

## Digital Branding Strategies of Islamic Higher Education Institutions through Religious Content Marketing

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### Abstract:

This study examines the digital branding strategies of Islamic higher education institutions, specifically focusing on Nurul Jadid University, through religious content marketing. The integration of Islamic values in digital branding has become a critical aspect for Islamic universities to differentiate themselves and engage their target audience effectively. As digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok gain prominence, understanding how religious content influences engagement is essential for educational institutions. This research employs a qualitative case study approach, utilizing content analysis and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including social media managers and faculty members. The study finds that the integration of Islamic values into digital branding enhances the institution's identity and strengthens its emotional connection with the audience. Additionally, religious content significantly boosts engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares, reinforcing its effectiveness in fostering community interaction. Personal branding strategies by faculty members further contribute to the institution's authenticity and credibility, enhancing the overall digital presence. The research contributes to the understanding of how Islamic higher education institutions can utilize digital branding strategies to build trust and loyalty among their stakeholders. It recommends that universities focus on integrating religious content while also promoting faculty involvement in branding efforts to enhance engagement.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/sem.v1i1.000>

Cite in APA style as:

Albustomi, A. Y. (2025). Digital Branding Strategies of Islamic Higher Education Institutions through Religious Content Marketing. *Spectrum: Journal of Educational Management*, 1(1), 1-11.

### Article History

Received February 2025

Revised February 2025

Accepted February 2025

### Keywords

Digital Branding, Religious Content Marketing, Islamic Higher Education, Social Media Engagement

## INTRODUCTION

Digital branding strategies have become an essential aspect of modern marketing, particularly in the educational sector. For Islamic higher education institutions, digital branding serves as a critical tool to communicate their values, mission, and academic offerings to a broader audience (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Munawwaroh & Rahayu, 2024). The phenomenon of digital branding is inherently



linked to the development of online platforms such as social media, which has revolutionized how educational institutions engage with potential students, faculty, and the wider community (Berdiieva & Goroshko, 2022; Doyle et al., 2022; Maulidia, 2023). Religious content in digital branding strategy to align its identity with Islamic values while maintaining academic rigor. Religious content, embedded within the digital branding framework, helps create an emotional and spiritual connection with the audience, reinforcing the institution's commitment to both education and Islamic principles.

Digital branding within the context of Islamic higher education has gained significant scholarly attention in recent years. Researchers have highlighted that religious content plays a vital role in shaping the digital identity of educational institutions, particularly in Islamic settings (Ghorbanzadeh, 2023; Ghuftron et al., 2023; Kartika et al., 2020). Integrating religious values into digital branding can enhance trust and loyalty among stakeholders, fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose (Doyle et al., 2022; Farwati, 2024; Feher, 2021). Several studies have explored the power of social media in educational marketing, noting that platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are increasingly used by universities to build their digital persona (Kumar & Raman, 2020; Sungkawaningrum et al., 2022). In this context, the integration of Islamic teachings, Quranic verses, and religious symbols in digital content creates an emotional bond with the audience, distinguishing Islamic universities from secular counterparts (Thoha & Hannan, 2022). The inclusion of Islamic ethics in branding content aligns educational institutions with the broader societal values, enhancing engagement and community building. Religious-themed content significantly increases interaction rates, suggesting its effectiveness in engaging the target audience.

The importance of digital branding in Islamic higher education is further emphasized by social facts surrounding the behavior of both current and prospective students. In the digital age, individuals increasingly seek educational institutions that align with their personal and cultural values. Social media platforms have become a primary space for interaction, providing universities with the opportunity to showcase their values, academic offerings, and institutional ethos. For Islamic institutions like Nurul Jadid University, these platforms are not just tools for promotion but serve as spaces for cultural and spiritual expression. Students and faculty are increasingly active online, sharing content that aligns with their values and beliefs. This behavior reflects a broader trend where individuals gravitate towards educational environments that reflect their personal, religious, and academic aspirations. Moreover, digital branding strategies, particularly those that incorporate religious elements, allow universities to establish a distinct identity that resonates with a wider audience, fostering a deeper sense of community and belonging.

