Engaging Generation Z: Marketing Innovations in Islamic Boarding Schools for Sustainability

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the strategy of Islamic boarding schools in marketing education amidst the onslaught of educational competition that utilizes digital technology by non-Islamic boarding school educational institutions and to find the unique marketing values of Islamic boarding schools that have made them survive until now. The approach used is qualitative with a case study type. Data collection is done through interviews, observations, and documentation. The analysis uses three interactive models: reduction, presentation, data depiction, and conclusion. The study results show that educational marketing is done by dominating social media, sharing information, activities, and achievements, and holding online registration. In addition, digital marketing is also carried out by managing websites and social media. These findings indicate that implementing a curriculum that focuses on students' competence can be a model of adaptation for other Islamic boarding schools and influence educational marketing trends by directing strategies toward digital, increasing competitiveness, and preparing students to face future challenges. This Islamic boarding school also carries out digital content relevance in the form of graphic design training activities, applications, and creative videos and films.

Keywords: *Educational Marketing, Digital Technology, Social Media, Competitiveness of Pesantren*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang strategi pesantren dalam melakukan pemasaran pendidikan di tengah gempuran kompetisi pendidikan yang memanfaatkan teknologi digital oleh lembaga pendidikan non pesantren serta untuk menemukan nilai-nilai marketing khas pesantren yang membuatnya survive hingga kini. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Pengumpulan datanya dengan wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Analisisnya menggunakan interaktif tiga model, yaitu: reduksi, penyajian, penggambaran data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitiannya menunjukkan bahwa pemasaran pendidikan dilakukan dengan cara mendominasi media sosial, tidak hanya dalam share informasi, kegiatan dan prestasi tapi juga menggelar pendaftaran online. Selain itu, melakukan marketing digital juga dilakukan, bentuknya yaitu mengelola website dan media sosial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan kurikulum yang berfokus pada kompetensi santri dapat menjadi model adaptasi bagi pesantren lain dan mempengaruhi tren pemasaran pendidikan dengan mengarahkan strategi ke arah digital, meningkatkan daya saing, dan mempersiapkan santri menghadapi tantangan masa depan. Pesantren ini juga

melakukan relevansi konten digital berupa kegiatan pelatihan desain grafis, aplikasi dan pembuatan video kreatif dan film.

Kata Kunci: *Pemasaran Pendidikan, Teknologi Digital, Media Sosial, Daya Saing Pesantren*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has pesantren, which are indigenous educational institutions currently faced with the era of society 5.0, demanding the resilience of pesantren and their readiness to utilise technology to survive with their traditions of maintaining Islamic law and moral education. With the existence of pesantren, the hope is that they will remain in demand by millennials, who want to be free and accepted in a comprehensive environment without limits. Hence, marketing pesantren education is necessary to adage 'change or extinction' in excellent service. Pesantren in Indonesia is an educational institution currently competing in marketing education as a service it manages (Wahab et al., 2022; Ibadiyah et al., 2022). The digital era is also utilised by pesantren to promote education, achievements, and their contribution to educating the nation. One of the ways taken is to use inbound marketing as done by Pesantren Nurul Jadid Probolinggo, namely the publication of creating activity content on social media so that it is easier to build good communication with the community.

Marketing education is necessary for pesantren regardless of their typology because the existence of pesantren is currently at stake as the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia with its educational values based on the yellow classical books (kitab kuning) (Fakhrurrazi & Sebgag, 2020) that shape his characteristics, including high solidarity and independence. (Mundir & Nawiro, 2019), Of course, with good marketing management and time, the resilience of pesantren is not only determined by the length of time the pesantren has been established but also its managerial skills, especially in the field of service marketing (Fauziyatul Iffah, 2019). As a religious-based educational institution, Pesantren faces challenges in maintaining relevance and sustainability amid increasingly fierce educational competition. Education marketing plays a vital role in reaching out to prospective students and their parents and building the image of pesantren as quality and trusted educational institutions.

