

# Dynamics of Islamic Pesantren: Digital Marketing Strategy Model on the Existence of Santripreneur Roles

Dinamika Pesantren: Model Strategi Digital Marketing Pada Eksistensi Peran Santripreneur

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## ABSTRACT

*Pesantren today not only serve as institutions for Islamic education, but also play a role in the aspects of community life. Santripreneur has become one of the roles of santri in the economic independence of pesantren, with digital marketing being one of the distinguishing features of the typical muamalah of santri with society in general. The purpose of this research is to explore the role of Santris in addressing the challenges of the digital world, particularly in the aspect of digital marketing which has become one of the sources of income for the Santris with the pesantren strategy model. This research method uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis. Data obtained from interviews with religious leaders, instructors, and students. The results of this study show the efforts of pesantren in shaping santripreneurs who carry out digital marketing, activities that embody the spirit of the pesantren. The spirit of the pesantren is the identity of the santri who continue to uphold the values of the pesantren, indicating a significant dynamic within the pesantren regarding the existence of santri who are capable of engaging in digital business aspects, particularly in marketing. The marketing strategy of the santri optimizes the digital competencies possessed by the santri that are inherent to the pesantren, focusing on optimizing marketing content on social media and e-commerce.*

**Keyword:** Digital marketing; Dynamics of Pesantren; Pesantren; Santripreneur

## ABSTRAK

Pesantren saat ini tidak hanya berperan sebagai Lembaga Pendidikan agama Islam, akan tetapi berperan dalam aspek tatanan kehidupan masyarakat. Santripreneur menjadi salah satu peran santri dalam kemandirian ekonomi pesantren, kegiatan pemasaran digital didalamnya menjadi salah satu ciri berbeda dari wujud muamalah khas santri dengan Masyarakat umumnya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk mengeksplorasi peran dari santri dalam menjawab tantangan dunia digital, khususnya pada aspek pemasaran digital yang menjadi salah satu pendapatan dari santri dengan model strategi pesantren. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis deskriptif. Data yang didapatkan dari wawancara kyai, ustadz, dan santri. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan upaya pesantren dalam membentuk santripreneur yang melaksanak kegiatan digital marketing yang berjiwa pesantren. Jiwa pesantren merupakan identitas dari santri yang tetap melaksanakan nilai-nilai pesantren hal ini menunjukkan dinamika pesantren yang signifikan pada eksistensi santri yang mampu untuk menjalankan aspek bisnis digital khususnya dalam pemasaran. Strategi pemasaran santri mengoptimalkan kompetensi digital yang dimiliki santri yang melekat pada pesantren hanya pada optimalisasi konten marketing di social media dan e commerce

**Kata Kunci:** Digital marketing; Dinamika Pesantren; Pesantren; Santripreneur

## Introduction

The existence of pesantren from time to time has indeed risen and fallen, with the traditional stigma that pesantren people cannot blend with the development of the times, that pesantren have no future, and even that pesantren give rise to radical groups (Saputra & Sirozi, 2025). However, this does not discourage members of the community from sending their children to pesantren, looking at the results that it produces. The pesantren is basically a boarding educational institution that teaches traditional Islamic education, where Santris live together and learn religious knowledge under the guidance of a kiai. The dormitory for the santri is located within the pesantren complex, which includes the kiai's residence, the study of classical texts (turost), and a mosque as educational facilities for the santri (Zamakhsyari Dhofier, 1980).

