



Marketing Strategies of Islamic Educational Institutions During Globalization: A Theoretical Review of Cultural Capital and Local Religiosity Values

Dyan Pratiwi^{1*}, Betania Kartika Muflih², Syukri Fathudin Achmad Widodo³,
Nujumun Niswah⁴

¹Fattahul Muluk State Islamic Institute, Papua, Indonesia

²International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia

^{3,4}Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Email Correspondence: dyan.pratiwi@iainfmpapua.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The contemporary educational landscape is undergoing a massive transformation driven by globalization, forcing Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) to navigate between maintaining moral traditions and competing in a liberal, outcome-oriented market. This study aims to explore how integrating cultural capital and local religious values can serve as a robust foundation for IEI marketing strategies to build public trust. Utilizing a qualitative approach with library research, this study deconstructs Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and contextualizes it within the framework of local Indonesian religiosity. The findings reveal that IEI possess unique inherent advantages, namely embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital—ranging from student habitus (ethics and discipline) to classical literacy (*kitab kuning*) and formal certifications—which can be converted into symbolic capital and competitive advantages. Furthermore, local religiosity serves as an authentic Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that offers parents a sense of identity amid global value shifts. The study concludes that successful IEI marketing must transition from transactional approaches to sophisticated symbolic capital management, rebranding traditional values as "Future-Ready Skills" while maintaining ethical digital communication to avoid the commodification of religion.

Keywords: Cultural Capital, Islamic Education, Marketing Strategy, Local Religiosity

Article history

Received:
February 19, 2026

Revised:
February 24, 2026

Accepted:
February 25, 2026

Published:
March 1, 2026

Citation (APA Style): Pratiwi, D., Muflih, B. K., Widodo, S. F. A., & Niswah, N. (2026). Marketing strategies of Islamic educational institutions during globalization: A theoretical review of cultural capital and local religiosity values. *Dialogium: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 1(1), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.1213/djis.v1i1.95977>

INTRODUCTION

The world of contemporary education is in the vortex of a transformation triggered by the massive, unstoppable flow of globalisation (Assaiqeli et al., 2023; Drigas et al., 2023). Globalisation has not only brought advances in information technology and economic integration, but also a profound sociocultural paradigm shift, including in how society views educational institutions (Aguaded et al., 2022; Mitchell, 2023). The Islamic Education Institute (IEI), which has historically been a pillar of the transmission of moral and spiritual values in Indonesia, now faces an existential challenge (Anam et al., 2024; Pallathadka et al., 2023). On

the one hand, IEI is required to remain a fortress of morality and religious tradition (Akbar & Ridgeon, 2022; MR, Widiastuti, et al., 2025), but on the other hand, they are forced to enter the arena of competition in the increasingly liberal and *outcome-oriented* education market (Ramezani, 2024). This phenomenon creates tremendous pressure for institutional managers to rely not only on piety but also on professionalism in managing the institution's image and marketing strategy to ensure its sustainability amid global competition.

Marketing in the context of Islamic education is often viewed skeptically as a form of vulgar commercialisation of religion (Syukur & Junaedi, 2020). However, from a strategic perspective, educational marketing is a process of value communication that aligns societal expectations with the institution's vision (Kustian et al., 2025). In the era of globalisation, the "product" offered by IEI is not just a diploma or physical facility, but a promise of character formation capable of adapting to modernity without losing its religious identity (Hamzah & Jusoh, 2025). An effective marketing strategy during globalisation requires more than conventional promotional techniques; it requires a deep understanding of how cultural capital and local religious values can be converted into a competitive advantage.

