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Marketing Islamic Education : Stakeholders Satisfaction and Institutional Selection Behavior

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Abstract

The marketing of Islamic education is becoming increasingly urgent to study as the scale of Islamic education provision in Indonesia expands and competition between institutions for public trust intensifies. However, studies on stakeholder satisfaction and the behavior of selecting Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) tend to be separate, not yet integrated into a comprehensive service marketing framework. This article aims to examine the position of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) as service organizations, the mechanisms that shape stakeholder satisfaction with these services, and their implications for institution selection behavior. This study uses a scoping review approach with a review process following the SALSA framework. The search is not limited to journal articles alone, but also includes reference textbooks in the field of educational service marketing management using keywords related to satisfaction, service quality, and the selection of Islamic educational services. Then, it is filtered based on inclusion-exclusion criteria and synthesized thematically. The results of the study indicate that Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) are service organizations with dual outputs: academic and spiritual, which require quality management based on Islamic values, in addition to functional service dimensions. Stakeholder satisfaction is formed from the alignment between religious and academic expectations and perceived service experiences, and has been shown to correlate with loyalty and willingness to recommend the institution. This satisfaction in turn becomes the main predictor of Islamic educational institution selection behavior, both at the initial registration stage and during the continuation of studies.

Keyword: marketing of Islamic education; stakeholder satisfaction; institution selection behavior; service quality; scoping review.

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INTRODUCTION

The competitive environment has forced nearly every organization to evolve and compete, including public institutions, which were previously considered to operate independently of market pressures. Educational institutions are one of the most visible examples of this shift: from preschool to higher education, they are now being challenged to improve the quality of their services to remain the preferred choice of parents, pupils, and students. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2021) , through their systematic review of global higher education marketing literature, assert that educational institutions can no longer ignore the need to anticipate the long-term implications of their own consumer choices, a situation that in turn encourages the application of marketing principles to a sector once considered purely a public service.

This dynamic is evident in Islamic education in Indonesia. Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as of October 2025, recorded at least 42,391 Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) spread across the country, with West Java, East Java, and Banten being the three provinces with the largest distribution. However, this figure does not include the thousands of madrasas, integrated Islamic schools, and Islamic religious colleges that serve similar functions. This scale makes Islamic education no longer merely a space for preaching and religious guidance, but rather a service arena with millions of stakeholders vying for the trust of a relatively similar community base. As service organizations, the ability of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) to win the hearts of potential stakeholders is largely determined by the quality of the services they provide. This is where the importance of marketing begins to be taken seriously by institution managers.

Marketing in the context of educational institutions, as formulated by Kotler and Fox (1995) , is intended as a stakeholder-oriented approach that aims to bring about targeted change to meet the needs of school stakeholders, while simultaneously promoting the institution's mission. This approach is increasingly relevant considering that the sustainability of educational institutions, including Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI), which are largely managed independently, is highly dependent on the adequacy of funding from students and community donations. This dependence makes the presence of new students not only an indicator of the success of educational da'wah, but also supports the continuity of the institution's operations. Therefore, the factors that attract and retain the community at an educational institution are worthy of in-depth study.

There is also a general principle in service marketing: the greater the costs incurred by consumers, the higher their expectations of the service they will receive. Zeithaml (1988) , through the price-quality-value model widely referenced in marketing literature, explains that

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price functions as a signal that shapes consumer expectations of quality, causing the higher the price, the higher the standard of satisfaction that must be met by the service provider. This principle also applies to Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI), especially modern Islamic boarding schools, integrated Islamic schools, and private Islamic religious colleges that set high tuition fees. The higher the fees paid by parents or students, the higher their expectations of the academic quality and Islamic guidance they receive in return.

Successfully achieving satisfaction with these expectations is not merely an administrative achievement, but rather the core goal of service marketing itself. Fornell (1992) , through his study that produced the Swedish national customer satisfaction index, demonstrated that customer satisfaction is the key to an organization's long-term competitive success, not merely a superficial short-term achievement. When this logic is applied to Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI), stakeholder satisfaction can no longer be viewed as a side effect of good service, but rather must be a consciously managed goal. It is through this satisfaction that the institution gains the continued trust of the community, which is the source of its survival.

