



Digital Da'wah Communication Strategies for Engaging Generation Z on Social Media in Indonesia

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Riwayat Artikel :

Penyerahan : 23 Desember 2025
Revisi : 4 Mei 2026
Diterima : 24 Juni 2026
Diterbitkan : 28 Juni 2026

Kata Kunci : Dakwah
Digital; Strategi Komunikasi;
Generasi Z; Media Sosial;
Literasi Digital.

Keyword :

Digital Da'wah;
Communication Strategy;
Generation Z; Social Media;
Digital Literacy.

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi komunikasi dakwah digital yang digunakan pendakwah dalam menyampaikan pesan keagamaan melalui media sosial kepada Generasi Z di Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur yang dipadukan dengan analisis konten terhadap akun – akun dakwah pada platform Instagram, TikTok, dan YouTube. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi, kategorisasi, interpretasi, dan penarikan kesimpulan untuk mengidentifikasi pola strategi komunikasi yang dominan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas dakwah digital dipengaruhi oleh empat aspek utama, yaitu penyajian konten visual yang singkat dan menarik, penyampaian pesan yang kontekstual dengan kehidupan sehari – hari Generasi Z, interaksi dua arah melalui fitur komentar dan siaran langsung, serta konsistensi personal branding pendakwah dalam membangun kredibilitas dan kedekatan dengan audiens. Selain itu, algoritma media sosial turut memperluas jangkauan pesan melalui sistem rekomendasi berbasis tingkat keterlibatan pengguna. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberhasilan dakwah digital tidak hanya bergantung pada substansi pesan keagamaan, tetapi juga pada kemampuan pendakwah mengintegrasikan strategi komunikasi, karakteristik audiens, dan optimalisasi fitur media sosial sehingga dakwah menjadi lebih efektif, adaptif, dan relevan di era digital.

This article aims to analyze the digital da'wah communication strategies used by da'wah practitioners to convey religious messages to Generation Z on social media in Indonesia. This study employs a qualitative approach, combining a literature review with content analysis of da'wah accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Data were analyzed through the stages of reduction, categorization, interpretation, and drawing conclusions to identify dominant communication strategy patterns. The results indicate that the effectiveness of digital da'wah is influenced by four main aspects: the presentation of brief and engaging visual content; the delivery of messages contextualized to Generation Z's daily lives; two-way interaction through comment sections and live streams; and the consistency of preachers' personal branding in building credibility and rapport with their audience. In addition, social media algorithms help expand the reach of messages through recommendation systems that prioritize user engagement. This study concludes that the success of digital da'wah depends not only on the substance of religious messages but also on the preacher's ability to integrate communication strategies, consider audience characteristics, and optimize social media features, thereby making da'wah more effective, adaptive, and relevant in the digital age.



INTRODUCTION

Advances in digital technology over the past few years have transformed the way people interact and access information. Social media has become more than just a communication tool; it has also emerged as a new space for the dissemination of religious ideas, values, and practices. Generation Z has grown up amid the development of the internet and digital devices, so their patterns of engagement with religious information differ from those of previous generations (Nisa, 2024). They tend to prefer content that is concise, visually appealing, and relevant to their daily lives. This situation requires digital preachers to develop communication strategies that adapt to the rhythm of social media interactions. This shifting media landscape indicates that da'wah activities in the digital age cannot be separated from an understanding of platform characteristics and user behavior (Saleh et al., 2022). The ability to manage content, understand algorithmic dynamics, and build relationships with audiences has become a new competency for preachers. The shift in communication patterns occurring in the digital space means that da'wah is no longer limited to face-to-face methods or conventional sermons; rather, it has evolved into activities that utilize visual, audio, and interactive media. Preachers now play a dual role—not only as conveyors of religious messages but also as content creators who must understand communication design, audiovisual production techniques, and the dynamics of message distribution on digital platforms ('Ulyan, 2023).