In its development, education marketing in pesantren is also carried out using spiritual marketing, as is done by the 98-year-old Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor, which does not conduct promotions in the media but instead functions alums as brand ambassadors who are very significant in contributing to its input. (Fahamsyah, 2020). This should have been very well understood by the leaders and managers of the pesantren, because in essence, the success of an educational institution, one of the measures that the community can see is its alumni, apart from the fact that alums are the ambassadors of the pesantren for the community.

Strategies are certainly needed in the competitive promotion of pesantren in the portrait as an educational institution that is currently starting to attract many people because of its success in maintaining a parenting pattern that embodies

good characteristics (Mundiri et al., 2022; Roqib, 2021), humanist education, pluralism, a scientific tradition in studying the Qur'an with specific methods that strengthen the understanding of the Qur'an and independence as well as the transformation of its educational institutions that can compete with non-pesantren educational institutions (Soebahar, 2021). Madrasahs, as one of the educational institutions managed by pesantren, must be able to gain the sympathy of the millennial generation, which is currently very inclined to use digital technology (Mu'is et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to utilise viral digital media promotions with creative and innovative content and still substantive echoes of superior, independent and characterised madrasas. This is where planning, determination and improvisation of content are needed so that it is always exciting, and the output is the increase in the number of applicants (Zainal Arifin, Dicky Artanto, 2023). Another thing that needs to be considered is the exemplary leadership of the madrasah in fostering religious teachers and employees who strengthen militancy in raising the madrasah (Indawati et al., 2022).

One of the things that need to be considered in publications is building a sound management information system; as an educational institution, pesantren is very important in building a positive image of itself (Rahtikawatie et al., 2021), it is essential to do this by improving service quality, technology integration, harmonisation with stakeholders, especially alums, increasing achievements to raise the bargaining power of the community, therefore, sound planning is needed so that the purpose of the publication is proven in increasing public interest and increasing the number of students, including can be realised by using the marketing mix, namely products, processes, processes and people as resources (Jannah & Dian Hidayati, 2023). The characteristics of pesantren are also manifested in this image, which is part of the pesantren's distinction, for example, the parenting of the kyai to his sons and daughters who become his successors by example and the sharia rituals that are also given to his santri (Mundiri et al., 2022). The marketing mix in education marketing is an effort by pesantren to introduce to the community the traditions and achievements of pesantren, including using the marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence.

Several related studies have found that pesantren need to create branding so that community interest increases, for example, with high morality-oriented education, so that students in pesantren are assisted in having a noble character with exemplary behaviour by kai and ustadz as well as habituation with standardised activities and evaluations determined (Syafruddin et al., 2022). Like companies, pesantren as educational institutions are also inaccessible from the community's spotlight, which is increasingly intelligent in choosing educational institutions for their sons and daughters. Other research shows that improving human resources in pesantren also needs to be considered because it is the basis for improving quality and igniting the community to become users of its services (Amet, 2023). Modern marketing strategies can be adapted to traditional values in pesantren. Further research is needed to explore how pesantren can integrate effective marketing strategies while maintaining their religious and cultural principles. In addition, there is a need for studies that identify the challenges that

pesantren face in implementing digital marketing strategies and how they can overcome them without undermining the integrity of their traditional values.

Meanwhile, in other studies, kya also plays a vital role in shaping the characteristics of santri in addition to their sons and daughters, which is carried out with Sufism-based leadership, which is currently starting to erode (Muali et al., 2021). The following study concluded the need for the readiness of pesantren leaders and managers to find the advantages of pesantren and their ability to brand these advantages so that they become a magnet for the community (Ghufron et al., 2023). This is where the involvement of total pesantren stakeholders whose commitment is tested in raising the pesantren and shaping the organisational culture, as the results of the study show (Kartiko & Azzukhrufi, 2019). Meanwhile, ustadz in pesantren will be able to know their loyalty to the pesantren leadership, integrity and dedication exemplified by the pesantren leadership as a role model, especially in their participation in raising the pesantren, such as the results of the study (Wardi et al., 2023). Then, the uniqueness of pesantren in marketing is also influenced by leadership management, which characteristically has Islamic values.

