

## Da'wah strategies for millennials and gen-z: a comprehensive literature review

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**Abstract.** This research is a literature study that describes effective da'wah methods for millennials and Generation Z in the current digital era. The study results show that social media is the most effective and widely used means of media of da'wah among millennials and Generation Z because these two generations are the most active in digital technology. Da'wah in the form of short videos and creative content on social media has been proven to increase religious understanding, self-awareness, and motivation to worship Millennials and Generation Z. In addition, social media helps to deliver religious values that are more relevant to modern lifestyles so that they are more easily accepted among the younger generation. Despite challenges such as vulnerability to exposure to negative content, da'wah approaches through interactive media such as social media have great potential to strengthen the religious understanding of the younger generation if accompanied by regular evaluation. This study emphasizes the importance of innovation in digital da'wah to achieve a young generation fluent in religious understanding despite living in the era of globalization.

**Keywords:** Da'wah strategies, millennial generation, generation Z

## INTRODUCTION

Da'wah plays a crucial role in spreading Islamic teachings, not only to strengthen the understanding of the Muslim community but also to introduce Islam to the wider society. The dissemination of Islamic teachings becomes more effective when the right medium of da'wah is chosen, enabling it to reach diverse groups and generations within society (Rubawati, 2018). The media and strategy for da'wah must be adapted not only to the characteristics of the target audience but also to keep pace with the times to ensure that the message is conveyed well and generates interest among the audience. In today's digital era, da'wah media has evolved rapidly, offering various communication channels that make the spread of da'wah more accessible.

While the digital era offers many conveniences, it also presents significant new challenges for da'wah. These challenges include the emergence of deviant understandings due to the uncontrolled flow of globalization and information. Information circulating on social media and the internet is often unscreened, allowing ideas or views that may not align with true Islamic teachings to spread and influence the public, particularly the younger generation who are active social media users. Young people in Indonesia, who belong to Generation Z and Millennials, have broad access to social media, making them the most vulnerable group but also the most potential audience for da'wah.

A study conducted by Prasetyo et al. (2024) using data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) shows that as of 2024, the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 221.5 million people, representing about 79.5% of Indonesia's total population of 278.7 million. Among this number, Generation Z leads with a percentage of 34.4%, followed by Millennials at 30.62%. Meanwhile, older generations show much lower percentages, with the successor generation (born 1946-1964) at 6.58% and the pre-boom generation (born before 1945) at 0.24%. This data indicates that Millennials and Generation Z dominate the internet in Indonesia, positioning these two generations as the primary targets for digital da'wah.

The opportunity for da'wah through online media is very large when looking at the high number of internet users from Generation Z and the Millennial Generation. Da'wah through online media can be done from various popular platforms, such as Instagram, Youtube, TikTok, Twitter, and many other platforms. With so many social media platforms, the choice of types of da'wah content also varies. However, the most commonly used are short videos, images, and live streaming that allow direct interaction between the content host and the audience. These varied approaches make da'wah easier and more attractive to the younger generation, so they can receive and understand the content easily.

However, the use of da'wah strategies through online media also requires awareness of its users because of the rampant spread of misleading information in the digital world. Dawah content in online media is expected to reduce the emergence of negative content. Social media filled with da'wah content can be a shield for all users, especially young people, to avoid misunderstanding. Due to the large number of online media that can be used as a medium for da'wah, this research focuses on knowing what strategies are widely used by Generation Z and Millennial Generation to spread da'wah and seek information about religious understanding.

Previous research shows that there have been many strategies developed and used to spread da'wah among the younger generation, namely the Millennial Generation and Generation Z. One of them is the use of social media, which has become an integral part of young people's lives. One of them is the use of social media which has become a close part of young people's lives. This is in line with research conducted by Maulida, et al. (2023), whose research results show that da'wah content presented on social media has a vital role in influencing Generation Z's level of spirituality. By watching just one or two short da'wah videos, Generation Z has a better understanding of Islam. The results of this study show that the visual appeal that is attractive and easily accessible makes one of the main reasons why online media is the right strategy to spread da'wah among the younger generation.