This development demands new competencies that combine mastery of religious material with technological skills and media creativity. In this context, the role of social media algorithms has become a crucial factor in determining the reach and visibility of da'wah messages. Recommendation systems based on user preferences enable certain Islamic da'wah content to grow rapidly when it generates high engagement (Zabar & Permana, 2024). This encourages digital da'wah practitioners to design content relevant to their audience's needs, adopt persuasive communication styles, and utilize interactive features such as live streams, comments, and short videos to strengthen relationships with followers. This article stems from the rapid transformation of da'wah in the digital age, which has reshaped communication patterns between da'wah practitioners and the public (Faustyna et al., 2025).

Research on digital da'wah continues to evolve from various perspectives. Agustiani (2025) explains that digitalization creates opportunities for the emergence of more participatory da'wah models by leveraging digital technology to empower the Muslim community. Meanwhile, Delisa and Bafadhal (2025) highlight the opportunities and challenges of digital da'wah in addressing the moral decline of the Muslim generation, emphasizing the importance of adapting da'wah methods to social changes. Similar perspectives are presented by Maburur and Hairul (2022), Rani (2023), and Ramadhan (2026), who view the transformation of da'wah as a consequence of shifts in communication culture within virtual communities. Other studies focus more on da'wah communication strategies. Ilham Ansori and Jaya (2025) assert that the effectiveness of digital

da'wah is determined by the communicator's ability to utilize digital media interactively. Sopiyan et al. (2025) identify strategies for disseminating Islamic messages through digital media as well as the challenges arising from changes in audience characteristics. Rizky et al. (2025) argue that the transformation of da'wah methodology requires integrating information technology with more innovative communication approaches. On the other hand, Dhora et al. (2023) introduce the phenomenon of "e-jihad" as a new cultural form of digital da'wah influenced by the intensity of social media use. In particular, attention to Generation Z is increasingly prominent in digital da'wah research. Sari et al. (2026) demonstrate that Generation Z, as "digital natives," seeks communication that is fast, visual, interactive, and authentic. However, these studies remain conceptual and have not yet provided an in-depth analysis of the communication strategies employed by da'wah practitioners across various social media platforms. Based on this literature review, most studies still focus on the transformation of da'wah from a conceptual perspective, the opportunities and challenges of digitalization, and changes in da'wah methodology.

Previous research has not comprehensively explained how da'wah communication strategies are developed based on the characteristics of individual social media platforms—such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube—nor how these strategies influence the effectiveness of message delivery to Generation Z. Furthermore, studies examining the role of visual content, preachers' personal branding, two-way interaction, and social media algorithms as an integrated communication strategy remain relatively limited. Thus, the research gap in this study lies in the absence of an analytical model that integrates digital da'wah communication strategies with the characteristics of social media platforms and the communication behavior of Generation Z. The novelty of this study lies in its proposal of a digital da'wah communication strategy framework that integrates four main dimensions: adaptive visual content, contextualization of religious messages, participatory interaction with the audience, and optimization of social media algorithms through the preacher's personal branding. This framework provides a new perspective on understanding the effectiveness of digital da'wah as a communication process that is not only oriented toward conveying religious messages but also toward optimizing the social media ecosystem in accordance with the characteristics of Generation Z.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review design and content analysis of active digital da'wah accounts on social media. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of digital da'wah through data interpretation, social context, and the dynamics of interaction between da'wah practitioners and Gen Z audiences in the digital space. The literature review was conducted by examining books, journal articles, research reports, and regulations related to digital da'wah, religious communication, the characteristics of Generation Z, and the development of social media. This literature review serves as a conceptual

foundation for identifying relevant patterns of da'wah communication and changes in audience behavior in the digital age. In addition, this study employs content analysis of several Islamic da'wah accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, selected based on the following criteria: (1) having a significant number of followers, (2) actively posting Islamic da'wah content, and (3) having high audience engagement. Content analysis was conducted to identify the message formats, delivery styles, interaction strategies, and visual and narrative elements used by digital preachers to capture Generation Z's attention. Data collection techniques included documenting content posts, observing comments, and examining interaction patterns between preachers and their followers. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key categories, including communication strategies, interaction patterns, and audience perceptions. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation—that is, comparing literature findings with the results of the content analysis to ensure consistency and accuracy of interpretation.