To dissect this phenomenon, the theory of cultural capital, introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, offers a relevant framework (Carvalho et al., 2023). Cultural capital in Islamic education is not limited only to formal academic qualifications (*institutionalised state*), but also includes habitus, ways of thinking, ethics, and symbolic authority possessed by educators, students, and institutions (El-Bassiouny et al., 2023; Lahmar et al., 2023; Pallathadka et al., 2023). In the midst of a global education market that tends to experience the standardisation of international curricula such as IB or Cambridge (Daniela et al., 2022), IEI has unique cultural capital in the form of mastery of classical literacy (*yellow book*), tahfidz skills, and politeness ethics (Anam, Ade Agustinova, et al., 2025; Aprilianti, 2024; Hakim, 2023). The challenge is how to package and communicate this traditional cultural capital as an asset for urban communities that want their children to be globally competitive while maintaining strong spiritual integrity.

In addition to cultural capital, local religiosity also plays a crucial role as a differentiator in marketing strategies (Prabowo et al., 2025; Sabur et al., 2025), because globalisation often carries the risk of cultural alienation, leaving individuals feeling uprooted from their traditional roots (Lasaiba, 2023; Soriya Enny et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, Islam developed in a harmonious dialectic between sacred texts and local contexts (Basyir et al., 2023; Nurhanisah & Tjoetra, 2025; Saputra et al., 2025). Local religiosity—such as the tradition of Islamic boarding schools in Java, the pattern of integrated education in Sumatra, to local wisdom in religious moderation—is not an obstacle to progress, but rather an (Prabowo et al., 2025; Sabur et al., 2025)(Lasaiba, 2023; Soriya Enny et al., 2025)(Basyir et al., 2023; Nurhanisah & Tjoetra, 2025; Saputra et al., 2025) *authentic Unique Selling Proposition* (USP). Marketing strategies grounded in local religiosity offer parents a sense of security and pride in their identity amid a storm of global value shifts (Prabowo et al., 2025; Pradhita, 2024; Saputra et al., 2025). This suggests that IEI does not need to be completely "Western" to be considered advanced; on the contrary, by strengthening its local distinctiveness, IEI can provide a meaningful educational alternative amid the modernity identity crisis.

However, the reality on the ground shows a gap between the potential of cultural capital and the marketing practices of many IEIs. Often, the marketing strategies applied remain reactive and superficial, highlighting only physical facilities or discounts on education costs, without addressing the substance of the values and cultural capital that are their main strengths (Umam & Purnomo, 2025). On the other hand, some institutions tend to modernise too radically in pursuit of the title of "international school", thereby slowly eroding the characteristics of their local religiosity (Anam, MR, et al., 2025; Anthony & Skrefsrud, 2023a; Rustandi et al., 2025; Suyani & Lubis, 2025). This imbalance risks causing IEI to lose its loyal mass base and fail to compete in the global elite market. Therefore, a sharp theoretical review is needed to synthesise how cultural capital and local religiosity can be integrated within a professional yet ethical marketing framework.

This article aims to explore in depth how integrating cultural capital and local religious values can serve as the foundation for a formidable marketing strategy for Islamic educational institutions in the era of globalisation. The focus of this study will be on how IEI capitalises on its symbolic assets to build public trust. Through this theoretical review, we will see that the marketing of Islamic education is not just about winning the competition for students, but an attempt to reposition Islam in the global educational discourse. IEI must be able to prove that traditional values and local religiosity are not just relics of the past, but strategic capital to shape the future.

The urgency of this study lies in IES's need to formulate a "soulful" marketing narrative. In the midst of the dominance of a neoliberal logic that measures everything by numbers, IEI needs to offer a counter-narrative that emphasises moral sustainability, intellectual depth, and socio-cultural connectivity. Marketing based on *cultural capital* allows institutions to communicate with their audience on a more emotional and spiritual level, beyond a purely economic transaction. By harnessing the power of local religiosity, IEI can create a "brand" known not only for its achievements but also for its authenticity and integrity.

More specifically, this analysis will seek to answer fundamental questions: How does the process of converting cultural capital into globally recognised symbolic capital occur in the context of IEI? How can the values of local religiosity be translated into the language of modern marketing communication without reducing the sacredness of those values? And to what extent can this strategy meet the demands of the increasingly competitive education market? Through a comprehensive theoretical approach, this article is expected to offer ideas for Islamic education managers in designing marketing strategies that not only survive in the midst of globalisation but also colour these currents with transformative Islamic values rooted in local wisdom.

