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SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY DAKWAH DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Islamic values in contemporary da'wah discourse on social media through a semantic approach using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework. The digital era has fundamentally transformed the landscape of da'wah communication, where social media platforms have become primary spaces for disseminating Islamic messages. This research aims to identify and describe the meanings of Islamic values constructed in digital da'wah content and analyze the semantic strategies employed in delivering da'wah messages. The study employs a qualitative approach with semantic analysis as the main framework. Data were obtained from 50 da'wah content pieces on Instagram and Facebook platforms during the 2025-2026 period, selected through purposive sampling. Findings reveal that Islamic values in contemporary da'wah discourse are represented through four dominant patterns: (1) modern religiosity emphasizing visual aesthetics and simplicity, (2) social ethics highlighting humanitarian responsibility, (3) religious organizational identity with reformist orientation, and (4) akhlaq (moral character) as the fundamental foundation of da'wah. These findings indicate that social media functions as a dynamic and adaptive space for constructing Islamic meaning in response to contemporary developments. The research contributes to digital da'wah studies by providing a semantic framework for analyzing religious discourse in digital environments and offers practical recommendations for da'wah practitioners in optimizing social media for Islamic communication.

Keywords: Semantic Analysis, Digital Da'wah, Social Media, Islamic Values, Contemporary Discourse, Roland Barthes

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed communication patterns, information dissemination, and religious practices across societies. The widespread use of social media has created new opportunities for religious communication, enabling individuals and organizations to engage with broader audiences beyond geographical and temporal limitations. In Indonesia, one of the countries with the highest social media penetration rates globally, platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become important channels for accessing, sharing, and discussing religious content. This phenomenon has contributed to the emergence of digital da'wah as a prominent form of contemporary Islamic communication.

Traditionally, da'wah has been conducted through face-to-face interactions in mosques, religious gatherings, educational institutions, and community settings. However, the digital transformation of communication technologies has shifted da'wah practices toward virtual spaces characterized by interactivity, accessibility, and multimodal communication. Social media platforms enable Islamic preachers, organizations, and content creators to disseminate religious messages through various formats, including short videos, infographics, memes, visual quotations, podcasts, and live-streaming sessions. As a result, da'wah is no longer confined to conventional settings but has become an integral part of everyday digital experiences.

The increasing popularity of digital da'wah has altered not only the modes of religious communication but also the ways Islamic values are represented and interpreted. Contemporary da'wah content frequently integrates visual aesthetics, emotional narratives, and popular cultural references to engage digital audiences, particularly younger generations. Islamic teachings are often presented through concise messages, motivational language, and visually appealing designs that align with the communication preferences of social media users. While these strategies enhance accessibility and audience engagement, they also raise important questions regarding the construction, interpretation, and negotiation of Islamic meanings in digital environments.

Social media platforms are not merely neutral channels for information dissemination but active spaces where meanings are continuously produced, circulated, and contested. In the context of religion, digital platforms facilitate the formation of virtual religious communities, the negotiation of religious authority, and the performance of religious identities (Campbell, 2012). Consequently, Islamic values communicated through social media are shaped not only by religious texts but also by platform characteristics, audience interactions, and digital culture.

Islamic values constitute the fundamental principles that guide Muslim beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. These values encompass theological dimensions such as tawhid (the oneness of God), moral dimensions such as akhlaq (moral character) and ihsan (excellence), as well as social dimensions including ukhuwah (brotherhood), justice, compassion, and social responsibility. Although these values are rooted in the Quran and the Sunnah, their representations and interpretations may vary according to social and cultural contexts. In digital environments, Islamic values are increasingly communicated through visual symbols, hashtags, narratives, and interactive features that shape how audiences understand and internalize religious messages.