Furthermore, research conducted by Hidayat, et al. (2023) shows that social media is not only effective but also Sudha becomes a necessity as a medium of da'wah for Generation Z. Social-media is believed to be a suitable platform to counteract various misleading ideas because positive messages contained in it can be conveyed quickly and easily. However, it cannot be denied that negative content also spreads quickly on social media. This requires the younger generation to continue to be selective in choosing what to watch on social media.

Research conducted by Salehudin, et al. (2023) also supports the results of previous research which shows that of the 306 respondents from the Millennial Generation and Generation Z, 275 of them stated that social media is the most suitable da'wah strategy for the younger generation. This shows how enthusiastic young people are in using social media as a da'wah strategy and media because of its easy access and the da'wah content provided is often relevant to the lives lived by young people. The results of research conducted by Azman (2021) also show that social media is an ideal solution for millennials looking for religious information.

In this digital era, the internet is not only the main source of information but also a flexible and easily accessible learning platform. Millennials, who are accustomed to digital technology, find the internet, especially social media, highly practical and suited to their needs. With the high interest in internet-based information, social media serves as a source of religious information that is engaging, dynamic, and accessible, making da'wah more inclusive and adapted to the needs of young generations.

Research by Surbakti et al. (2023) adds that using social media for da'wah is an efficient strategy as it has become an integral part of Millennial life. They are actively connected to social media and open to content delivered on these platforms, especially if presented in simple, easy-to-understand language. Additionally, Surbakti et al. emphasize that attractive visuals can further motivate Millennials to engage with da'wah content.

Based on the above studies, it can be concluded that Millennials and Generation Z tend to prefer social media as the primary medium for exploring religious teachings. However, given the vast reach of social media and the variety of platforms and types of da'wah content available, it is essential to develop an appropriate approach to ensure that da'wah messages are effectively received. Therefore, this research focuses on da'wah strategies tailored specifically to Millennials and Generation Z, emphasizing the most relevant and effective forms and types of da'wah in the digital era.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Dr. Yuli Kristiyowati (2021), the theory of generations was first introduced by Karl Mannheim in his book "The Problem of Generation". In this work, Mannheim explains that individuals within a generation are influenced by shared socio-historical experiences, creating similarities in their characteristics and mindsets. This interaction leads to mutual influence among individuals within the same generation, forming consistent attitudes, values, and preferences. Mannheim's generational concept was further developed by other scholars into several generational categories, they are the Pre-Baby Boom Generation (born 1945 and earlier), the Baby Boom Generation (born 1946–1964), the Baby Bust Generation or Generation X (born 1965–1976), the Echo of the Baby Boom or Millennial Generation (born 1977–1997), Generation Net or Generation Z (born 1998–2009), and Generation Alpha (born 2010–2025).

Each generation has its own characteristics and outlook. For example, Millennials are the only generation that experienced the transition from analog technology to digital technology. This causes Millennials to be a generation that has a high curiosity for new technology, which makes them one of the most active social media users. The online activeness of the Millennial Generation has an important role in the dissemination of information across digital platforms around the world, including da'wah content in the digital world.

In contrast, Generation Z has been interacting with digital technology since they were born, making them very fluent and familiar with the digital world including social media. Generation Z tends to absorb information faster if it is presented in an attractive visual form, they also prefer bar and video-based content over long written

text-based content. With these characteristics, reaching Generation Z through proselytizing on social media is very possible.

Research conducted by Gazali (2021) shows that Generation Z is a generation that is very tolerant and appreciates diversity. This generation is very aware and open-minded to social issues that occur in the world. The characteristics of this generation make da'wah content easier to accept, especially da'wah content related to social issues, justice, and humanity. This generation also enjoys discussing and brainstorming on social media.

The use of generational theory in this research plays an important role in providing further understanding of the social characteristics possessed by the Millennial Generation and Generation Z. The social characteristics of these two generations can serve as a reference in formulating appropriate da'wah strategies that can be applied to the Millennial Generation and Generation Z. This is because an effective da'wah strategy must be tailored to its target audience.

The generational theory not only provides knowledge about the characteristics of each generation but also offers guidance and direction in formulating appropriate strategies for effective da'wah. By using a da'wah strategy that suits the characteristics of each generation, it will produce a more effective da'wah. So that it can make young individuals who are the successors of the nation who have an understanding of religious knowledge.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method. Mulyati & Kultsum (2023), explained that Meriem described qualitative research as research involving people, programs, groups, and certain policies. In this study, the Millennial Generation and Generation Z are the groups that are the subject of this research. As for the literature review according to Mahanum (2021), John W. Creswell describes the literature review as a written summary of articles from journals, books, and other documents that describe theories and information both past and present.

