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MARKETING STRATEGY OF THE ZAKAT AND WAQF MANAGEMENT STUDY PROGRAM

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Abstract

The increasing competition among higher education institutions and the proliferation of diverse academic programs have presented significant challenges for the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program in attracting prospective students. The relatively low level of interest in this specialized field necessitates proactive and strategic marketing efforts to ensure its sustainability and relevance. This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing data collection through interviews, documentation, and observations. The data were analyzed using a systematic process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings of this study reveal that effective marketing strategies for the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program can be categorized into three primary approaches: cost leadership, differentiation, and focus strategies. These strategic alternatives are designed not only to enhance the visibility and appeal of the program but also to align with its unique value propositions within the context of Islamic economics and philanthropic financial education. The study contributes to the broader discourse on strategic management in higher education, particularly for niche programs with significant socio-religious impact.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Higher Education, Study Program.

INTRODUCTION

The massive development of Islamic financial institutions in all regions in Indonesia certainly requires talented, educated and skilled human resources who can improve the performance of Islamic financial institutions (Antonio, 2011) Therefore, universities, both public and private, are competing to open Islamic finance majors/study programs to meet the desire of the community that by studying in the Islamic economics study program, they have the prospect of easily having a career in Islamic financial institutions.

Of the many offers for majors/study programs related to sharia economics, there is a phenomenon that captures the attention and minds of study program policymakers at the university level, namely relatively few people are interested in studying in certain study programs because they are considered lacking. Prospective. For example, in the case of IAIN Ponorogo, there is a significant difference in the number of students of the zakat and waqf management study program when compared to other study programs such as sharia economics and sharia banking within the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business IAIN Ponorogo.

This reality shows that there is an inequality in the number of students in the zakat and waqf management study program compared to other majors due to the lack of interest of prospective new students in studying the problem of zakat and waqf which is considered less prospective to be able to compete

in the labor market in the future. However, this may not always be true, because currently zakat management organizations in Indonesia have developed very well. Agreeing with Khasanah, in Indonesia there are currently 4 (four) models of zakat management organizations, namely: bureaucratic model, business model, mass organization model, and traditional model (Khasanah, 2010). Every model of zakat management organization certainly requires a workforce that comes from graduates of the zakat and waqf study program.

Several studies related to college marketing at the institute/university level have been conducted, but there are still very few studies that analyze the marketing strategy of the study program specifically. Research conducted at the institute/university level includes a study of marketing strategies at private universities that suggest a combination of various marketing strategies, choose appropriate and potential markets, and pay attention to aspects of price, product, promotion, and distribution (Romli, 2020). As for public campuses, the strategy emphasized is a promotion strategy through advertising, socialization, brochures, and media (Malarangan et al., 2020). Some researchers also emphasize on the strategy of implementing the promotion mix such as: 4P, namely *product*, *price*, *place*, *promotion*, *people*, *physical evidence*, and *process* (Maisah et al., 2020; Tanti et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, another research related to the offer of a more specific strategy in developing a new study program is that there must be an analysis of the internal and external

conditions of universities. Then analyze internal and external factors that encourage the development of new study programs. In addition, if the development of new study programs is used as a competitive strategy, then the internal party of the university needs a process to come up with ideas, filter ideas, develop and test concepts, develop marketing strategies, analyze businesses, and develop new products (Widayani, 2018)

Related to the above reality, it may be necessary for stakeholders of the IAIN Ponorogo Zakat and Waqf Management study program to determine the right promotion strategy. According to Porter, there are 3 (three) marketing strategies that can be used by companies to be effective in business competition, namely: cost advantage, differentiation, and focus (Porter, 1980). These strategies are very important so that the zakat and waqf study program has a comparative advantage and competitive advantage both internally and externally IAIN Ponorogo. So the analysis of the marketing strategy of the zakat and waqf management study program is interesting to research. Based on the above background, the purpose of this research is to identify marketing strategies for the zakat and waqf management study program to increase the interest of prospective new students to study in the department of zakat and waqf management IAIN Ponorogo.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Higher Education Marketing

Marketing activities that have been taking place in the business world have slowly begun to be applied by many universities with the aim of gaining a competitive advantage (Mankiw, 2009) Meanwhile, marketing is one of the tools that can help a university survive in an increasingly competitive environment. In addition, a university is an institution that provides services/services, so all the characteristics of service/service marketing activities can be applied to universities. The main target market of higher education is students as the main consumers/clients who are segmented both demographically and geographically (Kusumawati, 2018).