Understanding how Islamic values are represented in digital da'wah requires an analytical approach that goes beyond literal meanings. From a semantic perspective, meaning is not inherent in signs but is produced through complex interactions between language, culture, and social contexts (Chaer, 2018). Digital communication environments intensify this process by combining textual, visual, and audiovisual elements that work together to construct meaning. Therefore, the analysis of digital da'wah should consider not only what messages are explicitly communicated but also how meanings are implicitly constructed through signs and symbols.

Roland Barthes' semiotic framework provides a relevant theoretical perspective for examining the multilayered meanings embedded in digital religious discourse. According to Barthes (2015), meaning operates through three interconnected levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotation refers to the literal and explicit meaning of a sign. Connotation involves cultural, emotional, and associative meanings that emerge from social contexts. Myth represents broader ideological narratives that naturalize particular meanings and make them appear universal or self-evident. This framework is particularly suitable for analyzing social media content because digital communication relies heavily on visual symbolism, cultural references, and multimodal interactions.

Previous studies have examined digital da'wah from various perspectives. Ulya (2024) investigated da'wah messages in Islamic memes on Instagram and found that visual humor and popular culture effectively communicate religious values to younger audiences. Andreawan (2025) analyzed the construction of life meanings in digital da'wah memes and identified themes related to afterlife orientation, spiritual awareness, and moral reflection. Hadi (2025) explored semiotic representations of da'wah messages targeting Generation Z audiences and demonstrated that contemporary religious communication increasingly incorporates digital trends and popular cultural elements. Furthermore, Hadi and Sumarlan (2026) identified four dominant patterns in Instagram-based da'wah content: modern religiosity, civic ethics, organizational identity, and digital da'wah as an informal learning medium. Syahrul and Armando (2023) also emphasized that digital platforms facilitate the dissemination of moderate Islamic values and encourage more inclusive forms of religious communication.

Despite these contributions, previous studies have primarily focused on communication strategies, audience engagement, or general semiotic interpretations of digital da'wah. Limited attention has been given to the semantic construction of Islamic values through Barthes' three levels of signification, particularly in relation to the interaction between textual and visual elements in social

media content. In addition, existing research has rarely examined how Islamic values are ideologically constructed and naturalized through digital communication practices.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the semantic construction of Islamic values in contemporary da'wah discourse on social media using Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on signs or communication effects, this research investigates how meanings are produced, negotiated, and institutionalized within digital religious content.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How are Islamic values represented in contemporary da'wah discourse on social media? (2) How do denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings operate within digital da'wah content? (3) What semantic strategies are employed by content creators to communicate Islamic values effectively in digital environments?

Accordingly, this research aims to identify and analyze the representations of Islamic values in digital da'wah content, examine the semantic processes through which meanings are constructed, and explore the dominant strategies used to communicate religious messages on social media platforms.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of interdisciplinary scholarship in semantics, Islamic studies, and digital communication. Methodologically, this research demonstrates the applicability of Barthes' framework for analyzing multimodal religious discourse in digital environments. Practically, the findings may provide valuable insights for Islamic organizations, da'wah practitioners, and digital content creators in developing effective communication strategies that remain faithful to the essential teachings of Islam while responding to the characteristics of contemporary digital culture.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach using Roland Barthes' semantic framework as the primary analytical perspective. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of the meanings and values embedded in contemporary da'wah discourse on social media (Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2018). This approach is particularly appropriate for examining the complex and context-dependent meanings constructed through digital religious communication.

The study focused on the analysis of digital da'wah content published on Instagram and Facebook between January 2025 and June 2026. These platforms were selected due to their popularity as digital da'wah media, their diverse content formats, and their significant role in shaping contemporary religious communication. Instagram is widely used for visual-based religious content, while Facebook facilitates longer textual discussions and community interactions.

The research data consisted of 50 da'wah content pieces selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included: (1) content explicitly related to Islamic values and da'wah; (2) content containing textual and visual elements with significant semantic meaning; (3) content produced by da'wah content creators or Islamic organizations; (4) content demonstrating substantial audience engagement, indicated by likes, comments, and shares; and (5) content presented in various formats, including visual quotations, short videos, infographics, memes, and long-form textual posts.

