

Utilization of Social Media as a Digital Publication Strategy at Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT: *Social media is essential for introducing Islamic educational institutions to the broader community. The presence of social media is beneficial and provides benefits for Islamic educational institutions in the digital publication of the educational services offered. This study aims to describe the use of social media as an effort for digital publications carried out by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school Blitar City. This research uses a qualitative approach, and this type of research is descriptive. This study's data sources were Islamic boarding school caretakers, public relations schools, teaching boards, and administrative staff. This study used several data collection methods: participatory observation methods, in-depth interview methods, and documentation methods. The data analysis technique used is; data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The study's results stated that the types of social media users at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school included Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This research shows that YouTube is a social media often used as a digital publication. The purpose of using social media at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school is as a medium of communication, media for promotion, and media to build institutional brands. The real implication of using social media is that the wider community increasingly recognizes the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, the number of students is increasing yearly and has received broad public trust.*

Media social merupakan sarana penting untuk mengenalkan lembaga pendidikan Islam ke masyarakat luas. Kehadiran media social sangat membantu dan memberi keuntungan bagi lembaga pendidikan Islam dalam publikasi digital terhadap jasa pendidikan yang diselenggarakan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan menjelaskan secara mendalam tentang penggunaan media social sebagai usaha untuk publikasi digital yang dilakukan oleh pondok pesantren Nurul Ulum Kota Blitar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan jenis penelitian ini adalah deskriptif. Sumber data pada penelitian ini adalah pengasuh pondok pesantren, public relation pesantren, dewan pengajar, dan tenaga administratif. Penelitian ini menggunakan beberapa metode dalam mengumpulkan data, yaitu: metode observasi partisipatif, metode wawancara mendalam, dan metode dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah; reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menyebutkan bahwa jenis media social yang digunakan di pondok pesantren Nurul Ulum diantaranya adalah facebook, instagram, dan youtube. Tujuan dari penggunaan media social di pesantren Nurul Ulum

adalah sebagai media komunikasi, media promosi, dan media membangun brand lembaga. Implikasi nyata penggunaan media social adalah pesantren Nurul Ulum semakin dikenal oleh masyarakat luas, jumlah santri yang semakin bertambah setiap tahunnya, dan mendapat kepercayaan public secara luas.

Keywords: *Social Media, Islamic Boarding School, Islamic Educational Institutions.*

Received: February 11, 2023; Revised: May 22, 2023; Accepted: June 20, 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

The presence of social media in society has an exciting role, namely as a means of communication, publication tool, media promotion, and entertainment. Social media is also very popular with the public, especially among teenagers and adults. This is because social media has various features, so apart from being used for communication, it can also be used for business. Data shows that active social media users in Indonesia will reach 277.7 million people in 2022, consisting of children, youth and adults. This number increased by 12.35% compared to the previous year (Lubis, 2022). However, from data exposure, most social media users are used as business and entertainment media. This is the academic anxiety of researchers that social media, primarily used by the public as a venue for business and entertainment, should also be used to spread Islamic values, especially related to Islamic education (Ikhwan et al., 2020).

The use of social media is always connected to the development of electronic media. The discovery of new tools in the electronic world plays a significant role in people's lives in communicating and interacting. The era in which electronic media is the primary support for information and communication facilities is known as the digital era. The phenomenon of using social media is also supported by the existence of smartphones (hand phones) that are equipped with internet facilities that are connected to various existing social media services (Grover et al., 2022). If previously information was obtained through mass media such as newspapers, TV, radio and magazines, now different information can be obtained quickly via cell phones at any time. This is as stated by Duffett that social behaviour and how consumers think have conventionally been disseminated by media such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Still, in the twenty-first century, social media has begun to replace traditional media's enduring and influential role on consumers (Duffett, 2017). Social media that are popular and often used from childhood to adulthood are YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram (Siegel et al., 2023).

The general public uses social media channels such as YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram for business and entertainment purposes only. Still, some modern Islamic educational institutions have been used to publish educational activities and programs (Smith & Short, 2022);(Pretorius et al., 2022). This is what attracts researchers to explore in depth what types of social media are used for digital publications, the value of the benefits of digital magazines, and their implications for modern Islamic educational institutions.