The problem is that academic studies that comprehensively link stakeholder satisfaction with behavior in selecting Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) are still relatively rare. Some studies measure the quality of educational services using generic instruments like SERVQUAL without considering the Islamic dimension, which is the primary reason people make choices. Others explore the religious motives behind choosing Islamic boarding schools or madrasas, such as the desire to deepen religious knowledge, as found by Sabdah (2021) and Haetami, Saputra, and Irfanudin (2025) , but rarely explicitly link these to satisfaction mechanisms and the underlying service marketing theory. Yet, theoretically, Zeithaml et al. (1996) have demonstrated that satisfaction evaluation results always lead to behavioral intentions, one concrete manifestation of which is the decision to choose or leave a particular service provider. This pattern should also apply, even with richer nuances, to the context of Islamic education.

Based on these gaps, this study is structured as a systematic literature review that attempts to reconnect the common thread between the position of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) as service organizations, the mechanisms by which stakeholder satisfaction with these services is formed, and their implications for the behavior of selecting Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI). Specifically, this study aims to: (1) describe the position and characteristics of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) as service organizations, as a foundation for understanding the marketing of Islamic education in general; (2) examine the concept of stakeholder satisfaction with Islamic educational services and its shaping factors, both functional and rooted in Islamic values; and (3) examine the implications of this satisfaction for the behavior of selecting Islamic

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Educational Institutions (IEI) (institutional selection behavior) by students and parents, as a basis for institutional managers in designing marketing strategies that are more responsive to the needs of their stakeholders.

METHOD

This study uses a scoping review approach, a type of review that is more appropriate when the purpose of the writing is not to test the effectiveness of an intervention strictly, but rather to map the breadth and variety of available evidence on a research theme. The choice of this approach is based on the characteristics of the topic being studied, namely the position of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) as service organizations, the mechanisms for forming stakeholder satisfaction, and its implications for institutional selection behavior, which are naturally spread across various fields of study, namely: service marketing management, education management, and consumer behavior, so that it is more suitable to be mapped than tested through a rigid systematic review. Arksey and O'Malley (2005) explain that scoping reviews are suitable for describing the scope of literature in fields that are not yet methodologically consolidated, while also identifying research gaps that can be followed up in subsequent studies.

Operationally, the review process follows the Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis (SALSA) framework as outlined by Grant and Booth (2009), which divides the literature review into four sequential steps but remains flexible to accommodate the nature of the topic, which intersects multiple disciplines. These four stages are outlined as follows.

In the Search stage, the search is not limited to journal articles alone but also includes reference textbooks in the field of educational services marketing management. This kind of source coverage expansion is commonly done in scoping reviews, as emphasized by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010), who stated that scoping reviews allow the involvement of non-journal sources as long as their contribution to concept mapping can be accounted for. The search for journal articles is still conducted through Scopus, Google Scholar, Sinta, and Garuda with the same keywords as mentioned previously, while the search for reference books is carried out by searching for the main reference works in the field of educational services marketing that are frequently cited in related literature, such as the works of Kotler (2000) Kotler and Fox (1995) , Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) , and Sallis (2012) , Alma (2003).

In the Appraisal stage, eligibility criteria are adjusted according to the source type. For journal articles, inclusion criteria still require Scopus or Sinta 1–4 indexing. For reference books, eligibility is assessed based on the extent to which the work is a primary reference consistently cited in the educational services marketing literature, rather than based on the peer review

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mechanism as in journals. This difference in eligibility criteria treatment between source types aligns with the nature of scoping reviews, which, according to Peters et al. (2020) , require flexibility in assessment rather than the application of a single standard for all document types. In the Synthesis stage, each source deemed relevant is extracted into a relevance matrix. This matrix facilitates cross-source comparisons while maintaining accountability for the references used in the discussion section. Transparency in reporting the article selection and screening stages in this section is developed for scoping review reporting to ensure the selection process remains traceable, although not as rigorous as a systematic review (Tricco et al., 2018).