A literature review is not just describing one by one existing results, but the author is required to provide a critical review of the various literature so that it can confirm a study. In compiling a literature review, there are six organized stages that the author goes through, starting from determining the topic, finding relevant literature, developing arguments, conducting surveys of related literature, criticizing the literature, and then writing the review. The data used in this research are scientific books and articles that have been reviewed and examined by the author carefully to obtain comprehensive results and conclusions for knowledge about the da'wah strategies used by the Millennial Generation and Generation Z.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the most effective strategy for reaching Millennials and Generation Z in da'wah is through social media. These generations are highly familiar with digital technology, which has become an essential part of their daily lives. They use digital technology for nearly every activity, such as shopping, entertainment, online learning at school and university, working, and seeking information and knowledge. Social media has become one of the main platforms they rely on, including for obtaining information and insights about religion.

Research conducted by Nikmah (2020) revealed that there are several strategies used by Ustazd Azharul Husein to optimize da'wah through social media. The first is, he shares religious knowledge with the audience with regular content. Second, there is a team tasked with helping to spread and promote its da'wah content on various platforms so that the spread of da'wah content can be widespread. Third, he manages a dedicated website that provides information on common religious issues that young people are usually curious about. Fourth, he creates interesting and creative da'wah content and then uploads it on various social media platforms such as YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Instagram which makes the da'wah content delivered more interesting and varied.

The variety of formats available on social media, which makes it hard to get bored, leads to a high level of social media usage among Millennials and Generation Z. There are various types of content formats available on social media, such as videos, images, short articles, and much more. Among the many interesting and creative types of content, religious preaching in the form of short videos has become the most popular type of religious content among Millennials and Generation Z. Research conducted by Rejeki et al. (2024) shows that short-duration religious preaching videos play an important role in strengthening Generation Z's understanding and faith in Islamic teachings. Da'wah content in the form of short videos is not only easy to access and understand but also very relevant to their daily lives, which sparks interest in continuously studying and deepening religious knowledge.

In addition, various types of social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) allow da'wah content to be delivered more widely and creatively. Dai (Islamic preachers) who use social media must also understand how to capture young people's attention with relatable communication styles, using language they can connect with, and offering examples from everyday life that resonate with their experiences. In facing the challenges of da'wah in the millennial era, preachers must continually innovate and adapt their da'wah

methods to align with technological developments so that the message of Islam can be received and understood well by Millennials and Generation Z.

### **TikTok**

TikTok is an app originating from China, known as Dou Yin in its home country. In 2018, TikTok ranked among the top 10 most downloaded apps in several Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, with the majority of its users being young people (Batoebara, 2020). TikTok's popularity surged globally, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced people worldwide into lockdown and kept them at home. During this period, TikTok became an incredibly popular platform, with many challenges or "trends" emerging, followed by users from various countries. Short videos featuring these trends, such as making dalgona coffee, lip-syncing to popular songs, and various other challenges, helped accelerate TikTok's global reach.

Retrieved from CNN News Indonesia as of August 2024, TikTok remains one of the most popular apps, with 157.6 million users in Indonesia, the majority of whom belong to Millennial Generation and Generation Z. The content on TikTok is diverse, ranging from entertainment and business to religious content. Over time, more and more TikTok users have started uploading religious content. Several religious figures, such as Ustaz Irfan Rizki Haas and Ustazah Halimah Alaydrus, gained popularity because their concise and impactful religious videos. These short religious videos are particularly popular among Millennials and Generation Z because the topics often resonate with their daily lives, such as life challenges and struggles. Furthermore, the use of simple and easily understandable language makes the religious messages more relatable and accessible to young people.

TikTok, which acts as a social media platform to spread da'wah, has several advantages. One of the biggest advantages is that the TikTok platform can easily influence the mindset of its users, especially the younger generation. The da'wah content contained in TikTok also uses language that is easy to understand and relevant to modern life, this is one of the attractions for Millennials and Generation Z as well. This platform also provides a 'comment column' feature where users can exchange ideas and share religious knowledge. Being a very accessible platform is also an advantage of TikTok in attracting users.

