

BRAND IMAGE ENHANCEMENT: Analysis of the Inspirational Class Program at State Senior High School 2, Pasuruan

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Abstract

The intensifying competition among educational institutions necessitates that madrasahs move beyond conventional academic services to establish a strong and distinctive institutional *brand image*. This study analyzes: (1) the implementation of the Inspirational Class Program in enhancing *the brand image* of MAN 2 Pasuruan; (2) the challenges encountered during program implementation; and (3) the program's impact on strengthening *brand image* and *stakeholder* trust. A descriptive qualitative approach utilizing field research was employed. Data collection methods included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings demonstrate that the Inspirational Class Program—comprising Tahfidz, Literacy, Bilingual, Fashion, and Digital classes—is systematically managed through Planning, implementation, and evaluation. The program effectively enhances *the* madrasah's *brand image* in multiple dimensions by simultaneously cultivating religious, intellectual, global, creative, and modern identities. Key constraints include uneven human resource competencies, budget limitations, and infrastructure gaps. This study advances Islamic education marketing management by highlighting program innovation strategies as tools for institutional branding.

Keywords: Madrasah Brand Image, Inspirational Class Program, Islamic Education Management, Learning Innovation, MAN 2 Pasuruan.

Abstrak

Persaingan lembaga pendidikan yang semakin ketat menuntut madrasah untuk tidak hanya mengandalkan layanan akademik konvensional, melainkan juga membangun citra institusi (brand image) yang kuat dan terdiferensiasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis: (1) implementasi Program Kelas Inspiratif dalam meningkatkan brand image MAN 2 Pasuruan; (2) kendala yang dihadapi dalam pelaksanaan program; dan (3) dampak program terhadap penguatan brand image serta kepercayaan stakeholders. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan jenis penelitian lapangan (field research). Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Program Kelas Inspiratif—yang terdiri atas Kelas Tahfidz, Literasi, Bilingual, Fashion, dan Digital—dikelola secara sistematis melalui fungsi manajemen perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi. Program ini terbukti mampu meningkatkan brand image madrasah secara multidimensi dengan membangun citra religius, intelektual, global, kreatif, dan modern sekaligus. Kendala utama meliputi ketidakmerataan kompetensi SDM, keterbatasan anggaran, dan kesenjangan sarana prasarana. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan manajemen pemasaran pendidikan Islam melalui strategi inovasi program sebagai instrumen branding institusional.

Kata Kunci: Brand Image Madrasah, Program Kelas Inspiratif, Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, Inovasi Pembelajaran, MAN 2 Pasuruan.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the educational landscape in the era of globalization has altered societal assessments of the quality of Islamic educational institutions (Mudiono & Mudzakkir, 2025). Madrasahs are now regarded not only as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as arenas for symbolic competition that require professionalism, innovation, and strategic public image development. Competition among educational institutions has compelled madrasahs to establish distinctive institutional identities to secure social legitimacy (Rumra et al., 2025). A positive institutional image is essential for building public trust, attracting prospective students, and sustaining the institution's presence amid the proliferation of modern and leading private educational institutions.

The rise of digital culture has accelerated changes in public preferences for selecting educational institutions. Parents and prospective students now critically evaluate institutional quality, considering factors such as academic reputation, educational innovation, facilities, and the institution's capacity for public communication (Rizqi, 2023). Consequently, brand image has become a central component of modern educational governance. Brand image extends beyond logos, slogans, or visual promotions; it encompasses the collective public perception of service quality, organizational culture, and institutional values (Manurung & Siagian, 2021). Madrasahs that systematically manage their institutional identity are better positioned to secure social support and stakeholder trust.

According to 2024 data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, there are over 82,418 active madrasahs in the country. However, only a small proportion have adopted integrated branding strategies grounded in program innovation. This suggests that most madrasahs continue to operate under conventional management models focused primarily on administrative functions (Gamferi, 2024). The intensifying competition in education necessitates a paradigm shift toward more adaptive, creative, and responsive management approaches. Innovative learning programs are essential for institutional differentiation and for enhancing the appeal of Islamic educational institutions in the public domain (Rohman & Munawaroh, 2026).

