



## **Strategy for Building Brand Image to Enhance the Competitiveness of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 4 Tulungagung**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the strategies for building brand image to enhance the competitiveness of educational institutions at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 4 Tulungagung. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The research informants included the head of the madrasah, teachers, educational staff, and supporting documents related to brand image development strategies. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was ensured through source, technique, and time triangulation. The findings reveal that the strategy for building brand image at MIN 4 Tulungagung is systematically implemented through the management functions of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC). The identity of the Madrasah Qur'ani is manifested through flagship programs based on the UMMI method, religious culture habituation, improvement of educational service quality, and optimization of digital media. The implementation of these strategies contributes positively to strengthening the competitiveness of the madrasah, as indicated by increased public trust, growth in new student enrollment, improved academic and non-academic achievements, and the strengthening of a positive institutional image. This study confirms that brand image development integrated with institutional management functions serves as an effective strategy for enhancing the sustainable competitiveness of madrasah

**Keywords:** Brand image, Competitiveness, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 4 Tulungagung

### **INTRODUCTION**

Competition among educational institutions in the era of digital transformation and increasing public awareness of educational quality requires madrasahs to develop strong competitiveness. This condition is reflected in official educational data provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology through the Center for Data and Information Technology (Pusdatin), as well as data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The competitiveness of educational institutions is no longer measured solely by the number of students enrolled annually but also by the institution's ability to build public trust, achieve academic and non-academic excellence, provide quality educational services, and create added value that distinguishes it from other institutions.

In the context of madrasahs, competitiveness has become an important indicator because it is directly related to institutional sustainability, community trust, and the ability of madrasahs to maintain their existence amid increasingly diverse educational choices. Therefore, improving competitiveness



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cannot be achieved instantly but requires planned, sustainable strategies that are able to respond to the needs and expectations of society as users of educational services.

Various studies have demonstrated that brand image plays a strategic role in strengthening the competitiveness of educational institutions. Research conducted by Abdul Razak, Prim Masrokan, and Agus Sujianto at SDIT Al Ghazali Pamekasan found that visionary, collaborative, and innovative leadership contributes to the development of institutional brand image, thereby improving school competitiveness through strengthening institutional identity, service quality, and public trust (Razak et al., 2025). Prayogi and Muslihun also explained that program innovation, achievement publications, and digital media utilization successfully strengthen madrasah image and increase public interest (Prayogi & Muslihun, 2024).

Furthermore, Fachri, Rozi, and Tamimullah (2022) stated that inclusive education programs can become institutional identities that strengthen brand image and competitive advantage. (Fachri et al., 2022) emphasized that systematic brand image management represents an effective strategy for improving the competitive position of madrasahs in the Society 5.0 era. Meanwhile, research conducted by Nada (2022) at MTs Tarbiyatul Banin Winong Pati revealed that brand image development strategies through flagship programs, service quality improvement, and strengthened community relations have positive implications for enhancing educational institution competitiveness.

Based on these previous studies, brand image can be understood as one of the strategic instruments for improving the competitiveness of educational institutions. However, the implementation of brand image strategies varies among institutions depending on their characteristics, resources, and institutional advantages.

Nevertheless, studies regarding brand image development in educational institutions still leave research gaps that require further exploration. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the influence of brand image on school selection decisions, student satisfaction, or parental loyalty. Meanwhile, studies that deeply examine strategies for building brand image as an effort to enhance institutional competitiveness, particularly in public Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, remain limited.

Moreover, many previous studies have been conducted in private schools or higher education institutions, while the management characteristics of public madrasahs have received less attention. Public madrasahs have distinctive characteristics because they carry the function of public educational services while simultaneously being required to compete with public schools and private Islamic educational institutions. This condition indicates a research gap regarding how brand image development strategies are implemented within the context of public Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 4 Tulungagung is one of the Islamic primary education institutions that has demonstrated positive development through various innovations, strengthening of religious culture, improvement of student achievements, utilization of digital media, and community involvement activities. Its identity as a Madrasah Qur'ani is reflected through flagship programs, including Qur'an learning using the UMMI method, Qur'an memorization targets, development of academic and non-academic achievements, and publication of institutional activities through various media platforms.

