

Beyond Normative Preaching: How TikTok Reconstructs Local Wisdom-Based Da'wah in the Nahdlatul Ulama Community

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Received: 09/05/2026

Revised: 19/06/2026

Accepted: 30/06/2026

Abstract

This study examines how Islamic education grounded in local wisdom is constructed and disseminated through the TikTok account of NU Lumajang. The research draws on the theoretical perspectives of the mediatization of religion and on Clifford Geertz's concept of religion as a cultural system to explain the interaction among media logic, religious authority, and local cultural values in digital environments. Employing a qualitative netnographic approach, the study investigates the production, circulation, and audience engagement of religious content on social media. Data were collected through the observation and documentation of 87 TikTok videos uploaded throughout 2025, analysis of user interactions in the comment sections, and in-depth interviews with account managers and selected followers to strengthen the interpretation of online findings. The findings reveal that Islamic education on TikTok NU Lumajang is communicated through short, visually engaging videos that integrate normative Islamic teachings with local traditions, cultural symbols, and regional languages. This strategy enables Islamic values to be conveyed in a contextual, inclusive, and accessible manner while reinforcing local cultural identity. The study concludes that TikTok NU Lumajang functions as a digital space where religious authority, local wisdom, and platform logics are continuously negotiated. The article contributes to the growing scholarship on digital religion by demonstrating how Islamic organizations utilize social media not only to disseminate religious teachings but also to preserve and recontextualize local cultural traditions within contemporary digital communication practices.

Keywords

Digital religion; Islamic education; Local wisdom; Nahdlatul Ulama Lumajang; TikTok.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has fundamentally transformed how people communicate and interact (Rio Febriannur Rachman, 2017). This transformation also extends to religious rituals and practices (R. F. Rachman, 2019). Patterns of religious preaching (*dakwah*), as well as the dissemination of religious messages and information, have undergone significant changes (Lövheim & Hjarvard, 2019). Consequently, internet-based media frequently serve as spaces for articulating Islamic values that intersect with local cultural dynamics. Local wisdom, or at least distinct regional nuances, is often employed by Islamic organizations as a cultural framework for communicating religious understandings to broader audiences (Rio Febriannur Rachman, 2018).

According to Gary R. Bunt's concept of the cyber Islamic environment, religious authorities, whether organizations, communities, or individual religious leaders, have increasingly utilized the internet as a space for cadre development, education, da'wah, and even economic activities (Bunt, 2018)



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(Al Aliby, Jayanto, & Sari, 2025). Research on the TikTok account of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama, one of Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations) Lumajang Branch, namely @nulumajang, is highly relevant to this context. This relevance stems not only from the account's recognition in 2023 as one of the most active and widely followed NU-affiliated TikTok accounts nationally. More importantly, the existence of TikTok NU Lumajang represents the intersection of digital media transformation, religious practice, and local socio-cultural contexts (Arif, 2023). Within the framework of the cyber Islamic environment, TikTok NU Lumajang can be understood as part of an organizational effort to utilize digital media as a platform for education, da'wah, and the dissemination of Islamic values. Consequently, investigating TikTok NU Lumajang offers both strong theoretical and empirical justification as a study of how local religious organizations employ new media to promote Islamic education in digital spaces.

Although this study focuses on a local Islamic organization in Lumajang, the phenomenon it examines reflects a broader global transformation in the relationship between religion and digital media. Across different religious traditions and geographical contexts, social media platforms have increasingly become arenas where religious authority, identity, and community are negotiated beyond conventional institutional boundaries (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020). Religious organizations around the world are adapting their communicative practices to platform logics characterized by visibility, algorithmic visibility, and audience participation. In this regard, TikTok NU Lumajang represents a local manifestation of a global trend in which religious actors utilize digital platforms not only to disseminate doctrinal teachings but also to construct culturally meaningful forms of religious engagement in contemporary networked societies.

A survey conducted by We Are Social and released in February 2025 identified TikTok as one of the most frequently accessed social media platforms and websites among Indonesian internet users. Its user base continues to expand rapidly each year (Kemp, 2025). TikTok's distinctiveness lies in its capacity to shape how religious messages are produced and received through short-form videos, intensive visualization, and algorithm-driven content distribution mechanisms (Doyle, 2023; Rosenblatt, 2021). This condition creates new opportunities to negotiate the relationship among Islamic teachings, local traditions, and the logic of digital media. In such circumstances, da'wah and the dissemination of Islamic values can no longer be understood merely as the transfer of normative knowledge. Rather, they become discursive practices through which meanings, identities, and religious authority are produced and negotiated within media spaces (Ghulam, Farid, & Ghofur, 2024). The present study, entitled *Media and Religion: Local Wisdom-Based Islamic Education on TikTok NU Lumajang*, explores how Islamic education rooted in local wisdom is constructed and circulated through the TikTok account of NU Lumajang.

