



PESANTREN DIGITAL BRANDING THROUGH THE MANAGEMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL CONTENT ON YOUTUBE AND INSTAGRAM PLATFORMS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34125/jmp.v11i3.3014>

Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: 23 March 2026

Final Revised: 11 April 2026

Accepted: 16 May 2026

Published: 30 June 2026

Keywords:

Digital branding

Pesantren

Manajemen konten

Edukasi keislaman

Media sosial



ABSTRACT

The rapid development of social media has encouraged Islamic educational institutions, including pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), to utilize digital platforms for communication, da'wah (Islamic outreach), information dissemination, and institutional branding. However, studies on pesantren digital branding through the management of Islamic educational content remain limited, particularly those examining content management as an integral part of institutional branding strategies. This study aims to describe the management of Islamic educational content on the social media platforms of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah in Purworejo Regency, identify the factors supporting and constraining its implementation, and analyze its contribution to pesantren digital branding. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation involving eight informants, including the pengasuh (head of the Islamic boarding school), a social media administrator, santri (students), alumni, and members of the congregation. The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings indicate that YouTube and Instagram are utilized to publish Islamic educational content, da'wah, and documentation of pesantren activities. Although content management remains relatively simple, continuous educational and religious activities sustain regular content publication. Social media also enhances institutional visibility, information transparency, alumni engagement, and the positive public image of the pesantren.

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan media sosial telah mendorong lembaga pendidikan Islam, termasuk pesantren, memanfaatkan platform digital sebagai sarana komunikasi, dakwah, publikasi, dan penguatan citra kelembagaan. Namun, kajian mengenai digital branding pesantren melalui manajemen konten edukasi keislaman masih terbatas, terutama yang mengkaji pengelolaan konten sebagai bagian dari strategi branding lembaga. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan manajemen konten edukasi keislaman pada media sosial Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah Kabupaten Purworejo, mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambatnya, serta menganalisis kontribusinya terhadap digital branding pesantren. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi terhadap delapan informan yang terdiri atas pengasuh, pengelola media sosial, santri, alumni, dan jamaah. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa YouTube dan Instagram dimanfaatkan untuk publikasi konten edukasi keislaman, dakwah, dan dokumentasi kegiatan pesantren. Meskipun pengelolaan konten masih sederhana, keberlangsungan publikasi didukung oleh aktivitas pendidikan dan keagamaan yang rutin. Media sosial turut meningkatkan visibilitas, keterbukaan informasi, hubungan dengan alumni, dan citra positif pesantren.

Kata kunci: digital branding, pesantren, manajemen konten, edukasi keislaman, media sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has changed the way educational institutions establish communication, engage with the public, and shape their institutional image. Social media no longer functions merely as a channel for information dissemination; rather, it has evolved into a strategic instrument for building institutional identity, reputation, and public trust. The development of digital platforms such as Instagram and YouTube enables educational institutions to deliver information more rapidly, interactively, and extensively to diverse segments of society.

The rapid expansion of digital communication has fundamentally transformed public expectations regarding the transparency and accessibility of educational institutions. Prospective students, parents, alumni, and the wider community increasingly rely on digital platforms to obtain information before making educational decisions. Consequently, institutional credibility is no longer determined solely by educational quality but also by the institution's ability to communicate consistently through digital media. In this regard, digital branding has become an essential component of educational management because it enables institutions to present their vision, educational values, and institutional achievements more effectively to the public. Previous studies indicate that effective digital branding strategies can strengthen institutional reputation, increase public trust, and improve institutional competitiveness in the digital era (Nurhidayah, 2022; Zuher & Zakir, 2024).

In addition to functioning as a communication medium, social media has increasingly become a strategic platform for disseminating Islamic educational values beyond the physical boundaries of educational institutions. Educational institutions that consistently publish meaningful Islamic educational content are more capable of maintaining audience engagement while strengthening their institutional identity. Therefore, effective content management requires not only technological competence but also communication strategies that integrate educational objectives with audience needs (Kartika & Arifudin, 2024; Annisa & Mukaromah, 2025).

This phenomenon is also evident in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, including *pesantren*. As the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, *pesantren* are challenged to preserve their Islamic identity while simultaneously adapting to the rapid development of information technology. The emergence of social media provides opportunities for *pesantren* to expand the reach of their *da'wah* activities, disseminate educational programs, and introduce their institutional strengths to the wider community. Many *pesantren* have begun utilizing Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and other digital platforms as tools for communication and institutional branding (Annisa & Mukaromah, 2025; Cendikia et al., 2024). This adaptation demonstrates that digital transformation is not merely a technical necessity but has also become an integral component of institutional development strategies for *pesantren* in the digital era.