Different from some of these studies, this research focuses on the current phenomenon that there are many pesantren that carry out educational moderation and have advantages in integrated curriculum management in realising multiple intelligences, which then become the distinction, but not many pesantren can implement marketing management using marketing mix, namely offline and online by utilising digital technology, the majority of pesantren in the promotion of educational institutions both madrasah and schools they manage use offline spiritual marketing, and even then it is not implemented optimally by preparing students to become militant alums. This is what attracts researchers to research Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung, which is currently the largest pesantren in Banyuwangi regency with the most varied and adaptive educational institutions in the use of social media as a product of the sophistication of digital technology in educational marketing and targeting generation Z.

This research makes a unique contribution by examining the current phenomenon where many pesantren have adopted educational moderation and developed excellence in integrated curriculum management to achieve multiple intelligences as their distinction. Unlike previous studies that generally focus on aspects of digital marketing or general education strategies, this research specifically explores the challenges and opportunities in implementing marketing management using the marketing mix approach in the context of pesantren. The importance of this research lies in providing practical insights on how pesantren can integrate modern marketing strategies with their traditional values and how they can utilise curriculum excellence to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of their institutions amid increasingly fierce educational competition.

This study aims to analyse the marketing strategies of pesantren as Islamic educational institutions in the face of increasingly fierce educational competition, especially with the widespread use of digital technology by non-educational institutions. This research aims to find the typical marketing values of pesantren that have enabled them to survive and thrive until today. The importance of this

research lies in its ability to provide in-depth insights for pesantren leaders and managers on how to optimise the implementation of effective educational marketing strategies, which in turn is expected to increase the attractiveness of pesantren and in line with the increase in the number of santri from year to year. This research offers practical guidance for practitioners on adopting modern marketing techniques while maintaining traditional values. In contrast, for academics, this research contributes to the literature on Islamic education marketing and adaptation strategies in the digital era. The impact of this research will strengthen the position of pesantren in the education sector and provide a basis for developing relevant and sustainable marketing strategies in the evolving context of Islamic education.

As the oldest educational institution in Indonesia that survives with its distinctive education in the current era of global competition, pesantren needs to continue to adapt and adopt marketing systems aligned with Generation Z preferences. The goal is not only to build sustainability but also the relevance of the digital era and respond to trends so that the resilience of pesantren is maintained and even more attractive with the transformation of education and institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study type, allowing for a deep understanding of complex phenomena in specific contexts. Focusing on Generation Z's unique characteristics about technology and digital media, the study explores their views and expectations of Islamic boarding schools and traditional Islamic educational institutions as they navigate modern demands. By conducting a case study at Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung, Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia, the research examines how this pesantren adapts to Generation Z trends and develops sustainable marketing strategies in the digital era.

Primary data for this study were gathered through interviews, documentation and observations, with the snowball sampling technique facilitating access to a broad network of knowledgeable informants. Researchers also utilized secondary data from Islamic boarding school reports and digital content to enrich the analysis and ensure data triangulation. The study involved 27 key informants, including the head of the pesantren and technical staff, to gain strategic insights into how Pesantren Darussalam is responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital preferences of Generation Z.

Table 1. Research informants

| No | Position | Gender | | Code Position / Number |
		Male	Female	
1	Pesantren Leader	2	3	Pim./5
2	Pesantren Management	3	2	PP/5
3	Educational Institution Leader	4	5	PLP/9
4	PSPDB Committee	3	5	Pan./8
Total				**27**

The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, starting with data reduction, where data from interviews, observations, and documentation were selected, simplified, and transformed to focus on aspects relevant to the research objectives. Next, in the data presentation stage, the reduced information was systematically arranged in tables, matrices, or descriptive narratives to facilitate understanding and further analysis, helping to identify relationships, patterns, and trends. The final stage, conclusion drawing, involved interpreting the data to identify critical findings verified through triangulation to ensure validity and reliability.