The phenomenon of using social media in modern Islamic educational institutions is an exciting thing to study and research, and one is the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school Blitar City which has used and utilized social media as a digital publication. The use of social media at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school has long been implemented, considering that social media is an effective medium for conveying information to the public regarding the activities and programs being held. This is an object and an exciting research locus for researchers to dig deeper into the use of social media as an effort to digital publication at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school (Brown et al., 2015);(Widiastuti et al., 2022);(Ikhwan & Yuniana, 2022).

Research related to the use of social media was carried out by Dina Mizanie and Irwansyah, whose results stated that social media is an entry point to a larger audience through social media users share information and communicate even with people they don't know (Mizanie & Irwansyah, 2019). Another research conducted by Hasan Sazali and Ainun Sukriah, whose research results shows that social media can be used to publicize student activities and achievements, establish relationships with residents, and build a good image (Sazali & Sukriah, 2021). Wahyuni and Ernungtyas, in their research, stated that people prefer to communicate using social media managed by the school to provide information and obtain information (Wahyuni & Ernungtyas, 2020). the role of social media in institutional publications in this era is very beneficial. Amilia, in her research results, explained that in the world of education, social media is used in the context of news promotion and publication, and learning media attracts students and prospective students (Amilia et al., 2022). Nurmalasari and Masitoh also stated that social media-based educational marketing strategies could increase the interest of prospective students because they are more accessible to the public, parents of students, and even prospective students as objects of marketing strategies (Nurmalasari & Masitoh, 2020). Some of the previous research above served as the author's basis for researching the uses and benefits of social media. Still, the difference between this research and previous research is that it focuses more on the value and service of social media as a digital publication strategy in Islamic educational institutions, especially in Islamic boarding schools.

Theoretically, this research can contribute to utilizing social media as a digital publication effort so that Islamic educational institutions have a good reputation and are in demand by the wider community. Practically this research can be helpful for leaders of Islamic education institutions always to maximize the use of social media in introducing, marketing, sharing information, and publicizing institutions to the public. Practically this research also provides insight to all human resources in Islamic educational institutions to always master and use information and communication technology as an integral part that cannot be separated from the academic environment.

II. METHOD

This research is a type of field research with a qualitative approach, in which researchers explore and describe the efforts of Islamic educational institutions in utilizing social media as digital publication efforts. This research uses a qualitative descriptive design, where it explores in depth the steps to use social media to introduce it into the wider community. This research was conducted at the Nurul Ulum Islamic

boarding school Blitar City, located at Jalan Ciliwung No. 56, Blitar Kota, East Java, Indonesia.

The researcher collected data in the following steps: (1) Involved observation: researchers made observations about activities in the use of social media as an effort to digital publication at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school; (2) In-depth interviews: researchers conducted interviews with Islamic boarding school caretakers, public relations, teaching boards, and administrative staff; (3) Documentation: the data taken is from photos of activities, videos of all madrasah activities, activity agendas related to efforts to use social media as an effort to digital publication at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. The data analysis technique used in this research is the data analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman models (Muda, 2019), namely; (1) data reduction: sorting and focusing on essential things according to the data needed, (2) data presentation: reduced data is then presented in the form of narrative text, and (3) drawing conclusions or verification: data that has been reduced presented and then drawn a conclusion (Miles et al., 2014).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social Media Strategy as a Means of Digital Publication

Social media is a platform to support communication activities with the public. All Islamic educational institutions have utilized social media to connect directly with the community. Based on interviews, documentation, and observation, it is known that social media often used by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school are YouTube, Facebook, TikTok and Instagram.

