

Digital Da'wah in the Modern Era

The Role of NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad in Engaging the Younger Generation

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Abstract

The digitalisation of da'wah refers to the utilisation of online platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to disseminate Islamic teachings. This transition from traditional to digital da'wah is being embraced by three online Islamic communities: NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad. The primary question this study addresses is: How do these online da'wah communities employ digital platforms to propagate Islamic teachings, and how do consumers of digital da'wah respond to these methods? The study aims to analyse the da'wah methods employed by these communities and to explore how consumers of digital da'wah engage with them, including their preferences and the platforms they favour. A mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research, is employed. Qualitative data is gathered through interviews with community members and consumers of digital da'wah, alongside direct observations of the activities of the three communities. For the quantitative component, a survey of 100 respondents examines their reactions to digital da'wah. The findings reveal that NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad adopt gentle, non-violent methods (*Al-mauizah hasanah*) and tailor their approaches to different contexts (*Al-hikmah*). The methods employed by these communities were generally well received by the respondents.

Keywords: da'wah, digital, Islam, da'wah community, social media



Introduction

Da'wah is an invitation or appeal to humanity, with creed and sharia as the primary messages. Abu Bakar Zakaria (1962) states that da'wah is "the efforts of scholars and individuals knowledgeable in Islam to provide teaching to the general public according to their abilities regarding the matters they require in both worldly and religious affairs" (Aziz, 2017). From this understanding, it can be inferred that da'wah is an act of Islamisation or an invitation for individuals to follow the path of Allah. The objective is to invite and influence others to comprehend and accept the teachings of Islam and to implement these teachings in their daily lives. However, as Johan Meuleman (2011) elucidates, "Although da'wah includes efforts to convert non-Muslims, fundamentally, da'wah encompasses activities that aim to strengthen and deepen the faith of Muslims, as well as to develop their way of life in accordance with Islamic principles." Based on Meuleman's understanding, da'wah should not solely be an endeavour to convert non-Muslims into Muslims; it should also serve as a means to reinforce faith in the creed and Islamic law (Meuleman, 2011).

The condition of Islam in the digital era necessitates that this religion adapts to contemporary times, prompting a transformation in the concept of da'wah. What was once limited to studies or lectures at mosques can now take the form of online studies on social media. The utilisation of digital devices for da'wah is not a novel phenomenon, as da'wah has long been digitised; for instance, recordings of religious lectures by Kh. Zainuddin MZ have been compiled in the form of cassette tapes and DVDs/VCDs. Zainuddin MZ began adapting to these digital media after leaving the political party, the United Development Party (Indonesian: Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), in the late 1970s. Initially, he was well-known only in the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta. His adaptation to new media subsequently increased his popularity throughout Indonesia. This evolution continued with the dissemination of recorded lectures through online platforms such as YouTube, and today, da'wah not only involves sharing video recordings of lectures on online networks but also conducting comprehensive online studies for social media users.

NU Garis Lucu (@nugarislucu), AISNU (@AISNUsantara), and Pondok Sanad¹ (@pondoksanad) exemplify creative media for Islamic preaching in the digital era. All three actively share information digitally through Instagram, Threads, Twitter, Facebook, websites, and online religious learning applications. These platforms have been selected due to

1 In the study of *hadith*, *sanad* refers to the system of reliance used to trace the origins and authenticity of a *hadith*. It serves as a critical framework for verifying the chain of transmission and ensuring the reliability of the narrations. Meanwhile, Darul Mustafa is an esteemed Islamic institution in Yemen that has produced many notable Muslim scholars, including graduates from Indonesia. Darul Mustafa serves as a key reference for Pondok Sanad, particularly for its emphasis on three primary methods of teaching: *bil hikmah* (wisdom), *mau'izhah hasanah* (good advice), and *mujadalah* (dialogue conducted with decorum and respect, avoiding interference in others' affairs). These methods reflect an approach to *da'wah* that prioritises thoughtful communication, ethical engagement, and a focus on mutual understanding.

their active roles in disseminating Islamic teachings through diverse approaches. NU Garis Lucu employs simple and humorous messages to convey Islamic teachings; AISNU shares flyers to invite social media users to attend both offline and online preaching gatherings; while Pondok Sanad primarily creates mini-series to communicate Islamic messages on social media. The transition from traditional methods of da'wah (such as lectures and studies at mosques) to digital platforms raises the question of how Islamic preaching can adapt to new technologies and media formats. The challenge lies in preserving the essence of the message while utilising modern tools for broader reach and engagement. It is important to note that the three aforementioned social media accounts play a crucial role in the development of da'wah in the digital era. Each account possesses unique characteristics for spreading Islamic da'wah on the internet. For instance, NU Garis Lucu engages in preaching by discussing trends among internet users, wrapped in humour. As stated in its Instagram slogan, "Deliver the truth even if it's funny." Rather than merely addressing trending issues, NU Garis Lucu approaches them with humour while maintaining substantive content that conveys the truth. The content is presented in the form of quotes on Twitter, Threads, and Instagram, and occasionally includes sharing viral videos from the internet.

Meanwhile, AISNU (Arus Informasi Santri Nusantara) employs a distinct approach to preaching compared to NU Garis Lucu. This social media account represents a santri community engaged in digital media, focusing on online studies through platforms such as Instagram and dedicated websites. Beyond their digital presence, AISNU also organises seminars and training sessions on digital literacy. Upholding the teachings of ahlu as-sunnah wa al-jama'ah, AISNU states on their Instagram account: "Expansion of digital da'wah kepesantrenan with the principles of ahlu as-sunnah wa al-jama'ah an-nahdliyah Islam." This indicates that AISNU promotes da'wah aligned with Nahdlatul Ulama's Sunni principles. According to AISNU's motto, ahlu as-sunnah wa al-jama'ah an-nahdliyah Islam refers to Muslims guided by the Qur'an, following the practices of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, early Islamic scholars (salaf), and their successors (Misbah, A.F., 2021).

Another distinctive approach to preaching is exemplified by Pondok Sanad, which differentiates itself from the two aforementioned social media accounts. Pondok Sanad is an Over-The-Top (OTT) media platform offering online streaming services. Established in 2019, it envisions fostering religious intellectual potential within the community. As its name suggests, Pondok Sanad emphasises the validity of the scientific sanad (chain of transmission) connected to the Prophet Muhammad. Its teachings are based on the principles of Darul Mustafa, Hadramaut, Yemen. One notable form of their da'wah is through artistic performances, such as their series Azka, featured on the Pondok Sanad platform. This series incorporates da'wah themes, including Islamic and scientific studies, aqidah, tauhid, and Islamic sociology.

NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad represent three digital da'wah initiatives explored in this research. The digitalisation of da'wah plays a pivotal role in transforming how religious messages are disseminated and consumed in contemporary society. Thus, in-depth and comprehensive studies of this phenomenon are increasingly essential. First, dig-

italisation broadens access to religious messages, transcending geographical and temporal limitations inherent in traditional forms of dissemination. By examining how technology influences engagement with religious messages on social media, research can offer valuable insights into the role of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in shaping religious opinions and attitudes. Moreover, as technology advances, such research can identify novel opportunities for creating content and leveraging emerging platforms to enhance the effectiveness of proselytisation.

The shift towards online studies and social media-based da'wah underscores the importance of reaching younger, digitally literate audiences. The challenge lies in designing digital da'wah strategies that resonate with this demographic by aligning with their digital habits and preferences. Accordingly, through digital data analysis, this research provides a nuanced understanding of da'wah audiences, including their preferences, needs, and behavioural patterns in engaging with religious content. To address these questions, the researchers analyse the online da'wah audience from the Islamic State University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten (Universitas Islam Negeri, UIN SMH Banten). Comprehensive research on the digitalisation of da'wah not only sheds light on the impact of technology on da'wah practices but also offers critical insights into improving its effectiveness, addressing challenges, and leveraging emerging opportunities.

This research employs mixed methods, which combine quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative method is utilised to gather sample data directly from community surveys relevant to this study. Meanwhile, the qualitative method is employed to interpret the survey findings more comprehensively by integrating supporting theories derived from the collected sources (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). This study adopts the Sequential Exploratory model, which involves collecting quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to either validate or challenge the quantitative findings, and vice versa (Hendrayadi et al., 2023).

For the quantitative data collection, the researcher surveyed 100 students from UIN SMH Banten to gather insights on digital da'wah consumption, preferences for da'wah topics, perceived urgency, and the influence of digital da'wah on social media users. The selection of 100 UIN SMH Banten students as respondents was deemed representative of young Indonesian Muslims' preferences for social media-based da'wah. UIN SMH Banten, as an Islamic state university in Indonesia, attracts Muslim students from various regions across the country. The university integrates Islam and science in its educational framework, highlighting its adaptability and openness to technological advancements, including the dissemination, reception, and response to da'wah messages in the digital realm. The survey questions specifically focused on three digital da'wah accounts: NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad. The primary objective of the survey was to assess the effectiveness of these digital da'wah accounts in developing and disseminating da'wah messages on social media.

In addition to the quantitative survey of digital da'wah consumers, the research involved qualitative methods, including interviews and content analysis. The researcher conducted

interviews with administrators of the NU Garis Lucu and AISNU accounts. For the Pondok Sanad account, the researcher performed a detailed analysis of its da'wah videos, which are presented in film format, by watching and thoroughly understanding their objectives. The data collected through interviews and content analysis were used to complement the survey findings and to evaluate the distinctive da'wah methods employed by the three accounts.

Numerous studies have examined how Indonesian Muslims adapt to new digital technologies to engage the younger generation in consuming Islam. Martin Slama (2018) explored the recent use of social media by Indonesian Muslims as a central platform for practising Islam. His article highlights the roles of practice, community, and user agency, offering a new perspective on Islam through the lens of media studies. Slama further analysed the growth of digital Islamic practices, attributing it not only to technological advancements but also to political and social changes in the post-Soeharto era.

While Slama (2018) focuses on broader societal shifts, particularly the influence of post-Soeharto political and social changes on the rise of digital Islamic practices, Puput Puji Lestari (2020) examines the specific impact of technological developments on the millennial generation. In her article, *Dakwah Digital Untuk Generasi Milenial*, she reviews how technological advancements affect the dynamics of da'wah and influence the morality of millennials seeking self-identity. Contemporary society, shaped by global culture and instant lifestyles driven by technological progress, presents new challenges for da'wah that are increasingly dynamic and complex. The article emphasises that while technology facilitates the dissemination of information, including radical and extremist content, it also offers opportunities for innovative and effective proselytisation in the digital age.

Lestari expands on Slama's argument by addressing the challenges and opportunities of digital platforms. She demonstrates how global culture and instant lifestyles influence the spread of religious content and how new methods of da'wah are developed to resonate with young audiences. Both studies illustrate the centrality of digital technology in shaping contemporary Islamic practices, albeit from different perspectives—Slama emphasising historical and political contexts, while Lestari focuses on generational implications for moral and religious development.

Another significant contribution to the discourse on digital da'wah is the work of Aziz Setya Nurrohman and Anwar Mujahidin (2022), titled *Strategi Dakwah Digital Dalam Meningkatkan Viewers di Channel Youtube Jeda Nulis*. Their study explores the increasing adoption of social media, particularly YouTube, by preachers to disseminate religious messages creatively and innovatively. The research focuses on the success of the Jeda Nulis YouTube channel, founded by Habib Ja'far in 2016.² Notably, in the 2020s, the channel released a video titled *Kultum Pemuda Tersesat* ("Seven-Minute Da'wah for Lost Youth"),

2 Husein Jafar al-Hadar, better known as Habib Jafar, is a *da'i* from Bondowoso, Indonesia, born in 1988. He is actively engaged in *da'wah* through writing and social media platforms. In 2016, Jafar established a YouTube channel titled *Jeda Nulis*, which features *da'wah* content and discussions addressing issues faced by Muslims.

which garnered significant attention, with over three million views.

Nurrohman and Mujahidin utilised a qualitative method involving data reduction, data presentation, and data verification to analyse Habib Ja'far's da'wah strategies on YouTube. Their findings reveal that Habib Ja'far employs YouTube to promote values of religious tolerance and Islamic teachings that emphasise peace. He conducts discussion forums with media figures such as Tretan Muslim³ and Coki Pardede⁴, adopting a relaxed and relatable approach. The content's success in attracting a large audience is attributed to Habib Ja'far's strategic use of YouTube features and algorithms to enhance video visibility.