Triangulation was employed across sources, methods, and theories to ensure data validity. Source triangulation involved comparing information from informants, such as Islamic boarding school leaders, marketing implementers, and students, to provide a complete and objective view of the phenomenon. The triangulation method combines in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation to cross-check data, enhancing accuracy and reliability. Theoretical triangulation was applied by analyzing data through various relevant theories, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and strengthening the validity and reliability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Dominating Social Media

As it is known that Generation Z tends to use social media to find information and conduct social interactions, Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung makes effective use of social media by actively using Instagram and TikTok to share information on activities, achievements and registration of santri, as well as providing online registration through a unique website and application. This differentiates it from other pesantren that still rely on offline registration. Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung takes advantage of this by sharing information on activities, achievements and online registration on its website and official social media accounts, including Instagram the following link: https://www.instagram.com/darussalamblokagung/ and tiktok at the following link: https://www.tiktok.com/@darussalamblokagung which is connected to the santri registration application in the following link: https://blokagung.net/psb/. Meanwhile, to check the recapitulation of the number of registrants at the following link: https://sipd.blokagung.net/report/. This shows the serious commitment of this pesantren in capturing new opportunities and challenges in marketing pesantren education to generation Z by implementing online registration, as well as showing that this pesantren is different from other pesantren whose santri registration is still offline (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Rouf et al., 2024).

The data shows that as of 4 July 2024, the number of students enrolled reached 1,977, signifying the success of this digital strategy in attracting prospective students, especially Generation Z students. The application of this technology expands the reach of the pesantren, increases the efficiency of registration, and provides a competitive advantage over pesantren that need to make optimal use of digital technology. The following graph displays the number of Santri who registered at this pesantren, a total of 1977 as of 04 July 2024. This

data is obtained from recapitulating the SIPD application (Darussalam Registrar Information System) as linked above.
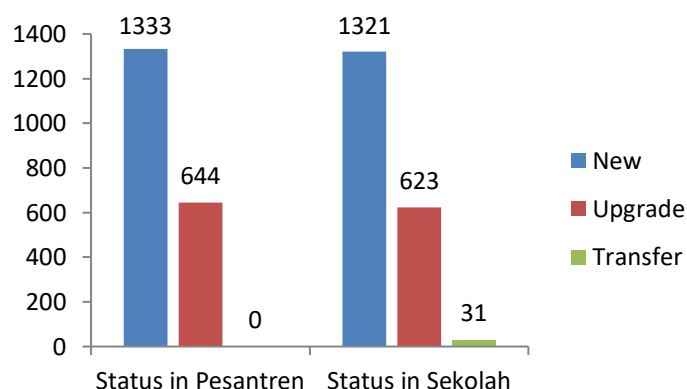

Figure 1. Recapitulation of Registrants

Figure 1 shows an increasing trend in the number of new santri, twice as many as Santri who increase their level of education, both recorded in the pesantren and the schools managed by this pesantren. Nevertheless, like schools in general, schools in this pesantren also accept transfer students from other schools whose purpose is to deepen the study of Islamic religious knowledge in pesantren while continuing their schooling.