In addition to functioning as a communication medium, social media has increasingly become a learning ecosystem that facilitates the dissemination of Islamic educational values beyond the physical boundaries of educational institutions. Educational content distributed through digital platforms enables *pesantren* to reach broader audiences, including communities that have limited access to conventional religious learning. Therefore, the effectiveness of social media is not merely determined by the frequency of content publication, but also by the quality, educational relevance, and consistency of content management. Educational institutions capable of integrating Islamic educational messages with attractive digital communication strategies tend to achieve stronger public engagement

while maintaining the authenticity of their institutional identity (Kartika & Arifudin, 2024; Cahyani et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the management of *pesantren* social media remains confronted with various challenges. Ideally, digital branding requires content management that is strategic, consistent, and audience-oriented. In practice, however, many Islamic educational institutions continue to face obstacles such as limited human resources, inadequate content planning, irregular posting schedules, and insufficient evaluation of social media performance (Saputra & Saiddaeni, 2024; Hidayati et al., 2025). Similar conditions can be observed at Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah in Purworejo Regency, which has utilized YouTube and Instagram as platforms for publishing institutional activities and Islamic educational content, yet its content management remains dependent on limited resources. This situation highlights a gap between the demands of professional digital branding and the evolving practices of social media management, thereby warranting further investigation.

Studies on social media and branding in Islamic educational institutions have developed along several research trends. First, a number of studies have examined the effectiveness of social media as a tool for branding and promoting Islamic educational institutions (Nurhidayah, 2022; Baisan et al., 2025). Second, other studies have explored *pesantren* branding strategies through the utilization of digital media to build institutional image and brand equity (Aedi, 2025; Hani', Khoiroh, & Husna, 2025). Third, research has investigated social media as a medium for *da'wah*, education, and educational marketing grounded in Islamic values (Kartika & Arifudin, 2024; Annisa & Mukaromah, 2025). Overall, previous studies have emphasized the significant contribution of social media in enhancing the visibility, reputation, and competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions.

Table 1. Synthesis of Previous Studies on Digital Branding and Islamic Educational Content Management in Islamic Boarding Schools

Author(s)	Research Focus	Key Findings
Ramadhan & Jelatu (2025)	Social media-based educational marketing management	Social media-based educational marketing strategies significantly increased institutional visibility and positively influenced student enrollment through the optimization of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok platforms.
Baisan et al. (2025)	Social media publication for <i>pesantren</i> image	Social media publications contributed to strengthening the positive image of Islamic boarding schools and expanding public awareness of the institution.
Annisa & Mukaromah (2025)	Social media as <i>da'wah</i> and educational media	Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok effectively functioned as platforms for Islamic preaching (<i>da'wah</i>) and educational dissemination despite challenges related to content consistency and limited human resources.
Rozi (2025)	Digital branding of modern <i>pesantren</i>	Digital branding enhanced public trust in Islamic boarding schools through the dissemination of informative and engaging digital content.
Maulana et al.	Digital branding strategy in <i>pesantren</i>	Digital branding strategies played an important role in increasing students' interest through well-planned visual communication and digital engagement.

Komarariah et al.	Instagram for pesantren promotion	Instagram served as an effective promotional platform for expanding information outreach and strengthening the institutional identity of Islamic boarding schools.
Meutia et al.	Social media for digital branding	Assistance in social media utilization improved the capacity of pesantren to develop sustainable institutional digital branding.
Rahmawati et al. (2025)	Content strategy and public engagement	Consistent content strategies encouraged greater public engagement and strengthened the presence of pesantren on social media platforms.

Despite these contributions, several limitations remain in the existing body of research. Most previous studies have focused primarily on branding, promotion, or the general utilization of social media without providing a detailed explanation of how content management processes are implemented to support institutional digital branding. Furthermore, many studies have concentrated on a single social media platform or have treated social media merely as a promotional tool rather than as an integral component of a comprehensive Islamic educational content management strategy. Research examining the relationship between Islamic educational content management, the integrated use of YouTube and Instagram, and the development of *pesantren* digital branding remains relatively limited, particularly within the context of locally based *pesantren* case studies. This gap represents an important area for further scholarly development and serves as the foundation for the present study.

Based on this research gap, the present article offers a different perspective by positioning *pesantren* digital branding as an outcome of the Islamic educational content management process implemented through the integrated use of YouTube and Instagram. This study aims to analyze how Islamic educational content management is carried out through the social media platforms of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah in Purworejo Regency, identify the factors that support and hinder its implementation, and explain its contribution to the formation of *pesantren* digital branding. Accordingly, this research is expected to enrich the field of Islamic Educational Management while also providing a practical model for social media management in *pesantren* institutions in the digital era.