This study is grounded in two principal theoretical frameworks: Stig Hjarvard's theory of the mediatization of religion and Clifford Geertz's concept of religion as a cultural system. The theory of mediatization of religion argues that within modern and digital societies, media no longer function solely as channels for transmitting religious messages. Instead, media act as social institutions that actively shape religious practices, meanings, and experiences (Hjarvard, 2015). Beyond influencing the form and presentation of religious messages, mediatization also transforms religious authority itself (Hanung Sito Rohmawati, Zulkifli, & Hakiem, 2024). Formal institutions or traditional religious leaders no longer monopolize religious authority; rather, it is increasingly mediated by digital actors such as account administrators and content producers (Bunt, 2018; Hadiyanto, Putri, & Fazli, 2025). To examine the cultural dimensions embedded in the content of TikTok @nulumajang, this study also employs Geertz's concept of religion as a cultural system. Geertz conceptualizes religion as a system of symbols

that shapes moods, motivations, and worldviews in ways that appear both meaningful and real to individuals (Geertz, 1973). From this perspective, religion cannot be separated from its social and cultural environment; rather, it is continuously intertwined with local traditions, values, language, and everyday social practices (Nadhifah, Zulaikha Rahmawati, Muhammad Isnanda Hamada Ramadhan, & Rio Kurniawan, 2024; Yilmaz et al., 2022). Within this study, Hjarvard's mediatization framework is employed to analyze how platform logics influence the production, circulation, and authority of Islamic educational content on TikTok. In contrast, Geertz's concept of religion as a cultural system is utilized to interpret how Islamic values are embedded within local cultural symbols, pesantren traditions, regional languages, and everyday practices. Together, these complementary perspectives enable the study to explain both media processes and cultural meanings.

This study, therefore, views TikTok @nulumajang as both a mediating space and a cultural space. On the one hand, TikTok shapes how Islam is communicated through the logic of digital media. On the other hand, the Islamic values disseminated through the platform remain deeply rooted in local wisdom and the religious traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama (Deslima, 2021). The integration of these two perspectives enables a more comprehensive analysis of local wisdom-based Islamic education on social media, not merely as a form of digital da'wah but also as a process through which Nahdliyyin Islamic identity and cultural values are reproduced within contemporary media environments (Marijan, Rachman, Wibisono, & Suwarko, 2025). In this study, local wisdom refers to socially inherited systems of knowledge, values, cultural practices, and ethical orientations that are collectively maintained and transmitted within local communities. It differs from local culture in that local wisdom contains normative principles guiding social life rather than merely describing cultural expressions (Pratama, 2024). Within the context of NU Lumajang, local wisdom is reflected in pesantren traditions, regional languages, communal religious celebrations, and Pandalungan cultural practices, which shape the interpretation and communication of Islamic values.

At least three previous studies serve as important references for this research. Firstly, an important international reference for this study is the work of Campbell and Evolvi (2020), who examined the development of digital religion across diverse religious traditions and online platforms. Through a comprehensive review of emerging digital religion scholarship, the study demonstrated that social media have become significant spaces where religious authority, identity, community, and religious practice are continuously negotiated (Bunt, 1999). Their findings suggest that digital platforms do not merely function as channels for disseminating religious messages but also actively shape how religious actors construct authority and engage with audiences. This study provides an important global perspective on how religious organizations adapt to the communicative logic of digital media while maintaining connections to existing religious traditions and cultural values (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020).

The second study, conducted by Rio Febriannur Rachman, Zainil Ghulam, and Achmad Farid (2025), is titled "*Media and Religion: Da'wah Communication of the Nahdliyyin Bersatu Movement on Instagram*" and was published in *Dakwatuna: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam*. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study examined how the Instagram account of the Nahdliyyin Bersatu Movement (GNB) carried out da'wah communication in digital spaces (Rio Febriannur Rachman, Ghulam, & Farid, 2025). The findings revealed that GNB's digital da'wah relied heavily on Nahdliyyin cultural symbols, including religious scholars (kiai), Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), grave pilgrimage traditions, and commemorations of prominent ulama.