Universities can also apply strategic *positioning* to differentiate themselves from competitors so that they can be firmly embedded in the minds of the community. For example, some universities strengthen their position as teaching-based campuses, while their competitors occupy positions as research-based campuses. In fact, some universities that present themselves as science-based campuses are different from their competitors who have art-based uniqueness (Kusumawati, 2018).

The 4P model marketing mix activities (product, price, distribution, and promotion) can also be applied by universities. Product policy in higher education refers to

services/services that include: teaching, research, and services to third parties. Services/services have the nature of interpersonal interaction between customers and service staff (lecturers and administrative staff) often affect satisfaction. Therefore, the quality of services provided by universities is very important because it can trigger customer satisfaction (Kusumawati, 2018).

The price policy is related to the pricing of educational services that are set differently based on the uniqueness of each university. Even in this case, the state intervenes in setting the basic tuition fee rate at several government-owned campuses. However, there are several universities that implement free tuition fees through scholarships in collaboration with institution/person donors. This means that the price aspect is very important which can affect students' decisions in deciding to study at a university (Kusumawati, 2018).

Universities can also carry out distribution activities with the aim of bringing their services closer to potential customers as the core of the virtues of distribution channels in the marketing mix in universities. Although this policy is not applicable in its implementation, recently many universities have implemented this policy as an effort to get closer to their students in the form of distance *learning* and online learning models (Kusumawati, 2018).

The next marketing mix that is most often applied by universities is a promotion policy, which is related to strong

promotion and communication aimed at potential applicants so that it can increase recruitment and admission of new students. However, these promotional activities should not only be at the time of new student screening, but must be continued with an improvement in the quality of educational services by universities because it is more important so that it can bring satisfaction to the main customers, namely students (Kusumawati, 2018).

2. Marketing Strategy

To be able to attract prospective new students, the study program must have a specific strategy that companies can use to find consumers, namely:

a. Cost Advantages (*Overall Cost Leadership*)

In this strategy concept, the company is committed to becoming a manufacturer that has the lowest cost in the industry by offering a lower selling price than the price offered by its competitors with the same value or quality of products. The sources of cost advantages can vary depending on the characteristics of the industrial structure. These sources can come from their own technology, easy access to raw materials, and so on (Hubeis & Najib, 2014). Efforts made by study programs when taking this strategy include implementing relatively affordable tuition fees for all groups, providing scholarships, and others.

b. Differentiation

With this strategy, the company seeks to be different in its industry in various aspects that are

generally valued by buyers. To create differentiation, companies must make a certain perception of the superiority of a product in the eyes of its consumers. Companies identify one or more of the attributes that are considered important by many consumers in an industry and can differentially position themselves to meet those needs, such as excellence in maximum product performance, cutting-edge product innovation, quality service, and *brand image* superior. The process of differentiating is adjusted to the type of industry or depends on the uniqueness of a product itself, such as how it is sold, marketing strategy, and other aspects. Companies that choose unique attributes to differentiate themselves from those of their competitors will be judged as having high performance in their industry (Hubeis & Najib, 2014) Efforts made by study programs when taking this strategy are for example applying uniqueness to fast administrative services (*one day service*), lecture facilities and infrastructure with certain nuances, the uniqueness of graduates' output skills in specific fields, and others.

c. Focus

This strategy is different from other strategies, especially in emphasizing a choice of competitive segments that are more oriented in an industry, namely focusing on choosing a certain segment in an industry and adapting a special strategy in serving consumers without looking at other aspects. This strategy is applied in order

to generate a competitive advantage in a segment that is intended to be targeted, while on the other hand the company has shortcomings in terms of overall competitive advantage. This strategy has two types, namely cost focus and differentiation focus. For example, a cost-focused strategy, the company will seek a competitive advantage in terms of low cost in its target segment. While the strategy focuses on differentiation, the company seeks differentiation on an attribute in the purpose segment (Hubeis & Najib, 2014) The efforts made by the study program when taking this strategy are to focus on certain segments, for example attracting prospective students from Islamic boarding school alumni.

