



## PERSONAL BRANDING OF ISLAMIC PREACHERS IN DIGITAL DA'WAH: IMAGE, INTENTION, AND ADAB

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**Abstract:** *The development of digital media has transformed the way Islamic preachers preach, build relationships with audiences, and establish religious authority in the digital public sphere. This situation has prompted some religious preachers to develop personal branding as a communication strategy for preaching on social media, while also sparking debate about the relationship between image, intention, and the manners of preachers from an Islamic perspective. This study aims to analyze the transformation of the role of Islamic preachers through personal branding, using the preachers' images, intentions, and manners as an analytical framework. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection methods including observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of digital preaching activities. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, focusing on data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that personal branding plays a significant role in shaping preachers' image and the audience's trust in digital preaching. However, personal branding can also shift the orientation of preaching towards popularity if not accompanied by sincere intentions. This study found that the balance between image, intention, and manners of preachers is an important factor in maintaining the integrity and quality of Islamic preaching in the digital space.*

**Keywords:** *Personal Branding; Preachers' Image; Preaching Intention; Preachers' Etiquette, Digital Media.*

**Abstrak:** Perkembangan media digital telah mengubah cara penceramah agama Islam berdakwah, membangun relasi dengan audiens, serta membentuk otoritas keagamaan di ruang publik digital. Kondisi tersebut mendorong sebagian penceramah agama untuk membangun *personal branding* sebagai strategi komunikasi dakwah di media sosial, sekaligus memunculkan perdebatan mengenai hubungan antara citra, niat, dan adab da'i dalam perspektif dakwah Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi peran penceramah agama Islam melalui personal branding dengan

menjadikan citra, niat, dan adab da'i sebagai kerangka analisis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi aktivitas dakwah digital. Data dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa personal branding berperan penting dalam membentuk citra da'i dan persepsi kepercayaan audiens terhadap dakwah digital. Namun, personal branding juga berpotensi menggeser orientasi dakwah menuju pencarian popularitas apabila tidak disertai niat yang tulus. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa keseimbangan antara citra, niat, dan adab da'i merupakan faktor penting dalam menjaga integritas dan kualitas dakwah Islam di ruang digital.

**Kata kunci:** *Personal Branding; Citra Da'i; Niat Dakwah; Adab Da'i; Media Digital.*

## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has brought significant changes to the practice of Islamic preaching in Indonesia<sup>1</sup>. The presence of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook has not only expanded the reach of preaching, but also changed the way a religious preacher builds relationships with his audience<sup>2</sup>. In this context, Islamic religious preachers are no longer seen merely as conveyors of religious messages but also as public figures who shape identity, image, and social influence through the process of personal branding. This phenomenon shows that contemporary da'wah has entered the digital communication space, which demands the ability to build visual appeal, rhetoric, and emotional closeness with the community. This change creates a new dynamic in the practice of da'wah, especially regarding the balance between digital popularity and the values of etiquette and a da'i's sincerity.

From the perspective of Islamic communication, branding can be understood as the process of forming the public perception of a preacher's identity through symbols, communication style, appearance, and the consistency of the message conveyed<sup>3</sup>. Personal branding in preaching is not always understood as a practice that conflicts with Islamic values. Although the concept of personal branding has developed in modern communications and marketing studies, shaping public perception of a preacher can be based on exemplary, consistent, and moral behavior. In Islamic history, Rasulullah Saw. is known for a noble moral reputation as a person who is honest (ṣidq), trustworthy, polite, and respectful, thereby gaining social legitimacy. However, this reputation is formed naturally through exemplary living, not through image-building strategies as understood in

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<sup>1</sup> Qomar Abdurrahman and Dudi Badruzaman, "Tantangan Dan Peluang Dakwah Islam Di Era Digital," *KOMUNIKASIA: Journal of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting* 3, no. 2 (2023): 152–62,

<sup>2</sup> H. Dasad Latif and S. Sos, *New Media Dan Dakwah* (Elex Media Komputindo, 2024),

<sup>3</sup> Aditya Putra Robby, "PERSONAL BRANDING DAN PERILAKU KOMUNIKASI DA'I PEREMPUAN DI INSTAGRAM" (PhD Thesis, UIN RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG, 2023),

contemporary personal branding concepts. However, the development of digital media has given rise to a new trend in which some preachers prioritize popularity, sensationalism, and image over the substance of their preaching. While personal branding can strengthen da'wah communication, some research indicates a tendency toward the commercialization of religion in the digital space. This phenomenon arises when da'wah activities are more focused on generating popularity, monetizing content, and achieving economic gain than on strengthening the educational and spiritual functions of da'wah<sup>4</sup>.

Several previous studies have shown that social media has a significant influence on the transformation of contemporary Islamic preaching. Moch Fakhruroji's research explains that new media has shifted the pattern of preaching interactions from conventional models to digital communication that is participatory and visual<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, Rulli Nasrullah's research confirms that virtual identities on social media are formed through self-representation strategies that are continuously produced symbolically<sup>6</sup>. Other research also highlights the emergence of the phenomenon of "celebrity preachers" who utilize digital media to expand the influence of da'wah while building social and economic capital<sup>7</sup>. However, most previous research has focused more on the use of digital media in preaching, online preaching communication strategies, and the phenomenon of preacher popularity on social media.