This study is grounded in the assumption that *pesantren* digital branding is not automatically established merely through the existence of social media accounts. Rather, it is developed through a content management process that is strategic, consistent, and aligned with the characteristics of digital audiences. Islamic educational content that is systematically managed through the functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation is believed to contribute to the development of a positive institutional image, enhance audience engagement, and strengthen the position of *pesantren* within the digital sphere. Therefore, this study conceptualizes content management as a strategic element that bridges digital *da'wah* activities and institutional branding efforts within *pesantren*.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the digital branding process developed through the management of Islamic educational content on social media within a specific institutional context. Meanwhile, the case study design was

utilized to comprehensively explore the processes of planning, implementation, management, supporting factors, and challenges associated with the use of YouTube and Instagram as platforms for *pesantren* digital branding. This design enables researchers to examine the phenomenon in depth within its real-life context and to explore the experiences and perspectives of informants holistically (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

The qualitative case study approach was considered the most appropriate research strategy because this study sought to understand a contemporary phenomenon within its natural setting, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context were not clearly evident. Rather than measuring causal relationships quantitatively, this approach enabled the researcher to explore the dynamics of Islamic educational content management, organizational communication, and digital branding practices from the perspectives of the actors directly involved. Furthermore, the case study facilitated the examination of interactions among institutional values, social media management practices, and audience engagement, which could not be adequately understood through quantitative methods. This methodological orientation is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that qualitative inquiry provides a richer understanding of communication management processes within Islamic educational institutions (Baisan et al., 2025; Cahyani et al., 2025).

Research Site and Context

The study was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah, located in Purworejo Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This *pesantren* was selected because it has actively utilized social media, particularly YouTube and Instagram, as platforms for disseminating Islamic educational content, publicizing *pesantren* activities, and communicating with the broader community. The selection of the research site was based on the institution's active engagement in digital communication practices and its efforts to enhance institutional visibility through social media. Data collection was carried out from May to June 2026.

Participants/Informants

Research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, whereby participants were intentionally chosen based on the consideration that they possessed relevant knowledge, experience, and involvement related to the research focus. A total of eight informants participated in this study, consisting of one *pesantren* leader (*pengasuh*), one social media administrator, two *santri* (students), two alumni, and two congregants. They were selected because they were considered capable of providing in-depth information regarding the management of Islamic educational content, digital branding practices, and the impact of social media utilization on the image of the *pesantren*.

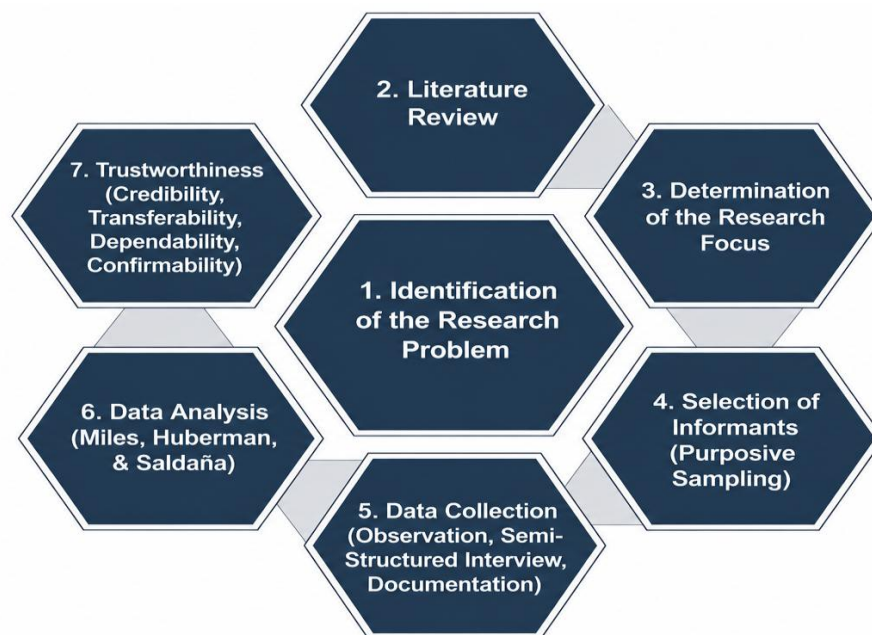
To obtain comprehensive information, the researcher ensured that each category of informants represented different perspectives regarding the implementation of digital branding. The *pesantren* leader provided information related to institutional policies and communication objectives, the social media administrator explained content planning and publication practices, *santri* described their involvement in content production and digital activities, while alumni and congregants shared their perceptions regarding the influence of social media on the institutional image of the *pesantren*. The inclusion of diverse informants allowed data triangulation across stakeholder groups and enhanced the richness of the findings concerning Islamic educational content management (Ariani et al., 2024; Rozi, 2025).