The third study referenced in this research was conducted by Nuning Rodiyah and Rio Febriannur Rachman (2026), who analyzed the discourse surrounding the role of teachers as educators from an

Islamic perspective as presented on the Muhammadiyah website. Their findings demonstrated that audiences may perceive ideas and interpretations disseminated on the websites of Islamic organizations as representing those organizations' official positions (Rodiyah & Rachman, 2026). However, the administrators and content creators responsible for publishing such materials are not necessarily recognized religious authorities or leaders within the organization.

Based on these previous studies, it can be concluded that research on Islamic da'wah and education in digital media has primarily focused on communication processes, symbolic representation, and audience participation. This study addresses a research gap that has received comparatively limited scholarly attention: the examination of Islamic education and da'wah rooted in local wisdom and mediated through TikTok within the context of a regional Nahdlatul Ulama community, specifically in Lumajang. As such, this study may provide broader insights, or at least a comparative perspective, into similar dynamics occurring in other regions. To provide a clearer analytical direction, this study addresses the following research questions: How are Islamic educational messages grounded in local wisdom represented through the TikTok content of NU Lumajang?; how are these digital da'wah contents produced and managed by the administrators of TikTok NU Lumajang?; and how do followers interpret and engage with local wisdom-based Islamic educational content on TikTok NU Lumajang?. Methodologically, this study adopts a netnographic perspective to examine religious communication practices within digital environments. Netnography enables researchers to investigate online interactions, content production, audience engagement, and meaning-making processes occurring within networked communities by combining systematic observation of digital traces with contextual interpretation (Kozinets, 2019). This approach is particularly relevant to understanding how Islamic educational messages are produced, circulated, and negotiated on TikTok.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative netnographic approach to investigate how local wisdom-based Islamic education is constructed, circulated, and interpreted through the TikTok account of NU Lumajang. Netnography is particularly suitable for examining social interactions, cultural practices, and meaning-making processes that emerge within digital environments and online communities (Kozinets, 2019). Rather than treating social media content solely as texts, netnography enables researchers to explore how users, content creators, and audiences collectively construct and negotiate meanings through digital communication practices. The study focuses on the TikTok account @nulumajang as a digital religious community where Islamic educational messages, local cultural values, and platform-specific communication practices intersect. In line with netnographic principles, the research combines systematic observation of online content and interactions with complementary offline data collection to achieve a deeper contextual understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Nasrullah, 2017).

The corpus consisted of the entire population of videos uploaded on the official TikTok account @nulumajang throughout January–December 2025. A total of 87 videos were identified; therefore, no sampling procedure was undertaken. These data included video content, captions, hashtags, visual representations, religious symbols, local cultural references, and audience interactions appearing in comment sections. Particular attention was given to how Islamic teachings were communicated, how local wisdom was represented, and how followers responded to and engaged with the content. Audience interaction data consisted of comments posted under the 87 observed videos. Because some popular videos contained hundreds of comments, only comments directly related to Islamic values,

local wisdom, cultural identity, and audience engagement were included. Duplicate comments, emojis without textual meaning, and spam responses were excluded.

To enrich the interpretation of online observations, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with administrators of the TikTok NU Lumajang account. The interviews explored content production processes, editorial considerations, the incorporation of local cultural elements, and strategies for communicating Islamic teachings through TikTok. Additional semi-structured interviews were conducted with followers of the account to understand how audiences interpreted, experienced, and negotiated the meanings conveyed through the content.

Table 1. Informan Profile

Code	Role	Location
QS	Chair of LTN NU Lumajang	Lumajang
RD	Evaluation team member	Lumajang
ST	Islamic junior high teacher	Ranuyoso
KN	Vocational school teacher	Tempeh
ZF	Lecturer	Kedungjajang

The supporting survey employed purposive sampling, involving 120 followers of the TikTok NU Lumajang account who had followed the account for at least 3 months and had previously interacted with its content. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items measuring perceptions regarding Islamic values, local wisdom, cultural relevance, and content credibility. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in communication studies to ensure content validity. Data analysis was conducted iteratively following the principles of netnographic research. The researcher repeatedly examined online content, audience interactions, interview transcripts, and survey results to identify recurring themes and patterns (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through thematic interpretation, the analysis explored how Islamic educational messages were produced, circulated, received, and negotiated within the digital environment of TikTok. This process enabled a comprehensive understanding of the relationships among religion, local culture, audience participation, and platform logic in contemporary digital Islamic communication.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Following Kozinets (2019), the findings are organized into three interconnected dimensions of digital religious practice. The first dimension examines cultural representations embedded in TikTok content as digital artifacts circulating within the online community. The second dimension explores the content production practices of TikTok NU Lumajang administrators, who, as community actors, are responsible for maintaining religious and cultural legitimacy. The third dimension investigates

audience engagement and meaning-making processes through which followers interpret, negotiate, and reproduce Islamic values and local wisdom in everyday digital interactions.