On the other hand, studies specifically addressing the transformation of the role of Islamic preachers through branding from a da'wah perspective are still relatively limited. Previous research has not linked digital image formation, da'wah intentions, and the concept of da'i etiquette as an ethical foundation in Islamic communication<sup>8</sup>. In fact, in the Islamic da'wah tradition, the success of da'wah is measured not only by the number of followers or popularity, but also by the sincerity of intentions, exemplary morals, and the conformity of the preachers' behavior to Islamic values. This gap in research underscores the need for research that views branding not only as a modern communication strategy but also as a da'wah phenomenon with spiritual, moral, and social

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<sup>4</sup> Ferdiana Arif Huzaidi et al., "Dimensi Aksiologis Dakwah Dalam Era Digital: Transformasi Nilai Etika Dakwah Dalam Ruang Virtual," *Menulis: Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara* 1, no. 6 (June 2025): 739–45, <https://doi.org/10.59435/menulis.v1i6.425>; Niken Maulida et al., "Komodifikasi Dakwah: Analisis Fenomena Ustaz Selebriti Dalam Industri Media," *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Agama Dan Filsafat* 3 (January 2026): 257–70, <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurrafi.v3i2.8129>.

<sup>5</sup> Moch Fakhruroji, *Dakwah di Era Media Baru: Teori dan Aktivisme Dakwah di Internet*, I, vol. 1, ed. Iqbal Triadi Nugraha, with Moch Fakhruroji (Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media, 2017),

<sup>6</sup> Rulli Nasrullah, "Media Sosial: Perspektif Komunikasi, Budaya, Dan Socioteknologi," *Bandung: Simbiosis Rekatama Media* 2016 (2015): 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Maulida et al., "Komodifikasi Dakwah."

<sup>8</sup> Zhahrania Oktavia Aryani, "Problematika Dakwah Digital Menurut Ustaz Salim A. Fillah: Antara Etika, Media, Dan Spiritualitas," *Iqtida: Journal of Da'wah and Communication* 5, no. 02 (2025): 193–211,

dimensions.

Based on the description, this study aims to analyze the transformation of the role of Islamic religious preachers through branding, from a da'wah perspective, by emphasizing three main aspects: the preachers' image, intention, and manners. This research is crucial for understanding how branding influences religious authority, the relationship between preachers and their audiences, and ethical values in digital da'wah practices. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will contribute theoretically to the development of contemporary da'wah communication studies and provide religious preachers with a critical reflection on how to use digital media wisely and in accordance with Islamic da'wah principles.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach to examine the personal branding practices of preachers in the context of digital preaching on social media. This approach was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of how the image, intentions, and manners of preachers are constructed and interpreted in the digital communication space. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the transformation of the role of Islamic religious preachers through branding from a da'wah perspective, particularly regarding the formation of the image, intentions, and manners of preachers in the digital space<sup>9</sup>. Qualitative research allows researchers to study social phenomena and the Islamic preaching communication contextually, grounded in the realities of society and social media.

The object of this research is the personal branding practices of Islamic preachers in digital da'wah activities published on YouTube and Instagram. These two platforms were selected based on their high levels of visual media use and audience interaction in disseminating da'wah content<sup>10</sup>. The research subjects consisted of 3–5 Islamic preachers and 8–10 social media audience members, selected purposively. The criteria for preachers included consistent social media preaching with a minimum of twice-weekly posts over the past six months, active audience interaction, and being known as a digital preacher. Meanwhile, the audience was selected based on their experience following, watching, and interacting with the digital preaching content published by the preachers<sup>11</sup>. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which selects informants based on

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<sup>9</sup> Ferdiana Arif Huzaidi et al., "Dimensi Aksiologis Dakwah Dalam Era Digital: Transformasi Nilai Etika Dakwah Dalam Ruang Virtual," *Menulis: Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara* 1, no. 6 (2025): 739–45,

<sup>10</sup> Bani Eka Dartiningsih, "Gambaran Umum Lokasi, Subjek, Dan Objek Penelitian," *Buku Pendamping Bimbingan Skripsi* 129 (2016): 135,

<sup>11</sup> Dartiningsih.

certain criteria, such as level of digital preaching activity, number of followers, intensity of interaction with the audience, and relevance to the research focus.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with Islamic preachers and several followers or audiences of digital da'wah. Furthermore, primary data were collected through observations of digital da'wah content published on social media, including communication style, content visualization, the use of religious symbols, and audience interactions. Secondary data were obtained from scientific journals, books, articles, social media documentation, and literature related to da'wah communication, branding, digital media, and Islamic da'wah ethics.

Data collection techniques are carried out in three stages, namely observation, interviews and documentation<sup>12</sup>. Observations were conducted by observing the branding activities of religious preachers on social media to determine their image representation, communication patterns, and strategies for conveying their preaching messages. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow informants to provide more in-depth explanations regarding their preaching intentions, branding strategies, and their views on preacher etiquette in the digital era. Meanwhile, documentation was conducted by collecting screenshots, videos, social media captions, and various forms of digital archives relevant to the research.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing<sup>13</sup>. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and grouped the data according to research themes: images, intentions, and manners of preachers. The preacher's image was analyzed through aspects of communication style, visual appearance, consistency of the preaching message, and audience response to the content delivered. The preacher's intentions were examined in terms of their preaching orientation, motivation for conveying religious messages, and the relationship between preaching activities and social media popularity. Meanwhile, the preachers' etiquette was analyzed in terms of linguistic politeness, the accuracy and precision of the scientific material, respect for the audience, and ethical interactions in the digital space. Furthermore, the data were presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the interrelationships between the data and the Islamic da'wah perspectives used in this study. To

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<sup>12</sup> Mudjia Rahardjo, *Metode Pengumpulan Data Penelitian Kualitatif*, 2011, <http://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/1123/>.

