Islamic Propagation in Tiktok Algorithm: The Effectiveness of Proselytizing Millennials in The Digital Era

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Abstrak

Kata kunci:
Dakwah Islam, Algoritma TikTok, dan Dakwah Digital

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pemanfaatan TikTok sebagai media dakwah Islam di era digital, dengan fokus pada generasi milenial di Indonesia. TikTok, sebagai platform media sosial populer dengan algoritma berbasis AI, menawarkan potensi besar untuk menyebarkan pesan-pesan keagamaan secara kreatif dan efektif. Namun, fitur algoritmik ini juga menghadirkan tantangan, seperti filter bubble, yang dapat membatasi keragaman informasi dan mendistorsi pemahaman nilai-nilai agama. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode deskriptif, penelitian ini menganalisis konten dakwah Islam yang populer di TikTok, seperti video yang diunggah oleh Habib Husein Ja'far dan konten-konten Islam lainnya. Data dikumpulkan dan dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi strategi kreatif dalam menyampaikan pesan keagamaan, tingkat penerimaan audiens, dan dampak konten terhadap literasi keagamaan anak muda. Temuan penelitian ini dapat memberikan panduan praktis bagi para pembuat konten Islami dalam merancang dakwah yang relevan dan inovatif yang selaras dengan ajaran Islam sekaligus meningkatkan kesadaran akan literasi digital. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam mengembangkan strategi dakwah digital transformatif yang beradaptasi dengan kemajuan teknologi.

Abstract

Keywords:
Islamic Preaching, TikTok Algorithm, and Digital Da'wah

This study explores the utilization of TikTok as a medium for Islamic preaching in the digital era, focusing on the millennial generation in Indonesia. TikTok, as a popular social media platform with an AI-based algorithm, offers great potential for spreading religious messages creatively and effectively. However, this algorithmic feature also presents challenges, such as the filter bubble, which may limit information diversity and distort the understanding of religious values. Using a qualitative approach and descriptive method, this study analyzes popular Islamic preaching content on TikTok, such as videos

uploaded by Habib Husein Ja'far and other Islamic content. Data is collected and analyzed to identify creative strategies in delivering religious messages, audience reception levels, and the impact of content on young people's religious literacy. The study's findings can provide practical guidance for Islamic content creators in designing relevant, innovative preaching that aligns with Islamic teachings while also enhancing awareness of digital literacy. Thus, this research contributes to developing transformative digital preaching strategies that adapt to technological advancements.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, the internet plays a central role in nearly every aspect of life—including religion. Beyond its use for entertainment or communication, the internet now facilitates education, commerce, and spiritual outreach. One key area of growth is Islamic preaching (dakwah), which is increasingly being spread online, allowing messages to reach global audiences more effectively(Ibnu Kasir & Syahrol Awali, 2024).

Social media, especially TikTok, has emerged as a powerful tool for dakwah, particularly among Generation Z. The platform allows Islamic values to be shared in ways that are creative, concise, and aligned with younger audiences' preferences for short, engaging content (Rochmah, 2022).

Indonesia's evolving digital culture, led by millennials and Gen Z, has embraced TikTok as a dominant platform. As of 2024, TikTok is the most popular social media app in the country, surpassing Instagram and averaging 23.5 hours of user engagement per month(Chandra, 2023); (Susanto et al., 2023). Reports indicate over 107 million uploads and 17 billion user responses in 2024 alone. TikTok's success is attributed to its entertaining, relatable content and "content democratization," which allows any user the chance to go viral (Hakim, n.d.)

TikTok has also become a key platform for religious content, with a 78% penetration rate among Muslim users in Indonesia (Maryani, Rahmi Hidayati, Ilham Efendi, Apifah Delisa, 2024). This signals a shift in dakwah strategies, where preachers and Islamic content creators leverage the digital platform to reach younger, tech-savvy audiences. Most users are aged 18–34, making this demographic a primary target for digital religious outreach (Pramono, 2023).

TikTok's AI-driven algorithm tailors content to user preferences, offering potential for targeted dakwah. However, it also presents challenges such as the creation of filter bubbles,

where users are repeatedly exposed to similar content and perspectives, limiting the diversity of religious views they encounter (Syifa Aulia Rahmadhani et al., 2024). Moreover, TikTok favors content with high engagement and watch time, which can reduce visibility for more educational or reflective dakwah content that may not be as immediately entertaining (Rochmah, 2022).