The selected content comprised 32 posts from Instagram and 18 posts from Facebook. Based on content format, the sample included 15 visual quotations with Islamic calligraphy, 12 short videos, 10 infographics or carousel posts, 8 memes, and 5 long-form textual posts. Regarding content creators, 28 posts originated from individual content creators, 16 from organizational accounts, and 6 from community-based accounts.

Data were collected through digital documentation, observation, and metadata recording. Digital documentation involved capturing and archiving selected content through screenshots, image downloads, video recordings, and transcript preparation. Observation was conducted to identify contextual information related to content presentation, audience engagement patterns, and platform-specific characteristics. Metadata recording included information regarding publication date, content format, creator type, platform, hashtags, and interaction metrics.

The data collection process consisted of several stages. First, relevant content was identified through systematic searches using hashtags such as #dakwah, #islam, #rahmatanlilalamin, and #dakwahdigital, as well as by following established da'wah accounts. Second, the identified content was screened according to the predetermined inclusion criteria. Third, selected content was downloaded, documented, and organized systematically. Finally, metadata and contextual information were recorded to support the analytical process.

Data analysis employed Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth. Denotative analysis focused on identifying the literal meanings of textual and visual signs contained in digital da'wah content. Connotative analysis examined the cultural, emotional, and associative meanings attached to these signs within contemporary digital contexts. Myth analysis explored the broader ideological narratives and social values embedded in the representations of Islamic teachings.

The analytical process followed three stages of qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Creswell, 2018). Data reduction involved selecting and organizing relevant content based on research objectives. Data display was conducted through tables and thematic categorizations to facilitate interpretation. Conclusion drawing involved identifying patterns, relationships, and dominant representations of Islamic values across the dataset.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, this study employed source triangulation, method triangulation, peer debriefing, and audit trail documentation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing content across different platforms and creator categories. Method triangulation involved comparing analytical findings with existing literature and theoretical perspectives. Peer debriefing was carried out through discussions with scholars familiar with semiotic analysis and Islamic communication studies. An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process by documenting all analytical decisions, coding procedures, and interpretive notes.

This study also adhered to ethical standards for digital research. All analyzed content was publicly accessible and used solely for academic purposes. The research respected the intellectual property rights of content creators, ensured the confidentiality of personal information when necessary, and avoided the commercial use of research data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed 50 pieces of da'wah content published on Instagram and Facebook between January 2025 and June 2026 using Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis reveals that Islamic values in contemporary digital da'wah are represented through four dominant patterns: modern religiosity, social ethics and humanitarian responsibility, religious organizational identity, and akhlaq as the foundation of da'wah. These patterns demonstrate that social media has evolved beyond its function as a communication channel and has become an important arena for the construction and negotiation of religious meanings.

Table 1. Distribution of Content Themes

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Spiritual Motivation	18	36%
Social Ethics	12	24%
Islamic Identity	10	20%
Moral Character (Akhlaq)	7	14%
Educational Content	3	6%
Total	50	100%

The distribution of themes indicates that contemporary digital da'wah primarily emphasizes personal spirituality and emotional well-being. Spiritual motivation constitutes the largest proportion of the content analyzed (36%), followed by social ethics (24%) and Islamic identity (20%). The relatively limited proportion of educational content (6%) suggests that social media users are more frequently exposed to concise, emotionally engaging messages than to in-depth theological discussions.

Table 2. Distribution of Content Formats

Format	Frequency	Percentage
Visual Quotations	15	30%
Short Videos	12	24%
Infographics/Carousels	10	20%
Memes	8	16%
Long-form Text	5	10%
Total	50	100%

The predominance of visual quotations and short videos reflects the communication logic of social media platforms, which prioritize brevity, visual appeal, and shareability. The findings indicate that digital da'wah increasingly relies on multimodal communication strategies that combine textual, visual, and symbolic elements to enhance audience engagement.