The role of religious content in shaping the digital identities of Islamic educational institutions, highlighting that it fosters trust and emotional connection with the audience. The use of religious symbols and teachings in digital branding strategies and found that such content significantly enhances engagement rates (Chaudhari & Awesh Bhornya, 2022; Hefniy & Arifin, 2023). Ghorbanzadeh (2023) explored how Islamic values integrated into digital content help build a unique brand identity for

Islamic universities, distinguishing them from secular institutions. Ambarwati and Sari (2024) confirmed that religious content not only improves user engagement but also promotes a sense of loyalty and commitment to the institution. The effectiveness of using religious narratives in educational branding, noting that it strengthens the institution's position within the Islamic community (Ansori et al., 2023). Hanafi et al. (2020) showed that religious content is particularly effective in engaging Muslim audiences, leading to increased interactions and shares. Personal branding strategies for faculty members within Islamic universities and concluded that faculty participation in branding activities helps establish the institution's authenticity and credibility.

Despite the growing body of research on digital branding in higher education, there remains a noticeable gap in studies specifically addressing how Islamic values are integrated into the digital branding strategies of Islamic universities. While previous research has explored the role of religious content in educational marketing, there is limited focus on how such content influences audience engagement, particularly within the unique context of Islamic higher education. Additionally, much of the research has not sufficiently examined the intersection of religious content and personal branding strategies of faculty members, an area that this study aims to explore in-depth. This study also addresses a gap in the literature by focusing specifically on Nurul Jadid University, providing a localized analysis of how Islamic values are communicated through religious content on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of the dynamic relationship between digital branding, religious content, and the effectiveness of personal branding strategies for faculty members in the Islamic higher education sector.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the digital branding strategies employed by Nurul Jadid University, with a particular focus on the integration of Islamic values through religious content. The study aims to analyze how the university's use of religious teachings, symbols, and narratives enhances its online presence and engagement with its audience. Another key objective is to assess the role of personal branding strategies employed by faculty members in contributing to the university's overall digital branding success. This research will also examine the effectiveness of religious content in increasing user engagement on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. By investigating these aspects, the study seeks to provide insights into how Islamic higher education institutions can effectively utilize digital branding strategies to strengthen their online identity and foster a sense of community among their stakeholders.

This research offers an original contribution to the field of digital branding in Islamic higher education by focusing on the unique integration of Islamic values through religious content. Unlike previous studies, which often focus on either religious content or personal branding separately, this study combines both elements to explore how they work together in creating a cohesive digital identity for an Islamic university. The research argumentation is grounded in the premise that digital branding, when aligned with religious values, not only enhances engagement but also fosters a deeper emotional connection with the audience. By providing a localized analysis of Nurul Jadid University, the study highlights the importance of context-specific strategies in digital

branding. Furthermore, by examining the role of faculty members in personal branding, the research argues that faculty participation is crucial for enhancing institutional credibility and authenticity, ultimately strengthening the university's digital presence. This originality lies in addressing both the institutional and individual aspects of branding within the Islamic higher education context.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research focuses on Nurul Jadid University, an Islamic higher education institution in Indonesia, specifically examining its digital branding strategies through religious content marketing. The material object of this study includes the university's digital content across multiple social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. A qualitative research approach is used to explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of the university's target audience and key figures, such as social media managers and faculty members (Ezer & Aksüt, 2021). This approach is ideal for understanding the nuances and depth of how religious content shapes the institution's digital identity and influences interactions with followers. The research is exploratory in nature, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between religious content, branding strategies, and engagement. A case study design is employed to allow for an in-depth analysis of Nurul Jadid University as a representative example of Islamic higher education institutions engaging in digital branding, making it a valuable contribution to the growing body of literature on digital marketing in the education sector.