TikTok is an effective social media for launching da'wah strategies for the younger generation because of several advantages it has. Because the type of da'wah content offered is varied, creative, and innovative, and is relevant to Millennials and Generation Z. Short da'wah videos that are easy to understand and access have also successfully become one of the sources of learning religious knowledge for the younger generation. These advantages make TikTok one of the popular platforms for young people to gain religious knowledge.

### **YouTube**

YouTube is a platform that has been around for over a decade. Founded in 2005 by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim (Chandra, 2017). Although it has been operating for more than ten years, YouTube's popularity remains a topic of conversation. One of the reasons why YouTube has remained relevant until now is because of its function that allows users to upload and watch long-duration videos. Although YouTube initially focused on long-duration video content, over time, YouTube followed the trend by releasing a new feature called "YouTube Shorts," which allows users to upload and watch short videos like the TikTok platform. However, unlike TikTok, which only focuses on short videos, YouTube has maintained its hallmark as a platform for uploading and watching long-duration videos.

These advantages are what makes YouTube one of the popular platforms for social media users to seek knowledge, including da'wah content. After watching an interesting short video, users can search for long video content that contains similar discussions, making the discussion on the topic more detailed and thorough. YouTube provides a more flexible viewing experience and provides a lot of knowledge to its users by providing various features that can be used for free. One of the features provided by YouTube is the 'comment section' feature. Similar to the TikTok platform, the 'comment section' feature is often used by its users to exchange opinions and share knowledge about topics relevant to the video provided. In addition to increasing knowledge, discussions carried out in the 'comment column' feature can also connect users around the world so that users can enjoy the experience of interacting with various other users from various countries.

Ustadz Abdul Somad is one of the prominent Islamic preachers in Indonesia and has 4.46 million subscribers recorded as of November 2024. He also utilised YouTube as one of the media for spreading Islam. This is in line with research conducted by Effendy (2023), which states that the da'wah content uploaded by Ustadz Abdul Somad on his YouTube channel has succeeded in reaching a wide audience, from the younger generation to adults.

### **Instagram**

Reporting from Tempo News, Instagram was first created in 2010 by two young entrepreneurs from the United States, Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. This platform has various interesting features, such as uploading photos and videos and interacting with other users through features such as 'like,' comments, and sharing content. Instagram has become one of the most popular platforms with its rapid development since its launch. At first, Instagram only had features for photos and videos in the 'feed' and 'stories' formats. However, similar to YouTube who added a short video feature after seeing the success of TikTok, Instagram introduced the 'Reels' feature to



keep up with the trend of short videos that are increasingly popular among users, especially Millennials and Generation Z.

Da'wah content comes in various forms on this platform, such as in the form of photos and videos. In addition to da'wah video content uploaded by preachers, da'wah content on Instagram is also often in the form of photos with text about religious knowledge or Hadith and Holy Qur'an verses which are usually accompanied by music that strengthens the atmosphere of the content. Da'wah can be delivered in various creative and interesting ways through various features provided by Instagram. This content can be in the form of inspirational images, short videos with moral messages, or religious quotes that are relevant to everyday life.

According to a study conducted by Fahrezi et al. (2024), the strategy of using Instagram as a da'wah media is very effective to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation in various parts of the world. Users are facilitated to access da'wah content because Instagram provides various features for free, such as photo and video uploads, comment columns, likes, tagging, explore, stories, and also post to. These features provide opportunities for preachers to deliver da'wah in a more creative and interesting way. Instagram also allows its users to interact directly with users through the 'comment column' feature.

### **X (Twitter)**

Application X, previously known as 'Twitter', is a social media application founded in 2006. Reporting from Kompas News, the X application underwent a fairly significant transformation by adding various new features in 2023 after being acquired by the famous American entrepreneur, Elon Musk. Twitter was originally designed because it was inspired by the simplicity of the SMS (Short Message Service) messaging system, which was originally designed for short text-based interactions.

This simple system can be seen in the early features of Twitter that provide 'like', 'retweet', and 'quote-tweet' features. It is because of the simplicity of Twitter's features that makes it widely used by people due to its lightweight application that can run on even simple gadget devices. However, Twitter's features underwent many changes after it was acquired by Elon Musk. Even the name 'Twitter' was also replaced with 'X', and the Twitter logo which is identical to the blue bird was replaced with a white X logo on a black background. This rebranding by Elon Musk made Twitter loved by many young people because of the many new features it added.