Doing Digital Marketing

Like educational institutions today that utilise digital technology as a medium of information and promotion, Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung also does so, in the form of managing a website and social media including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube darussalamblokagung and link tree at https://linktr.ee/darussalamblokagung. By utilising various platforms, the pesantren can reach a broader and more specific audience and interact directly with prospective students and parents, increasing engagement and satisfaction. Dynamic content and regular updates on social media allow pesantren to stay relevant and attract the audience's attention, while the lower cost of digital marketing and the ability to monitor and analyse data in real-time offer efficiency and flexibility that is difficult to achieve with traditional marketing. Digital marketing also enables global reach, transcending the geographical boundaries that often limit conventional marketing methods. Not only achievements, but pesantren also upload daily, weekly, monthly, and annual routine activities to these media on these media. Among the daily activities are congregational prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, recitation of salaf books and diniyah education. Weekly activities are talent interest activities such as sports, inter-dormitory competitions, skills training, etc. Monthly activities include the regular recitation of Sunday legends with the community and meetings of Santri organisations and others. Annual activities include commemoration of the haul of the founder of the pesantren, *tasyakur khotmil Qur'an, haflatul imtihan,* meetings with santri guardians and so on. The following is an image taken by researchers from Linktr. They showed the flow of online registration in this pesantren and some connected social media.
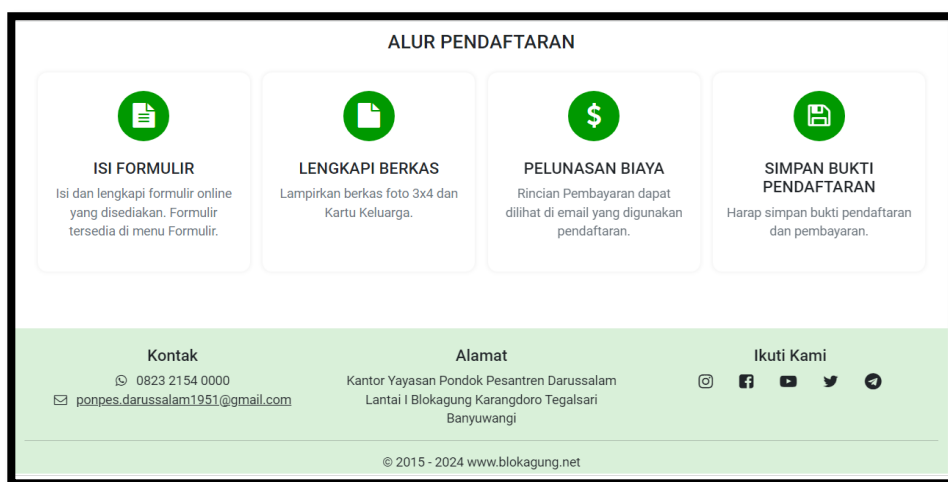
Figure 2. Online Registration Flow on Linktr.ee

Based on the picture above, the online registration flow at linktr.This includes filling out the form, completing the file, paying the fee, and saving proof of registration. In the form content, complete the form provided online in the menu section. Next, complete the file with a photo of the prospective student with a size of 3x4 and a family card in the form of a soft file. Next, pay the fee by paying attention to the payment details adjusted to the level of prospective students. Payment details can be seen from the email confirmed at the beginning of registration. Finally, when the three stages have been carried out, the last step is to save the proof of payment in the link.

The creativity of the santri in managing the pesantren's social media is exciting; in the picture, which is the official Facebook account, there are several pictures, including the greeting 'sugeng ambal warso', which is a greeting commemorating the birthday of the pesantren leader. Of course, when this picture is posted, many alums like and comment on it with prayers to build a bond with the kyai. This is where the strong bond between kyai, santri, and alums is formed, which is a medium in realizing the characteristics of pesantren education marketing. However, other posts are also intriguing; for example, the first photo in the picture is the alum muskernas, triggering alums to like the post as nostalgia in pesantren and reunion with fellow alums. Meanwhile, posting activities in the second photo, namely *mujahadah kubro*, is a form of mass activity at the pesantren, which certainly reminds the memory of alums and alumni's longing for the pesantren and of course, with the kyai.

The concept of posting on pesantren social media is not solely left to the santri. However, there is a pesantren leader in charge, so everything that is posted beforehand is well planned, checked first by the pesantren leader, and after being posted, is still evaluated. These are the values of education marketing through digital technology with the concept of building pesantren reputation (Kardi et al., 2023; Prayogi et al., 2021). Santri, who is in charge of the media team, is also a selected student and has competencies that support the development of pesantren social media so that publication activities are carried out professionally using the marketing mix (Wahab et al., 2022; Sulaiman & Ahmadi, 2020).

Responding to Changing Consumer Preferences

Generation Z tends to educational activities that relate to their daily lives in the form of learning interactions utilizing technological sophistication, which needs to be considered by pesantren in deciding the application of appropriate curriculum and learning methods, accommodating the needs of contemporary education, of course, while maintaining the values of religious education that characterize it. So, amid the rampant spirit of independent learning promoted by the government through the minister of education, Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung implements the Merdeka Curriculum with a focus on developing four main competencies: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity while utilizing digital technology and various platforms. In this context, Santri is encouraged to develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and evaluating digital information. Communication skills are enhanced through online presentations and discussions, while collaboration is strengthened through group tasks that use online project management tools. Santris' creativity is encouraged by the use of technology for multimedia content production. The implementation of this curriculum has shown a positive impact, with increased 21st-century skills and better adaptation to the digital environment. Supporting studies and data show that this competency- and technology-based approach effectively improves learning outcomes and skills.

