

## DIGITAL MARKETING AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE: INNOVATION IN BUILDING ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL RESILIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aims to explore the role of digital marketing as a catalyst for change in building resilience among pesantrens in the digital era. A qualitative method was employed with a case study approach on pesantrens in Banyuwangi that have adopted digital marketing strategies. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with pesantren managers, document analysis, and direct observation of social media content and websites of the pesantrens. Thematic and descriptive analyses were used to understand digital marketing strategies, the impact of content marketing, and the use of social media in building pesantren communities. The findings indicate that effective digital marketing enhances pesantren visibility, community engagement, and student participation in online education programs. Content marketing strategies play a crucial role in conveying Islamic educational values and strengthening pesantren identities, while social media facilitates closer interaction between pesantrens and their communities. These findings provide insights into how pesantrens can strategically leverage digital technology to remain relevant and competitive in the evolving digital era.*

**Keyword:** Digital Marketing, Innovation, Islamic Boarding School Resilience.

### A. Introduction

Digital marketing is not only about increasing product sales, but also about creating innovations that strengthen the resilience and sustainability of pesantren in the digital era (Caffrey et al., 2022); (Begum et al., 2022); (Adler (USA) et al., 2022). Through digital marketing, pesantren can introduce themselves and their activities to a wider community, both at the national and international levels. The use of social

media and websites by pesantren such as Pondok Pesantren Modern Gontor has increased their visibility, attracted donors, and gained students from various parts of the world (Zulaikha et al., 2022). Thus, digital marketing enables pesantren to increase their visibility, attract donors, and gain students from different parts of the world, thus strengthening their resilience and sustainability in the digital era.

Research on digital marketing as a catalyst for pesantren sustainability has been widely researched by several scholars (Febrian et al., 2024). Many researchers and academics recognize the importance of digital marketing in strengthening the resilience of pesantren, thus encouraging them to research this topic. Many studies have been conducted by scientists and academics on digital marketing as a catalyst for pesantren resilience, which is recognized as important in strengthening pesantren resilience, with many scientific articles published in leading journals such as the "Journal of Islamic Marketing".

Research on digital marketing as a catalyst for pesantren resilience aims to imply the marketing strategies needed (Hidayat et al., 2022). With the development of digital technology, pesantren need to adjust their marketing strategies to remain relevant and attractive to the younger generation. Research from Universitas Airlangga shows that pesantren that adopt digital marketing, such as the use of social media and interactive websites, are more successful in attracting prospective students than those that still rely on traditional methods. Research on digital marketing as a catalyst for the preservation of pesantren aims to imply the marketing strategies needed for pesantren to remain relevant and attractive to the younger generation (Mursidi et al., 2021).

Based on the literature review and supporting theories, the tentative argument in this study is that digital marketing can act as a catalyst for

change in building pesantren resilience (Rahman et al., 2024). Digital marketing allows pesantren to reach a wider audience, increase interaction with the community, and strengthen the overall brand of the pesantren. Evidence from previous studies shows that the adoption of digital marketing strategies has successfully increased community participation and significantly supported the growth of pesantren (Indrioko, 2023). By utilizing these theories, this study is expected to provide valuable insights for pesantren managers in strategically adopting digital technology to improve their competitiveness and relevance in the ever-evolving digital era.

## **B. Method**

The object of this research is pesantren in Banyuwangi that have adopted digital marketing strategies as part of their efforts to build resilience and improve their competitiveness in the digital era. This research utilizes a qualitative approach to explore them. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and strategies applied in pesantren digital marketing. The research design also includes a case study to gain comprehensive insights.

The informants in this study consisted of pesantren managers and staff who are directly involved in the implementation and management of digital marketing. The pesantren managers were selected based on inclusive criteria, such as their experience in managing digital marketing, and geographical representation of the pesantren to ensure diversity. The technique used in retrieving informants is Convenience Sampling Theory, which is one of the sampling techniques in research that involves selecting informants or respondents who are easily accessible to

researchers. This technique is often used because of its convenience and relatively low cost compared to other sampling methods. Estimates of population quantities derived from convenience samples will usually result in bias because the distribution of variables of interest in convenience samples is different from the population (Savitsky et al., 2023).

