



## THE ROLE OF @OFFICIALDARSUN IN CONSTRUCTING KH. ALI MUSTAFA YAQUB'S IDENTITY: Digital Da'wah Perspective

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### Abstract

The research problem addresses shifts in religious communication within the digital era, where scholars' identities are shaped not only by direct interaction but also by curated representations on social media platforms. This study examines how the Instagram account @officialdarsun constructs the identity of KH. Previous research by Ali Mustafa Yaqub focused on content, production, and audience. The central argument is that the construction of ulama identity posthumously is influenced by message selection, presentation strategies, and the negotiation of meaning between account managers and the public. The theoretical and conceptual framework is informed by Branston and Stafford's work in *The Media Student's Book* (2003: 265–279), which highlights the importance of analyzing content, production, audience, and academic perspectives in media research. The methodology adopts a constructivist paradigm and an interdisciplinary approach, integrating communication science, digital media studies, and da'wah-hadith. The research employs virtual ethnography, utilizing non-participatory observation, digital documentation, interviews, uploaded recordings, archive review, and literature review. Data analysis involves reduction, visual reading, narrative interpretation, and presentation of findings, with validity ensured through source triangulation. The findings indicate that directed curation, production strategies, and audience engagement are crucial in affirming Kiai Ali's scholarly authority in digital spaces and demonstrate how religious identity can persist through media construction. This research offers a significant contribution to the field of Islamic communication in the context of the rapidly evolving digital era.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Social media is now the primary space for recognizing scholarly figures, so the identity of the ulema is no longer formed mainly through direct interaction in scientific assemblies, but through visuals, audio, and digital narratives widely circulated on online platforms. This shift marks a shift in religious epistemology, from authority that relies on direct transmission and formal institutions to the construction of meaning mediated by the logic of digital media (Bunt, 2018). Religious representation on social media is thus not neutral but shapes how people understand, assess, and affirm the authority of the clergy (Bunt, 2018).

Stuart Hall affirms that representation is an active process of forming meaning through a system of signs and certain discourses that work in social and historical contexts (Aula, 2020). In the context of digital scholars, representation through social media is an arena for the production of meaning that determines which aspects of scholars' scholarship are highlighted and how they are perceived by the audience. Gary R. Bunt shows that the development of Islam in the digital space gives birth to a cyber-Islamic environment, which is a new religious space that has a different logic of authority, aesthetics, and legitimacy mechanisms than conventional religious spaces (Bunt, 2018).

The identities of religious figures on digital platforms are also strongly shaped by the media production process. The practice of editing, material selection, upload rhythm, and content packaging style creates a certain "version" of a scholar that is considered representative by the public, even though it does not always reflect the overall reality of his science. In the framework of Erving Goffman's dramaturgy, social identity is understood as the result of performance tailored to a particular stage and audience (Burns, 2002). Social media serves as a digital stage where the identity of the ulema is presented in a curated, repetitive manner. Tony Walter adds that in the context of posthumous figures, digital representations can even form a new symbolic presence that continues to live on in the collective memory of the audience (Walter, 2017).

Christine Hine emphasizes that online spaces are a living social field in which meaning is formed through collective interaction (Hine, C. 2017). Alice Marwick also points out that digital participation creates new hierarchies of visibility and authority that are often not fully aligned with traditional authority (Marwick, A. E.

2013). In this context, the legitimacy of the clergy is determined not only by personal scientific capacity but also by the dynamics of audience reception in the digital space.

This phenomenon can be seen in the representation of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub on social media, especially through the Instagram account @officialdarsun. The public response that affirms his scientific capacity as a hadith scholar shows how the audience contributes to affirming scientific authority through participatory mechanisms typical of social media. However, this reinforcement occurs within a media logic that tends to highlight certain aspects of his knowledge, while other dimensions may be simplified. This condition shows that the construction of digital scholar identities is never completely intact, but is always selective and contextual.

Responsible representation demands curated content based on authentic literature and academic principles. Heidi A. Campbell emphasizes the importance of religious digital literacy, the ability to understand the relationships among technology, religious values, and religious authority in the digital space (Campbell, 2010). Without this literacy, social media has the potential to become an arena for the simplification of teachings and the fragmentation of religious knowledge.

