

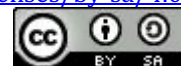
From Mimbar to Media: Da'wah Communication Strategies in Shaping Muslim Communities in the Digital Era

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Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 14-03-2026	The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed Islamic communication practices, particularly in the context of da'wah. Traditionally conducted through physical platforms, da'wah has increasingly shifted toward digital media, creating new opportunities for interaction and community formation. This study aims to analyze da'wah communication strategies and their role in shaping Muslim communities in the digital era. The research employs a qualitative approach using a literature-based design, involving the systematic review and conceptual analysis of scholarly works related to digital religion and communication. The findings reveal that effective digital da'wah communication is characterized by three main dimensions: message personalization, interactivity, and visual-symbolic representation. These strategies enhance audience engagement, foster emotional connection, and support the formation of collective identity within digital Muslim communities. Furthermore, social media functions not only as a communication channel but also as a dynamic social space where religious meanings and identities are constructed. The study concludes that communication strategies play a crucial role in determining the success of digital da'wah and community cohesion, offering both theoretical contributions to Islamic communication studies and practical implications for developing adaptive da'wah practices in contemporary digital society.
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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology over the past few decades has brought significant transformations in global communication practices, including within the context of Islamic religious communication. Da'wah, which was previously centered in physical spaces such as mosques, religious study circles (majelis taklim), and pulpits, has now shifted toward digital spaces that are more open, flexible, and interactive. Social media, as the

primary medium in the digital era, has transformed the pattern of da'wah communication from a linear and one-way process into a dialogical and participatory one. From the perspective of Islamic communication, this transformation not only concerns the medium of delivery but also affects strategies, rhetoric, and the increasingly dynamic relationship between the preacher (da'i) and the audience (mad'u) ([Campbell, 2020](#); [Hoover, 2021](#)).

The urgency of this research becomes even more relevant when viewed from the increasing number of internet and social media users globally and nationally. Recent reports indicate that more than 4.9 billion people worldwide are connected to the internet, with the majority actively using social media as their primary means of communication ([Kemp, 2023](#)). In Indonesia, the number of social media users has reached over 170 million, with most users belonging to the productive age group, which also constitutes the primary target of digital da'wah. This phenomenon demonstrates that social media is not merely a communication tool but also a space for the production and reproduction of religious values. Furthermore, the growing presence of digital preachers and Muslim influencers indicates a shift in religious authority from a centralized structure to a more distributed one ([Hjarvard, 2019](#)).

Empirical evidence indicates that da'wah content disseminated through social media can achieve broad reach and active audience interaction, particularly among younger users, while also facilitating the formation of digital religious communities grounded in shared Islamic interests and values ([Aisyapuri et al., 2025](#); [Jaya et al., 2025](#); [Roslan et al., 2025](#)). Research suggests that digital media facilitates the emergence of "networked religion," defined as religious practices connected through digital networks that form active virtual communities ([Campbell, 2020](#)). Additionally, the use of interactive features such as comments, live streaming, and content sharing enhances audience engagement in the da'wah communication process ([Papacharissi, 2015](#)). This indicates that social media functions not only as a distribution channel for messages but also as a social space that enables the formation of virtual Muslim community cohesion.

Although recent studies have examined digital da'wah in relation to social media utilization, audience engagement, ethical challenges, and the transformation of religious authority, they remain limited in explaining the strategic communication mechanisms through which da'wah activities foster, organize, and sustain Muslim communities in digital spaces ([Alazemi et al., 2024](#); [Faustyna et al., 2025](#); [Jaya et al., 2025](#); [Rifqi & Karwanto, 2023](#)). Most research tends to focus on the analysis of da'wah content, the use of digital platforms, or the popularity of preachers on social media ([Lim, 2017](#); [Miller et al., 2016](#); [Nisa, 2018](#)). Such approaches are generally descriptive and have not thoroughly examined the strategic dimensions of communication involving interaction processes, persuasion, and the construction of collective identity. Moreover, many studies continue to position media as merely instrumental, rather than as a social space with its own structures, norms, and communication dynamics ([Eickelman & Anderson, 2020](#)).