<sup>13</sup> Qomaruddin Qomaruddin and Halimah Sa'diyah, "Kajian Teoritis Tentang Teknik Analisis Data Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Perspektif Spradley, Miles Dan Huberman," *Journal of Management, Accounting, and Administration* 1, no. 2 (2024): 77-84,

maintain data validity, the study employed source and method triangulation by comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation collected during the study. In practice, the preacher's statements from interviews were compared with the preaching content posted on social media, then matched with audience responses seen in the comments section and other digital interactions. Furthermore, observations of preaching activities were verified through visual documentation and posts' recordings to ensure consistency between what the informant conveyed and what was actually displayed in the digital space.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Da'wah Theory***

Da'wah is the activity of conveying Islamic teachings to society with the aim of inviting people towards goodness and the path of Allah SWT <sup>14</sup>. From an Islamic communication perspective, da'wah is not only understood as conveying a religious message, but also as a process of social, moral, and spiritual transformation that is carried out wisely and based on moral values <sup>15</sup>. Da'wah plays an important role in shaping society's religious awareness through a persuasive, educational, and humanistic approach to communication.

According to Moch Fakhruroji, the development of digital media has changed the pattern of preaching from conventional communication to digital communication, which is more interactive and open <sup>16</sup>. Da'wah is no longer confined to mosque pulpits or religious study groups, but has evolved through social media, enabling rapid and widespread dissemination of messages. This shift has given rise to new forms of da'wah communication that adapt to the characteristics of digital media, including the use of visuals, symbols, and personal branding strategies by preachers.

In Islam, da'wah must be carried out in accordance with the principles of wisdom, good deeds, and *mujadalah bil-lati hiya ahsan*, as explained in QS. An-Nahl verse 125 <sup>17</sup>. This principle demonstrates that da'wah is not solely focused on conveying a message effectively, but also emphasizes ethical communication and the exemplary conduct of a preacher. Therefore, the transformation of da'wah in the digital era must continue to adhere to Islamic values to prevent it from becoming merely a public image-building activity or mere entertainment.

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<sup>14</sup> Mira Fauziah, "Konsep Keباikan Dalam Perspektif Dakwah," *Al-Idarah: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Administrasi Islam* 3, no. 1 (2019): 73–94,

<sup>15</sup> Nur Setiawati et al., "Etika Dakwah Dalam Perspektif Islam," *Jurnal Mimbar: Media Intelektual Muslim Dan Bimbingan Rohani* 11, no. 2 (2025): 140–51,

<sup>16</sup> Fakhruroji, *Dakwah di Era Media Baru*, vol. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Abdur Razzaq and Kristina Imron, "Dawah Through Effective Educational Strategies: A Perspective from the Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl, Verse 125," *TOFEDU: The Future of Education Journal* 4, no. 9 (2025): 5152–58,

### ***Branding Theory in Communication***

Branding is essentially the process of shaping the identity and public perception of a person, product, or institution through specific symbols, images, communication styles, and representations. In the context of modern communications, branding is used to build influence, trust, and rapport with an audience<sup>18</sup>. The concept of branding, which initially developed in the business world, is now also used in various social fields, including Islamic preaching.

Personal branding is a widely used strategy among religious preachers on digital media. Through personal branding, preachers build a specific character and identity that is easily recognized by the public, for example, through their clothing style, speaking style, preaching themes, and social media visualizations<sup>19</sup>. Branding can enhance the effectiveness of preaching by making it easier for audiences to recognize and remember the message. However, branding can also create problems when the focus of preaching shifts to seeking popularity and personal gain.

According to media representation theory, a person's identity in digital space is formed through a process of image production that is continuously displayed to the public<sup>20</sup>. On social media, a preacher's image is constructed not only through sermons but also through daily activities, visual content, interactions with followers, and publicized lifestyle. Therefore, branding has a significant influence on establishing religious authority in the digital age.

### ***Preacher's Image Concept***

An image is a picture or public perception of an individual, formed through experience, communication, and social representation<sup>21</sup>. In the context of da'wah (Islamic preaching), the image of the preacher is crucial because the credibility of the religious message is often tied to the audience's perception of the preacher's integrity, competence, and exemplary conduct. Therefore, the quality of reception of the da'wah message is determined not only by the content but also by how the preacher is perceived as a communicator with moral and scholarly authority in conveying Islamic teachings. A preacher is not only required to possess excellent rhetorical skills, but also to

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<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Sularno, "Strategi Digital Marketing Untuk Meningkatkan Brand Awareness Di Era Media Sosial," *Aliansi: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Bisnis* 20, no. 1 (2025): 228–40,

<sup>19</sup> Qori Hajidah Arianti, *Publik Speaking Dakwah Di Media Sosial: Teori & Praktik Personal Branding Pendakwah* (Basya Media Utama, 2026),

<sup>20</sup> Reka Purnama Sari et al., "Peran Media Sosial Dalam Pembentukan Identitas: Perspektif Cultural Studies," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 5, no. 4 (2025): 7282–90.