In this era of globalization, especially the business and economic world is facing significant challenges. Technological advancement has become an unavoidable factor. Besides being a challenge, technological advancement actually brings great opportunities for the business world, even though it also poses challenges. Survey results show that 171.17 million people in Indonesia use the internet, which constitutes 64.8 percent of the country's total population. This figure continues to increase and is projected to reach 196.7 million people by June 2020. This phenomenon supports the hypothesis that the Indonesian society as a whole has prepared itself for the fourth industrial revolution era (May Shinta Retnowati, 2024). Technological advancements can be used to introduce products to customers around the world more quickly and easily. Successful businesses heavily rely on marketing (Albanjari, 2022). Business actors usually use marketing patterns that focus solely on profit, overlooking community empowerment and education. According to the latest technological advancements, the paradigm of conventional strategies has led to spiritual marketing or sharia marketing that utilizes social media. In sharia marketing strategies, the principles of the company are applied through two concepts: profit and blessing, known as Ta'awun. The aspects of muamalah in Islamic law, which contain shari'ah laws worldwide, must be upheld (Handoko, n.d.). Digital technology has several attractions and advantages for both consumers and organizations (Kannan & Hongshuang, n.d.). With the presence of advanced electronic media technology, it can support e-commerce and encourage rapid growth (*Digital Marketing Menang Telak Ketimbang Pemasaran Konvensional* | *tempo.co*, 2022). Simplistically, by creating a homepage and serving product orders through the internet, one can already be considered a global marketer engaging in e-commerce.

The main challenges faced by pesantren are the limitations of technological infrastructure, the lack of digital training for teachers (*ustadz*) and student (*santri*),

and the need for a mindset change so that technology is not seen as a threat, but rather an opportunity. On the other hand, an increasingly digital society demands that pesantren expand their outreach for preaching and educational services through social media, online platforms, and technology-based management systems (Akhyar, 2024). Modern pesantren like Cahaya Langit Digital have proven that the integration of tradition and innovation can go hand in hand, while still maintaining the core values of pesantren and utilizing technology to enhance the quality of education and management. From these challenges arises the important role of Santris as santripreneurs—Santris who are not only proficient in religious knowledge but also possess an entrepreneurial spirit and digital skills (Afriyanti & Junaidi, 2022; Sa'dullah Assa'idi, 2021). Programs like Digital Preneur Santri and Santripreneur in various Islamic Pesantrens equip Santris with training in business, digital marketing, creative content production, and technology-based business management. Santris are encouraged to innovate, build online businesses, and become agents of economic change in their Pesantrens and the wider community. The role of santripreneurs is expected to address digital challenges while strengthening the economic independence of Islamic Pesantrens. With digital and entrepreneurial skills, Santris are not only ready to face the future job market but also capable of creating new jobs and expanding the contribution of Islamic Pesantrens to the national digital economy ecosystem (Afriyanti & Junaidi, 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2024). Islamic Pesantrens are increasingly recognized as centers for economic empowerment and innovation, without losing their identity as producers of scholars and guardians of Islamic traditions, as well as fulfilling their responsibility as educational institutions. to become agents of social and economic change in the community. However, the limitations of the Santris' competencies pose a unique challenge as a medium for social and economic change in society, particularly in the digital economic aspects faced, including cyber security, intense competition, human resource development, availability of internet access, and regulations.

## **Research Methodology**

Descriptive qualitative research presents research results with actual field data (Abdullah, 2014). This study examines the implementation of digital marketing strategies by the santripreneur of the Cahaya Langit Digital Islamic Pesantren using data collection techniques from observations, interviews, and documentation. The informants interviewed were the Kyai of Cahaya Langit Digital Islamic Pesantren and several santripreneurs. The analysis used in this study has four main references as follows (Sugiyono, 2017) : 1) data collection 2) data presentation, which involves presenting the data analyzed visually and descriptively, 3) data reduction, which

means simplifying and condensing the data information, and 4) drawing conclusions, which involves creating meaningful conclusions based on the analyzed data descriptively.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **1. Dynamics of Pesantren**