The strategic role of madrasahs within Indonesian Muslim society underscores that strengthening institutional image is not solely an administrative requirement but is integral to maintaining the social relevance of Islamic education (Rumra et al., 2025). The success of a madrasah in building its brand image often depends on its ability to offer flagship programs that set it apart from other institutions. Innovative educational programs are more effective in shaping public perceptions of institutional quality than formal or ceremonial promotions (Carnawi, Hermawan, and Zahro 2024). This underscores the close relationship between educational innovation and the establishment of an institution's social legitimacy.

State Senior High School (MAN) 2 Pasuruan is one of the schools striving to address these challenges by developing the Inspirational Class Program since 2023. The

school's location within the Al-Yasini Integrated Islamic Boarding School complex gives it a unique character in developing an educational system that integrates boarding school values with a modern educational approach. Its status as the only state madrasah aliyah in Kraton Subdistrict also positions MAN 2 Pasuruan to build public trust. The Inspirational Class Program is designed to develop students' potential through creative, collaborative, and experience-based learning approaches, while also serving as an institutional instrument to strengthen the madrasah's image amid regional educational competition.

Existing academic studies on madrasah brand image have primarily concentrated on institutional promotion, educational marketing strategies, academic reputation, and student achievement as determinants of institutional image (Sudirjo et al., 2023). However, discussions of learning program innovations as managerial strategies for brand image development remain limited, particularly among madrasahs operating within the pesantren ecosystem (Husni, 2025; Pratama et al., 2025). This research gap underscores the need for more comprehensive studies on the relationship between innovative program management and the formation of public perceptions of Islamic educational institutions. Addressing this gap is essential for broadening the discourse on Islamic education management, which has traditionally emphasized administrative aspects and formal policies.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Inspirational Class Program in enhancing the brand image of MAN 2 Pasuruan, identify the challenges encountered during program implementation, and explain its impact on strengthening stakeholder trust. The research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic education management studies, particularly regarding madrasah branding strategies grounded in learning innovations. In practical terms, the study offers the potential to develop a replicable model for strengthening institutional image that other madrasahs can adopt in response to contemporary educational competition.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Concept of Brand Image from the Perspective of Islamic Education Management

The term "brand" was originally used in marketing to denote an identity that distinguishes a product or service from similar products (Susanti, Mustar, and Sumarto 2024). The development of modern marketing theory has expanded the meaning of a brand beyond a mere visual symbol to encompass the values, quality, and experiences perceived by consumers (Hermawan, 2024). A strong brand fosters loyalty because the public tends to trust institutions with a good reputation that consistently deliver quality service (Carnawi, Hermawan, and Zahro 2024). These characteristics make a brand a vital asset for building an organization's competitive edge, including that of educational institutions.

The view of brand image positions it as the result of the public's perception of an institution (Wardani & Rochmaniah, 2025). These perceptions arise through direct experience, public communication, service quality, and information circulating within the social environment. Gronroos, as cited by Farida Jasfar, explains that image is a representation of how the public views an organization and its associated elements (Susanti, Mustar, and Sumarto 2024). An image is not static; it can change depending on the quality of the institution's relationship with the public and the effectiveness of the communication established over time (Sandyakala, 2020).

The educational context shows that brand image significantly influences the public's level of trust when choosing an educational institution (Manurung & Siagian, 2021). Madrasahs that can build an academic reputation, a religious culture, and professional services tend to gain greater social legitimacy than institutions that lack clear differentiation (Rubai, 2025)d. A positive image also influences parental loyalty, prospective students' interest, and community support for institutional programs (Wahid, 2023)w. This situation indicates that image management is no longer a secondary aspect but an essential component of modern educational management.

From the perspective of Islamic educational management, brand image is viewed not merely as a marketing strategy, but also as part of an institution's moral responsibility to provide quality education that serves the public good. The Qur'an, in Surah An-Nahl,

verse 125, emphasizes the importance of conveying teachings with wisdom, gentleness, and good manners (Aziz, 2025). These values are relevant to the concept of institutional communication in madrasah management, particularly in fostering harmonious relationships with the community (Efendi, Razzaq, and Imron 2024)e. The quality of educational programs, organizational culture, and service ethics serve as the primary foundation for shaping a credible and sustainable image of Islamic educational institutions.

Flagship Class Programs as an Instrument of Institutional Branding

Honors programs are a form of educational innovation designed to provide more effective academic support to students with specific potential (Setiawan, Alkahfi, and Hakim 2026). Students are grouped based on their interests, talents, and academic abilities to make the learning process more effective and focused. Honors programs are intended not only to improve academic achievement but also to create an educational environment that maximally fosters students' intellectual development, social skills, and character (Wati & Trihantoyo, 2020).