Data Collection

Research data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and

documentation. Observations were conducted on the *pesantren's* social media management activities, including content types, posting patterns, forms of audience interaction, and branding elements displayed on its YouTube and Instagram accounts. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore informants' experiences, perspectives, and evaluations concerning the management of Islamic educational content and *pesantren* digital branding. Documentation was carried out by collecting various relevant materials, such as social media post archives, screenshots, promotional materials, and institutional documents related to the *pesantren's* digital media activities. The use of these multiple data collection techniques enabled the researcher to obtain more comprehensive data and supported the triangulation process.

Figure 1. Research Procedure



Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three primary stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, the researcher conducted the processes of selecting, simplifying, focusing, and organizing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Subsequently, the data were presented in the form of narratives and relevant themes to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and conducting continuous verification throughout the research process. Through this interactive and cyclical analytical process, patterns, themes, and meanings related to digital branding and Islamic educational content management were systematically identified.

Trustworthiness

Throughout the analysis process, coding was conducted iteratively by identifying meaningful statements from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories before being synthesized into major themes that reflected the stages of Islamic educational content

management and their contribution to pesantren digital branding. This iterative analytical process enabled continuous comparison between emerging findings and existing theoretical concepts, thereby strengthening the interpretative validity of the research (Sari & Hidayat, 2025; Zuher & Zakir, 2025).

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through the application of the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data credibility was established through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants as well as findings derived from observations, interviews, and documentation. Transferability was enhanced by providing a detailed description of the research context, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other similar settings. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the entire research process, while confirmability was ensured by preserving field notes, interview transcripts, and other supporting documents as the basis for verifying the research findings.

Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted in accordance with established research ethics principles. Prior to the data collection process, all informants were provided with a clear explanation of the research objectives, the nature of their expected participation, and their right to participate voluntarily. Informed consent was obtained from each informant before interviews and observations were conducted. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' privacy, the identities of informants were anonymized in the reporting of the research findings. Furthermore, all data collected were used exclusively for academic purposes and were reported responsibly in a manner that did not cause harm to either the individuals or the institution involved in the study.

RESULTS DAN DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the research findings regarding the management of Islamic educational content on the social media platforms of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah in Purworejo Regency, the factors that support and hinder its management, and the contribution of social media to *pesantren* branding. The findings were obtained through observations of the Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah Instagram account and YouTube channel, interviews with media administrators, *santri*, alumni, and congregants, as well as documentation of the *pesantren's* digital media activities.

Table 2. Summary of Research Findings on the Management of Islamic Educational Content and Pesantren Digital Branding

Research Aspect	Main Findings
Islamic Educational Content	The social media content primarily consists of Islamic educational activities, including <i>Ngaji Posonan Ramadhan</i> , <i>pengajian kitab</i> , <i>haul masyayikh</i> , <i>khotmil Al-Qur'an</i> , <i>sema'an Al-Qur'an</i> , <i>Haflah Akhirussanah</i> , Islamic holiday commemorations, <i>santri</i> activities, visits by religious leaders, and community engagement programs.
Instagram Utilization	Instagram is mainly used to disseminate event posters, photo documentation, reels, and short videos that provide brief and up-to-

	date information about pesantren activities.
YouTube Utilization	YouTube functions as a platform for livestreaming religious lectures, documenting major pesantren events, and archiving long-form Islamic educational content.
Content Management Practices	Content management remains relatively simple, with no formal content planning, structured posting schedule, target audience segmentation, thumbnail optimization, or systematic evaluation beyond monitoring audio quality and viewer numbers.
Supporting Factors	The abundance of regular religious activities provides continuous content sources. The involvement of several santri in documentation activities also supports content production.
Challenges	Limited financial resources, inadequate media equipment, changes in student administrators, inconsistent posting schedules, and limited content variation remain the primary challenges.
Perceived Contribution to Digital Branding	Social media has enhanced public awareness, strengthened institutional transparency, maintained alumni engagement, supported Islamic da'wah, and contributed positively to the digital branding of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah.

The observation results indicate that the social media content of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah is predominantly centered on Islamic education, *da'wah*, and documentation of *pesantren* activities. The identified content includes *Ngaji Posonan Ramadhan* (Ramadan religious study sessions), *pengajian kitab* (classical Islamic text studies), *haul masyayikh* (commemorations of deceased Islamic scholars), *khotmil Al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic completion ceremonies), *sema'an Al-Qur'an* (collective Qur'anic recitation sessions), *Haflah Akhirussanah* (annual graduation and celebration ceremony), commemorations of Islamic holidays, documentation of *santri* activities, visits by religious leaders, and activities involving the broader *pesantren* community. Based on observations of the social media accounts, Instagram and YouTube serve distinct functions. Instagram is primarily utilized to disseminate brief information through event posters, photo documentation, reels, and short videos. In contrast, YouTube is used to upload long-form videos and livestream religious lectures as well as major *pesantren* events.

