

EMPOWERING ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS' BUSINESS UNITS: A DIGITAL MARKETING OPTIMIZATION MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study aims to develop a comprehensive digital marketing optimization model specifically designed for Islamic boarding schools in East Java, a province with a high concentration of Islamic boarding schools and their associated business units. The intense competition among these schools necessitates the adoption of digital transformation to enhance the effectiveness and competitiveness of their business operations.

Methods: Utilizing qualitative methods and the Analytic Network Process (ANP) for data analysis, this study identifies critical internal challenges, such as low product quality, and external threats, including competition from larger enterprises. The research also explores alternative strategies to address these challenges.

Results: The findings indicate that the primary barriers to effective digital marketing stem from both internal and external factors. Strategic solutions are proposed, including the implementation of Search Engine Optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and targeted advertising through platforms like Google Ads. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of continuous mentoring and counseling to support the successful application of these strategies.

Conclusion and suggestion: This research provides valuable insights into leveraging digital marketing to enhance human resource potential and improve product quality, thereby fostering economic empowerment within Islamic boarding schools and increasing their competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, with their long-standing tradition of *tafaqquh fiddin* (deep understanding of Islamic religious values), represent a valuable cultural and intellectual

heritage. Since the 1970s, some Islamic boarding schools have adapted to address various societal challenges, including economic, social, and political issues (Halim et al., 2005; Syamsuri, 2019). Over time, these schools have undergone significant transformations, particularly in their efforts to develop economic activities. Islamic boarding schools are not merely institutions for cultivating religious scholars but also serve as centers of power and influence that benefit the surrounding community (Fauroni & Quraisy, 2019; Syamsuri et al., 2023). With their potential to advance Islamic economics, these schools play a pivotal role in fostering economic independence, nation-building, and poverty alleviation (Basit & Widiastuti, 2020; Syahputra et al., 2022).

Currently, Indonesia is home to 27,722 Islamic boarding schools, with a total student population of 4,175,531 spread across the country (*Statistik*, n.d.). This substantial number reflects the schools' significant economic potential (Mohammad Nadzir, 2015). One effective way to harness this potential is through the establishment and management of Islamic boarding school business units, commonly known as *Kopontren* (Takbir, 1992). These cooperatives have a profound impact on the schools' economic growth (Syamsuri, 2016). By developing such units, Islamic boarding schools can achieve financial independence, thereby reducing the financial burden on students and making education more affordable. Moreover, these initiatives equip both students and teachers with valuable economic skills.

The rapid growth of Islamic boarding schools is particularly evident in East Java, which hosts 7,125 schools, making it the region with the highest number of students nationwide (Satudata.Kemenag, 2024). Among these, 630 *Kopontren* have been established, with the number increasing annually. One notable program currently being developed is the "One Pesantren One Product" (OPOP) initiative (Kominfo.Jatim, 2024). However, a critical challenge lies in the effective marketing of these superior products. Marketing is a fundamental issue for most business units (Cartwright et al., 2021; Olson et al., 2021), as inadequate marketing efforts hinder their growth and potential impact.

However, in making advancements in managing business units, Islamic boarding schools face numerous obstacles and challenges. The problems encountered in the economic development of these schools can generally be categorized into internal and external factors (Sih Darmi Astuti, 2022). According to Cahyani (2021), marketing represents a significant hurdle in the development of Islamic boarding school business units, particularly in the digital marketing domain. Many business units are unaware of technological advancements, making digital marketing a persistent challenge (Candra et al., 2021; Sufiani & Ratih, 2021). To date, most marketing activities are conducted using conventional methods. This is largely because Islamic boarding schools are primarily educational institutions, and many teachers lack knowledge of modern business management practices (Asandimitra et al., 2022; Nopranda & Amsari, 2022). These limitations hinder economic empowerment efforts, as business units serve as a critical mechanism for strengthening economic independence.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted business units across various sectors, including those within Islamic boarding schools (Leni Cahyani, 2021). Challenges such as declining purchasing power, limited market segmentation, and disruptions in production and distribution processes have further strained their operations. To navigate these challenges, Islamic boarding school business units must adopt digital marketing strategies to mitigate the effects of macroeconomic pressures, potential bankruptcies, and increased competition (S. D. Astuti et al., 2022).

He & Harris, (2020) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented shifts in the modern marketing environment, profoundly affecting corporate social responsibility (CSR), consumer ethics, and foundational marketing philosophies. The pandemic's global social distancing measures have necessitated a shift to digital marketing, which has become integral to business operations. Supporting this perspective, Herhausen et al., (2020) highlight that the pandemic has compelled marketing activities to transition to digital platforms, eliminating face-to-face interactions between buyers and sellers. This shift to online marketing has delivered substantial benefits to consumers by enhancing convenience and accessibility.

Addressing the challenges outlined above requires Islamic boarding schools to prioritize the optimization of their marketing systems. Marketing plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between products and consumers, ensuring that products align with consumer needs and preferences (Kolter & Armstrong, 2004). It involves purposeful human activities aimed at fulfilling needs and desires through the exchange process. Digital marketing, currently a dominant trend, enhances the ability to introduce products to consumers effectively (Fauzi et al., 2021). Additionally, the adoption of Islamic fintech can facilitate financial solutions for users, further supporting business growth (Yandra, 2021).

This study aims to address the challenges faced by business units within Islamic boarding schools in East Java, a region recognized for its significant number of Islamic boarding schools and their associated business enterprises. (Heryani, 2019)