No	Nama Informan	Position	Experience in Digital Marketing	Geographical Representation
	Ayyub Ramandana	Pesantren Manager	5 years	Mabadiul Ihsan
	Bisri Mustofa	Pesantren Manager	3 years	Al-Kautsar Srono
	Hanif afid	Pesantren Staff	2 years	Minhajutthullab Muncar
	Ali irfan	Pesantren Staff	4 years	Mamba'ul Ulum Muncar
	Maulana Ishaq	Pesantren Manager	6 tahun	Darussalam Blokagung

Source: Processed by Researcher

From the table, it can be seen that, with variations in experience, position, and geographical representation, this research is expected to provide a broad insight into the application of digital marketing in Banyuwangi pesantrens. The diversity of informants allows researchers to explore the various challenges and strategies implemented by pesantren in different contexts.

Data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, case studies, and document analysis will be thematically analyzed. In-depth interviews were conducted with pesantren managers who have implemented digital marketing strategies. These interviews were conducted face-to-face or via teleconference, using a structured interview guide to ensure consistency and

depth of data. Case studies were conducted on several pesantren that were considered successful in implementing digital marketing. Data were collected through direct observation, internal pesantren documents, and analysis of content published on social media and pesantren websites. Documents such as digital marketing plans, activity reports, and evaluation results will be analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the digital marketing strategies implemented and their impact on the pesantren.

Data analysis in this study uses thematic analysis. Thematic analysis in the context of pesantren content marketing involves an in-depth process of identifying and exploring the main themes that emerge from different types of content such as articles, videos, and infographics. Researchers will re-read all marketing content produced by pesantren to identify dominant themes. Such emerging themes may include Islamic educational values, pesantren's flagship programs, social activities, and so on. Once these themes are identified, the contents will be grouped based on the main themes for further analysis. This analysis will help in understanding how these themes contribute to the promotional and educational objectives of the pesantren, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the messages delivered to the target audience.

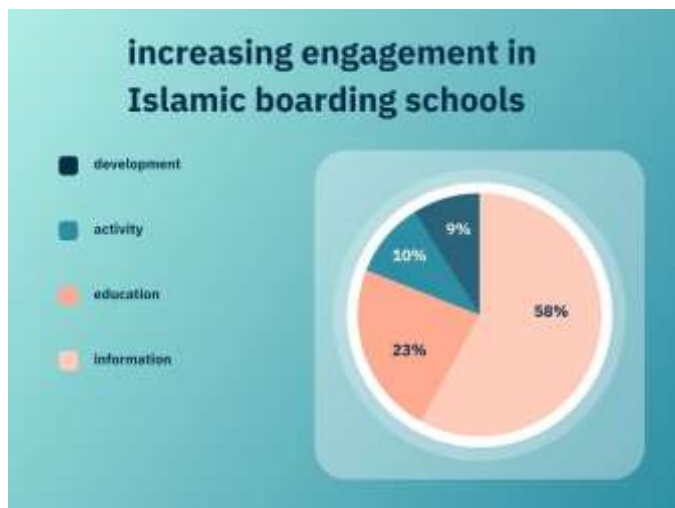
### C. Results And Discussion

#### Utilizing Content Marketing for Education and Promotion

Content marketing not only serves to attract consumer attention, but also plays an important role in providing useful education and building long-term trust (Hidayat et al., 2022). Content marketing adds value to consumers by providing relevant and educational information. A report from Demand Metric shows that 60% of consumers feel more positive about a brand after consuming educational and useful content. The calculation of the increase in

engagement in Banyuwangi pesantren is presented in the form of a pie chart as follows.

picture 1. calculation of increased engagement in banyuwangi pesantren.



Source: researcher processing based on informants

Based on the pie chart above, it states that informational content has more achievements. Namely 58% of the content contains information about huts in Banyuwangi. Such as information on new student admissions, walisantri meeting schedules, information on the arrival and return of students and others. Thus, content marketing not only attracts consumer attention, but also provides added value through relevant and educational information, which can significantly strengthen long-term trust in a brand, as shown by a report from Demand Metric that 60% of consumers feel more positive about the brand after consuming educational and useful content.