Interviews with the media administrator revealed that the Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah YouTube channel was established on February 2, 2012, with the primary objectives of religious outreach (*da'wah*) and the publication of *pesantren* activities. The channel is managed by a media team; however, in practice, most operational activities are handled by a single individual. The content published generally consists of livestreams of religious lectures, *haul* commemorations, and *haflah* events, utilizing the vMix application integrated with cameras, a sound card, and a computer.

Interview findings further indicate that content management is still carried out in a relatively simple manner. The media administrator stated that there is currently no formal content planning process, structured posting schedule, clearly defined target audience, strategy for developing video titles and thumbnails, or systematic video editing procedure, as most of the content is broadcast through livestreaming. The evaluation process is also relatively limited, focusing primarily on audio quality during broadcasts and the number of viewers who watch the content.

Table 3. Types of Content Identified on the Social Media Platforms of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah.

Content Type	Instagram	YouTube
Event Posters	✓	-
Photo Documentation	✓	-
Reels/Short Videos	✓	-
Pengajian Kitab (Classical Islamic Text Studies)	✓	✓
Ngaji Posonan Ramadhan (Ramadan Religious Study Sessions)	✓	✓
Haul and Khotmil Al-Qur'an (Commemorative and Qur'anic Completion Ceremonies)	✓	✓
Haflah Akhirussanah (Annual Graduation and Celebration Ceremony)	✓	✓
Livestreamed Religious Lectures	-	✓
Documentation of Santri Activities	✓	✓

Source: Research observations and documentation.

Interview data indicate that one of the primary supporting factors in the management of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah's social media is the abundance of religious and educational activities conducted on a regular basis, which provide a diverse and continuous source of content. These activities consistently generate materials that can be published through both Instagram and YouTube. In addition, several *santri* are involved in documenting institutional activities, thereby contributing to the social media content production process. On the other hand, the study identified several challenges in social media management. The media administrator reported that financial limitations constitute the main obstacle to the procurement and development of media equipment. Furthermore, changes in management personnel occur as student administrators who have completed their service period and left the *pesantren* are replaced by new administrators.

Interviews with *santri* and alumni further revealed that the quality of media production still requires improvement. Several informants noted that audio and video synchronization was not always optimal, content variation remained limited to certain types of activities, and posting schedules had not yet been implemented consistently. Alumni also recommended improving video production quality, expanding the variety of content, and increasing the frequency of livestreamed religious study sessions.

Table 4. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Social Media Management

Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
Numerous pesantren activities as sources of content	Limited funding and media equipment
Regular religious activities	Media production quality has not yet reached an optimal level

Santri involvement in documentation activities	Posting schedules are not yet consistent
Support from da'wah and educational activities	Changes in media management personnel
Relatively positive audience responses	Limited content diversity

Figure 2. Instagram Account of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah, Purworejo Regency.

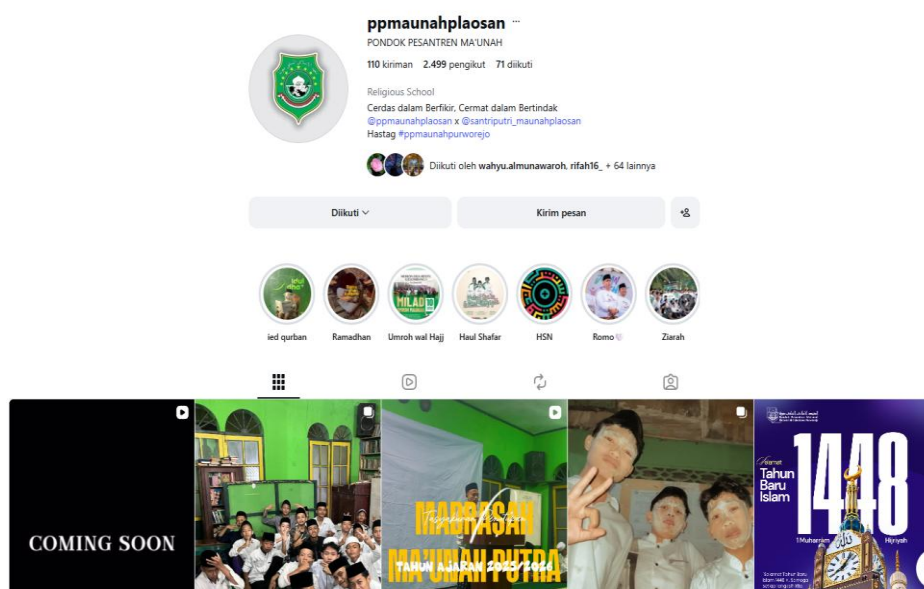


Figure 3. YouTube Channel of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah, Purworejo Regency.