<sup>21</sup> Wening Oktafia Ramadhani et al., "Membangun Citra Dan Reputasi," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmiah Multidisipliner* 2, no. 04 (2026): 2520–33,

demonstrate good morals and exemplary behavior in daily life. From a da'wah communication perspective, this relates to the concept of the communicator's ethos, which emphasizes credibility, integrity, and the audience's trust in the speaker. In the Islamic da'wah tradition, exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) is an integral part of the da'wah message itself, so that the da'i's personality serves not only to support the message but also to directly represent the values being preached.

The image of a preacher in the digital era is built through a combination of communication skills, visual appearance, message consistency, and social media activity<sup>22</sup>. Digital media enables the public to access the preacher's self-representation through uploads, interactions, and documentation of digital activities, facilitating image formation more quickly than with conventional preaching. Thus, the preacher's image in the digital space is not formed from his entire personal life, but rather from a construction displayed and reproduced through social media, which is then continuously interpreted by the audience. This condition makes the image a crucial factor in determining the level of audience acceptance of the preaching delivered. From the perspective of Islamic preaching, a good image must be built on integrity, honesty, and noble morals<sup>23</sup>. An image focused solely on popularity, unsupported by moral qualities, can lead to a crisis of public trust in Islamic preaching. Therefore, the image of a preacher must align with ethical values and the primary goals of Islamic preaching: conveying the truth, guiding the community, building morals, and inviting goodness. In this context, a preacher's personal branding in the digital space should strengthen the credibility of their preaching and legitimize their religious message, not merely an image-building exercise focused on social media popularity.

### ***The Concept of Intention in Da'wah***

Intention is the main foundation of every worship activity, including preaching<sup>24</sup>. In Islam, intention determines the value and quality of one's deeds, as explained in the hadith "*innamal a'malu binniyat*," which means every deed depends on one's intention. Da'wah performed with sincere intentions for the sake of Allah SWT will be considered an act of worship, while da'wah oriented toward praise, popularity, or worldly interests has the potential to diminish its spiritual value.

The development of social media presents new challenges related to the intention of preaching

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<sup>22</sup> Rohmat Wardiman, "Komunikasi Bisnis Di Era Digital: Pengaruh Konten Visual Terhadap Citra Merek Di Media Sosial," *Al-Musthofa: Journal of Sharia Economics* 8, no. 2 (2025): 23-40.

<sup>23</sup> Setiawati et al., "Etika Dakwah Dalam Perspektif Islam."

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Busro, "Menghadirkan Niat Dalam Segala Perbuatan," *Bunga Rampai Islam Dalam Disiplin Ilmu Fakultas Matematika Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan Alam Universitas Islam Indonesia Edisi Dakwah Mahasiswa*, 2022.

<sup>25</sup>. Digital popularity, follower count, content monetization, and public presence can influence a preacher's orientation toward preaching. Under certain circumstances, branding can be a positive tool for expanding the message of Islam, but on the other hand, it can also encourage the emergence of ostentation, excessive image-making, and the commercialization of religion. Therefore, intention is a fundamental aspect that a preacher must maintain when utilizing digital media. Digital preaching should remain focused on devotion and the dissemination of Islamic values, not simply on building personal popularity in the public sphere.

### ***The Concept of Preachers' Manners***

Preachers' etiquette is a set of ethics and behavior that a religious preacher must have in carrying out da'wah activities <sup>26</sup>. Manners reflect the moral qualities of a preacher, both in speech, behavior, and interaction with the community. In Islamic tradition, the success of preaching is determined not only by the content of the message delivered but also by the morals and exemplary behavior of the preacher.

Some forms of preachers' etiquette include speaking politely, respecting differences, not spreading hatred, avoiding provocation, and maintaining behavior in public spaces and on social media <sup>27</sup>. In the digital era, the preacher's manners are becoming increasingly important because all the preacher's activities can be easily accessed and assessed by the wider community. Communication errors on social media can damage the image of da'wah and cause social conflict.

From the perspective of da'wah communication, manners are the main foundation that differentiates Islamic da'wah from ordinary persuasive communication <sup>28</sup>. Preaching without etiquette can lose its spiritual and moral value. Therefore, transforming the role of religious preachers through branding must remain within the bounds of Islamic ethics to ensure that preaching does not lose its substance and primary purpose.

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<sup>25</sup> Firman Maulidna et al., "Etika Dakwah Di Media Digital: Tantangan Dan Solusi," *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 2 (2025): 315–36,

<sup>26</sup> M. Amin Sihabuddin, "Etika Profesi Da'I Menurut Al-Qur'an," *Ghaidan: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Islam Dan Kemasyarakatan* 1, no. 1 (2017): 27–40,

<sup>27</sup> Mawaliya Mawaliya, Kusnadi Kusnadi, and Aristhopan Firdaus, "Etika Komunikasi Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dalam Menanggulangi Ujaran Kebencian Di Media Sosial," *Journal of Literature Review* 1, no. 2 (2025)

<sup>28</sup> Rifki Rante Gau, "Analisi Konten Dakwah Ustaz Das' Ad Latif Di Tiktok (Teori Komunikasi Persuasif Aristoteles)" (PhD Thesis, Universitas Islam Negeri Palopo, 2026),

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Transforming the Role of Islamic Preachers in the Digital Era*

The research results show that the development of digital media has shifted the pattern of Islamic preaching from conventional communication to a more open, interactive, and visually based digital communication. This change is evident in the use of short videos as the primary format for delivering Islamic messages, the use of live-streaming features for direct audience interaction, and the increase in two-way communication through comment sections and the repost feature for lecture content. Furthermore, the visual representation of Islamic preaching quotes in graphic design has become a dominant strategy for expanding the reach of religious messages on social media. The preachers observed in this study function not only as conveyors of religious teachings but also as public figures actively building their identity and image through social media. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become primary tools for expanding the reach of Islamic preaching to the wider community.