Hine and Gauntlett emphasized the importance of understanding the media as a space for the production of meaning that must be managed reflectively, rather than simply used for popularity (Heidi A. Campbell, 2008). On the other hand, audiences also need digital literacy to interpret religious content critically and distinguish between online representations and scientific reality. Sonia Livingstone emphasizes that digital literacy includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce media messages reflectively (Livingstone, 2004). Danah Boyd added that understanding the dynamics of platforms helps the public recognize the limits of media construction and maintain the objectivity of meaning.

## **B. METHODS**

This research adopts the constructivist paradigm, which sees social reality as shaped by meaning constructed through symbolic interactions, language, and evolving social practices. Unlike positivism, which treats reality as objective and independent, constructivism views meaning as the outcome of ongoing social negotiation among actors.

In this study, religious identity—particularly that of the ulama—is viewed not as a fixed attribute of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, but as a digital construct shaped by curation, message selection, and audience interaction on social media. Consistent with Berger and Luckmann, social media functions as a space where religious reality is symbolically objectified, institutionalized, and internalized by the public as a new "social reality" (Berger, 1991). The constructivist paradigm enables this research to analyze how the @officialdarsun Instagram account not only shares KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub's lectures, but also actively shapes perceptions of hadith authority, scientific character, and the identity of the Darus-Sunnah Islamic Boarding School after his passing.

This research uses an interdisciplinary approach, integrating communication science, digital media studies, and da'wah-hadith studies. This approach is appropriate because the construction of scholars' identity on Instagram intersects with media communication, digital culture, and the ethics of Islamic knowledge transmission.

The subject of this research is the @officialdarsun Instagram account, managed by the Darus-Sunnah Islamic Boarding School, which serves as the official platform for disseminating KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub's da'wah content after his death. The account acts as a communicative agent, selecting, compiling, and distributing digital representations of Kiai Ali. The research examines the construction of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub's identity as a representation of hadith science pesantren in the digital space, focusing on content, production, and audience, rather than his complete personal biography.

This research draws on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through non-participatory observation of @officialdarsun uploads, visual and audio documentation, and structured and semi-structured interviews with account managers and internal audiences. Secondary data include digital archives, academic literature, media theory books, and scientific journals relevant to digital communication and da'wah. The study uses qualitative data to focus on symbolic meaning, narrative, and interpretation, enabling an in-depth analysis of how religious identity and authority are constructed.

Data collection methods include non-participatory observation, digital documentation, and interviews. Observation covered uploads, captions,

comments, and audience interaction patterns without direct researcher involvement. Digital documentation entailed archiving visual and audio content for analysis. Interviews provided insights into content curation and audience perceptions of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub's representation.

Data analysis uses the framework developed by Branston and Stafford, which includes four dimensions: content, production, audience, and academic research. Content analysis examines visuals, audio, and narratives. Production analysis reviews curation, editing, and impression management. Audience analysis considers comments, engagement, and public reception. Academic analysis connects empirical findings to relevant theories and literature. Data validity is ensured through triangulation by comparing observations, interviews, and literature reviews. This approach enhances credibility and minimizes researcher bias, providing a strong empirical and theoretical foundation (Denzin, 1978).

### **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In contemporary media studies, the media is no longer understood as a neutral channel for conveying messages, but rather as an active arena for the production of meaning, where various interests, ideologies, and social practices interact. Gill Branston and Roy Stafford affirm that each media product is the result of a series of interrelated and interlocking research processes, not just a stand-alone creative output (Branston & Stafford, 2006). This view aligns with the tradition of cultural studies, which rejects the assumption that meaning is inherent in the text. Instead, meaning is produced through the relationship between the text, the producer, the audience, and the broader social context. Stuart Hall states that representation is not a passive reflection of reality, but rather an active practice of forming meaning through a system of signs and language (Hall, 1997). In this framework, the media becomes a space where identity, including religious identity, is repeatedly constructed, negotiated, and reproduced.