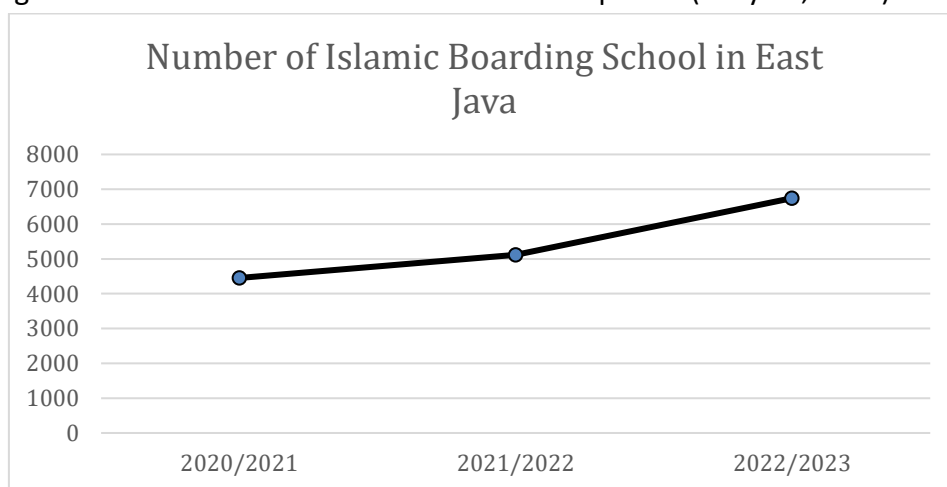


Figure 1. Number of Islamic Boarding Schools in East Java

Source: One Data, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia (East Java)

Based on the data, the popularity of Islamic boarding schools from 2020 to 2023 has shown significant growth. East Java is home to one of the largest concentrations of

Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia, with 4,452 schools recorded in the 2020/2021 academic year. This number increased to 5,121 in 2021/2022 and further to 6,744 in 2022/2023. Recognizing this growth, the Governor of East Java, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, launched the *One Pesantren One Product* (OPOP) initiative. OPOP is built on three pillars: *Santripreneurs*, *Pesantren Schoolpreneurs*, and *Sociopreneurs*. The economic resources of Islamic boarding schools represent one of the key drivers of economic growth in East Java. Given the continued increase in the number of schools, the economic potential of Islamic boarding schools is substantial and can be leveraged to stimulate regional economic development.

This research aims to propose an alternative model for economic empowerment within Islamic boarding schools through digital marketing optimization. The study focuses on several business units of Islamic boarding schools in East Java, with the goal of addressing their economic challenges. By optimizing the role of digital marketing, this research is expected to contribute to economic empowerment and support the sustainable growth of these business units.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic Marketing

'Islamic marketing' is a newly emerging and increasingly popular field of study (Nugraha, 2023; Sandikci et al., 2016; Wilson, 2012). This trend reflects a growing interest in exploring marketing principles through the lens of Islamic values. Islamic marketing examines marketing phenomena within the framework of Sharia principles and practices, particularly in the context of Muslim societies. It is developed and implemented to align with Sharia values, focusing on Muslim consumers (Alserhan, 2010; Floren et al., 2020; Hossain et al., 2018).

Islamic marketing encompasses strategies that conform to Islamic principles and values while considering the beliefs and cultural norms of Muslim consumers (Sandikci et al., 2016; Yusof & Jusoh, 2014). This approach incorporates several key concepts: **Values-Based Marketing**, which emphasizes ethical principles such as honesty and fairness; **Consumer-Oriented Approach**, which focuses on meeting the needs of Muslim consumers while adhering to Islamic principles; **Balanced Synthesis**, which aims to harmonize the material and spiritual dimensions of life; **Halal and Ethical Standards**, which ensures product and service compliance with Islamic and ethical criteria; and **Respect for Universal Values**, which Encourages inclusivity while maintaining adherence to Islamic principles (Hossain et al., 2018; Mathew, 2022; Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010).

Islamic marketing is a process and strategy aimed at fulfilling needs through halal products and services while ensuring mutual well-being (*falah*) for both buyers and sellers (Abuznaid, 2012; Jafari, 2012). The ultimate goal is material and spiritual well-being, both in this world and the hereafter. Islamic principles dictate that business activities should not solely prioritize profit (material benefits) but must also consider human welfare as a

fundamental objective. These principles extend to include spiritual goals, such as fostering righteousness, strengthening closeness to Allah, promoting cooperation and social harmony, avoiding unethical practices, and upholding justice and honesty (Shafiq & Jan).

To understand Islamic marketing fully, several critical aspects must be considered (Alserhan, 2006). *First, Value-Based Marketing*, which highlights the importance of ethical and moral values in business practices, including honesty, fairness, transparency, and social responsibility. *Second, Consumer-Oriented Approach* that focuses on addressing the needs and preferences of Muslim consumers in alignment with Islamic principles. This approach aims to provide products and services consistent with religious and cultural values, thereby maximizing individual well-being in this world and the hereafter while promoting socio-economic justice and brotherhood. *Third, Halal and Ethical Standards*, which places significant emphasis on ensuring that products and services are halal (permissible under Islamic law) and meet ethical standards. This includes considerations in sourcing, production, labeling, and distribution (Farhana et al., 2020; Mathew, 2022; Sandikci et al., 2016; Uula & Maziyyah, 2022).

Islamic Digital Marketing

Digital marketing encompasses all efforts made in marketing activities using the internet, leveraging various strategies and digital media to communicate with potential consumers through online channels (Mankad, 2019). While digital marketing offers numerous conveniences and benefits, it also presents risks and challenges for Muslims. The widespread adoption of digital marketing practices creates significant potential for Muslims to engage in these transactions (Hartini et al., 2022). However, a considerable number of Muslims lack an understanding of how to navigate these activities in compliance with Islamic principles. It is therefore essential for Muslim entrepreneurs to understand the primary challenges encountered in Islamic marketing to avoid actions contrary to Islamic law (Jan & Hooi, 2018; Suandi et al., 2022). These challenges include issues related to branding, halal product compliance, legal considerations, and the avoidance of prohibited elements such as *maisir* (gambling).

Digital marketing aligns with Islamic principles provided it adheres to Sharia guidelines and avoids prohibited activities. Emphasizing this compliance is critical to ensure that the advancements in transactional patterns and business practices, increasingly shaped by technology, lead to success both in this world and the hereafter. The realization of *falah* (well-being) can only be achieved by adhering to Sharia law and avoiding major prohibitions such as *maisir*, *gharar* (excessive uncertainty), and others (Hartini et al., 2022).

Islamic Boarding School

Islamic boarding schools are educational institutions focused on Islamic studies (Syamsuri, 2019; Syapudin, 2017). These institutions significantly contribute to the advancement of knowledge. Their approach to teaching and learning is distinctive, integrating Islamic teachings with both traditional and modern methods of wisdom. This integration is evident in their contribution to various areas of scientific development,

including religion, society, culture, economics, and national resilience (Mustaghfiri, 2020). Over time, Islamic boarding schools have undergone a paradigm shift, evolving from institutions focused solely on religious education to ones that produce skilled human resources capable of generating employment opportunities.