Despite challenges in optimising YouTube algorithms, the channel effectively delivers content with engaging visuals, language tailored to younger audiences, and a touch of humour that reduces tension in preaching. The study provides insights into how preachers utilise digital media, particularly YouTube, to reach diverse audiences with methods that align with the current social and cultural landscape. Unlike Slama's and Lestari's studies, Nurrohman and Mujahidin's work highlights the economic impact of digital da'wah. Successful da'wah content on social media not only increases interest in Islam but also generates economic benefits for preachers by attracting large audiences.

Collectively, these studies provide valuable insights into the adaptation of da'wah to digital media, addressing not only technological developments but also political, social, and economic transformations. This article builds on these insights by exploring three digital da'wah communities—NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad. It examines the methods they use to preach on social media, their distinctive approaches, and how the younger generation responds to these new da'wah strategies in the digital age.

Definition and Methods of Da'wah in the Indonesian Context and Contemporary Approaches

Da'wah is derived etymologically from the Arabic word *da'a yad'u*, *da'watan*, meaning "calling," "inviting," or "entertaining." Alternatively, *da'a yad'u, du'aan, da'wahu* means "calling for him" (Hardian, 2018). Terminologically, da'wah refers to efforts or activities aimed at conveying the teachings of Islam to others, with the goal of fostering understanding, encouraging improvement, or inviting individuals to embrace these teachings.

Broadly speaking, da'wah is not confined to religious instruction but encompasses all efforts to communicate messages deemed significant within a belief system or ideology. Da'wah can be conducted through various channels, including lectures, written works,

3 Aditya Muslim, widely known as Tretan Muslim (born March 10, 1991), is an Indonesian comedian, broadcaster, actor, and radio host. He gained prominence in 2013 by appearing in the third season of *Stand-Up Comedy Indonesia* on Kompas TV.

4 Reza Pardede, widely known as Coki Pardede (born January 21, 1988), is an Indonesian comedian, singer, radio broadcaster, presenter, and actor. He participated in the fourth season of *Stand-Up Comedy Indonesia*, a talent search competition aired on Kompas TV.

social media, and behaviour that exemplifies the values being promoted. In the Islamic context, da'wah constitutes a crucial responsibility for Muslims, emphasising the peaceful dissemination of Islamic teachings to the wider community while respecting individual freedom of belief.

As outlined above, da'wah serves as both a means of Islamisation and a method to strengthen Muslims' faith. To achieve its objectives effectively, da'wah must be carried out using appropriate methodologies that ensure the messages are delivered clearly and received well. The Qur'an outlines the methodology for da'wah in Surah An-Nahl, verse 125:

“Invite all to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and kind advice, and only debate with them in the best manner. Surely your Lord alone knows best who has strayed from His Way and who is rightly guided.”

This verse indicates three primary methods of da'wah: al-hikmah, al-mau'izah hasanah, and mujadalah bi al-lati hiya ahsan (Hotiza, 2022). These methods provide foundational guidance for preachers in delivering religious messages. When applied appropriately, these methods can make da'wah a more effective tool for disseminating religious values and inspiring positive societal changes. Each method must be tailored to the specific context, as they differ in their approach to communication.

The first method, al-hikmah, emphasises wisdom in preaching, requiring adaptability to the circumstances of the audience. This involves recognising the characteristics of the listeners, the setting in which da'wah is conducted, and the timing of its delivery. Understanding the psychological state of the audience is crucial for ensuring the message is well received. Furthermore, considering sociological conditions is a wise approach, as the style of preaching should be dynamic and responsive to the social context of the community (Aliyudin, 2010).

The second method, al-mau'izah hasanah, involves gentle admonition and kind advice, as advocated in Surah An-Nahl, verse 125. This method relies on soft language, avoids criticism, and eschews violence in conveying messages or offering corrections. Its heartfelt delivery makes it particularly effective, especially for individuals with minimal religious knowledge. When applied appropriately, this approach fosters receptivity and facilitates meaningful engagement with the teachings of Islam (Said, 2015).

Mujadalah bi al-lati hiya ahsan is a method of da'wah that emphasises rational discourse through debate, discussion, and dialectics. This approach is characterised by a more confrontational style compared to other methods, as it involves direct engagement and critical exchange with the interlocutor. The primary objective is to provide a clearer understanding of Islam to others. In this method, the two parties engage synergistically, exchanging opinions and presenting strong arguments and evidence without fostering hostility. This method is commonly employed by educated groups who prioritise intellectual dialogue (Ismatulloh, 2015).

The three methods mentioned earlier form the foundational approaches to da'wah. However, contemporary da'wah has increasingly adapted to digital platforms, reflecting

broader social and political transformations. Martin Slama highlights that Indonesia has experienced significant changes in recent decades, particularly with the emergence of a Muslim middle class and political reforms following the fall of Suharto in 1998. These transformations have coincided with shifts in the media landscape, notably the rise of the Internet (Slama, 2018).

In this evolving context, several da'wah communities have emerged, as discussed earlier in this article, including AISNU, Pondok Sanad, and NU Garis Lucu. These online communities adapt da'wah methods to align with digital platforms and techniques. For instance, when conducting da'wah on social media using the al-hikmah method, the message delivery can be tailored to suit the target audience. If a preacher aims to admonish someone in a comment section or private message, employing the al-mau'izah hasanah method ensures the correction is delivered gently, avoiding offence and fostering receptiveness. In cases of confusion or disputes on social media, a preacher should engage in objective, two-way discussions until a mutual understanding or truth is reached.

Digitalisation of Da'wah on the Internet

In the era of globalisation and modernisation, interaction and communication are no longer confined to the physical world. These activities can now take place on the internet, accessible to anyone, anytime, and anywhere. This shift presents an opportunity for preachers to share their da'wah messages online. Currently, numerous preachers actively engage in digital da'wah, including Ustadz Adi Hidayat⁵, Ustadz Abdul Somad⁶, and Ustadz Hanan Attaki⁷. These preachers utilise platforms such as YouTube for long-form content and Instagram for shorter, more concise messages, often incorporating entertainment elements to enhance the appeal of their da'wah.

