



The Influence of Experiential Marketing, Islamic Branding, and Word of Mouth on the Decision of New Student Enrollment at SDIT Al-Hanif Cilegon. (A Study on Parents' Perceptions)

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ABSTRACT

In the increasingly competitive educational landscape, SDIT Al-Hanif Cilegon has implemented an integrated marketing strategy that encompasses Islamic branding, experiential marketing, and Word of Mouth (WOM) to attract new students while maintaining its core Islamic values. This study aims to evaluate the influence of these strategies on enrollment decisions and examine the role of WOM as a mediating variable between experiential marketing and Islamic branding in influencing enrollment decisions. Based on data collected from 168 online questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS software, the results indicate that experiential marketing has a positive and significant impact on school selection decisions ($T = 5.530$, $P = 0.000$) with an 85% agreement level among respondents. Islamic branding strongly influences experiential marketing ($T = 4.638$) and WOM ($T = 12.004$), supported by an 84% agreement level. WOM effectively mediates the relationship between experiential marketing and enrollment decisions ($T = 3.198$, $P = 0.001$), while experiential marketing through WOM shows a significant influence ($T = 2.736$, $P = 0.006$). However, the role of Islamic branding through WOM remains suboptimal ($T = 1.922$, $P = 0.055$). The integrated marketing strategy has effectively enhanced enrollment decisions, meeting stakeholder expectations and achieving 88% parental satisfaction. While experiential marketing and WOM have been proven as key factors in influencing decision-making, further optimization of Islamic branding in marketing communication is necessary to strengthen the school's identity and attract prospective students more effectively.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Al-Hanif Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) Foundation is an Islamic educational institution located in Cilegon City, Banten. The foundation houses different levels of education from Integrated Kindergarten (TKIT), Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT), Integrated Junior High School (SMPIT) to Integrated Senior High School (SMAIT). Established in 2005 by the Al-Hanif

Foundation, the school's vision is to produce a generation of Muslims who have noble morals, are strong in Aqidah and have a broad knowledge. With this vision, the school is committed to providing an education that integrates the national curriculum with Islamic religious education in a comprehensive manner. (Curriculum, Al Hanif)

Provides basic education with an integrated curriculum that includes general subjects and Islamic Religious Education. The religious curriculum includes instruction in Al-Quran, Hadith, Aqidah, Fiqh, Islamic History and Akhlak, with an emphasis on early mastery of Arabic and English. The method of teaching is a combination of classical, practical and self-directed methods. This approach aims to develop a strong Islamic character in the students, in addition to providing adequate general knowledge.

SDIT Al-Hanif faces challenges in effectively managing new student admissions (PPDB) due to the high public interest in the education offered, necessitating the school to conduct strict selection through psychological tests. This research was conducted to examine the influence of experiential marketing, Islamic branding, and word of mouth on student enrollment decisions at SDIT Al-Hanif, providing useful insights for the development of more effective school marketing strategies in the future. The Al-Hanif Foundation School is an educational institution that places a strong emphasis on Islamic principles. Over the past three years, there has been a significant increase in the number of individuals applying to the Al-Hanif Foundation. Each year, there is consistently a higher number of students applying than the school can accommodate (curriculum, Al-Hanif 2024). Below is the data on the number of students who have registered over the past three years.

Table 1. Number of students registered at SDIT Al-Hanif

	registered	accepted	Class
2022	274 people	212 people	6 class
2023	306 people	238 people	7 class
2024	344 people	196 people	7 class

Based on the above data, it can be seen that the number of students enrolled in SDIT Al-Hanif has increased each year, in 2022 the available classes were 6 classes, for 2023 the school increased the number of classes to 7 classes, in 2024 the school still received 7 classes, but the number of students accepted was less than in 2023 due to the rules of the Education Office which requires a maximum number of students per class of 28 people. (Al-Hanid Curriculum. 2024).

As a result, prospective students are required to undergo a selection process with psychologist assessment. However, despite satisfactory results in the assessment, many potential students were unable to secure a place due to quota restrictions. This scenario highlights the popularity of Al Hanif School, but also sheds light on the hurdles faced in the enrollment and selection process for new students. These statistics reveal a strong attraction to this institution, likely influenced by marketing strategies such as experiential marketing, Islamic branding, and word of mouth in determining school selection. It is necessary to conduct this research to measure the extent to which the marketing that has been done is successful and effective.