This research gap highlights the distinction between the present study and previous works, particularly in terms of analytical focus. While previous studies have examined digital da'wah mainly in relation to media utilization, content dissemination, audience engagement, ethical challenges, and the transformation of religious authority, these studies have not sufficiently addressed da'wah communication strategies as active social processes that shape Muslim communities in digital spaces ([Faustyna et al., 2025](#); [Rachman et al., 2025](#); [Roslan et al., 2025](#)). Existing research, for example, highlights social media as a tool for spreading Islamic values, youth engagement with digital Islamic content, and the shifting authority of religious actors in online platforms, but it pays less attention to how da'wah communication practices construct social relationships, collective identity, and community cohesion among Muslim audiences.

Preliminary findings are supported by previous studies showing that da'wah communication on social media is increasingly characterized by personal, interactive, and engagement-based approaches, particularly through audience-oriented content, visual and interactive features, and dialogical interaction between da'i and digital audiences ([Faustyna et al., 2025](#); [Fitriani et al., 2025](#); [Jaya et al., 2025](#); [Roslan et al., 2025](#)). Strategies such as storytelling, message visualization, and emotional appeals have proven effective in increasing the attractiveness and effectiveness of da'wah in digital environments ([Hutchings, 2017](#)). Furthermore, continuous interaction between preachers and audiences through social media features fosters a sense of closeness and solidarity within digital Muslim communities. However, these findings remain partial and have not systematically linked communication strategies with the sustainable process of community formation.

Based on this analysis, this study positions itself not only to support previous findings regarding the importance of digital media in da'wah but also to critique approaches that remain overly instrumental by emphasizing the relational and constructive dimensions of communication. This study also challenges the assumption that the success of digital da'wah is solely determined by content popularity, demonstrating instead that communication strategies play a more fundamental role in community building. Therefore, this research aims to contribute theoretically and conceptually to the development of Islamic communication studies in the digital era.

The objective of this study is to analyze da'wah communication strategies in shaping Muslim communities in the digital era and to identify how these communication processes contribute to the creation of social cohesion and collective identity within social media spaces.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a literature-based design. The data were collected through a review of 25 journal articles and 5 books relevant to da'wah communication, Islamic communication, social media, digital communication, and Muslim community formation in the digital era. The research process was conducted in several stages: identifying relevant keywords,

collecting academic sources from databases and library materials, screening the sources based on relevance and credibility, classifying the literature into key themes, analyzing the data descriptively, and synthesizing the findings into an analytical framework. Through these stages, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how da'wah communication strategies function as social processes in shaping Muslim communities in digital spaces. The qualitative approach is chosen as it allows for an in-depth understanding of communication phenomena, particularly in interpreting meanings, interactions, and social processes within digital religious practices ([Campbell, 2020](#); [Couldry, 2020](#)).

The research is conducted through a conceptual and analytical review of relevant scholarly literature on Islamic communication, digital media, and digital religion. The selection of this approach is based on the need to synthesize theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from previous studies to construct a comprehensive framework of da'wah communication strategies ([Hjarvard, 2019](#)). Therefore, this study does not focus on a specific geographical field site but instead examines digital spaces as the primary locus of analysis, particularly social media platforms where da'wah activities actively occur.

The data sources in this research consist of secondary data derived from academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and credible online publications related to digital communication, social media, and Islamic da'wah. These sources are selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the development of the research topic ([Flew, 2021](#); [Nasrullah, 2018](#)). Key authors and recent studies in digital religion and communication are prioritized to ensure the relevance and depth of analysis.

Data collection is conducted through a systematic literature review process, which includes identifying, selecting, and categorizing relevant literature. The researcher collects data by reviewing publications that discuss digital da'wah practices, communication strategies, audience engagement, and the formation of online religious communities. This process involves note-taking, classification of key themes, and comparison of findings across different studies ([Eickelman & Anderson, 2020](#); [Miller et al., 2016](#)).