In the Analysis stage, the extracted articles were analyzed thematically and grouped into three major themes aligned with the study's objectives: the position of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) as service organizations, the mechanisms by which stakeholder satisfaction with Islamic educational services is formed, and the implications of such satisfaction on institutional selection behavior. The analysis was conducted narratively and not statistically using meta-analysis, considering that the collected studies had diverse research designs, ranging from conceptual studies, qualitative studies, to quantitative surveys based on structural equation modeling. Therefore, statistically combining the data risks losing the context of each finding. To maintain the credibility of the argument, each finding used as the basis for the discussion was re-verified for its conformity with the original source and, whenever possible, supported by more than one reference so that the conclusions drawn were not based on a single study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) as Service Organizations

Services can be simply understood as economic activities that produce intangible output, where the production and consumption processes occur simultaneously, and provide added value to the recipient, whether in the form of comfort, tranquility, or an improved quality of life. Three characteristics, namely: intangible, inseparability and value added, are the basis for Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) to include education in the service category. Educational output, namely changes in student knowledge and competence, cannot be physically felt; the learning process is enjoyed by students at the same time as the teacher delivers it; and the final result is an increase in knowledge and skills that were not previously possessed.

These provisions also apply, with even greater emphasis, to Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI), from madrasas and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), integrated Islamic schools, to Islamic religious colleges. As non-profit organizations, the goals of these institutions differ from those of profit-oriented corporations. However, this difference in orientation does not

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negate the need for sound marketing management. Alma (2003) emphasized that the essence of educational institutions is that they provide services, where the parties they serve—students, parents, and the community, often referred to as stakeholders—expect to obtain satisfaction from the services they receive. As service providers, Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) deal directly with consumers, including prospective students, students, students, parents, and the wider community, who place high expectations on the quality of the education they provide.

The difference between Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) and educational service organizations in general lies in the two layers of output that must be produced simultaneously: academic excellence and character formation based on Islamic values. Nursaidah et al. (2026) , through an in-depth literature review of the quality management of Islamic educational services, found that the Total Quality Management framework and the five dimensions of SERVQUAL, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, become an effective model when strengthened by the integration of Islamic values such as amanah, ihsan, and rahmah. Such implementation, according to them, not only increases stakeholder satisfaction and loyalty but also helps shape the character of students who excel academically and spiritually. Islamic educational services, in other words, are not only assessed by the efficiency and completeness of facilities, but also by the extent to which the service process reflects sharia principles in its interactions, curriculum, and learning environment.

This structural similarity also makes the Islamic value-based service quality measurement framework in other sectors relevant to be used as an analytical lens. In the Islamic banking industry, Othman and Owen (2001) developed the CARTER (Compliance, Assurance, Reliability, Tangibles, Empathy, Responsiveness) model as an extension of SERVQUAL, adding a compliance dimension to measure the extent to which an institution operates in accordance with sharia principles. Fauzi and Suryani (2019) , in their test on Indonesian Islamic banking, demonstrated that this dimension significantly impacts customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. Because Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) are both service organizations bound by sharia principles in carrying out their services, this compliance dimension can be conceptually understood as an analogy for the suitability of the curriculum, educator behavior, and institutional atmosphere with Islamic values, as an intangible service attribute that is also assessed by stakeholders in addition to other functional dimensions.

Evans (1995) , as cited in various educational marketing literature, views education as a market in which the laws of supply and demand apply: educational institutions act as sellers, while the community, as stakeholders, acts as buyers with the right to choose. Although this relationship is not entirely identical to conventional business transactions, the similarities are still clear. Islamic

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Educational Institutions (IEI) do not have complete control over the educational market, while prospective students and parents have the freedom to choose the institution they deem most suitable. Price, Matzdorf, Smith, and Agahi (2003) , in their study on the impact of facilities on university choice, found that the availability of learning resources, library quality, teaching reputation, and the friendliness of the campus environment are significant considerations for prospective students. These findings confirm that perceptions of service quality, both physical and non-physical, contribute to the decisions of consumers of educational services, including in the context of Islamic education.

