



Islamic Word of Mouth: The Role of Da'wah and Community in Promoting Islamic Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

One promotional approach that has proven effective and cost-effective is the Word of Mouth (WOM) strategy, namely the dissemination of information or experiences from one individual to another, verbally or digitally. Institutions need to have a mechanism for clarification, media literacy, and Islamic communication education so that the spread of WOM remains ethical and truthful. The results of the study are that Word of Mouth (WOM) is a very effective communication strategy in promoting Islamic educational institutions. However, from an Islamic perspective, WOM is not merely a promotional tool, but also a medium for da'wah that conveys the truth, spreads goodness, and strengthens the image of the institution ethically and spiritually. The implementation of Islamic Word of Mouth requires the involvement of all stakeholders, especially internal communities such as teachers, parents of students, alumni, and local community leaders. The role of this community is the main force in creating authentic, memorable, and sustainable promotions. The practice of Islamic WOM must be based on the values of da'wah, namely conveying correct information, not exaggerating, not containing slander, and always prioritizing etiquette. Promotion based on positive experiences and role models is far more effective than formal advertising because it has deep emotional and spiritual power.

Keywords: *Da'wah community; Islamic Word of Mouth; Islamic promotion.*

INTRODUCTION

In an era of increasingly competitive competition among educational institutions, every institution is required to market itself effectively and sustainably. Not only general educational institutions, but also Islamic educational institutions must begin to consider communication and promotional strategies to ensure their existence remains relevant, recognized, and trusted by the wider community (Alwifaqi & Ambarwati,

2022). One promotional approach that has proven to be effective and cost-effective is the Word of Mouth (WOM) strategy, namely the dissemination of information or experiences from one individual to another, either verbally or digitally.

Indonesian society, with its collective culture and strong family values, makes WOM a highly influential promotional tool. Recommendations from relatives, religious teachers, alumni, or community leaders are often more trusted than formal advertising (Arafah & Subali, 2023). Therefore, Islamic educational institutions need to utilize the power of WOM with an approach that is in accordance with Islamic values so that they do not get caught up in mere promotion, but also carry out the mission of preaching and empowerment.

From an Islamic perspective, communication cannot be separated from the values of manners and ethics. The Quran and Hadith teach the importance of conveying information honestly, not exaggerating, and avoiding slander or lying (Yussitha et al., 2023). Therefore, WOM practices applied in the promotion of Islamic education must be based on these principles, so that the information disseminated is not only correct, but also brings blessings and benefits.

Apart from ethical values, it is also important to understand that WOM in the context of Islamic education is part of da'wah (Mappanyompa et al., 2024). Sharing positive experiences about an institution, encouraging parents to send their children to Islamic institutions, or sharing Islamic activities at the school through social media are all potential forms of educational da'wah. This means that WOM not only impacts the institution's image but also disseminates Islamic values to the wider community.

Another factor that strengthens the effectiveness of WOM is the role of the community. Communities of parents, alumni, religious study groups, and education volunteers are crucial actors in spreading positive messages about educational institutions (Arroji & Ruspitasari, 2022). When they actively engage in institutional activities, they naturally become promotional agents, bringing authentic experiences to their surrounding community. This community strength must be managed and directed within an Islamic value-based promotional strategy.

However, the use of WOM in Islamic education is not without challenges. Not all testimonials are based on genuine experience, and there is also the risk of spreading unverified negative information (Haryeni &

Mawaddah, 2022). Therefore, institutions need to have a mechanism for clarification, media literacy, and Islamic communication education so that the WOM that is spread remains protected from an ethical and truthful perspective.

This reality drives the need for an in-depth study of how WOM can be integrated Islamically into the promotional strategies of Islamic educational institutions. This article stems from the concern that many Islamic institutions remain passive in leveraging the potential of WOM and community outreach, or even neglect the da'wah aspect of their public communication practices. However, if managed strategically, WOM can be a powerful avenue for da'wah and promotion.

Through this article, the author aims to illustrate how an Islamic word-of-mouth approach can be used to strengthen an institution's image, build a network of community support, and simultaneously instill da'wah values in its communication strategy. This study also emphasizes that marketing Islamic educational institutions should not simply focus on enrollment numbers but should also embrace a moral and spiritual mission in all its practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Word of Mouth in Islamic Perspective

Word of Mouth (WOM) is generally understood as the process of spreading information or recommendations from one individual to another, either directly (verbally) or through social media and digital platforms. In the marketing world, WOM is considered a very powerful form of promotion because it is based on trust and real experiences of people who have experienced a product or service (Basusena & Astiti, 2020). In the educational context, WOM has great power in shaping institutional image and fostering public trust.