Competition among educational institutions drives schools and madrasahs to offer distinctive programs that stand out to the public (Rumra et al., 2025). In the context of educational marketing, flagship programs serve as a unique selling proposition (USP)—a distinguishing factor that makes an institution more appealing than its competitors. Institutional identity is often shaped by the success of innovative programs that address community needs while demonstrating the quality of educational management (Wati & Trihantoyo, 2020). This position makes flagship programs a strategic tool for strengthening institutional image.

The characteristics of high-performing schools can be identified through key indicators, including a clear institutional vision, effective leadership, a conducive learning culture, an adaptive curriculum, and community involvement in educational development (Wahid, 2023). An institution's success in integrating these elements will foster a positive perception within the social environment. Public trust typically grows when the community observes a consistent alignment between the institution's vision and the quality

of services provided to students. This situation demonstrates that strengthening an institution's image is closely linked to the quality of governance of educational programs.

Several previous studies have shown that program innovation is closely linked to the formation of an educational institution's brand image. Research by Nurul Afla and Lilik Sugiarto found that the sustainable management of the Adiwiyata program can enhance the image of madrasahs by strengthening their environment-based institutional identity (Afla & Sugiarto, 2024). A study by Noris Aniqotul Azizah and Afif Syaiful Mahmudin shows that combining learning innovations with traditional values effectively strengthens public trust in schools (Azizah & Mahmudin, 2024). Arif Rohman Hakim's study, "," also confirms that the integration of traditional and digital pedagogy has a positive impact on the quality of learning while simultaneously strengthening the reputation of Islamic educational institutions (Hakim, 2025).

Analytical Framework: Brand Image Through Kotler's Three Dimensions

Philip Kotler explains that brand image is formed through a series of associations that arise in the public's memory regarding a product or institution (Putrianingsih, Putra, and Huda 2024). These associations develop through repeated experiences, communication, symbols, and the quality of service the public receives. The strength of an institution's image is determined not only by the popularity of its name but also by its ability to consistently maintain a positive perception (Eriani et al., 2025). This approach positions brand image as a critical element in the management strategy of modern educational institutions.

The first dimension in Kotler's concept is the strength of brand association. This aspect concerns the extent to which the public associates an institution with specific values or qualities (Rahmat, 2021). Madrasahs that offer flagship programs, have a strong academic culture, and enjoy a solid religious reputation will find it easier to establish a positive image in the public's mind. The intensity of the institution's public experiences and communications also determines the strength or weakness of these associations in stakeholders' perceptions.

Favorability, or excellence, is the second dimension that emphasizes the public's positive assessment of an institution's quality (Nursyamsi, Sukirman, and Palupi 2022). Perceptions regarding the quality of instruction, teacher professionalism, educational facilities, and graduate success are key factors in shaping this assessment. Perceived excellence increases an institution's chances of gaining long-term social support and trust (Carnawi, Hermawan, and Zahro 2024). This situation demonstrates that the quality of educational services is directly linked to the formation of an institution's image.

The third dimension is uniqueness, which refers to the distinctive characteristics that set an institution apart from its competitors. Uniqueness can manifest in program innovation, organizational culture, teaching methods, or an institutional identity that other institutions lack. The Inspirational Class program at MAN 2 Pasuruan was analyzed through these three dimensions to examine how the program's strengths, advantages, and uniqueness contribute to strengthening the madrasah's brand image. This analytical framework serves as the theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between educational program innovation and the formation of public perception regarding Islamic educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach through field research to uncover deeper meanings, processes, and social dynamics (Annasthasya et al., 2025). The qualitative approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand the implementation of the Inspirational Class Program within the real-life context of madrasah institutional life, including management patterns, the experiences of educational actors, and the construction of stakeholders' perceptions of the program (Moleong & Surjaman, 2014). The characteristics of qualitative research enable researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena that cannot be captured solely by statistical figures (Sugiyono, 2013). The researcher's presence serves as the primary instrument in both data collection and interpretation, making direct interaction with research subjects a crucial component for obtaining in-depth and contextual information.