Islamic Pesantrens will face challenges in coping with the wave of change in the era. They must be able to balance the development of the digital world while maintaining the traditions that have become their icons (Saputra & Sirozi, 2025). The challenges faced by Islamic educational institutions in the information age include internal and external challenges (Saputra & Sirozi, 2025). Internal challenges consist of (1) facilities and infrastructure (Abidin, 2020) Their simplicity and modesty still seem to require awareness to implement a clean and healthy lifestyle, which is driven by the placement and provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure (2) Human resources (HR) (Ambo Masse et al., 2024) Human resources in the religious field are undeniable, but to enhance the existence and role of Islamic Pesantrens in the social life of the community, it is important to prioritize the provision and improvement of human resources in institutional management as well as in areas related to the social life of the community (3) Institutional management. Management is an important part of pesantren management (Abidin, 2020) Currently, it is still evident that pesantren are managed traditionally, especially with the suboptimal mastery of technology and information. This is evidenced by the fact that the documentation process of Santris and alumni of pesantren is still minimally organized (4) Economic independence of Islamic Pesantrens (May Shinta Retnowat, 2025; Syahputra et al., 2022). There has never been a better way to sustain the sustainable economy of these schools, both in terms of improving facilities and in the process of daily activities. There are many Pesantrens that rely solely on donations or contributions from external parties to complete their constructions over a long period.

Meanwhile, the external challenges faced by Islamic education, including pesantren, in the present time are as follows (Zamakhsyari Dhofier, 1980) : (1) The application of science and technology in societal life, which affects communication forms, interactions, public service systems, and so on; (2) The entry of modern cultural values that are materialistic, hedonistic, and secular, which leads to moral decadence; (3) The interdependence between countries that causes domination and violations of human rights; (4) The increasing public demand for more just, democratic, egalitarian, quick, and precise treatment leads to political fragmentation; (5) The existence of free market policies that regard education as a commodity that can be bought and purchased. The existence of these two

challenges indirectly demands that Pesantrens play a stable role amidst these pressures. This can be evidenced in the role of the development of digital technology, which brings significant changes to the dynamics of Pesantrens, especially in the aspect of developing the entrepreneurship of Santris or santripreneurs. Pesantrens, which have long been known as traditional educational institutions, are now beginning to transform into educational centers that integrate religious values with digital skills and modern entrepreneurship. The dynamics of pesantren in the digital era show a transformation from traditional educational institutions into centers of innovation that integrate religious education with technology and digital entrepreneurship. Santripreneurs become key in facing challenges and seizing opportunities in digital marketing, so that pesantren not only produce a generation that is religiously knowledgeable but also economically independent and competent in the digital world. The success of this integration requires support in infrastructure, training in digital competencies, and a balance between tradition and innovation, so that pesantren remain relevant and competitive in the future.

## **2. Pesantren and Digital Marketing**

The pesantren is a religious-based educational institution whose main purpose is to disseminate Islamic knowledge, uphold Islamic traditions, and produce new scholars. These three main tasks are facing the challenges of changing times and the characteristics of the current generation. In the fields of information, communication, and biotechnology, rapid advancements have transformed many aspects of life. Economic development includes pesantren after the emergence of economic innovation phenomena entering the era of digitalization. Information technology has erased geographical boundaries, producing new ways to create new innovations (Abidin, 2020). One example is the development in digital technology involving artificial intelligence (AI), which transforms data into information, making it easy and affordable to optimize business and economic. As a progressive non-formal Islamic educational institution, Pesantren Cahaya Langit Digital Ponorogo must create and implement effective digital marketing strategies to enhance the visibility of the Santris' businesses, through various digital marketing techniques that can drive the economic independence of the pesantren through Santris who are capable of developing independent businesses that can improve personal and overall pesantren welfare, while also opening up new job opportunities within the pesantren.

Digital marketing in Islamic Pesantrens plays an important role in helping Santris develop technology-based entrepreneurial skills, such as marketing products online through social media, marketplaces, and digital content. This