Experiential marketing at SDIT Al-Hanif is a holistic approach that aims to create an immersive experience for prospective students and parents through various excellent programs. One example of experiential marketing carried out by SDIT Al-Hanif Cilegon is utilizing social media and digital content. Through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, schools share engaging videos, photos, and stories showcasing student activities, top-notch facilities, and inspiring events. This strategy allows

prospective students and parents to virtually experience the school, visualize their experiences, and build an emotional connection without having to come to the school in person.

SDIT Al-Hanif also leverages Islamic branding as part of its identity. The school logo, an octagon featuring the Arabic inscription "Allah" at its center and the school's name in Latin letters around it, reflects the integration of Islamic values in modern education. The slogan "Loving the Quran from an Early Age" underscores the school's commitment to Quranic education for young learners. The green color of the logo symbolizes Islamic traditions, reinforcing the school's image as a value-based institution. Additionally, WOM has proven to be a highly effective marketing tool. Based on Google Maps reviews, SDIT Al-Hanif received a 4.8 out of 5-star rating, with most reviews being positive. This indicates a high level of parental satisfaction with the quality of education, further enhancing the school's appeal amidst competition with other educational institutions.

This study was conducted in response to the need for a deeper understanding of how experiential marketing, Islamic branding, and word of mouth contribute to parental perceptions in enrolling their children at SDIT Al-Hanif. It also aims to improve the quality of education at SDIT Al-Hanif Cilegon. The research is expected to provide strategic contributions through the implementation of effective marketing that not only attracts consumers but also aligns with the Islamic values upheld by the school. In the context of increasing competition in the education sector, particularly among Islamic schools, this study is crucial for offering valuable insights to schools with similar characteristics. To address this phenomenon, the researcher used a reference journal by Ambarwati titled "Experiential Marketing and Islamic Branding: A New Perspective on College Decision in Islamic Higher Education" (Ambarwati & Sari, 2024).

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Stage

In this study, researchers tried to test the variables derived from the reference journal owned by Ambarawati which had been selected based on the similarity of variables and the relationship in this study. Research that has been conducted and has been written in the journal used as a reference will be adopted according to the needs of the study. The study is replicative of research a research. To help determine the research hypothesis, the next stage is to review previous literature from various journals and theoretical studies. The research design consists of the concept of research flow and questionnaires and their distribution. After the questionnaire was sent and the data collection process was completed, the data was processed using the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM), which is a component-based or variant SEM structural equation model. To evaluate the relationship between variables, indicators, and constructs in a particular model, this multivariate analysis technique combines factor analysis and regression analysis (correlation). PLS-SEM is used to test theories or develop theories that aim to make predictions [1]. At the data processing stage, statistical tests to test the validity and reliability of the data must be carried out. In processing the data, this research model uses the second-order technique. The measurement model in the smart-PLS software is analyzed using two different methods. The results of data processing are then analyzed to produce research conclusions and recommendations for the Al-Hanif Cilegon Foundation.

2.2 Population and Sample

The determination of the sample size used is based on the population size approach according to Krejcie and Morgan in 1970 [2], namely the sample size used in the study can refer to Table 3.3. from the table, the population in this study is 196 or close to the number N of 200 in the table, so referring to the table the sample size required is n or at least consists of 132 samples. According to Hair et al. (2020), sampling technique is a method or procedure used to determine members of a population that will be used as samples in research. This technique aims to ensure that the selected sample can accurately represent the characteristics of the population, so that the research results can be generalized. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers deliberately select individuals or units that have

special characteristics that are relevant to the research objectives. The reason for choosing this purposive sampling technique is because researchers set criteria that must be met by a sample. The sample criteria are that the sample is a parent of students whose children have been accepted at SDIT Al-Hanif in the 2024 academic year, consisting of 7 classes, each containing 28 students, so that the total population reaches 196 parents of students.

2.3 Validitas Test

In research, correlation values are used to indicate the strength of the relationship between two variables. A correlation with a value of less than 0.20 indicates that the two variables do not have a significant relationship or correlation. A correlation between 0.20 and less than 0.40 indicates a low relationship, while a value between 0.40 and less than 0.70 indicates a moderate correlation. If the correlation value is between 0.70 and less than 0.90, then there is a high correlation. A correlation with a value between 0.90 and less than 1.00 indicates a very strong relationship, and a correlation value of 1.00 indicates a perfect correlation between the variables according to Ghazali (2021). Understanding this level of correlation is important in interpreting the results of statistical analysis and helps conclude how strong the relationship is in the context of the research. Based on the results of the validity test, all items from the research variables showed a calculated r value greater than the r table (0.361), so they were declared valid. In the Experiential Marketing (EM) variable, all items (EM1 to EM5) have calculated r values ranging from 0.639 to 0.867, indicating that the items are able to measure the experiential marketing dimension well. For the Islamic Branding (IB) variable, items from IB1 to IB3 are also valid, with calculated r values ranging from 0.604 to 0.816.