Data collection for this study involves multiple techniques to gather a wide range of insights on the digital branding strategies employed by Nurul Jadid University. The primary data sources include digital content from the university's official social media accounts, such as YouTube videos, TikTok clips, and Instagram posts, which will be analyzed for the integration of Islamic values and their effectiveness in audience engagement. Additionally, semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants, including the university's social media managers and faculty members involved in content creation. These interviews aim to gain a deeper understanding of the rationale behind the use of religious content and personal branding strategies within the university's digital marketing efforts. Secondary data is gathered from academic journals, books, and other relevant literature on digital branding, religious content marketing, and Islamic higher education. By using a combination of content analysis and qualitative interviews, the research ensures a comprehensive approach to examining the material object, providing both visual and experiential data to inform the study's findings.

Data analysis in this study follows the framework outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), which is a widely used approach in qualitative research for systematically analyzing large volumes of data (Duckett, 2021). The analysis process involves three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction phase, the collected content from social media platforms and interview transcripts will be carefully coded to identify recurring themes related to the integration of Islamic values, audience engagement, and personal

branding strategies. During the data display phase, the coded data will be organized into categories and visualized in a manner that allows for easier comparison and interpretation, such as tables or matrices that highlight key patterns in the content and responses. Finally, in the conclusion drawing/verification phase, the research will synthesize the findings to identify overarching themes and implications related to the effectiveness of religious content in digital branding strategies for Islamic higher education institutions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Integration of Islamic Values in Digital Branding

In the context of Islamic higher education institutions, the integration of Islamic values into digital branding has been a key strategy in creating a distinctive identity and fostering a sense of belonging among the audience. This approach ensures that the digital presence resonates with the core values of Islam, aligning the institution's message with the ethical and religious standards of the community. Observations from the content on social media platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, show that Nurul Jadid University emphasizes Islamic teachings through religious symbols, quotes, and educational content, effectively reflecting the institution's commitment to both academic excellence and spiritual growth.

Based on the analysis of the digital content from Nurul Jadid University, it is clear that their social media channels feature regular posts containing Quranic verses, Hadiths, and Islamic scholarly teachings. These elements not only enhance the religious atmosphere but also act as reminders to the audience about the institution's values. The frequent incorporation of Islamic themes in the visuals, such as Arabic calligraphy or Islamic architecture, provides a seamless connection between the institution's educational mission and its religious identity. Table 1 below the integration of Islamic values through different content formats across platforms,

**Table 1. The Integration of Islamic Value**

Platform	Content Type	Islamic Values Integrated
YouTube	Video lectures, sermons	Quranic verses, Islamic ethics
TikTok	Short-form video clips	Islamic teachings, prayers
Instagram	Posts, stories, live sessions	Religious quotes, Islamic symbols

The findings indicate a deliberate effort by Nurul Jadid University to align its branding with Islamic values. This strategy reinforces the institution's identity and strengthens its position as an Islamic educational center. The consistent use of religious elements helps establish a strong, unified presence across platforms, appealing to the target audience while upholding Islamic principles. The integration of Islamic values in digital branding not only enhances the institution's reputation but also builds trust and loyalty among its followers. By continuously showcasing its commitment to both religious and academic excellence, Nurul Jadid University successfully differentiates itself in a competitive educational landscape.



## The Effectiveness of Religious Content in Increasing Engagement

The effectiveness of religious content in increasing engagement on digital platforms is evident in the content strategy of Nurul Jadid University. Religious content such as Quranic recitations, Islamic lectures, and religious quotes has been shown to significantly increase interactions such as likes, comments, and shares. Engagement metrics from the university's social media pages show a clear correlation between the presence of religious content and increased user interaction, suggesting that the audience feels more connected when religious elements are involved.

Upon reviewing interview findings from social media managers and digital marketers at Nurul Jadid University, it was noted that content related to Islamic teachings often received higher engagement compared to more secular or purely academic posts. This indicates that the university's audience actively seeks and appreciates content that aligns with their religious values. Additionally, followers often engage with posts that feature religious topics, with a noticeable increase in shares and comments, indicating that such content resonates deeply with the community.

Restating the research findings, it is clear that religious content plays a pivotal role in fostering engagement on digital platforms. This is particularly important in an academic setting, where the objective is not only to educate but also to connect with the target audience on a deeper level. Religious content (see Figure 1), by its very nature, sparks conversations, shares common values, and reinforces a sense of belonging.