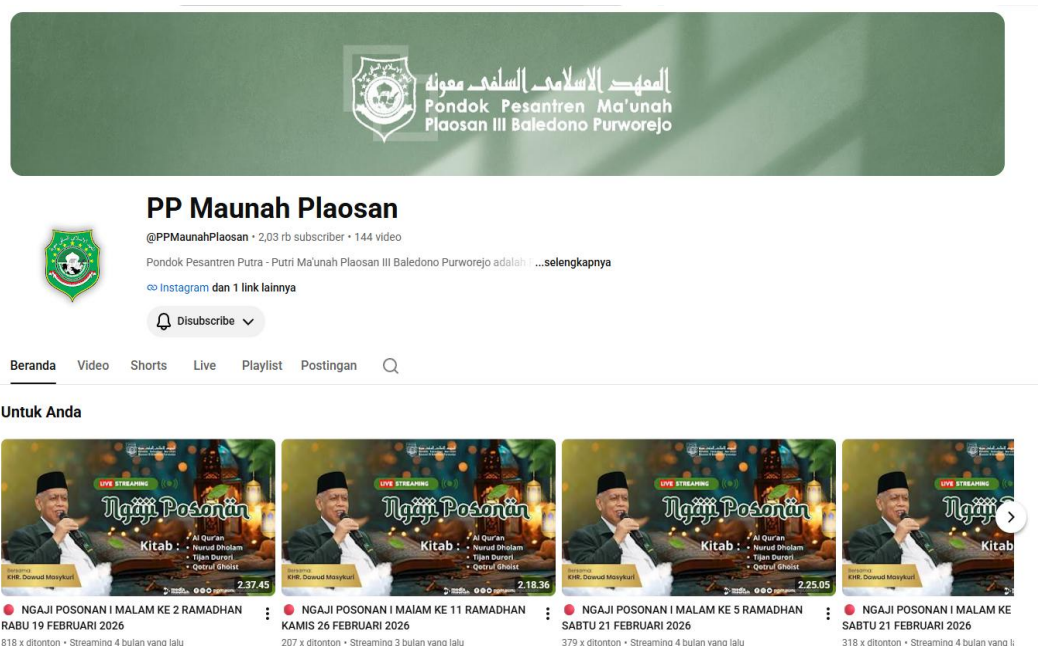


Figure 2. YouTube Channel of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah, Purworejo Regency.

Interviews with *santri*, alumni, and congregants revealed that social media is perceived as an effective medium for introducing Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah to the wider public. Informants indicated that social media enables the community to become more familiar with the *pesantren*'s activities, programs, and daily life, aspects that were previously accessible primarily to individuals within the institution.

According to the media administrator, the existence of the YouTube channel has enabled a broader audience to become acquainted with Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah and has increased the institution's exposure. In addition to serving as a platform for *da'wah* and institutional publication, the YouTube channel also functions as a repository for documenting *pesantren* activities.

Alumni reported that the YouTube channel helps them stay informed about developments within the *pesantren* even after they have left the institution. Informants stated that they are able to follow various *pesantren* activities through uploaded videos and livestreamed events. They can also revisit previously uploaded religious study materials at any time according to their needs.

Several informants perceived that social media has had a positive impact on the image of the *pesantren* by presenting its activities in an open and transparent manner. According to one alumnus, "*the public can observe the activities of the pesantren more openly, thereby increasing public trust in the institution.*" Other informants noted that social media posts help the community gain a clearer understanding of the characteristics and identity of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah.

Based on the documentation and interview findings, the social media platforms of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah function not only as channels for *da'wah* and information dissemination but also as tools for documenting activities, publicizing institutional programs, maintaining connections with alumni, and introducing the institution's identity to the wider community.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the social media content of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah is predominantly composed of Islamic educational activities, religious study sessions, and documentation of *pesantren* activities, which are distributed through Instagram and YouTube with distinct functions. Social media management is supported by the abundance of *pesantren* activities and the involvement of *santri* in documentation processes. However, it continues to face challenges related to limited financial resources, media production quality, turnover among media administrators, and inconsistencies in posting schedules. Furthermore, social media contributes to expanding information dissemination, maintaining relationships with alumni, increasing transparency regarding *pesantren* activities, and helping the broader public gain a better understanding of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah.