2.4 Reliability Test

In developing a research questionnaire, each question item must not only meet the validity requirements, but must also have reliability. This refers to the ability of the instrument to produce consistent and consistent measurements every time it is used. As explained by Indrawati [2], the concept of reliability is closely related to how reliable and trustworthy a measuring instrument is. This reliability is demonstrated through the ability of the instrument to minimize measurement errors and produce relatively the same data when used under similar conditions. In other words, a questionnaire can be said to be reliable when it is able to produce accurate and reliable measurement results, regardless of when and how many times the instrument is used. This study applies a reliability test using the Alpha Cronbach method. The reliability coefficient formula according to Suliyanto (2018: 264) is as follows:

$$r_1 = \frac{k}{(r_{1-1})} \left(1 - \frac{\sum si^2}{s_t^2} \right)$$

In this study, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the internal consistency of each variable. The results of the reliability test showed that all variables used had a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7, indicating good reliability. The Experiential Marketing (EM) variable had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.961, indicating very high reliability. The Islamic Branding (IB) variable with a value of 0.841 was also reliable, indicating good consistency. Meanwhile, Word of Mouth (WOM) and School Decision (SD) each had values of 0.905 and 0.911, both of which indicated a very high level of reliability. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the research instrument used had good internal consistency and was reliable in measurement.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is carried out after the data is collected to answer the research questions according to [3]. Data analysis is the process of converting data into interpretable information according to Darwin et

al., (2021: 167). In quantitative research, statistics are used in descriptive and inferential forms Hardani et al., (2020: 299 - 300).

2.6 Multivariate Analysis

Indrawati [2] stated that multivariate analysis is a quantitative statistical analysis technique that allows researchers to test two variables simultaneously. Multivariate analysis is a technique for processing many variables that aims to determine the effect of these variables on an object simultaneously or simultaneously according to Hidayat, (2021). Using multivariate analysis, this study investigates how the variables Experiential Marketing, Islamic branding, and Word of Mouth influence the perception of parents' decisions to enroll in SDIT Al-Hanif Cilegon.

2.7 Measurement model (Outer Model)

The measurement model is used to evaluate indicators against latent variables or to find out how far indicators can provide explanations about other latent variables. Narimawati & Sarwono (2017) explain the measurement model which shows how manifest variables can be observed to represent a latent variable. Latent variables are symptoms that cannot be measured directly and are considered abstract. Hair et al. (2021) Measuring the model in PLS-SEM is better known as the outer model. According to Hair et al [1] the validity of the measurement model for PLS-SEM is carried out with construct validity, multicollinearity test, and reliability test..

2.8 Measurement Model (Inner model)

The structural model describes the relationships between latent variables in the model. It represents the research hypothesis regarding the influence of one latent variable on another latent variable. The mathematical model for the structural model is:

$$\eta_i = \sum_{i=1}^m \beta_{ji} \xi_i + \zeta_j$$

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Discussion of Descriptive Analysis.

Overall, the results of the descriptive analysis in this study indicate that all variables studied—Experiential Marketing, Islamic Branding, Word of Mouth, and School Decision received a high level of agreement from respondents. This finding reflects parents' positive perceptions of various aspects of the school, and indicates the effectiveness of the marketing strategy implemented by the school in forming a good image and reputation Hair et al (2020) Ghozali (2021).

In the Experiential Marketing variable, respondents positively assessed the attractiveness of promotions, enjoyable learning experiences, and the suitability of educational values with family principles. Learning experiences that strengthen children's closeness to Islamic teachings are also an important highlight, Sari, R. F., & Prabowo, H. (2020). As many as 87% of respondents strongly agree, they are interested in the learning implemented by SDIT Al Hanif because it is very strong with the teachings of Al Sunnah, but there are several things that need to be improved, as many as 83% of respondents feel that sending their children to SDIT Al-Hanif is a pleasant experience and learning activities at SDIT Al-Hanif make their children feel happy can be improved.