YouTube

The administrators of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school have made various efforts to introduce and publicize the institutions they manage, one of which is to expand their marketing reach through YouTube media. It can be said that YouTube is a type of social media that offers online video hosting services that allow the leadership of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to share videos related to information on programs and activities held by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. Like other social media, YouTube enables people worldwide to interact, share and create video content through online community networks. As stated by Bolat, social media can be defined as platforms and technological channels that enable communication and exchange of data virtually between individuals or groups of individuals anywhere at any time (Bolat & O'Sullivan, 2017). Currently, internet access can be enjoyed in various regions, and YouTube itself is also increasingly accessible among its users. This is good news for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to publish various videos for the institution as a means of digital publication. Based on an interview with the manager that there are several benefits of YouTube for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school as a digital publication effort, including:

1. Providing information services for education consumers

Youtube provides a free service for the public to access videos uploaded by the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. This means that people only use their data quota or wifi network to access all information related to the programs and activities of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school in video form. The community also has easy access to information only through a smartphone connected to the

internet network. YouTube is a type of social media that can be used by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to build its market in the online world.

2. Introducing and marketing the institution

Public Relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school uses YouTube to introduce and promote the institution to the broader community. Publishing and marketing the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school through the online world is an effective way to attract the interest of educating consumers in an enormous scope. Shih-Chih Chen stated that social media marketing is defined as commercial marketing events or processes that use social media to positively influence consumers' purchase behaviour (Chen & Lin, 2019). In its position as a video container, Youtube can be an efficient marketing medium for educational marketing services. Videos uploaded on YouTube can also be a medium of communication with the broader community because one of YouTube's features is providing communication services between education consumers and the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school.

3. Strengthen the institution's brand image

Youtube can also be used to build the brand image of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, such as posting related to institutional profiles to expand publication and self-introduction to the broader community. The Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school also uploads videos about student programs and activities to the broader community to build a deep impression of educational services. The images that arise in the minds of the public regarding their perceptions of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, which were built through YouTube social media, are then referred to as brand images so that the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school utilize YouTube as a medium in strengthening the institution's brand image in the eyes of the public. Public at large.

Facebook

Facebook is also one of the social media that has a vital role in the digital publication process at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. This is motivated by the fact that many people use Facebook to seek information, communicate, and entertain. The public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school captured the opportunity to use Facebook as a digital publication, which later became an effective medium for introducing and publicizing educational institutions to the broader community. According to an interview with the director of Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, there are some of the benefits of Facebook for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school include:

1. Increasing the popularity of the institution

Facebook is a type of interactive social media used by the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to interact with the broader community anytime and anywhere freely. On Facebook, there are also like, comment and share features which are used by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to find out the public's response to posts that have been uploaded. The more and more often the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school uploads videos related to the institution's activity program, and the more public responses, the more well-known and popular the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school is in the public eye.

2. Increase the broad target of education consumers

Facebook is a type of social media that has a lot of users. Facebook user coverage covers all people in the world. With this significant number of users, Facebook has become one of the media for marketing education which is very profitable for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. The use of Facebook by the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school in introducing the institution has reached all regions of Indonesia and even abroad. By marketing education using Facebook, the scope or target of educational consumers at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school is getting wider.

Instagram

Instagram is a social media that focuses on sharing photos and videos. Public Relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school uses Instagram as a means of promotion which is considered adequate and efficient. Moreover, Instagram is equipped with new features useful for advertising and publication in institutions. Based on interviews, documentation, and observation, the following are the benefits of Instagram for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school:

1. Online media to introduce the institution to the wider community

Instagram is an online social media that operates digitally and can reach the wider community. The reach of publications on Instagram exceeds advertisements in mass media in terms of speed of time and recipient response. Using Instagram is relatively easy, enough for the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to be creative in making videos/photos uploaded and immediately viewable by the wider community.

2. Appropriate promotional media for the institution

Another benefit of Instagram for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school is to provide convenience for promotion. Some of the features available on Instagram are designed to promote business products, which can also be utilized by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to market educational services to the public. The correlation between Instagram social media and the education services business is to market educational services, even more than that as a strengthening of the brand image of the community's Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. This shows the power of social media as a source of information and inspiration for marketing planning. From a marketing perspective, research findings point to Instagram influencer marketing as an effective branding strategy (Jin et al., 2019).

