Faith in the Digital Age: Analyzing Religious Imagology through the Virtual Sorogan Tradition

Dudy Imanuddin Effendi
UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
dudy.imanuddin@uinsgd.ac.id

Ahmad Sarbini
UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
ahmad.sarbini@uinsgd.ac.id

Dede Lukman
UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
dede.lukman@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract:

This study examines a digital da'wah model promoting religious moderation through the yellow book chanting tradition broadcasted via live streaming on YouTube channels, including Al-Bahjah TV, Ngaji Gus Baha Official, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla. Employing a qualitative approach within a critical paradigm, the research analyzes the historical, social, cultural, economic, and political contexts of digital da'wah. The *sorogan* tradition is explored using descriptive-qualitative methods and virtual ethnography to capture online interactions. Data were collected through participant observation, interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis. Findings reveal that these channels effectively strengthen religious knowledge among the younger generation through engaging content and innovative visual communication. The *sorogan* tradition fosters virtual social relationships at individual and group levels, contributing to a relevant da'wah ecosystem in the digital era.

Keywords: digital preaching; religious moderation; sorogan tradition; virtual ethnography; visual communication.

INTRODUCTION

Based on 1980 BPS data, Indonesia has striking ethnic and religious diversity, with the majority of the population being ethnic Javanese and Muslim. Indonesia is a multicultural country, where diversity lies not only in ethnicity and religion but also in cultural aspects that have existed since the royal era until post-independence(Statistik, 1981). Sociologically, multiculturalism influences people's social interactions, creating cultural mixing, which can result in acculturation, assimilation, or invention. However, if not managed well, this diversity can trigger conflict and division, especially when fanaticism and exclusivism emerge, which has the potential to lead to religious extremism (Mubit, 2016).

Religious extremism arises due to differences in perceptions in understanding religious teachings, which are influenced by a person's social, cultural and educational background. One of the impacts of extremism is

intolerance, radicalism and terrorism, which are growing among the younger generation, especially in public spaces such as social media. Religious radicalization can spread due to a lack of social control in the religious transmission process (Fatharani et al., 2023). Acts of terrorism, according to Law No. 15 of 2018, are violence that causes fear and mass casualties, which is often driven by certain ideologies or politics. Radicalism is an ideology that wants to drastically change socio-politics through violence, often associated with extreme religious views (Abdullah, 2021). This behavior arises from an uncritical mindset, which emphasizes the importance of moderation in religion. Wasathiyyah Islamic values, which prioritize tolerance, can be a model for the internalization of religious values that can create a more inclusive social transformation in a multicultural society. Moderate religious education must be built in social networks and formal educational institutions to create critical and open awareness and reduce the potential for intolerance and radicalism.

Apart from that, the phenomena of intolerance, radicalism and religious terrorism take advantage of political momentum and create spaces for unproductive political contestation. Political discussions that utilize religious extremism have an impact on intolerant behavior (Abror, 2020). For example, in political moments such as regional elections, general elections and presidential elections, religious issues are politicized as a way to carry out black campaigns. The momentum of the DKI Jakarta Governor Election as well as the 2014 and 2019 Presidential Elections which were jammed with the production of political content containing hoaxes, hate speech and radical narratives of terrorism germinated in public spaces (Effendi et al., 2022). In fact, these narratives of intolerance are accompanied by intolerant actions and behavior in various forms that lead to efforts to disintegrate the nation. We can easily find these narratives and actions in the era of media convergence. Social media has become an open public space that displays the reality of the use of issues of religion, SARA, radicalism and terrorism.

Social media has become a virtual interaction space that connects various aspects of global society, creating a "global village" that transcends geographic and cultural boundaries (Chen, 2022). This digitalization is changing daily life, reflected in the use of technology in social, educational, political and religious matters. Social media creates virtual reality at three levels: individual (self-identity), inter-individual (social relations), and community (virtual community) (Khan, 2024). In the religious landscape, social media is used to transmit religious teachings through online studies, streaming tabligh, posting da'wah, and even Islamic teleconferences, replacing conventional da'wah models (Fakhruroji et al., 2020). However, this digital transmission also carries threats such as hoaxes, hate speech, cybercrime and radicalization of terrorism (Pramudita et al., 2020). However, social media is also a space for spreading messages of Islamic moderation, which can be formed through religious narratives, symbols and images in the form of texts, memes and symbols.

Information and activities for transmitting religious moderation messages in the virtual space are significant, this is based on the market potential of internet users who are in large numbers. We Are Social noted, until January 2020 active internet users in the world reached 4.5 billion people, with the number of active social media users reaching 3.8 billion people (Villalobos-Lopez, 2022). Meanwhile, in Indonesia itself, from a total population of 272 million in 2020, the penetration of active internet users reached 175 million, and active social media users reached 160 million (Braidotti, 2020). Of this total, the use of social media is dominated by the younger generation aged between 16-30 years (Fakhruroji et al., 2020).

Attitudes of religious extremism that lead to understanding, narratives, behavior and actions of intolerance, radicalism and terrorism in the digital space are more targeted at the younger generation. The potential for internet and social media users who are actively dominated by the younger generation in Indonesia is a great opportunity that certain religious groups exploit to disseminate religious messages that are destructive, intolerant and have a divisive tendency (Dewi et al., 2023). One of the reasons for the phenomenon of urbanizing Muslims is the dissemination of information and religious activities which leads to the production of religious content with the potential for radical terrorism (Effendi et al., 2022). Therefore, Indonesia's young generation has become the target and object of spreading these radical messages of terrorism.

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in January 2021 noted that the population of Indonesia until 2020 was dominated by the younger generation who fall into the categories of the millennial generation and Generation Z. Of the total population of 270.20 million people, generation Z is in the age range 8- 23-year-olds account for 27.94 percent of the total population. Meanwhile, the millennial generation in the age range of 24-39 years amounts to 25.87 percent of the total population. Generation The remainder, the baby boomer generation aged between 56-74 years, amounted to 11.56 percent, and the post-Z generation aged up to 7 years amounted to 10.88 percent (Dwi, 2021).

The data above shows the significant level of internet and social media use which is dominated by the millennial generation and generation Z in Indonesia. This is both a strength and a weakness, an opportunity and a

threat. Where, if the demographic bonus will last until 2030, if it is not managed productively, it will cause a demographic disaster, one of which is measured by the ability to meet the opportunities and threats of digital life for the young generation in Indonesia. Therefore, digital da'wah based on religious moderation must be a priority within the framework of building a landscape of religious life that is tolerant, open, critical and harmonious (Effendi et al., 2022). This is based on several symptoms of emerging threats in the dimensions of religious life in digital spaces.