The total percentage of respondents' agreement reaching 85% shows that the Experiential Marketing strategy has been able to create a memorable and meaningful learning experience, so that it can contribute to student interest in registering at the school.

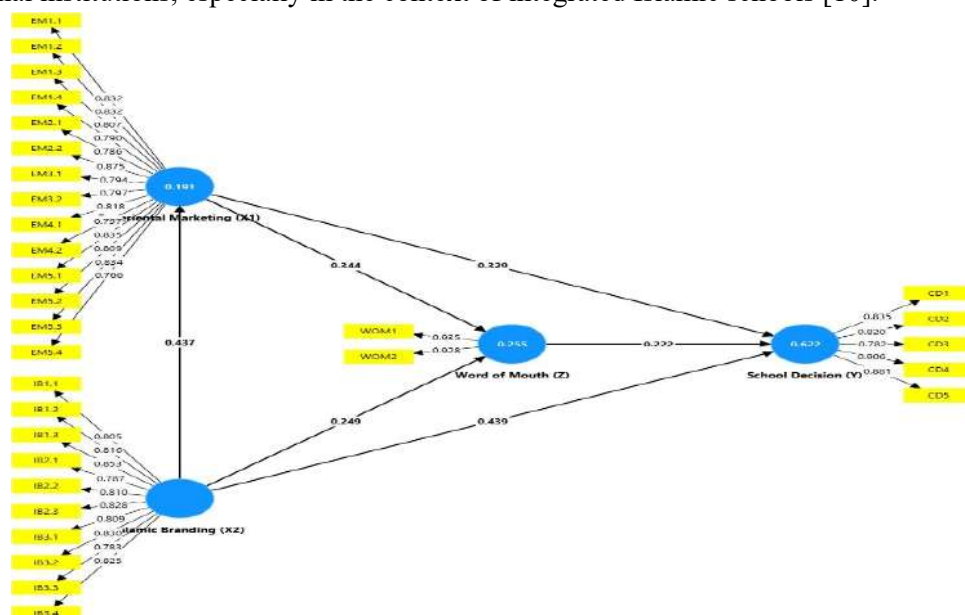
In the Islamic Branding variable, the level of agreement of 84% shows that the school's Islamic image is well established. The Muslim majority environment, the existence of Islamic promotion, Islamic school

certification, and the emphasis on sharia principles and the teachings of al-Sunnah are factors that foster parental trust according to Sari, R. F., & Prabowo, H. (2020). As many as 85% of respondents strongly agree because the environment of SDIT Al-Hanif supports Islamic values, with promotions and activities that are in accordance with the needs and traditions of the Muslim community, as well as Islamic certification that reflects compliance with these values. However, there are several things that need to be improved, 82% of respondents feel that the service at SDIT Al Hanif can be in accordance with sharia principles. The conformity of this Islamic image plays an important role in shaping parents' beliefs to choose schools that are considered consistent in practicing Islamic values in every aspect of their learning.