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of WOM is closely related to the Islamic communication values taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Maknunah et al., 2023). Islam commands its followers to convey goodness, spread correct information, and avoid spreading false news or slander. One verse that emphasizes this is Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 6: "O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, then verify it thoroughly..." This shows that in conveying information (including WOM), Islam emphasizes verification, honesty, and responsibility.

The basic concept of WOM in Islam can be linked to the activity of "tabligh" (conveying the truth). In this case, sharing positive experiences about an Islamic educational institution with others can be part of da'wah (Purnama et al., 2019). If the information shared contains a call to goodness and provides benefits to others, then WOM not only acts as a promotional tool, but also as a rewarding medium for preaching.

Islam also encourages its followers to advise one another on good deeds, as stated in QS. Al-'Ashr: "And advise one another to truth and patience." Recommending quality Islamic educational institutions that educate students with Islamic values is a concrete form of social advice. Islamic WOM was not born out of mere business interests, but rather from a drive to spread the good and strengthen the Islamic educational community.

However, in Islam there are also strict limits regarding the delivery of information. The hadith of the Prophet SAW states: "It is enough for someone to be called a liar if he tells everything he hears." (HR. Muslim)(al-Hajaj, 2010). This serves as a warning that WOM should not be conducted carelessly, without clarification or proper knowledge. Conveying inaccurate information, especially information that is detrimental to other institutions, is contrary to Islamic ethics and can lead to sin.

Therefore, Islamic WOM is not only about what is conveyed, but also how and why it is conveyed. Right intentions, polite speech, and clear facts must be the main foundations. In practice, Islamic WOM can be realized through honest testimonies from students' parents, recommendations from alumni, or stories from the daily lives of teachers and students that reflect Islamic morals (Hamdani & Maimun, 2025). This type of content will be more touching and convincing because it stems from real experiences and faith values.

Furthermore, Islamic WOM can also utilize digital media wisely. In today's era, the spread of WOM is no longer limited to face-to-face conversations, but has also reached social media, video testimonials, Google reviews, and even discussions in community WhatsApp groups. If managed with an Islamic approach, these digital platforms can be highly effective tools for disseminating positive information, expanding da'wah networks, and increasing trust in Islamic educational institutions.

Thus, the concept of Word of Mouth from an Islamic perspective is not merely a promotional tool, but rather a form of communication that brings goodness and spiritual values (Febyana et al., 2023). When WOM is

used with the intention of preaching, delivered with manners, and accompanied by honesty and responsibility, it becomes a strategic means to strengthen the position of Islamic educational institutions in society and raise the image of Islam more broadly and with dignity.

The Role of Da'wah in Word of Mouth Practice

Da'wah in Islam is the activity of conveying Islamic teachings with wisdom, sound advice, and a polite approach. Da'wah is not only carried out by preachers or ustadz (Islamic preachers) from the pulpit, but can also be realized in the daily lives of Muslims through speech, behavior, and social interactions. One form of contemporary da'wah that often goes unnoticed is word of mouth (WOM), which involves conveying positive information and experiences to others, especially in the context of promoting Islamic values and Islamic educational institutions.

In practice, Islamic WOM contains a da'wah dimension because the information conveyed by someone is not merely a recommendation but also carries a moral message, an invitation to goodness, and the dissemination of Islamic values (Hidayat & Ariffin, 2023). When someone recommends an Islamic educational institution because of the quality of its education, the exemplary conduct of its teachers, or the moral values it instills, it constitutes a form of narrative and social da'wah.

Da'wah in WOM positions interpersonal communication as the most powerful means of shaping public perception. Unlike formal advertising, which is often considered manipulative, WOM is more credible because it originates from close contacts, such as friends, relatives, or community leaders. This is why Islamic WOM is so strategic as a da'wah medium: it is natural, non-patronizing, and emotionally engaging.