Table 2. Theme Distribution of TikTok Content Uploaded by TikTok NU Lumajang (2025)

Theme	Number of Videos	Percentage (%)
Ibadah (Worship)	24	27.6
Muslim Community Activities in Lumajang	24	27.6
Akhlaq (Morality)	13	14.9
Aqidah (Faith)	11	12.6
Islamic Knowledge	8	9.2
History of Islam in Lumajang	4	4.6
Local Culture	3	3.5
Total	87	100.0

Table 2 demonstrates that the content uploaded by TikTok NU Lumajang throughout 2025 was dominated by two major themes: Islamic worship (ibadah) and Muslim community activities in Lumajang, each accounting for 24 videos (27.6%). This indicates that the account places equal emphasis on providing practical religious guidance and documenting the everyday religious life of the Nahdliyyin community. Moral education (akhlaq) constituted the third-largest category with 13 videos (14.9%), followed by aqidah with 11 videos (12.6%) and Islamic knowledge with 8 videos (9.2%). Meanwhile, videos explicitly addressing the history of Islam in Lumajang (4.6%) and local culture (3.5%) appeared less frequently. Although these two categories represent only a small proportion of the overall corpus, they serve as important cultural resources through which Islamic teachings are contextualized within Lumajang's historical and socio-cultural identity. Overall, the thematic distribution suggests that TikTok NU Lumajang combines normative religious instruction with community-based religious practices and locally embedded cultural narratives, reflecting a balanced strategy of digital Islamic education.

3.1. Digital Religious Content and the Representation of Local Wisdom

The 87 TikTok posts published by NU Lumajang throughout 2025 provide an important entry point for understanding how Islamic education is communicated within a contemporary digital environment. From a netnographic perspective, these posts may be understood as digital artifacts that reflect the values, identities, and cultural orientations circulating within the online community surrounding TikTok NU Lumajang (Kozinets, 2019). Rather than functioning merely as individual pieces of content, the videos collectively represent a patterned form of religious communication through which Islamic teachings, local traditions, and community experiences are continuously shared and reproduced. The thematic distribution of the content demonstrates that Islamic education on TikTok at NU Lumajang is predominantly organized around three core dimensions of Islamic teachings: aqidah (faith), ibadah (worship), and akhlaq (morality). These themes appear consistently throughout the observed period

and constitute the primary framework through which religious knowledge is introduced to followers. Content related to *aqidah* commonly discusses belief, spirituality, Qur'anic teachings, and theological reflections. Videos such as *Worldly Pleasures Are Only Temporary*, *The Qur'an as Guidance for Humanity*, and discussions of *Laylat al-Qadr* illustrate how complex theological concepts are translated into concise, accessible digital narratives. Meanwhile, *ibadah*-related content focuses on practical religious guidance, particularly during Ramadan, including fasting regulations, *zakat*, Qur'anic recitation, and prayer practices. *Akhlaq*-oriented videos frequently address everyday moral conduct, resilience, parenting, patience, and interpersonal communication.

The dominance of these themes indicates that TikTok NU Lumajang continues to maintain the educational orientation traditionally associated with *Nahdlatul Ulama*. However, the presentation of such themes differs significantly from conventional religious learning environments. Religious messages are communicated through short-form videos, visual storytelling, subtitles, and simplified explanations that align with TikTok's communicative logic. This finding supports Hjarvard's (2015) argument that religion in digital environments undergoes processes of mediatization, whereby religious communication adapts to the technological and cultural characteristics of media platforms. Islamic teachings remain present, yet they are reformulated into formats that are more compatible with contemporary patterns of media consumption (Choirin, Dwijayanto, Yumna, & Muaz, 2024). This pattern illustrates what Hjarvard (2015) describes as the mechanism of accommodation within the process of mediatization. Rather than altering the substance of Islamic teachings, NU Lumajang adapts the form, pacing, and visual presentation of religious messages to correspond with the communicative logic of TikTok. Short videos, subtitles, visual storytelling, and simplified explanations demonstrate how religious communication accommodates platform-specific conventions while maintaining its educational objectives.