Islamic boarding schools have immense potential to play an even greater role in the future. They not only serve as guardians of piety and centers for the dissemination of Islam in rural areas but also act as significant contributors to national development (Cahyo, 2021; Irawan, 2021; Nurhadi & Atiqullah, 2020; Susanti et al., 2021). This includes their pioneering role in the economic development of the *ummah* (Muslim community). The shift in focus toward fostering economic independence positions Islamic boarding schools as impactful agents in reducing unemployment and poverty (Syamsuri et al., 2023; Uci sanusi, 2012; Umam et al., 2023; Zaki et al., 2020). Economically, Islamic boarding schools positively influence society by meeting the growing demand for halal products and services. Their emphasis on Islamic studies fosters the potential to drive Islamic economic development and nurture young entrepreneurs imbued with Islamic values (Hastasari et al., 2022).

Application of Digital Marketing in Islamic Boarding Schools

The application of digital marketing to business units in Islamic boarding schools represents a critical step toward achieving economic independence. Key models for fostering economic independence through the empowerment of Islamic boarding schools include:

1. **Establishing business ventures:** Islamic boarding schools engage in retail, printing, cooperatives, home industries, and other economic activities to build self-sufficiency.
2. **Maximizing human resources:** This involves leveraging the talents of students and the surrounding community to implement income distribution programs, thereby assisting underprivileged individuals and fostering social awareness and religious values (Basit & Widiastuti, 2019).
3. **Utilizing business profits:** Revenues generated from these ventures are reinvested in education, community empowerment, and operational needs of the Islamic boarding schools (Fauroni & Quraisy, 2019).

Islamic boarding schools hold considerable potential to support the nation's progress in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This aligns with the *Making Indonesia 4.0* initiative by the Ministry of Industry, which emphasizes the empowerment of micro, small, and medium enterprises, including those managed by Islamic boarding schools (Perindustrian, 2019).

Socialization and training programs on digital marketing have been increasingly implemented in modern Islamic boarding schools seeking to harness the advantages of digital platforms. Business unit managers within these schools recognize that effective and optimized digital marketing can expand the reach of their products, enhancing the economic self-sufficiency of Islamic boarding schools. This independence enables these

institutions to sustain educational programs for their students without financial constraints.

Related Previous Research

The development of business units through the application of digital marketing by several Islamic boarding schools has been shown to advance, grow, and enhance the economic independence of these institutions. Irwanto et al., (2021) in their study, explored the optimization of digital marketing in Islamic boarding schools using the SOSTAC approach. The study identified social media and marketplaces as suitable strategies for implementation. The research demonstrated that adopting appropriate strategies enabled Islamic boarding school cooperatives to rapidly expand their business units, even during the pandemic era.

Fauroni & Quraisy, (2019) examined the application of digital marketing in Islamic boarding schools, revealing that most initiatives are still in the introduction phase. This phase is typically supported by socialization efforts from government entities, private organizations, and community service programs led by university students. Similarly, research by (Futaqi & Fadya, (2022) confirmed that digital marketing serves as a tool for economic development and empowerment within Islamic boarding schools. The study highlighted its role in enabling these schools to market their business unit products to a broader customer base, thereby increasing sales turnover. This growth subsequently supports the development of educational programs for students. Research by Risma also affirmed the positive impact of digital marketing on product quality, sales performance, and branding efforts, including enhanced brand recognition and legality (Noor Shodiq Askandar, 2022).

In a related study, S. D. Astuti et al., (2022) concluded that implementing a Smart Trends Program (Digital Marketing) can improve the economic conditions of Islamic boarding schools. Nurhadi & Atiqullah, (2020), explored the use of digital marketing in Islamic boarding schools, noting that some institutions utilize digital platforms to attract prospective students. The marketing strategies employed range from leveraging social media and search engine optimization (SEO) to incorporating AdSense and other tools. Other institutions focus on marketing products from their business units.

The government's efforts to support the economic development of Islamic boarding schools through digital marketing initiatives have been ongoing for the past two years. Setiawan, (2020), that the program is OPOP (One Product One Islamic boarding school) where the output produced is that many Islamic boarding schools have developed by receiving education, socialization, and intensive programming from the government through the OPOP. However, based on research and uploaded news, the program only took place in East Java and West Java (Sangkoso, 2022).

Previous research underscores the critical role of digital marketing in the business development of Islamic boarding schools. Studies suggest that effective digital marketing strategies are essential for enhancing the economic independence of these institutions. By

leveraging information technology, Islamic boarding schools can improve the effectiveness of their product marketing. However, existing studies have yet to propose an optimized model for fully harnessing the potential of digital marketing. As a novel contribution, this research offers recommendations for an economic empowerment model designed to maximize the role of digital marketing in Islamic boarding schools, particularly in East Java. It comprehensively identifies challenges and provides solutions from both internal and external perspectives, proposing alternative strategies tailored to the unique needs of Islamic boarding schools.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research method, utilizing the Analytic Network Process (ANP) as its primary research approach. According to Thomas Saaty, ANP is a decision-making technique that considers the interconnections among criteria and sub-criteria, thereby reflecting the interests of multiple stakeholders (Ascarya, 2024; Saaty, 2004b). ANP provides a comprehensive framework for decision-making without assuming the independence of elements at different levels of a hierarchy (Ascarya, 2005; H. H. Astuti & Tanjung, 2019; Presley & Meade, 1999).