This phenomenon is significant to examine because it demonstrates that brand image formation is not merely achieved through promotional activities but also through strengthening educational service

quality, organizational culture, and the involvement of all members of the madrasah community. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the strategies for building brand image implemented at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 4 Tulungagung and to explain their contribution to enhancing institutional competitiveness. The findings are expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of Islamic educational management studies and offer practical references for madrasah administrators in designing sustainable institutional image-building strategies.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach is a research method used to examine natural settings, where the researcher serves as the key instrument, data collection is conducted through triangulation techniques, data analysis is inductive, and the research findings emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2022). This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of the strategies implemented by Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 4 Tulungagung in developing brand image to enhance institutional competitiveness. The case study design enables researchers to explore phenomena comprehensively based on actual conditions in the field, thereby describing the processes, strategies, and factors influencing the success of institutional image development.

The research was conducted at MIN 4 Tulungagung, Tulungagung Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The research site was selected purposively considering that the madrasah has various flagship programs, academic and non-academic achievements, and a distinctive identity as a Madrasah Qur'ani, which serves as a characteristic element in building institutional image amid competition in primary education.

The research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the head of the madrasah, vice principals, teachers, educational staff, madrasah committee members, and parents of students. The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in institutional management and brand image development. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from institutional documents, including the madrasah profile, madrasah work plans, accreditation documents, publication media, achievement archives, and activity documentation related to brand image strengthening strategies.

Data collection was conducted through three techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observation was used to directly examine organizational culture, the madrasah environment, the implementation of flagship programs, and activities reflecting institutional identity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow informants to provide detailed explanations regarding their experiences and perspectives. Documentation studies were used to strengthen and verify the data obtained from observations and interviews (Ma, 2025).

Data analysis employed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The analysis process was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the study, allowing information obtained from various sources to be compared, categorized, and systematically interpreted according to the research focus (Fadjarani et al., 2020).

The validity of the data was ensured through credibility testing by applying source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation, as suggested by Moleong (2018) and Sugiyono (2022).

Furthermore, member checking was conducted with several informants to confirm the accuracy and suitability of interview findings with the intended information provided by the participants, following the recommendations of Creswell and Poth (2018) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). These procedures were implemented to ensure that the collected data possessed a high level of credibility and accurately represented the empirical conditions of the research setting (Nurfajriani et al., 2024).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

#### **1. Brand Image Identity of MIN 4 Tulungagung**

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri (MIN) 4 Tulungagung is an Islamic primary education institution established on March 20, 1978, based on Decree Number L.m/3/606/A/1978. The madrasah has a vision of “Realizing a Qur’anic Generation with Excellence in Quality and Environmental Awareness.” This vision is implemented through several missions, including fostering students’ love for the Qur’an, improving educational quality, organizing quality learning processes, and developing environmental awareness.

Currently, MIN 4 Tulungagung has 403 students supported by 45 teaching and educational staff members and has achieved an “A” accreditation status. Various academic and non-academic achievements have strengthened the existence of the madrasah as a leading Islamic educational institution, including students’ success in memorizing up to three juz of the Qur’an and consecutive achievements in the PORSENI competition.

The main identity shaping the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung is the tagline “Madrasah Qur’ani.” This identity is not merely used as a slogan but is realized through integrated flagship programs embedded in the entire madrasah environment. These programs include Qur’an learning using the UMMI method, a tahfidz program with a target of three juz memorization for each student, habituation of Qur’an recitation (tadarus), dhuha prayer, recitation of Asmaul Husna, and strengthening of Islamic character education.

Furthermore, the madrasah develops academic achievements through the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM) and various academic olympiads, while non-academic achievements are developed in sports, arts, and three-language speech competitions. The utilization of digital media, including the official website, Facebook, and Instagram, also becomes part of the strategy to strengthen institutional identity within society.

