



## Etika Pemasaran Pendidikan dalam Perspektif Islam

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### Abstract

*This study aims to examine how Islamic marketing ethics shape value-based marketing strategies at SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak. Unlike conventional marketing approaches that are persuasion-oriented, Islamic boarding schools build legitimacy through social relations, public morality, and religious symbols. This study uses a library research method, which combines primary sources such as the Qur'an, hadith, and fiqh muamalah rules with secondary sources such as educational marketing theory (Kotler & Fox), relationship marketing (Grönroos), service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch), and pesantren social studies (Geertz). The results of the analysis show that the four pillars of Islamic ethics – *ṣidq*, *amānah*, *ukhuwah*, and the prohibition of *gharar* – function as non-transactional marketing capital that generates trust capital, legitimacy capital, and network capital. School marketing practices are reflected through information transparency, community-based religious relations, and humanistic public representation on social media, which form organic word-of-mouth-based promotion. This study confirms that educational marketing from an Islamic perspective is not merely normative ethics, but a sustainable strategy model relevant to educational institutions in rural areas.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education; Decentralization; Social Inequality; Financial Technology; Cultural Construction.*

## **A. Introduction**

Competition among educational institutions in Indonesia is becoming increasingly intense as education transforms towards output orientation and public acceptance. School performance is no longer assessed solely on academic aspects, but also on facilities, institutional branding, service quality, and the educational user experience (Kotler & Fox, 1995; Wijaya, 2008). This has shifted the position of schools from moral entities to entities that must compete like commercial organizations in attracting students. The challenge is even more complex for Islamic-based educational institutions, because in addition to being competitive, these institutions are also required to maintain the integrity of normative and spiritual values. This tension is the main problem: how can Islamic schools market themselves effectively without sacrificing religious ethics? The author emphasizes that this issue is not merely an individual moral dilemma, but a structural problem that systematically affects the marketing model of Islamic educational institutions.

At the conceptual level, educational marketing is not only about product communication or promotion, but also a process of forming long-term relationships and building public trust (Grönroos, 1994). In relationship marketing theory, the success of educational institutions is determined by their ability to build value based on experience, rather than visual persuasion or exaggerated claims. On the other hand, the service-dominant logic paradigm emphasizes that educational value is created through interactions between schools, parents, and communities, rather than simply being conveyed through public media (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In the context of Islamic institutions, this principle is reinforced by the values of *ṣidq*, *amanah*, and *ukhuwah*, which form social trust as marketing capital. Thus, Islamic ethics are not only moral constraints, but also a framework for value production and a basis for community-based marketing legitimacy.

Various studies on the ethics of Islamic education marketing still tend to stop at a normative approach that emphasizes the prohibition of fraud, the obligation of honesty, and the recommendation of good manners in promotion (Hamid & Zubair, 2019; Sula, 2014). These studies tend to position ethics as an addition to individual behavior, rather than as a system that shapes the marketing structure of an institution. Even studies related to educational marketing in Islamic schools tend to focus more on the effectiveness of digital media, the role of branding, or publication strategies, rather than exploring how religious values build the ecology of institutional trust (Aditia et al., 2020). Irpan Ilmi's research on TikTok Media Ethics: A Case Study of Islamic Perspective Education Marketing shows that ethics is not merely a moral regulation but a mechanism that shapes the meaning and legitimacy of marketing; ethics is practiced not only through speech but also through visual construction, representation of student behavior, and content framing that displays honesty and digital manners. These findings indicate that Islamic ethics can function as media architecture, not merely as prohibitive principles. However, this study still focuses on algorithm-based social media and has not yet linked it to the relational structure of educational communities in rural areas. Some pesantren

studies have found that social legitimacy based on the figure of the kiai encourages student enrollment (Zahro, 2022), but this has not been systematically linked to modern marketing theory. Thus, there is a theoretical gap between Islamic ethics and contemporary marketing frameworks, especially in community-based educational institutions in rural areas.

The disconnect between modern marketing theory and Islamic ethics has led to a misunderstanding of marketing practices in religious educational institutions: it is as if Islamic institutions are not allowed to engage in marketing strategies because they are considered contrary to moral values. In fact, value-based ethical marketing can be a more stable competitive advantage than aggressive marketing based on visual competition. SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak shows a different phenomenon: without massive promotion, this school is still able to attract public interest through parental trust, alumni networks, and religious legitimacy within the community. This phenomenon indicates that Islamic ethics are not just “moral rules,” but can function as relationship-based marketing logic. Based on these reasons, this study formulates the main question: How does Islamic marketing ethics shape a relationship-based educational marketing model, and how is this framework reflected in the institutional practices of SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak?