These algorithmic features have a double-edged impact: they help religious content reach the right audiences but may also isolate users within narrow interpretations of Islam. This is a concern, as Islamic preaching seeks to convey broad, deep, and transformative values.

To adapt, Islamic preachers and creators now use TikTok to present messages in relatable ways. Creators like Habib Husein Ja'far effectively use creative editing and sound design to make short sermons more compelling, such as his viral video "Tersesat kemana Bib?" (Wulansari, 2024). Such strategies show how combining content creativity with an understanding of the algorithm can increase the reach and impact of dakwah.

However, a lack of digital literacy in Indonesia—where only 62% of users are skilled in evaluating online information—poses risks. Many users consume viral religious content without questioning its context or accuracy (Setyawan, 2023). This can lead to misunderstanding or oversimplified interpretations of Islamic teachings.

This study aims to offer practical guidance for optimizing Islamic preaching on TikTok. It encourages the creation of content that is algorithm-compatible, engaging, and grounded in Islamic principles. It also advocates for stronger digital literacy programs to help youth navigate religious content critically. Through qualitative analysis of popular TikTok dakwah content and interviews with users, this research provides strategic recommendations for more effective, adaptive digital dakwah.

METHOD

This study examines the effectiveness of Islamic preaching on TikTok for millennials and Gen Z using a descriptive qualitative approach. Three main methods were used: content analysis to examine communication strategies, discourse analysis to understand the construction of Islamic narratives, and social media interaction analysis to measure audience engagement. Data was collected from videos with high engagement, analyzed based on themes,

delivery style, as well as visual and audio elements. The study also highlights the role of TikTok's algorithm in the dissemination of Islamic preaching, including how engagement rates and watch time influence visibility. The results provide a deep understanding of effective Islamic preaching strategies on this digital platform.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Popular Islamic preaching videos on TikTok generally use a simple, engaging, and easy-to-understand approach. Preachers and content creators convey religious messages in short videos that get straight to the point, often using a casual style and language that is familiar to young people. The use of visual effects, background music, and short texts helps to increase the appeal of the content.

Additionally, interactive features such as comments and duets allow the audience to discuss or share opinions, ensuring that the videos remain visible on many users' homepages and that the dakwah is not one-sided but more dynamic. Videos that follow trends or use popular hashtags are also more likely to go viral, enabling the dakwah message to reach a wider audience. In this study, the author selected several dakwah videos based on the previously mentioned categories for analysisas follows:

Figure 1. Screenshot of Habib Husein Ja'far's video advice (Source: TikTok account @hilang.16)

This video has been viewed 13.8 million times and liked by 2 million viewers. In the video uploaded by the @hilang.16 account, Habib Ja'far delivers his message in a relaxed and familiar

style that resonates with the younger generation. The message is supported by text in Indonesian, making it easier for viewers to understand the content of the advice given. Additionally, the video utilizes the hashtag #habibjafar and features viral music that aligns with the content's atmosphere, creating a touching and engaging impression. The combination of these elements keeps viewers engaged until the end.
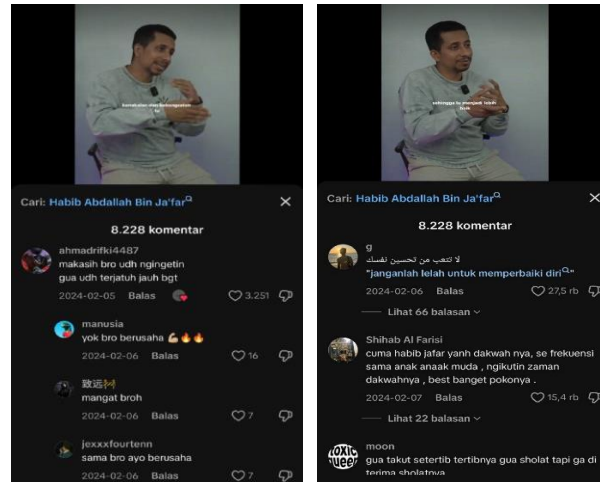

Figure 2. Comments on a video clip of advice from Habib Hussein Ja'far

Several comments in the video show positive responses from viewers to the sermon delivered by Habib Ja'far. Many feel inspired and grateful for the reminder to continue improving themselves, as seen in comments such as "don't tire of improving yourself." In addition, many appreciate his preaching style, which is relevant to young people and keeps up with the times, making the message easier to accept. Some comments also reflect personal reflections, such as fear of imperfection in worship or the determination to rise from adversity. Overall, the video successfully motivates and has a positive impact on its viewers.