Interviews with the Vice Principal of MIN 4 Tulungagung for Public Relations revealed that the community perceives MIN 4 Tulungagung as a religious, friendly, and Qur’anic-oriented madrasah with a strong tradition of Qur’an-based learning. According to the informant, public trust has grown because the madrasah does not only emphasize academic achievement but also focuses on the formation of Qur’anic character.

The image of the madrasah as a “polite and achievement-oriented institution” has become embedded within the community and represents one of the main reasons parents choose MIN 4 Tulungagung as an educational institution for their children. Furthermore, the informant emphasized that the main strength of the madrasah lies in the Madrasah Qur’ani Program through the implementation

of the UMMI method and the three-juz memorization target, which serve as a unique value distinguishing it from other primary education institutions.

This identity is continuously strengthened through consistent religious culture practices, including morning Qur'an recitation, dhuha prayer, Asmaul Husna recitation, Yasin, tahlil, istighasah, and other religious activities. Based on these findings, the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung is developed through a planned process by positioning Qur'anic values as the core identity of the institution. This identity does not remain limited to symbolic aspects such as slogans or taglines but is manifested through organizational culture, flagship programs, educational services, and the behavior of all members of the madrasah community.

Therefore, the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung has developed into an institutional identity that differentiates the madrasah from other educational institutions while becoming a foundation for increasing public trust and strengthening institutional competitiveness.

## **2. Strategies for Building Brand Image**

The strategy for building brand image represents the main focus of this study because it determines the ability of MIN 4 Tulungagung to improve its institutional competitiveness. The findings indicate that this strategy is not only implemented through promotional activities but also systematically developed through the application of management functions proposed by George R. Terry, namely Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC).

These four functions are interconnected and serve as the foundation for designing, implementing, and evaluating various programs aimed at establishing a positive institutional image among the community.

To provide a comprehensive explanation, the findings in this section are presented according to the four POAC management functions:

1. Planning, explaining the process of designing brand image development strategies;
2. Organizing, describing the arrangement of resources and role distribution in supporting branding activities;
3. Actuating, explaining the implementation of flagship programs and publication activities as manifestations of brand image development; and
4. Controlling, describing monitoring and evaluation processes regarding the effectiveness of branding strategies in strengthening MIN 4 Tulungagung's competitiveness.

### **2.1. Planning**

The planning stage represents the initial step undertaken by MIN 4 Tulungagung in developing brand image to improve institutional competitiveness. Based on interviews with the Head of Madrasah, branding strategy planning begins with an analysis of institutional needs and community expectations.

Based on this analysis, the madrasah establishes the identity of Madrasah Qur'ani as the main direction of institutional development, which is subsequently translated into the institutional vision, flagship programs, Qur'an learning Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and long-term development plans oriented toward achieving Qur'an memorization targets for all students.

To ensure implementation quality, the madrasah collaborates with UMMI Foundation Surabaya as a partner in developing the Qur'an learning system. In the planning process, the madrasah prioritizes strengthening the UMMI-based tahfidz program, teacher certification, improvement of educational services, optimization of publication media, and provision of representative learning facilities.

Strategic planning is also conducted through identifying community needs by observing social expectations, conducting discussions with parents, and holding deliberations with the madrasah committee. The findings indicate that the community expects educational institutions capable of balancing academic achievement with religious character development.

These expectations become the basis for designing programs that integrate Qur'anic education with academic and non-academic achievement development, structured tahfidz implementation, quality standards for UMMI-based learning, continuous publication of student achievements, harmonious relationships with the community, and professional educational services.

Thus, the planning stage becomes the fundamental foundation in developing the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung because systematic planning is not merely oriented toward promotion but also toward improving educational service quality and strengthening public trust.

## *2.2. Organizing*

The planning stage represents the initial step undertaken by MIN 4 Tulungagung in developing brand image to improve institutional competitiveness. Based on interviews with the Head of Madrasah, branding strategy planning begins with an analysis of institutional needs and community expectations.

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**Figure 1.** Interview with the Vice Principal for Public Relations

### *2.3. Actuating*

The actuating stage represents the implementation of all planning and organizing processes that have been developed within the strategy for building the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung. At this stage, the madrasah actualizes the identity of “Madrasah Qur’ani” through the Madrasah Qur’ani Program, which is implemented through Qur’an learning using the UMMI method with a target of three juz memorization for all students upon graduation.