Beyond normative Islamic teachings, the content also reveals the strong presence of local cultural representations. Several videos highlight the history of Islam in Lumajang through narratives about local *pesantren*, including Miftahul Midad, Ainun Na'im, and Faidlur Robbani. Other posts introduce regional religious landmarks, including the Nine-Domed Mosque, while some videos discuss cultural traditions such as *mudik* (homecoming) and various communal religious celebrations. Within the context of digital religion, these cultural references serve as symbolic resources that link religious teachings to local experiences and collective memory. The representation of *pesantren* deserves particular attention because it appears repeatedly throughout the dataset. Rather than being portrayed solely as educational institutions, *pesantren* are presented as cultural symbols of Islamic identity in Lumajang. Their appearance in TikTok content contributes to the construction of a digital narrative in which Islam is closely associated with local religious traditions and community history. In this regard, TikTok functions not merely as a medium for religious instruction but also as a platform for preserving and recontextualizing cultural heritage for contemporary audiences.

Similarly, the substantial number of videos documenting MTQ competitions, Qur'anic memorization contests, *rukayatul hilal* activities, and NU community gatherings demonstrates that Islamic education on TikTok NU Lumajang extends beyond doctrinal explanations. Followers are exposed to visual representations of religious life as it is practiced within the community. Such content enables audiences to witness how Islamic values are embodied through collective activities and social interactions. Consequently, religious learning occurs not only through explicit instruction but also through observing cultural practices and participating in the community. Another notable finding concerns the use of local linguistic expressions within several videos and audience interactions.

Javanese and Madurese phrases frequently appear in spoken communication, captions, and comment sections. The incorporation of these regional languages reflects the cultural composition of Lumajang society, particularly its Pandalungan character, where Javanese and Madurese cultural influences coexist. From a netnographic perspective, language constitutes an important marker of community identity because it signals shared cultural understandings among participants. The use of local languages, therefore, helps create a sense of familiarity and belonging among followers who recognize these expressions as part of their everyday social reality (Khamami, 2022).

The coexistence of Javanese and Madurese linguistic expressions should be understood within the broader socio-cultural context of Pandalungan, the distinctive cultural identity that characterizes much of Lumajang society. Rather than representing a simple coexistence of two ethnic traditions, Pandalungan refers to a long-standing process of cultural interaction through which Javanese and Madurese values, languages, customs, and social practices have become mutually integrated in everyday life. Consequently, local wisdom in Lumajang cannot be reduced to either Javanese or Madurese traditions alone. Instead, it emerges from a hybrid cultural system in which religious life, social interaction, and communal identity are continuously negotiated through the synthesis of both cultural heritages. This hybrid cultural identity is also reflected in the digital communication practices of TikTok NU Lumajang. The alternation between Javanese and Madurese expressions, the frequent representation of pesantren traditions, and the documentation of local religious activities collectively illustrate how Islamic education is communicated through a specifically Pandalungan cultural framework. In this regard, local wisdom is not merely a cultural ornament but serves as the primary communicative context through which Islamic teachings become socially meaningful and culturally familiar to followers. The findings, therefore, suggest that TikTok NU Lumajang constructs a culturally proximate form of digital da'wah in which religious authority is reinforced not only through theological messages but also through the Pandalungan community's shared cultural identity.

The integration of Islamic teachings, local cultural symbols, and regional linguistic practices suggests that TikTok NU Lumajang operates as a digital cultural space rather than merely a religious information channel. What circulates within this online environment is not only religious knowledge but also representations of local identity, collective memory, and socio-cultural belonging. Followers encounter Islam through culturally familiar and socially meaningful references. Such a pattern reflects Geertz's (1973) conception of religion as a cultural system in which religious meanings are embedded within symbols, traditions, and everyday practices. Viewed through the lens of netnography, the content shared by TikTok NU Lumajang illustrates how digital religious communities construct and maintain shared understandings through recurring symbolic representations. The 87 posts collectively reveal a consistent effort to position Islamic education within the cultural context of Lumajang society. As digital artifacts circulating within an online religious community, these contents demonstrate that Islamic da'wah on TikTok is not limited to the transmission of religious doctrines. It simultaneously functions as a process of cultural representation through which local wisdom, religious authority, and community identity are continuously articulated within contemporary digital environments (Himam, 2025).

