

Brand Image Strategy in Increasing the Number of New Students

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*Ayu Risma Aryanthy, Novitawati, Noorhapizah^{abc} 

¹Magister Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia

²³Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: yogi.prihandoko@ulm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the brand image strategy implemented by PAUD IT Athaira in Banjarbaru City in increasing the number of students. In the midst of fierce competition between educational institutions, building an institutional image (brand image) is one of the important strategies to maintain its existence and attract public interest. The selection of the right method and relevant to the condition of the institution is a crucial factor in building a positive image, both internally and externally. Educational institutions need to formulate positioning, brand value, and marketing concepts that are able to reflect competitive advantages. This study uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The informants in this study include school principals and teachers. The results of the study show that the brand image strategy through the 7P marketing mix approach implemented by PAUD IT Athaira has a positive impact on increasing the number of students every year and increasing public awareness of the existence and quality of the institution. These findings show that a strategic and sustainable approach in building brand image has significant practical implications in strengthening the competitiveness of educational institutions in the modern era.

Keywords: *Brand Image, Strategy, Students*

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing in the education sector today is one of the strategic needs that cannot be ignored, especially for private educational institutions such as PAUD. Increasingly competitive competition requires institutions to not only focus on the quality of education, but also to be able to market their services and advantages effectively to the public. Marketing in PAUD institutions is not just a promotional effort, but a step to build public trust and expand the reach of institutions in the midst of changing parental preferences in choosing education for their children.

One of the important elements in an education marketing strategy is the formation of a brand image, namely the public's perception of the identity and values of educational institutions. A strong brand image can increase the attractiveness of institutions, foster parental loyalty, and strengthen the institution's position in the midst of competition (Fajri, 2019). In the context of early childhood education, brand image is closely related to the quality of educational services (Eduqual), which includes aspects of parenting, learning, and non-curricular programs that support children's growth and development holistically (Novitawati, 2022).

Local phenomena in Banjarbaru City show the high number of early childhood education units, which reached 181 PAUD institutions spread across five sub-districts (data.kemdikbud.go.id). This number creates a climate of fierce competition, where each institution must have its own appeal to remain in demand by the public. This condition also has an impact on the uneven distribution of students, especially in the sub-district with the highest concentration of PAUD such as North Banjarbaru.

Brand Image Strategy in Increasing the Number of New Students

PAUD IT Athaira is one of the integrated Islamic educational institutions established in 2021. As a new institution, Athaira faced challenges in terms of attracting students at the beginning of its establishment, with only four students in the first year.

In the midst of high competition and minimal exposure, PAUD IT Athaira strives to build a brand image through digital-based marketing strategies, strengthening superior services, and programs that are attractive to early childhood and the elderly.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the brand image strategy applied by PAUD IT Athaira in increasing the number of students in the midst of competition from PAUD institutions in Banjarbaru City. This research also seeks to describe the factors that shape brand image and the impact of the strategies carried out on public perception and institutional competitiveness.

The following is data on the distribution of public or private PAUD schools in the city of Banjarbaru obtained from data.kemdikbud.go.id:

JUMLAH DATA SATUAN PENDIDIKAN (PAUD) PER KOTA BANJARBARU

Jalur Formal

Show: 10 entries

No	Nama Kecamatan	TK	RA	Taman Sempurna	SPK TK	Pratama Widya Pratama	Nusa Dhammassekha	Total
1	Landsan Ulu	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2	Cempaka	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	Banjarbaru Utara	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
4	Banjarbaru Selatan	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
5	Liang Anggang	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL SEMUA		5	0	0	0	0	0	5