These preachers typically deliver sermons to live audiences, record the sessions, and upload the content to YouTube. Additionally, they create podcasts featuring religious discussions and produce short videos specifically designed to convey da'wah messages. However, this article does not focus on the individual efforts of digital da'wah. Instead, it examines how da'wah can be conducted collectively and strategically through the formation of mas-

5 Ustadz Adi Hidayat is a prominent Islamic scholar and preacher in Indonesia. He is widely acknowledged for his profound expertise in Islamic studies, particularly in the areas of *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), *hadith*, and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

6 Ustadz Abdul Somad is a prominent preacher and Islamic scholar in Indonesia. He is widely recognised for his ability to deliver Islamic sermons in a compelling, accessible, and straightforward manner, often addressing contemporary issues in Indonesia from an Islamic perspective.

7 Ustadz Hanan Attaki is a prominent Indonesian preacher, widely known for his inspirational talks and religious lectures. He gained widespread recognition through his active presence on social media platforms, particularly YouTube, where he shares sermons and teachings on various Islamic topics.

sive digital da'wah communities (Ummah, 2020).

While the presence of social media can pose challenges if misused, it also offers significant opportunities when leveraged for positive purposes, such as disseminating religious teachings. Rather than abandoning social media due to its potential negative aspects, it can be utilised to propagate religious messages. Social media offers considerable advantages, including efficiency in terms of time and location, enabling users to access diverse content and reach wide audiences.

Diversity and technological advancements provide opportunities for individuals and organisations to contribute to the development and dissemination of religious knowledge. For instance, NU Garis Lucu actively shares Islamic messages through tweets, images, and videos. AISNU conducts online studies via Zoom meetings and Instagram Live sessions. Similarly, Pondok Sanad, a prominent media entity, has produced a da'wah series incorporating theatrical performances as a means of spreading Islamic teachings.

Adi Wibowo's 2019 study, *The Use of Social Media as a Trend of Islamic Education Da'wah Media in the Digital Age*, conducted at the An Nawawi Purworejo Islamic Boarding School, highlights the positive impact of digital da'wah. Wibowo found that social media platforms managed by the boarding school successfully reached audiences in Malaysia and Thailand, demonstrating the potential of digital da'wah to transcend geographical boundaries and foster global engagement (Wibowo, 2019).

This article discusses how NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad convey Islamic messages. The following sections provide an analysis of their respective forms of da'wah and methodologies.

NU Garis Lucu

NU Garis Lucu adopts a unique approach to da'wah by utilising humour as an antithesis to the rigidity often associated with Islam, especially in light of recent religious sectarian polemics (Muslim & Arafah, 2022). Differences of opinion within Islam are addressed with humour, without diminishing the essence of the issues being discussed. While NU Garis Lucu is not officially affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) media, it is widely recognised within NU circles, including by the public and official NU outlets such as NU Online and AISNU.

NU Garis Lucu operates as an informational media outlet that employs humour to address societal trends and issues. Its focus spans a wide range of topics, including social, cultural, political, and religious matters, which are reinterpreted in a humorous and entertaining manner. The primary goal is to elicit laughter from the audience while simultaneously delivering profound messages and critical insights.

This platform primarily leverages digital channels such as Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram Threads to disseminate its content. Through the use of memes, humorous images, short texts, and videos, NU Garis Lucu creates viral and accessible content. This strategy enables the platform to reach a broad audience, particularly younger individ-

uals who are active on social media. The use of humour in da'wah makes religious messages and spiritual values more approachable for individuals who might otherwise feel distanced from or uninterested in such topics.

By adopting a creative and entertaining approach, NU Garis Lucu succeeds in attracting a wider audience, including those who do not typically engage with formal da'wah content. Messages conveyed through humour tend to be more memorable because the positive emotions evoked by humour enhance audience retention. Additionally, humour in da'wah fosters an open and relaxed atmosphere for discussing religious values and issues that are often perceived as taboo or difficult to address.

Below are examples of da'wah content shared by NU Garis Lucu on social media, demonstrating how humour can serve as an effective method for conveying Islamic messages.



Figure 1: NU Garis Lucu's Instagram Posts

The first post reads: “As younger siblings, we know to respect Muhammadiyah⁸. If we were allowed to kiss hands, we would bow repeatedly. They just don't want us to. Imagine, when we want to fast, we let our brother go first. When it's time for *tarawih*, we are also willing to go home later.” This implies that NU considers itself the “younger sibling” of Muhammadiyah because Muhammadiyah was established earlier as a religious community organisation. NU symbolically expresses deference, reflecting its willingness to “bow” in respect. However, as highlighted, Muhammadiyah does not practice such traditions. Fur-

8 Muhammadiyah is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, established in 1912 by Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta. It is regarded as a modernist or reformist movement due to its critical stance toward various Islamic traditions and practices at the time of its founding. These included wirid (post-prayer invocations), tahlil (communal prayers for the deceased), ziarah kubur (visiting graves), and slametan (ritual meals symbolizing relationships with the sacred and others), which were perceived as syncretic customs. Such practices were considered deviations because they lacked a basis in the Qur'an or hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), which are regarded as the primary sources of Islamic law (Krismawati, 2020, p. 115).

thermore, NU humorously accepts the differing practices between the two, such as Muhammadiyah often beginning Ramadan a day earlier due to differences in moon-sighting calculations. Similarly, in *tarawih* prayers, NU traditionally performs more *rak'ahs* than Muhammadiyah. Through this post, NU Garis Lucu aims to foster harmonious communication among Muslims from diverse organisations, schools of thought, and ideologies. This effort has been fruitful, as the humorous *da'wah* posts by NU Garis Lucu have received positive responses from their Instagram audience.

The second post states: “NU and Muhammadiyah were born from the same teacher. One chose to proselytise in the city, the other in the village. That’s why the number of our followers is different.” This statement highlights the differing methods and target audiences of *da'wah* between NU and Muhammadiyah. NU, with its primary focus on rural communities—where the majority of Indonesians reside—has a larger following. In contrast, Muhammadiyah’s *da'wah* predominantly targets urban communities, leading to a relatively smaller following. According to *PBNU Perjuangan Besar Nahdlatul Ulama*, 39% of Muslims in Indonesia identify as NU members (Staquf, 2020). Similarly, an Alvara survey reveals that 88.4% of Indonesians feel connected to NU, while Muhammadiyah follows with 25.5% (Hasanuddin Ali, Lilik Purwandi, & Ekoputri, 2021).