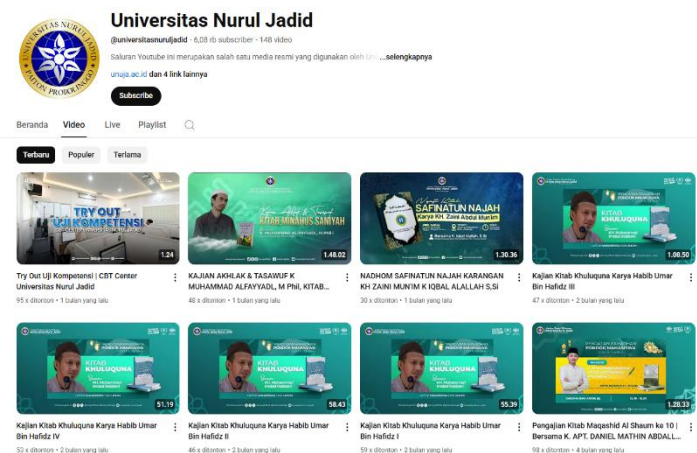


Figure 1. Religious Content at YouTube

Religious content serves as an effective tool for driving engagement. It provides a medium through which the audience can express their values, engage with others who share similar beliefs, and participate in a broader dialogue on faith and education. By offering this type of content, the university can strengthen its digital presence while maintaining alignment with its Islamic foundation. Religious content plays a significant role in increasing engagement for Nurul Jadid University. The findings suggest that incorporating religious elements into the institution's digital branding not only enhances interaction but also helps foster a sense of community among its audience.

## Personal Branding Strategy

Personal branding has emerged as a strategic approach for the faculty members and key figures within Nurul Jadid University, allowing them to create a unique, recognizable identity both online and offline. Faculty members actively contribute to the university's social media presence by sharing educational content, personal insights, and religious reflections, further strengthening their association with the university's core values. This personal branding strategy not only enhances their credibility but also elevates the university's visibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of the public.

The observation of content from social media accounts reveals that faculty members at Nurul Jadid University often feature personal reflections, academic achievements, and involvement in religious activities. This personal touch in the content allows the audience to connect with the university on a more intimate level, seeing the faculty not just as educators, but as role models who embody the institution's values. These personal brands help humanize the institution's digital presence, creating more relatable and approachable figures for prospective students and the wider community. Table 2 illustrates the impact of personal branding the types of content shared by faculty members and their associated outcomes,

**Table 2. The Integration of Islamic Value**

<b>Content Type</b>	<b>Impact on Personal Brand</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Educational content (kiai)	Increases authority	Higher trust and engagement
Religious reflections	Builds emotional connection	Strengthened personal identity
Personal achievements	Showcases expertise	Higher visibility and engagement

Personal branding strategies implemented by faculty members contribute positively to the university's digital branding. These strategies help humanize the institution and make it more relatable to the audience, fostering deeper connections and engagement. Personal branding is not only beneficial for the individual but also enhances the institution's overall branding strategy. It provides faculty members with a platform to represent the values of the university, contributing to its overall reputation and engagement. Personal branding strategies have proven to be effective in elevating the institution's digital presence. By allowing faculty members to actively participate in the university's online narrative, Nurul Jadid University creates a more authentic and relatable image that resonates with its audience.

## **Discussion**

The integration of Islamic values in digital branding has been widely discussed in scholarly literature, with numerous studies highlighting the importance of aligning institutional messaging with cultural and religious values. The incorporation of cultural and religious symbols in branding enhances trust and loyalty among target audiences, particularly in educational institutions (Poulis et al., 2024; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Saharani & Diana, 2024). This aligns with our findings, where Nurul Jadid University successfully integrates Islamic values to create a strong, unified digital identity. Nasir et al. (2024) emphasized that aligning digital content with religious teachings fosters a

sense of community, as seen in Nurul Jadid University's efforts to incorporate Quranic verses and Islamic symbols in their social media content.