To conclude this introductory section, it is important to emphasise that marketing strategies in Islamic education are a form of contemporary *ijtihad*. IEI should no longer be allergic to marketing terms, but should also avoid getting caught up in market pragmatism. The harmonisation of global demands, the strength of cultural capital, and the richness of local religiosity is key to IEI remaining relevant and competitive. This is the core of the discussion in this article, an attempt to see Islamic education through the lens of a more humane and dignified marketing sociology.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach and a literature review (Dioba et al., 2024; Sherman & Webb, 1998) to examine the dialectic between cultural capital and marketing strategies in Islamic educational institutions. The choice of this method is based on the need to carry out a theoretical deconstruction of Pierre Bourdieu's thinking on cultural capital which is then contextualised with the values of local religiosity in Indonesia. As a theoretical review, this study does not aim to test hypotheses statistically, but rather to build a new conceptual synthesis. The researcher conducted an in-depth search of authoritative literature, including foundational books, international scientific journals, and articles from previous research relevant to the sociology of education and strategic management. Systematically, the data classification and operational framework of this study are summarised in the following table:

Table 1. Operational Framework of Literature Research

Stages	Data Sources / Instruments	Focus of Analysis
Identification	Pierre Bourdieu's Distinguished Work, a journal of marketing, & Islamic educational literature.	Inventory of the concept of cultural capital and global education market challenges.
Sintesis	Previous research articles & documentation of IEI best practices.	Connecting local religious assets with modern brand image needs.
Output	Theoretical propositions of marketing strategies.	The formulation of a marketing model that maintains value authenticity in the midst of globalisation.

The data classified in the table above are then processed using a content analysis technique with a deductive-inductive logic (Bouncken et al., 2021; Laari, 2025). The researcher examines how abstract aspects such as ethics, tradition, and religious authority can be transformed into symbolic capital with bargaining power in the global education market. The analysis is carried out in a dialectical manner, in which Western sociological theories are engaged with the characteristics of Indonesian Islamic education to produce a marketing model that remains rooted in local identity while being internationally competitive. To ensure the reliability of the findings, the researcher conducted theoretical triangulation by comparing perspectives across disciplines (Elffers et al., 2024), ensuring that the conclusions were not only academically rigorous but also applicable to managers of Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Dynamics of the Educational *Field*: The Symbolic Capital Battle

Analysis of the marketing strategy of Islamic Education Institutions (IEI) must begin by dissecting the institution's position in the "field" of global education. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, the realm of education today is no longer just an arena for the transfer of knowledge, but also for the fight for legitimacy and symbolic power (Anthony & Skrefsrud, 2023b; Trémon, 2023; Wright, 2022). In this context, IEIs face a double challenge: they must remain

academically relevant by international standards while maintaining their theological identity. Failure to balance these two poles often leads to "hysteresis," i.e., a mismatch between the institution's habitus (old habits) and the demands of rapidly changing times.

An effective marketing strategy for IEI, therefore, is not just a superficial promotional activity, but a strategic manoeuvre to accumulate and convert capital. Theoretical findings show that IEI has an inherent advantage that is often not realized by its managers, namely the wealth of *cultural capital* (Falchetta et al., 2023; Sabur et al., 2025; Serpa et al., 2022), which is different from secular schools that rely heavily on economic capital such as luxury facilities and social capital that can be in the form of elite networks (Holmqvist, 2021a), IEI has a cultural capital base that is firmly rooted in religious traditions and local values (Asghar Fazilat et al., 2022; Lahmar et al., 2023; Pallathadka et al., 2023). However, it is undeniable that this phenomenon also presents challenges, especially in translating this esoteric and traditional cultural capital into a marketing language that can be understood and appreciated by the rational and critical urban Muslim middle-class market.