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative content analysis combined with conceptual synthesis. The researcher analyzes patterns, themes, and relationships within the collected data to identify key dimensions of da'wah communication strategies. These findings are then synthesized into a coherent analytical framework that explains how communication strategies contribute to community formation and social cohesion in digital environments ([Castells, 2010](#); [Van Dijk et al., 2022](#)).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study applies source triangulation by comparing findings from multiple academic sources. In addition, the researcher ensures analytical rigor. In this study, the credibility of references will be evaluated by prioritizing peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and publications from reputable publishers that are directly

relevant to da'wah communication, Islamic communication, and digital communication studies. The authors will cross-check theoretical arguments by comparing concepts and findings across several sources to ensure that the arguments used are not based on a single reference. Furthermore, consistency between the research objectives and findings will be maintained by using the research questions as analytical guidelines when classifying, interpreting, and synthesizing the literature ([Hepp et al., 2018](#))

The focus of this research is to examine how da'wah communication strategies particularly message personalization, interactivity, and visual-symbolic elements function as key mechanisms in shaping Muslim communities in digital spaces. This focus aligns with the research objective of understanding the role of communication processes in fostering engagement, collective identity, and social cohesion within the context of digital Islamic communication ([Campbell, 2020](#)).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the transformation of da'wah from conventional pulpits to digital media not only affects the communication medium but also reconstructs patterns of social interaction, the distribution of religious authority, and the mechanisms of Muslim community formation. In this context, da'wah communication strategies become a key element in determining both the effectiveness of message delivery and the success of community cohesion. The study identifies three main dimensions of digital da'wah communication strategies: message personalization, interactivity, and visual-symbolic representation. These three dimensions operate simultaneously in shaping audience engagement and strengthening the collective identity of digital Muslim communities ([Campbell, 2020](#); [Hutchings, 2017](#)).

To provide a systematic overview of these strategies, the following table presents a classification of digital da'wah communication strategies:

Table 1. Da'wah Communication Strategies in Social Media

Strategy Dimension	Main Characteristics	Impact on Community
Message Personalization	Personal narratives, simple language, emotional approach	Emotional closeness and loyalty
Interactivity	Comments, live streaming, direct dialogue	Participation and engagement
Visual-Symbolic	Videos, Islamic design, religious symbols	Collective identity and shared meaning

Source: Data Processed

The categories presented in Table 1 were derived from a thematic analysis of the literature reviewed in this study. The analysis was conducted by identifying recurring concepts, arguments, and findings related to da'wah communication practices on social media. First, the relevant literature was

read carefully to identify key patterns concerning how da'wah messages are produced, delivered, and received by digital audiences. Second, similar patterns were coded and grouped into broader thematic categories. For example, discussions on personal narratives, simple language, emotional storytelling, and audience-oriented messages were categorized as message personalization. Studies emphasizing comments, live streaming, question-and-answer sessions, and direct dialogue were grouped under interactivity. Meanwhile, references to videos, Islamic visual design, religious symbols, and aesthetic representation were classified as visual-symbolic communication. Third, these themes were interpreted in relation to their impact on Muslim community formation, particularly emotional closeness, audience participation, collective identity, and shared religious meaning. Therefore, Table 1 is not constructed arbitrarily, but is the result of a systematic synthesis of recurring themes found in previous studies on digital da'wah and social media communication.

As shown in Table 1, da'wah communication strategies are no longer linear but rather multidimensional and relational. Message personalization enables a more humanistic and contextual communication approach, allowing audiences to feel closer to the preacher. This aligns with findings that communication based on personal experience and emotion can enhance trust and audience engagement in digital environments ([Abidin, 2016](#); [Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017](#); [Khamis et al., 2017](#)). In the context of da'wah, this approach strengthens the preacher's legitimacy in the eyes of the audience while also increasing the effectiveness of religious messages.

The dimension of interactivity becomes the primary distinguishing factor between conventional and digital da'wah. Social media enables intensive two-way communication, where audiences can respond directly to the messages conveyed. This interaction not only increases engagement but also creates a more open and democratic space for religious discourse. Previous studies indicate that interactivity in digital media contributes to the formation of communities based on active participation ([Papacharissi, 2015](#); [Sundar, 2019](#); [Vraga et al., 2020](#); [Ziegele & others, 2018](#)). In this context, digital da'wah functions as a dialogical medium that strengthens social relationships among community members.