Modern Religiosity

The representation of modern religiosity emerged as the most prominent pattern in the analyzed content. At the denotative level, digital da'wah frequently employs minimalist visual designs, soft color palettes, contemporary typography, and concise motivational language. The content often incorporates Islamic symbols such as calligraphy, mosque silhouettes, prayer beads, and Quranic verses presented in aesthetically appealing formats.

Expressions such as "find peace in remembrance," "gratitude brings blessings," and "return to Allah when life feels overwhelming" appear consistently across different platforms. These messages are commonly accompanied by visuals depicting serene landscapes, individuals engaged in prayer, or symbolic representations of spiritual reflection.

At the connotative level, these elements construct an understanding of Islam as a source of emotional well-being, inner peace, and psychological resilience. Religious practices such as prayer, dhikr, and gratitude are associated with self-improvement and mental health. The use of contemporary visual aesthetics reinforces the perception that Islamic teachings remain relevant to modern lifestyles and digital culture.

At the mythological level, digital da'wah constructs the belief that spiritual fulfillment can be achieved through simple and consistent religious practices. Islam is represented as a practical framework capable of addressing contemporary concerns such as anxiety, loneliness, and the search for meaning. This representation challenges the perception that religious commitment is incompatible with modernity and instead positions Islam as a source of balance in an increasingly complex digital society.

These findings support Campbell's (2012) concept of digital religion, which argues that religious meanings are increasingly shaped through interactions within digital environments.

Social Ethics and Humanitarian Responsibility

The second dominant representation pattern emphasizes social responsibility, compassion, and humanitarian engagement. Content within this category highlights themes such as charity, environmental awareness, social solidarity, and community service.

Denotatively, the analyzed content depicts acts of generosity through images of food distribution, donation campaigns, volunteer activities, and messages encouraging social participation. Frequently used expressions include "the best people are those who benefit others," "your smile is charity," and "small acts create meaningful change."

At the connotative level, these messages position Islamic teachings as inherently connected to social welfare and collective responsibility. Religious devotion is represented not merely as an individual obligation but as a commitment to improving the well-being of society. Concepts such as ukhuwah, justice, and rahmatan lil 'alamin are linked to contemporary social concerns, including poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and humanitarian action.

At the mythological level, the content constructs the belief that authentic religiosity is reflected in one's contribution to society. Social engagement becomes a marker of spiritual maturity,

while generosity and compassion are framed as essential expressions of faith. This representation reinforces the understanding that religious values must be manifested through concrete social action.

The findings align with previous studies emphasizing the increasing prominence of civic ethics and humanitarian values within digital da'wah discourse (Hadi & Sumarlan, 2026; Syahrul & Armando, 2023).

Religious Organizational Identity

Digital platforms are also utilized by Islamic organizations to strengthen institutional identity and promote specific religious orientations. Content produced by organizational accounts frequently incorporates logos, slogans, visual branding, and hashtags that distinguish their perspectives from other actors in the digital religious sphere.

Terms such as "moderate Islam," "progressive Islam," "ijtihad," and "wasatiyah" appear regularly in organizational content. These concepts are often presented through infographics, educational videos, and statements from religious leaders.

At the denotative level, organizational symbols function as markers of institutional affiliation and authority. Connotatively, they signify credibility, legitimacy, and commitment to contextualized interpretations of Islamic teachings.

At the mythological level, organizational content constructs the narrative that moderate and progressive interpretations represent authentic and socially relevant forms of Islam. Social media becomes a strategic space through which organizations negotiate religious authority and strengthen their influence among digital audiences.

The findings corroborate Bunt's (2018) argument that digital platforms reshape traditional patterns of religious authority by enabling organizations to communicate directly with wider communities without relying exclusively on conventional religious institutions.