The importance of da'wah in WOM is clearly evident when the information shared relates to the success of Islamic educational institutions in fostering character, developing pious students, or organizing socio-religious activities. All of these narratives, if packaged well and honestly, will become a vibrant da'wah within the community and have a significant impact on the image of Islam itself (Trilaksono et al., 2021).

A simple example of the role of da'wah in WOM is when a parent tells a friend about the changes in their child's behavior after entering an Islamic school: he prays more diligently, is more polite to his parents, and is accustomed to reading the Quran. Without intending to promote it, the story serves as an indirect invitation for others to consider an Islamic-based

education (Rahim, 2024). This is *bil hal* da'wah through WOM.

In many cases, WOM preaching is more successful than conventional promotion. This is because people trust real-life experiences more than brochures or banners (Suprihatin, 2015). Therefore, Islamic educational institutions should facilitate the emergence of WOM with a da'wah dimension, by maintaining the quality of service, building good relationships with parents, and creating meaningful educational experiences (Wahid, 2023).

However, the role of da'wah in WOM demands Islamic communication ethics. The information conveyed must be accurate, not exaggerated, not disparaging other institutions, and not containing elements of *riya'* (showing off). Da'wah through WOM must be based on the intention to spread benefits, not simply to improve the image of the organization (Suprayitno, 2021). Without this foundation, WOM can turn into a propaganda tool that leads to arrogance or even gossip.

Islamic WOM can also occur in digital environments, such as parent-teacher WhatsApp groups, social media comments, video testimonials, or reviews on Google Maps. This is where da'wah meets technology. An alumnus who writes a positive review of an Islamic school he attended is actually da'wah and spreading good values. Similarly, a parent who shares their child's activities at school through social media (Fadhila & Abdilah, 2025).

Islamic educational institutions need to respond to this opportunity by providing space and media for stakeholders to channel positive WOM (word of mouth) da'wah. For example, creating alumni testimonial content that focuses on character transformation, videos of school activities that emphasize Islamic values, or reflective content from teachers and students (Astana & Sumiasa, 2023). This is not just promotion, but also a contribution to the spread of digital da'wah.

Da'wah through WOM also demands consistency in the values and behavior of Islamic educational institutions. Without exemplary behavior, there will be no positive stories worth sharing. Therefore, internalizing Islamic values within the school's organizational culture is crucial so that the WOM that emerges is truly born from real experience, not fabricated communication.

In addition to teachers and parents, the role of alumni is also crucial in da'wah through WOM. Successful alumni with Islamic character are tangible evidence of the success of Islamic education (Abdurrisal et al.,

2022). When they convey the positive influence of their former institution to new work environments or communities, WOM (Islamic da'wah) spreads widely and creates a positive impression that impacts public trust.

Thus, Islamic WOM is not just ordinary promotion, but rather a form of social da'wah with significant potential to expand the influence of Islamic educational institutions. When WOM is conducted honestly, responsibly, and based on Islamic values, it becomes a promotional tool that not only increases the number of students but also strengthens Islam's role in building social civilization through education (Afida et al., 2025).

The Role of the Community in Spreading Islamic Word of Mouth

Communities have a strategic position in shaping public opinion and disseminating information, including in the context of promoting Islamic educational institutions (Hildayanti & Satriyani, 2022). In the Word of Mouth (WOM) approach, the community plays a major role in spreading messages, because they are directly connected to the social environment of prospective students (Afida et al., 2025). A strong sense of trust among community members makes the message more easily accepted and influential.

From an Islamic perspective, the community or congregation is a crucial element in upholding good values. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The hand of Allah is with the congregation." (Narrated by Tirmidhi)(Kholis et al., 2024), which demonstrates the importance of collective strength in bringing goodness. Therefore, community involvement in spreading Islamic-themed WOM is not only a promotional strategy, but also part of implementing the values of Islamic da'wah and brotherhood.

The communities in question include parents, alumni, teachers, foundation administrators, religious leaders, study groups, and volunteers. They have direct or indirect experience with Islamic educational institutions and have significant potential to convey information that shapes public perception (Alazeez et al., 2024). Because it originates from trusted sources, WOM delivered by communities tends to be more convincing than formal promotions.

Parents, for example, can be effective agents of Islamic WOM when they share positive experiences regarding changes in their children's behavior after attending an Islamic institution. These stories are usually told naturally in everyday conversation, but their impact can be extraordinary.