Based on observations of three digital Islamic preaching accounts selected based on consistent posting activity, a significant number of followers, and high audience engagement, it was found that the preachers actively engage in personal branding in the digital space. This practice is evident in consistent visual identity across posts, distinctive greetings or communication styles, clothing choices that reflect a particular religious image, and the structured design of their Islamic preaching content. Furthermore, audience interaction patterns also demonstrate efforts to strengthen engagement through comment responses, reposts, and strategic use of social media features. This personal branding is used to build an emotional connection with the audience and increase the appeal of preaching on digital media.

One informant (I1, digital speaker) explained: *"Nowadays, preaching isn't just about the content of the sermon, but also how it's delivered. On social media, appearance and communication greatly influence whether or not the audience will listen."*

This statement was reinforced by another informant (I2, digital preaching audience) who stated: *"If preaching on social media is too formal and monotonous, it's usually quickly abandoned by the audience. That's why preachers are now trying to adapt their communication style to suit the characteristics of young people."*

The results of these interviews show that the transformation of digital da'wah requires religious preachers to be more adaptive to developments in communication technology and social media culture. This form of adaptation can be seen in the use of popular language, attractive visual design, short preaching videos, and direct audience interaction through live-streaming features and

comment sections.

Furthermore, the study found that social media provides significant opportunities for religious preachers to build broader social influence than conventional preaching. Several informants assessed that digital media can accelerate the spread of preaching messages and increase public access to Islamic studies.

An informant (I3, digital preaching audience) said: *"Through social media, preaching has become more accessible. People can learn about religion at any time without having to attend a congregation in person."*

Another informant (I4, digital preaching audience) expressed a similar sentiment: *"Digital media makes preaching more flexible and has a broader reach. Sermons can even be rewatched and shared with many people."*

These findings indicate that digital media has become a new space for contemporary Islamic da'wah practices. However, the research also found that this transformation has shifted the orientation of da'wah activities, particularly regarding the image and popularity of religious preachers in the digital space.

### ***The Image of Preachers in Digital Da'wah Branding***

The research results show that image is one of the important factors in building the success of da'wah on social media, although this success is also influenced by the quality of the da'wah material, the credibility of the da'i's knowledge, and the suitability of the message to the audience's needs. Audiences tend to be more attracted to religious preachers who display communicative qualities, neat and consistent visual representations, and a simple, easy-to-understand delivery style, so that the da'wah message can be received more effectively by social media users. Therefore, da'i strive to build a certain image to gain public attention and trust.

Based on observations, the image of a preacher is shaped by various factors, including religious dress style, casual language, Islamic motivational content, and daily activities shared on social media. Furthermore, consistency in delivering the preaching message is also crucial in shaping a preacher's digital image. One informant (I5, digital preaching audience) stated: *"Masyarakat sekarang melihat ustadz bukan hanya dari ceramahnya, tetapi juga dari sikap dan penampilannya di media sosial."*

This statement shows that the audience's perception of preachers on social media is shaped not only by the substance of the preaching message but also by self-representation through attitudes, interaction patterns, and visual appearance in digital space.

This statement was reinforced by another informant (I6, digital preaching audience), who said: *"If a preacher's image is good and communicative, the congregation will usually trust him more and feel*

*more comfortable following his lectures."*

This statement indicates that the image of a preacher is perceived by the audience as a factor that contributes to the formation of trust and comfort in receiving the preaching message. However, this trust is still tied to the preacher's scientific credibility, personal integrity, and consistency in behavior across digital and social spaces.

The research also shows that a positive image strengthens the influence of da'wah (Islamic preaching) on digital media. This contribution is evident in the audience's greater trust in preachers, increased interaction in the comments section, and a tendency to rewatch and share da'wah content with other users. Religious preachers who are perceived as polite, modest, and close to the community tend to be seen as more familiar and more easily accepted by audiences than preachers who are considered too formal or exclusive. This indicates that personality and communication style play a role in building positive relationships between preachers and their followers on social media.

However, this study also found a tendency for some religious preachers to prioritize image-building over the substance of their preaching. This is evident in the excessive use of attention-grabbing titles, the dominance of visual elements over in-depth religious content, and the presentation of sermons that emphasize sensational aspects rather than comprehensive scientific explanations. This is evident in the emergence of content that is more oriented towards sensation, popularity, and entertainment to attract audience attention.

An informant (I7, digital preaching audience) explained: *"Sometimes there's preaching content that focuses more on going viral than on deepening the content of the sermon."*

This statement indicates a perception among some audiences that popularity-driven social media has the potential to shift the focus of preaching from deepening religious content to strategies for increasing content visibility. This finding demonstrates the importance of maintaining a balance between efforts to build a digital image and a commitment to the quality and depth of preaching material delivered.

This statement was reinforced by another informant (I8, digital preaching audience), who stated: *"On social media, there is a tendency for preachers to appear attractive to attract more viewers, but focusing too much on image can diminish the value of preaching itself."*

This statement demonstrates to the audience that strategies for building image and attracting public attention are part of the dynamics of digital da'wah. However, these efforts are deemed necessary to limit so as not to shift the primary focus of da'wah, namely, conveying Islamic teachings in depth, guiding the community, and shaping morals and behavior in accordance with Islamic values.