Both primary and secondary data were employed in this research. Primary data were collected through paired questionnaires distributed to three groups of respondents: experts (regulators and academics), and practitioners. Respondent selection was based on their expertise and experience in digital marketing, Islamic economics research, and digital marketing practices within Islamic boarding schools in East Java. The focus group discussions (FGDs) involved a small number of participants, as experts in the relevant fields were limited, and the researcher aimed to foster in-depth discussions (Rabiee, 2004). While primary data were the main focus of the research, secondary data were collected from journals, books, documents, official websites, and other sources related to digital marketing, economic empowerment, and Islamic boarding school business units.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

No.	Name of Respondent	Category	Position
R1	AF	Expert	Digital Marketing Expert
R2	AS	Expert	Digital Marketing and SEO Expert
R3	AH	Expert	Digital Marketing Expert and owner of Jagoan Branding Consultant
R4	S	Academician	Lecturer at Islamic Economic Law Faculty
R5	IH	Academician	Lecturer at Islamic Economic Law Faculty
R6	AAM	Academician	Lecturer at Islamic Economic Law Faculty

R7	IBP	Practitioner	Digital Marketing Practitioner at Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School
R8	AL	Practitioner	Digital Marketing Practitioner at Bahrul Maghfiroh Islamic Boarding School
R9	HN	Practitioner	Digital Marketing Practitioner at Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School

The ANP approach was applied to determine the most suitable model through a prioritization scale based on respondents' inputs. The research sought to provide an alternative economic empowerment model tailored to optimizing digital marketing for Islamic boarding school business units. The ANP method is particularly suited to addressing complex problems by structuring them into a network of clusters, conducting pairwise comparisons, and deriving local priorities from the elements in the clusters to generate actionable alternatives (Ascarya & Yumanita, 2018; Saaty, 2004a). In this study, the clusters and elements were organized to address problem-solving, determine solutions, and formulate alternative digital marketing optimization models. By leveraging ANP, the study identified the most dominant factors influencing economic empowerment and prioritized these factors to guide decision-making (Ascarya, 2005; R.M. Qudsi Fauzi, Meri Indri Hapsari, Sri Herianingrum, Sunan Fanani, 2022). Through this process, the research aimed to pinpoint the primary issues, solutions, and strategies for empowering the business units of Islamic boarding schools.

Model Development

The ANP research process involves three key stages (Figure 1): First, **Model Construction**: This stage begins with a literature review of the identified variables and field observations conducted in several Islamic boarding schools in East Java, which serve as the research subjects. Based on the literature review, the researcher develops the ANP model framework. To refine this model, questionnaires are distributed, or in-depth interviews are conducted with academics, experts, and practitioners experienced in Islamic boarding schools and digital marketing. Second, **Quantification Model**: Insights from the first stage are used to design the ANP network and develop relevant questionnaires for data collection from experts and practitioners. Third, **ANP Analysis**: At this stage, the ANP method is applied to derive priority alternative solutions and determine optimal policy strategies (Rusydia et al., 2023)

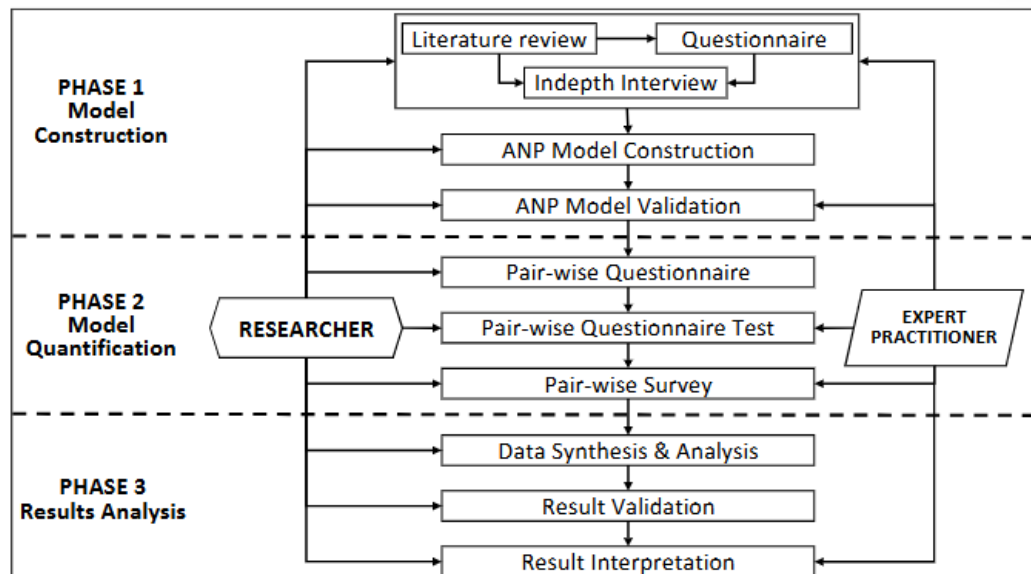


Figure 2. Stages of ANP
Source: Ascarya & Yumanita, (2018)

Model validation is performed to ensure accuracy and reliability. Given the regulator's authority and expertise, validation is carried out by both experts and regulators. Once validated, the finalized model is inputted into SuperDecisions 2.0.8 software. Following the integration of the model into the ANP framework, questionnaires are distributed to all respondents, as outlined in Table 1. After collecting all data, the ANP method is applied to prioritize results across all variables. The researcher then conducts a global analysis, linking findings to existing theories, regulations, and previous research (Jicang Xu, Linlin Li, 2022; Shih, 2022). The priority results are determined from the average eigenvector values, which are subsequently used to provide policy recommendations.

RESULT

ANP Results on the Economic Empowerment Model Based on Digital Marketing Optimization for Islamic Boarding School Business Units

1. Internal Problems and Solutions

Based on the findings from the literature review and focus group discussions (FGDs) with experts and practitioners, various problems and solutions were identified, enabling the formulation of appropriate strategies for economic empowerment through the optimization of digital marketing for Islamic boarding school business units in East Java. This section describes the synthesis of the internal problem clusters used to establish digital marketing strategies for the economic empowerment of Islamic boarding schools in the region. The data processing conducted through SuperDecisions Software version 2.0.8

identified the priority internal problems according to the opinions of respondents, which included experts, academics, and practitioners. These priority criteria were determined by analyzing the weight values derived from the limiting supermatrix calculations and synthesizing the combined priorities.