The increasingly fierce competition among Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI), including Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), madrasahs (Islamic schools), and even state and private Islamic religious universities, has also driven the need for more targeted marketing strategies. A systematic review and meta-analysis of marketing management for Islamic higher education in Indonesia shows that strategies such as Islamic branding and experiential marketing significantly influence prospective student interest. This situation emphasizes that Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI), even those operating as nonprofits, can no longer ignore service quality management as part of their efforts to maintain their sustainability. Therefore, stakeholder satisfaction occupies a central position in the marketing of Islamic educational services, as will be described in the following section.

2. Stakeholder Satisfaction with Islamic Education Services

Satisfaction comes from the root word 'satisfy', which means a feeling of relief or pleasure. Kotler (2000) defines it as a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment that arises after comparing their perception of a product or service's performance with their expectations. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003) formulate a similar definition, namely a consumer's evaluation of a product or service to assess whether both have met their needs and expectations. Athiyaman (1997) adds that satisfaction is a short-term attitude, the result of an evaluation of the experience of consuming goods or services. Summarizing the three, satisfaction can be understood as the feeling that arises after consumers compare their impressions of perceived service performance with their previously held expectations.

In the service marketing literature, the concept of satisfaction is discussed alongside the concept of service quality, with one of the most frequently referenced measurement instruments being Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1996) SERVQUAL . A service is considered high quality when it meets, or even exceeds, consumer expectations; this fulfillment of expectations, in turn, generates satisfaction. In the context of Islamic educational services, this relationship has an

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additional layer: quality is not solely assessed by the five functional dimensions of SERVQUAL, but is also influenced by the Islamic values inherent in the service process. Nursaidah et al. (2026) demonstrated that strengthening the five SERVQUAL dimensions with the values of amanah, ihsan, and rahmah consistently increases the satisfaction and loyalty of stakeholders in Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI). This aligns with the logic of the compliance dimension in the CARTER model (Amin & Isa, 2008; Othman & Owen, 2001) , which places sharia compliance as a separate evaluative criterion in the minds of consumers of Islamic value-based services, including educational services.

Stakeholders are essentially customers of educational services. Sallis (2012) maps educational customers into several layers, namely: students as primary external customers, namely those who receive and directly experience educational services; parents, guardians, or sponsors as secondary external customers; the community, the world of work, and the government as tertiary external customers; and teachers and education personnel as internal customers. This framework can be adapted to the context of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI): students, madrasah students, or students at Islamic religious universities occupy the position of primary customers; guardians of students and parents are secondary customers; while the community, the business world-industrial world, the government, and even the wider community are at the tertiary level; while ustadz, teachers, lecturers, and education personnel play a role as internal customers who also determine the quality of service received by external customers.

Education (added value provided to students)	=	Service
Students	=	Primary external customers
Parents/regional heads/sponsors	=	Secondary external customers
job market/ government/ community	=	Tertiary external customers
Teachers/support staff	=	Internal customers

Figure 1. Education Customers
(Source: Sallis, 2005)

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Figure 1 explains that the primary stakeholders of educational services are students, those who directly receive and experience educational services. As the primary external customers of educational services, students certainly have expectations regarding the quality of the educational services where they study (Hill, 1995). These services are considered high-quality when they satisfy students. Simply put, student satisfaction is defined as a short-term attitude resulting from their evaluation of their experiences while studying at an institution (Elliott & Healy, 2001). Students compare their experiences with the institution's services with their expectations of those services (Alves & Raposo, 2010).