Figure 3. Screenshot of Ustadz Adi Hidayat's video lecture (Source: TikTok account @coretcoretan__)

The video uploaded by @coretcoretan_ has been viewed 7.1 million times and received 1.3 million likes, indicating the high level of interest among viewers in its content. The video has a unique presentation style, where someone watches Ustadz Adi Hidayat's lecture on prosperity in the middle of the night with aesthetic lighting. This concept gives the impression that TikTok viewers are third-party observers of the lecture. The main appeal of the video lies in its relatable packaging for young people, especially those who often overthink at night. The da'wah theme addressed is highly relevant to their issues, thereby enhancing emotional connection with the audience. Additionally, the video is supported by hashtags such as #fyp, #ustadzadihidayat, #nasehatislami, #dakwah, and viral sounds.
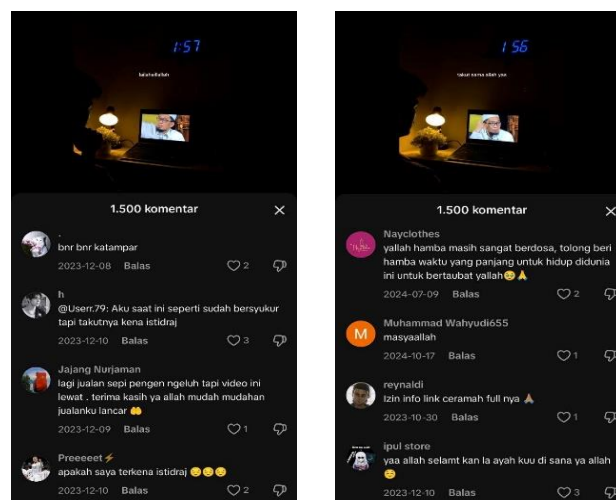

Figure 4. Comments on Ustadz Adi Hidayat's lecture excerpt

The conclusions drawn from the comments on the video indicate that many viewers felt deeply moved and gained profound insights after watching Ustadz Adi Hidayat's lecture. Most of the comments expressed gratitude, requests for forgiveness, and hopes for the opportunity to repent and receive blessings in life. Some viewers also felt "struck" by the message of the sermon, prompting self-reflection on their lives and their relationship with Allah. Additionally, some viewers connected the content of the sermon to their own life circumstances, such as concerns about istidraj or hopes for smooth provision. This indicates that the video successfully conveyed a message that resonates with many people's lives, especially those who often reflect deeply in the middle of the night.

The results of this study reveal that the success of da'wah on TikTok is greatly influenced by the delivery method and creativity of the content, the utilization of platform features, and the level of audience engagement. To understand further, here is an analysis of the da'wah videos that have been studied.
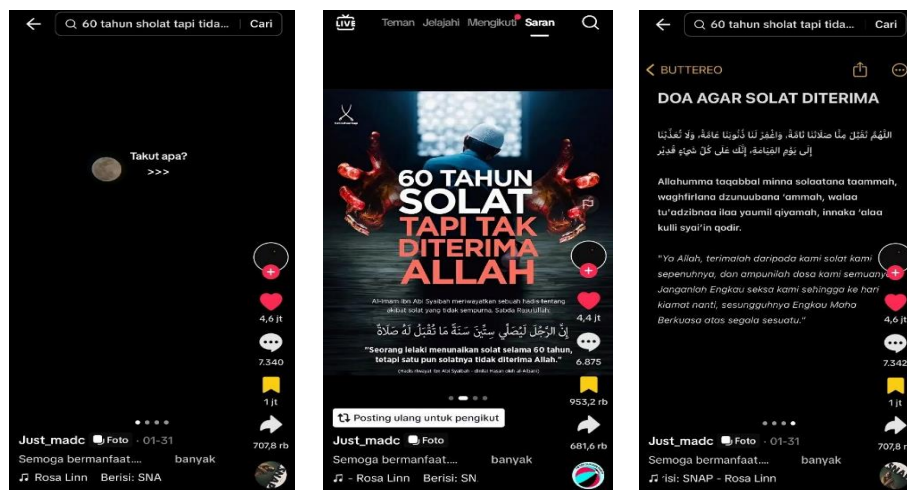