The identified internal problems in the economic empowerment of Islamic boarding school business units using digital marketing are as follows:

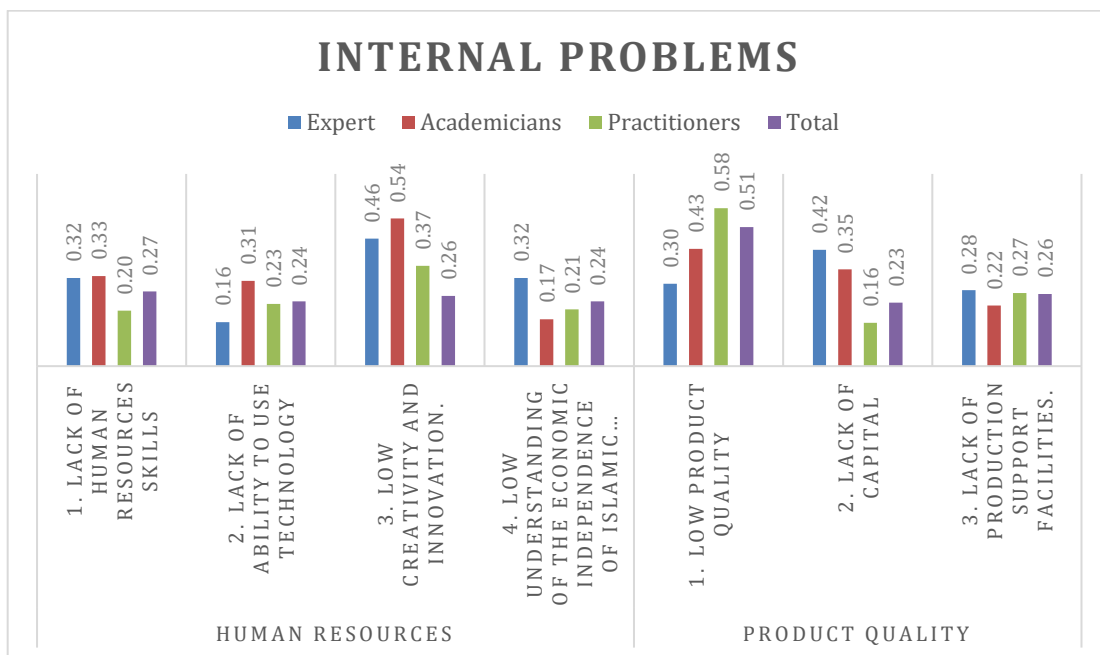


Figure 3. Priority Synthesis Result Combined of Internal Problems Based on The Value of Each Respondent

From the analysis, the results indicate that the highest-priority internal problem, as agreed upon by all respondent groups, is the *low quality of products*. This is followed by issues related to *human resources* and *production support facilities*. The geometric mean results for these internal problems (Figure 2) indicate the following priority values: **First, the low quality of products** emerged as the most critical issue, with an overall weight of **0.51**. This value is further detailed as follows: practitioners (**0.58**), academics (**0.43**), and experts (**0.30**). **Second, the lack of human resources skills** with a weight of **0.27** across all respondents. Academics assigned the highest agreement value (**0.33**). **Third, the lack of production support facilities** with a weight of **0.26**. Experts attributed the highest agreement value (**0.42**). These findings highlight the critical nature of addressing these internal issues. The identified problems across the three elements and two clusters reflect the urgency for targeted solutions, as evidenced by the consensus among respondents.

Meanwhile, the priority solutions to address these internal problems and optimize the economic empowerment model for Islamic boarding school business units are visualized through data synthesis. The internal solution cluster results are analyzed to determine the most important solutions, based on assessments from all respondents as identified by the researcher.

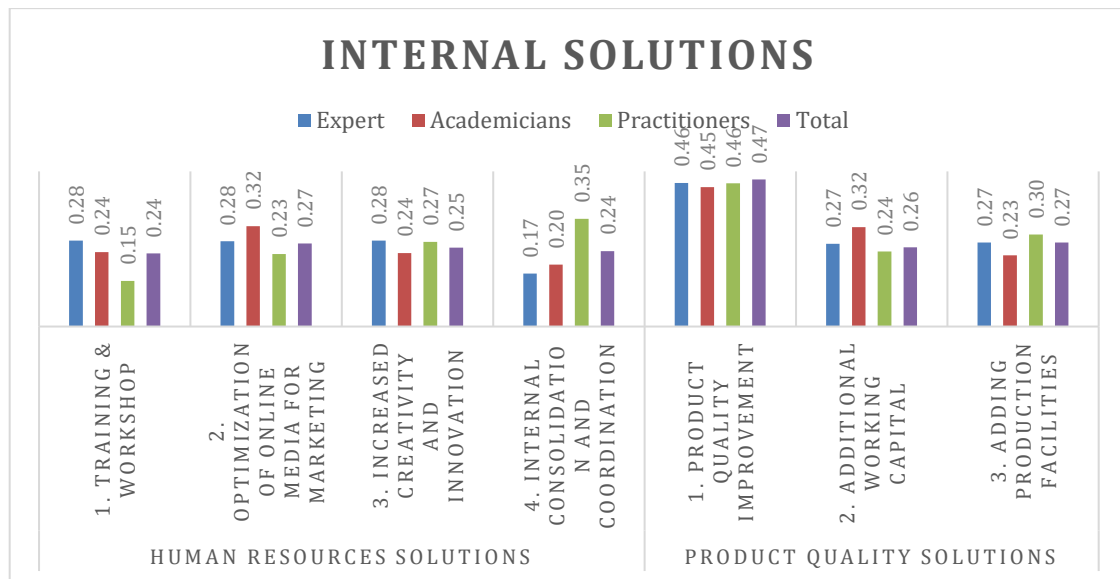


Figure 4. Priority Synthesis Result Combined of Internal Solutions Based on The Value of Each Respondent

According to Figure 3, the results of the ANP synthesis calculations indicate the priority solutions for addressing internal issues, based on the opinions of all respondents (GM values). The figure presents alternative solutions to internal problems in the economic empowerment model based on digital marketing for Islamic boarding school business units. The geometric mean results for these internal solutions (Figure 3) reveal the following priorities: **First, Product quality improvement** is identified as the top priority, with a weight of **0.47** across all respondents, including practitioners (**0.46**), experts (**0.46**), and academics (**0.46**). All respondent groups showed a consistent level of agreement with high scores for this solution. **Second, Optimization of online media for marketing** ranks second, with an overall weight of **0.27**. Academics provided the highest value (**0.32**) for this solution. **Third, Enhancement of production facilities** is the third priority, with a weight of **0.27** across all respondents. Practitioners provided the highest value (**0.30**) for this solution. These findings indicate that the internal solutions proposed by the researchers align closely with the internal problems identified (Figure 2), as they share similar priority values. This suggests a high level of consensus among respondents regarding the internal issues and the corresponding solutions.