After the acquisition by Elon Musk, Twitter evolved into a platform that has various features that keep up with the times. Some of these include threads, communities, hashtags, and direct messages. One of the most interesting new features for younger users is the 'Space' feature, where users can make real-time voice calls with hundreds of participants. This feature provides an opportunity for users to interact and exchange opinions in real-time and conduct discussions on religious topics. In addition, the X platform also provides a short video feature that can be scrolled like the TikTok feature, this short video content is usually favoured by young people in search of da'wah content.

Updates to this application have attracted many millennials and Generation Z because they can access a variety of content, one of which is da'wah content. The flexibility of this platform is also one of the advantages in allowing da'wah content creators to share their content in various types of formats, ranging from short tweets to long tweets in the form of threads that can open a forum for discussion for its users. For example, in the Space feature, Islamic preachers or influencers can open a question and answer session on a religious topic that they are currently speaking about and then they will hold a real-time joint discussion on the topic. This kind of interaction provides an experience for users because it is very attractive to the younger generation who seek knowledge.

One of the famous religious influencers among the younger generation is Husein Ja'far Al-Hadar, and he even earned the title 'Millennial Habib' because of his modern and fun way of preaching to the younger generation and easy to understand for the Millennial Generation and Generation Z (Putri, 2023). He is very active in preaching on platform X and often interacts with his followers on the platform. He usually posts open-ended questions that encourage the younger generation to exchange ideas on the topic. His unique style of preaching makes his own appeal to Millennials and Generation Z.

Based on the da'wah carried out by Habib Ja'far, platform X shows its great role as an effective medium for launching da'wah strategies in the digital era like now. By linking religious teachings with the lives and problems commonly faced by the younger generation in the modern era, he is able to create da'wah that is easily understood by the younger generation. Interactive features on X, such as replies and retweets, further amplify his messages, allowing them to reach a wider audience when his followers share his posts to their networks.

### **The Impact of Da'wah on Social Media**

Although social media has proven to be an efficient strategy for spreading da'wah to the Millennial and Generation Z generations, it cannot be denied that there are several negative impacts resulting from exposure to negative content spread across these platforms. Excessive use of social media can reduce interaction with people around its users and lead to the emergence of many radical misleading groups on behalf of certain religions, ethnicities, or ideologies, which often deviate from accepted norms (Pesik, 2022). In addition, social media can also have a negative impact on health. Excessive use of social media to forget time can reduce sleep hours which will have a long-term negative impact on the body (Sudrajat, 2020). Another bad impact on health is that it can

cause eye damage. Continuous exposure to screens that emit blue light can cause visual disturbances such as eye fatigue, dry eyes, eye pain, strabismus, and myopia (nearsightedness) (Nursyam et al., 2024).

Although there are some negative impacts of using social media if used excessively, it cannot be denied that da'wah strategies using social media are effective strategies in the digital era like now, especially for Millennials and Generation Z. The controlled use of social media can have a positive impact on its users. Filtering the content that is watched is also necessary. As long as its use is controlled and not excessive, and the content consumed is positive, social media plays an important role in strengthening faith and religious understanding, especially among Millennials and Generation Z.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the results of this study show that the most effective da'wah strategy for Millennials and Gen Z is through da'wah content on social media, especially on popular platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. This is because both generations are very familiar with interacting with social media in their daily lives. In addition, the type of da'wah content most favoured by both generations is da'wah content in the form of short videos. However, it cannot be denied that social media also has a negative impact if overused and the content watched is not filtered.

These negative impacts include changes in social behavior, such as becoming more withdrawn and less engaged in face-to-face interactions with others. Additionally, excessive use of social media can affect health, such as causing sleep deprivation and eye damage due to prolonged screen exposure. Nevertheless, if social media is used wisely, with attention to time limits and the selection of positive content while avoiding negative content, social media can become a highly effective tool for da'wah, reaching and providing religious understanding to the millennial and Gen Z generations. For future research, it is hoped that solutions will be found to address the negative impacts of social media use, so that da'wah strategies through social media can be maximized more effectively.

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