These findings indicate that personal branding plays a crucial role in shaping preachers' image

in the digital age. However, excessive use of personal branding has the potential to shift the orientation of preaching from conveying Islamic values to merely seeking popularity.

### ***The Intention of Preaching in Branding Practices***

The research findings indicate that intention is a crucial aspect in digital da'wah practices. Social media is not only a means of spreading da'wah but also presents new challenges related to the existence, popularity, and monetization of da'wah content. The research findings indicate that this monetization occurs in various forms, including revenue from AdSense on video platforms, endorsement partnerships with certain brands, paid promotion practices, and digital donations from audiences via live-streaming features. Furthermore, some preachers also receive honoraria for lecture invitations stemming from their social media exposure. This situation influences how some religious preachers interpret da'wah activities in the digital space.

Based on the interview results, some informants assessed that social media can influence a preacher's sincerity due to the urge to continue gaining public attention. One informant (I9, a digital preacher) said: *"Nowadays, the measure of success in preaching is often seen in the number of followers and viewers, even though preaching shouldn't be solely about popularity."*

This statement was reinforced by another informant (I10, a digital preacher), who stated: *"Sometimes there's a worry that the intention to preach will change because we're too busy chasing social media engagement."*

However, several informants also argued that branding does not always conflict with the intention of da'wah as long as it is used to expand the spread of Islam and is carried out proportionally.

An informant (I11, social media audience) stated: *"Personal branding is actually fine if the goal is to make it easier for the public to recognize your missionary work, as long as you don't forget sincerity."*

This statement indicates that some audiences do not view personal branding as a practice completely contrary to da'wah. Branding is perceived as a means to expand the reach of religious messages and increase the visibility of preachers, provided it remains focused on supporting da'wah goals and does not shift the focus from sincerity in conveying Islamic teachings.

Something similar was expressed by another informant (I12, social media audience): *"Social media is just a tool. The most important thing is still the intention of the preacher himself."*

This statement indicates that some audiences view social media as an instrumental tool in the da'wah process. The effectiveness of its use is perceived to depend not only on technical skills in

managing digital content, but also on the da'i's orientation and sincerity in conveying religious messages. This finding indicates that personal branding and the use of social media are acceptable da'wah strategies as long as they remain within the framework of the primary goals of Islamic da'wah, namely conveying the truth, guiding the community, and inviting them to goodness.

These findings indicate that digital media presents a dilemma in contemporary da'wah practices. On the one hand, branding can be an effective communication strategy; on the other, it can foster worldly orientations if not accompanied by the right intentions.

### ***Preachers Manners in Digital Da'wah***

The research results show that the preacher's etiquette is a highly considered factor in the public's assessment of preaching quality on social media. Based on interviews and observations, the forms of etiquette most frequently highlighted by informants include politeness in language, accuracy in argumentation, the ability to respond proportionately to criticism, an attitude of not attacking other groups, and respect for the audience through ethical interactions in the digital space. Audiences assess not only the content of the sermon but also how the religious preacher communicates, responds to criticism, and presents himself in the digital space.

Based on observations, the public tends to prefer religious preachers who are polite, humble, and non-provocative. Conversely, rude behavior, hate speech, and content that incites conflict are considered detrimental to the image of Islamic preaching.

One informant (I13, social media audience) explained: *"Manners are very important. Even if you're highly educated, if you speak rudely, people won't sympathize."*

This statement was reinforced by another informant (I8, social media audience): *"On social media, all of a preacher's behavior is easily observed. So, his attitude and ethics are crucial in determining how the public perceives his preaching."*

This statement demonstrates that the open, documented nature of social media makes preachers' behavior easier for the public to observe and evaluate. In the context of digital preaching, good manners are reflected not only in the delivery of religious material but also in the preacher's attitude, interaction patterns, and consistent behavior in the digital space, which ultimately influence the audience's level of acceptance and trust in the preaching message.

Furthermore, the study found indications that the visibility- and interaction-oriented characteristics of social media can encourage some speakers to adopt more emotional and competitive communication strategies. This is evident in the use of attention-grabbing titles, the discussion of controversial issues, and the presentation of lecture excerpts that could spark debate

among the audience.

An informant (I9, social media audience) said: *"Sometimes there are sermons that are deliberately made harsh or controversial so they go viral and become widely discussed."*

This statement reflects the perception among some audiences that the characteristics of social media, which emphasize the visibility and reach of content, can encourage a more confrontational or controversial communication style. While this strategy has the potential to increase public attention, informants believe it needs to be balanced with ethical responsibility to ensure that the substance of da'wah (Islamic preaching) and the goal of community development remain the primary focus.

This statement was reinforced by another informant (I10, social media audience): *"If preaching is too offensive or insulting to other groups, society will view it negatively."*

This statement demonstrates that audiences pay attention not only to the content of the preaching material but also to the preacher's delivery and handling of differences. Based on interviews, avoiding statements that attack, demean, or insult other groups is perceived as an important part of da'wah etiquette in the digital space. This finding indicates that respecting diverse views and maintaining audience respect contribute to the formation of a positive image and public acceptance of the preaching message.

These findings demonstrate that etiquette serves as a primary foundation for maintaining the quality of da'wah in the digital age. Etiquette also serves as an ethical barrier, preventing personal branding practices from devolving into provocative, sensational, or purely popularity-driven religious performativity.