3.2. Producing Digital Da'wah: Community Practices Behind TikTok NU Lumajang

The religious content appearing on TikTok NU Lumajang is not the product of individual creativity alone. However, it emerges from a collective process involving organizational actors, shared responsibilities, and continuous interaction with audience expectations. From a netnographic

perspective, understanding digital religious communication requires attention not only to the content that circulates online but also to the social practices that enable its production and maintenance within a digital community (Kozinets, 2019). Interviews with administrators of TikTok NU Lumajang reveal that the account operates through institutional arrangements designed to ensure both religious credibility and communicative effectiveness. According to QS, Chair of LTN NU Lumajang, content production is organized through a structured workflow involving editorial personnel, field contributors, and technical teams responsible for recording and editing audiovisual materials. Rather than relying solely on spontaneous uploads, the administrators engage in routine discussions regarding themes, target audiences, and presentation strategies before content is published. This process reflects an awareness that religious communication on social media requires planning and adaptation to the characteristics of digital platforms.

One of the most significant considerations shaping content production concerns audience accessibility (Agung, Wulandari, Anjani, & Tanjung, 2025). Administrators recognize that TikTok users generally consume information quickly and often interact with content while simultaneously engaging in other activities. Consequently, religious messages are intentionally packaged in concise formats that can be understood without requiring lengthy attention spans (Toron, Waton, Dancar, Beding, & Watomakin, 2023). Explanations of Islamic teachings are often reduced to essential points, while visual elements are used to attract viewers and sustain engagement. The objective is not to simplify religion itself but to present religious knowledge in forms that correspond to contemporary patterns of media use (Setia & Iqbal, 2022). This adaptation is particularly visible in the transformation of conventional religious activities into digital content. Sermons, religious gatherings, pesantren events, and organisational programmes are rarely uploaded in their original duration. Instead, administrators identify particular segments that contain educational value, practical advice, or culturally relevant messages. These segments are subsequently edited into shorter videos suitable for TikTok circulation. Through this process, everyday religious activities become digital resources that audiences can access repeatedly beyond Lumajang's immediate geographical boundaries. The findings further indicate that conventional religious activities are not merely recorded for online dissemination but are reformatted into content specifically designed for platform circulation. This reflects the mediatization of religious practice, whereby sermons, pesantren activities, and community events are reconstructed as platform-native digital artifacts that conform to TikTok's communicative environment while preserving their religious significance.

Another notable aspect of content production involves the deliberate incorporation of local cultural references. Administrators explained that content performs more effectively when audiences perceive it as connected to their own social environment. As a result, local traditions, community events, regional religious figures, and historical narratives frequently become part of the account's storytelling strategy. References to pesantren culture, local religious celebrations, and social activities are not inserted merely for aesthetic purposes. Rather, they function as cultural anchors that make Islamic messages feel relevant and familiar to followers. The significance of cultural proximity also appears in the linguistic choices employed throughout the account. Several videos feature presenters who occasionally use Javanese or Madurese expressions, particularly when discussing topics closely associated with everyday life. These linguistic practices contribute to a communicative atmosphere that differs from that of more formal religious broadcasts. The use of regional language signals cultural intimacy and reinforces the impression that the content originates from and speaks directly to local communities (Channoufi, 2026). In this regard, language is an important mechanism for cultivating and maintaining

online relationships (Zhang, 2026).

Interviews further indicate that audience feedback plays a meaningful role in shaping subsequent content decisions. Administrators regularly monitor comments, viewer responses, and engagement patterns to identify topics that resonate with followers. This does not imply that audience preferences completely determine editorial choices. Religious considerations remain central to the organization's mission (Khusairi, 2025). Nevertheless, digital interaction provides valuable insights regarding the types of content that encourage participation and facilitate understanding among users. Content production, therefore, becomes a dynamic process involving continuous observation of community responses (Lou & Yuan, 2019). RD, a member of the evaluation team, noted that many followers interact with videos using expressions strongly associated with pesantren and Nahdliyyin culture. Responses such as *manut kiai*, *qobiltu*, and various forms of religious greetings frequently appear within comment sections. For administrators, these interactions are important indicators that audiences are not merely consuming information but are actively engaging with the values and cultural references embedded within the content. The comment space consequently functions as an extension of the community itself, where shared identities and cultural affiliations become visible through everyday digital interactions. Monthly evaluations are also conducted to assess overall performance. These discussions examine viewership trends, audience engagement, and the effectiveness of different presentation styles. However, administrators emphasize that success is not measured exclusively through numerical indicators such as views or likes. Equal attention is given to whether content remains aligned with the educational mission of Nahdlatul Ulama and contributes positively to public understanding of Islam. Such considerations demonstrate that the account operates within a balance between organizational objectives and platform demands.