TikTok

TikTok is a social networking application that is quite popular in Indonesian society. TikTok is also a music video platform where users can create and share videos accompanied by music as support. TikTok is not only used as a means of entertainment but also as a media publication in Islamic educational institutions. The Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school utilizes TikTok as a digital publication media to increase public appeal. There are several benefits of TikTok for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, including:

1. Reach more viewers, especially teenagers

Creative and unique video content uploaded to the TikTok application will attract viewers' attention, especially teenagers. Public Relations of Nurul Ulum boarding school believes that digital publication through the TikTok platform significantly impacts the appeal of the broader community because TikTok facilitates video content

that invites visual and audio reactions for viewers. TikTok users will easily capture video messages conveyed through visuals and audio.

2. Keeping the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school relevant to the progress of the times

TikTok is a social media that is in great demand. TikTok users can explore various short video content uploaded to the TikTok application. TikTok can make the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school in Blitar City famous if the videos uploaded on the TikTok application have many likes and comments. Of course, the requirements for video content to become viral are if the video content is unique, interesting, frequently seen by users, and many like it.

3. Save on publication costs

TikTok is a digital publishing platform with a low cost so that the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School can save expenses related to educational marketing. TikTok also allows the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to be known by the public with a broad reach without significant costs. Information conveyed through the TikTok application will spread quickly in a short time but with ample space.

The Purpose of Using Social Media

There are three purposes for using social media as a digital publication effort, namely as a communication function, promotion function, and media for building institutional brands.

Communication Function

Scholarly communication conveys information through messages, ideas, and ideas from the institution to the community. The purpose of scholarly communication is to provide information to the public so that it can influence thoughts, attitudes, and actions to better understand Islamic educational institutions' existence. The communication functions for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school include:

1. Convey information

The information available at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, such as profiles, activity programs, institutional data, and valuable information for the community, is conveyed to the public through social media. Raj Agnihotri said that using social media in community interaction is a logical development for organizations to expand communication with society (Agnihotri et al., 2016). The use of social media aims to make the wider community know the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school entirely and in-depth without having to come directly to the institution's location.

2. Educational function

The task of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, apart from carrying out education for students within the institution's scope, must also educate the wider community. Educating the public through social media can be carried out directly and indirectly. Direct activities at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, such as workshops, religious lectures, seminars and training, are done online through social media. Indirect activities at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school are carried out by uploading videos of Islamic religious lectures, motivational videos, research results, and scientific articles uploaded via social media.

3. Persuasive function

The hope of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school in utilizing social media is that people believe and understand the things that exist and are carried out by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. In simple terms, the function of social media is to influence and convince the public that the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school is the best place to be trusted to educate the community's children. Social media has a role in influencing and convincing consumer behaviour in virtual environments (Ioană & Stoica, 2014). The implication and persuasive function of social media is that the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school is not empty of enthusiasts, and there tends to be an increase in the number of santri registrants yearly.

Promotion media

In running an educational organization at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, promotion through social media is essential. Currently, almost everyone can access social media through their smartphone. Therefore promotion through social media is a must for educational institutions. Based on the results of the interviews and observations that there are several benefits of promotion on social media for the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, including:

1. Attract new consumers

The Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school has increased the upload of information via social media, and this aims to expand opportunities for the public to get to know the educational services offered. Using various types of social media for promotion will provide opportunities for the entry of education consumers from multiple circles. Of course, using different types of social media also maximizes the features of each type of social media.

2. Influence public interest

Promotion is one of the efforts of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to increase public understanding and influence them to use the educational services offered. Through promotion, the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school tries to attract the public's interest and convince them that the educational services offered are better than others. Rutter stated that social media marketing efforts influence consumer behaviour (Rutter et al., 2016). The results of interviews with public relations and some teachers that the steps to exploit public interest carried out by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school through promotion on social media are:

- a. Content uploaded on social media can create a deep impression on those who see it.
- b. Creating content on social media that is different, unique and attractive.
- c. Content also develops a sense of curiosity in the community.
- d. The content uploaded is by the actual conditions at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school.