METHODOLOGY

This research method uses a qualitative descriptive method, namely describing the phenomenon of how the marketing strategy of the zakat and waqf management study program in increasing public interest in studying in the zakat and waqf management study program, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, IAIN Ponorogo (Yusuf, 2014) For data mining, it was carried out by interviewing policymakers for the development of the zakat and waqf management study program of the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, IAIN Ponorogo. The data analysis in this study uses the Miles

& Huberman technique which starts from data reduction, namely sorting and selecting the data from the interview results that are relevant to the research, then presenting the data by describing and narrating the data from the interview results, and then drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2008)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Description of the Research Object

In this section, the researcher will describe the research object consisting of: history, vision, mission, objectives, Zakat and Waqf Management study program of the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business IAIN Ponorogo is as follows:

a. The History of the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program

The history of the establishment of the waqf zakat management study program is closely related to the history of the establishment of the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business within IAIN Ponorogo. The forerunner of the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business is the Sharia Economics and Sharia Banking study program which was part of the sharia department when it was still in the status of STAIN Ponorogo. These two study programs received an establishment permit in 2014 from the Directorate General of Islamic Education with Decree No. 7062 of 2014. Furthermore, in 2015 the

Zakat and Waqf study program was also opened with a Decree of establishment permit from the Directorate General of Islamic Education No. 4723 of 2015. Based on the nomenclature of the study program, finally in 2017, the Zakat and Waqf Study Program changed its name to Zakat and Waqf Management with the Decree of the Director General No. 2084 of 2017.

b. Vision, Mission, and Objectives of the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program

1) All

The vision of the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program is to produce graduates who are professional in the field of zakat and waqf management with a sociopreneur spirit based on moral character in realizing a civil society.

2) Mission

The mission of the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program is:

1. Organizing education that excels in producing graduates in the field of zakat and waqf management who have a sociopreneur spirit based on moral character in realizing a civil society.
 - a) Carry out research in the field of zakat and waqf management that contributes positively to the realization of civil society.
 - b) Carrying out sociopreneur-based community service effectively and sustainably, so that it can play an

active role in socio-economic empowerment in realizing civil society.

- c) Carrying out cooperation in the context of improving the quality of graduates in the field of zakat and waqf management who have a sociopreneur spirit based on moral character in realizing a civil society.

3) Purpose

The objectives of the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program are:

1. The implementation of education that excels in producing graduates in the field of zakat and waqf management who have a sociopreneur spirit based on moral character in realizing a civil society.
 2. The implementation of research in the field of zakat and waqf management that contributes positively to the realization of civil society.
 3. The implementation of sociopreneur-based community service effectively and sustainably, so that it can play an active role in socio-economic empowerment in realizing civil society.
- a) The implementation of the cooperation in the context of improving the quality of graduates in the field of zakat and waqf management who have a sociopreneur spirit based on moral character in realizing a civil society.

2. Marketing Strategy

This study provides an alternative offer of marketing strategies for the IAIN Ponorogo Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program which is considered less prospective to be able to compete in the labor market in the future. These strategies are cost advantage, differentiation, and focus (Porter, 1980).

a. Cost Advantages

The first strategy offered is cost advantage. In theory, the concept of this strategy is how companies commit to being the lowest cost manufacturer in the industry by offering a lower selling price than the price offered by its competitors with the same quality of products (Hubeis & Najib, 2014). In the context of the study program, it means that the study program applies relatively affordable tuition fees for all groups, provides scholarships, and others.

The results of this study show the advantages of the cost delinquency strategy if applied in the IAIN Ponorogo Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program can attract the interest of many prospective new students who want to go to college, so that the IAIN Ponorogo Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program will have a large number of students because it implements cheap tuition fees through scholarships or tuition discounts which in turn can be a means of promotion to attract more prospective students new.

The effectiveness of the cost advantage strategy with low tuition fees through scholarships and tuition discounts can attract students has been proven by several research results in various countries. Research by Wagner and Fard (2009) in Malaysia found that the cost of education has a significant relationship with students' intention to study at university. In addition, Goven, et al. and Hoyt and Brown (2003) also found in the United States that financial aid (scholarships) is a factor that influences students to choose universities (Kusumawati, 2018).