Regardless of the size and demographic of their audiences, NU Garis Lucu delivers its *da'wah* subtly and respectfully, utilising humour as a key approach. An analysis of the numerous infographics and memes shared on NU Garis Lucu’s social media accounts indicates that their approach aligns with the *al-mau'izah hasanah* method. This method employs gentle, non-coercive communication, making it more impactful for reaching wider audiences. People are generally resistant to forceful persuasion, and humour creates a more positive, engaging environment for delivering Islamic teachings.

The *al-mau'izah hasanah* method has gained significant traction among preachers in the digital era due to its effectiveness in reaching diverse audiences. NU Garis Lucu exemplifies how social media *da'wah* accounts effectively employ this method, particularly through humour. The impact of humorous *da'wah* has been further explored by Ahmad Fadhli (2022) in his study *Humorous Da'wah and Its Effect on Motivation to Listen to Religious Tausiah in Kampung Tanah Bara Kec. Gunung Meriah Aceh Singkil*. Fadhli’s findings reveal that humour in *da'wah* leaves a positive impression on recipients, enhancing their acceptance of the messages conveyed. It prevents disengagement, avoids offending the audience, and transforms *da'wah* into an enjoyable, non-monotonous experience (Fadhli, 2022).

When associated with digital media, *da'wah* infused with humour is particularly effective in targeting today’s younger generation. This aligns with the approach taken by NU Garis Lucu, which preaches on social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. According to this study’s survey, 40% of respondents prefer *da'wah* presented with humour. Based on this data, NU Garis Lucu has successfully delivered *da'wah* on social media, effectively engaging the younger generation. This observation is supported by Muhammad Luthfi et al. (2024) in their study, *The Importance of Humor Elements in Islamic Da'wah Messages Among the Millennial Generation*. Their research reveals that millennials

are more attracted to *da'wah* delivered with humour, as it enhances their understanding of the message. In addition to imparting Islamic knowledge, humour makes the audience feel entertained and emotionally connected to the message (Luthfi et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of NU Garis Lucu's humour-based *da'wah*, as part of the *al-mau'izah hasanah* method, reflects a noble objective: enriching Islamic knowledge among social media users. *Da'wah* wrapped in humour aligns with the core values of Islam, which is *Rahmatan lil Alamin*—a blessing for all creation. Islam should be perceived as a religion that is pure, noble, and compassionate to all. Consequently, Islamic *da'wah* must reach its target audience in a gentle, friendly, and non-coercive manner. Humour in *da'wah* should not merely entertain but also provide educational value that benefits the audience (*mad'u*).

However, humour in *da'wah* must adhere to ethical guidelines. It should not degrade others, offend any ethnic groups, religions, races, or classes, nor include elements of dishonesty, insults, or indecency. Failing to respect these boundaries can lead to misunderstandings and harm the preacher's (*dai*) reputation. This issue is addressed in Muhammad Ridwan and Zaenal Arifin's analysis of Gus Miftah's sermons⁹, which often incorporate humour. They argue that while humour can refresh the audience and enhance engagement, it must be employed judiciously to avoid crossing ethical lines or causing controversy among the audience (Ridwan & Arifin, 2024).

Arus Informasi Santri Nusantara (AISNU)

The movement of *Arus Informasi Santri Nusantara (AISNU)* on social media in the context of *da'wah* is inseparable from the role of *santri*. The term *santri* refers to students or pupils in *pesantren*, traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. *Santri* typically reside in *pesantren* to study Islam comprehensively, including disciplines such as the Qur'an, *hadith*, *fiqh* (Islamic law), *aqidah* (Islamic theology), and other religious sciences. These students are also instilled with ethical and moral values, as well as social norms, in their daily lives.

Traditionally, *santri* live and engage in various religious activities within the *pesantren*. These institutions play a crucial role in Islamic education in Indonesia, functioning not only as formal educational establishments but also as centres for character and spiritual development. *Santri* follow structured and intensive educational programs led by a *kyai* (Islamic scholar and caretaker of the *pesantren*), who holds primary authority over religious and institutional matters. While the *santri* tradition has deep historical roots in Indonesia, it remains relevant in contemporary society, adapting to the influences of technological advancements and modernisation. Today, *santri* are considered pillars of Islamic religious and cultural life, significantly contributing to the broader community.

9 Gus Miftah, whose full name is Miftah Maulana Habiburrahman, is a prominent Indonesian Islamic scholar, preacher (*dai*), and public figure. He is widely known for his modern and engaging approach to *da'wah*, often integrating humor and addressing contemporary issues in his sermons.

In the current digital era, social media has emerged as a pivotal tool for information dissemination, including *da'wah* and religious education. AISNU represents an innovative adaptation of Islamic values to the digital environment, leveraging technology to reach a broader audience, particularly the younger generation well-versed in information technology. AISNU was established as a digital community through the collaborative efforts of social media administrators from *pesantren* and other *santri*-oriented and *Aswaja*-based Islamic media portals. On October 26, 2016, approximately 50 social media administrators convened in Yogyakarta and agreed to formally establish a digital media network called AIS-NU.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter now provide *santri* with opportunities to expand their activities and showcase their talents in the field of Islam, complementing the traditional religious activities conducted in *pesantren*. AISNU, as a representative of the modern *santri* movement in Indonesia, plays a vital role in Islamic education. The distribution of flyers on social media to promote online *da'wah* exemplifies AISNU's contribution to spreading Islamic teachings and values in the digital age. This observation is supported by Rabith Maddah Khulaili Harsya et al. (2023), in *The Role of Santri in the Progress of the World of Education in the 21st Century*, who argue that *santri* have made significant contributions in this digital era. By leveraging social media, *santri* not only develop their talents but also disseminate Islamic insights, thereby enhancing the quality of education in the present and future (Harsya et al., 2023).

Over the past decade, the phenomenon of digitalisation has transformed the global communication paradigm. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and websites now serve not only as tools for social interaction but also as essential mediums for religious education and proselytisation. AISNU utilises these platforms to present Islamic studies, lectures, panel discussions, and other religious content in accessible and engaging formats.

AISNU also conducts online study programs through Zoom Meetings and YouTube, addressing pertinent issues such as bullying in Islamic boarding schools. This particular topic reflects AISNU administrators' concern over the prevalence of bullying within the *pesantren* environment. Additionally, AISNU hosts live Instagram sessions to discuss classical Islamic texts frequently studied among *santri*, such as *Hujjah Aswaja*, *Kifayatul Atqiya*, *Ta'limul Muta'allim*, and *Jawahirul Kalamiyah*.