Content marketing is effective for education and promotion of pesantren in Banyuwangi. Informative and interesting content increases public interest and trust in the pesantren. By utilizing content marketing, pesantren can convey the educational and religious values they offer through various forms

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of content such as articles, videos, infographics, and blogs. Well-crafted content not only attracts the attention of the audience but also provides them with useful information about the pesantren's programs and activities. In addition, content marketing allows pesantren to showcase their uniqueness and advantages over other educational institutions, thus attracting potential students and parents. According to the latest consumer engagement theory, high-quality content can increase audience engagement with the brand or institution it represents, which in turn can increase loyalty and mina (Chalil & Sari, 2021).

The conclusion is that content marketing is an effective strategy for the promotion and education of pesantren (Ihsan et al., 2020), (Kussudyarsana et al., 2022). By presenting useful and interesting content, pesantren can build trust and interest, increase audience engagement, and strengthen their reputation as quality educational institutions. This approach also helps pesantren to remain relevant and competitive in the digital era, in line with digital marketing theory that emphasizes the importance of relevance and added value for consumers (Rahman et al., 2024).

#### Education Program Innovation through Digital Platform

Innovation of educational programs through digital platforms is one of the efforts in digital marketing (Yao et al., 2024). The innovation of educational programs through digital platforms allows pesantren to reach more students globally. Digital platforms such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have changed the education paradigm by providing millions of students with access to quality curriculum from leading universities around the world. Innovation of educational programs through digital platforms is not only a strategy in digital marketing, but also allows pesantren to reach more students globally (Harmathilda et al., 2024). The

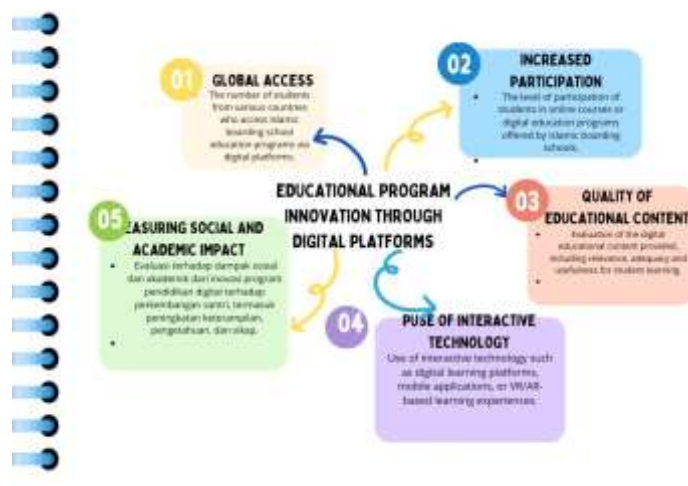
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educational innovations through digital platforms are presented using the following figure:

picture 2. education innovation through digital platform



Source: researcher processing based on informants

Based on the data drawn, it shows that educational innovation through digital platforms includes global access, increased participation, quality of educational content, use of interactive technology, measurement of social and academic impacts. Thus, digital marketing encourages innovation in educational programs in pesantren (Putra, 2024). The conclusion based on the data above is that digital marketing not only serves as a promotional tool, but also as a catalyst for educational innovation. Thus, pesantren that integrate digital technology into their curriculum can improve the quality of education they offer. In addition, this innovation also helps pesantren stay relevant in the digital era and attract the younger generation who are more familiar with technology (Muhyiddin et al., 2022), (Di & Millennial, 2019), (Shofiyyah et al., 2019). By continuously exploring and developing digital education programs, pesantren can ensure that they provide modern and

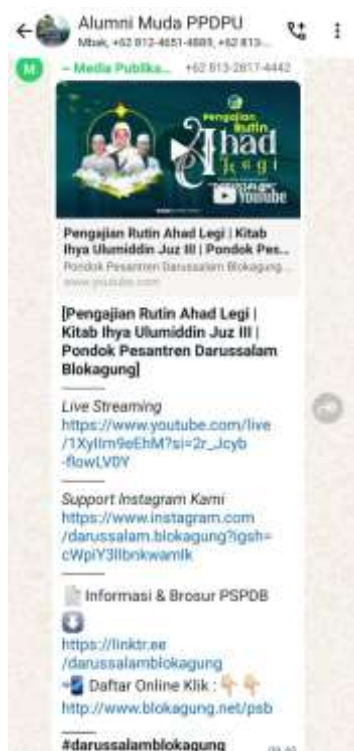
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high-quality education, in line with the needs and expectations of today's students, in accordance with the principles of 21st century education theory that prioritizes personalized and technology-based learning (Sioradain & Carr, 2022).