Branston and Stafford propose a methodological framework that explains how each media product is formed through four main types of research: content research, production research, audience research, and academic research. The four are not linear; they influence each other in the production and circulation of media meaning. Likewise, in the context of Islamic communication, Andi Faisal Bakti views da'wah as a communication practice that cannot be separated from the medium and its audience (Bakti, 2020). Therefore, media research is an important analytical tool to understand how da'wah and the authority of

scholars transform in the digital space. This framework is important because it allows researchers to read the media comprehensively, avoiding being bogged down in text analysis alone, and to take into account institutional factors, audience practices, and broader theoretical reflections. In this context, the identity of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub's social media presence can be understood as the result of the interaction among these four research types.

Content research focuses on the media text and the forms of representation it displays, including the choice of visuals, language, narrative, and symbols. Branston and Stafford place content research at the center of understanding how meaning is constructed in media. Content analysis does not stop at "what is shown", but examines the "how" and "why" of those representations that are produced.

Branston and Stafford also emphasize the importance of understanding the social, cultural, ideological, and historical context of media texts. Content is seen as the result of deliberate selection of meaning, rather than a complete representation of reality. Therefore, content analysis examines not only what is shown, but also how and why those representations are produced, as well as what narratives are prioritized in framing media reality. Bakti emphasized that religious media plays an important role in shaping public discourse and the perception of religious authority (Bakti, 2018).

In the context of @officialdarsun account, content research appears in visual selection (black-and-white photographs, teaching poses, calm expressions), quotation choices (advice, hadith, or moderate statements), and narratives that emphasize the scientific authority of the hadith. This representation is not a coincidence, but builds the image of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub is an authoritative, scientific scholar (Observation, 2025). Stuart Hall's theory of representation helps explain how meaning in media texts is polysemic, yet it remains limited by a particular discursive framework. In other words, while audiences can interpret variously, the initial construction of meaning is still guided by the representation strategies used by account managers.

Production research examines the social, institutional, and professional conditions behind media content production. Branston and Stafford emphasize that media are always produced within certain constraints, such as institutional pressures, editorial policies, market logic, and work routines (Branston & Stafford, 1978). In digital media, these limitations extend to platform algorithms, social media visual culture, and online audience expectations. Bakti emphasized that da'wah through the media must consider communication ethics and scientific responsibility to avoid reducing religious messages (Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

In the @officialdarsun case, the production research appears in the practice of curating KH's digital archives. Ali Mustafa Yaqub. Lecture materials, photos, and quotes are selected, cut, and repackaged to fit the social media format. This process shows that the identity of the scholars displayed is not a complete representation of their lives and thoughts, but rather the result of a selection shaped by the logic of digital consumption. This approach aligns with David Hesmondhalgh's view that cultural production always involves a negotiation between symbolic idealism and structural limitations (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). Thus, the identity of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, who is present on social media, is an identity mediated by the interests of production and technology.

### **Audience Research: Participation and Social Legitimacy**

Audience research places the audience as an active subject in the production of meaning. Branston and Stafford reject the passive audience model and explain that audiences interpret, respond to, and even participate in shaping the meaning of media. On social media, the role of the audience is increasingly significant through comments, likes, and resharing. Bakti emphasized that public involvement in religious media also plays an important role in shaping the beliefs and authority of da'wah (Bakti, 2012).

Audience interaction on the @officialdarsun account serves as a mechanism of social legitimacy. Praise and scientific acknowledgment, and reference to the authority of the hadith of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub strengthened his image as a credible scholar. In Hall's encoding/decoding framework, the audience not only receives the message but also engages in negotiated or preferred readings that reinforce the dominant meaning (Stuart Hall, 1980). Thus, the identity of clerics in digital media is shaped not only by content producers but also by audiences who collectively affirm that authority.

### **Academic Research and Theoretical Reflexivity**

Academic research serves as a reflective layer that links empirical findings to broader social and cultural theories. Branston and Stafford assert that without academic research, media studies risk falling into superficial descriptions. Academic research requires researchers to reflect on their own epistemological positions. Bakti also emphasized that da'wah in the era of globalization must be carried out intelligently, reflectively, and responsibly so as not to lose the depth of scientific value (Bakti, 2011).