2. External Problems and Solutions

The priority problems associated with the external aspects of the economic empowerment model based on digital marketing for Islamic boarding school business units are visualized through data analysis. The synthesis of the external problem cluster identifies the most significant challenges, as follows:

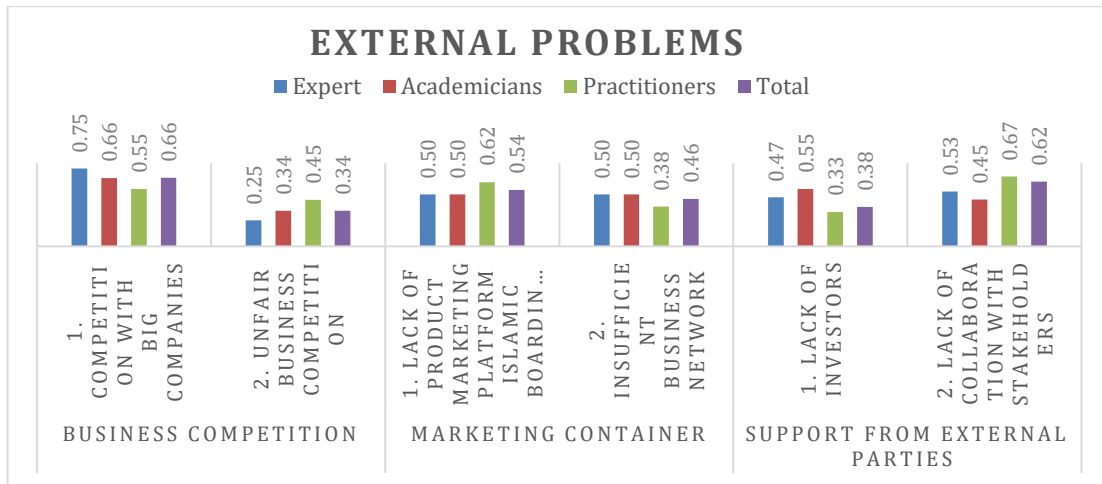


Figure 5. Priority Synthesis Result Combined of External Problems Based on The Value of Each Respondent

The results of the ANP synthesis calculations (Figure 4) reveal the following top-priority external problems: First, **Competition with large corporations** from the business competition cluster is the highest-priority issue, with an overall weight of **0.66**. Experts assigned the highest value (**0.75**), followed by academics (**0.66**) and practitioners (**0.55**). Second, **Lack of collaboration between stakeholders** ranks second, with a weight of **0.62**. Practitioners provided the highest value (**0.67**) for this issue. Third, **Insufficient business networks** from the marketing container cluster is the third priority, with a weight of **0.46**. Experts and academics assigned equal values (**0.50**) for this problem.

Solutions to address these external issues for the economic empowerment model based on digital marketing for Islamic boarding school business units will be further detailed through the data visualization.

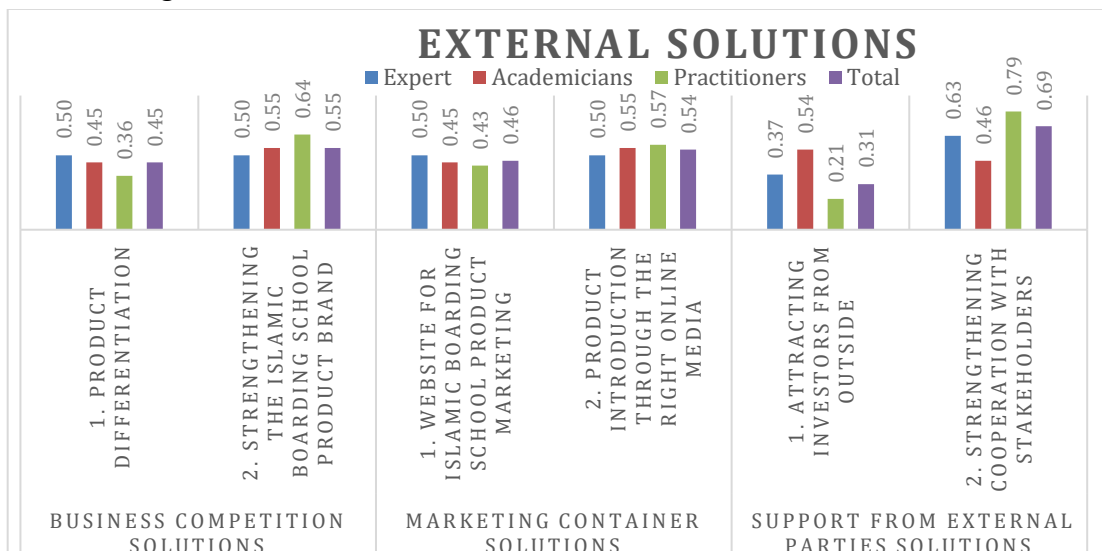


Figure 6. Priority Synthesis Result Combined of External Problems Based on The Value of Each Respondent

According to Figure 5, the geometric mean results for these internal solutions reveal the following top-priority values: **Strengthening cooperation with stakeholders** from the cluster "support from external parties" is the highest priority, with a value of **0.69** across

all respondents. Practitioners provided the highest agreement (**0.79**), followed by experts (**0.63**) and academics (**0.46**). **Second, strengthening the product brand** ranks second, with a value of **0.55** across all respondents, with the highest value assigned by practitioners (**0.64**). **Third, introducing the product through the appropriate online media** is the third priority, with a value of **0.54** across all respondents, with the highest agreement from practitioners (**0.57**). The synthesis of these values suggests the recommended solutions to address the external problems.

DISCUSSION

Internal Problems and Solutions for the Economic Empowerment Model Based on Digital Marketing Optimization of Islamic Boarding School Business Units

The primary issue identified through the geometric mean calculation of all respondents in the context of using digital marketing to empower the economy of Islamic Boarding Schools is the low quality of the product. This aligns with the findings of Mokalau & Tumbel, (2015), who emphasized that to increase profits and foster consumer loyalty, business units must focus on improving product quality. This conclusion is further supported by research by Nasution et al., (2017), which indicated that micro-enterprises that prioritize product quality improvements can experience increased sales. Additionally, consumers tend to be highly selective when evaluating the quality of the products they purchase (Cesariana et al., 2022; Martoyo et al., 2020).