In Bourdieu's perspective, cultural capital takes three forms: embodied (internalised), objectified (material objects), and institutionalised (formal institutions) (Carvalho et al., 2023; Veen et al., 2023). In-depth analysis shows that IEI's most successful marketing strategies are those that can "objectify" and "institutionalise" their Islamic (Carvalho et al., 2023; Veen et al., 2023) *habitus*. *First*, cultural capital is internalised (embodied state), which is IEI's greatest asset, in the form of morals, manners, worship discipline, and students' rhetorical ability (Asghar Fazilat et al., 2022; Pallathadka et al., 2023). In the midst of global anxiety about the moral degradation of teenagers and the negative impact of social media (Asghar Fazilat et al., 2022; Pallathadka et al., 2023) (Balt et al., 2023; Molero et al., 2022; Skogen et al., 2023; You et al., 2022), so that the habitus of polite and integrity of students has become a very scarce commodity ("scarce value"). IEI marketing must narrate *this habitus* not as a mere religious obligation, but as "Soft Skills for the 21st Century". The ability to memorise the Qur'an, for example, needs to be rebranded as evidence of cognitive discipline, mental focus, and memory resilience (Ali et al., 2021; Aprilianti, 2024; Mumtazah & Oktaviani, 2023) that are crucial for academic success in science and technology, not just memorisation activities.

Second, cultural capital is objectified (in a state of objectification), including the library of the Yellow Book, mosque architecture, and the use of technology in learning (Fitriani et al., 2022; Truong & Bao Diep, 22 C.E.). IEI needs to display a visual synthesis between tradition and modernity. The existence of a classic book next to a state-of-the-art computer laboratory sends a powerful visual message about "balance". (Fitriani et al., 2022; Truong & Bao Diep, 22 C.E.) *Third, institutionalised cultural capital*. The pesantren diploma or tahfidz certification must be positioned on par with a global competency certificate (McGreal et al., 2022). The marketing strategy is to showcase the success path of alumni (tracer study) who have entered the world's top universities or secured strategic positions in multinational companies, without losing their student identity. To clarify this transformation mechanism, Table 2 below details how each form of capital is converted into a concrete branding strategy:

Table 2. Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Conversion Matrix in IEI Marketing

Cultural Capital	Internal Assets of the Institution (Input)	Marketing Conversion Strategy (Marketing Framing)	Selling Value in the Global Market (Value Proposition)
Embodied	Habitus of the santri: Tawadhu', Discipline of Worship, Memorisation of the Qur'an, Manners of the Teacher.	Character Building & Resilience Training. Narrating righteousness as the foundation of leadership.	Moral Security: A solution for parents who are afraid that their children will be exposed to global promiscuity.
Objectified	Yellow Book (Turats), Mosques, Dormitories, Calligraphy Arts, Muslim Clothing.	Visual Identity of Authentic Tradition. Packaging Islamic aesthetics as a symbol of cultural stability.	Cultural Exclusivity: Pride of identity that cannot be bought in a secular international school.
Institutionalised (Terinstitusi)	Islamic Boarding School Diploma, Scientific Sanad, Madrasah Accreditation, Foreign MoU.	Global Recognition & Legitimacy. Aligning sanad ilmu with academic accreditation.	Quality Validity: Formal evidence that religion and science can coexist professionally.

The Dialectic of Local Religiosity: A Strategy of Differentiation in the Global Market