This program is strengthened through religious habituation activities, including Qur’an recitation (tadarus) and murojaah before learning activities, the recitation of Asmaul Husna, congregational dhuha prayer, and the development of Islamic manners in students’ daily lives. In addition, the madrasah actively involves students in various academic and non-academic competitions as evidence that Qur’anic education is implemented alongside the improvement of student achievements.

To strengthen its brand image, MIN 4 Tulungagung also utilizes digital publication media, including the official website, Instagram, and Facebook, to document achievements and flagship activities through videos, posters, news publications, and visual documentation. Various major events, such as Imtihan, Tahfidz Graduation Ceremony, Haflah Akhirussanah, Madrasah Anniversary, and New Student Admission (PPDB), are also utilized as strategic moments to strengthen the institutional image among the community.

The implementation of branding strategies is further carried out through the development of harmonious relationships with various stakeholders, including parents, alumni, religious institutions, and community leaders. The madrasah implements a culture of excellent service through the principles of smiling, greeting, politeness, transparency, and rapid responses to community needs, ensuring that every interaction becomes part of strengthening the identity of Madrasah Qur’ani.

The findings indicate that the success of brand image implementation at MIN 4 Tulungagung is not solely determined by promotional intensity but primarily by the consistency of flagship program implementation, religious culture development, improvement of student achievements, utilization of digital media, and the quality of services provided to the community.

The synergy among these elements enables the madrasah brand image to be naturally established through positive experiences and perceptions among stakeholders, while simultaneously enhancing the competitiveness of the institution.



**Figure 2.** Qur'an Learning Using the UMMI Method

#### *2.4. Controlling*

The controlling stage at MIN 4 Tulungagung is conducted to ensure that the brand image development strategy is implemented in accordance with the established objectives. Program evaluation is carried out periodically, at least once every three months and at the end of each semester, through meetings involving institutional leaders, the public relations team, teachers, and program coordinators.

This evaluation process is used to assess the achievement of the Qur'ani programs, the effectiveness of publication activities, and community responses, while also serving as a basis for improving strategies in subsequent periods. The success of brand image development is measured through several indicators, including an increase in new student enrollment, parental satisfaction, community trust, consistency of the tahfidz program, student achievements, social media activities, and the development of students' religious character.

The evaluation results are subsequently followed up through the improvement of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), teacher training, optimization of digital media, and strengthening of activities that support the identity of Madrasah Qur'ani. Monitoring is conducted regularly by the public relations team, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, and the UMMI Coordinator, while Qur'an learning supervision is carried out in collaboration with UMMI Foundation.

During this process, the madrasah also encounters several challenges, including limited human resources in digital media management, the need for continuous teacher development, and limited supporting facilities. Nevertheless, consistent supervision enables the controlling stage to function as an organizational learning mechanism for maintaining service quality and strengthening the brand image of the madrasah.

### **3. The Impact of Brand Image on Institutional Competitiveness**

The implementation of brand image development strategies at MIN 4 Tulungagung has generated significant impacts on improving institutional competitiveness. These achievements are reflected in the strengthening of the Madrasah Qur'ani identity, increased public trust, growth in new student enrollment, improvement of academic and non-academic achievements, and the wider dissemination of madrasah activities through various publication platforms.

The head of the madrasah further emphasized that the success of brand image development can be identified through several indicators, including the number of applicants, parental satisfaction,



consistency of the tahfidz program, student achievements, social media activities, and positive community perceptions regarding students' religious character.

One of the indicators demonstrating the increasing competitiveness of MIN 4 Tulungagung is the development of new student enrollment numbers in recent years. Data on new student admissions indicate a significant increase, particularly in 2024 and 2026. This condition suggests that the brand image development strategy implemented by the madrasah has successfully increased public interest and trust in choosing MIN 4 Tulungagung as an educational institution for their children.