Akhlaq as the Foundation of Da'wah

The analysis indicates that moral values constitute a central component of contemporary digital da'wah. Themes related to honesty, patience, gratitude, humility, forgiveness, and respectful communication appear consistently across all categories of content.

The denotative dimension of the content emphasizes practical examples of ethical conduct in everyday life, including family interactions, workplace relationships, and online communication. Messages such as "speak kindly or remain silent," "patience is strength," and "forgiveness brings peace" are commonly presented through simple visual illustrations and relatable narratives.

At the connotative level, moral behavior is associated with authentic religiosity. Ethical conduct is represented as the most visible manifestation of Islamic commitment and an essential aspect of personal development.

At the mythological level, the content constructs the understanding that genuine faith is reflected primarily through character rather than external symbols of religiosity. Personal moral transformation is portrayed as the foundation for broader social harmony and collective well-being.

This finding reinforces the prophetic tradition that positions noble character as the essence of Islamic teachings and the primary objective of da'wah.

Semantic Strategies in Digital Da'wah

The analysis identified several semantic strategies employed by content creators to communicate Islamic values effectively in digital environments. The first strategy involves the simplification of complex religious concepts into concise and accessible language. Theological terms are translated into practical messages that resonate with everyday experiences. The second strategy is emotional framing. Content creators frequently employ language associated with hope, peace, gratitude, and happiness to establish emotional connections with audiences. The third strategy involves the integration of visual and textual elements. Images, colors, typography, and captions function synergistically to reinforce the intended meanings of religious messages. The fourth strategy is intertextuality, whereby Quranic verses, hadith, motivational quotations, and contemporary issues are combined within a single piece of content. This approach enhances the relevance of Islamic teachings to current social realities.

The use of hashtags such as #DakwahDigital, #Hijrah, #IslamRahmatanLilAlamin, and #MuslimLife functions not only as a categorization tool but also as a semantic marker that facilitates identity formation and community building. Narrative storytelling also plays an important role in translating abstract religious concepts into relatable experiences. Personal stories and everyday situations enable audiences to connect Islamic teachings with their own lives.

Relevance of Islamic Values to Contemporary Context

The findings demonstrate that digital da'wah effectively contextualizes Islamic values within contemporary social realities without fundamentally altering their theological foundations. Issues such as mental health, social justice, environmental sustainability, family relationships, and digital ethics are integrated into religious messages, illustrating the adaptability of Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, the adaptation of Islamic values to social media environments presents several challenges. The brevity and algorithm-driven nature of digital platforms may encourage the oversimplification of complex theological concepts and prioritize engagement metrics over substantive discussion.

Despite these limitations, social media offers significant opportunities for expanding access to Islamic knowledge, strengthening digital religious literacy, and fostering virtual religious communities. The findings indicate that contemporary digital da'wah is not merely a process of transmitting information but a dynamic process of meaning construction in which Islamic values are continuously interpreted, negotiated, and contextualized. The integration of traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary communication strategies demonstrates the capacity of Islam to remain relevant and meaningful within rapidly changing digital environments.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that contemporary da'wah discourse on social media functions not merely as a medium for disseminating religious messages but as a dynamic space for constructing and negotiating Islamic meanings. Through Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth, the findings reveal that Islamic values are represented through four dominant patterns: modern religiosity, social ethics and humanitarian responsibility, religious organizational identity, and akhlaq as the foundation of da'wah.