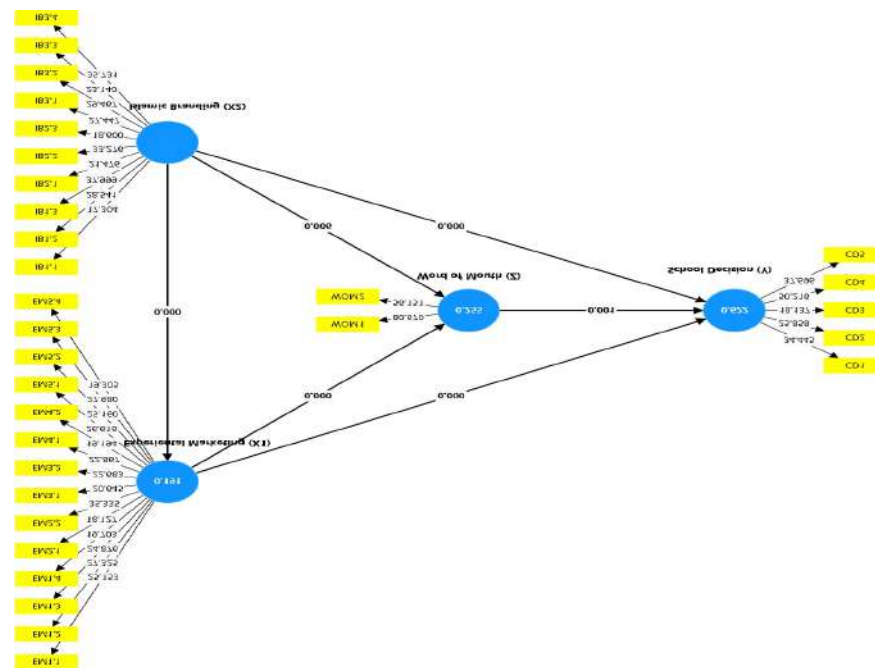
Meanwhile, the Word of Mouth variable with an agreement level of 82% shows how recommendations and positive stories from other parents help strengthen the school's reputation. Parents who have had positive experiences will share their stories, which then serve as a source of information and influence for prospective parents of students. Thus, Word of Mouth becomes an important element in the school registration decision-making process, strengthening the credibility and excellence of SDIT Al Hanif. The total percentage of respondents' agreement reaching 82% shows that the Word of Mouth strategy has succeeded in building a strong reputation, encouraging natural word-of-mouth promotion among parents and the Muslim community. The results of the questionnaire showed that 88% of respondents were satisfied after sending their children to SDIT Al-Hanif and 84% agreed that the learning program at the school was in accordance with their children's needs reflect a high level of satisfaction from parents. This high level of satisfaction shows that the school has succeeded in meeting parents' expectations in providing quality education, with an approach based on Islamic values, such as the tahfidz program and character building. Although there was a slight difference in percentages, indicating that some parents felt there was room for improvement in terms of tailoring the learning program to the individual needs of their children, overall, parents were satisfied with their decision. This is in line with the literature stating that effective marketing strategies, a strong school image, and positive recommendations from others can influence parents' decisions in choosing an educational institution (Hair et al., 2021; Ghozali, 2021)

3.2 Hypothesis Discussion Analysis

Based on the results of hypothesis testing conducted using the bootstrapping procedure through SmartPLS software, the findings of this study indicate that all relationships proposed in the hypothesis have a significant influence. These results are consistent with related literature stating that factors such as Experiential Marketing, Islamic Branding, and Word of Mouth can influence student enrollment decisions at educational institutions, especially in the context of integrated Islamic schools [10].



Gambar 1. Outer diagram



Gambar 2. Inner diagram

H1. Experiential marketing has a significant effect on the decision to choose SDIT Al-Hanif.

The effect of experiential marketing on prospective students' registration decisions at SDIT Al-Hanif shows significant results, with a T-statistic value of 5,530 (>1.96) and P-values of 0.000 (<0.05). These results reflect that the marketing experience implemented by the school is effectively able to influence prospective students' decisions to register, with a path coefficient of 0.406 indicating a positive contribution to the process. Experiential marketing is a strategy that aims to create a deep and meaningful experience for consumers, which in the context of basic education such as at SDIT Al-Hanif can be realized through activities such as open houses, school tours, or direct experience with a learning environment that reflects the educational and spiritual values of Islam offered. These experiences provide prospective students and parents with a clearer picture of the learning atmosphere, teaching methods, and facilities available, thus strengthening the school's appeal as the main choice. This is in line with the findings [4] which state that a well-designed positive experience can improve prospective students' and parents' perceptions of the quality of an educational institution, thus potentially strengthening the decision to enroll their children in that school. In the field, this approach often proves effective, especially when parents are given the opportunity to directly observe learning activities or interact with teachers and students, which strengthens their belief in the quality of education offered.

H2. Islamic Branding has a significant effect on experiential marketing.

Islamic branding has a very strong significant effect on experiential marketing, as evidenced by the highest T-statistics value of 4.638 (>1.96) and P-values of 0.000, with a path coefficient of 0.344. This shows that Islamic branding implemented at SDIT Al-Hanif is very effective in forming a positive marketing experience while strengthening the school's identity as an Islamic-based educational institution. By providing a relevant and meaningful context in every experience given to students and parents, such as during school tours, community events, or Islamic parenting programs, Islamic branding can strengthen experiential marketing strategies. When every interaction at school, from teaching methods that reflect Islamic values to daily activities such as the habit of praying together and the tahfihz program, is integrated with Islamic identity, this creates a stronger resonance with the values embraced by prospective parents of students. Conditions in the field show that this approach is able to increase the attractiveness of schools in

the eyes of the community who prioritize education based on religious values. Thus, prospective parents of students are more likely to respond positively to marketing strategies and consider the school as a primary choice for their child's education, as stated by Che & Peng [5].