**Table 1.** Number of New Students

| no | Admission Year | Number of New Students |
|----|----------------|------------------------|
| 1  | 2021           | 58                     |
| 2  | 2022           | 52                     |
| 3  | 2023           | 48                     |
| 4  | 2024           | 77                     |
| 5  | 2025           | 60                     |
| 6  | 2026           | 83                     |

The data indicate that although the number of new student enrollments experienced fluctuations during the 2021–2025 period, an increasing trend began to emerge in 2024 and reached its highest point in 2026, with a total of 83 new students enrolled.

This increase is closely associated with the madrasah's consistency in developing the Madrasah Qur'ani identity through the UMMI-based tahfidz program introduced in 2023, the implementation of religious culture habituation, improvement of educational service quality, and optimization of digital publication strategies.

Furthermore, the competitiveness of MIN 4 Tulungagung is also reflected in students' academic and non-academic achievements, the successful implementation of the three-juz Qur'an memorization program, the achievement of an "A" accreditation status, and the growing public recognition of the Madrasah Qur'ani identity.

Therefore, brand image has proven to be a strategic asset that strengthens the competitive position of MIN 4 Tulungagung amid the increasing competition among Islamic primary education institutions.

## **Discussion**

### **1. Madrasah Qur'ani Identity as the Foundation of Brand Image Development**

The findings of this study indicate that the identity of Madrasah Qur'ani represents the foundation of brand image development at MIN 4 Tulungagung. This identity is not merely presented as a slogan or institutional tagline but is consistently implemented through the tahfidz program based on the UMMI method, Qur'anic learning activities, religious habituation, improvement of educational service quality, and the utilization of digital media as a communication platform with the community.

These findings demonstrate that the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung is formed through authentic experiences perceived by students, parents, and society regarding the quality and characteristics of the institution. Therefore, institutional image is not only constructed through promotional activities but through consistency between the identity communicated and the educational practices implemented by the institution (Anisah et al., 2023).

This finding is consistent with Keller's concept of brand image, which explains that brand image is formed through perceptions, beliefs, and associations stored in the minds of society as a result of experiences, information, and interactions with a brand (Keller, 2013). In the context of educational institutions, brand image does not only refer to institutional names or symbols but also includes perceptions of educational quality, institutional values, organizational culture, services, and achievements. At MIN 4 Tulungagung, the perception of Madrasah Qur'ani is developed through direct experiences with Qur'anic programs, religious culture, educational services, and student achievements. Consequently, the identity of Madrasah Qur'ani becomes a positive association that differentiates the institution from other educational institutions.

The findings also strengthen Aaker's concept of brand identity, which states that brand identity consists of values, characteristics, and organizational commitments that are consistently developed to create differentiation (Aaker, 1996). MIN 4 Tulungagung builds its institutional identity by integrating Qur'anic values into the madrasah vision, flagship programs, organizational culture, educational services, and public communication. This finding is supported by Edy et al. (2024), who explain that educational branding in Islamic institutions is developed through the integration of institutional culture, Islamic values, and educational service quality. The strength of Madrasah Qur'ani identity at MIN 4 Tulungagung emerges because the values communicated to society are aligned with actual practices within the madrasah environment.

Furthermore, this study confirms that Qur'anic-based programs can function not only as educational activities but also as strategic institutional identities. The implementation of the UMMI-based tahfidz program becomes a unique value that strengthens the reputation and competitiveness of MIN 4 Tulungagung. This finding is in line with Anisah et al. (2023), who emphasize that Qur'anic learning programs contribute to strengthening the characteristics of Islamic educational institutions. Thus, the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung is developed through the integration of institutional identity, flagship programs, organizational culture, and educational services, where the strength of the image depends on the consistency between the identity promoted and the educational reality experienced by stakeholders.

## **2. Strategic Management of Brand Image Development through the POAC Approach**

The findings of this study reveal that the development of brand image at MIN 4 Tulungagung is not merely a promotional activity but a strategic management process integrated into institutional management. The implementation of brand image development is carried out through the management functions of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC). Through this approach, the madrasah is able to formulate institutional identity, manage resources, implement flagship programs, and evaluate the effectiveness of branding strategies continuously. This finding indicates that educational branding requires systematic management because institutional image is formed through a long-term process involving planning, implementation, and organizational commitment.