The second priority problem pertains to the human resources aspect, specifically the lack of HR skills. Adequate HR skills are crucial for developing a productive business. A deficiency in digital marketing knowledge and skills among human resources in business units hampers their ability to compete effectively in an increasingly competitive market (Nurchayati et al., 2022). The third priority internal problem, identified with equal significance, is the low level of creativity and innovation, as well as the lack of production support facilities. Weak creativity and innovation significantly hinder the ability to leverage digital marketing for increasing product sales. This issue has been substantiated by Aisyah et al., (2021). who highlighted that creativity, innovation, and marketing strategies directly contribute to enhanced consumer purchasing power. A business unit must employ precise calculations and innovative ideas to create a more appealing image or value for consumers (Chouhan & Srivastava, 2014; M. K. Fikri et al., 2022). These priorities are further corroborated by studies from Anam & Setyawan, 2019; Iswanti et al., 2022; Rahmadieni & Wahyuni, 2022. This challenge is also commonly faced by MSME actors transitioning into the digital sphere (Prananjaya et al., 2022).

These internal issues can be addressed through the implementation of appropriate alternative solutions. The results of the geometric mean calculation used to prioritize solutions for the challenges of implementing digital marketing in the economic empowerment of Islamic Boarding Schools indicate that the highest-priority solution is the improvement of product quality. Enhancing production quality is considered a critical

marketing strategy for managers of Islamic Boarding School business units (Candra et al., 2021; Fatonah et al., 2020; Suhartono & Prasetyo, 2022).

The second priority solution is the optimization of online media for marketing. Research by Urva et al., (2022) and Hadi & Zakiah, (2021) highlights that the digital transformation era compels business actors, including Islamic boarding schools, to adopt online media, such as social media, to expand their market reach and remain competitive. This shift is crucial as online media provides significant opportunities for business promotion.

The third priority solution, still considered a key internal measure, is the expansion of production facilities. The adequacy of facilities can enhance customer satisfaction, which positively impacts sales performance (W. Wahyudi & Herlan, 2021). The availability of comprehensive facilities within a business unit boosts productivity, which in turn increases workforce motivation, improves time efficiency, and enhances the skills of employees (Harsono, 2012; Isnaini, 2022).

External Problems and Solutions for the Economic Empowerment Model Based on Digital Marketing Optimization of Islamic Boarding School Business Units

External challenges must be carefully considered when developing alternative models for economic empowerment. The primary external problem identified is business competition with large companies. The online business sector is characterized by substantial competition, largely due to the efficiency of online sales, which encourages many individuals to replicate products or services (Febrina, 2022). Research by Indrayani, highlights that the competition faced by most MSMEs is intensified by competitors' aggressive promotion strategies and the increasing attractiveness of their product packaging. Most customers, being more aware of well-established brands, tend to prefer products from brands that are widely recognized and have been previously tried (Indriyani & Kempa, 2022). Islamic boarding schools must address this issue to remain competitive.

The second priority external problem is the lack of cooperation with stakeholders. Collaboration is crucial for business growth as it allows for more flexible achievement of targets. Establishing partnerships with business stakeholders can strengthen business actors (Anggraini & Indrayana, 2022; Syaprudin, 2017). The role of stakeholders is essential for the sustainability of organizations, as they have a vested interest in development activities. Public sector stakeholders, in particular, aim to contribute to societal welfare. Therefore, optimizing the role of stakeholders in the development of Islamic boarding school business units is necessary, as these units often operate independently, without external support.

The third priority external issue is the lack of a marketing platform for Islamic boarding school products. The location or platform is a critical medium that influences a business's ability to reach its target consumers and generate profits. Business units,

including those within Islamic boarding schools, face challenges in expanding their market reach and promoting their products effectively (Oktaviani & Rustandi, 2018).

External challenges can be addressed by implementing the alternative solutions presented. The primary external solution, based on the geometric mean calculation, is strengthening cooperation with stakeholders. In any organization or company, the primary role of stakeholders is to contribute to the development of policies, rules, or projects that align with the organization's goals and mission. Stakeholders, while playing different roles, share the common objective of advancing and developing the business or organization (Siti Nur Azizah 2018).

The second priority external solution is enhancing the Islamic boarding school product brand. This is supported by research conducted by Masrurroh, (2019) which discusses the branding strategy implemented at Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School. Strengthening the brand identity of Islamic boarding schools is crucial to attracting consumers and fostering customer loyalty. A strong brand also serves as a differentiator by highlighting the unique aspects of Islamic boarding school products compared to those of competitors. This is consistent with the findings of (Putri et al., 2021). The final priority, according to the geometric mean calculation, is introducing products through appropriate online media. Previous research supports this approach, emphasizing that selecting the right online platforms for marketing and promoting products is an essential strategy for business development (M. El Fikri et al., 2020; Nikmah, 2017; Syarifuddin et al., 2022).

Alternative Strategy Model for Economic Empowerment Based on Digital Marketing Optimization for Islamic Boarding Schools

After obtaining the geometric mean calculation results to determine strategic priorities, it is evident that there are similarities in the values of the first and second priorities. When sorted by priority, the first sequence of strategies includes the optimization of SEO and social media for Islamic boarding school product marketing, the use of appropriate advertisements for Islamic boarding school products (e.g., Google Ads), HR mentoring and counseling for Islamic boarding schools, strengthening the Islamic boarding school product brand, and collaborating with stakeholders of Islamic boarding schools.

Priority alternatives for the strategy in the economic empowerment model, based on the digital marketing of Islamic boarding school business units, will be displayed through data visualization. The strategy formulation presented is based on the identified problems and solutions from both internal and external factors. The results of the strategy cluster synthesis will be explained to identify the most important strategies, based on the consensus of experts, academicians, and practitioners.