H3. Experiential marketing has a significant effect on word of mouth.

Experiential Marketing shows a significant effect on Word of Mouth with a T-statistic value of 6.047 (>1.96) and P-values of 0.000. The path coefficient of 0.437 indicates that a good marketing experience has succeeded in encouraging positive word of mouth among stakeholders of Al Hanif school. This reflects the reality in the field where the experiential marketing strategy implemented by elementary schools, such as open houses, learning demonstrations, or parenting activities, has succeeded in creating memorable experiences for stakeholders. According to Suhartanto, D., & Dean [4], positive experiences resulting from experiential marketing strategies can increase the likelihood of prospective parents and students to share their experiences through WOM. When parents experience a pleasant learning atmosphere firsthand, see the interaction between teachers and students, or feel the warmth of school staff service, they tend to share these positive experiences with their relatives and community. This phenomenon is very common in elementary schools, where parents actively seek school references through testimonials from other parents. This positive word of mouth is a very effective marketing tool for schools, because recommendations from existing parents are more trusted than conventional advertising. Schools that succeed in providing a positive and consistent experience to their stakeholders have indirectly built an organic marketing network through the parent community, which ultimately contributes to an increase in the number of new student registrations.

H4. Islamic Branding has a significant effect on word of mouth.

Islamic branding has a significant effect on Word of Mouth with a T-statistic value of 12.004 (> 1.96) and P-values of 0.000. The path coefficient of 0.672 shows that the implementation of good Islamic branding by Al Hanif School has succeeded in encouraging positive word of mouth communication in the community. This can be seen in daily practices in Islamic elementary schools, where the implementation of consistent Islamic values, such as the habit of worship, quality learning of the Quran, and the integration of Islamic values in every subject, are the main attractions for Muslim parents. According to Ahmad, I., & Raza [6], strong Islamic branding not only increases consumer trust and satisfaction but can also motivate them to share positive experiences through WOM. This phenomenon is very relevant to conditions in the field, where parents who see their children developing not only in academic aspects but also in understanding and practicing Islamic values, will naturally share these positive experiences with their community. Parents feel proud when their children show improvements in memorizing the Qur'an, improving morals, and discipline in worship, which encourages them to recommend the school to their relatives and friends. This creates a positive domino effect in the Muslim community, where word of mouth becomes a very effective marketing channel because it is based on real experience and belief in the Islamic values applied by the school.

H5. Islamic branding has a significant effect on the decision to choose SDIT Al-Hanif.

Islamic branding has a significant effect on registration decisions with a T-statistic value of 5.125 (>1.96) and P-values of 0.000. With a path coefficient of 0.399, this shows that the application of Islamic values and identity in the branding of Al Hanif schools is effective in influencing prospective students' decisions to register. This is reflected in the reality in the field where Islamic elementary schools that consistently apply Islamic branding through various aspects such as logos with Islamic nuances, taglines that reflect the vision of Islamic education, uniforms that are sharia, and a school environment that is maintained in an Islamic manner, have succeeded in attracting the interest of Muslim parents. According to Ahmad, I., & Raza [7], Islamic branding is a term that refers to the development of a brand identity that is centered on

Islamic principles that are believed in by the target market. In practice in Islamic elementary schools such as SDIT Al-Hanif, branding that emphasizes Islamic principles is realized through superior programs such as memorizing the Al-Quran, learning Arabic, fostering Islamic morals, and getting used to daily worship. The implementation of these comprehensive Islamic values is the main consideration for parents who want a holistic education based on Islam for their children. This can be seen from the enthusiasm of parents when attending open houses or presentations of the school's Islamic programs, where they pay close attention to the Islamic aspects offered, starting from the qualifications of teachers who are hafidz/hafidzah, the Al-Quran learning methods used, to the moral development system implemented by the school.

H6. Word of Mouth has a significant effect on the decision to choose SDIT Al-Hanif.