In this study, academic research allows a critical reading of the construction of KH identity. Ali Mustafa Yaqub: Does the digital representation simplify the complexity of his knowledge? Is the authority built selectively and contextually? These questions can only be answered through a dialogue between empirical data and theory. This approach aligns with

Nick Couldry's emphasis on seeing the media as a social practice with implications for power (Couldry, 2012). Thus, social media not only represents scholars but also reshapes the relationship of religious authority in the digital public space.

Based on the framework of Branston and Stafford, it can be concluded that KH's identity. Ali Mustafa Yaqub's presence on social media is the result of a complex interaction among content research, production, audience, and academia. These four research works simultaneously shape the meaning, legitimacy, and authority of the clergy. This framework provides a solid theoretical foundation for reading the phenomenon of digital scholars while avoiding textual reductionism or technological determinism. Thus, social media is understood not only as a da'wah tool but also as a space for the production of religious identity, which demands critical and multidimensional analysis.

### Conceptual Frame

Tabayyun is a fundamental epistemological principle in Islam that serves as a mechanism to prevent distortion of meaning, mistranslation, or manipulation of messages. The Qur'an affirms this principle explicitly in QS. al-Ḥujūrāt [49]: 6:

*This verse emphasizes that all information must undergo a clarification process before being disseminated, especially if it has the potential to cause social or moral impacts. In the context of digital da'wah, this verse is the normative foundation for the content curation process, including the selection of quotations, the cutting of lectures, and the repackaging of religious messages.*

This principle of tabayyun is emphasized in the hadith narrated by the Prophet (Imam Muslim, Yahya ibn Syaraf al-Nawawī, 2016).

*"It is enough for a person to be considered a liar when he tells everything he hears." (HR. Muslim).*

This hadith shows that inaccuracies in information are not always due to false intentions, but to carelessness in conveying information without selection or verification. In the context of social media, the practice of cutting, framing, and reposting da'wah content without a scientific context can fall into this category. Imam al-Nawawī, when lecturing on the hadith and in his discussion in al-Majmū', affirmed that the transmitter of knowledge has a scientific responsibility to maintain the context of the meaning (siyāq) and the purpose of origin (maqṣūd al-kalām). He considered that the partial delivery of knowledge to abort the meaning in



question includes the form of *taḥrīf al-ma'nā* (distortion of meaning), although it does not change the pronunciation literally (Yahya ibn Syaraf al-Nawawī, 2019).

In the context of contemporary communication, Andi Faisal Bakti emphasized that religious media bear epistemic and ethical responsibilities in shaping public discourse. He emphasized that *da'wah* in modern media must be carried out with the principle of prudence so as not to get caught up in simplifying messages for the sake of popularity (Andi Faisal Bakti, 2018). Thus, *tabayyun* functions as a bridge between Islamic normative principles, research practices, and the curation of digital *da'wah* content.

### **Da'wah (Invitation): Delivery Ethics and Communicative Wisdom**

*Da'wah* in Islam is not only measured by the truth of the substance of the message, but also by the way it is delivered and its communicative manners. This principle is affirmed in QS. an-Naḥl [16]: 125:

*This verse shows that da'wah must be based on ḥikmah, the ability to place messages in proportion to the conditions of the audience, the medium, and the social context. In digital media, wisdom requires sensitivity to visual logic, the rhythm of information consumption, and the potential for audience misunderstanding.*

This principle is reinforced by the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ in the history of Imam Muslim (Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, 2004). "Indeed, gentleness is not in a thing but it adorns it, and it is not taken away from something but it destroys it." (HR. Muslim).

This hadith emphasizes that the ethos of *da'wah* is ethical and communicative, not confrontational. In the context of social media, a rude, provocative, or manipulative style of delivery, even if it carries evidence, has the potential to damage the message of *da'wah* itself. Imam al-Ghazali in *Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn* explained that the honor of scholars does not lie solely in the breadth of their knowledge, but also in manners, scientific honesty, and the way they deliver their teachings. He emphasized that knowledge conveyed without manners can actually destroy meaning and foster symbolic arrogance (Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, 2001). Bakti emphasized that *da'wah* in the global and digital era must be carried

out in a reflective and responsible manner, paying attention to the impact of the message on the audience and the wider community (Andi Faisal Bakti, 2020).