The representation of modern religiosity indicates a significant adaptation of Islamic messages to the communicative characteristics of digital platforms. At the denotative level, da'wah content utilizes minimalist visual aesthetics, motivational language, and emotionally engaging narratives. Connotatively, these elements associate Islam with peace, happiness, and personal well-being. At the mythological level, digital da'wah constructs the belief that religious practice offers effective solutions to contemporary challenges, including stress, anxiety, and the search for meaning in modern life. This finding is consistent with Campbell's (2012) concept of digital religion, which emphasizes that religious meanings are increasingly shaped by interactions within digital environments. The prominence of social ethics and humanitarian responsibility reflects a shift from individual-centered piety toward socially engaged religiosity. Content emphasizing charity, compassion, justice, and community service positions Islam as a religion that promotes collective well-being and social solidarity. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that digital da'wah increasingly incorporates themes of civic responsibility and humanitarian values (Syahrul & Armando, 2023; Hadi & Sumarlan, 2026). The myth constructed through these representations reinforces the idea that spiritual fulfillment is inseparable from social contribution. The findings also reveal that religious organizations strategically employ social media to strengthen their institutional identities and promote moderate Islamic perspectives. Through visual symbols, organizational branding, and narratives emphasizing tolerance and reform, digital da'wah content constructs an image of Islam that is rational, inclusive, and responsive to contemporary issues. This supports Bunt's (2018) argument that digital platforms have transformed traditional patterns of religious authority by creating new opportunities for organizations to engage with broader audiences.

Furthermore, akhlaq emerges as a central component of digital da'wah discourse. The emphasis on honesty, patience, gratitude, forgiveness, and respectful communication demonstrates that moral character is positioned as the primary indicator of religiosity. The findings suggest that digital da'wah prioritizes practical ethical guidance that resonates with everyday experiences. This

representation reinforces the prophetic principle that the perfection of faith is reflected in noble character.The semantic strategies identified in this study—including simplification of religious concepts, emotional framing, visual-textual integration, intertextuality, hashtag utilization, and narrative storytelling—illustrate how digital content creators adapt Islamic teachings to contemporary communication practices. These strategies enhance accessibility and audience engagement while maintaining the essential values of Islamic teachings.

However, the adaptation of religious messages to digital environments also presents challenges. The brevity and algorithm-driven nature of social media may encourage oversimplification of complex theological concepts and prioritize content popularity over scholarly depth. Therefore, content creators and Islamic organizations must balance accessibility with theological accuracy to ensure that digital da'wah remains both engaging and authentic. Overall, the findings confirm that social media has become a significant arena for the production, dissemination, and negotiation of Islamic meanings. The integration of traditional Islamic values with contemporary communication strategies demonstrates the capacity of Islam to remain relevant in rapidly changing digital contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the semantic construction of Islamic values in contemporary da'wah discourse on social media using Roland Barthes' framework of denotation, connotation, and myth. The findings reveal that Islamic values are represented through four dominant patterns: modern religiosity, social ethics and humanitarian responsibility, religious organizational identity, and akhlaq as the foundation of da'wah. These patterns demonstrate that contemporary digital da'wah extends beyond the transmission of religious information and actively participates in the construction of religious meanings within digital environments. At the denotative level, digital da'wah content communicates Islamic teachings through accessible language, visual aesthetics, and interactive formats. At the connotative level, Islamic values are associated with emotional well-being, social responsibility, inclusivity, and moral excellence. At the mythological level, broader ideological narratives position Islam as a compassionate, adaptive, and socially relevant religion capable of addressing contemporary challenges.

The study also identifies several semantic strategies employed in digital da'wah, including simplification of religious concepts, emotional framing, visual-textual integration, intertextuality, hashtag utilization, and narrative storytelling. These strategies enable content creators to engage digital audiences effectively while preserving the essential substance of Islamic teachings. Despite concerns regarding oversimplification and the influence of engagement-oriented algorithms, social media offers significant opportunities for expanding access to Islamic knowledge, strengthening digital religious literacy, and fostering meaningful religious engagement. This research contributes to the advancement of interdisciplinary scholarship in semantics, Islamic studies, and digital communication by providing a comprehensive framework for understanding how Islamic values are represented and negotiated in contemporary digital spaces. Future studies are encouraged to investigate audience reception, compare multiple social media platforms, and explore cross-cultural variations in digital da'wah discourse to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving relationship between religion and digital media.

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