The research was conducted at the State Senior High School (MAN) 2 Pasuruan, East Java. The location was selected through purposive sampling based on academic and practical considerations relevant to the research focus. MAN 2 Pasuruan is considered unique because it has developed the Inspirational Class Program as an institutional strategy that is not only oriented toward improving the quality of learning but also aimed at strengthening the school's brand image. The institution's presence within the Al-Yasini Integrated Islamic Boarding School environment demonstrates the integration of boarding school culture with modern educational management, which is a hallmark of the institution. Another consideration concerns the increased public trust in the madrasah, evident in the interest among new students and the strengthening of the institution's public image. Open data accessibility is also a key factor, as it enables the information gathering process to be conducted more deeply, systematically, and transparently.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique in which subjects are chosen based on specific criteria directly related to the research data requirements (Moleong & Surjaman, 2014). This technique was used to identify informants with a deep understanding of the implementation of the Inspirational Class Program and the process of strengthening the madrasah's brand image. The primary informants consist of the Principal of MAN 2 Pasuruan, as the institutional policy decision-maker; the Vice Principal for Student Affairs and Public Relations, as the implementer of the institution's communication strategy; and the coordinators of each Inspirational Class, who understand the technical aspects of program implementation. Supporting informants include program-implementing teachers, students from several Inspirational Classes, and parent representatives selected to provide perspectives on the program's impact on public perception (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). This diversity of informants is intended to ensure that the data collected possesses sufficient depth, balance, and validity.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Safarudin et al., 2023). Participatory observation was used to understand learning activities, interaction patterns, and program implementation in natural settings within the madrasah environment (Sugiyono, 2013). In-depth interviews

were conducted in a semi-structured manner to enable the researcher to obtain comprehensive data on the experiences, perspectives, and strategies used in managing the Inspirational Class Program. The documentation technique was used to supplement field data by reviewing official documents, including madrasah profiles, annual work plans, activity archives, learning curricula, student achievement documentation, and institutional publications. Data analysis used the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which includes the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data validity was tested through source and methodological triangulation to ensure consistency across information obtained from various informants and data collection methods. A member check process was also conducted by reconfirming the findings with informants to maintain the research's credibility and objectivity.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Inspirational Class Program Management

The Inspirational Class Program at MAN 2 Pasuruan emerged from the institution's realization that madrasahs cannot survive on conventional teaching methods alone. Social changes, technological advancements, and rising public expectations regarding the quality of education have prompted madrasahs to implement innovations tailored to students' needs. This program is designed not merely as an extracurricular activity but as an institutional strategy—aimed at strengthening the institution's identity while simultaneously improving the quality of its graduates. This awareness demonstrates that educational management at MAN 2 Pasuruan has shifted toward a modern management paradigm that positions innovation as a tool for enhancing the institution's competitiveness.

The characteristics of the Inspirational Class Program demonstrate an integration of pesantren values with 21st-century competency requirements. Madrasahs not only maintain their religious orientation by reinforcing Quran memorization but also provide opportunities to develop practical skills, including literacy, digital technology, global communication, and Islamic fashion design (Fauzi et al., 2025). This integration forms the basis for establishing an institutional identity that distinguishes it from other madrasahs in the Pasuruan region. This perspective indicates that program innovation is not only related

to learning development but also serves as a symbolic strategy for establishing the institution's positioning amid educational competition (Saputra & Faridi, 2026).

1. Planning

The planning phase of the Inspirational Class Program is conducted through a participatory process involving various institutional stakeholders. The program formulation process begins with small-group discussions among teachers and subject coordinators, followed by larger coordination forums with madrasah leaders (Hermawan, 2024). This planning model demonstrates a bottom-up approach, in which program ideas and needs are not solely determined by leadership but also developed through exchanges among field implementers (Kadfi & Susy Widiaty, 2026). The involvement of multiple stakeholders in the planning process fosters a greater sense of collective responsibility for the program's sustainability.

The program's development is rooted in MAN 2 Pasuruan's vision: to cultivate students who are literate, intelligent, virtuous, and scientifically minded. This vision is then translated into five specialized classes, each with a distinct focus on specific competencies. The Tahfidz Class is geared toward strengthening Qur'an memorization; the Literacy Class emphasizes developing a writing culture; the Bilingual Class focuses on mastering foreign languages; the Fashion Class develops skills in Islamic fashion design; and the Digital Class is geared toward mastering creative technology. This differentiation demonstrates that the madrasah strives to build an educational system that is not homogeneous but is capable of accommodating students' potential and interests more broadly (Reska, 2024).