RESULT

Patterns of Da'wah Transformation on Social Media

The rise in da'wah activity on social media is closely tied to shifting public preferences, as people increasingly rely on digital devices. A DataReportal report shows that Indonesia has one of the highest rates of internet and social media usage in Southeast Asia, with users aged 16–24 making up the majority (Khoiruz, 2026). This situation reinforces social media's role as a strategic space for the rapid, adaptive dissemination of religious messages to a broad young audience. In this context, digital da'wah has become an integral part of a modern communication ecosystem that operates in real time and is interactive. Nevertheless, the penetration of da'wah through social media still faces challenges related to information quality, religious authority, and increasingly complex competition for content (Ahmad Rizal & Khorina Seci Vella, 2024). Generation Z's characteristics as "digital natives" accustomed to consuming information rapidly may make them more responsive to communicative approaches than to in-depth arguments. Therefore, preachers are required to convey messages concisely, engagingly, and contextually without compromising the depth of the da'wah's substance. Furthermore, the participatory nature of social media has shifted communication patterns from a one-way model to two-way communication through comments, private messages, and various forms of digital interaction (Jalaluddin et al., 2024).

The transformation of digital da'wah also faces several challenges. First, the dominance of short-form video formats can oversimplify religious messages, thereby diminishing the depth of meaning intended to be conveyed. Second, da'wah content must compete with a wide array of entertainment, informational, and advertising content that floods users' social media feeds. Third, the risk of misinformation increases if da'wah practitioners lack adequate scholarly competence or fail to verify religious sources. Furthermore, the dynamics of

interactions in comment sections often spark debates that can shift the focus of da'wah; thus, digital literacy and the ability to engage in dialogic communication are necessary to manage differences of opinion (Alfi et al., 2025). The next challenge relates to dependence on social media algorithms. Changes in algorithms can affect the distribution and reach of content, so preachers need to continually adjust their message production and distribution strategies to remain relevant to their audience's characteristics. The success of digital da'wah is ultimately determined not only by the quality of the material but also by the ability to interpret the dynamics of digital technology. On the other hand, the ease with which individuals can produce da'wah content has led to a fragmentation of religious authority. Generation Z obtains religious information from various sources that may lack sufficient credibility, leading to confusion and even polarization in religious understanding (Di Marco et al., 2026).

Therefore, religious institutions play a crucial role in providing credible reference sources and guiding digital da'wah practices to ensure they remain within responsible academic and religious boundaries. Additionally, digital ethics present a distinct challenge. Efforts to build a personal brand on social media often create a dilemma between the demands of popularity and the moral responsibility of a da'i. This situation requires da'wah practitioners to exercise ethical sensitivity so as not to fall into sensationalist practices that could undermine the spiritual values of da'wah (Kalwar et al., 2026). Analysis indicates that da'wah among Generation Z has undergone a significant transformation alongside the increasing use of social media as a space for religious learning and the expression of religious identity. Dakwah content, which was previously dominated by long-form sermons, has now shifted toward short-form visual content, such as short videos, digital posters, infographics, and sermon excerpts (micro-da'wah). This transformation is a response to the characteristics of Generation Z, who prefer information that is fast, concise, visual, and easy to understand. Digital da'wah that adapts its communication style to these characteristics tends to reach a wider audience and achieve higher levels of engagement. This shift transforms the role of preachers from mere conveyors of religious teachings to digital religious influencers who must understand social media algorithms, audience behavior, and digital communication strategies.

Consequently, preachers are not only required to master Islamic teachings but must also possess skills in digital content production, selecting multimedia formats, crafting messages, and leveraging communication trends relevant to Generation Z. Furthermore, this transformation indicates that social media has driven the decentralization of religious authority. Generation Z no longer relies on a single religious scholar as the primary source of religious knowledge but instead draws references simultaneously from various digital accounts and platforms. This phenomenon presents significant opportunities for the expansion of Islamic da'wah but simultaneously increases the risk of information bias, oversimplification of teachings, and the spread of misinformation if not balanced by adequate verification processes. Therefore, the transformation of da'wah on

social media is not only related to changes in the medium through which messages are conveyed but also reflects changes in communication structures, religious authority, and patterns of religious information consumption in the digital age (Rokibullah & Laksana, 2025).