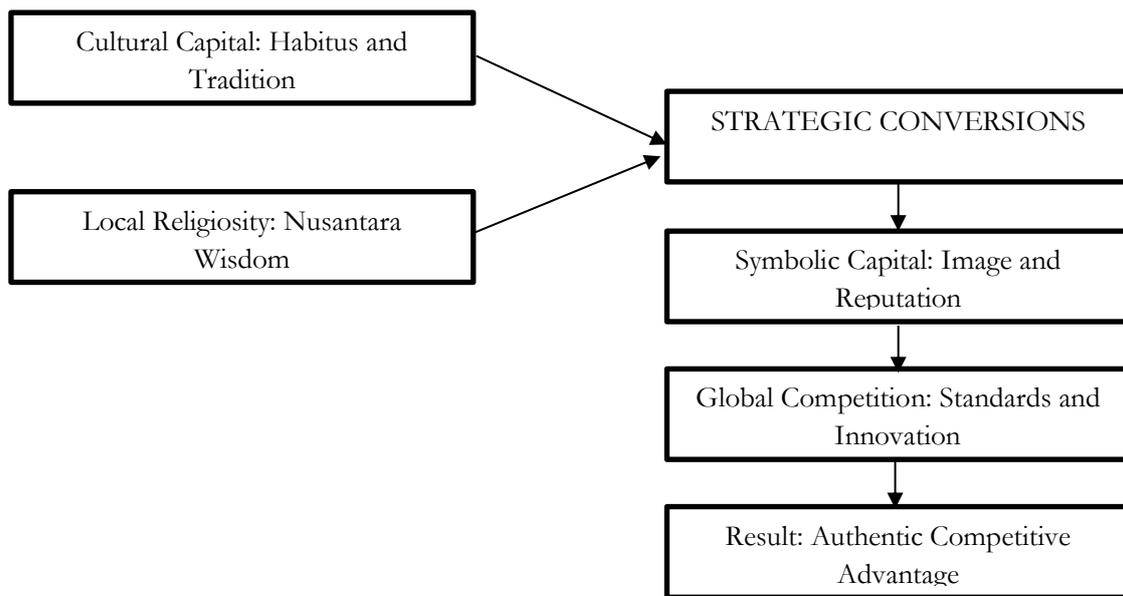
The next discussion highlighted the crucial role of local religiosity as a *differentiating* element. Globalisation often brings about a current of cultural homogenization, or the "McDonaldization of Education" (Jin, 2023; Soriya Enny et al., 2025). In which educational institutions around the world begin to look uniform in their curricula and appearance. In this saturated market, IEI which merely imitates the Western school model, will lose its appeal because it is seen as a mere imitator. On the contrary, IEI, which can explore local religious values, actually enjoys a premium position as an authentic education provider. Local religiosity here refers to variants of Islamic practices typical of a region, such as the sorogan and bandongan traditions in Javanese Islamic boarding schools, the surau system in Minangkabau, or other local wisdom values integrated with Islamic teachings (MR, Anam, et al., 2025; Roqib et al., 2025; Sholihah et al., 2025; Sobaya et al., 2023). In marketing, these values are branded as "Nusantara Wisdom for World Civilisation". This narrative is very powerful because it touches on the emotional and primordial side of society. Today's parents, despite wanting their children to succeed globally, have a deep fear of being uprooted from *cultural alienation* (Bhandari et al., 2025; Bunce, 2021; Larrinaga-Bidegain et al., 2025). Marketing strategies that elevate local religiosity offer a strong "anchor." For example, the culture of *solemnity* (devotion) to Kyai is marketed as empathy-based leadership training (*servant leadership*), a modern management concept that is rooted in old traditions.

In addition, local religiosity also serves as a filter against the negative excesses of globalisation, such as cultural and social impacts (Bushati, 2023; Muppalla et al., 2023), mental health, as well as the problem of child vulnerability and exploitation (Gowland et al., 2023; Marques et al., 2024). IEI promotes itself as a "Safe Haven" or a safe zone where family and community values are maintained. This marketing is not defensive or anti-Western, but constructive. The institution shows that being modern doesn't have to be liberal, and being religious doesn't mean being radical. The moderate position (*wasathiyah*) is the hallmark of Islam

in the archipelago (Faisal & Rani, 2023; Rane, 2023)It is the strongest Unique Selling Proposition (USP) in the eyes of the international community, which is increasingly wary of extremism.