The program's planning orientation also demonstrates the madrasah's management's ability to identify the needs of the education market. Modern society tends to seek educational institutions that are not only strong in religious education but also capable of providing practical skills relevant to the times (Manan, 2023). The Inspirational Class Program serves as a strategic response to these changes by successfully integrating religious values with modern competencies within a single educational system. The positioning as a "modern pesantren madrasah" is indirectly

established through a program planning process grounded in differentiation and social needs.

2. Implementation (Actuating)

The Inspirational Class Program is implemented as an integrated part of the madrasah curriculum. The program is allocated six class hours per week and is regularly scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The integration of the program into the formal academic schedule demonstrates that Inspirational Classes are not merely an additional activity but an integral part of the madrasah's learning system (Sopidi, Nugroho, and Syibromilisi 2024). Intensive coordination between the curriculum team and class coordinators ensures that the program's implementation does not interfere with core subjects and remains effective.

Each inspirational class has specific and measurable learning objectives. The Literacy Class requires students to regularly produce written works, such as short stories and poems. The Digital Class focuses on developing graphic design, video editing, and simple app development. The Bilingual Class emphasizes public speaking skills in a foreign language, while the Fashion Class develops sewing and Islamic fashion design skills. The Tahfidz Class implements progressive monthly targets for memorizing the Qur'an. This output-based learning system demonstrates a shift in educational orientation from merely transferring knowledge to developing competencies that can be tangibly demonstrated.

An interesting aspect of this program is the use of students' work as a medium for public communication. The resulting products are published on social media, in exhibitions, and in institutional documentation. This strategy has a significant impact on public perception, as the public can directly see the quality of learning outcomes at MAN 2 Pasuruan. The presence of tangible evidence in the form of student-authored books, creative videos, fashion designs, and Quran recitations makes the madrasah's branding more authentic and goes beyond mere verbal promotion.

The program's implementation has also demonstrated a transformation in the learning culture within the madrasah. Students are no longer viewed as passive recipients of material but are encouraged to become creative, productive individuals

capable of producing their own work (Zain, 2025). This situation indicates that the Inspirational Classroom Program not only enhances the institution's image but also fosters a more dynamic academic culture at MAN 2 Pasuruan.

3. Evaluation (Controlling)

The evaluation of the Inspirational Class Program is conducted through monitoring of the input, process, and output aspects of learning activities. The input aspect covers teacher readiness, guest speaker competence, and the availability of program support facilities. The process aspect focuses on learning effectiveness, discipline in carrying out activities, and student engagement during the inspirational classes. The output aspect focuses on the quality of work, memorization achievements, and the development of students' skills in accordance with program targets. This evaluation system demonstrates that the madrasah strives to maintain program quality on an ongoing basis.

Evaluations are conducted periodically through coordination meetings, classroom observations, and reviews of student work. This mechanism enables the madrasah to identify obstacles that arise during program implementation. Field findings indicate that the success of inspirational classes is heavily influenced by teacher quality and the consistency of program management. These factors are crucial because the quality of program implementation directly impacts public perception of the institution.

Evaluation serves not only as an administrative oversight tool but also as an instrument for institutional reflection aimed at improving the learning system. The madrasah recognizes that program innovation must be accompanied by quality enhancement to ensure that the positive image established is not merely temporary (Fatima, 2026). This perspective indicates that a brand image in the context of education cannot be sustained through promotion alone but requires consistent improvement in the quality of educational services.

Table 1. Summary of the Management Functions of the Inspirational Class Program at MAN 2 Pasuruan

Management Functions	Main Focus	Impact on Brand Image
Planning	Market needs, strengthening the madrasah's vision, and tiered participatory discussions	Creating a unique selling point as a modern and innovative Islamic boarding school
Implementation (Actuating)	Allocate 6 hours per week, coordinate the curriculum team, and set concrete output targets for each class	Producing tangible evidence (works/memorization) that can be demonstrated to the public
Evaluation (Controlling)	Periodic analysis of inputs, processes, and outputs; continuous feedback	Ensuring the program's quality and consistency remain competitive

Challenges in Implementing the Inspirational Class Program

The implementation of the Inspirational Classroom Program faces several challenges related to human resources, funding, and facilities and infrastructure. The first challenge relates to differences in teachers' readiness and creativity in managing the program. Some educators adapt quickly to innovative learning systems, while others remain accustomed to conventional approaches. This situation indicates that organizational cultural change requires a lengthy adaptation process.