Effective Da'wah Communication for Generation Z

The study's findings show that social media algorithms play a crucial role in influencing the reach of digital da'wah. Content that generates high engagement in a short period of time will be recommended by the algorithm to users with similar interests. This underscores that the success of digital da'wah is determined not only by the quality of the message but also by an understanding of algorithmic mechanisms, such as posting times, content consistency, and prompt responses to comments. The use of hashtags, music trends, and popular formats also increases the visibility of da'wah content on users' home feeds. In addition to expanding reach, algorithms also shape patterns of religious content consumption among Gen Z. Personalized recommendation systems make users more likely to receive da'wah content that aligns with their preferences and interaction habits, thereby creating a more segmented da'wah space. This phenomenon encourages digital da'wah practitioners to understand their audience's specific characteristics so that the content they produce aligns with their interests. At the same time, algorithmic personalization has the potential to create echo chambers digital spaces that reinforce certain viewpoints and limit the diversity of religious perspectives (Hidayat & Nuri, 2024).

Algorithms operate not only based on interests but also on behavioral signals such as watch time, video completion rates, click counts, and patterns of repeated engagement. Therefore, digital da'wah practitioners must craft a strong hook within the first few seconds, as it is crucial to whether a user will continue watching a video. Success in retaining user attention is a crucial indicator of the visibility of Islamic preaching on digital platforms. On the other hand, algorithms also create intense competition for content. Islamic da'wah content must compete with various types of lighter entertainment that capture Gen Z's attention (Hasan et al., 2025). This requires da'wah practitioners to produce content that is not only informative and accurate but also visually and emotionally appealing, capable of standing out in a highly crowded newsfeed. This challenge simultaneously opens opportunities for more creative innovations in Islamic da'wah without compromising the substance of the message. This can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategies for Da'wah Communication on Social Media

Dakwah Communication Strategies	Description
Use of Short Visual Content	Findings show that 15–60–second videos on TikTok and Reels are the most effective format for conveying Islamic da'wah messages. Narrative and emotional content improve audience retention and increase the likelihood of being shared.
The Relevance of the Message to Gen Z's Reality	Islamic outreach content that addresses everyday issues such as anxiety, friendship, self–improvement, and digital activities is more readily accepted by Gen Z. "Relatable" messages have proven more effective at building emotional connection.
Two–Way Interaction Through Comments and Live Streams	Interactive features allow da'is to build dialogic relationships and strengthen audience trust. This two–way communication model is a key advantage of digital da'wah over conventional da'wah.
Consistent Personal Branding	A consistent visual identity and communication style make it easier for audiences to recognize da'is, thereby increasing loyalty and engagement.

Source: Personal Data Analysis, 2026

Table 1 illustrates that Da'i must be able to keep up with trends such as the use of viral audio, visual transition formats, or trending topics which tend to have a greater chance of entering algorithmic recommendation systems and appearing on Gen Z users' timelines. This adaptive strategy makes da'wah more accessible without compromising the essence of the religious message. The use of storytelling has proven to be a highly relevant approach. Gen Z is more interested in content that presents personal experiences, short stories, or moral reflections closely tied to everyday life. This technique makes the da'wah message feel more human and less preachy. Da'is who use a semi dialogic narrative style with simple language and natural visual expressions are more likely to elicit a positive response from their audience. Moreover, integrating call to action elements such as inviting discussion, encouraging comments, or sharing spiritual experiences also contributes to high audience engagement. This strategy not only expands the reach of da'wah messages but also fosters a sense of belonging among followers, thereby building an active and participatory digital community around the da'wah figure. Thus, an effective da'wah communication strategy for Gen Z focuses not only on content but also on

creating interactive spaces that strengthen the relationship between da'wah and its audience. In addition to these four main strategies, research findings also indicate that the effectiveness of digital da'wah is significantly influenced by the da'i's ability to leverage the fast – paced dynamics of the platform.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that digital da'wah requires adaptive and creative communication strategies, as well as a deep understanding of Generation Z's digital and psychological preferences. In this context, digital da'wah practitioners serve not only as conveyors of religious messages but also as online community managers and content creators who can leverage algorithms to expand their reach. These findings can be explained through the Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, which views the audience as active participants in selecting media and content that meet their needs. In the context of digital da'wah, Generation Z no longer passively receives religious messages but selectively chooses content that is relevant, engaging, easy to understand, and aligned with their needs for information, identity formation, social interaction, and entertainment.