A moderate framework of religious thought, understanding and action is important in representing the values and face of Islam in cyberspace (Hidayatullah et al., 2020). This is done in order to build a counter-narrative and radical acts of virtual terrorism that target the younger generation (millennials and millennials). Therefore, the activity of transmitting religious messages online must be accompanied by digital media literacy that harmonizes values, substance, narratives and actions that lead to an attitude of religious moderation. Narratives and radical acts of terrorism in digital spaces can be caused by low levels of literacy and critical attitudes in receiving religious information virtually (Nurish et al., 2021). This is reflected in the large number of productions of religious messages that fill cyberspace without any restrictions. In other words, the Mayantara space can be accessed openly by anyone, including producing religious content.

The YouTube social media platform has very significant users in Indonesia. The Hootsuite and We Are Social (2021) survey recorded 107 million potential YouTube users in Indonesia, with 61 percent of internet users frequently accessing YouTube for information and entertainment (Anubha et al., 2024). The most frequently accessed content includes films, music, sports and culinary delights, however religious lecture content (5.3 percent) and education (2.5 percent) are still relatively low. This shows that the use of YouTube for da'wah and education needs to be optimized to strengthen positive narratives in virtual spaces, which have implications for social change (Suminar, 2017). One effective way for this is to utilize the sorogan tradition, a typical Islamic boarding school tradition, which can be broadcast via live streaming. With this approach, messages of religious moderation can be reached more widely, including by the younger generation who use social media more. The sorogan tradition produced virtually has the potential to be an alternative for those who need knowledge of Islam, as well as strengthening the values of religious moderation, openness, critical attitudes and harmony in public and national life.

Some live streaming sorogan traditions that are routinely carried out are: First, 'Reciting the Ahlusunnah' with Gus Baha. Through the YouTube channel "Ngaji Ahlusunnah", Gus Baha regularly conveys Islamic messages through the sorogan method of reciting the Yellow Book. As of February 2021, the number of subscribers to the YouTube channel reached 125 thousand subscribers. Gus Baha has credibility as one of the scholars from the Nahdiyyan circle who has the scientific skills and qualifications of "santri". Apart from that, Gus Baha is seen as being able to combine Islamic boarding school traditions through virtual preaching methods. His intellectual chatter and relaxed, open and critical demeanor attract some social media users to use his Islamic broadcasts as a reference in understanding Islamic teachings.

Second, Ulil Abshar Abdalla's YouTube channel which has approximately 10.9 thousand subscribers, with total content production as of February 2021 of 424 videos. One of the contents of the Qur'an recitation of the book that is in the writer's spotlight is the content "Ngaji Ihya Ulumiddin" which is guided directly by Ulil Abshar Abdalla which has reached episode #257. As is known, Ulil Abshar Abdallah is a young NU intellectual who began to be highlighted with his thoughts since he founded the Liberal Islam Network (JIL) with other young NU intellectuals. At that time, his movement was seen as controversial by most of the Muslim community in Indonesia because it was seen as carrying out a deconstruction of the religious perspective held by Indonesian Muslims in general. Three years ago, in 2017, Ulil Abshar Abdallah started posting yellow book studies in the "Ngaji Ihya Ulumiddin" program on his YouTube channel. The author considers that his YouTube channel is a reference for how the yellow book sorogan tradition is carried out through popular social media platforms such as YouTube, so that the Qur'an tradition is still carried out using a digital da'wah model.

Third, YouTube channel Al-Bahjah TV nurtured by KH. Yahya Zainul Ma'arif Jamzuri or known as Buya Yahya. This YouTube channel already has 3.19 million subscribers with the production of preaching content of 10 thousand videos. Buya Yahya routinely presents a study of the yellow book that describes the sorogan tradition. Some of the yellow book studies presented include, Dauroh Ilmiyah Kitab Al-Wasith Lifahmi Kitabillahi Al-Muhith, Riyadush Sholihin Kitab, Bidayatul Nihayah Kitab Study, Khoridatul Bahiyyah Kitab, Adabul Alim Wa Mutaa'lim Kitab Study, Public Aqidatul Kitab Study, Book Study Safinatun Najah, and others. The study of the yellow book conducted by Buya Yahya through the YouTube channel Al-Bahjah TV commented on various problems of the community both related to aqeedah, sharia, muamalah, morals and worship. In addition, research reviews are conducted both in the context of contemporary studies and jurisprudential reviews.

The three scholars, Gus Baha, Ulil Abshar Abdallah, and Buya Yahya, who conducted live streaming studies of the Yellow Book, have their own charm amidst the flow of social media information. The three of them grew up in the Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding school tradition and brought different characteristics to their preaching approach: Gus Baha with a moderate view, Ulil Abshar Abdallah with a pluralist view, and Buya Yahya with a fundamental-rational approach. Their da'wah method, which combines the sorogan kitab tradition with digital media, has become a role model for digital da'wah based on religious moderation. This research aims to introduce the sorogan tradition as an alternative to strengthen moderate Islamic messages in virtual spaces.

The digitalization of da'wah, which is increasingly developing after the Covid-19 pandemic, allows the transmission of Islamic messages from conventional methods to digital spaces through the study of live streaming, memes, videos, animations and online applications such as Zoom. However, on the other hand, the emergence of destructive Islamic messages through social media is also a threat, which can lead to intolerance and radicalization (Kahfi & Mahmudi, 2024). Therefore, it is important to introduce a message of religious moderation that presents the image of Islam as a religion that is rahmatan lil alamin.

The dominance of internet users in Indonesia, especially the millennial and Z generations, is very high, but their digital media literacy is still low. This makes them easy targets for the spread of extremist ideology. Without proper filters, the dissemination of unhealthy religious information can lead to intolerant behavior, which is further exacerbated by the spread of hoaxes and hate speech on social media. In addition, Indonesia's low digital literacy (3.7 on the 2020 Ministry of Communication and Information scale) worsens the situation, with the younger generation tending to easily accept information without a critical attitude (Setyawan et al., 2023).