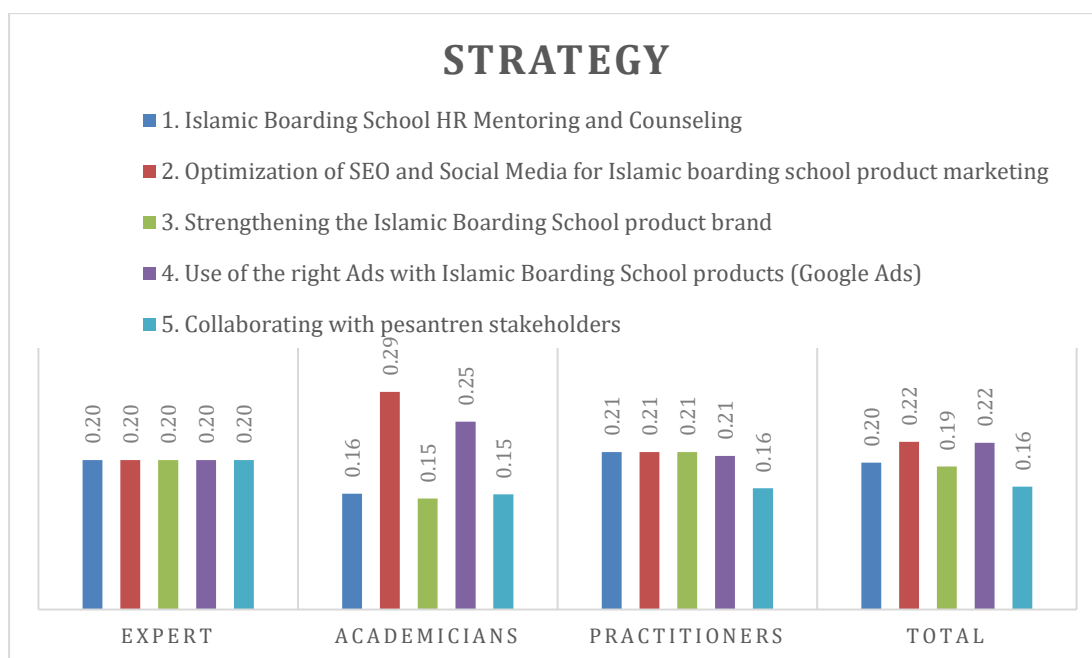


Figure 7. Priority Synthesis Result Combined of External Problems Based on The Value of Each Respondent

According to Figure 6, the results of the ANP synthesis calculation show the order of strategy priorities based on the opinions of all respondents (GM value). Notably, there are two top priority strategies, each with a value of 0.22. The first is the optimization of SEO and social media for Islamic boarding school product marketing, and the second is the use of the right ads (e.g., Google Ads) for Islamic boarding school products. This indicates that both strategies are considered equally important by all respondents, particularly academicians (0.29) and practitioners (0.21), with experts assigning a slightly lower value (0.20). The second priority strategy is Islamic boarding school HR mentoring and counseling, with a value of 0.20 from all respondents. The third strategy is strengthening the Islamic boarding school product brand, with a value of 0.19. The final strategy is collaboration with Islamic boarding school stakeholders, with a value of 0.16. Furthermore, the data shows a constant value of 0.20 from experts across all strategy elements, indicating that experts view all proposed strategies as equally important. These findings illustrate the priority order of strategies for the economic empowerment model based on the digital marketing of Islamic boarding school business units.

The first priority is the optimization of SEO and social media for Islamic boarding school product marketing. Several factors that influence purchasing decisions stem from the optimization of SEO and social media in the digital marketing strategies employed by a business unit (Abdjul et al., 2022). SEO, or search engine optimization, allows a website (in this case, a company or business unit profile) to rank strategically on search engine results pages (SERP) by targeting specific keywords. Many companies and agencies have recognized SEO as one of the most effective digital marketing strategies (Astono, 2017; R. Wahyudi et al., 2019). SEO can increase brand awareness, enhance business credibility, attract more website visitors, improve user-friendliness, support business development, offer website updates, simplify visitor conversions, and do so at relatively low costs.

The second priority, with the same value as the first in the geometric mean calculation, is the use of the right ads for Islamic boarding school products (e.g., Google Ads). While the first priority focuses on information loading, the second strategy emphasizes promotion as a marketing tool. As Ayu et al., (2021) noted, using appropriate promotional media can significantly increase conversions, often in a quicker and more efficient manner (Saputra et al., 2020).

The third priority in the digital marketing strategy for economic empowerment is Islamic boarding school HR mentoring and counseling. This strategy is crucial for realizing the mission of empowering Islamic boarding schools (Putri et al., 2021). A key step in this process involves providing counseling, training, and mentoring for the human resources within the Islamic boarding schools. Once the human resources are adequately trained, the Islamic boarding schools will be better positioned to achieve their empowerment goals more effectively and independently.

CONCLUSION

The main problems faced in the use of digital marketing as an effort to empower the economy of Islamic boarding schools in East Java are identified from both internal and external perspectives. These issues include low product quality, lack of human resource skills, low creativity and innovation, and insufficient production support facilities. On the external side, challenges include business competition with large companies, lack of collaboration with stakeholders, and the absence of a marketing platform for Islamic boarding school products. In terms of solutions for the effective use of digital marketing to empower Islamic boarding schools in East Java, key strategies include improving product quality, optimizing online media for marketing, enhancing production facilities, strengthening cooperation with stakeholders, and bolstering the Islamic boarding school product brand. The third priority involves introducing products through the appropriate online media. The priority strategies for applying digital marketing in the economic empowerment of Islamic boarding schools are: optimization of SEO and social media for product marketing, the use of the right ads (e.g., Google Ads) for Islamic boarding school products, and HR mentoring and counseling for Islamic boarding schools.

The implications of this research encompass several important aspects that can affect the economic empowerment of Islamic boarding schools through digital marketing optimization. These implications include the implementation of digital marketing strategies. This study demonstrates that effective digital marketing strategies, such as social media and SEO, can increase the visibility and sales of Islamic boarding school products. This finding encourages Islamic boarding schools to invest in training and digital skills development for both students and managers. Improving product quality allows Islamic boarding schools to better compete in the market. This implication urges Islamic boarding schools to innovate and develop products that meet consumer needs and preferences. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of collaboration between

Islamic boarding schools, their business units, alumni, the government, and other stakeholders. This can lead to the formation of mutually beneficial strategic partnerships that foster the development of Islamic boarding school business units.

For future research, this study opens opportunities for further investigation into the effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies within Islamic boarding schools and the broader Islamic economic sector.

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