How are all these cultural capitals and local values managed operationally? The answer lies in managing symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is the accumulation of prestige, reputation, and honour (Holmqvist, 2021b; Shymko et al., 2022). The ultimate goal of IEI marketing is to transform cultural capital (religious knowledge) and social capital (community network) into symbolic capital (good name/brand). In the digital era, this conversion is achieved through "Marketing Storytelling" (Daniel et al., 2023; Schorn, 2022). This means that IEI can no longer rely on rigid brochures containing subject lists. They must produce narrative content that demonstrates the "Transformation of the Student". Alumni testimonials, documentary videos of humanist dorm life, and student achievements in the international science olympiad scene are key pieces of evidence. The following flowchart illustrates the circular process by which cultural capital is input, processed through locality-based branding strategies, and produces outputs in the form of greater market loyalty and symbolic capital.

Diagram 1. IEI's Integrative Marketing Model Based on Cultural and Locality Capital



The diagram above shows that the marketing process is not a straight line, but a cycle. *Inputs* in the form of pesantren traditions and local values are internalised and modernised through facility upgrades. Then, *his output* was communicated as "Graduates with Global-Religious Character". The market acceptance of these graduates will again enhance the institution's reputation (Symbolic Capital), which, in turn, attracts more qualified students and donations (Economic Capital) to reinforce the tradition.

The Challenge of Digitalisation: Commodification vs. Sacredness

The last crucial aspect of this discussion is the ethical challenge posed by digitalisation in marketing. When religious cultural capital enters the digital free market, there is a risk of religious commodification—that is, when sacred values are reduced to mere means of sale (Callahan (Ed.), 2024; French & Coudert, 2023; Pujianto et al., 2024; Tagwirei, 2023). For example, excessive use of Qur'anic verses in advertisements without proper context, or exploiting scholarly figures just for *clickbait*. This is dangerous because it can erode the "aura" of the sacredness, which is precisely the core of cultural capital itself. If this aura is lost, IEI will lose its moral legitimacy. Therefore, IEI's marketing strategy demands semiotic prudence. Marketing should be done on the principles of *al-bidayah* (giving directions) and *at-tabayir* (giving good news), not manipulation. Digital content must reflect reality (Tharib, 2023), not a false image (*hyperreality*). Transparency regarding curriculum, fees, and facilities is part of Islamic business ethics (*shiddiq* and *amanah*). IEI must be able to become an educational "Content Creator", filling the digital public space with a cool, intelligent, and dignified Islamic narrative. In this way, marketing activities themselves are valuable for worship and da'wah, as well as commercially effective because they build authentic *trust* from the community.

As a final synthesis of this discussion, the success of IEI's marketing in the global era is not determined by how much advertising money is spent, but how smart the institution is in managing its "warehouse" of cultural capital. The synergy between the forces of tradition (*past*), professional management (*present*), and global vision (*future*) is the key to winning the hearts and minds of modern Muslims. A successful IEI can stand tall on two legs: one foot firmly rooted in the earth of local traditions, and one foot tread steadily across the sky of global progress.

CONCLUSION

Theoretically, this study emphasises that the marketing strategy of Islamic Education Institutions (IEIs) in the era of globalisation cannot rely solely on a transactional approach; it must be transformed into a sophisticated management of symbolic capital. Through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital, IEI is proven to have intangible assets in the form of habitus, literacy traditions, and spiritual authority that, if converted correctly, become a competitive advantage that is difficult for secular educational institutions to replicate. Globalisation opens up opportunities for IEI to occupy an exclusive market niche by offering the authenticity of local religiosity values as the antithesis of global cultural homogenization. Thus, the marketing of Islamic education is an effort to translate the noble values of religion into the language of modern professionalism, making local identity not a burden of tradition but a solid, dignified brand foundation.

The practical implications of these findings require IEI managers to reorient their strategies from imitation of Western models towards strengthening value-based differentiation. It is recommended that Islamic educational institutions begin a serious audit of cultural capital and package the narrative of local wisdom—such as the independence of Islamic boarding schools or eastern manners—as global competencies relevant to the development of future-ready skills. This strategic step must be supported by the digitisation of elegant marketing content, with evidence of the success of religious alumni serving as validation of quality. In the end, the IEIs that will win the competition of the future are those most daring to be themselves:

globally minded in infrastructure and curriculum, yet still firmly rooted in the values of spirituality and local culture.

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