The expectations that prospective students bring to an Islamic educational institution are not solely shaped by institutional promotion, references from others, or pragmatic needs such as proximity and cost. Sabdah (2021) and Haetami, Saputra, and Irfanudin (2025) , through research on parents and prospective students at the Daarussalaam Islamic Boarding School in Depok, found that the primary motivating factor for parents to choose an Islamic boarding school as a place for their children's education was the desire to deepen religious knowledge. This religious motive creates a dual stakeholder expectation of Islamic educational services: expectations for academic quality and expectations for spiritual and moral development. When the perceived service meets, or even exceeds, both expectations, satisfaction is achieved; conversely, a gap in one of the two has the potential to lead to disappointment even if the other dimension has been met.

Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI)' concern for stakeholder satisfaction is not without empirical basis. Anwar, Malik, and Ayuna (2023), in their study of Islamic higher education institutions, found that the quality of academic services significantly impacted student satisfaction and loyalty. Similar findings were demonstrated by Fadhli et al. (2026) , who used the SERVQUAL instrument on students at Muhammadiyah University of Bandung, a private Islamic university, and demonstrated that the quality of higher education services influenced student loyalty and willingness to recommend the institution to others through positive word of mouth. These two studies provide concrete evidence that in the Islamic higher education ecosystem in Indonesia, satisfaction is not merely a subjective feeling, but a measurable variable that has been proven to have a significant impact on the sustainability of the relationship between the institution and its customers.

To build and maintain this satisfaction, Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) can take several complementary steps: forging long-term relationships with alumni and guardians of students so that they become sincere promotional agents; providing superior service compared to competitors, for example through a variety of religious programs, extracurricular activities, and the use of learning technology; establishing a consistent internal quality assurance system as a

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form of guarantee of service quality; placing the handling of student and guardian complaints as part of the evaluation of continuous improvement; and developing the competence of ustadz, teachers, and educational staff on an ongoing basis. Nursaidah et.al. (2026) emphasized that consistent and authentic service quality ultimately functions as a strategic investment in building the institution's brand equity. Positive experiences generate trust, trust triggers loyalty, and loyalty encourages word-of-mouth recommendations. Stakeholder satisfaction, therefore, is not only the ultimate goal of the service but also the foundation for the sustainable marketing of Islamic educational services itself.

3. Implications of Satisfaction on the Selection of Islamic Education Services

Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) introduced the concept of behavioral intention to explain the behavioral consequences arising from consumers' evaluations of the quality of service they receive. These consequences can be positive or negative, depending on how the experience is perceived. When a student, guardian, or university student experiences service that meets expectations, a positive response typically emerges in the form of a stronger attachment to the institution, a willingness to recommend it to others, and even a willingness to bear higher costs. Conversely, dissatisfaction tends to lead to a desire to switch to another institution and a reluctance to bear additional costs. These two distinct behavioral poles ultimately determine the financial success and sustainability of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) amidst competition.

One of the most relevant forms of behavioral intention discussed in this context is loyalty. Jones and Sasser (1995) explain that consumer loyalty is manifested through the intensity of selecting and reusing a service, as well as their willingness to refer the service to others. In the context of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI), loyalty can be seen when students who have completed a certain level of education choose to continue to the next level at the same foundation, or when alumni and guardians of students actively recommend the Islamic boarding school or madrasah to their family and friends. The findings of Anwar et al. (2023) and Fadhli et al. (2026) mentioned earlier reinforce this picture: the quality of service perceived by Islamic higher education students has been shown to correlate with their loyalty and willingness to spread positive recommendations. A cycle that Nursaidah (2026) calls a chain of positive experiences, trust, loyalty, and word-of-mouth advocacy.

The choice of educational institution by students or parents is part of consumer behavior, namely, the process by which individuals or groups select, decide, and use a product or service. Kotler and Fox (1995) divided this process into five stages: need recognition, information search,

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alternative evaluation, decision making, and post-purchase evaluation. The following are the stages of this selection process.