Figure 2: AISNU Zoom *Da'wah* Flyer

Although AISNU frequently conducts online studies, Ulin, the Coordinator, stated in an interview that AISNU is not primarily a *da'wah* media but rather a *santri* community. He further explained that AISNU focuses on the empowerment of *santri* resources through activities such as digital literacy training, creating infographics, managing social media, and fostering career development for *santri*. When asked about AISNU's affiliation, Ulin clarified that the community emerged from students associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and adheres to the principles of *Ahlussunnah Waljama'ah An-Nahdliyah*, reflecting Sunni teachings based on NU concepts. However, despite its alignment with NU principles, AISNU operates independently and is not part of NU's autonomous structure. Its primary focus lies in empowering NU students to advance the modernisation and digitalisation of Islamic boarding schools, recognising the critical importance of digital media management in this context (Nawawi, 2024).

AISNU's approach to *da'wah* often involves disseminating invitations to participate in online *da'wah* sessions via Zoom or YouTube live streaming. This aligns with the *al-hikmah* method of *da'wah*, which adapts to the audience and various conditions, including time and place. By utilising Zoom and live-streaming platforms, AISNU demonstrates its ability to adjust to contemporary circumstances, ensuring its *da'wah* remains relevant and accessible in the digital age.

In today's digital era, the delivery of Islamic *da'wah* must adapt to advancements in science, technology, and the changing needs of its target audience. AISNU has effectively embraced these technological developments, enabling its *da'wah* efforts to reach diverse groups anytime and anywhere. According to survey data collected from over 101 students at an Islamic university in Indonesia, the majority of respondents indicated that online *da'wah* is more effective in the current era due to its wider reach. Additionally, many respondents noted that social media-based *da'wah*, such as that conducted by AISNU, is more engaging because social media has become an integral part of their daily lives.

Pondok Sanad

Pondok Sanad is a digital *da'wah* platform that offers online religious studies led by scholars with a direct *sanad* (chain of transmission) to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). As an Islamic preaching community in the digital era, Pondok Sanad is highly active on various social media platforms, particularly Instagram and YouTube. For instance, the Pondok Sanad YouTube channel regularly hosts online studies. Notable scholars connected through a direct *sanad* to the Prophet Muhammad, such as Al-Habib Isa Al Kaff¹⁰, Al-Habib Fahmi Assegaf¹¹, and Al-Habib Ali Zaenal Abidin Alkaff¹², deliver *da'wah* on topics including Islamic history, stories of the Companions, Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsir*), and the role of Muslim women in one of Saudi Arabia's cities.

During Ramadan, Pondok Sanad intensifies its preaching efforts by incorporating the art of acting through its digital *da'wah* series, *Azka the Series*. This series blends *da'wah* with dramatic storytelling, exploring the interplay between Islam and science. Through engaging narratives, it takes viewers on an inspiring spiritual and intellectual journey, delving into the relationship between faith and scientific understanding.

Each episode of *Azka the Series* presents critical Islamic concepts through the dialogue and actions of its protagonist, Azka, a young Muslim grappling with questions about his faith and the reconciliation of divinity and science. Azka's internal conflict—his belief in Allah versus his search for scientific truth—forms the series' central theme, encouraging viewers to reflect deeply on the harmony between religion and science. The series frequently explores philosophical questions, such as proving God's existence through scientific inquiry. For instance, Azka and other characters engage in thoughtful debates about theories on the universe's origin and intricate design, paralleling Qur'anic verses that highlight the grandeur and wisdom of creation.

The series also emphasises the interpretation of Qur'anic verses in light of contemporary scientific discoveries. Topics include the creation of the heavens and the earth, the evolution of living beings, and natural phenomena, all correlated with modern scientific understanding. By highlighting these connections, the series demonstrates how scientific knowledge can deepen faith and inspire reflection on Allah's majesty. With its captivating visuals and a well-crafted screenplay, *Azka the Series* achieves a balance between the aes-

10 Al-Habib Isa Al-Kaff: Al-Habib Isa Al-Kaff is a distinguished Islamic scholar and preacher, closely associated with the Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). He is widely recognized for his teachings on spiritual purification (*tazkiyah*), the promotion of moderation in Islamic practice, and his emphasis on fostering unity among Muslims.

11 Al-Habib Fahmi Assegaf: Al-Habib Fahmi Assegaf is a respected figure in Indonesian Islam, celebrated for his profound knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and his dedication to advocating for social justice, unity, and community welfare.

12 Al-Habib Ali Zaenal Abidin Alkaff: Al-Habib Ali Zaenal Abidin Alkaff is a prominent religious leader and scholar, known for his expertise in Islamic theology and his significant contributions to the spiritual development of the Muslim community.

thetic appeal of dramatic performance and the theological and scientific depth it explores. Each episode serves as both entertainment and an insightful lesson on integrating faith with scientific knowledge.

Consequently, *Azka the Series* transcends the boundaries of conventional digital *da'wah* by serving as an intellectual platform that inspires viewers to explore the depths of their faith through a more profound understanding of Islam and its relationship with modern science.

In the first episode, the series begins with Azka questioning the existence of God. He expresses his doubts, stating that if God truly existed, his life would not be so unfortunate—he was abandoned by his father before birth and lost his mother during childhood. Episode two builds on this scene, where Azka apologises for his earlier statement, and his uncle advises him, highlighting that Islam does not oppose critical questions. This sets the tone for the series, which integrates *da'wah* with religious dialectics. In episode three, Azka asks, “Why did God choose to remain invisible?”—a question frequently posed by both sceptics and Muslims struggling with their faith. These questions form the foundation for thoughtful discussions that address doubts while deepening the viewers’ understanding of Islam.

In this episode, it is explained that God can be recognised through evidence such as the complexity of creation and the enduring presence of ancient scriptures. Philosophically, the existence of God can be proven through concepts such as emanation, ontology, and cosmology (Amirudin, 2019). The series employs science as a medium for delivering *da'wah*, aiming to address theological questions with logical reasoning. Additionally, the series tackles contemporary issues such as atheism, agnosticism, orientalism, and liberalism.