Figure 5. Screenshot of photo mode or slideshow poster dakwah (Source: TikTok account @just_madcc)

This image posted by @just_madcc emphasizes the importance of the quality of prayer over its quantity, quoting a hadith about someone who prayed for 60 years but was not accepted if it was not done correctly. This hadith was narrated by Imam Ibn Abi Syaibah and deemed authentic by Al-Albani. Visually, the image shows someone praying against a backdrop of light, while bloodied hands add a dramatic touch to the consequences of unaccepted worship. This post went viral with 26.7 million views and 4.4 million likes, as it

offers a solution in the form of a prayer for prayers to be accepted. This pattern is common on TikTok, where emotionally charged content is followed by a solution, encouraging more interaction. It is supported by the use of hashtags like #reminder #foryoupage and viral sounds. The combination of the prayer in Arabic, transliteration, and translation also makes it easier to understand and practice. Unfortunately, however, this post does not fully explain why someone's prayers were not accepted for 60 years, which could lead to misunderstandings among readers. Without clear context, people may mistakenly interpret that their worship is futile without understanding the factors that make prayers unacceptable, such as a lack of devotion, non-compliance with Sharia law, or improper intentions.
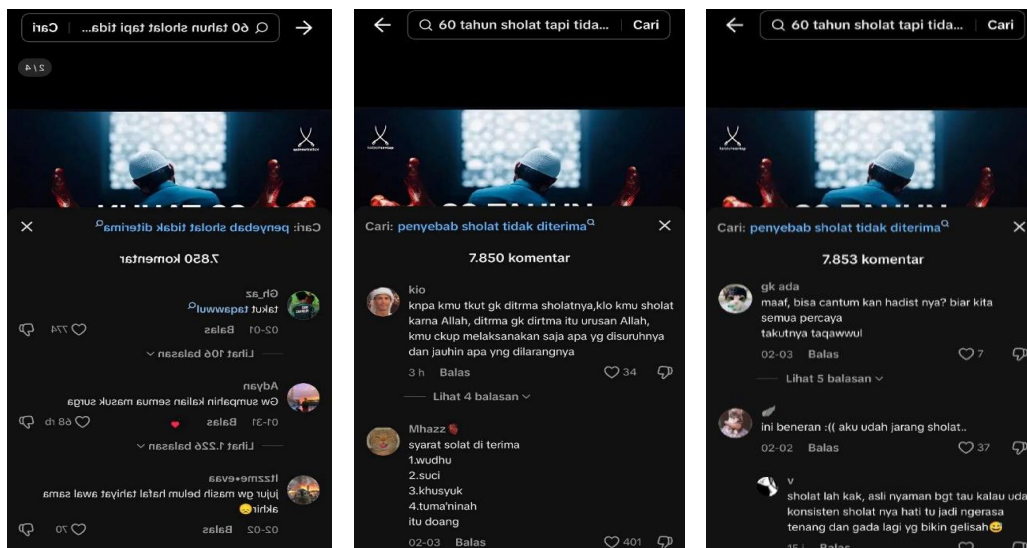

Figure 6. Comments on photo mode or slideshow poster of da'wah

The comments on this post reflect a variety of responses from users, ranging from requests for evidence in the form of religious texts or hadiths to make the information more credible and avoid mere scare tactics (taqawwul), to feelings of anxiety and guilt among those who rarely pray. On the other hand, there are also comments that provide motivation by emphasizing the benefits of prayer, such as inner peace and avoiding restlessness. In conclusion, when performing the prayer, the most important things are intention and obedience to Allah, as well as fulfilling the valid conditions of prayer, such as performing wudu, being in a state of purity, being focused, and being at peace. Some users remind us that whether the prayer is accepted or not is Allah's concern, while the human's duty is simply to perform the

worship as best as possible and avoid His prohibitions. Additionally, some users expressed concerns about performing prayer, such as not yet memorizing the recitations, which is part of the learning and worship process. Overall, this discussion shows how the post influences users' thoughts and feelings in various ways, whether through skepticism, introspection, or motivation to improve their worship.