The planning aspect demonstrates that the establishment of Madrasah Qur'ani identity is based on an analysis of institutional needs and community expectations. The formulation of flagship programs, particularly the tahfidz program based on the UMMI method, represents a strategic decision to create institutional differentiation. This finding is consistent with Razak et al. (2025), who explain that visionary leadership and strategic programs play an important role in building brand image and increasing the competitiveness of educational institutions. Similarly, Carnawi et al. (2024) emphasize that institutional branding requires systematic planning by integrating organizational values, educational programs, and community expectations. Therefore, the planning process at MIN 4 Tulungagung demonstrates that brand image is developed through strategic institutional decisions rather than incidental promotional activities.

The organizing and actuating processes show that successful branding depends on the effective management of institutional resources and the involvement of stakeholders. The establishment of branding and publication teams, the involvement of teachers, the management of digital media, and collaboration with external partners demonstrate that brand image development is a collective responsibility. This finding supports Ansori et al. (2023), who explain that communication management and organizational involvement contribute significantly to strengthening the branding image of Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, the implementation of Qur'anic culture, flagship programs, and public communication activities indicates that brand image becomes stronger when institutional values are consistently translated into organizational practices.

The controlling function confirms that sustainable brand image development requires continuous evaluation and improvement. Monitoring programs, evaluating public responses, improving services, and strengthening digital communication become important mechanisms to maintain institutional consistency. This finding is in line with Haro et al. (2024), who explain that brand management requires continuous evaluation to maintain brand value and organizational reputation. Thus, the POAC approach applied at MIN 4 Tulungagung demonstrates that educational branding is not only a marketing strategy but also a comprehensive management system that integrates institutional identity, human resources, educational programs, and quality improvement processes to strengthen institutional competitiveness.

### **3. Flagship Programs as Institutional Differentiation Strategy**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the flagship programs implemented at MIN 4 Tulungagung function as a strategic instrument in creating institutional differentiation. The Madrasah Qur'ani program, particularly the tahfidz program based on the UMMI method, does not only serve as an educational activity but also becomes a unique value that strengthens the identity and reputation of the institution. The program provides a distinctive characteristic that differentiates MIN 4 Tulungagung from other Islamic primary educational institutions. Therefore, the development of flagship programs becomes an essential strategy in building brand image because it provides concrete evidence of the institutional values offered to the community.

This finding supports the concept of educational branding, which emphasizes that a strong institutional image is developed through unique values and meaningful experiences provided by educational institutions. In the context of MIN 4 Tulungagung, the Qur'anic identity is strengthened through structured tahfidz programs, the UMMI learning method, Qur'anic habituation, and religious

character development. These programs create direct experiences for students and parents, which subsequently influence public perceptions of institutional quality. Fachri et al. (2022) explain that distinctive educational programs can become institutional characteristics that strengthen brand image and competitive advantage. Similarly, Abadi and Hidayatulloh (2022) state that strengthening flagship programs in Islamic educational institutions can increase public interest because the programs provide differentiation value compared with other institutions.

The findings also indicate that the success of flagship programs is not only determined by the existence of the program itself but also by the consistency of implementation and its integration with the overall institutional identity. At MIN 4 Tulungagung, the Madrasah Qur'ani program is integrated with the vision, learning process, religious culture, and public communication strategy. This integration allows the flagship program to become part of the institutional reputation rather than merely an additional activity. This finding is consistent with Razak et al. (2025), who highlight that institutional competitiveness can be strengthened through the development of superior programs supported by effective leadership and consistent implementation.

Thus, this study confirms that flagship programs play an important role as a differentiation strategy in Islamic educational branding. The Madrasah Qur'ani program at MIN 4 Tulungagung demonstrates that educational institutions can strengthen their competitiveness by developing programs that represent their values, meet community expectations, and provide meaningful experiences for stakeholders. The contribution of this finding lies in showing that brand image is not only created through communication strategies but also through the ability of institutions to develop authentic and sustainable educational advantages.