Based on these conditions, it is important to develop a digital da'wah model that prioritizes religious moderation and critical understanding. Digital da'wah activities continue to grow, but there is no model that specifically focuses on moderate religious understanding. This research is important for designing an appropriate digital da'wah model, in order to overcome the challenges and threats that arise in the digital era, as well as strengthening religious moderation among the millennial generation.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a critical paradigm to understand the phenomenon of digital da'wah based on religious moderation among the millennial generation. With this paradigm, data is obtained through a holistic approach involving historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts (Murdiyanto, 2020). This type of descriptive-qualitative research was used to analyze the sorogan tradition broadcast live streaming on YouTube channels, such as Gus Baha's "Ngaji Ahlusunnah" and Buya Yahya's "Al-Bahjah TV". The method used is virtual ethnography, which focuses on interaction and interpretation in the digital world (Hine, 2020). Primary data was collected through participant observation, online interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), documentation analysis, and life histories, while secondary data was obtained from articles, journals, and other relevant sources. Data analysis follows the Miles & Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 2013) stages, starting with data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions which leads to mapping a digital preaching model based on religious moderation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Al-Bahjah TV YouTube Account, Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Ngaji Ahlusunnah

The process of carrying out da'wah carried out via the internet in cyberspace gives rise to the discourse of cyber da'wah or digital da'wah. Practically, digital da'wah activities are carried out by Muslims by utilizing internet technology. The use of this technology is carried out in various forms of da'wah activities, including online studies, production of narratives and da'wah content, da'wah videos and animations, as well as other da'wah content (Mazaya, 2019). In simple terms, the term digital da'wah or cyber da'wah can be interpreted as all activities of conveying da'wah messages including *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* by utilizing cyber technology (internet) (Rustandi, 2019).

The internet is a medium that changes the pattern of dissemination of ideas, including ideas related to religion. The transformation of the spread of religious messages has undergone renewal from time to time. This is in line with the emergence of new information technology (Guzik & Malik, 2016). The communication pattern carried out using the internet takes place in two-way communication and is computer mediated communication (CMC). The internet virtual space has become a communication medium for Muslims oriented towards efforts to change the face of Islam throughout the world (Rustandi, 2019)

The internet has become a virtual space (cyberspace) that displays new ways in the distribution of Islamic da'wah. It contains various features or applications that make it easier to disseminate Islamic messages. Da'wah in virtual space requires interconnection and interactivity. Connections in building a network are carried out via an internet connection. Meanwhile, interactivity in virtual space is built through a series of actions in formulating ideas, packaging messages, and conveying narratives as an effort to *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (Qudratullah & Syam, 2024).

The implementation of da'wah via the internet is oriented towards the production and distribution of messages that are popular, easy to digest, framed attractively, using a multidisciplinary approach, integration of science and technology, rational and scientific, based on the normative authority of religion (the Qur'an and hadith) which are interpreted accordingly. with the actuality of events or symptoms that occur in society (Fakhruroji et al., 2020). In this case, preaching via the internet is constructed with religious language which is designed through the link between text-narrative, graphic images and visual-videography. Da'wah on the internet is carried out through engineering in the process of religious imagology, where religious language in digital media is produced subjectively (Nasrullah & Rustandi, 2016).

The typology of digital da'wah activities can be divided into six main categories, namely: (a) typology of da'wah based on websites, sites and social media networks; (b) typology of mailing list-based da'wah; (c) typology of audio-visual YouTube-based da'wah; (d) typology of chat-based da'wah; (e) typology of da'wah based on images, graphics and animation; and (f) typology of e-book da'wah (Muhaemin, 2017). The six typologies of da'wah are carried out in digital space both at the individual, inter-individual and community levels.

In practice, the above typology of da'wah activities is carried out through a series of religious content productions that link text, metaphors, images and symbols. Da'wah's activities in Internet media are oriented toward the popularization of religious messages with the hope that the message will be conveyed through a wide and relatively short reach. In this case, the implementation of Islamic da'wah is carried out with the aim of building an image of Islam which is identified as a religion of violence, anti-peace, intolerance and teaches terrorism. Therefore, the significance of Islamic da'wah in virtual space is carried out as an alternative in carrying out counter-narratives as well as a space for waging discourse wars to build a universal face of Islam, *rahmatan lil alamin*.

One of the digital da'wah activities is carried out through social media platforms. Social media is online media that allows everyone to connect in a network for the entire world community. Social media is seen as having the characteristics of participation, openness, information, community, and connectedness (Mayfield et al., 2008). One of the social media platforms that is widely used in virtual da'wah communication activities is YouTube. In Indonesia, YouTube users with various activities reach 105 million people.

YouTube is a social media based on video content. Every YouTube user can share information by becoming a channel owner. Each channel owner can create videos and share them like packaging on television (Nasrullah, 2017). YouTube provides information in the form of moving images. Generally, each user can share by uploading videos and get information by searching and downloading YouTube videos. YouTube is a video-sharing website that can be used to load, watch and share information in the form of videos for free (Lingga et al., 2019). Generally, these videos can be music clips, films, TV streaming, and videos made by the channel owner himself.

The YouTube platform is used as an alternative media which has significant implications in efforts to transmit Islamic messages. In this case, YouTube is seen as an interactive media used for exploratory Islamic da'wah strategies, animation, research, and other forms of da'wah practices (Pamungkas et al., 2023). Apart from that, YouTube has advantages in the process of archiving (archive) documentation of preaching that has been carried out and shared. In other words, Islamic literature can be accessed anytime and anywhere by users when preaching content is shared via YouTube (Mutrofin, 2018).

YouTube channels al-Bahjah TV, Ulil Abshar Abdalla, and Ngaji Ahlusunnah are three YouTube channels that consistently broadcast Islamic preaching activities, especially related to the strengthening of religious skills and knowledge in the form of studying the yellow book. Each has a yellow book study focus that is nurtured by a kiai. YouTube channel Al-Bahjah TV, under the tutelage of Buya Yahya, consistently broadcasts live-streaming studies of the books of Minhajul Abidin, Ayyahul Walad, Riyadush Sholihin, Syarah Asmaul Husna, and Al-Hikam Ibn Athaillah.

Ngaji Ahlusunnah YouTube channel under the tutelage of Gus Baha, consistently studies the yellow book Risalah Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah and Al-Qowaidu Al-Asasiyyah fi 'Ulumi Al-Qur'an. Meanwhile, Ulil Abshar Abdallah's YouTube channel, which shows the name of the real manager, routinely conducts live streaming of the study of the book Ihya Ulumiddin, Miskat Al-Anwar, and occasionally the book Al-Munqidz Min Al-Dlalal. All three are young scholars who come from the *nahdliyin* tradition and each has a unique style in the process of thinking,

interpreting and conveying the main points of book study. Currently, these three young ulama have fans, audiences, congregations, and/or YouTube congregations who are viewers and subscribers of their respective YouTube channels.

Historically, these three young NU clerics have experienced Islamic education not only in the Islamic boarding school environment, but have also received formal university education, both at home and abroad. Ethnographically, life experiences, including parental care, educational experiences, and the intellectual ecosystem that one has experienced, influence the worldview in understanding religion. Both religious teachings as a doctrine and as a system of life. Therefore, before describing the third YouTube channel which is used as a digital preaching media platform. It is important to briefly review the profiles of each of these young scholars.