Word of Mouth shows a significant effect on registration decisions with a T-statistic value of 3.198 (>1.96) and P-values of 0.001. The path coefficient of 0.222 indicates that word of mouth communication has a positive contribution in influencing prospective students' decisions to register at Al Hanif School. This phenomenon is very common in the context of elementary schools, where parents of prospective students actively seek information from various sources, especially from the experiences of parents who have sent their children to the school. According to Yang, S., & Liu [8], Word of mouth (WOM) is a very effective marketing tool to influence consumer choices, especially in terms of education. This is proven in the field where positive recommendations from existing parents, either through direct conversations in the community, WhatsApp groups, or online reviews on social media, are key factors in building the trust of prospective parents. Parents tend to trust testimonials from fellow parents more than official promotional materials from the school, because they are considered more objective and based on real experience. The information shared usually includes the quality of learning, student achievement, teacher professionalism, school facilities, and especially the positive developments seen in the children who attend school there, all of which contribute significantly to influencing the decision to register prospective new students.

H7. Experiential marketing has a significant effect on the decision to choose SDIT Al-Hanif through Word of Mouth mediation

The effect of Experiential Marketing on the decision to register prospective students through Word of Mouth shows significant results with a T-statistic value of 2.736 (>1.96) and P-values of 0.006 (<0.05). With a path coefficient of 0.077, this indicates that the marketing experience implemented by Al Hanif School has succeeded in influencing the decision of prospective students to register through the role of Word of Mouth mediation, although the effect is relatively small but still statistically significant. This is reflected in practice in the field, where the positive experiences felt by parents when participating in school activities such as open houses, trial classes, or parenting seminars, encourage them to share these experiences with others. According to Suhartanto, D., & Dean, D. [4], WOM functions as an intermediary that strengthens the relationship between experiential marketing and enrollment decisions. This phenomenon is clearly seen in the context of elementary schools, where parents who are impressed with their direct experiences when interacting with the school, such as seeing interesting learning methods, adequate facilities, or friendly service, tend to share these positive stories in their community. These positive testimonials that circulate by word of mouth then become valuable references for other prospective parents of students in considering enrollment. This process creates an effective chain of communication, where the positive experience of one parent can influence the enrollment decisions of several other prospective students through trusted recommendations.

H8. Islamic Branding has a significant effect on the decision to choose SDIT Al-Hanif through word of mouth.

Islamic branding on prospective student registration decisions through Word of Mouth shows insignificant results with a T-statistic value of 1.922 (<1.96) and P-values of 0.055 (>0.05). With a path coefficient of

0.055, this indicates that the effect of Islamic branding on registration decisions through Word of Mouth is not strong enough to be said to have a significant effect, although it still shows a positive relationship direction. This phenomenon is interesting to observe in the context of elementary schools, where even though schools have implemented a strong Islamic identity in various aspects, its effect on registration decisions through WOM is not as great as expected. According to Ahmad, I., & Raza [7], strong Islamic branding can produce positive WOM, which in turn strengthens prospective students' intentions to register. In practice in the field, this can be seen from how parents who are interested in the school's Islamic branding, such as tahfidz programs, moral learning, or religious activities, do not always automatically share this information with others or influence registration decisions through WOM. Other factors such as tuition fees, school location, or non-religious academic quality are often also important considerations in the enrollment decision-making process, although WOM about the Islamic aspects of the school continues to circulate in the community.

H9. There is a significant influence of parents' perceptions of experiential marketing (EM), Islamic branding (IB), which is mediated by word of mouth (WOM) on the decision to register new students at SDIT Al-Hanif.

Parents' perceptions of experiential marketing and Islamic branding mediated by word of mouth show mixed results. Experiential marketing has a significant influence (T-statistics 2.736, P-values 0.006) when mediated by word of mouth, while Islamic branding shows an insignificant influence (T-statistics 1.922, P-values 0.055) in the same mediation. This indicates that the enrollment decision at SDIT Al-Hanif is more influenced by the marketing experience communicated through word of mouth compared to the Islamic branding elements directly. In accordance with the marketing theory proposed by Schmitt (2019), experiential marketing can increase consumer engagement and loyalty through positive, memorable experiences, such as school visits, parenting activities, or class demonstrations that demonstrate interesting learning methods. On the other hand, Islamic branding emphasizes the importance of the alignment of brand values and identities with Islamic principles, which can increase the trust and preferences of Muslim consumers according to Wilson (2020). However, in the context of elementary schools such as SDIT Al-Hanif, direct experience is often more impactful because prospective parents tend to trust recommendations from fellow parents who have experienced the school's educational services firsthand. This is in accordance with the opinion of Cheung & Thadani [9] who stated that word of mouth is a strong factor influencing consumer decisions, especially in education, where recommendations from other parents who have similar experiences are very influential in forming positive perceptions..