One notable episode, titled “Every Baby Born Atheist?” explores the topic of atheism. The protagonist, Azka, poses a provocative question, asserting that every baby is born atheist and that religiosity is merely a result of parental influence. This logical query is then addressed by his uncle, who responds that if Azka identifies as an atheist, it implies that his thinking remains as undeveloped as that of a baby (Instagram @pondoksanad). This thought-provoking mini-series has resonated widely, garnering over 300,000 viewers on Instagram.



Figure 3: AZKA Miniseries, Accessed on Pondok Sanad Instagram

Da'wah presented in the form of miniseries or films is a popular approach, alongside humour. Efendi P., in his article *Dakwah Melalui Film*, highlights that films infused with Islamic *da'wah* values are particularly appealing to the public. The impact of Islamic films extends beyond the viewing experience, leaving a lasting impression on audiences (Efendi P., 2009). This is because entertainment media often resonates deeply with viewers, embedding messages through compelling narratives and engaging plots.

Similarly, the miniseries produced by Pondok Sanad conveys Islamic teachings in a way that captures the audience's attention without overtly resembling formal *da'wah*. Viewers may not consciously seek *da'wah* content but still receive Islamic knowledge indirectly through the series. This approach aligns with the contemporary context, where *da'wah* is no longer confined to traditional settings, such as pulpits, but extends into the realm of social media.

The methods of *da'wah* employed by Pondok Sanad—through online studies and miniseries—reflect the principles of *Al-hikmah* and *Al-mau'izah hasanah*. Online studies conducted via YouTube Live Streaming exemplify *Al-mau'izah hasanah*, as they deliver Islamic messages tailored to the conditions of the digital era. Viewers can access these studies at their convenience, even if they miss the live session, as the recordings remain available on the Pondok Sanad YouTube channel. Meanwhile, the use of *Al-hikmah* is evident in the gentle and creative packaging of *da'wah* through miniseries. By employing storytelling and entertainment, Pondok Sanad delivers *da'wah* without coercion or force.

The *Al-hikmah* method has long been a cornerstone of Islamic *da'wah*. Historically, Islam was propagated through education, culture, trade, and marriage, methods that made it more accessible to diverse communities. This intelligent approach facilitated the widespread acceptance of Islam, ultimately making it the majority religion in Indonesia. From

its introduction in the 7th century AD to the rise of Islamic sultanates in the 13th century and the efforts of the *Walisongo* in Java during the 15th century, Islamic *da'wah* has consistently adapted to the cultural and social contexts of its time.

In the present day, adapting to digital technological advancements represents a prudent strategy for preachers aiming to reach broader audiences. The development of digital platforms provides new opportunities for disseminating Islamic knowledge to diverse groups. Whether in the pre-digital era or in the current age of advanced science and technology, *da'wah* continues to evolve to meet the needs of the time. Social media, in particular, has created an expanded space for preachers, especially younger generations, to extend their reach and impact. The emergence of new media—from print and electronic formats to the internet—has introduced innovative methods for Muslims to deliver *da'wah*, further enriching the tradition of Islamic teaching in the modern world.

Preference for Da'wah Content Types in the Digital Era

The three creative media communities—NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad—play a significant role in propagating Islamic teachings in the digital era. Their ability to adapt to contemporary trends enables them to compete effectively with other creative media on the internet. These communities provide positive content that counters the pervasive negative influences often encountered on social media, particularly among the younger generation, who are highly susceptible to the information they consume online.

According to the results of a questionnaire administered to 100 Islamic students at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, Indonesia, 54 respondents aged 12–25 years frequently consume *da'wah* content on social media in various forms, including studies, films or miniseries with *da'wah* elements, and posts containing Islamic messages. The remaining respondents indicated that they “sometimes” engage with digital *da'wah* content. Although individual consumption frequencies vary, the responses demonstrate that 100% of the younger-generation respondents engage with and appreciate *da'wah* content delivered through social media. These findings suggest that digital *da'wah* has become a preferred means of accessing Islamic teachings, particularly among young audiences in the current era.

The ubiquity of the internet and social media provides a valuable opportunity for Islamic preachers to develop skills and knowledge in mastering information technology. As Nurdin (2014) explains in his article *To Dakwah Online or Not to Dakwah Online: Da'i Dilemma in the Internet Age*, the predominance of Muslims among Indonesia's internet users represents a golden opportunity for preachers to adapt to digital platforms for disseminating Islamic knowledge. Nurdin (2017) highlights several reasons for embracing online *da'wah*: Indonesia's high number of Muslim internet users, the extensive reach of online *da'wah*, and the longevity of digital *da'wah* materials, which remain accessible for extended periods.

Regarding the types of *da'wah* content consumed, online studies are the most popular

choice among students. This preference stems from the comprehensive and detailed nature of Islamic messages conveyed in online studies compared to the brevity of short posts or *da'wah* films and miniseries. Although humorous posts, such as those created by NU Garis Lucu, are engaging and non-dogmatic, their brevity often limits the depth of information provided. Additionally, the interpretation of humorous content may vary among social media users. Similarly, while Islamic miniseries attract some audiences, their popularity does not rival that of online studies.