Buya Yahya has the full name Yahya Zainul Ma'arif Jamzuri, who was born in Blitar, East Java, on August 10, 1973. His formal education started from elementary to middle school in Blitar, high school at the Darullughoh Wadda'wah Islamic Boarding School in Bangil Pasuruan, East Java, S1 and Masters at Al-Ahgaf Hadramaut University, Yemen, and completed the Ph.D program at the American University for Human Sciences, California, United States (Nasyrah, 2023).

His non-formal education started at Madrasah Diniah Al-Falah Blitar for 8 years under the tutelage of Al-Murobbi KH. Imron Mahbub studied the Qur'an in Blitar with Kyai Muhammad Ruba'i Marzuqi, a student of KH. M. Arwani Kudus, for 8 years studied at the Darullughoh Wadda'wah Bangil Pasuruan Islamic Boarding School under the tutelage of Al-Murobbi Al-Habib Hasan Bin Ahmad Baharun, and 9 years in Hadramaut Yemen to the ulama in Tarim and Mukalla-Hadhramaut-Yemen in under the care of Al- Murobbi Al-Habib Abdullah bin Muhammad Baharun and Al-Murobbi Al-Habib Idrus bin Umar Al-Kaf. Currently, his da'wah activities are carried out by developing the Al-Bahjah Da'wah Development Institute (LPD) in Sendang Village, Sumber District, Cirebon Regency, West Java (Nasyrah, 2023).

Apart from actively delivering religious lectures, Buya Yahya is known as a virtual kiai who often performs "Ngaji Buku Kuning" live streaming via the YouTube social media platform. The Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channel is Buya Yahya's official media which often broadcasts his studies live streaming or posts Buya Yahya's lectures in various tabligh activities. This YouTube channel appears to be the official YouTube channel which is also the YouTube channel of the Al-Bahjah Da'wah Development Institute (LPD) which he founded (Samsudin & Januri, 2018). Based on searches, YouTube content related to the study of the Yellow Book began to be posted and streamed in mid-2016. Until now, this channel has consistently produced Buya Yahya religious study content with various variations of content.

Ulil Abshar Abdalla is known as a Liberal Islamic figure in Indonesia who is a member of the Liberal Islam Network (JIL). Ulil was born in Pati, Central Java, on January 11, 1967. He grew up in the NU environment, where his father was Kiai Abdullah Rifa'i from the Mansajul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, Pati and his father-in-law was Mustofa Bisri, who is an old NU cleric from the Raudlatut Talibin Islamic Boarding School, Rembang and is known as also as Indonesian writers, artists and cultural figures (Samsudin & Januri, 2018).

His formal and non-formal education began when he was a student at Madrasah Madrasah Mathali'ul Falah, Kajen, Pati, Central Java, which was taught by KH. M. Ahmad Sahal Mahfudz (representative of Rois Am PBNU for the 1994 period-1999), became a student at the Mansajul 'Ulum Islamic boarding school, Cebolek, Kajen, Pati Central Java, received a bachelor's degree from the Sharia Faculty of LIPIA (Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences) in Jakarta, studied philosophy at the Driyakara College of Philosophy, and is currently studying took a doctoral program at Boston University, Massachusetts, United States (Samsudin & Januri, 2018).

Ulil is a liberal Muslim scholar. In 2003, the Islamic Ulama Forum issued a death fatwa for Ulil for his writing entitled "Refreshing Understanding of Islam" which was published in HU Kompas and was considered deviant by ulama in Indonesia. Apart from that, in 2011, Ulil found a bomb for himself in the Utan Kayu Community. However, its intellectual tradition is commendable. Ulil Abshar Abdallah is very productive in writing. Apart from being published in newspapers, some of his works are also published in books and scientific journals. His writings were considered controversial and drew many protests from ulama in Indonesia (Samsudin & Januri, 2018).

Apart from that, Ulil Abshar Abdallah is also known as a researcher at several research institutions, including the Information Flow Study Institute (ISAI), and Program Director of the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP). Since 2017, Ulil Abshar Abdalla has been actively organizing the "Virtual Qur'an of the Yellow Book" via the YouTube social media platform regarding the book Ihya Ulumiddin (Samsudin & Januri, 2018).

Kiai Haji Ahmad Bahauddin Nursalim or better known as Gus Baha is a young NU cleric from Rembang. Gus Baha was born on September 29, 1970, in Rembang, Central Java. Gus Baha is the son of

the couple KH. Nursalim is a cleric who specializes in the Qur'an, caretaker of the Tahfidzul Qur'an LP3IA Islamic boarding school, Kiai Nursalim al-Hafizh, from Narukan, Kragan, Rembang. Kiai Nursalim is a student of Kiai Arwani Kudus and Kiai Abdullah Salam, Kajen, Mergoyoso, Pati. In terms of lineage, Gus Baha is connected to great scholars. Gus Baha is known as KH's favorite student. Maimun Zubair. His mother's name is Nyai HJ. Yuhanidz is part of the large family of Lasem ulama, from Bani Mbah Abdurrahman Basyeiban or Mbah Sambu (Qudsy & Muzakky, 2021).

Since childhood, Gus Baha was taught to love the Qur'an. This was practiced by studying the Qur'an using the *tajwid* and *mahkhorijul huruf* (utterances) methods under the tutelage of his father. As a teenager, Gus Baha had already memorized 30 Juz of the Qur'an perfectly. Then he was entrusted to KH. Maimun Zubair to board at Madrasah Ghozaliyah Syafi'iyyah PP. Al-Anwar Karangmangu, Sarang, Rembang. In this Islamic boarding school, knowledge increasingly develops and becomes prominent by mastering the knowledge of hadith, fiqh and tafsir (Qudsy & Muzakky, 2021).

In terms of formal education, Gus Baha never received a formal university education. Even though his father offered him to study in Rushoifah or Yemen. Gus Baha chose to serve his teacher, Mbah Maimun, and his alma mater at the Al-Anwar Islamic boarding school. Since 2005, after the death of his father, Gus Baha has continued the leadership of the Islamic boarding school at the LP3IA Narukan Islamic boarding school. Even though he did not have an academic degree, Gus Baha was appointed as chairman of the Lajnah Mushaf Team at the Indonesian Islamic University (UII) Yogyakarta, at that time, sat with professors, doctors and Al-Qur'an experts in Indonesia such as Prof. Dr. Quraish Syihab, Prof. Zaini Dahlan, Prof. Shohib and members of the National Tafsir Council (Qudsy & Muzakky, 2021).