They not only recommend the school but also convey messages about the importance of education based on religious values.

Alumni are also a vital part of the community, shaping the institution's image. Their success in the workplace or in the community can be a tangible testament to the quality of education provided. When alumni voluntarily promote their alma mater to the next generation, it is not just a matter of pride but also a form of Islamic WOM that reflects gratitude and commitment to educational da'wah.

In the digital world, communities can play an active role through social media, WhatsApp groups, online discussion forums, and YouTube channels. Positive comments, posts about children's activities, or video testimonials from parents can spread widely and become Islamic WOM that reaches a wider audience. The existence of this digital community strengthens the dissemination of da'wah values and expands the presence of Islamic educational institutions in the public sphere. In addition to conveying positive messages, communities also play a role in clarifying negative issues or information circulating about institutions. In Islam, *tabayyun* (clarification) is a key principle in receiving or disseminating information (Andrianto et al., 2022). Therefore, an active and loyal community can help maintain an institution's reputation by conveying accurate and factual information and preventing the spread of slander.

To optimize the community's role in Islamic WOM, Islamic educational institutions need to build close and participatory relationships with their communities. Involving them in school activities, evaluation forums, and socio-religious programs will foster a sense of ownership (Astana & Sumiasa, 2023). When a community feels a part of an institution, they will voluntarily and consistently spread positive information about it.

It's also important for institutions to acknowledge and appreciate the community's contribution to promotion. This can be done in the form of awards, published testimonials, or simply a thank you (Arifianto & Purnomo, 2024). An attitude of respect will strengthen the emotional bond between the community and the institution, making the word of mouth (WOM) more powerful and meaningful.

Islamic WOM from the community not only impacts the promotional aspect but also contributes to strengthening the institution's image as having character and Islamic values (Ibrahim et al., 2023). When communities disseminate information aligned with Islamic values—such as morality, integrity, togetherness, and knowledge—the institution's image

will be authentic and trusted by the wider community.

Thus, communities are a crucial pillar of the Islamic Word of Mouth strategy. Through their active involvement in conveying messages of goodness, communities not only help promote Islamic educational institutions but also become part of a collective da'wah movement that strengthens the role of Islamic education in society (Alwifaqi & Ambarwati, 2022; Ikhwan et al., 2025). Building synergy with the community is a strategic and spiritual step that must continue to be developed by every Islamic educational institution.

Effective Islamic Word of Mouth Building Strategies

An effective Islamic Word of Mouth (WOM) building strategy requires an approach that is not only oriented towards marketing results, but is also based on sharia values (Arafah & Subali, 2023; Sulistiawati et al., 2022). Islamic WOM is not merely the dissemination of information, but rather part of Islamic communication that prioritizes honesty, etiquette, and usefulness. Therefore, WOM strategic planning must combine spiritual and professional aspects.

The first step in building Islamic WOM is maintaining the quality of service and the integrity of the institution. WOM will only emerge if the public or users of educational services have a real, positive experience. Parents' satisfaction with the curriculum, teachers, facilities, and administrative services will become a natural narrative they share with others. Therefore, building a memorable experience is an absolute foundation.

The second strategy is to ensure that the entire academic community internalizes the values of da'wah in all activities. The exemplary behavior of teachers, the moral character of educational staff, and trustworthy and transparent institutional governance will foster a positive image (Devi et al., 2025; Nindialisma, 2022). If institutions consistently present Islamic values authentically, then good stories will flow naturally and become strong Islamic WOM.

Furthermore, institutions can strengthen relationships with parent communities, alumni, and the surrounding community. These communities play a central role in spreading word of mouth (WOM) because they are trusted and close to prospective students. Involving them in activities, social programs, or evaluation forums will strengthen their sense of belonging, encouraging them to voluntarily recommend the institution.

To expand the impact of WOM, it's also important to establish a systematic testimonial and experience-sharing program. Schools can facilitate the creation of short videos from parents or alumni, written accounts of learning experiences, or student success stories, which can be featured on the institution's official social media platforms (Audina et al., 2024; Basusena & Astiti, 2020). This narrative must be composed honestly, inspiringly, and full of Islamic values so that it can reach a wider audience.