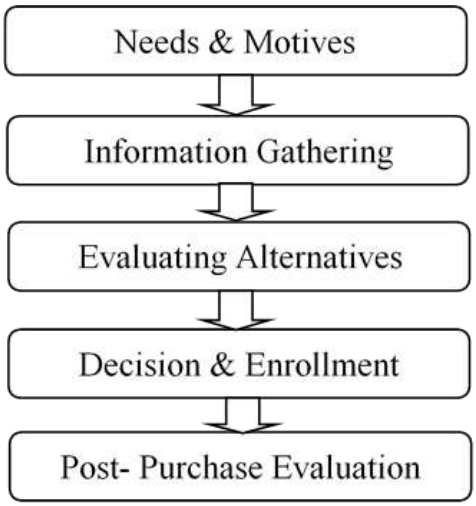


Figure 2. Stages of selecting an educational institution by students
(Source: adapted from Kotler & Fox, 1995)

In the first stage, the needs of prospective students at Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) are often rooted in religious motives. As demonstrated by Sabdah (2021) and Haetami et al. (2025), the desire to deepen religious knowledge is the primary driver for parents directing their children to Islamic boarding schools. This need is then followed up with information searches, whether through social networks, community recommendations, or promotions conducted by institutions through various channels, including digital media.

In the alternative evaluation stage, prospective students and parents compare a number of institutions based on specific criteria. Haetami, Saputra, and Irfanudin (2025) identified six factors that significantly influence the decision to choose an Islamic boarding school: the quality and comfort of the boarding school, innovation and support for educational services, the essence of the boarding school's excellence, affordability and accessibility, financial support and facilities, and social interaction and access to information, with the quality and comfort of the boarding school being the most dominant factor. At the elementary education level, Khasanah (2012) found a similar pattern: school facilities, school culture, location, religiosity-based education, and customer satisfaction levels collectively influenced parents' decisions to choose a religious-based private elementary school. Khairunnisa et al. (2019) reinforced this picture through a study of

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parents' perceptions in choosing an integrated Islamic elementary school in Palembang, which confirmed that religious factors contribute to the positioning of Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) in the eyes of potential consumers.

These findings demonstrate that satisfaction does not stop at the final output of the service received, but also serves as input for the post-purchase evaluation stage in the next selection cycle, both for the same students when deciding whether to continue their studies, as well as for other prospective students who receive information from the network of satisfied alumni and guardians. In other words, stakeholder satisfaction serves a dual function: as an indicator of the quality of the service provided, as well as a predictor of the sustainability of the choice of Islamic education services in the future. In an increasingly competitive Islamic education market, consistent service quality management based on Islamic values is no longer an optional option, but rather a long-term investment for the competitiveness and sustainability of the institution.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Islamic Educational Institutions (IEI) are service organizations with unique characteristics: they produce two layers of output simultaneously, namely academic achievement and character formation based on Islamic values, so that the quality of their services is not only assessed from a functional dimension, but also from the extent to which the service process reflects sharia principles in the curriculum, interactions, and learning environment. Stakeholder satisfaction is in turn formed from a comparison between dual expectations, namely: academic and religious, with the service experience truly felt by students, pupils, students, parents, and the wider community who act as layers of education customers. This satisfaction is not merely a subjective feeling that stops at the individual, but rather a quality indicator that can be deliberately managed by the institution through relational strategies, quality assurance, and ongoing complaint handling.

Furthermore, this satisfaction is proven not to stand alone, but rather leads to the behavior of selecting an Islamic educational institution, whether in the form of the decision to enroll for the first time, loyalty to continue education at the same institution, and willingness to recommend it to others. Religious motives are the starting point that distinguishes this decision-making process from the service sector in general, while the quality and convenience of the service remain the most decisive considerations in the evaluation stage before the final decision is taken . Thus, the marketing of Islamic education is essentially a continuous cycle management. Starting from the formation of services, satisfaction evaluation, to selection behavior that

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ultimately determines the sustainability and competitiveness of institutions in the midst of an increasingly competitive Islamic education market.

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