In the last few years, excerpts from Gus Baha's lectures and studies have decorated the YouTube social media platform. So he became known to Muslims in Indonesia as a scholar who is an expert in interpretation and hadith. If we search for YouTube channels, no YouTube channel can be found, which is the official media for preaching. The author has several YouTube channels, such as Ngaji Bareng, Official Smart Study, Bayt Al-Hikmah, Kalam Channel, IQRO Channel, Ngaji Online, Ngaji Gus Baha Official and Ngaji Ahlusunnah. Therefore, the author took several samples of Gus Baha's yellow book study videos from several YouTube channels that broadcast them. The author saw that the Ngaji Gus Baha Official YouTube channel was being prepared as an official study channel hosted by Gus Baha. Even though the total subscribers and viewers are still not visible, there is not much content posted (Qudsy & Muzakky, 2021).

Of course, the life background of these three young NU clerics influences their way of thinking in understanding religion. Including responding to Islamic and religious phenomena and dynamics that are developing in Indonesia and globally in the world. However, their presence in the Mayantara space proves that the preaching innovations of these three young ulama are starting to migrate from conventional methods toward digital transformation. In this case, one of the innovations in religious studies was carried out in the form of the study of the yellow book, which in the Islamic boarding school tradition is known as 'sorogan'. Where, studies with this sorogan pattern are still preserved as a typical Islamic boarding school intellectual style, but in an innovative way by utilizing the internet, especially social media platforms.

Based on the author's observations, the YouTube social media platform used by the three received a positive reception from the active internet user public in Indonesia. Especially among the younger generation who dominate the level of social media usage. Based on observations, the YouTube channel Al-Bahjah TV, which broadcasts Buya Yahya's yellow book studies, currently has 4 million subscribers with a total number of viewers reaching 460,704,472 views. To date, there are approximately 11,526 videos showing Buya Yahya religious content in the form of religious lectures, video clips, or live streaming of yellow book studies. The total number of videos, specifically a yellow book study playlist with various book titles and themes, is 1,685 pieces of content. The study of the book of tafsir of the Qur'an, the book of Riyadush Sholihin and the book of Al-Hikam has the largest number of videos, most of which are in live streaming format.

Figure 1 below shows the appearance of the Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channel in various video content playlists. The YouTube heading display is dominated by photos of Buya Yahya with variations of white, green, golden yellow and turquoise. Apart from Buya Yahya's photo, it appears to include the official media LPD Al-Bahjah, which was founded by Buya Yahya.

Figure 1. Al-Bahjah TV YouTube Channel Heading Display

Source: Al-Bahjah TV Youtube Channel, 2021

Figure 1 is a template for the Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channel heading display. If you look at the link between text, images, narratives, symbols and visible images, it is clear that Al-Bahjah TV has made Buya Yahya a YouTube channel icon. Where, Al-Bahjah TV became Buya Yahya's official media as well as LPD Al-Bahjah which he founded. In this case, the Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channel became the official preaching media for LPD Al-Bahjah which made Buya Yahya a media icon.

Figure 2. Al-Bahjah TV YouTube Religious Content Playlist Display

Source: Al-Bahjah TV Youtube Channel, 2021

Picture 2 is Al-Bahjah TV's YouTube content playlist, which has approximately 11 thousand religious content with various study variations. Good studies related to faith, worship, Sharia, morals, and muamalah. These studies are formatted in several forms, such as video clips of lectures, tabligh akbar, videos of Al-Bahjah assemblies in several regions, and live-streaming recordings of book studies.

Figure 3. Youtube Display of Live Streaming Content of Al-Bahjah TV's Yellow Book Study

*Source: Al-Bahjah TV Youtube Channel, 2021*

Picture 3 is a display of YouTube content in the form of live streaming of the yellow book study. Average video duration is 1.5 to 2 hours. It started with the opening by the host who looked like a student of LPD Al-Bahjah, iftitah or introduction from one of the asatidh LPD, then the main event from Buya Yahya who explained

the study of the yellow book according to the title in a routine and sequential manner Chapter by Chapter, hadith by hadith.

The YouTube channel, which presents religious lectures and studies of Gus Baha's Yellow Book, is spread across several YouTube media. These include Ngaji Ahlusunnah, Ngaji Gus Baha Official, Channel TV21, Kalam-Kajian Islam, Bayt Al-Hikmah, and others. The following is a picture of several YouTube channels that present Gus Baha's religious studies, which are the results of the author's searches on YouTube social media.

Figure 4. View of the Ahlusunnah Qur'an YouTube Channel
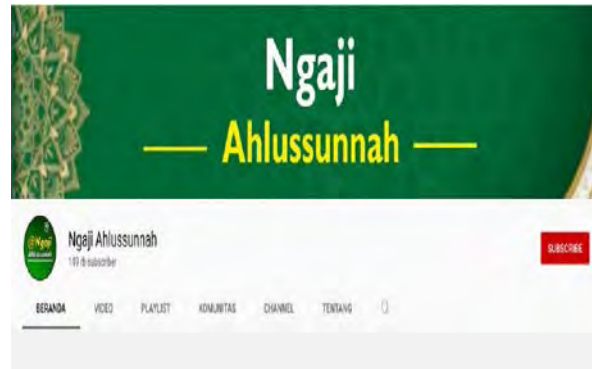
Source: Ngaji Ahlusunnah Youtube Channel

Figure 4 is the Ngaji Ahlusunnah YouTube channel which presents several videos of Gus Baha's religious content. To date, this YouTube channel has 149 thousand subscribers with a total of 53,366 viewers. This YouTube channel has been around since 2019 and still hasn't posted a playlist of YouTube content.

Figure 5. Appearance of the Official Smart Study Youtube Channel.

Source: Official Smart Study YouTube Channel, 2021

Figure 5 is a display of the Heading of the Official Smart Study YouTube channel. This channel joined in July 2019, currently has 249 thousand subscribers with a total of 30,747,051 viewers. The amount of content posted by this YouTube channel has reached 1,656 content with various variations. Of the total videos, the content that presents yellow book studies totals 339 videos, including showing studies of the books Hikam, Jauharotut Tauhid, Nashoihul Ibad, Syariatullah Al-Kholidah, Al-Barzanji, Atqiya, Hayatus Sahabah, Arbain Nawawie, and Tafsir Jalalain.

Figure 6. Display of the IQRO Channel Youtube Channel

Source: IQRO Channel Youtube Channel, 2021

Figure 6 is a display of the IQRO Channel YouTube channel. Joined in October 2019, so far he has 7.33 thousand subscribers and the number of views has reached 746,829 viewers. There are 39 videos presenting Gus Baha's studies which are general thematic studies. The author did not find any video content specifically related to the study of the yellow book by Gus Baha.