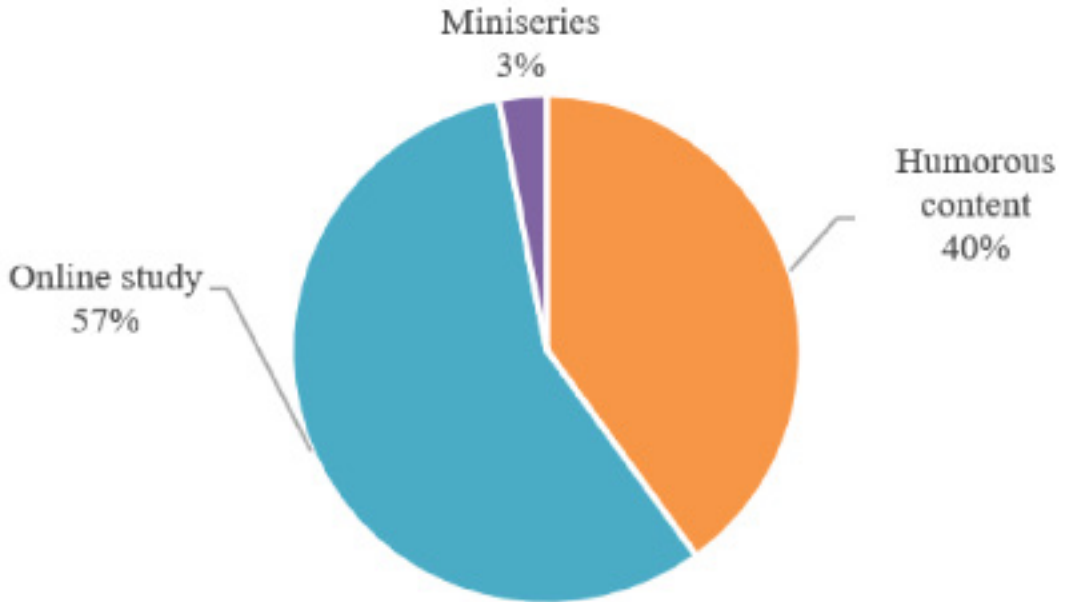


Figure 4: Percentage of *Da'wah* Preferences Among 100 Respondents

The chart above illustrates the types of *da'wah* content preferred by 100 students at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. Online studies account for the largest proportion, with 57% of respondents indicating a preference for this format. This suggests that the lecture-based approach, even with a longer duration, remains highly appealing. Online studies closely resemble conventional *da'wah* practices, wherein preachers deliver lectures on Islamic knowledge to large audiences, with opportunities for attendees to ask questions at the end of the session. However, the primary differences between conventional *da'wah* and online *da'wah* lie in accessibility—specifically, place, time, and audience reach. Unlike traditional *da'wah*, online *da'wah* does not require audiences to physically attend a specific location; they only need internet access. Additionally, online *da'wah* can be accessed at any time, making it more flexible and capable of reaching a broader audience.

Digital *da'wah* consumers access content through various platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. The diversity of platforms used by respondents reflects the digital habits of the younger generation in the contemporary era. Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are the most commonly accessed platforms for online *da'wah* content, as indicated by the responses to the survey conducted in this study.

Platforms used by respondents to access da'wah

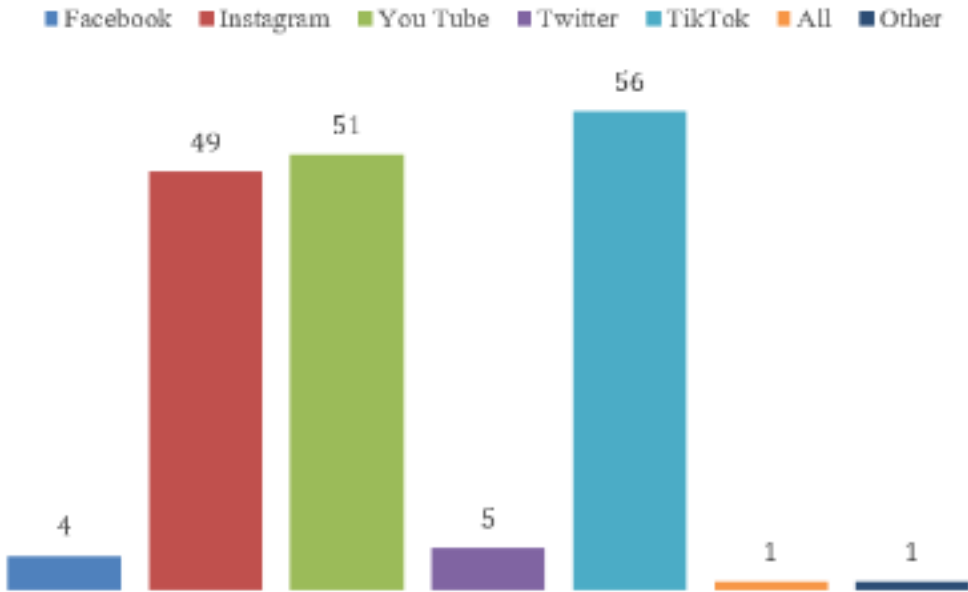


Figure 5: Platforms Used by Respondents to Access *Da'wah* Content

The high use of TikTok for accessing *da'wah* content can be attributed to the demographic profile of the respondents, who are primarily young people aged 12–25 years. According to data from Databoks by Katadata, TikTok users in Indonesia have shown a significant increase over recent years. In 2022, TikTok users accounted for 40% of total internet users in the country. This underscores the potential of TikTok as an alternative platform for preachers to disseminate Islamic knowledge both within Indonesia and globally.

Nevertheless, the platforms utilised by the three creative media communities—NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad—remain highly relevant for engaging the younger generation. The data indicates that Instagram and YouTube are nearly as popular as TikTok among respondents. All three communities actively use Instagram and YouTube (as well as Facebook to a lesser extent) to propagate Islamic teachings. These platforms allow them to effectively reach their target audience and contribute to the spread of *da'wah* in the digital era.

Conclusion

The rapid development of digital technology and information presents both opportunities and challenges for Muslims in conveying their *da'wah*. This shift has been effectively utilised by three creative media communities—NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad—which are highly active in spreading Islamic knowledge and preaching on social

media. These communities leverage platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook to deliver their messages. Their transition from conventional to digital *da'wah* demonstrates the adaptability of contemporary preachers in addressing the demands of the modern era.

The methods employed by preachers can be categorised into three general approaches: *al-hikmah* (adapting to needs), *al-mau'izah hasanah* (gentle persuasion), and *mujadalah bi al-lati hiya ahsan* (arguing constructively). NU Garis Lucu, AISNU, and Pondok Sanad predominantly use the *al-hikmah* and *al-mau'izah hasanah* methods, characterised by delivering *da'wah* gently, without coercion, and tailored to the needs of society in the digital age. The *mujadalah bi al-lati hiya ahsan* method, however, is not employed by these communities, as their *da'wah* is presented through accessible and engaging formats such as online studies, humorous posts, and miniseries that can be consumed anytime and anywhere.

The behaviour and responses of the community further underline the relevance of digital *da'wah*. Among the 100 students from UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin surveyed for this research, all are active consumers of online *da'wah*. While their frequency of engagement varies, the majority prefer *da'wah* delivered through online studies, humorous content, and, to a lesser extent, miniseries. These preferences highlight the importance of adapting *da'wah* to the psychological and practical needs of today's digital society.

By leveraging digital platforms and tailoring content to modern audiences, preachers can ensure the effective dissemination of Islamic teachings. This approach not only facilitates *Islamization* but also enhances the acceptance and impact of Islamic knowledge among the broader Muslim community.

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