Several journal findings corroborate the strategy of integrating religious values into digital branding. A study by Berdiieva and Goroshko (2022) demonstrated that incorporating Islamic teachings into university branding strategies enhances institutional reputation and strengthens community ties. Additionally, Komara and Meliyani (2021) found that universities with a clear religious identity in their digital presence attract students who share similar values. The digital branding strategies of Nurul Jadid University align with these findings, showcasing how religious content can attract like-minded individuals and foster a sense of unity. The role of consistent religious messaging in building institutional credibility, further supporting the university's branding approach.

The effectiveness of religious content in driving engagement is consistent with several studies on digital marketing and content engagement. Religious content fosters a sense of connection and engagement among target audiences, particularly in the context of Islamic communities (Ataman et al., 2024; Azad et al., 2022; Razali et al., 2023). This resonates with our finding that religious content in Nurul Jadid University's digital branding results in increased engagement. Furthermore, a study by Baines et al. (2022) highlighted that religious-themed content fosters higher social media interactions, which is evident in the university's content strategy that emphasizes religious teachings and Islamic values to create meaningful interactions with its audience.

Further studies highlight the power of religious content in shaping user behavior and increasing engagement. Shaikh and Alam Kazmi (2022) demonstrated that religious content on social media platforms prompts users to engage more actively with posts that reflect their values. This finding is consistent with the university's strategy, where religious content such as Quranic verses and Islamic teachings generates more interaction compared to other content types. Additionally, Huda et al. (2022) pointed out that users are more likely to share content that resonates with their religious beliefs, a phenomenon observed in the high share rates of religious content on Nurul Jadid University's platforms.

Personal branding is an essential component of digital marketing, particularly in educational institutions. Personal branding strategies contribute to building a strong online presence and enhancing institutional credibility (Doyle et al., 2022). This aligns with the findings from Nurul Jadid University, where faculty members actively engage in building their personal brands, thereby contributing to the university's digital identity. Furthermore, research by Amin (2024) highlighted that faculty members who establish strong personal brands can positively influence the university's overall reputation and online visibility, which was evident in Nurul Jadid's approach.

The findings on personal branding strategies align with several studies on individual branding within educational institutions. A study by Ghorbanzadeh (2023) suggested that faculty members who create relatable, authentic content enhance both their personal image and the institution's reputation. Nurul Jadid University's use of faculty members to represent the institution's values through personal branding



reflects this approach. Additionally, Berdiieva and Goroshko (2022) found that faculty engagement in digital branding increases the institution's engagement metrics, a result seen in the university's active social media presence. Personal branding allows faculty to contribute to the university's digital narrative, enhancing engagement and building a stronger connection with the audience.

The research findings suggest significant implications for digital branding strategies in Islamic higher education institutions. Integrating Islamic values, leveraging the effectiveness of religious content, and fostering personal branding among faculty members contribute to a robust digital presence that resonates with the target audience. The findings recommend that Islamic higher education institutions focus on creating content that reflects both academic excellence and religious commitment. Additionally, personal branding strategies for faculty members can enhance the institution's authenticity and credibility, strengthening its position in the digital space.

## CONCLUSION

The significant role of digital branding strategies in shaping the identity of Islamic higher education institutions, particularly through the integration of religious content. The findings from Nurul Jadid University demonstrate how embedding Islamic values into digital branding not only enhances the institution's online identity but also fosters a deeper connection with the audience, resulting in higher engagement levels. By strategically using religious teachings, quotes, and symbols across platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, the university effectively strengthens its reputation as both an educational and spiritual hub. Furthermore, the personal branding efforts of faculty members play a crucial role in enhancing the authenticity and trustworthiness of the institution, adding a personal touch to its digital presence. These findings underscore the importance of aligning institutional branding efforts with the values and beliefs of the target audience, particularly in the context of Islamic education. As such, this research provides valuable insights for other Islamic universities looking to leverage digital branding strategies to build strong, authentic connections with their communities while upholding religious principles. The implications of this study contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing in the educational sector, particularly within Islamic institutions.

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