Figure 7. View of the Official Ngaji Gus Baha Youtube Channel

Source: Ngaji Gus Baha Official Youtube Channel

Figure 7 is the Ngaji Gus Baha Official YouTube channel. Joined YouTube since 2016, but the manager does not display the number of subscribers. The total viewing to date has reached 376,614 viewers. There are 109 video contents with 107 yellow book studies and interpretations.

Of the four YouTube channels above, it seems that the Official Smart Study YouTube channel can be used as the main research object. Apart from having the largest number of subscribers and viewers, the content playlist also represents the focus of the research. However, video content from other YouTube channels will still be explored and used as objects of observation that complement research.

Figure 8. Youtube Content Display of Gus Baha's Yellow Book Stud.

Source: Official Smart Study Youtube Channel, 2021

Figure 8 is a display of the YouTube content of Gus Baha's yellow book study on the Official Smart Study channel. Gus Baha's yellow book study is presented in audio form (podcast) and does not feature an audience. The duration of the study video is between 30 minutes to 1.5 hours.

Figure 9. Display of the Gus Baha Yellow Book Study Content on the Official Gus Baha Qur'an Channel


Source: Ngaji Gus Baha Official Youtube Channel, 2021

Figure 9 is a display of the study on the Ngaji Gus Baha Official YouTube channel. The same as the Official Smart Study YouTube channel, Gus Baha's yellow book study content is only presented in audio form. Then, what is characteristic of Gus Baha's studies is that he is dominated by the use of Javanese language which characterizes his local identity. However, the theme of the study is global in nature, based on the parts of the book being studied and contextualized with currently developing dynamics.

Ulil Abshar Abdallah's YouTube channel presents study content from Ulil. The naming of the YouTube channel is exactly the same as the name of this young cleric. It seems that Ulil is the main icon of this YouTube channel which consistently produces religious content, especially related to the study of the Yellow Book. Based on the author's observations, there are four book studies presented, namely, the books of Ihaya Ulumuddin, Misykat Anwar, Al-Munqidz Min Al-Dlalal, and the thematic lecture Ihya. In the heading template, it only displays a photo of Ulil and his wife, the only thing that stands out is the writing Ulil Abshar Abdallah. Here's what the YouTube channel looks like.

Figure 10. View of Ulil Abshar Abdalla's YouTube channel
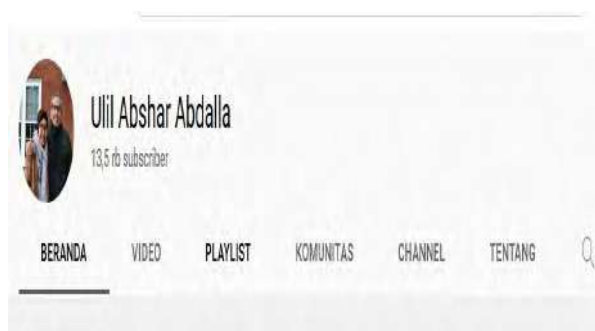
Source: Ulil Abshar Abdalla Youtube Channel, 2021

Figure 10 is a display of Ulil Abshar Abdalla's YouTube channel. Currently it has 13.5 thousand subscribers with a total of 688,738 viewers. Joined in 2006, but have only been posting Kuing book study content since May 2017. Currently we have 229 video content, with the Ihya Ulumuddin book study content being the most content with 126 content.

Figure 11. View of YouTube Content Study by Ihya Ulumiddin Ulil Abshar Abdalla.

Source: Ulil Abshar Abdallah Youtube Channel, 2021

Figure 11 is a YouTube channel display on a playlist of content related to Ngaji Ihya Ulumiddin. The image on the left is the first content when Ulil did a live stream of Ihya's study, while the image on the right is the latest content on the live streaming of Ihya's study. Unlike Buya Yahya and Gus Baha, Ulil seems to have prepared this content very simply. Without a presenter or other event equipment, from the start of the video, Ulil immediately opened the event and conveyed his studies. The duration of the study video is between 1 and 1.5 hours. The pattern of discussion of the book Ihya by Ulil is made in 4 quadrants or main parts and discussed by chapter.

The trend of using the Internet as a medium for Islamic da'wah can be seen from the total number of Internet users, which is increasing significantly. In terms of quantity, this can be used as a reference to show the size of the potential audience (object of da'wah) connected via the internet. Apart from that, the variety of media created through various features and applications makes it easier to process the production and distribution of

Islamic messages. Time efficiency, costs, and dissemination reach are other conveniences obtained when carrying out digital da'wah (Supratman et al., 2022).

Digitalization of da'wah can be said to be a trend in da'wah activities in the future. Therefore, preparing da'wah resources that have technological skills both technically and conceptually must be carried out as an effort to welcome the digital da'wah trend by utilizing sophisticated information and communication technology. Of course, this preparation is carried out through a series of training and optimization of da'wah assets oriented towards strengthening mindset, mentality, skillset and society in line with the development and sophistication of information and communication technology (Rohman, 2019).

Social media has a high level of popularity for netizens (internet users) in Indonesia. This is based on the characteristics of social media, which is inter-activity between users so that it can be used to share information and build participation and cooperation between users. Social media offers a virtual space for relationships and interactions. Therefore, social media allows for connectedness between users. So it is oriented towards the realization of a social network which leads to the existence of a global village (Faldiansyah & Musa, 2020).

In Indonesia alone, there are around 170 million active social media users. According to APJII (2018), the most widely used social media platforms are Facebook (50.7%), Instagram (17.8%), YouTube (15.1%), Twitter (1.7%) and Linkedin (0 .4%). Around 61 percent of internet users in Indonesia say they often use YouTube to access information and entertainment. In this case, the penetration of internet users accessing YouTube content in the form of films (16.2 percent), music (13.6 percent), sports (8.9 percent), culinary (7.7 percent), game tutorials (7.1 percent). percent), the world of entertainment (5.6 percent), religious lectures (5.3 percent), news (4.7 percent), vlogs of famous artists (3.5 percent) and education (2.5 percent) (Saputra, 2019).

The millennial generation, as active users of social media, must continue to be strengthened with ideas and narratives that lead to tolerance and social harmony (Masinambow & Nasrani, 2021). One way is to fill virtual channels with religious information based on religious moderation. This is important to do to build a counter-narrative to messages that are false, provocative and have a radical, terrorist tone. Religious messages based on religious moderation are an alternative in constructing a framework of thought that is moderate, tolerant, and aims to create peace (Sentosa et al., 2024).

The religious perspective views that campaigning for religious moderation values and attitudes is very important as an effort to build a counter-narrative to the spread of content that leads to the disintegration of the nation. In this case, digital media platforms must be dominated by the production and distribution of tolerant content with peaceful and non-violent narratives to strengthen the religious dimension in Indonesia (Sukenti & Hermawan, 2024).