Showing 1 to 5 of 5 entries

Figure 1. Number of PAUD Units in Banjarbaru City

JUMLAH DATA SATUAN PENDIDIKAN (PAUD) PER KOTA BANJARBARU

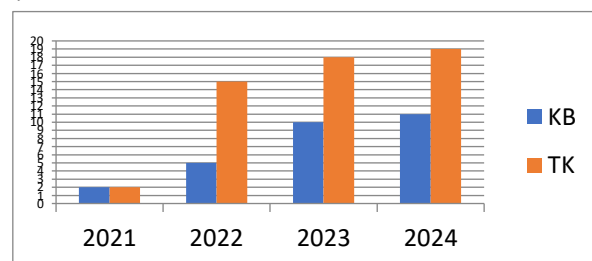
Jalur Formal

Show: 10 entries

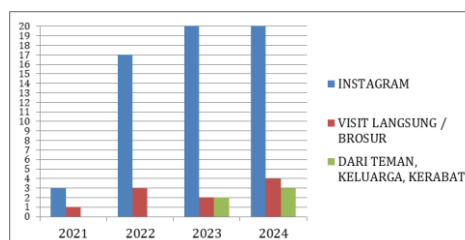
No	Nama Kecamatan	TK	RA	Taman Sempurna	SPK TK	Pratama Widya Pratama	Nusa Dhammassekha	Total
1	Landsan Ulu	33	5	0	0	0	0	38
2	Cempaka	18	5	0	0	0	0	23
3	Banjarbaru Utara	44	5	0	0	0	0	49
4	Banjarbaru Selatan	33	4	0	0	0	0	37
5	Liang Anggang	27	2	0	0	0	0	29
TOTAL SEMUA		155	21	0	0	0	0	176

Figure 2. Number of PAUD Units per Banjarbaru City District

The following graph shows the increase in the number of students at PAUD IT Athaira Banjarbaru in 2021 – 2024:



Graph 3. Increase in the Number of Early Childhood Education Students at IT Athaira



Graph 4. Number of Students Based on School Information Sources

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a type of case study carried out at PAUD IT Athaira Banjarbaru. This approach is used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the strategy brand image in the local context of PAUD institutions.

The data sources in this study include primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while

secondary data came from internal documents of relevant institutions and publication media. The informants in this study include school principals, teachers, parents of students, and the community around the school environment. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, with the criteria of providing data by understanding the dynamics of the institution, being directly involved in marketing activities, and having experience relevant to the school's brand image strategy.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2014), which included three stages:

Data reduction: the process of sorting, summarizing, and focusing data by relevant categories.

Presentation of data, arranging information in the form of narratives or matrices to facilitate understanding.

Verification or drawing conclusions, formulating findings through interpretation of patterns, meanings, and relationships between data.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses triangulation techniques. This triangulation was carried out by comparing data obtained through three data collection methods, namely in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation. This approach aims to ensure the reliability of the data and strengthen the interpretation of the findings through various complementary perspectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Brand image

Definition of Brand

Brand is an important element of a product because it can provide added value, both for goods and services. A trademark is a name, symbol, mark, design, or combination of these elements that functions as the identity of an individual, organization, or company, and is used to distinguish the products or services it owns from those of other parties.

According to Suyanto, a brand is a combination of names, words, symbols, or designs that function to give an identity to a product. Meanwhile, Kotler defines a brand as a name, term, mark, symbol, design, or combination of such elements that aims to identify the goods or services offered by an individual or group of sellers and to distinguish them from competitors' products.

According to the Trademark Law No. 15 of 2001 Article 1 Paragraph 1, it states that a trademark is a mark that distinguishes a product in trade activities, which can be in the form of images, names, words, letters, numbers, color arrangements, or combinations of these elements that have distinguishing power and are used to trade goods or services.

Brand name is a combination of names, words, symbols, or designs/designs that provide product identity to distinguish a product or service from competitors' products or services. A strong brand identity is able to create a major competitive advantage for brand owners.

Image Definition

Image (image) according to Kotler and Fox in Sutisna is the sum of the images, impressions, and beliefs that a person has towards an object. Image is an impression that arises from the understanding of a reality, obtained from information.

Image can also be interpreted as people's impressions, feelings, or conceptions of a company, object, individual, or institution. The image cannot be produced instantly like factory products, but is formed through the process of individual perception and understanding based on experience and information received.

Gronroos in Jasfar defines image as a representation of the assessment of both potential and actual consumers as well as other parties related to the institution, such as suppliers, agents, and investors. Image is the public's perception of the institution, product, or service offered, and is greatly influenced by various external factors that are beyond the control of the institution.

Definition of Brand Image

According to Tjiptono (2005), brand image reflects consumers' views and trust in a brand. Brand image can also be interpreted as a perception formed in the minds of consumers. Brand identity is the initial foundation for the formation of an image, which is then conveyed to consumers through various communication channels.

Brand image is not the result of direct creation from marketers, but a perception formed in the minds of consumers of marketing communication efforts carried out. Changing brand image means changing consumers' minds and expectations, and this process takes a lot of time and investment.