### **Content Preparation Patterns and Scientific Representations**

The results of observations on the Instagram account uploads @officialdarsun show that the pattern of content preparation is carried out selectively, consistently, and thematically. The content published consists mainly of snippets from KH's lectures. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, in the format of short videos, hadith clarification audio, and archival photos of his scientific activities during his lifetime. The themes repeatedly raised emphasize the thoroughness of sanad, methodological discipline in hadith science, and scientific manners in the transmission and reception of religious knowledge (Observation, 2025). Visually, the content is presented in a simple style, with minimal aesthetic manipulation. The visual selection tends to preserve original archives, such as black-and-white photographs or documentation of recitation activities, which show Kiai Ali in a teaching or discussion position. This pattern shows that the account's main focus is not on exploiting the visual appeal typical of social media, but on affirming the scientific identity and authority of the hadith inherent in the figure of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub (Observation, 2025).

The caption that accompanies the upload is written in a concise, informative, and descriptive manner, without subjective opinions from the account manager. Captions generally serve to explain the material's context, the source of the lecture, or reinforce the main message conveyed by Kiai Ali. This practice demonstrates epistemic awareness to maintain the authenticity of the message and avoid distortion of scientific meaning through the admin's one-sided interpretation (Observation, 2025). This observational finding is strengthened by the testimony of H. Zia ul Haremein, as Khadim Ma'had Darus-Sunnah, as well as the only son of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub. He emphasized that content management @officialdarsun was directed as a form of scientific mandate to preserve his father's scientific heritage, not as a means of personal or institutional imagery. Content curation is carried out with the principle of prudence so that each material displayed remains in harmony with the manhaj of hadith and the scientific attitude of KH. Ali (Interview, H. Ziaul Harmaen, 2025).

This explanation is in line with the statement from the Darus-Sunnah Media Center (MCD) Team, especially Ustadz Muhammad Aqil, as the head of MCD, who stated that each content goes through an internal selection process, especially related to the clarity of the source, the context of delivery, and the conformity with the values of the pesantren. The MCD team seeks to avoid cutting lectures that could alter the original intention or cause misunderstandings among the audience (interview, M. Aqil, 2025).

Among internal audiences, students and alumni of Darus-Sunnah consider @officialdarsun content a reliable scientific reference, especially for those who did not have the time to learn directly from Kiai Ali. The content is perceived as a "methodological reminder" on how to approach hadith and differences of opinion. Meanwhile, Darus-Sunnah's external audience views this account as a calm, non-provocative, and distinct source of da'wah, in contrast to the tendency of popular religious content on social media, which is often simplistic (Interview, M. Aqil, 2025).

### **Digital Content Production and Curation Process**

In terms of production, the digital documentation and observation of uploads to the Instagram account @officialdarsun show that the content editing process is selective and controlled. The account manager chooses a piece of KH's lecture. Ali Mustafa Yaqub is considered the most scientifically essential, especially for the part that emphasizes the accuracy of the sanad, prudence in issuing fatwas, and proper manners in understanding the hadith. The truncation is done without altering the structure of the main argument, so that the substance of the message remains intact even when presented in a short format.

In terms of audio, the lecture recordings are streamlined to focus on technical aspects such as sound clarity and the elimination of background noise, without altering intonation, word pressure, or KH's original speaking style. Ali Mustafa Yaqub. This approach demonstrates a conscious effort to maintain the authenticity of the voice as part of the ulama's symbolic authority. The visuals are generally drawn from archives of scientific activities, such as lectures, scientific forums, or teaching moments, with a dominance of calm expressions and simple poses that convey scientific authority.

The upload rhythm is relatively stable and consistent, indicating continuous production planning. This pattern is strengthened by Ustadz Aqil's statement that every content uploaded through @officialdarsun first goes through an internal selection process to ensure the material's suitability with the scientific character of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub and the vision of Darus-Sunnah Islamic boarding schools (Interview, M. Aqil, 2025). According to him, the main principle of content production is to "maintain the scientific mandate and not add personal interpretations outside of Kiai Ali's original message."