Therefore, the effectiveness of da'wah depends not only on the quality of the message's substance but also on the preacher's ability to package the message in a way that aligns with Generation Z's media consumption patterns. Research findings indicate that the effectiveness of digital da'wah is significantly influenced by the ability of religious institutions and individual da'wah practitioners to integrate digital literacy as part of their da'wah competencies. Mastery of technology, an understanding of digital communication ethics, and the ability to manage virtual interactions are skills that are inseparable from da'wah practices in the era of social media. From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory, these competencies are crucial because the audience has numerous options for religious information sources. If da'wah messages are delivered in a monotonous manner, lack interactivity, or do not align with the preferences of digital media users, the audience will easily switch to other content deemed better suited to meet their needs. Digital literacy is also necessary to anticipate potential misinformation, oversimplification, and the dynamics of debates that frequently arise in comment sections.

The implications of this research also emphasize the need for collaboration between digital da'wah practitioners, academics, and Islamic educational institutions in designing a more contextually relevant da'wah model for Generation Z. This collaboration could include the development of a digital da'wah curriculum, training in creative content production, and the development of social media based da'wah ethics guidelines that preserve the integrity of religious teachings while remaining relevant to the needs of the younger generation. These findings also underscore the importance of a data driven da'wah approach. By understanding engagement patterns, audience preferences, and user responses to specific content types, preachers can design more effective and sustainable da'wah strategies. This data driven approach not only expands

reach but also ensures that da'wah messages are delivered in a way that aligns with the social and psychological dynamics of Generation Z.

These findings further reinforce the core assumption of Uses and Gratifications Theory that the success of communication is heavily influenced by the communicator's ability to understand the audience's needs, motivations, and media usage patterns. Thus, an effective da'wah communication strategy for Generation Z must be audience-centered, make optimal use of the characteristics of digital media, and foster interactions that provide valuable information, inspiration, and meaningful religious experiences for social media users. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. This study remains conceptual in nature, relying on a literature review; thus, it has not empirically tested the effectiveness of various da'wah communication strategies across different social media platforms. Additionally, the characteristics of Generation Z used in this study are viewed in general terms and do not account for variations by cultural background, geographic region, educational level, or preferences for specific digital platforms. The ever-changing dynamics of social media algorithms also pose a limitation, as they can affect the relevance of da'wah communication strategies over time.

Given these limitations, further research is recommended to conduct empirical testing using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches to measure the effectiveness of various da'wah communication strategies on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and other digital platforms. Future research should also develop data-driven da'wah communication models by leveraging social media analytics, artificial intelligence, and audience behavior analysis to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's engagement patterns. Furthermore, cross cultural and cross regional research is needed to develop da'wah communication strategies that are more inclusive, adaptive, and practical, aligned with advances in digital communication technology and the needs of contemporary Muslim communities.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the effectiveness of digital da'wah among Generation Z is determined by the preacher's ability to integrate the substance of religious messages with communication strategies tailored to the characteristics of social media. Content that is visual, concise, interactive, and contextual has proven more effective at increasing audience engagement, while optimizing platform features such as algorithms, hashtags, and multimedia formats expands the message's reach. These findings confirm that the success of digital da'wah no longer depends solely on the preacher's scholarly authority but also on digital communication skills, media literacy, and the ability to foster participatory interactions with the audience. On the other hand, digital da'wah still faces various challenges, including the simplification of religious material, intense competition for content, the potential for misinformation, and changes in social media algorithms that affect message distribution. Therefore, preachers need to

develop adaptive communication strategies without compromising the validity and depth of Islamic teachings. The contribution of this study lies in the development of a strategic framework for digital da'wah communication that integrates visual content, contextualization of messages, participatory interaction, and optimization of social media algorithms to reach Generation Z. This framework can serve as a reference for the development of digital da'wah practices as well as for future research. Future research is recommended to use an empirical approach, including surveys, in-depth interviews, or analyses of social media user behavior, to test the effectiveness of da'wah communication strategies across various digital platforms and demographic groups.

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