#### **4. Organizational Culture and Stakeholder Trust in Strengthening Brand Image**

The findings of this study indicate that organizational culture plays an important role in strengthening the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung. The identity of Madrasah Qur'ani is not only reflected through flagship programs but also embedded in the daily culture of the madrasah, including Qur'an reading habituation, Asmaul Husna recitation, dhuha prayer, Islamic character development, and a culture of friendly service. These practices demonstrate that institutional values are transformed into organizational behavior that can be directly observed and experienced by stakeholders. Therefore, organizational culture becomes an important medium in communicating institutional identity and shaping positive perceptions of the community toward the madrasah.

This finding supports the view that institutional image in educational organizations is strongly influenced by the consistency between organizational values and actual institutional practices. A positive brand image emerges when stakeholders experience alignment between the values promoted by the institution and the services provided. In the context of MIN 4 Tulungagung, public trust toward the Madrasah Qur'ani identity is developed through continuous interactions between the madrasah and its stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and the community. This finding is consistent with Alves et al. (2010), who explain that institutional image is influenced by the quality of relationships established between educational institutions and their stakeholders.

Furthermore, the findings reinforce the argument of Ansori et al. (2023), who state that symbolic communication and organizational culture contribute significantly to building the branding image of

Islamic educational institutions. The religious culture implemented at MIN 4 Tulungagung functions as a symbolic representation of institutional values that can be recognized by the community. Activities such as Qur'anic learning, religious habituation, and character education are not only internal educational processes but also become forms of communication that strengthen the external image of the institution. This shows that organizational culture can become a strategic branding instrument when it is implemented consistently in the daily life of the institution.

The findings also demonstrate that stakeholder trust is developed through the quality of services and meaningful experiences provided by the madrasah. The friendly service culture, effective communication with parents, and community involvement contribute to strengthening public confidence in MIN 4 Tulungagung. This finding is in line with Tersta et al. (2025), who explain that public trust in Islamic educational institutions is built through the integration of institutional identity, strategic communication, and educational service quality. Therefore, this study confirms that brand image in Islamic educational institutions is not only a result of external communication but also a reflection of organizational culture and the quality of relationships maintained with stakeholders.

### **5. Digital Media as Supporting Instrument for Sustainable Brand Image**

The findings of this study indicate that digital media plays an important role as a supporting instrument in strengthening the brand image of MIN 4 Tulungagung. The madrasah utilizes various digital platforms, such as websites, Instagram, and Facebook, to communicate institutional activities, student achievements, flagship programs, and various educational services to the wider community. The use of digital media enables the madrasah to expand access to information and increase public awareness regarding the identity of Madrasah Qur'ani. However, the findings also show that digital media does not become the primary factor in forming institutional image, but rather functions as a communication tool that strengthens the real educational experiences provided by the institution.

This finding is consistent with the concept of digital branding, which emphasizes that educational institutions need to utilize digital platforms to build visibility, communicate institutional values, and establish closer relationships with stakeholders. In the context of MIN 4 Tulungagung, digital media becomes effective because the information presented is supported by actual programs, student achievements, and institutional activities. Therefore, digital communication functions as an extension of institutional practices rather than merely a promotional strategy. The findings support Nurnisya (2025), who explains that digital branding initiatives through social media optimization and website development can strengthen institutional image and competitiveness in educational environments.

Furthermore, the findings are in line with Winata et al. (2025), who state that digital marketing media has an important role in strengthening school branding by increasing institutional visibility and facilitating communication with society. At MIN 4 Tulungagung, digital platforms are used to document and publish various activities, including tahfidz programs, student achievements, religious activities, and institutional events. This strategy allows the community to recognize the uniqueness and quality of the madrasah more easily. Nevertheless, this study emphasizes that digital media effectiveness depends on the existence of strong institutional values and quality programs that become the main content of communication.

The findings also reinforce Ilmi and Harahap (2025), who explain that Islamic branding requires authenticity of Islamic values, consistency of institutional culture, and sustainable communication. The digital presence of MIN 4 Tulungagung becomes meaningful because it reflects the actual implementation of the Madrasah Qur'ani identity within the institution. Thus, digital media contributes to sustainable brand image development by strengthening public recognition, maintaining communication with stakeholders, and expanding institutional reputation. However, the fundamental strength of brand image remains rooted in the quality of programs, organizational culture, and educational services provided by the madrasah.