The findings also demonstrate that the digital branding of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah is developed through the management of Islamic educational content on YouTube and Instagram, although the content management processes remain relatively simple and have not yet been fully structured. In addition, the study reveals that the effectiveness of social media management is influenced by the interaction of supporting and inhibiting factors, and that social media has made a tangible contribution to enhancing the visibility and image of the *pesantren*. The following discussion interprets these findings through the perspectives of the POAC management theory, social media content management concepts, digital branding theory, and previous research findings.

The findings further indicate that Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah utilizes Instagram and YouTube to distribute Islamic educational content, *da'wah* materials, and documentation of *pesantren* activities. Nevertheless, content management is still carried out in a relatively simple manner, without documented content planning, structured posting schedules, clearly defined audience segmentation, or comprehensive evaluation procedures. Despite these limitations, content publication continues on a regular basis due to the large number of religious activities organized by the *pesantren*, which consistently generate publishable content.

From the perspective of George R. Terry's management theory, these findings indicate that the actuating function has been implemented relatively effectively, as the processes of content production and publication are carried out actively. In contrast, the planning and controlling functions have not yet been implemented optimally. In fact, the success of social media management is determined not only by the ability to produce content but also by strategic planning and continuous evaluation, which enable an organization to align its content with its intended branding objectives. In other words, the mere presence of social media platforms does not automatically result in strong branding unless it is supported by a well-planned content management system.

These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Saputra and Saiddaeni (2024), which emphasized that social media management in educational institutions requires integrated planning, implementation, and evaluation processes to achieve effective communication. The results also support the findings of Kartika and Arifudin (2024), who argued that Islamic educational content possesses significant potential as a digital communication medium for educational institutions when managed systematically. However, the present study extends previous findings by demonstrating that, within the *pesantren* context, content sustainability does not always depend on complex digital marketing strategies. Rather, it can be sustained by educational and *da'wah* activities that naturally generate a continuous source of content.

These findings suggest that *pesantren* digital branding is not built solely through digital marketing techniques but also through the consistent representation of educational and religious activities disseminated through social media. Practically, this implies that *pesantren* institutions should develop more structured content management systems, including the preparation of content calendars, the allocation of responsibilities among media team members, the identification of target audiences, and the systematic evaluation of social media performance. Such measures would enable branding functions to operate more effectively and strategically.

The study found that the primary supporting factors in the social media management of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah are the abundance of educational and religious activities that can be transformed into digital content, as well as the involvement of *santri* in the documentation process. Conversely, limited financial resources, inadequate media equipment quality, turnover among media administrators, and inconsistencies in posting schedules were identified as factors that hinder the development of the *pesantren's* social media presence.

From the perspective of organizational management, these findings indicate that the success of social media management is determined not only by the technical aspects of content production but also by the availability of human resources and organizational support. The organizing function within the POAC framework is particularly important because the sustainability of social media management requires clear role distribution, leadership succession among administrators, and adequate institutional support. When

social media management relies heavily on specific individuals, the continuity of the program becomes vulnerable to disruptions caused by personnel changes.

These findings are consistent with the study by Hidayati et al. (2025), which demonstrated that strengthening institutional branding through digital technology is strongly influenced by the readiness of human resources and the availability of supporting infrastructure. The results also align with the findings of Cendikia et al. (2024), which suggest that *pesantren* social media can develop effectively when supported by productive institutional activities and adequate resources. Nevertheless, this study reveals an interesting pattern: resource limitations do not necessarily hinder the continuity of content publication as long as the institution maintains ongoing core activities that can be converted into digital content.

These findings demonstrate that the development of *pesantren* social media requires a sustainable institutional approach. Strengthening the capacity of media teams, providing adequate production facilities, and establishing a systematic succession mechanism for media administrators are essential aspects of ensuring the sustainability of digital branding efforts. Therefore, *pesantren* social media management should be viewed as an integral part of institutional strategy rather than merely as an activity for documenting events and programs.

The findings further indicate that social media has made a tangible contribution to enhancing the visibility of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah. Through YouTube and Instagram, the public can access information about various *pesantren* activities, alumni can remain informed about institutional developments, and broader audiences can gain greater access to the Islamic educational content provided by the institution. In addition to serving as platforms for *da'wah* and information dissemination, social media also functions as a medium for documentation and as a bridge connecting the *pesantren* with the wider community.