3.3. Negotiating Meaning: Audience Engagement with Local Wisdom-Based Islamic Education

The significance of digital religious communication cannot be fully understood solely through an examination of content production and circulation. Equally important is how audiences interpret, evaluate, and incorporate religious messages into their everyday lives (Yilmaz, 2026). Within a netnographic framework, users are not viewed as passive recipients of information but as active participants who continuously construct meanings through interaction with digital content and with one another (Kozinets, 2019). The findings of this study indicate that followers of TikTok NU Lumajang engage with local wisdom-based Islamic educational content in ways that extend beyond simple consumption. They interpret the content through the lenses of personal experience, cultural familiarity, and existing religious knowledge. Interviews with followers reveal that many audiences perceive TikTok NU Lumajang as a source of Islamic learning that remains closely connected to Lumajang's social realities. Rather than presenting religion as an abstract set of doctrines, the account is understood to offer practical insights that resonate with local life. This perception is particularly evident in the testimony of ST, a teacher at an Islamic junior secondary school in Ranuyoso. She explained that the account provides useful information about pesantren traditions and Islamic educational environments familiar to many families in the region. For her, the value of the content lies not only in its religious substance but also in its ability to introduce younger audiences to institutions and traditions that continue to shape local Muslim communities.

Such interpretations suggest that audiences encounter Islamic education through contexts that are already meaningful within their social environment (Yuliansyah, 2025). The presence of local references enables religious messages to appear approachable and relevant rather than distant or overly formal.

Consequently, engagement with the content often involves recognition and identification (Wormley et al., 2026). Followers do not simply learn about Islam; they encounter representations of social worlds that they already inhabit or understand (Baharudin & Waehama, 2024). A similar pattern emerges in the perspective of KN, a vocational school teacher from Tempeh District. He highlighted how cultural practices discussed in several videos are connected to broader Islamic values such as togetherness, mutual respect, and social solidarity. In his view, traditions that might otherwise be regarded as purely local customs are presented as meaningful expressions of ethical principles encouraged within Islam. This connection allows audiences to appreciate cultural practices not merely as inherited habits but as activities carrying moral significance (Samsul Hady et al., 2025).

The integration of culture and religion appears to play an important role in shaping audience interpretations (Noviana, Ramdani, & Assondani, 2025). Rather than perceiving local traditions and Islamic teachings as separate domains, followers frequently understand them as mutually reinforcing elements of community life. This finding reflects the broader character of Nahdliyyin religiosity, where religious expression is often intertwined with local customs, communal gatherings, and inherited cultural practices. TikTok provides a space where these relationships become visible and accessible to wider audiences. Another noteworthy dimension of audience engagement concerns perceptions of credibility. ZF, a lecturer in Kedungjajang, noted that although the videos are presented in an entertaining and informal style, they remain associated with legitimate religious knowledge. She observed that many explanations refer, directly or indirectly, to established Islamic traditions and pesantren scholarship. As a result, audiences can enjoy the accessible format without questioning the seriousness of the religious content conveyed.

This observation demonstrates that followers actively evaluate content rather than accepting it uncritically. Trust is not generated merely because information appears on social media (Shahbazi & Bunker, 2024). Instead, credibility emerges from the combination of organizational reputation, familiarity with NU traditions, and consistent messaging across videos. In this sense, audience engagement involves both emotional connection and cognitive assessment. Users participate in processes of interpretation that draw upon their prior knowledge and religious experiences. This interaction also reflects the mediatized transformation of religious authority proposed by Hjarvard (2015). Religious authority is no longer exercised exclusively through formal religious institutions or face-to-face instruction. However, it is increasingly negotiated through platform-based interactions involving administrators, followers, and digitally mediated community practices. Within TikTok NU Lumajang, authority is therefore reinforced through continuous participation, discussion, and the collective recognition of culturally familiar religious symbols.

The supporting survey further reinforces the qualitative findings regarding audience perceptions of local wisdom-based Islamic education on TikTok NU Lumajang. Among the 120 respondents, 62.5% agreed, and 20.8% strongly agreed that the account successfully integrates Islamic teachings with local cultural traditions, indicating that more than four-fifths of the participants positively evaluated the account's communication approach. Meanwhile, 10% expressed neutrality, suggesting that some followers neither fully endorsed nor rejected the integration of religious and cultural elements. Only a relatively small proportion of respondents reported negative perceptions, with 4.2% disagreeing and 2.5% strongly disagreeing. Overall, these findings demonstrate that followers generally perceive the incorporation of local wisdom into Islamic educational content as an effective and culturally meaningful communication strategy. The survey results also support the interview findings, which indicate that audiences value religious messages presented through familiar cultural symbols, regional traditions,

and everyday social experiences.