Religious moderation should be a value that must be instilled and disseminated in virtual space. This is an effort to counter the narrative against the spread of information that is manipulative, provocative, hate speech and has radical, terrorist undertones. Religious Moderation must be developed as a religious characteristic amidst the diversity of Indonesian society. These values and attitudes must be produced massively and distributed en masse in order to fill virtual interaction traffic on various digital media platforms. Religious moderation must be strengthened to build a narrative of harmony in a plural and multicultural society (Saifuddin, 2019).

Religious Imagology in Digital Da'wah Based on Religious Moderation

Digital industrialization has led to the transformation of life into an all-digital life. This happens in various aspects of human life and daily activities (everyday life). Therefore, digital technology offers new ways of building human relationships and interactions. This relationship and interaction process occurs through a virtual space that forms a virtual community based on network work with an internet connection. Therefore, the era of digitalization requires connectivity and interactivity (Nurfitria & Arzam, 2022).

The virtual relationships that take place in this virtual space occur at three levels. First, at the individual level, which influences self-identity. Second, at the inter-individual level, which gives birth to virtual relationships such as virtual shopping, virtual games, virtual conferences, virtual sex and virtual mosques. Third, at the community level which creates a democratic and open community model. These three levels relate to various interests that are possible and sometimes occur instantaneously as a characteristic of the digitalization of human life (Supratman et al., 2022).

Social media is "a medium on the internet that allows users to represent themselves and interact, collaborate, share, communicate with other users, and form social bonds virtually (Nasrullah, 2017). Social media is seen as a virtual space that allows each user to build relationships and strengthen networks, including blogs, social networks, wikis, forums and virtual worlds. Social media is a virtual space that is used to share, build

attention and participation, and aims to create a virtual community through virtual interaction and communication processes. Social media reflects a two-way communication process between participants, where each user has the same freedom and access to sharing and receiving information (Lestari, 2024).

Cybermedia analysis can be seen from two levels, namely the micro level, which relates to text, and the macro level, which relates to context. Practically, these two levels are divided into four levels, namely media space, media documents (media archive), media objects and media experiences (experiential stories). These four levels are not separate but are interrelated and influence the imagological process and construction of the message and discourse conveyed (Fakhruroji et al., 2020).

The media space level is related to the procedures and rules that apply to media use. In this case, researchers try to describe the structure of media devices and their appearance in relation to technical devices or application procedures. The media document level (media archive) is related to the content and meaning of text/graphics as a form of cultural artifact. Media documents relate to the use of symbols, graphics, and images that display media messages. Media objects relate to interactions that occur between community members. Media experiences (experiential stories) relate to motives, effects, benefits or realities connected offline and online, including myths (Nasrullah, 2018).

The construction of Islamic messages represented through various symbols is a process of religious imagology. Dissemination of religious information with the millennial generation segmentation must pay attention to attractive displays and presentations, which link text-narrative-image-symbols-metaphor-graphics. This is because the characteristics of the millennial generation are familiar with digital devices, making it possible to utilize social media as a platform for disseminating religious messages based on religious moderation (Nasip, 2017).

The construction of the Islamic message is carried out through religious language which is full of imagological processes. This process is carried out by linking various symbols that visualize the da'wah message being conveyed. Religious imagology is carried out through the convergence of textual engineering; both in the form of status, memes, symbols, graphics, audio, video, cinematography, and so on. This process in the digital space becomes a distinctive feature of religious messages that are transmitted and disseminated through digital media platforms(Anwar et al., 2022).

Visual communication built on the YouTube social media platforms Al-Bahjah TV, Official Smart Study, Official Ngaji Gus Baha, Ngaji Ahlusunnah, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla displays the construction of religious language that is informative, innovative, and recreational. Where the religious message displayed is not only based on the primary reference for implementing Islamic da'wah. But it also presents the actuality of Islamic references that are in accordance with trends or realities developing in society (Anwar et al., 2022).

Religious imagology positions religious language as a subjectively produced reality. At this point, religious language in social media depends on who conveys it and with what purpose (Ioffe, 2024). Social media as cyberspace allows for the transition or change of elements from one category to another. Generally, this transition and change takes place through a series of symbols, metaphors, memories, actions, calculations and predictions (Benlakdar, 2024). Religious imagology displays transitions and changes between phenomena related to religious practices and the complexity of the religious texts presented.

The slogan tradition, which is presented as a method of preaching through digital space on social media, is a religious language packaged climatologically. The visible visual communication structure shows the management of religious messages based on text (normative sources) presented creatively through symbolic and metaphorical arrangements (Zeng, 2024). In this case, the YouTube channel that presents the study of the Yellow Book by Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla is managed by linking text (normative source, yellow book), symbols (icons represented by the three scholars), images, and graphics.

Based on observations, visual communication on the YouTube channels of Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla can be seen from various graphic design elements that form the construction of visual communication messages. In this case, the visual communication elements include images, letters and typography, color, composition and layout. All of these elements are linked together symbolically to produce visual communication messages in audio, visual and/or audio-visual form (Giunashvili, 2024).

Visual communication on the YouTube channel can be seen in terms of visual language, visualizer, visual effects, visual information and visual literacy. Visual language is related to the embodiment of discourse depicted in a language so that the audience understands it (Laba, 2024). A visualizer is a subject or person whose job is to realize ideas in visual design projects. Visual effects relate to the use of sounds, images, graphics, memes and certain effects that reflect reality. Visual information relates to information through sight (Collinge, 2024). Visual

literacy is related to literate awareness in the process of receiving messages (Toybah, 2016). The table below shows the forms of visual communication on three YouTube channels managed by Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla which are related to the sorogan kitab kuning tradition in virtual space.