This study aims to (1) examine the conceptual framework of Islamic marketing ethics by identifying moral principles that have operational implications for the marketing system; (2) align these principles with modern marketing theories such as relationship marketing and service-dominant logic; and (3) interpret marketing practices at SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak as a manifestation of the application of value-based marketing models. In the context of literature review, this study not only describes ethical concepts but also places them within the epistemic framework of educational marketing.

The main contribution of this study lies in its conceptual approach: Islamic ethics are not viewed as an individual moral code, but as a system of value production that can shape the marketing behavior of educational institutions. By combining community spirituality, social relations, and modern marketing theory, this study offers a new framework for understanding Islamic education marketing in the context of rural communities. This study shows that Islamic marketing is not the antithesis of modernity, but a transformational model that makes trust, social legitimacy, and moral reputation strategic resources that cannot be replaced by conventional visual promotion.

## **B. Method**

This study uses a library research design with a conceptual analysis approach. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study is not on collecting field data, but rather on constructing a theoretical synthesis sourced from texts, documents, and scientific literature related to Islamic education marketing. Library research allows researchers to engage in systematic reasoning by identifying key concepts, tracing previous academic arguments, and developing an interpretive framework that can be used to analyze institutional phenomena theoretically. Thus, this study places texts not merely as empirical support, but as the primary source of meaning formation.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary literature. Primary literature includes the Qur'an, the hadith of the Prophet, and the principles of fiqh muamalah, which form the normative and epistemological basis for marketing ethics in Islam. These primary texts are used to derive basic principles related to honesty (ṣidq), trustworthiness (amānah), ukhuwah, and the prohibition of uncertainty in transactions (gharar). Secondary sources were obtained from various academic publications relevant to the research context, including Kotler and Fox's theory of educational marketing, Grönroos' concept of relationship marketing, which emphasizes a long-term relationship-based orientation, and Vargo and Lusch's service-dominant logic, which shifts the focus of marketing from products to service interactions. In addition, Geertz's classic research on Islamic society in Java is an important reference for understanding the patterns of social legitimacy of Islamic boarding schools as community-based educational institutions. Other secondary literature, such as Sula and Khoiruddin's study on Islamic marketing ethics and sustainability, is used to enrich the conceptual dimension and show how Islamic ethics function as an operational framework in modern marketing practices.

The analysis process was carried out through interpretative stages that were deductive-comparative in nature. The first stage was to derive Islamic ethical principles from primary sources in order to map out the normative foundations of value-based educational marketing. The second stage involves comparing these principles with modern marketing theories in the domains of service marketing, relationship marketing, and educational marketing. This comparison aims to find common ground between modern business epistemology and Islamic ethics, as well as to identify areas where Islamic concepts are not only compatible with but also enrich existing marketing frameworks. The final stage is contextual interpretation, namely the application of the theoretical synthesis to understand how SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak manifests value-based marketing practices in its institutional activities. The analysis was conducted without field observation, but through critical reading of the school's digital documents, public representations through social media, and the institution's track record in the local community's religious social sphere.

### **C. Results and Discussion**

The following analysis describes how the four pillars of Islamic ethics – ṣidq, amānah, ukhuwah, and the prohibition of gharar – shape a value-based educational marketing model at SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak. Data is interpreted through the school's daily practices, digital footprints, and community relations to see how honesty, moral legitimacy, social networks, and information transparency generate stronger social capital than conventional promotion. The discussion is then linked to Relationship Marketing and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) theories to demonstrate the compatibility between Islamic values and modern marketing models. With this structure, the findings and discussion are organized in an integrated manner: from an understanding of the pillars of Islamic ethics, their compatibility with marketing theory, to the reasons why the pesantren model creates a more sustainable strategy in the context of rural education.

## **1. Results**

### **1.1 The Transformation of Educational Marketing Logic**

In classical Islamic tradition, ethics is not merely a personal dimension, but a system that shapes social governance and economic relations (Iqbal, 2013). Four main pillars – *ṣidq* (honesty), *amānah* (trust), *ukhuwah* (social solidarity), and the prohibition of *gharar* (uncertainty/information manipulation) – produce non-transactional marketing capital that is highly resilient amid modern educational competition. These pillars function not as moral advice, but as a behavioral regime for market actors.

First, *ṣidq* (honesty) generates trust capital, which is public trust built through information transparency. At SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak, this honesty is manifested in the form of openness regarding PPDB guidelines, cost structures, learning models, and documentation of educational activities. There are no hyperbolic claims promising “employment after graduation” or “excellent facilities” without basis. Instead, the school presents empirical evidence in the form of student activities, TBSM workshop practices, religious activities, and relevant competitions.