Based on the results of the analysis of the nine existing hypotheses, it can be concluded that Experiential Marketing (EM) has a significant effect on student registration decisions, both directly and through Word of Mouth (WOM) mediation. Positive marketing experiences, such as open houses and learning demonstrations, have proven effective in creating lasting impressions and encouraging WOM communication that strengthens registration decisions. Islamic Branding (IB) also shows a significant effect on Experiential Marketing (EM) and Word of Mouth (WOM), but its effect on registration decisions through Word of Mouth (WOM) tends to be weaker. This indicates that the implementation of strong Islamic values and identities, such as tahfidz programs and moral education, although strengthening the school's image, has not been fully accompanied by the spread of significant Word of Mouth (WOM) in influencing registration decisions. Overall, Experiential Marketing and Word of Mouth (WOM) are proven to be key factors that drive prospective students' enrollment decisions at SDIT Al-Hanif, while Islamic Branding has a significant impact but needs to be optimized, especially in strengthening Word of Mouth (WOM) as an organic marketing channel in communicating Islamic Branding values to prospective students and parents.

4. CONCLUSION

Experiential marketing at SDIT Al-Hanif has proven to have a significant influence on prospective students' enrollment decisions by creating immersive experiences such as open houses and school tours. This strategy is effective in building positive perceptions of prospective students and parents, strengthening the school's appeal, and increasing their confidence in enrolling their children.

Islamic branding at SDIT Al-Hanif has proven to have a significant influence on experiential marketing by strengthening the school's identity as an Islamic-based educational institution. The implementation of Islamic values in teaching activities and methods creates relevant and meaningful experiences for prospective students and parents, thereby increasing the school's appeal and positively influencing enrollment decisions.

Experiential marketing at SDIT Al-Hanif has proven to have a significant influence on word of mouth (WOM) by creating positive, memorable experiences for stakeholders, such as through open houses, learning demonstrations, and parenting activities. These positive experiences encourage parents to share their impressions with the community, which strengthens the school's image organically. Positive word of mouth is an effective marketing tool, increasing the trust of prospective parents of students and contributing to an increase in the number of new student enrollments.

Islamic branding implemented by SDIT Al-Hanif has proven to have a significant effect on word of mouth (WOM). Consistency in implementing Islamic values such as practicing worship, learning the Qur'an, and integrating Islamic teachings into the teaching and learning process creates a positive experience for parents. When seeing their child's development in academic and spiritual aspects, parents tend to share these experiences with their community. This encourages effective WOM, strengthens the school's positive image, and attracts more prospective new students.

Islamic branding implemented by SDIT Al-Hanif has a significant effect on the decision to register new students. Consistency in reflecting Islamic values through the school's identity, such as the Islamic logo, sharia uniforms, and superior programs such as memorizing the Qur'an and moral development, effectively attracts parents' interest. This approach provides a holistic picture of Islamic-based education that is in accordance with the expectations of Muslim parents, thus encouraging them to choose the school as a place of education for their children.

Word of Mouth (WOM) has a significant effect on the decision to register students at SDIT Al-Hanif. Positive testimonials from parents, whether through direct conversations, communities, or social media, build trust among prospective parents by highlighting the quality of learning, teacher professionalism, facilities, and student development, thus encouraging enrollment decisions.

Experiential Marketing has a significant influence on student enrollment decisions at SDIT Al-Hanif through the mediation role of Word of Mouth (WOM). Positive experiences felt by parents while participating in school activities encourage them to share their impressions with their community. These positive testimonials then become valuable references that help prospective parents consider enrollment, creating an effective communication chain.

Islamic branding has a positive but insignificant influence on student enrollment decisions at SDIT Al-Hanif through Word of Mouth (WOM). Although a strong Islamic identity has been implemented, its influence on enrollment decisions through WOM is not yet optimal. Parents who are interested in the Islamic aspects of the school do not always share this information widely or influence enrollment decisions, because other factors such as cost, location, and academic quality are also important considerations.

Parents' perceptions of experiential marketing and Islamic branding mediated by word of mouth indicate that the decision to register at SDIT Al-Hanif is more influenced by the marketing experience communicated directly than the Islamic branding elements. Positive experiences felt by prospective parents, such as parenting activities and class demonstrations, tend to be more effective in building trust and influencing registration decisions through recommendations from other parents. On the other hand,

although Islamic branding reflects strong Islamic values and identity, its influence through word of mouth is not very significant in influencing registration decisions.

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