allows the Pesantrens to not only be centers of religious education but also as centers of economic empowerment that are adaptive to digital challenges and opportunities (May Shinta Retnowati, 2024). At the Cahaya Langit Digital Pesantren, led by Kyai Muhammad Tholut, they embrace this challenge as a manifestation of the dynamics of the Pesantren. The Santris at this Pesantren are not only taught about religious education such as reading classical texts and memorization, but they are also provided with digital business competencies, particularly in digital marketing. Currently, the Santris at Cahaya Langit Digital Pesantren already have several business accounts and they have developed their businesses independently. With the existence of digital marketing competencies held by the Santris, the Santris of the Cahaya Langit Digital Islamic Pesantren as santripreneurs can expand the market, increase sales, and build the reputation of the Pesantren in a modern and efficient manner. The Santris are involved as a team for social media management, responsible for creating content, updating posts, and interacting with followers. This involvement not only enhances the digital skills of the Santris but also strengthens social bonds and collaboration within the Pesantren environment. Moreover, digital marketing also supports the Pesantren in spreading religious teachings more widely and interactively, bridging religious traditions with technological innovations (Abidin, 2020; Afriyanti & Junaidi, 2022). The existence of digital marketing encourages Santris to be creative in creating content that aligns with Islamic values and pesantren, while also being consistent in managing social media accounts to keep the audience engaged and growing. Therefore, the integration of pesantren and digital marketing is a key factor in shaping a generation of Santris who are not only religious but also independent and competent in the digital era.

### **3. Strategies of Digital Marketing “Pesantren Cahaya Langit Digital”**

Islamic marketing strategy is nothing but an Islamic business strategy that aims at the process of offering, creating value for stakeholders as a principled initiator based on the Quran and Hadith, using good contracts. The marketing strategy is fundamentally a business strategy directed towards creating and changing the value for stakeholders and an offer in the process that utilizes the principles of Shariah muamalah (*business*) for fulfilling consumers' lives, free from falsehood (Suryana, 2016). Marketing strategy is a process of creation and offering but must meet the elements of Sharia consisting of three elements, namely (G. Armstrong, 2018) : (1) Theitis (Rabbaniyah), which is the belief of a producer that must be optimistic solely because of the pleasure of Allah SWT; this belief in Rabbaniyah is very difficult to uphold by companies; (2) Ethical (Ethics) behavior and norms; and (3) Realistic (Reality) transparency with no defects in the goods.

Sharia marketing must avoid dirty and harmful practices to consumers, meaning that producers must be transparent and prioritize honesty in carrying out their business. Sharia marketing and digital marketing have a close correlation in the context of modern business. Sharia marketing is a marketing approach that bases its strategy on Islamic principles, such as justice, transparency, and blessings in every step. Meanwhile, digital marketing utilizes digital technology to reach a wider market and enhance business competitiveness. The correlation between the two lies in the application of sharia values in digital marketing activities. In the Islamic perspective of digital marketing, all activities related to technology must be based on sharia law. This means that there should be no elements of *riba* (interest), *maisir* (gambling), haram products, or *gharar* (uncertainty) in online marketing activities. By applying digital marketing strategies based on sharia, santripreneurs can optimize the potential of digital technology while maintaining the integrity of sharia values in every aspect of operations and business interactions. The implementation of digital-based sharia marketing can enhance the competitiveness of entrepreneurs by building trust and customer loyalty.

The digital era provides opportunities for pesantren to achieve santri's financial independence by managing digital-based businesses. Pesantren can use digital platforms to manage their own businesses. This can include selling products, such as food, books, or handicrafts, or offering online training that can generate additional income (Aziz & Santoso, 2023). Pesantren can also utilize other digital economies, such as providing consulting services, conducting online marketing, or using crowdfunding platforms to support their projects. Pesantren can fund their needs to build facilities, pay teachers, and provide scholarships to Santris with the income from these activities. The santripreneurs at Cahaya Langit Digital Pesantren using marketing strategies conduct this business, namely:

1. Through social media platforms Instagram and Tiktok. This marketing strategy that utilizes social media platforms to promote brands, products, or services. This strategy involves creating and sharing content across various social media platforms to achieve specific marketing goals, such as increasing brand awareness, driving engagement, directing traffic to websites, and boosting sales. The stages in marketing strategy through social media include: 1) Recognizing the Target Audience Understanding who your target audience is, including their demographics, interests, and online behavior, is crucial to ensure your marketing efforts are targeted effectively. 2) Choosing the Right Platform identifying which social media is most relevant to your target audience, for example, if it's young people, then Instagram or TikTok could be used, whereas Facebook might be more suitable for older individuals. 3)