Brand image is an important asset of a company, which is often valued higher than the value of the company's tangible assets. Consumers who are familiar with a brand tend to maintain a consistent perception of the brand.

In the field of education, brand image is formed from the public's perception of the attributes of educational institutions. Institutions need to build a positive impression through the achievement of achievements and competitive advantages so that their image remains good in the eyes of the public. A positive brand image will create strong satisfaction, loyalty, and trust from education service users.

Brand Image PAUD IT Athaira Banjarbaru

The results of the study show that PAUD IT Athaira Banjarbaru is an Islamic-based early childhood education institution with adequate facilities to support a positive image. This PAUD has various excellent programs such as the habit of praying dhuha and reciting every day, as well as non-curricular programs such as little science, swimming, healthy eating together, outing classes, cooking classes, and partnerships with child psychologists.

One of its innovative programs is "parents teach", in which parents of learners with various professions share knowledge with children. The activity was also published through social media as a form of managing the school's brand image .

Facilities available include air-conditioned classrooms, indoor play areas, child-friendly plastic play equipment, and indoor swimming pool. Social media such as Instagram is actively used to promote school activities. Another flagship program is the Elementary School Readiness Assessment for Kindergarten B students, which is supported by collaboration with the psychology team. All of these efforts aim to strengthen the school's brand image in the eyes of the wider community.

Factors That Form Brand Image to Increase the Number of Students

Brand image is the public's view or image of a brand. With a good brand image marketing strategy , educational institutions can increase their competitiveness and attract public interest in enrolling children in school.

The factors that form the brand image of PAUD IT Athaira to increase the number of students can be done in various ways, such as:

Building an Identity

Provide a school identity, such as by creating a logo and packaging that is easy to remember. PAUD IT Athaira has a unique logo design with a logo shape that resembles the shape of a children's palm as many as 4 pairs with a purple base color. And with a unique letter design so that the people who see it immediately recognize the logo of the PAUD IT Athaira school.



Figure 3. Athaira IT Early Childhood Educator Logo

Building Credibility

Improving the quality of teachers' abilities, and building public trust. In PAUD IT Athaira, the improvement of teachers' abilities is carried out by involving teachers in various kinds of training, both organized by schools and those organized by the education office, both offline and online.

Making Banners for Facilities and Activities in the School Area

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Make a banner that contains school facilities and activities and programs carried out at school so that people who visit the school can see what activities are carried out at school. PAUD IT Athaira made an activity banner and pasted it around the school's front fence. This banner is updated every year so that the banner is always in a new state with bright colors as a form of consistency in the school's brand image through banners.

Participating in Other School Events

Participating in events organized by other schools so that they are known by other schools. PAUD IT Athaira often receives invitations from other schools in the form of competitions held by other schools, this is one of the ways for the school to be recognized by others through indirect and minimal promotion.

Utilizing Social Media

Social media management in today's digital age is very helpful in the brand image of a school. PAUD IT Athaira has Instagram and Facebook accounts that are regularly managed with posts on school activities. Teachers are required to make videos of activities per day so that activities at school can make posts either in the form of stories or feeds on social media. To do branding on social media at PAUD IT, Athaira also advertises posts with a wider reach by setting the radius of the city to be reached. Post advertising through social media can be adjusted to the desired budget so that it is more effective in brand image with a wider reach and makes it easier to interact through messages on social media without having to come to school. Build brand awareness.

PAUD IT Athaira Builds Brand Awareness

By making a school name with a name, logo, color and slogan that is easy to remember, one way is to make a school logo with acrylic writing with a large size of 5 meters long with a position on the school roof and at night the school logo is on. This has a great effect on people who pass by the school area during the day and at night will quickly remember the name and logo of the school.



Figure 4. Athaira IT PAUD Logo on School Building

Doing Brand Marketing with Non-Academic Parties

PAUD IT Athaira conducts brand marketing with child psychologist institutions, in terms of the implementation of events as a sponsor of an event. So that the market that is to be achieved is not only limited to parents who want their children to go to school but also to parents who want school activities to be accompanied by psychological observation in children. PAUD IT Athaira also partners with dentist clinics for periodic dental check-up activities.



Figure 5. Periodic Dental Check-Up Activities

Application of Brand Image Strategy in Increasing the Number of Early Childhood Education Students at Athaira IT Banjarbaru

Strategy is one of the key factors in achieving the institution's goals. The success of a business is greatly influenced by the quality of leadership and the strategy implemented. The strategy will determine the direction of the institution's movement, whether it is able to achieve its goals or not. In the context of educational institutions, strategies are also needed in marketing the educational services offered. PAUD IT Athaira applies a marketing strategy that refers to Kotler's theory (2015).

