

Studi Tentang Peran Branding Institusi, Ekspektasi, *Brand Experience*, *Brand Love* Terhadap *Word Of Mouth (WOM)* pada Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Swasta di Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) Sunan Pandanaran Yogyakarta

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INTISARI

Perkembangan perguruan tinggi swasta (PTS) di Indonesia menghadapi tantangan serius, termasuk rendahnya minat calon mahasiswa yang berdampak pada keberlangsungan institusi. Perlu upaya lebih dari PTS agar dapat bersaing dalam merekrut mahasiswa baru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana branding institusi, ekspektasi mahasiswa, *brand experience*, dan *brand love* dapat meningkatkan daya saing PTS, khususnya di STAI Sunan Pandanaran (STAISPA) Yogyakarta. Metodologi penelitian kualitatif digunakan, dengan wawancara mendalam sebagai teknik pengumpulan data, melibatkan alumni, mahasiswa, dan pimpinan institusi. Analisis penelitian menggunakan pengkodean, *open coding*, *axial coding*, *selective coding*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa STAISPA telah berupaya membangun branding yang kuat melalui fokus pada pendidikan Al-Qur'an, biaya terjangkau, dan lokasi strategis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ekspektasi mahasiswa yang terpenuhi dan pengalaman belajar yang positif membangun keterikatan emosional dan loyalitas, mendorong *word of mouth (WoM)* yang efektif. Namun, diperlukan usaha lebih untuk memperluas daya tarik branding dan meningkatkan aspek akademik serta non-akademik. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk peneliti pengaruh branding institusi dan *word of mouth* terhadap keputusan berkuliah.

Kata Kunci: brand institusi, ekspektasi, *brand experience*, *brand love*, mahasiswa

Study On The Role Of Institutional Branding, Expectations, Brand Experience, Brand Love Towards Word Of Mouth (WOM) at Private Islamic Religious College in Sunan Pandanaran Islamic Religious College Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

The development of private higher education institutions (PTS) in Indonesia faces serious challenges, including the low interest of prospective students in which it later on has an impact on the sustainability of the institution. More efforts are then required from private higher education institutions to be capable of competing in recruiting new students. This study aims to explore how institutional branding, student expectations, brand experience, and brand love can improve the competitiveness of private higher education institutions, especially at STAI Sunan Pandanaran (STAISPA) Yogyakarta. It used qualitative research methodology with in-depth interviews as data collection techniques, involving alumni, students, and institutional leaders. The research analysis uses coding, open coding, axial coding, selective coding. The results of the study showed that STAISPA has made some efforts to build strong branding through a focus on Al-Qur'an education, affordable costs, and strategic locations. They also showed that the fulfilled student expectations and positive learning experiences build emotional attachment and loyalty, encouraging effective word of mouth (WoM). However, more efforts are needed to expand the appeal of branding and improve academic and non-academic aspects. Further research is recommended for researchers on the influence of institutional branding and word of mouth on college decisions.

Keywords: *institutional brand, expectations, brand experience, brand love, students*