The second issue relates to the program's limited funding. Developing skills-based classes incurs high operational costs, particularly for practical learning and the procurement of supporting materials (Daratheia, 2025). Government funding has not been sufficient to meet all the program's needs, so madrasahs must implement alternative strategies to ensure the sustainability of their activities. Community support also tends to increase once the program demonstrates tangible results that can be seen firsthand.

Limited facilities and infrastructure pose the next challenge in implementing the program. The Digital Class requires adequate technological equipment, while the Fashion Class requires professional sewing machines and sufficient materials for practical work. These obstacles impact students' ability to produce work and the effectiveness of practical learning. Nevertheless, the madrasah administration continues to strive to maintain the program's quality by optimizing available facilities.

Table 2. Clusters of Challenges in the Inspirational Class Program and Managerial Implications

Type of Challenge	Description of Findings	Managerial Implications
Human Resources	Readiness, creativity, and commitment among educators are not yet uniform	There is a need for ongoing training and strengthening of teachers' work motivation
Funding	Limited reliance on government funding; conditional community participation	The need for an economic self-reliance strategy or the search for external partners
Facilities & Infrastructure	The need for practical tools (digital studio, sewing machines) has not been fully met	Challenges in maintaining quality standards for student output (products)

Impact of the Inspirational Class Program on the Brand Image of the Madrasah

Field data analysis demonstrates that the Inspirational Class Program has significantly strengthened MAN 2 Pasuruan's brand image. This effect is reflected in the public's increasingly positive perception of the madrasah's educational quality. The program has established a robust institutional identity, with the public now recognizing MAN 2 Pasuruan as both a pesantren-based madrasah and an institution characterized by innovation and adaptability to contemporary developments.

According to Kotler's theory, the dimension of strength is demonstrated by the strong association between MAN 2 Pasuruan and modern religious education. The Tahfidz class serves as the primary symbol of the madrasah's enhanced religious image. Parents perceive the program as ensuring that religious education remains a central focus while maintaining academic competence and modern skill development. This association contributes to a high level of trust in the institution.

The dimension of favorability is reflected in the public's increasingly positive evaluation of the madrasah's educational services (Siminto, Mayasari, and Ulya 2024). Student work disseminated through social media functions as an effective tool for enhancing public legitimacy. Tangible outputs such as books, creative videos, fashion designs, and memorization achievements further reinforce public confidence in the educational quality at MAN 2 Pasuruan. This favorable perception is strengthened by the success of alums who have gained admission to public universities.

The dimension of uniqueness is demonstrated by the madrasah's integration of pesantren traditions with 21st-century skills within a unified educational system (Ningrum, Amin, and Saepudin 2025). The combination of Quran memorization, literacy, digital technology, foreign language proficiency, and design creativity distinguishes MAN 2 Pasuruan from other institutions. This unique approach positions the madrasah as a modern pesantren institution capable of producing graduates who are both religiously grounded and highly competent.

Table 3. Mapping the Impact of the Inspirational Class Program on the Brand Image of MAN 2 Pasuruan

Class Program	Image Built	Tangible Output
Tahfidz Class	Religious & Qur'anic	Memorization target: 15 juz; appeal of the pesantren community
Literacy Class	Intellectual & Productive	Publication of short story collections and poetry anthologies by students
Bilingual Class	Global & Communicative	Proficiency in English, Arabic, and Japanese; public speaking
Fashion Class	Creative & Skilled	Skills in sewing and Islamic fashion design
Digital Class	Modern & Innovative	Graphic design, video editing, app/website development

Overall, the implementation of the professionally managed Inspirational Class Program has proven to be a strategic instrument that synergizes three key elements: academic-religious achievement, the noble values of the pesantren, and 21st-century practical skills. It is the synergy of these three elements that solidifies the institutional position of MAN 2 Pasuruan as an excellent, competitive, and innovative madrasah in the Pasuruan region and its surroundings.

Comparative Analysis: Relevance to Previous Research

The findings of this study indicate that the strengthening of a madrasah's brand image is determined not only by its academic reputation but also by its ability to offer innovative programs relevant to the community's needs. Field data from MAN 2 Pasuruan indicates that the Inspirational Class Program successfully shaped public perception

through a combination of religiosity, practical skills, and creative learning. These findings reinforce the argument from previous research that the quality of educational services is closely linked to the formation of an institution's image. This perspective aligns with Kotler's view that brand image is formed through associations arising from the public's experiences and evaluations of an institution's quality.