A digital approach is crucial in today's WOM. Therefore, institutions need to utilize social media with an Islamic communication style (Efendi et al., 2024). Content such as Islamic motivational quotes, inspiring videos of school activities, and highlights of student achievements will spread quickly if presented in an engaging and shareable manner. Each post can trigger the ever-expanding online word-of-mouth (WOM).

The next strategy is to develop a culture of sincere and friendly service. WOM stems not only from achievements but also from simple interactions. A warm greeting from a teacher, a quick response from school administrators, or a personal approach to welcoming guests can leave a lasting impression. Islamic WOM is born from small experiences carried out with good manners and good intentions (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Maknunah et al., 2023).

Institutions also need to develop loyalty programs or alumni ambassadorships, where successful and influential alumni are appointed as ambassadors to share their positive experiences. They can be invited to school activities, given a platform to share in seminars, or asked to write reflections on their experiences. Alumni have the potential to become the most powerful and credible agents of Islamic WOM.

In Islamic WOM practices, it is important to maintain ethics and caution in conveying information (Sulistyawati et al., 2023). Information that exaggerates, compares negatively with other institutions, or creates unrealistic expectations, should be avoided. Islamic WOM must remain based on the truth and stay away from *riya'*, *ghuluw* (exaggeration), and backbiting. This is in accordance with the principles of communication in Islam.

Islamic WOM strategies can also be promoted through social activities that involve the community (Dhana et al., 2022; Hamdani & Maimun, 2025). For example, programs like sharing basic food packages, orphanages, parent training, or community service programs organized by schools. When Islamic institutions provide direct benefits to the

community, they become a topic of positive discussion that spreads organically.

Regular evaluation is a crucial strategy for measuring the success of WOM. Institutions need to listen to the voice of the community through satisfaction surveys, parent forums, or digital feedback. This feedback not only helps internal improvements but also demonstrates that the institution is open to input, thereby fostering trust that strengthens WOM from external parties.

Strengthening Islamic WOM can also be done by integrating spiritual values in all promotional activities (Hafsari, 2024). Gentle sentences of preaching, prayers inserted in the content, or moral reminders in brochures will give a spiritual nuance to the institution's public messages (Rahim, 2024). Promotion with an Islamic spirit will differentiate the institution from secular approaches and touch the hearts of the people.

Building a promotional or public relations team that understands the concept of Islamic WOM is also a crucial strategy. They must be equipped with da'wah literacy, communication skills, and ethical awareness to build the institution's image. This team is not only tasked with disseminating information but also ensuring that every communication from the institution is an invitation to goodness and blessings.

Consistency is key in WOM. Institutions cannot build Islamic WOM instantly (Rahmawati & Assidik, 2025). It requires a long-term process through quality service, polite communication, and genuine interaction. When people see this consistency year after year, WOM will grow naturally and be continuously strengthened by the real experiences of many people.

Thus, an effective strategy for building Islamic word of mouth is a synergy between service quality, community strength, digital communication, and Islamic missionary values. WOM born of good intentions, conducted correctly, and aimed at spreading benefits will be the most powerful promotion for Islamic educational institutions (Afif et al., 2021; Mahaputra & Saputra, 2021). This is not just a marketing effort, but also part of our dedication to advancing education and spreading Islamic values within society.

CONCLUSION

Word of Mouth (WOM) is a highly effective communication strategy for promoting Islamic educational institutions, particularly in communities that uphold social trust and family values. However, from an Islamic perspective, WOM is not merely a promotional tool but also a medium for Islamic propagation, conveying the truth, spreading goodness, and strengthening the institution's image ethically and spiritually. Implementing Islamic WOM requires the involvement of all stakeholders, especially internal communities such as teachers, parents, alumni, and local community leaders. When they are actively involved and have positive experiences with the institution, they naturally become trusted agents of communication. This community role is a key force in creating authentic, memorable, and sustainable promotion.

Islamic WOM practices must be grounded in Islamic propagation values: conveying accurate information, not exaggerating, not containing slander, and always prioritizing good manners. Promotion based on positive experiences and role models is far more effective than formal advertising due to its profound emotional and spiritual power. With proper management, Islamic word of mouth can become the foundation of an Islamic educational institution's communication strategy, not only increasing the number of students but also strengthening public trust and expanding the reach of Islamic outreach. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions need to build a community-based promotional system, guided by sharia values, and directed toward creating blessings, not just popularity.

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