). Therefore, to introduce institutions such as schools to the public, school institutions need to use various strategies to give a positive impression to the public by being creative and innovative on multiple social media platforms (Safitri, 2021).

Since an institution's image reflects its identity, effective management of this image must be done through harmonious relationships with the community or audience. An overview of the instructive foundation, packed by taking into account various parts, including scientific standing or scholastic quality, should be possible by working on the expert implementation of the principal, teachers, and related staff in the school, having a proper hierarchical organization for teachers and parents, as well as a reasonable educational plan thus producing excellent output or alumni (Sumendap, 2021).

To improve the image of an institution, competent human resources (HR) in management that connect directly to the community are essential; in theoretical terms, it is called public relations management. The task of public relations management in a foundation or institution is to prepare program objectives such as determining, setting, implementing, and evaluating. The existence of public relations management is to increase the ability of assets in the institution to achieve authoritative goals efficiently and actually (Supriani, 2022).

One way to develop a positive image of an institution is, of course, by providing information about the activities and programs of institutions or schools. To build a positive image of an organization, an institution can hold several programs such as

Open Houses, Innovation Exhibitions, and Skills Exhibitions, which are held before the new student admission season to provide information to prospective students (Elfrianto, 2017). Likewise, Samarinda has an educational institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, MTs Negeri Samarinda. This institution is Islamically oriented and one of the leading or most favorite educational institutions, with an A accreditation in 2015.

MTs Negeri Samarinda, with the title of favorite educational institution, certainly has programs that support the competence of its students and excellent programs to grow a positive image of MTs Negeri Samarinda. The school deploys public relations to provide information to the public by using various social media platforms to provide information so that the community can access the school programs and foster a positive perception of MTs Negeri Samarinda. This study aimed to investigate the strategy of MTs Negeri Samarinda as one of the favorite educational institutions in cultivating a positive image of the institution.

B. Literature Review

In principle, public relations management is a process of providing community needs carried out by public institutions to provide information or services to the community, namely through various social media platforms. Therefore, schools and educational institutions have a close relationship with the community. The success of building a school's reputation is measured by the attitudes and perceptions of its community. A good reputation or image also shows that the school has good quality. Therefore, an image must be an organization's primary goal because a good hierarchical image will also influence the level of trust among people (Rahayu & Trisnawati, 2022).

An image, of course, cannot be separated from how the institution effectively manages public relations and has strategies for implementing public relations management. Public relations management certainly has steps to achieve institutional goals and build a positive image for the institution, and it cannot be separated from planning. Planning is a step in creating programs or activities in which the planning is achieved following the institution's ideals (Rahayu & Trisnawati, 2022).

Apart from that, public relations management in an organization certainly has different systems or strategies, especially for profit or non-profit. With the development of technology that is now increasingly advanced and has an extensive impact, primarily through virtual entertainment, various institutions are starting to utilize online entertainment to provide information for the public about organizations or institutions, both regarding activities that will be carried out, programs carried out, and those that have been completed (Akmal & Diniati, 2022).

Online media is critical in building the public perception of information for individuals and organizations. Social media is a device that various age groups use to share information, such as writing, photos, sound, and video, with other online media users (Rianawati & Mulyanti, 2022). However, the primary purpose of public relations is to provide a positive image of the target institution, the educational institution (school). A positive image is built if the public has a positive impression of the institution (Sanusi, 2020). To realize public perception, which is always positive, people in charge of Public Relations must always maintain the image of the educational institution (school) they represent. The role of Public Relations is to

create a harmonious relationship between the school and the community so that it will build public opinion that is beneficial for the school (Setiyadi et al., 2022)

To achieve ideal progress, public relations must develop and organize procedures. For this reason, the functional stage is worthy of making excellent breakthroughs (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Public relations efforts, especially regarding a positive image, are essential in cultivating a good image of the school organization. A positive image will be well recognized by the community through school programs and activities, which are conveyed to the broader community through information platforms to achieve satisfaction (Husin et al., 2023) and most importantly, when it comes to building an institution's image, an excellent public relations task is critical to connect educational institutions with the local environment so that there is a good relationship and can improve the quality of the institution (Taufiq & Fujiantie, 2023).

C. Method

This study included subjective exploration with phenomenological strategies that aim to describe and summarize various conditions and characteristics in society by making them objects of investigation by revealing the natures, features, and models of certain conditions or characteristics (Istiqomah, 2020).

This study was carried out in the city of Samarinda. Important information-gathering methods in the subjective examination include a focus on archives or documents equipped with top-to-bottom meetings and the perceptions of the researcher and sources, both of which are not only aimed at researching and digging up information but also showing the importance of the discovery (Setiawan & Wigati, 2019).

Apart from observations, meetings or interviews, and suggestions as information-gathering techniques, this study also utilized essential and optional sources of information. Through collecting data, presenting data, and conclusion drawing (confirmation), the researcher used interactive analysis or the theory of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana to analyze data. The data credibility and validity were also tested using triangulation.