## **6. Brand Image Development as a Strategy for Increasing Institutional Competitiveness**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the development of brand image at MIN 4 Tulungagung contributes significantly to strengthening institutional competitiveness. The improvement of competitiveness is reflected in several indicators, including increasing public trust, growth in the number of new students, improvement of academic and non-academic achievements, strengthening of institutional reputation, and wider public recognition of the Madrasah Qur'ani identity. These findings indicate that brand image functions not only as an external perception of the institution but also as a strategic asset that supports institutional sustainability in facing educational competition.

The findings confirm that the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions is not solely determined by promotional intensity but by the ability of institutions to develop distinctive values and provide consistent educational quality. At MIN 4 Tulungagung, competitiveness is strengthened through the integration of Madrasah Qur'ani identity, flagship programs, religious culture, educational services, and strategic communication. This finding is consistent with Razak et al. (2025), who explain that brand image development through institutional identity, leadership, and superior programs can strengthen the competitiveness of educational institutions. Similarly, Prayogi and Muslihun (2024) emphasize that innovation programs and digital publication strategies contribute to strengthening madrasah image and increasing community interest.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the increase in public trust and student enrollment reflects the effectiveness of the branding strategy implemented by MIN 4 Tulungagung. The Madrasah Qur'ani identity provides a clear institutional positioning that distinguishes the madrasah from other educational institutions. This finding supports Tersta et al. (2025), who state that strategic branding in Islamic educational institutions can strengthen public trust through the integration of institutional identity, communication strategies, and service quality. In this context, the brand image developed by MIN 4 Tulungagung becomes a competitive advantage because it creates a positive perception and strengthens the relationship between the institution and its stakeholders.

Therefore, this study provides a contribution by demonstrating that brand image development in Islamic primary education institutions is a comprehensive management process rather than merely a marketing activity. The case of MIN 4 Tulungagung shows that sustainable competitiveness is achieved through the integration of institutional identity, strategic management, flagship programs, organizational culture, stakeholder relationships, and digital communication. Thus, the development of brand image becomes an effective strategy for strengthening the position of madrasahs in educational competition while maintaining their Islamic values and institutional uniqueness.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of brand image at MIN 4 Tulungagung is carried out through a comprehensive institutional strategy based on the integration of identity, management, flagship programs, organizational culture, stakeholder relationships, and digital communication. The identity of Madrasah Qur'ani becomes the main foundation in building institutional image, where the values of the Qur'an are not only communicated through slogans but are implemented through the tahfidz program based on the UMMI method, religious habituation, educational services, and the daily practices of madrasah members.

The strategy for developing brand image is implemented through the management functions of Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC). The planning stage is realized through the formulation of Madrasah Qur'ani identity and flagship programs; organizing is implemented through resource management and stakeholder involvement; actuating is demonstrated through the implementation of Qur'anic programs, achievement development, and digital publication; while controlling is carried out through continuous monitoring and evaluation to maintain institutional quality.

The findings also show that flagship programs, particularly the UMMI-based tahfidz program, function as a differentiation strategy that strengthens the competitiveness of MIN 4 Tulungagung. The consistency between institutional identity, organizational culture, educational services, and communication strategies has contributed to increasing public trust, student enrollment, institutional reputation, and community recognition. Digital media supports this process by expanding institutional visibility, although the fundamental strength of brand image remains rooted in the quality of educational programs and authentic institutional practices.

This study contributes to the development of Islamic educational management studies by demonstrating that brand image development in madrasahs is not merely a marketing activity but a strategic management process. The sustainability of institutional competitiveness depends on the ability of madrasahs to integrate unique identity, superior programs, organizational culture, stakeholder engagement, and continuous quality improvement. Therefore, the experience of MIN 4 Tulungagung provides an empirical model for Islamic educational institutions in developing sustainable brand image strategies while maintaining their religious values and institutional characteristics.

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