### ***Transforming the Role of Islamic Preachers in the Digital Era***

The research findings show that digital media has not only transformed Islamic preaching practices from conventional models to more interactive, visual, and participatory communication, but also shifted the role of preachers from religious communicators to public communication actors who must negotiate the logic of digital media. In this context, preachers are not only required to convey religious messages but also to adapt to the platform's algorithmic mechanisms, the visual culture of social media, and audience expectations, which demand engaging, accessible, and responsive content to current issues.

The findings of this study align with Fakhruroji's opinion<sup>29</sup>, which explains that the development of new media has shifted the practice of da'wah from one-way communication to more open and participatory digital communication. Da'wah in the digital era is no longer confined to

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<sup>29</sup> Fakhruroji, *Dakwah di Era Media Baru*, vol. 1.

physical spaces like mosques and religious study groups, but has evolved into a virtual communication activity capable of reaching a wide and rapid audience. This aligns with the results of interviews with informants, who stated that social media makes da'wah more accessible anytime, anywhere.

Furthermore, the research findings also show that religious preachers strive to adapt their preaching style to the characteristics of social media audiences, particularly the younger generation. The use of popular language, short videos, and engaging visual designs is part of contemporary preaching communication strategies. These findings reinforce digital communication theory, which holds that social media encourages changes in communication formats to better suit the medium's characteristics and the audience's needs.

However, this transformation also has consequences for changing the orientation of da'wah. Da'wah is not only understood as the activity of spreading Islamic values, but also related to the existence and popularity of a preacher in the digital space. In this context, branding can be understood as a communication strategy that is increasingly prominent in digital da'wah practices. This strategy allows preachers to establish a more recognizable identity, maintain message consistency, and build rapport with their audience. However, research findings indicate that branding practices still need to be placed within the ethical framework of da'wah to prevent a shift towards an image-oriented approach that prioritizes visibility over religious substance.

### ***The Image of Preachers in Digital Da'wah Branding***

This study found that the image plays a crucial role in strengthening the acceptance of da'wah messages in the digital space. Social media audiences tend to be more attracted to religious preachers who are perceived as communicative, polite, and close to the community. This image is constructed through visual representation, language style, message consistency, and social activities displayed in digital media. However, these findings are not intended to position image as the sole indicator of da'wah success. From an Islamic da'wah perspective, da'wah success is measured by achieving the goal of religious transformation, namely increasing understanding, awareness, and the practice of Islamic teachings in individual and social life.

This finding is relevant to the theory of media representation, which holds that a person's identity in digital space is formed through a continuous process of producing symbols and images<sup>30</sup>. In the context of da'wah, social media becomes a space for the formation of new authority, where

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<sup>30</sup> Annisa Ica, "Teori Representasi Stuart Hall: Mengungkap Makna Dalam Media Dan Budaya: Perspektif Teori Stuart Hall," *Sanak: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 2, no. 2 (2024).

society not only assesses a preacher's scientific abilities but also his behavior and appearance in the digital public space.

The results of this study are also in line with Nasrullah's opinion<sup>31</sup> that social media allows individuals to construct virtual identities through symbolic self-representation. In digital da'wah practices, branding serves to build emotional closeness and increase audience trust in religious preachers. This is evident from the research findings that people feel more comfortable following the lectures of religious preachers who are perceived as communicative and possess a positive image.

However, this study also found a tendency for some religious preachers to prioritize image over the substance of their preaching. Based on interviews and observations, this tendency is evident in the use of clickbait titles, the presentation of sermon excerpts that highlight controversial statements, a provocative communication style, and an excessive emphasis on visuals to increase content appeal. These findings indicate a negotiation between the demands of social media visibility and the commitment to maintaining the depth and quality of religious messages. These findings demonstrate that branding has two distinct sides. On the one hand, branding can strengthen the effectiveness of preaching; on the other hand, it can shift its focus toward mere image-building. From the perspective of Islamic preaching, a good image should be built on integrity and exemplary morals, not just digital popularity<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, branding in da'wah needs to be positioned as a means of communication to expand the spread of Islam, not as a primary goal oriented solely towards seeking social influence.

### ***The Intention of Preaching in Branding Practices***

The research results show that intention is the most crucial aspect in digital da'wah practices. Social media presents significant opportunities for expanding da'wah, but also creates challenges related to popularity, monetization, and seeking a presence in the public sphere. This finding is evident in several informants' concerns about a shift in da'wah orientation toward an overfocus on social media followers and engagement.

This finding aligns with the concept of intention in Islam, which holds sincerity as the primary basis for every good deed<sup>33</sup>. The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad narrated by Umar ibn al-Khattab states, "Indeed, every deed depends on its intention" (*innamā al-a'mālu bi al-niyyāt*) as stated in Sahih

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<sup>31</sup> Nasrullah, "Media Sosial."

<sup>32</sup> Setiawati et al., "Etika Dakwah Dalam Perspektif Islam."

<sup>33</sup> Nurul Hidayah, Ade Rizal Rosidi, and Amrini Shofiyani, "Konsep Ikhlas Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Tujuan Pendidikan Islam," *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 12, no. 2 (2023): 190–207.

al-Bukhari, Kitab Bad' al-Wahy, hadith no. 1, and Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Imarah, hadith no. 1907. In the context of digital da'wah, intention becomes increasingly important because social media offers a broad platform for gaining public recognition, visibility, and popularity. Therefore, da'i are required to continue to maintain the orientation of da'wah so that it remains based on sincerity in conveying Islamic teachings, even when faced with various symbolic incentives offered by digital platforms.