Second, *amānah* generates legitimacy capital. In educational marketing, legitimacy is not merely legal, but also moral and social. Community-based Islamic schools gain legitimacy from the moral reputation of teachers, the sustainability of educational services, and their closeness to the community (Auda, 2015). SMK Miftahul Ulum gains legitimacy from its social position in the village of Cimerak: teachers become religious figures, alumni become agents of reputation, and religious leaders become moral anchors. In the context of rural education, social legitimacy is more influential than advertising – because parents make decisions based on personal trust, not facility comparisons (Ulum, 2021).

Third, *ukhuwah* generates network capital, which is marketing value derived from human networks: parents, alumni, mosque communities, youth organizations, and parent Islamic boarding schools. Many Islamic educational institutions utilize parents as “invisible” ambassadors – who recommend schools through kinship, religious, or social relationships. In *pesantren* culture, recommendations from religious figures carry a weight of legitimacy that cannot be shifted by paid advertising. This network forms organic word-of-mouth marketing (WOM) that is far stronger than conventional marketing.

Fourth, the prohibition of *gharar* serves as a mechanism for controlling information asymmetry. Schools are prohibited from making abstract promises, creating uncertainty, or covering up weaknesses in educational services. In practice, SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak does not promote itself through destructive comparisons or manipulation of achievement data. Their marketing narrative is more informative, *da'wah*-oriented, and emphasizes the process – not just the end result.

These four pillars form a value-based marketing model, not a persuasion-based one. Therefore, the marketing capital generated is not commercial capital, but social capital: trust, legitimacy, networks, and moral reputation.

## **1.2 The Compatibility of Islam with Relationship Marketing Theory**

The theory of relationship marketing shifts the logic of marketing from product persuasion to strengthening long-term relationships (Grönroos, 1994). In this model, marketing is not merely promotion, but planned relationship management between institutions and stakeholders. Its essence lies in three variables: loyalty, commitment, and trust. These three variables are identical to the framework of Islamic ethics.

First, loyalty in the Islamic model does not arise from gimmicks, but from the alignment of personal and institutional values. At SMK Miftahul Ulum, loyalty arises because parents believe that the school not only teaches technical skills (such as TBSM or TKJ), but also provides a foundation in religion and professional behavior. Religious values become identity affinity – a factor that accelerates decision-making because prospective students are no longer looking for “the best technically,” but “the one that fits their family values.”

Second, reputation persistence is a historical trace-based marketing mechanism. Schools that have long demonstrated moral consistency will generate trust that is difficult to replace. At SMK Miftahul Ulum, documentation of activities on social media – for example, student activity albums on Facebook (SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak, 2023) – reflects consistency in service. Posts do not feature influencers, aggressive taglines, or competitive claims; instead, they showcase learning activities such as motorcycle mechanics practice, religious programs, and character building.

Third, the absence of competitor exploitation is an important element in Islamic marketing. Schools do not build their reputation by disparaging other schools. In conventional marketing theory, this strategy is called brand aggression. However, in Islam, it is categorized as *ghasbu-al-i'tibar* – damaging the honor of others (Zubair, 2019). In practice at SMK Miftahul Ulum, all promotions are conducted without confrontational narratives. Thus, the theory of Relationship Marketing is not only compatible with Islam but is also normatively reinforced by Sharia.

## **1.3 Islamic boarding schools as a model of service-dominant logic (SDL)**

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), according to Vargo & Lusch (2004), rejects the paradigm that value is inherent in products. Value emerges when service providers and recipients interact – through co-creation. Pesantren-based education is an ideal representation of SDL: students, teachers, parents, and kyai are involved in value creation. Value does not come from buildings, computer labs, or workshops; value lies in social and spiritual relationships.

The pesantren model structures marketing actors as follows:

- a. Teachers are not only educators, but also producers of values: role models of good character, spiritual figures, and mediators of parents' aspirations.
- b. Alumni act as reputation agents: they bring the institution's values into the public sphere. Successful alumni of SMK Miftahul Ulum who work in independent workshops or become official service technicians will naturally become “living advertisements” for the school.

- c. Kyai are the anchor of moral legitimacy: they set ethical standards, ensure the integrity of the institution, and provide religious validation of the school's vision.

Within the SDL framework, SMK Miftahul Ulum's marketing model becomes seamless. Social media channels—Facebook and Instagram—publicly document these interactions: religious activities, character building, student vocational activities, and workshop training. Values are produced together and demonstrated visually, rather than promised through brochures.