Create unique, engaging, and valuable content for the audience. Content can take the form of text, images, videos, infographics, or a combination of all of these, and make sure the content is informative, relevant, and entertaining. 4) Use relevant hashtags to increase content visibility. 5) Set a consistent posting schedule to maintain audience engagement. 6) Use paid advertisements on social media platforms to reach a wider audience, build brand awareness, and increase traffic. 7). Connect various social media in one integrated platform to facilitate management and ensure that no customer interactions are missed, 8). Collaborate with influencers relevant to your brand to reach a wider audience and build trust, and 9). Monitor and analyze the performance of your social media campaigns regularly. Evaluate metrics such as the number of followers, engagement rates, and conversions to measure the effectiveness of your strategy and make necessary improvements.

2. In addition, they also market through e-commerce with optimized live chat marketing. strategies to promote businesses and sell products or services online using e-commerce platforms. E-commerce itself involves all buying and selling activities conducted electronically. It includes various actions to increase profits and ROI while reducing investment in brand promotion. The main components of e-commerce include: Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising, Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, Content Marketing, and Retarget Ads. With an effective e-commerce marketing strategy, businesses can increase traffic to online stores, boost sales conversions, and build long-term relationships with customers. For santripreneurs in Islamic Pesantrens, understanding digital marketing strategies is crucial for effectively engaging with Santris and the community.
3. When they use this system, they also focus on creating engaging content to attract and retain the audience. In this business, they do not provide products themselves, or they only market from local SMEs present in the Pesantren environment. By applying these strategies, santripreneurs can optimize the promotion of their local products, enhance competitiveness, and make a positive contribution to the economy of the pesantren and the surrounding community. Digital marketing can increase the visibility of the Pesantren, attract donors, and recruit Santris from different parts of the world.
4. Islamic Pesantrens must consider the quality of digital content created by Santris, whether it is business marketing materials or religious outreach content. Building a website or digital platform that provides



high-quality and easily accessible content will help the Pesantrens to remain relevant in the global market. In addition, they can utilize social media to share religious knowledge, enhance Santris' insights, and introduce the Pesantrens to the wider community as well as promote Santris' businesses. Furthermore, the schools can also develop online discussion programs to expand their business reach to people around the world.

It is important for Pesantrens to teach entrepreneurship to their Santris in a way that is relevant to digital developments. For example, Pesantrens can teach Santris how to start an online business, manage a digital store, or even create their own technology products. By preparing Santris to have digital-based entrepreneurial skills, Pesantrens will produce Santris who not only have religious knowledge but are also ready to face the modern world.

The financial reporting management of the pesantren has not been optimally executed, thus optimizing the administrative process and transparency has not been realized. This system allows the pesantren to manage data such as attendance, finance, and other administrative matters. Furthermore, with this reporting system, it can facilitate stakeholders, such as the parents of the Santris, the government, and donors, to monitor and report the activities of the pesantren. The inadequate recording and reporting, especially concerning the businesses run by the Santris, is due to the fact that these businesses are managed individually by the Santris, resulting in the financial impact being felt primarily by the Santris, while the pesantren only receives approximately 30% in grants from the Santris' business profits.

## **Conclusion**

Following the growth of economic innovation phenomena and the advent of the digital age, economic development encompasses pesantren. In a contemporary and effective way, santripreneurs can boost sales, broaden the market, and enhance the Pesantren's reputation. At its core, the marketing strategy is a business plan that involves using Shariah muamalah principles to create and modify value for stakeholders. Ethical Theitis realistic transparency and flawless products. Sharia marketing requires producers to be open and honest in their business dealings in order to avoid unethical and damaging activities for consumers. This company either doesn't produce its own goods or solely markets goods from nearby SMEs that operate in Pesantrens. Santripreneurs can improve competitiveness, maximize the marketing of their regional goods, and positively impact the pesantren's and the neighborhood's economies. Digital marketing can draw in benefactors, recruit Santris from around the globe, and raise the Pesantren's profile. The Pesantrens can

stay competitive in the worldwide market by creating a website or digital platform that offers excellent and user-friendly material. It is crucial that Santris at Pesantrens learn about entrepreneurship in a way that is pertinent to technological advancements.

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