These quantitative findings should not be interpreted as statistical generalizations but rather as complementary evidence supporting the netnographic analysis. The survey was designed to triangulate patterns identified through online observation, comment analysis, and in-depth interviews. The consistency between respondents' positive evaluations and the qualitative data suggests that TikTok NU Lumajang has successfully constructed a form of digital Islamic education that remains closely connected to the cultural realities of the Pandalungan community. Rather than separating Islamic teachings from local traditions, the account presents both as mutually reinforcing dimensions of everyday religious life, thereby strengthening followers' sense of cultural familiarity and religious belonging. These responses suggest that audiences generally recognize and appreciate the account's efforts to communicate Islam through locally grounded narratives (Setiawan, 2022).

Importantly, engagement extends beyond agreement with specific messages. The comment sections indicate that followers frequently respond using expressions commonly found within pesantren and Nahdliyyin communities (Ridho, Suja, Taufik, Rahmat, & Nisa, 2023). Greetings, prayers, affirmations, and references to religious figures appear regularly in audience interactions. Such responses demonstrate that followers are not merely reacting to content but are also reproducing cultural and religious vocabularies within the digital environment (Campbell, 2021). Through these interactions, TikTok becomes a space where community identity is continuously performed and reaffirmed. From a netnographic perspective, these patterns illustrate the collaborative nature of meaning-making in online religious communities. Meanings are not fixed by content creators alone; they emerge through ongoing interactions among administrators, followers, cultural traditions, and platform environments (Usman, Nurdin, Ahmed, & Huda, 2023). Audiences bring their own experiences, memories, and expectations into the interpretive process, producing diverse yet interconnected understandings of the content they encounter (Noviana et al., 2025). The findings demonstrate that local wisdom-based Islamic education on TikTok NU Lumajang resonates strongly because it connects religious teachings with familiar cultural references and everyday social experiences. Followers engage with the content as learners, community members, and cultural participants simultaneously. Through these processes, Islamic education becomes more than the transmission of religious knowledge (Hilmi, 2022; Ummah, 2020). It evolves into a shared communicative practice through which cultural belonging, religious identity, and collective understanding are continuously negotiated within the digital sphere.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that TikTok NU Lumajang functions not merely as a platform for disseminating Islamic teachings but also as a digital religious community where Islamic values, local wisdom, and cultural identity are continually reproduced through online interactions. The analysis of 87 TikTok posts reveals that Islamic education is communicated through a combination of normative religious teachings, local cultural narratives, pesantren traditions, and regional linguistic expressions. These digital artifacts help keep Islamic messages accessible and relevant in contemporary social media environments while preserving cultural elements deeply embedded in Lumajang's social life. The findings further indicate that local wisdom is not a supplementary component of da'wah but rather an integral framework through which Islamic values are contextualized and communicated to audiences. The study also highlights that digital da'wah is shaped through an ongoing process involving content producers, platform logics, and audience participation. Administrators actively adapt religious messages to TikTok's communicative characteristics, while followers interpret and negotiate those

messages through their own cultural experiences, religious backgrounds, and everyday realities. Consequently, Islamic education on TikTok NU Lumajang emerges as a collaborative process of meaning-making rather than a one-way transmission of religious knowledge. By demonstrating how local Islamic organizations integrate religious authority, cultural traditions, and digital communication practices, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on digital religion. It provides empirical evidence that social media can function simultaneously as spaces for religious learning, cultural preservation, and community formation.

Beyond confirming prior scholarship on digital religion, this study demonstrates that the Pandalungan cultural identity of Lumajang offers a distinctive model of culturally proximate digital da'wah. Rather than separating Islamic teaching from local traditions, TikTok NU Lumajang integrates pesantren symbolism, bilingual communication, and regional cultural practices into platform-native religious communication. This finding extends existing digital religion literature by illustrating how hybrid local cultures shape contemporary forms of online religious authority and community engagement. This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single organizational TikTok account within a single regional context; therefore, its findings are not intended for statistical generalization. Second, the supporting survey was designed to complement the qualitative netnographic interpretation rather than to produce generalizable quantitative evidence. Finally, interview data may reflect the perspectives of administrators responsible for managing the account. Future research could conduct comparative studies across multiple Islamic organizations and social media platforms, or over longer observation periods, to examine how local wisdom is negotiated within diverse digital religious communities.

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