This research shows that branding is not always viewed negatively by informants. Some informants believe that branding can be an effective communication strategy as long as it is used to expand the message of Islam and does not diminish the value of sincerity. These findings suggest that the main problem lies not in the use of social media or branding itself, but rather in the orientation and goals of a preacher's da'wah.

The results of this study demonstrate that social media cannot be understood solely as a neutral communication instrument. Digital platforms operate through algorithmic logic that tends to prioritize visibility, interaction, and content appeal, requiring preachers to continually negotiate the balance between the demands of media popularity and the normative goals of Islamic preaching. Thus, personal branding can be positioned as a legitimate communication strategy in digital preaching, but such practice needs to be tempered by sincere intentions, preaching etiquette, and moral responsibility to prevent it from devolving into religious performativity oriented solely toward public recognition.

Thus, intention is the primary foundation that determines the direction of digital da'wah transformation. Without the right intention, branding can turn da'wah into an activity driven by popularity and worldly interests. Conversely, with sincere intention, branding can be a strategic tool for expanding the influence of Islamic da'wah amidst the development of modern communication technology.

### ***Preachers Manners in Digital Da'wah***

The research results show that the preacher's etiquette is a crucial aspect in building the quality of preaching on social media. Audiences evaluate not only the content of the sermon but also the preacher's attitude, communication ethics, and behavior in the digital space. These findings demonstrate that etiquette significantly influences the level of public acceptance of the preaching delivered.

The findings of this study align with the principles of Islamic da'wah, which emphasize the importance of wisdom, good advice, and polite communication, as explained in QS. An-Nahl verse 125

<sup>34</sup>. Da'wah not only aims to convey the truth, but also to be conducted in a wise and respectful manner. Therefore, good manners are the primary foundation of da'wah communication practices.

This study found that people prefer religious preachers who are humble, polite, and non-provocative on social media. Conversely, harsh, aggressive, and insulting preaching styles are viewed negatively by the public. These findings demonstrate that digital audiences are increasingly critical in assessing the moral quality of preachers, not only on the basis of their rhetorical abilities but also on their social behavior. Furthermore, research findings show that social media often encourages emotional and competitive communication to gain public attention. This situation makes some preaching content go viral by making it controversial. This phenomenon highlights ethical challenges in digital preaching practices, where some preachers are driven to prioritize sensationalism over the substance of their preaching.

From an Islamic perspective, this situation underscores the importance of maintaining good manners in the use of digital media. Good manners serve not only as a communication ethic but also as a representation of Islamic morals in the public sphere. Therefore, the transformation of the role of religious preachers through branding must remain within Islamic values to ensure that Islamic preaching does not lose its spiritual and moral substance.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research shows that the development of digital media has brought a significant transformation to the role of Islamic preachers in contemporary da'wah practices. Religious preachers is no longer only function as transmitters of religious messages through conventional media, but also become public figures who actively build identity and influence through branding on social media. Branding is used as a communication strategy to expand da'wah's reach, build closeness with the audience, and increase the appeal of da'wah messages in the digital space. This transformation can be seen through content visualization, popular communication styles, and active public interaction across various social media platforms.

The research also shows that image, intention, and etiquette are three key aspects in digital da'wah branding practices. The preachers' image plays a crucial role in shaping the audience's trust and acceptance of the da'wah message. This image is built through a neat visual representation, a communicative style, consistent religious messages, and social activities displayed on digital media. Furthermore, intention serves as a spiritual foundation that determines the direction of branding in da'wah, whether it remains focused on supporting Islamic propagation or shifts toward popularity

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<sup>34</sup> Razzaq and Imron, "Dawah Through Effective Educational Strategies."

and worldly interests. Furthermore, the preachers' etiquette is a crucial element in maintaining the quality and ethics of da'wah communication on social media. This etiquette is reflected in the use of polite language, the accurate presentation of evidence, the ability to respond wisely to criticism, and an attitude that avoids statements that attack or demean other groups. The research findings indicate that audiences tend to be more receptive to da'wah delivered politely, wisely, and non-provocatively than da'wah that is controversial or confrontational.

This study concludes that branding in Islamic preaching is not inherently contrary to Islamic values, provided it is used proportionately and with sincere intentions and good manners. Branding can be a strategic tool for expanding the influence of Islamic preaching in the digital age. However, if used excessively and focused solely on popularity, it can shift the essence of Islamic preaching into mere image-building. Therefore, a balance among image, intention, and manners is crucial for maintaining the integrity of Islamic preaching amid the development of modern communication technology.

The limitations of this study lie in its scope, which remains confined to the phenomenon of da'wah branding on social media, without a more in-depth analysis of the specific characteristics of digital platforms. Furthermore, the number of informants in this study remains limited, so it does not fully represent the phenomenon of digital da'wah in Indonesia. This study also focuses more on the perspective of da'wah communication and does not examine in depth the political economy of media, social media algorithms, or the influence of digital commercialization on contemporary da'wah practices. Therefore, further research is expected to develop broader studies with a multidisciplinary approach, such as the political economy of media to understand power relations in the production and distribution of da'wah content, algorithm studies to examine the role of digital platform recommendation systems, digital ethnography to observe da'wah practices in cyberspace, cross-platform content analysis to examine the consistency of da'wah messages across various social media platforms, and audience reception studies to understand how da'wah messages are received and interpreted by the audience. These approaches are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the transformation of Islamic da'wah in the digital era.

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