Building an Institutional Brand

Social media branding is something that Islamic educational institutions must do. Branding is an essential factor that differentiates educational services from other institutions in the minds of the public and makes them more preferred by consumers (BiLgiN, 2018). Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are a forum for the public relations of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to show their name and existence to the broader community. The purpose of building the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School is to ensure that the wider community has a positive

perception of the education services offered. Based on an interview with the manager of Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, to create a brand of superior Islamic educational institutions that are known by the public through social media, there are three things that are considered by the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school:

1. The identity of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school

For the brand of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school to become known to the public, an in-depth analysis is needed regarding the inherent identity of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, for example, infrastructure, curriculum, human resources, financing, graduates, etc.

2. Target community

Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school also understands and knows the community that is the target of efforts to build an institutional brand. Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School also knows how the community responds and responds to the existence of educational services from their point of view so that it can become material for continuous improvement in the quality of education.

3. Created content

The content created by the public relations section of the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school is exciting, makes the community memorable and is by the actual conditions of the institution. Content is still king because good content can at least help attract consumers to engage (Hou, 2017). Content is created and uploaded regularly so that people know and are familiar with the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. In the early stages, the content focused on quantity and, over time, focused on quality.

Implications of Using Social Media

According to the results of interviews with the manager and public relations, there are three real implications of the use of social media as a digital publication effort that can be seen at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school, which is increasingly known to the broader community, the number of students is increasing every year, and gaining public trust widely.

1. Increasingly known by the wider community

The Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school utilizes social media to be known by the wider community, whose goal is to reach the Blitar area and all parts of Indonesia. Social media effectively introduces Islamic boarding schools to the broader community because anyone can access it anywhere and anytime. Social media has unique and powerful features, efficiently facilitating connections to others (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016).

2. The number of students is increasing every year

The Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding School can utilize social media to offer educational services to the broader community. The purpose of this marketing is so that the community always demands the institution. The manifestation of the high public interest in educational services at the Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding School is the increasing number of applicants for prospective students each year.

3. Gain public trust

Social media is essential for building public trust in educational services at Nurul Ulum Islamic boarding school. The general public will receive sufficient information regarding profiles, infrastructure, resources, activity programs, tuition fees, student achievements, and the advantages of the Nurul Ulum Islamic Boarding School. All

information posted via social media will add to its appeal in the eyes of the public so that it has the potential to be trusted by the community as the best education for their children.

The author tries to make the research map by the explanation in the research findings above, as follows:

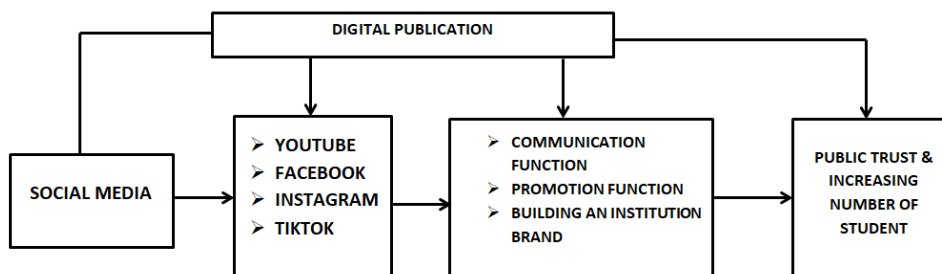


Chart 1. Research framework

IV. CONCLUSION

Islamic educational institutions use and utilize social media for digital publication. The types of social media used include Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The use of social media is considered adequate because many people use the media in their daily lives as a means of accessing information or entertainment. The purpose of using social media is as a communication medium which provides information to the public about Islamic educational institutions and promotional media to attract public interest and convince them that educational services are offered better than other educational services. The media builds institutional brands so that the community positively perceives educational services in Islamic educational institutions. The real implication of the use of social media is that the wider community increasingly recognizes Islamic educational institutions; the number of Islamic educational institutions is increasing every year, as evidenced by the increasing graph of the number of enthusiasts, and Islamic educational institutions, have received broad public trust as one of the Islamic educational institutions that instil Muslim values.

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