Meanwhile, the use of visual and symbolic elements in digital da'wah plays a crucial role in constructing collective identity. Visual content such as da'wah videos, Islamic illustrations, and aesthetically presented Qur'anic verses enhances both attractiveness and religious symbolism. These findings are consistent with studies suggesting that visualization in digital media influences audience perception, emotion, and social identity ([Highfield, 2016](#); [Lobinger et al., 2019](#); [Tufekci, 2017](#)). Therefore, da'wah communication strategies in the digital era are inherently multimodal and integrative. Furthermore, the process of forming digital Muslim communities can be illustrated through the following model:



Figure 1. Process of Digital Da'wah Community Formation

The model demonstrates that digital Muslim communities are formed through continuous and interaction-based communication processes. Each stage plays an essential role in building social cohesion and collective identity. These findings reinforce the network society theory, which posits that social relationships in the digital era are constructed through intensive and repetitive communication networks. In the context of da'wah, communication strategies serve as the primary connector within this process.

Compared to previous studies, the results of this research indicate a shift in analytical focus. Earlier studies tended to emphasize content aspects or the popularity of preachers (Lim, 2017; Nisa, 2018; Slama, 2018). In contrast, this study asserts that the success of digital da'wah is determined not only by content or figures but by the communication strategies used in building social relationships. Thus, this research revises earlier approaches that were largely descriptive and insufficiently attentive to the strategic dimensions of communication.

In addition, this study challenges the perspective that positions digital media merely as a tool. Based on the findings, social media plays an active role in shaping communication structures and religious social practices. This is in line with mediatization theory, which argues that media not only mediate but also construct social reality (Hepp et al., 2018). In the context of da'wah, social media becomes a dynamic space for the construction of religious meaning.

This study also finds that the presence of Muslim influencers as actors of digital da'wah has a significant impact on community formation. Influencers are capable of reaching broad audiences and building more personal relationships through adaptive communication strategies. However, this study shows that the primary factor of success is not merely the number of followers but the ability to establish authentic and sustained communication. These findings are supported by studies indicating that influencer credibility and authenticity significantly affect audience trust (Audrezet et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes by integrating Islamic communication theory and digital communication theory in explaining contemporary da'wah phenomena. It emphasizes that communication strategy is a fundamental element in the formation of digital Muslim communities. Furthermore, this study expands the concept of da'wah as a social communication practice that is not only oriented toward message delivery but also toward relationship-building and identity formation.

Practically, the findings provide implications for preachers and Islamic communication practitioners to develop more effective, adaptive, and contextual da'wah strategies (Baym, 2015; Busro et al., 2025; Samsudin &

[Putri, 2023a](#)). The use of personal, interactive, and visual approaches can enhance the effectiveness of da'wah and strengthen Muslim communities in digital spaces. This is particularly important in addressing the increasingly complex challenges of globalization and digitalization.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations, particularly regarding the scope of data, which does not yet encompass all social media platforms and variations of digital da'wah practices. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ more comprehensive approaches, such as big data analysis, digital ethnography, or mixed methods. Additionally, it is important to examine the long-term impacts of digital da'wah on religious behavior, religious authority, and the social structure of Muslim communities more deeply (Ulyan, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the transformation of da'wah from conventional pulpits to digital media has fundamentally reshaped the practice of Islamic communication, not only in terms of the medium but also in communication strategies and the process of Muslim community formation. Da'wah communication strategies comprising message personalization, interactivity, and the use of visual symbolic elements have been proven to play a significant role in enhancing audience engagement and fostering social cohesion in digital spaces. In the digital era, da'wah communication is no longer one directional but has evolved into a dialogical and participatory process that enables the continuous formation of collective identity within Muslim communities.

Conceptually, this study affirms that digital da'wah constitutes a complex social communication practice, in which media function not merely as tools but as spaces for constructing meaning and social relationships. Therefore, communication strategies become a key element in bridging interactions between preachers and audiences, as well as in shaping communities grounded in Islamic values. These findings extend the scope of Islamic communication studies by integrating perspectives from digital communication, while also challenging prior views that tend to treat digital da'wah in an instrumental manner.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to providing a new conceptual framework for da'wah communication strategies in the digital era, which may serve as a reference for the development of Islamic communication theory as well as contemporary da'wah practices. Moreover, the findings offer practical implications for preachers and communication practitioners to design more adaptive, interactive, and contextually relevant da'wah strategies, thereby strengthening Muslim communities in facing social and cultural challenges in the digital age.

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