The cost advantage strategy has the potential to fail, if universities cannot properly manage the cheap tuition strategy which is sourced from the cross-subsidy system from overpayment of tuition fees from other departments/study programs or from donors, both private and government, in providing scholarship funds. Therefore, in order for this cost advantage strategy to be successful, it is necessary to have good and planned management and do a lot of cooperation with various parties.

b. Differentiation

The second recommended strategy is differentiation. Conceptually, this strategy is how a company seeks to be different in its industry in various aspects that are generally valued by buyers. To create differentiation, companies must make a certain perception

of the superiority of a product in the eyes of its consumers. For example, excellence in maximum product performance, cutting-edge product innovation, quality service, and *superior* brand image (Hubeis & Najib, 2014). In the context of the study program, it means that the study program applies uniqueness to fast administrative services (*one day service*), lecture facilities and infrastructure with certain nuances, the uniqueness of graduates' output skills in specific fields, and others.

The results of this study show that if the differentiation strategy applied in the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program IAIN Ponorogo has advantages, namely it can produce professional graduates with adequate infrastructure support, qualified lecturers, curriculum development relevant to the industrial world, optimal lecture activities, and cooperation with various parties. This condition occurs if the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program IAIN Ponorogo is committed to emphasizing and developing certain uniqueness that is mutually agreed, for example, producing graduates who have unique skills in the field of zakat and waqf management, it will be a positive signal to be able to increase the demand from graduate users and at the same time be an effective promotion to bring in a large number of new students.

The differentiation strategy by applying a form of uniqueness that is mutually agreed upon by university

policymakers will form strong institutional characteristics and be proven to be effective in attracting students' interest, as revealed in the research of Tavares, et al (2008) in Portugal that relevant institutional characteristics such as teaching quality, prestige, infrastructure, libraries, computer facilities, location, The quality of the curriculum, the quality of scientific research, administrative support, extra-curricular factors, and the availability of student exchange programs are important factors that can influence students in choosing a university (Kusumawati, 2018).

The differentiation strategy becomes less effective, if there is no strong commitment and support from policy makers for a uniqueness that will be developed together. Therefore, in order for this differentiation strategy to be successful, a university leader who has a leadership style that can move his subordinates to realize certain uniqueness to the maximum.

c. Focus

The last marketing strategy suggested by the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program IAIN Ponorogo is focus. Conceptually, this strategy is how the company emphasizes on a choice of competitive segments that are more oriented in an industry, namely by focusing on choosing a certain segment by adapting a special strategy in serving consumers. This strategy is applied in order to produce a competitive advantage in a segment that is

intended to be targeted (Hubeis & Najib, 2014). In the context of the study program, it means that the study program focuses on working on certain segments, for example attracting prospective students from Islamic boarding school alumni.

The results of this study show that if the focus strategy applied in the Zakat and Waqf Management Study Program IAIN Ponorogo has an advantage, namely it can produce professional graduates who are relevant to the industrial world. This condition occurs because the study program can carry out careful planning at the beginning to determine the right criteria for prospective students so that they can be processed and educated to become professional graduates so that it can be a positive signal received by prospective graduate users and prospective new students.

The focus strategy by working on a certain segment of prospective students has been proven to be effective in attracting students with certain backgrounds because choosing a university is actually exploring the influence of the personality factor of each prospective student, as revealed in the research of Tavares, et al (2008) in Portugal that students' choice of university seems to be greatly influenced by gender background. In addition, family cultural and economic factors not only affect the likelihood of entering college, but are also

related to the choice of study program and type of college (Kusumawati, 2018).

The focus strategy can be less effective if the study program makes mistakes in planning to determine student segments, as well as a lack of coordination from stakeholders to get strong support from various parties. Therefore, in order for this focus strategy to be successful, it requires the real role of all university stakeholders. For example, if this focus strategy is carried out by working on a segment of prospective students from underprivileged families as a form of campus social concern for the surrounding environment, then all stakeholders must think about how to provide financial support to carry out the strategy.

CONCLUSION

Alternative marketing strategies offered for the IAIN Ponorogo zakat and waqf management study program are 1) cost advantage by implementing relatively affordable tuition fees and providing scholarships, 2) differentiation applying uniqueness to fast administrative services (*one day service*), lecture facilities and infrastructure with certain nuances, uniqueness of graduate output skills, and 3) focus on working on certain segments, for example attracting prospective students from alumni of Islamic boarding schools.

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