The same thing was conveyed by H. Zia ul Hamein, as Khadim Ma'had Darus-Sunnah, as well as the son of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub. He emphasized that the management of his father's digital archive was directed to maintain the purity of the message and avoid symbolic exploitation of scholarly figures (Interview, M. Aqil, 2025). Therefore, there was no indication of the addition of editorial narratives, ideological framing, or interpretive comments from account admins. Content production is directed at maintaining the symbolic objectivity of KH figures. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, through a curation practice that emphasizes the proportional sorting, arrangement, and presentation of material.

### **Audience Response and Engagement**

Analysis of the comment column and interaction patterns on the Instagram account @officialdarsun shows the dominance of affirmative responses, expressed as respect, longing, prayer, and recognition of the benefits of KH's lecture. Ali Mustafa Yaqub. This comment pattern reflects the audience's affective involvement as well as a symbolic recognition of his scientific authority in the digital space (Observation, 2025). In addition to comments, the like, save, and share features are used intensively. The practice of saving indicates that content is positioned as a valuable scientific reference, while sharing and tagging with others indicates the audience's role as a distribution agent for da'wah messages. This shows that the audience is not passive, but actively participates in expanding the reach and legitimacy of KH representation. Ali Mustafa Yaqub (Alice E. Marwick, 2013).

These findings align with the concept of audience gatekeeping, which views the audience as a filter and driver of message circulation on social media. Through

repeated digital engagement, the audience also selects, strengthens, and normalizes the image of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub was a strict and methodical hadith scholar. Thus, his digital identity is not only formed by the account manager but also institutionalized through the collective participation of the audience after his death (Christine Hine, 2004).

### **Digital Representation and Identity Construction of Post-Deceased Scholars**

The identity of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, who is present on Instagram @officialdarsun, does not appear naturally, but is formed through a process of representation that continues to be reproduced in digital space. The media plays an active role in producing meaning, not just reflecting reality as it is, through the selection of certain symbols, languages, and cultural contexts (Stuart Hall, 1997). Uploads in the form of lecture clips, hadith clarification audio, and archive photos serve as a tagging practice that shapes how the public recognizes KH figures. Ali Mustafa Yaqub also interpreted his scientific authority.

The identity constructed through such representations does not reflect the overall biographical complexity of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, on the other hand, highlights certain dimensions, such as the rigor of hadith methodology, sanad discipline, and scientific manners. This emphasis aligns with Hall's concept of encoding, the selective process by which media producers determine the elements that form the dominant meaning (Hall, 1980). This finding is reinforced by Ulfa Khairina, who shows that the effectiveness of da'wah on Instagram depends heavily on selecting meaningful lecture pieces, using simple visual formats, and keeping captions short to prevent the message from spreading and losing direction (Khairina, 2021). Savanna also emphasized that media content must be produced through systematic planning, from the formulation of ideas and selection of formats to the scheduling of uploads, to maintain the relevance and consistency of the message (Savanna et al., 2021).

From the perspective of Islamic communication, Bakti and Lecomte emphasized that the content of da'wah should display the core substance of the teachings in a clear and ethical manner, without the addition of subjective opinions from da'i and editors that have the potential to distort religious meaning (Andi

Faisal Bakti and Isabelle Lecomte, 2015). The meaning that continues to be reproduced is gradually accepted as a reality taken for granted in the collective consciousness of digital audiences (Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, 1966).

### **Production, Curation, and Impression Management as an Authority Practice**

The practice of producing and editing content on the @officialdarsun account can be read as a form of impression management in the digital space. Erving Goffman explained that social actors always perform a "front stage" to build the desired image before an audience (Erving Goffman, 1959). In this context, the account manager acts as an institutional actor who regulates how the figure of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub was "shown" to the digital public, even though he had passed away. The selection of scientifically dense lecture pieces, the avoidance of excessive visual effects, and the absence of editorial opinions indicate a conscious strategy to maintain the impression of objectivity and scientific authority. This kind of production is not just a technical problem, but a symbolic practice that determines the limits of the representation of scholarly figures. David Gauntlett asserts that identity in modern media is formed through consistent and repeated symbolic selection, so that certain meanings become dominant and stable (Gauntlett, 2008).