In contrast to other pesantren, this pesantren, in actualizing the four competencies that adopt the independent curriculum, thinks critically as evidenced by the role of pesantren leaders and managers in motivating santri to be involved in pesantren organizations and contribute creative ideas to develop the pesantren, including becoming pesantren administrators, leaders and managers of madrasah/schools and managers of pesantren-owned units/business entities, becoming the Multimedia Darussalam (MMD) team that manages the official social media accounts of this pesantren and becoming a committee for the Admission of New Santri and Learners (PSPDB) and realizing communication competencies, including by accustoming santri to have public speaking skills by providing an upgraded version of the da'wah organization, not only offline but also in the form of online da'wah management for the community as a means of practising knowledge. Collaboration is carried out through assisting santri activities in building cooperation with pesantren and other institutions at the national and international levels to develop synergy and the quality of santri through productive pesantren activities, including student mobility and sending santri to alums pesantren as a form of service throughout Indonesia. Creation is carried out by recommending that Santri participate in national and international competitions according to their talent interests and hold competition events in pesantren, seminars, book reviews, conferences, etc. This is undoubtedly very good and needs to be improved (Wahyudiono, 2023; Latif & Hafid, 2021). From this explanation, it can be seen that this pesantren tries to continue to adapt to the significant changes resulting from globalization by carrying out various activities that support the improvement of Santri competencies, especially in the era of society through the use of technology to support the ability of santri to adapt and even compete in society (González-salamanca et al., 2020; Qureshi et al., 2021;

Syarifudin, 2022). The following table shows the four competencies of students who adopt the independent curriculum recommended by the government:: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Table 2. Four Santri Competencies

No	Competency	Description
1	Critical Thinking	The role of pesantren leaders and managers in motivating santri to be involved in pesantren organizations and contribute creative ideas to develop pesantren, including becoming pesantren administrators, leaders and managers of madrasas/schools and managers of units / Pesantren-Owned Business Entities, becoming the Multi Media Darussalam (MMD) team that manages the official social media accounts of this pesantren and becoming a committee for the Admission of Santri and New Learners (PSPDB).
2	Communicating	Accustoming students to have public speaking skills by providing an upgraded version of the da'wah organization, not only in the form of offline but also in the form of online da'wah management for the community as a means of practicing practicing knowledge.
3	Collaborate	Assisting santri activities in building cooperation with pesantren and other institutions at the national and international levels to develop synergy and the quality of santri through productive pesantren activities, including student mobility and sending santri to alumni pesantren throughout Indonesia as a form of dedication
4	Be creative	recommending students to participate in national and international competitions according to their interests and talents and hold competition events in pesantren as well as seminars, book reviews, conferences and so on.

Based on Table 2, Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung implements "Merdeka Curriculum" with a focus on four critical competencies-critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity-through various initiatives that involve santri in diverse roles. Santris is allowed to be involved in the pesantren management, multimedia team, and PSPDB. Committee, which motivates them to develop creative ideas and critical thinking. They are also trained in public speaking through *da'wah* organizations that include online platforms and are encouraged to collaborate nationally and internationally with other institutions through activities such as student mobility. In addition, pesantren recommends that Santri participate in competitions and organize events such as seminars and conferences, strengthening their creative skills. This approach integrates 21st-century competencies with activities supporting the holistic development of Santri.

Digital Content Relevance

The current digital era is also well utilized by Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung to improve its publication, including by forming Multi Media Darussalam, which is tasked with publishing the activities, achievements, and information of this pesantren through the website and official social media accounts. Multimedia Darussalam (MMD) at Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung is crucial in utilizing the digital era for Pesantren publications. This team manages

and creates content on the pesantren's website and social media accounts, including Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. They produce materials that include photos, videos, and articles about pesantren activities and achievements and run promotional campaigns for essential events. Statistics show a significant increase in social media followers and interactions, with the number of new santri registrations reaching 1,977 by July 2024. However, MMD also faces the challenge of ensuring high content quality and managing multiple platforms efficiently, which requires good technology and time management skills. This is well supported by the Ministry of Labor, which assists the Vocational Training Center with the distinction of training activities in graphic design, applications, and creative video and filmmaking. The following is a statement from Kiai Abdul Kholiq Syafa'at, Leader of Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung, regarding Santri's motivation to utilize digital technology and make films.