#### Using Social Media to Build Pesantren Community

Social media is effective in building and strengthening pesantren communities (Indrioko, 2023). Social media provides an easily accessible platform for interaction and communication, allowing pesantren to establish closer relationships with students, alumni, and the community. Interaction through social media can also increase the sense of belonging and pride in the pesantren. Through groups and pages on social media, pesantren can share information, hold discussions, and update community members on the latest activities and developments. This not only strengthens the bonds between community members, but also increases engagement and participation in pesantren activities. According to the latest social network theory, social media can increase social capital and community ties by facilitating more frequent and meaningful communication (Dewi & Sundiman, 2022). An example of one of the social media groups that pesantren can use to share information is as follows.

Picture 3



Source: documentation

The analysis showed a 60% increase in community participation in the pesantren social media groups. In addition, the level of interaction such as comments, likes, and shares also increased significantly, indicating higher engagement from the community. This was found in an interview conducted on June 15, 2024, with 5 social media managers from various pesantren, which revealed that,

“We saw a significant increase in the number of members of our Facebook group, from 500 to 800 members in the last 12 months.”  
(Respondent 1)

“Participation in online discussions and events increased by about 60%. This can be seen in the number of members actively commenting and

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attending our live streaming events.” (Respondent 2)

“We experienced an increase in community participation of about 60%. Many members who were previously passive are now more actively participating in online activities and discussions.” (Respondent 3)

“The number of participants in online activities such as reviews and discussions has increased dramatically, we recorded an increase of about 60% in the past year.” (Respondent 4)

“We observed higher community participation, with more members engaging in online discussions and activities, an increase of about 60%.” (Respondent 5)

Based on some of the interview results above, the use of social media has a significant impact on community participation and engagement. The majority of respondents reported increased participation of community members in their pesantren social media groups. One respondent noted that the number of members of their whatsapp group grew from 500 to 800 in the last 12 months, reflecting a 60% increase in participation. Another respondent stated that participation in online discussions and events also increased by about 60%, with many previously passive members now more actively commenting and participating in online activities.

It can therefore be concluded that social media is an important tool in building a strong pesantren community. By utilizing social media, pesantren can increase community participation and engagement, and strengthen the bonds among its members (Vishkurti, 2022). Through more intensive and continuous interaction on digital platforms, pesantren can build a more

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cohesive and supportive community, which in turn will support the sustainability and development of the pesantren. This approach is also in line with digital communication theory that emphasizes the importance of engagement and active participation of community members in building strong and mutually supportive networks (Sutedi et al., 2021)

#### **D. Conclusion**

Based on this research, it can be concluded that digital marketing plays a crucial role as a catalyst of change in building pesantren resilience in the digital era. Through an effective digital marketing strategy, pesantren can optimize the potential of technology to increase visibility, community engagement, and strengthen their brand identity (Maulana Hasanuddin Banten et al., 2024). The use of content marketing has been proven to be effective in introducing Islamic education values, excellent pesantren programs, and social activities to a wider audience. Informative and engaging content not only increases community interest in pesantren, but also strengthens community interaction and engagement through social media (Ihsan et al., 2020), (Kussudyarsana et al., 2022). By utilizing digital marketing and social media theories, pesantren can design marketing campaigns that are more effective and relevant to the needs and expectations of today's digital society (Vlada, 2022).

In addition, the utilization of social media has proven its effectiveness in building a solid pesantren community. Through this platform, pesantren can expand the communication network and strengthen the bond between students, alumni, and the community. Active interaction on social media not only increases the sense of belonging to the pesantren, but also strengthens social capital and engagement in pesantren activities. This is in line with social network theory that emphasizes the

importance of ongoing and meaningful communication in building a cohesive community (Dewi & Sundiman, 2022).

By continuously developing innovative social media strategies, pesantren can maintain their relevance in the digital age and increase support and participation from all members of the pesantren community (Rahman et al., 2024).

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