From the perspective of digital branding, these findings suggest that the branding of Islamic educational institutions is constructed through the creation of visibility, information transparency, and continuous interaction with audiences. Social media enables *pesantren* to present their institutional identity in a more open and accessible manner, allowing the public to form perceptions based on the activities and values displayed online. Consequently, branding is generated not only through promotional messages but also through the consistent representation of educational and religious activities disseminated through social media platforms.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Nurhidayah (2022), who argued that social media can enhance the brand and quality of Islamic education by expanding public access to information. These findings also support the studies conducted by Baisan et al. (2025) and Aedi (2025), which demonstrated that digital publication contributes to the development of a positive institutional image and the strengthening of *pesantren* identity. However, the present study extends previous research by showing that branding contributions emerge not only through deliberate promotional strategies but also through the ongoing functions of documentation and digital *da'wah* activities.

An interesting finding is that most informants did not perceive social media as an institutional marketing instrument. Instead, they viewed it primarily as a medium for religious outreach (*da'wah*), documentation, and the dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Nevertheless, these activities indirectly generate positive branding effects for the *pesantren*. This finding suggests that, within the *pesantren* context, digital branding may emerge as a consequence of authentic digital *da'wah* activities. The practical implication is that *pesantren* institutions do not necessarily need to adopt commercial marketing approaches to build a strong digital image. Rather, they can optimize the consistent and professional publication of

their educational and religious activities to strengthen their digital presence and institutional reputation.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the digital branding of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah is developed through the management of Islamic educational content distributed via YouTube and Instagram. The principal pattern identified is that educational and *da'wah* activities serve as the primary sources of content, while social media functions as a medium for expanding the reach of information, strengthening relationships with alumni and the broader community, and fostering a positive image of the *pesantren*. These findings enrich the field of Islamic Educational Management by demonstrating that *pesantren* digital branding depends not only on digital promotional strategies but also on the institution's ability to manage and represent its educational activities within the digital sphere.

From a practical perspective, the findings imply that *pesantren* institutions need to strengthen the functions of planning, organizing, and evaluating social media management to ensure that the resulting branding is more sustainable and effective. This study is limited to a single case study; therefore, its findings cannot be generalized to all *pesantren* contexts. Consequently, future research may explore comparative analyses of digital branding strategies across different types of *pesantren* or employ mixed-methods approaches to examine the influence of social media on public perceptions more comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the digital branding of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah, Purworejo Regency, is developed through the management of Islamic educational content that is continuously disseminated via YouTube and Instagram. Social media has been utilized as a platform for information dissemination, *da'wah*, education, and the documentation of *pesantren* activities, although its implementation remains relatively simple and is not yet fully supported by structured systems of planning, organizing, and evaluation. Furthermore, the study found that the sustainability of social media management is influenced by supporting factors, including the abundance of educational and religious activities and the involvement of *santri* in the documentation process. At the same time, limitations in human resources, funding, media equipment, and management consistency constitute challenges that need to be addressed. On the other hand, social media has been shown to make a positive contribution to enhancing visibility, increasing information transparency, strengthening relationships with alumni, and fostering a positive public image of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah. Therefore, the objectives of this study—to describe the management of Islamic educational content, identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in social media management, and analyze its contribution to *pesantren* branding—have been successfully achieved.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of Islamic Educational Management scholarship, particularly in understanding the relationship between social media content management, digital *da'wah*, and *pesantren* digital branding. The findings demonstrate that the branding of Islamic educational institutions is shaped not only through formal promotional strategies but also through the authentic and consistent publication of educational and religious activities. From a practical perspective, the findings provide implications for *pesantren* administrators to develop more systematic social media management by formulating content strategies, establishing clear task allocation, enhancing the capacity of media teams, and conducting regular evaluations to ensure that social media functions more effectively and sustainably as a branding instrument.

The findings of this study affirm that social media has become an integral component of the communication transformation occurring within Islamic educational institutions in the digital era. Consequently, social media management can no longer be regarded merely as a means of documenting activities but should instead be recognized as a strategic instrument for building institutional identity, reputation, and public trust. Looking ahead, *pesantren* institutions need to integrate social media management more systematically into their institutional strategies to maximize the benefits of digital branding. Future research may expand upon this study by comparing digital branding practices across different types of *pesantren* or by examining the effectiveness of social media in shaping audience perceptions and engagement through more diverse methodological approaches.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in only one *pesantren*; therefore, the findings reflect the specific context of Pondok Pesantren Ma'unah and cannot be broadly generalized to other Islamic educational institutions. Second, the relatively limited number of informants led the study to prioritize the depth of information rather than the breadth of perspectives. Third, the research period, which spanned from May to June 2026, restricted the observation of social media management dynamics over a longer period of time. Therefore, future research is encouraged to involve a greater number of *pesantren* institutions, expand the number of informants, and employ longer research periods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of digital branding practices within Islamic educational institutions in the digital era.

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Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan

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