The existence of five specialized classes at MAN 2 Pasuruan illustrates that program differentiation is essential in educational branding. The Tahfidz, Literacy, Digital, Fashion, and Bilingual programs not only foster students' talents but also serve as recognizable symbols of institutional identity. This approach reflects the application of a unique selling proposition (USP) in educational management. According to educational marketing theory, institutions with distinctive programs are more likely to achieve social legitimacy, as the public can clearly distinguish their character from competitors. Field data further indicate that MAN 2 Pasuruan is increasingly recognized for its distinctive integration of religious education and modern skills.

A distinguishing feature of this study is its positioning of the learning program as a deliberate branding strategy (Ayub, 2024). While previous research often treats brand image as an indirect result of enhanced educational quality, this study shows that the Inspirational Class Program was intentionally designed to shape institutional image. The program's planning process was systematic, involving vision formulation, class differentiation, setting output targets, and strategies for publicizing student achievements (Salsabila et al., 2024). These findings indicate that educational branding at MAN 2 Pasuruan is a conscious, structured process integrated with institutional governance. This supports the argument that brand image in modern education is shaped through intentional managerial strategies rather than arising spontaneously.

The pesantren context at MAN 2 Pasuruan introduces a unique dimension to the development of the institution's brand image. Rather than being diminished by educational modernization, religious values are leveraged as symbolic capital to enhance the madrasah's social legitimacy. Field data show that the Tahfidz Class is the primary anchor of public trust, as it preserves the institution's Islamic identity while fostering modern skills. This reflects a transformation in Islamic education management, characterized by

the integration of pesantren traditions with a global competency orientation. In this framework, pesantren identity serves as a source of values that reinforces institutional differentiation, rather than as a marker of conservatism.

Analysis using Kotler's theory reveals that the "strength" dimension of MAN 2 Pasuruan's brand image is established through a strong association between the madrasah and the quality of its religious-modern education. This association is attributed to the public's perception of consistent program delivery in both Quran memorization and practical skills. The "favorability" dimension is demonstrated by increasingly positive public perceptions of graduate quality and student achievements, which are widely disseminated through social media and institutional events. The "uniqueness" dimension is evident in the madrasah's integration of Quran memorization, literacy, digital technology, foreign-language proficiency, and creative design into a unified educational system. Collectively, these dimensions shape MAN 2 Pasuruan's image as an excellent and competitive madrasah.

The brand image established through the Inspirational Class Program suggests a shift in Islamic education management toward innovation and institutional differentiation. The case of MAN 2 Pasuruan illustrates that effective madrasah branding requires demonstrable program quality, rather than reliance on slogans or administrative promotion. Student achievements in memorization, communication, and creative activities serve as symbolic representations that enhance institutional legitimacy. These findings indicate that brand image in Islamic education results from the interplay of service quality, communication strategies, and the institution's capacity to provide educational experiences relevant to current social needs.

CONCLUSION

This study presents three main conclusions. First, the Inspirational Class Program at MAN 2 Pasuruan is managed through systematic functions, including participatory Planning, the implementation of an integrated curriculum with a weekly allocation of 6 hours, and periodic evaluation of inputs, processes, and outputs. The five class specializations—Tahfidz, Literacy, Bilingual, Fashion, and Digital—constitute an

integrative learning system and serve as distinctive elements in establishing institutional differentiation.

Second, the program's implementation faces significant challenges, including disparities in educator competencies and commitment, limited operational budgets, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure for skills-based learning. These interrelated obstacles impact the effectiveness and sustainability of program development. Third, the Inspirational Class Program has effectively strengthened MAN 2 Pasuruan's brand image. Drawing on Kotler's theory, the program fosters positive associations with the madrasah (strength), enhances perceptions of excellence through student achievements (favorability), and establishes institutional differentiation that is challenging to replicate (uniqueness). The integration of pesantren values with 21st-century skills positions MAN 2 Pasuruan as a religious, modern, and competitive madrasah.

This study recommends enhancing ongoing teacher training, diversifying funding sources through strategic partnerships, implementing data-driven evaluation, and replicating the Inspirational Class Program model in other madrasahs with comparable characteristics.

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