From the perspective of media sociology, the practice of production is also related to symbolic power relations. Shoemaker and Reese explain that media content is influenced by various levels, ranging from individuals, media routines, organizations, and ideology (Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, 1991). On the @officialdarsun account, the production routine and institutional policies of the Darus-Sunnah pesantren serve as the main filters that control the representation of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, so that the content that appears is relatively homogeneous in terms of value and message.

This view aligns with Nadia's research on media content design, which emphasizes the importance of format and message consistency in building audience trust (Nadia, 2021). In the framework of Islamic communication, Bakti and Meidasari emphasized that digital da'wah requires a suitable fit between the substance of the message, the format of presentation, and the character of the platform, so that the authority of the communicator is maintained. The findings of

this study show that @officialdarsun maintains this conformity, enabling content production to function as a mechanism for stabilizing KH authority. Ali Mustafa Yaqub is in the midst of digital da'wah, which is often sensational, fragmentary, and popularity-oriented. Thus, the production of representations on the @officialdarsun account cannot be understood as a passive or neutral activity. It is an institutional practice that actively manages impressions, limits meaning, and affirms the scholarly authority of post-death scholars through continuous symbolic control.

### **Digital Audiences as Agents of Legitimacy and Co-production of Meaning**

One of the important findings of this study is the active role of the audience in strengthening the construction of KH identity. Ali Mustafa Yaqub. Affirmative responses, storage practices, and redistribution of content show that audiences are not only consumers of messages, but also co-producers of meaning. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of audience gatekeeping, which positions the audience as a determining actor in the distribution of messages on social media (Melati Budi Srikandi et al., 2023).

Marwick explained that legitimacy on social media is formed through visibility, interaction, and public recognition. In the context of @officialdarsun, the legitimacy of KH's authority. Ali Mustafa Yaqub not only derives his scientific reputation from his lifetime, but also from the collective recognition of the audience who continue to reproduce his scientific narrative. As such, digital authority is relational and relies on the involvement of online communities. Jufriyanto emphasized that the reception of religious messages in the digital space is greatly influenced by the extent to which these messages meet the cognitive and affective needs of the audience (Jufriyanto, 2024). The findings of this study show that audiences @officialdarsun find the content presented relevant, calming, and scientifically clear, thereby encouraging simultaneous emotional and intellectual engagement.

This discussion also needs to be placed in a broader context of Islamic authority in the digital age. Gary Bunt explained that religious authority in cyberspace is no longer purely hierarchical, but is formed through networks, interactions, and media-based legitimacy. Within this framework, the

@officialdarsun account serves as an authority node that connects the scientific heritage of Islamic boarding schools with digital audiences across generations.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

First, this study examines KH's online identity. Ali Mustafa Yaqub is shaped through ongoing social construction on social media, particularly via the @officialdarsun Instagram account. This account not only archives lectures and scientific documentation but also actively builds a new public image of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub, after his passing. By consistently selecting content such as lecture clips, hadith clarification audio, and scientific visuals, it presents him as an authoritative and civilized hadith scholar. This identity results from deliberate representation strategies adapted to social media dynamics and digital audience expectations.

Second, the research findings show that content, production, and audience research work together. They build and affirm KH's scientific authority. Ali Mustafa Yaqub in the digital space. Content research selects which scientific aspects to highlight. Production research determines how the message is packaged so it remains authentic and effective. Audience research examines how responses, comments, and resharing support mechanisms of social legitimacy. Thus, religious authority on social media depends not only on personal scientific reputation. It also relies on the success of managing collective representation and audience acceptance. The identity of digital scholars in this context is relational, negotiated, and continuously reproduced through symbolic interaction on digital platforms.

Third, this study highlights that Instagram can sustain the authority of hadith science pesantren when used ethically and academically. While formatting constraints and audience attention may simplify discourse, careful curation based on tabayyun, scientific trust, and da'wah ethics helps preserve meaning. The example of @officialdarsun shows that digital da'wah can achieve legitimacy through consistent scientific substance, simple presentation, and respect for context, thereby strengthening the symbolic authority of KH. Ali Mustafa Yaqub is a leading representative of hadith pesantren in the digital era.



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