D. Findings and Discussion

The results of the interviews with the vice principal of the MTs Negeri Samarinda show that to foster a positive image of the school in the community is to carry out strategic planning to see what the needs of the Samarinda community are, especially prospective parents and guardians of students. They are looking for a quality school without leaving Islamic values, in which the social culture of Samarinda people is classified as a religious society. A previous study discovered that integrated planning, including all stakeholders, active participation of public relations professionals, and sufficient budget allocation are critical to establishing a favourable institutional image (Norman et al., 2023).

MTs Negeri Samarinda provides a platform for students to develop their competencies. It continuously adapts to technological developments and tries to follow trends among the people of Samarinda by maximizing various social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and websites. This finding adds to the previous research finding that digital public relations at MTs Az-Zainiyah I Randumerak only uses the Facebook platform to communicate with the community (Diana et al., 2023) and uses websites at Madrasah Tsanawiyah 1 Klaten (Solikhin et al., 2023).

The image that MTs Negeri Samarinda wants to show is in line with the vision and mission of the madrasah, which is "creating a madrasah that is excellent in quality based on *imtaq*, and science-technology and the environment-oriented" and one of the madrasah's missions is "fostering an appreciation for the values of Islamic teachings and national culture." In cultivating a positive image, the school identifies what the community needs, especially parents who want their children to enroll in MTs Negeri Samarinda, in which this school has quality education but does not leave Islamic teachings. In addition, MTs Negeri Samarinda provides opportunities for students to develop their interests and talents by maximizing various extracurricular activities so that the interests and talents of the students are channeled effectively by publishing on multiple platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and websites. A previous study highlights that by meeting the community's desires and interests, the madrasah can give high expectations for achieving public desires and interests and finally create a positive image for the madrasah (Tantowi et al., 2023).

In cultivating a good image, MTs Negeri Samarinda work together to realize a quality institution by aligning all program activities with the vision and mission of the madrasah. Apart from that, the image that MTs Negeri Samarinda wants to show to the people of Samarinda City is by holding various activity programs both related to madrasah activities and non-madrasah activities, such as every Friday, after sports, all the teachers and the principal of Madrasah together with madrasah students hold a clean Friday, to make the madrasah clean and beautifully organized. This is a part of the implementation of the *Adiwiyata* program. The school also created a *tahfidz* class program. The program was initially located at campus II on Jalan Anklung but has now moved to Samarinda Seberang on Jalan Harun Nafsi. The *tahfidz* program aims to produce *hafidz* of the Qur'an in Samarinda. At the beginning of the program launch, student interest surged, reaching around 100 students registered to participate in the *tahfidz* class program.



Figure 1. Clean Friday Activities at MTs Negeri Samarinda (Kemenag RI, 2017)

MTs Negeri Samarinda is building the institution's image by carrying out various programs per the program planned by the entire madrasah institutional community consisting of the MTs principal, teachers, and educational staff. All programs are published through multiple social media, including achievements and the success

obtained by MTs Negeri Samarinda. This evidence is provided to the people of Samarinda City by displaying or posting on various social media accounts of MTs Negeri Samarinda. Online media is critical in building public perception because social media is a device that various age groups use to share information, such as writing, photos, sound, and video, with other online media users (Rianawati & Mulyanti, 2022). Previous research also describes the significance of the public relations activity carried out by all civitas academia of the institution and building the image of the institution by focusing on the achievements of the school along with quality improvement (Indriyani & Syamsudin, 2023).



Figure 2. Instagram Post on Official Account of MTs Negeri Samarinda
(MTsN Samarinda, 2024)

MTS Negeri Samarinda consistently builds the institution's image by implementing several strategies because one way to improve the public image is to create a strategy to win and improve the institution's image in the public's eyes (Sarpendi, 2022). Therefore, the results of this study highlight the importance of a public relations strategy to build a positive image of the madrasah in society. A previous study also shows that implementing a public relations strategy through internal and external activities and institutional strategies, both functional and operational, has a great contribution to the institution's image (Cahyaningrum & Nuraini, 2022). An image must be an institution's primary goal because a good hierarchical image will also influence the level of trust among people (Rahayu & Trisnawati, 2022).

E. Conclusion

In building the institution's image, MTs Negeri Samarinda identifies, develops, and maximizes various existing programs aligned with the madrasah's vision and mission. The school also fulfills the community's wishes by providing quality education without eliminating Islamic values. The school maximizes various extra-curricular activities, both academic and non-academic, so the students can develop interests and talents according to what they are interested in. MTs Negeri Samarinda also maximizes and always keeps up with the era by trying to follow the trends of the students, that is, by using various social media platforms, including Instagram,

YouTube, and websites to display various excellent activity programs such as extracurriculars, Adiwiyata programs, and Tahfidz class programs. With these multiple programs, MTs Negeri Samarinda strives to foster a positive image and become the community's choice for sending their children to join high-quality MTs Negeri Samarinda with an Islamic orientation. This study's results highlight the importance of madrasah's strategies in cultivating a positive image of an institution. However, this study only involved one madrasah institution in Samarinda, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other institutions. For further research, it is recommended to involve more institutions to give more insights into public relations strategies and include other stakeholders such as parents and the community who perceive the institution's image.

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