Based on the results of the interview with the Principal, the brand image strategy used by PAUD IT Athaira is known as Mix 7P, namely: product, price, place, people, process, physical evidence, and promotion.

Product

The product in question is an educational service provided by PAUD IT Athaira. First, it includes the curriculum offered and different from schools in general, such as little science activities, periodic outing classes, cooking classes, healthy food, periodic swimming classes, and others. Second, supporting facilities and other activities such as air-conditioned classrooms, activities carried out indoors so that children are more comfortable, and indoor swimming pools that can still be used even when it rains. The excellence in this product aspect is the attraction of the public to Athaira's PAUD IT education services.

Price

Price is the amount of fees that must be paid when registering at PAUD IT Athaira, which is IDR 8,650,000.00 paid at the beginning of registration, then an annual fee of IDR 1,450,000.00 and a monthly tuition fee of IDR 500,000.00. With this amount of cost, students get good facilities and diverse and interesting learning. This cost range shows that the target market segment is parents who work as civil servants, state-owned employees, the private sector, the self-employed, and others.

Place

PAUD IT Athaira is located in North Loktabat Village, North Banjarbaru District, which has the second largest population in the city of Banjarbaru, which is 57,128 people. This location is strategic because it is easy to reach, not close to major highways, and is close to health facilities. The school building is located in a residential area that is not a closed cluster, with an average land area of 300 m², giving the impression of a spacious and safe learning environment.

Browse

The human resources owned by PAUD IT Athaira, namely educators, are all graduates of S1 Early Childhood Education. This increases the confidence of parents to register their children. The school also provides guidance and counseling services as support for students in overcoming growth and development problems.

Process

The process is part of a strong brand image. Parents who are satisfied with their child's educational results will spread positive stories to others. For example, the experience of children who are able to read and count well, as well as a safe and clean school environment. This shows that school operational standards also affect the image of the institution.

Physical Evidence

The institution's image is also shaped through physical evidence, such as the school's attractive logo, the distinctive color of purple, and the unique and easily recognizable uniform design. All of these elements strengthen the brand image in the minds of the public.

Promotion

Promotions are carried out online and offline. Online promotion through social media, especially Instagram, makes it easier for parents who do not have time to visit schools to stay informed. Offline promotion is carried out through the distribution of brochures during public activities, the installation of school logos on government billboards on the side of the road, and the distribution of stickers to parents to be pasted on cars as a form of pride for the school.

This strategy as a whole shapes the image of the school as a modern, Islamic, and quality PAUD institution.

Brand Image Strategy Model of IT PAUD Athaira (7P)

Components of 7P Implementation in PAUD IT Athaira	
Product	Islamic curriculum + creative programs
Price	Competitive entrance fees and tuition fees
Place	Strategic and safe location
Browse	Teacher with S1 PAUD education
Process	The process of learning service is fun
Physical Evidence	Complete and attractive facilities
Promotion	Active promotion through social media and events

This strategy not only strengthens the image of the institution, but also fosters public trust as evidenced by the increase in the number of students from year to year.

The Impact of the Brand Image Strategy in PAUD IT Athaira Banjarbaru

The impact of the implementation of the brand image strategy at PAUD IT Athaira Banjarbaru includes increasing public trust in the school, as well as a gradual increase in the number of students every year. This statement is in line with the opinion of Alma (2014) who states that educational institutions basically aim to provide services to those who expect satisfaction, because they have made payments for these services. If the service provided is good, then customers will feel satisfied and give a good impression and trust in the institution.

The brand image strategy carried out also has an impact on increasing public interest in registering their children. The school's reputation has also become very good in the community. This reflects the main goal of the brand image formation effort, which is to create positive perceptions through various branding strategies. A good reputation also makes it easier for schools to establish partnerships with various parties, which is an added value and attraction in itself.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the brand image strategy used by PAUD IT Athaira which is known as isitilah Mix 7P that is product, price, place, people, procces, physical evidence, promotion has an impact on the increasing number of students every year. In order to maximize the number of students, it is necessary to create a special team that takes care of the brand image in schools so that the goal of brand image can be achieved optimally.

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