## **2. Discussion**

### **2.1 The Transformation of Educational Marketing Logic**

In modern education competition, educational institutions are increasingly resembling market-oriented companies. Schools compete to build their image through visual branding, physical facilities, brochures, billboards, and digital campaigns on social media. Students are positioned as consumers who must be convinced and persuaded to choose a particular educational product (Kotler & Fox, 1995). This approach is usually rooted in market acquisition logic—expanding market share through product differentiation, promotion, and positioning. Such a marketing model adopts the view that education is a commodity that must be sold to parents and students. Therefore, school selection decisions in the modern context often depend on image variables such as building facilities, laboratories, promotional costs, or academic achievements packaged in competitive narratives (Wijaya, 2008).

However, the Islamic paradigm presents a different, even ontologically contradictory, perspective. In the Islamic perspective, students are not consumers who must be persuaded, but moral subjects, members of a religious community, and successors of social-spiritual values. Education is not sold as a service, but is carried out as a mandate that must be upheld—as emphasized in various classical Islamic scientific traditions (Al-Attas, 1993). Therefore, marketing is not persuasion; marketing is da'wah through educational practice. Values are not formed from image, but from institutional morals.

The Islamic marketing model uses social cohesion (*ukhuwah*), honesty (*ṣidq*), and trustworthiness (*amānah*) as marketing resources. The four main pillars of Islamic ethics—*ṣidq*, *amānah*, *ukhuwah*, and the prohibition of *gharar*—give rise to marketing capital that is not based on transactions but rather on trust and social reputation. In rural contexts, such as SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak, moral capital is much stronger than conventional promotion because rural communities' decisions are more influenced by cultural norms and religious figures than visual attributes.

On the school's official social media, this narrative is consistently evident. There is no excessive promotional content, hyperbolic slogans, or competitive messages that disparage other schools. The content displayed on the SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak Facebook account consists of documentation of student activities, religious guidance, automotive workshop practices, championship participation, Islamic holiday celebrations, and photos of teachers and students together. All of this shows a “humanistic school life” rather than an aggressive marketing strategy. Facebook albums and regular posts show the faces of the school community with emotional closeness—teachers listening to students during prayer practice, students learning to repair motorcycles, or community-based extracurricular activities. These

posts are not a “sell the product” model, but a “prove the service” model – illustrating what Vargo & Lusch (2004) refer to as value-in-context.

Through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu (1986), SMK Miftahul Ulum relies on symbolic capital based on religiosity and social attachment. This symbolic capital is built on the school's sustained moral reputation within the community, not the result of image manipulation. Symbolic capital is integrated with a religious-communitarian habitus – a cultural habitus that prioritizes humility, politeness, devotion, and emotional closeness between teachers and students. It is this habitus that keeps the school in demand even though it does not have the most superior physical facilities. In many cases, parents in rural areas choose schools not because of “promotional techniques,” but because of the alignment of religious values and teacher character. This explains why SMK Miftahul Ulum has never lost its appeal even though it does not pursue aggressive marketing strategies.

The transformation in marketing logic is clear: from a “sell services” paradigm to a “show value” paradigm. Unlike urban schools that rely on professional billboards, digital campaigns, or educational celebrities, SMK Miftahul Ulum presents a narrative of presence: documentation of activities, respect for local culture, teacher involvement, and spiritual sustainability. This strategy reduces the psychological distance between the institution and the community. Parents can see firsthand how teachers exemplify good character, how students interact, and how activities unfold without being scripted. They are not buying a product; they are entrusting their children to a new family.

In modern marketing, many educational institutions create messages that are aspirational rather than factual. They build campaigns: photos of modern laboratories, robotics projects, students who have won national competitions, or international achievements that actually only represent a handful of students. This is the logic of symbolic display marketing, which seeks to build perception rather than experience. From an Islamic perspective, this model is prone to violating the principle of gharar – because it obscures reality and creates excessive expectations.

Islamic ethics-based marketing, on the other hand, places transparency as a source of value. When schools present what is true – both strengths and limitations – the public tends to be more tolerant of material limitations. Parents can accept that schools are not grand, but they do not tolerate moral uncertainty. Therefore, ethics-based marketing is more effective and sustainable than facility-based marketing.

From the perspective of relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994), educational institutions are not merely short-term service providers but builders of long-term social relationships. These relationships are spiritual and emotional in nature: teachers are not operators, but murabbi (spiritual mentors); students are not customers, but amanah (trust). Therefore, Islamic-based marketing does not depend on customer acquisition cost (CAC) or advertising impressions, but on reputational continuity – the continuity of reputation passed down from generation to generation.