An in-depth analysis of popular Islamic preaching videos on TikTok above proves that the success of digital preaching is not only determined by the substance of the religious message, but also heavily depends on the creativity of content packaging, maximum use of platform features, and emotional closeness to the audience. Here are some points obtained from the analysis results:

1. Adaptive and Creative Preaching Strategies

Successful preachers on TikTok generally adapt their delivery style to the characteristics of the younger generation. Casual language, visually appealing content, and short durations are key to ensuring that the preaching message remains relevant and easy for the audience to digest. A successful example can be seen in the style of Habib Ja'far, who conveys advice in a light yet meaningful way, creating emotional resonance among the younger audience.

2. The Role of Algorithms in Content Distribution

Findings indicate that TikTok's algorithm significantly influences the visibility of dakwah videos. Short, interactive videos that use popular hashtags are more likely to appear on the For You Page (FYP), increasing their potential for virality. This means that the success of dakwah is no longer solely about the message being conveyed, but also how the message is "packaged" to attract both the algorithm and the audience simultaneously.

3. Two-Way Interaction and Online Spiritual Communities

Comment and duet features enable the formation of digital communities that provide mutual spiritual support. Reflective comments indicate that religious content can spark introspection and personal conversations about faith, worship, and daily life. This interactivity transforms religious content from a one-way process into a two-way communication that reinforces religious messages.

4. Risk of Meaning Distortion Due to Overly Brief Content

One important finding is the potential for misunderstanding when dakwah messages are packaged too succinctly or dramatically without sufficient context. For example, in a dakwah slideshow about the quality of prayer, viral content can cause fear or misinterpretation if it is not accompanied by comprehensive explanations. This highlights the need for caution to ensure that dakwah does not lose its depth and accuracy in pursuit of virality.

5. Contribution to Contemporary Islamic Communication Theory

This study reinforces the theory that the effectiveness of dakwah greatly depends on the ability to adapt communication methods to the characteristics of the audience. Visual and emotional approaches have become forms of contemporary dakwah communication that are capable of shifting the old paradigm from one-way lectures to a more inclusive, responsive, and participatory approach.

Research by (Chandra, 2023) also shows that TikTok's algorithm plays an important role in disseminating digital content by tailoring recommendations based on user preferences. This is in line with the results of this study, which identifies how TikTok's algorithm enhances the effectiveness of digital da'wah through content personalization and increased audience interaction. Similarly, research by (Suwahyu, 2024) found that TikTok contributes significantly to the spread of Islamic preaching, especially since many users spend a lot of time on this platform. The study also shows that students are more interested in da'wah content that is short, gets straight to the point, and uses an engaging style. This supports the argument that TikTok's algorithm prioritizes short videos with high interaction rates, making them easier to go viral and reach a wider audience.

Furthermore, this study enriches our understanding of Islamic Communication theory, particularly in the context of digital da'wah. The finding that creative and interactive approaches are more appealing to the younger generation supports previous theories stating that the success of da'wah heavily depends on the da'wah practitioner's ability to adapt communication methods to the characteristics of the audience. By leveraging popular trends, visual effects, and familiar language, da'wah on social media can be more effective in reaching and influencing the audience.

However, this study also reveals challenges that were not fully addressed in previous theoretical reviews. TikTok's algorithm, which prioritizes engagement, may cause da'wah content to focus more on visual appeal than on the depth of its substance. This is an important concern that requires further examination to ensure that digital da'wah is not merely viral but also maintains its educational value and Islamic authenticity.

Thus, this study not only confirms existing theories but also provides new insights into how digital da'wah can be optimized in the face of modern social media algorithm challenges. The implications of this study can serve as a foundation for preachers and content creators to design more effective strategies for conveying Islamic messages in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the effectiveness of preaching on TikTok is influenced by the style of delivery, visual and audio elements, and audience interaction. A relaxed and interactive approach is more appealing than a formal style, while creative preaching is more easily accepted by the younger generation. The use of text, visual effects, and background music that are in line with current trends increases the appeal of the content, with videos that follow trends tending to get higher engagement. Videos that encourage discussion or provide solutions to religious issues attract more positive responses, supported by interactive features such as comments, duets, and stitches that expand the reach of da'wah. However, unclear or provocative delivery can also lead to misunderstandings. As found in (Hidayana, 2024), digital da'wah increases reach but presents ethical challenges in maintaining the authenticity of religious messages on entertainment-based social media. Further studies could explore more effective, relevant, and Islam-aligned digital da'wah strategies.

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