"As kyai said, the founder of this pesantren, santri must be facilitated to get education according to their wants and needs. Now, in the era of digital technology and generation Z, we also facilitate santri to channel their interests and talents by utilizing digital technology, they are trained to make useful applications, including the Santri Information System (SIS), an application about santri biodata, educational activities and payments. We also facilitate those who are selected with their talents to become managers of Multi Media Darussalam (MMD) who are responsible for the official accounts of the pesantren. We also continue to encourage santri to produce films and recommend them to participate in festivals, Alhamdulillah, some of them have won at the national level" (Pim).

The information shows that the leadership of this pesantren strongly supports Santri in continuing to be creative and develop their potential, even in filmmaking, in which only a few pesantren leaders provide similar policies. This is among the things that are unique to this pesantren in adopting digital technology as a learning medium by the tendencies of Generation Z. The following is an image of a short film produced by Multi Media Darussalam (MMD) in 2021, which won first place in the national short film competition to commemorate National Santri Day. The link can be clicked on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=imXODizXStY.

Figure 3. MMD's Short Film 1st National Champion

Meanwhile, the output of the training carried out at the Pesantren Vocational Training Center (BLK) at an accessible cost for Santri and the community with the aim that Santri and the community around the Pesantren can master digital technology and join the Darussalam Multi-Media Team. Thus, the free training at the Balai Latihan Kerja (BLK) of the pesantren effectively improved the digital skills of the santri and the community and facilitated their integration into the Darussalam Multi-Media Team. This finding contradicts previous studies that suggest that training costs may limit participation (Smith, 2022) and that ongoing support is necessary for successful integration (Johnson & Lee, 2023). In contrast to these views, this study underscores that removing cost barriers and linking training directly to practical applications can open up more significant opportunities for active engagement in multimedia teams. In addition, the findings also challenge the research that digital technology training has limited impact without deep community initiatives (Brown & Patel, 2021) by showing that well-managed training can bring significant social and economic benefits to communities.

Educational institutions publish exciting content using the current platform through social media, and they can create and utilize applications as learning media. This is interesting amid millennials' infatuation with digital technology so that it can support the development of learning and increase their competence (Mu'is et al., 2022; Fadilah et al., 2021; Calara, 2020). This research significantly contributes to Islamic education management by highlighting the critical role of using social media and digital technology in publishing and learning. The findings suggest that Islamic education institutions like Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung can utilize the latest social media platforms and digital applications to create exciting and relevant content. This increases the institution's visibility and engagement with the digital-obsessed millennial audience and supports the development of learning and the improvement of santri competencies. By adopting effective digital strategies, Islamic education institutions can expand their educational reach, offer innovative learning media, and respond to the needs of the digital generation more adaptively and efficiently. This contribution provides new insights for Islamic education managers in integrating technology into the educational process, making it an essential tool for improving the quality and relevance of education in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung, the largest pesantren in Banyuwangi Regency, has effectively utilized social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Linktree as part of their education marketing strategy, significantly boosting enrollment and community engagement. By July 2024, new santri enrollment reached 1,977, mainly due to digital campaigns and online registrations. The increased followers and interactions on their social media accounts highlight the success of their digital strategy in enhancing visibility and community participation. Their focus on managing digital platforms strengthens their online presence and effectively engages the community in the opportunities provided by modern technology.

Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at Pesantren Darussalam Blokagung has notably enhanced santri competencies in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, evaluated through projects, presentations, and participation in competitions and digital content production. The pesantren also offers digital technology training, including graphic design, application development, and creative video production, equipping santri with the skills to support the institution's digital presence. This training aligns with the goals of improving visibility and educational quality through effective use of technology. However, the study acknowledges limitations in methodology and sample population, suggesting further research into digital marketing strategies in other pesantren and the long-term impact of technology training programs.

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