## 2.2 Why is the Islamic Boarding School Strategy More Sustainable?

In socio-economic analysis, Islamic ethics-based marketing has a competitive advantage that is difficult for conventional marketing strategies to match. There are three main factors that systematically shape the resilience of the pesantren model: moral premium, identity affinity, and relational persistence.

### a) Moral premium – honesty increases trust elasticity

Honesty (*ṣidq*) produces trust capital that cannot be replaced by visual promotion. When educational institutions do not manipulate data, do not promise something that has not been proven, and do not hide shortcomings, the public is highly tolerant of external limitations. In the context of rural education, limited facilities are not the main issue – the issue is moral uncertainty. Parents are more likely to forgive a small laboratory or a simple workshop than a rude teacher, a manipulative principal, or an opaque school policy.

The social media of SMK Miftahul Ulum demonstrates this moral premium. Teachers are portrayed as spiritual mentors, not marketing officers. There is no image engineering that presents the school as “the most advanced” or “the best in the region.” The public is presented with a realistic everyday life: students working in workshops, teachers supervising worship, students participating in local youth activities. This model is not a persuasive display, but experiential proof: evidence based on experience..

### b) Identity affinity – spiritual harmony shortens the decision-making process.

In conventional marketing models, the school selection process generally follows a funnel:

awareness → interest → consideration → decision. This phase is long, expensive, and requires an intensive branding strategy. In pesantren-based education, this funnel changes to:

value compatibility → quick decision.

The decision to choose a school often does not go through the phase of comparing facilities or curricula. Parents simply ask: “What are the teachers like? Will my child really be guided in religious matters?” If the community's answers are convincing, the decision is made immediately. This is called identity affinity, which is the moral and spiritual identity compatibility between the institution and the prospective student. Its effect is stronger than discounts or facility promotions.

In Islamic educational anthropology, this concept is consistent with umma-centric social bonding (Geertz, 1960). Traditional Muslim communities do not see schools as educational products, but as part of a worship and social ecosystem.

### c) Relational persistence – alumni networks as recruitment engines

Relationships based on *ukhuwah* form an invisible but active marketing network. Alumni bring the school's identity into the public sphere: the workshops where they work,

mosque communities, youth organizations, and even professional work environments. They do not feel “exploited” as promotional tools; they feel proud and connected. In relationship marketing, this is called brand advocacy—the ability of a community to become natural promotional agents at no cost (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Islamic educational institutions do not need advertising if alumni act as moral ambassadors. Therefore, the phenomenon of “no advertising but always having students” is not a coincidence, but a logical result of a value-based strategy.

### **2.3 Practical Interpretation at Miftahul Ulum Vocational School**

The application of Islamic ethical principles is clearly evident in the school's daily practices and digital footprint:

- a. Transparency of costs and services → representation of *ṣidq*. PPDB administrative information is announced openly, without hidden markups. This eliminates speculation (*gharar*) and builds public trust.
- b. No big claims or guarantees → prevention of *gharar*. There are no narratives of “job guarantees” or “100% of students accepted by industry” that are often used by other schools as propaganda.
- c. No attacks on other institutions → *ukhuwah* in competition. The institution's branding is carried out through positive promotion, not competitive destruction.
- d. Recruitment based on the local community → *da'wah* based on social networks. The curriculum and vocational programs are presented through alumni testimonials, not paid ad campaigns.
- e. Branding through school life → dignified reputation. The school's Instagram account features documentation of student activities—religious studies, extracurricular activities, workshop work, competition participation—that demonstrate quality based on experience, not claims.

All of this forms a value-driven strategy that is not inferior, but superior in the context of rural Indonesia.

### **D. Conclusion**

This study shows that Islamic marketing ethics are not merely a normative tool, but a social system that regulates educational marketing behavior. The four main pillars—*ṣidq*, *amānah*, *ukhuwah*, and the prohibition of *gharar*—serve as long-term capital that builds trust, legitimacy, and social networks. This value-based marketing model is more stable than transactional promotional strategies because it is rooted in moral relations and community identity.

In the context of SMK Miftahul Ulum Cimerak, the application of Islamic marketing ethics is evident in information transparency, community-based religious communication, and humanistic public representation through social media. This strategy results in consistent

organic word-of-mouth promotion that attracts public interest without aggressive advertising or exaggerated claims. Therefore, Islamic ethics-based educational marketing is a relevant sustainability model for educational institutions in rural areas and can be replicated by similar institutions.

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