Table 4. Youtube Platform Visual Communication

No	Akun YouTube	Visual Language	Visualizer	Visual Effect	Visual Information	Visual Literacy
1	Al-Bahjah TV	Visual language is packaged in audiovisual form, emphasizing Buya Yahya's religious studies. The hadith text and study chapter are included in the title and description.	A special team from LPD Al-Bahjah manages this channel. It can be seen from the production process, event equipment, and study setting.	Visual effects include color contrast, sound, graphics, and running text to support the main idea of the study.	Visual information in the form of Buya Yahya's live appearance with the audience, including audience feedback such as expressions, nods or laughter during the study.	Playlists are arranged based on study topics, including yellow books such as Riyadush Sholihin, Al Hikam, and others.
2	Kajian Cerdas Official	Visual language is displayed through audio and subtitles as a transliteration of Gus Baha's studies. Dominate black with white silhouettes in content illustrations.	Content is managed by an admin who compiles audio recordings of Gus Baha's studies without involving a special media team.	A simple visual effect in the form of a graphic showing an image of Gus Baha with his distinctive style, black cap and white shirt.	Visual information is limited to audio studies and picture illustrations of Gus Baha, without a view of the audience or the text of the yellow book being discussed.	Video playlists based on study topics. There is no study narrative text in the description.
3	Ngaji Gus Baha Official	The same as the Official Smart Study, the visual language displays Gus Baha's content in audio form without subtitles. Dominate color and contrast according to the topic.	Managed by the Izzati Nuril Qur'an Islamic Boarding School media team. The audio is clearer, it looks like Gus Baha's official media.	The visual effect is in the form of a graphic template with animation or caricature of Gus Baha. Each study has a different template.	Visual information includes recording locations, book study chapters, as well as references to Gus Baha's official account. There is no spotlight on the audience.	The content playlist is arranged by book. There is no narrative text material in the description or audio during the study.
4	Ulil Abshar Abdalla	Simple visual language, natural appearance Ulil wears a cap or blankon, reads the yellow book directly without filters.	Content is presented live streaming. The visualization was carried out by Ulil himself or a special media team, it looks simple and original.	There are no visual effects such as background, sound, music, or running text. The appearance is very natural and impresses the sorogance of the Islamic boarding school.	Visual information includes a view of Ulil reading a book with the title and edition included in the description, including hashtags and study numbers.	Visual literacy includes book sources from various publishers' editions, such as Ihya Ulumiddin from Darul Minhaj, Dar Ibn Hazm, or local editions.

Sumber: Observasi Penulis, 2021

Table 4 above shows the visual communication structure on the YouTube channel which presents the study of the Yellow Book by Buya Yahya, Gus Baha and Ulil Abshar Abdalla. Researchers assess that the Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channel can be said to be more professional and serious in working on digital da'wah using the yellow book sorogan method. Where, apart from media management carried out by the Al-Bahjah LPD special team, it also displays communication participants who are not only Buya Yahya, but also guides or emcees, there is an audience element that is highlighted with the aim of showing the Buya Yahya Congregation, and of course Buya Yahya's appearance is like studying at a boarding school.

This is different from the Official Smart Study and Ngaji Gus Baha Official YouTube channels which only feature Gus Baha alone, and that too in the form of audio recordings. Strengthening visual language only involves visual effects in the form of graphics and images. Meanwhile, the Buya Yahya YouTube channel displays varied visual effects from the audio to the images and graphics. Meanwhile, Ulil Abshar Abdallah's YouTube channel displays the originality of studies carried out in the form of live streaming. There are no visible visual effects in the form of audio or other images. Ulil is in a sitting position reading the yellow book which is studied in full pictures and includes sources or references.

Visual communication takes place in digital space through the convergence of text, symbols, graphics, audio and video. Where each participant involved is influenced by exposure to the message conveyed by the communicator and received by the communicant (Ramya & Ramamoorthy, 2025). Therefore, within the framework of transmitting Islamic messages digitally, visual communication becomes important as a symbolic series associated with the process of interpreting the message as a construction of the religious language displayed.

Ongoing visual communication will influence the message meaning process, which can be described through four levels of cyber media analysis, namely at the text level, which consists of media space and media documents, and at the context level, which consists of media objects and media experiences. These four levels display the ongoing visual communication process, especially related to strengthening the values of religious moderation as a basis for disseminating da'wah messages for the millennial generation (Li & bin Azraai, 2025). Table 5 below shows the cyber media analysis on four YouTube social media platforms which displays the content of the Sorogan Buku study by the three young ulama.

Table 5. CyberMedia Analysis of Al-Bahjah TV YouTube Channel, Official Smart Study, Gus Baha Official Qur'an, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla

Kanal YouTube	Level Analisis	Unit Analisis	Keterangan
Al Bahjah TV	Micro-Text	Media Space	The content is audiovisual with varied and creative visual effects in the form of sound and images. Visualization includes the transmitter (Buya Yahya and the media team) and the recipient (audience/congregation).
		Media Archive	11,526 videos with various religious content, including 1,685 videos specifically for yellow book studies with various themes.
	Context Macro	Media Object	4 million subscribers with 460,704,472 views.
		Experiential Stories	The informant enthusiastically participated in Buya Yahya's study. Content is considered easy to digest, relevant and practical.
Kajian Cerdas Official	Micro-Text	Media Space	The content is in the form of audio recordings with subtitles and visualization in the form of simple graphics that show Gus Baha's image without a spotlight to the audience.
		Media Archive	1,656 content with 339 videos specifically for yellow book studies.
	Context Macro	Media Object	249 thousand subscribers with 30,747,051 impressions.
		Experiential Stories	Informants felt that the content of Gus Baha's study was interesting, in-depth, but easy to digest and contextual.
	Micro-	Media Space	Content in the form of audio recordings without subtitles. The visualization takes the form of a study category template according to the book, with a picture of Gus Baha in animation or caricature form.

Ngaji Gus Baha Official	Text	Media Archive	109 video content with 107 of them being yellow book studies and interpretation.
	Context Macro	Media Object	No subscriber count listed, but it has 376,614 views.
		Experiential Stories	The informant was interested in taking part in the study of Gus Baha's yellow book which was considered in-depth but still easy to understand.
Ulil Abshar Abdalla	Micro-Text	Media Space	The audio-visual content displayed is original and true. Ulil appeared to read the book directly without graphics or visual effects, with the book displaying full images.
		Media Archive	229 videos, with 126 contents of which specifically study the book of Ihya Ulumuddin.
	Macro-Context	Media Object	13.5 thousand subscribers with 688,738 views.
		Experiential Stories	Informants expressed interest in the study of Ulil's yellow book, although some linked it to Ulil's background as a liberal Islamic figure. The study of the Ulil book is considered to be full of philosophy and contextualized with societal trends.

Table 5 shows the visual communication elements analyzed based on the characteristics of YouTube social media. Where visual communication takes place both at the text level in the form of narrative and content displays on YouTube channels, as well as at the context level by observing the interaction process and feedback from the audience. Specifically, visual communication structure analysis is only carried out by researchers related to the content that presents the yellow book study. Where the focus of the research is directed at optimizing the use of the yellow book sorogan method as a role model that can be used to instill the values of religious moderation for internet users. Where, the characteristics of YouTube social media are video-based, both auditively and visually.

Based on the research results, visual communication can be viewed from several characteristics of social media, including: First, connected social media is based on the existence of a network. In this case, the infrastructure that connects participants in social media is based on an internet connection. This connection assumes there is a connection between one piece of hardware and other hardware. The network built through social media that displays yellow book study content shows that there is a new way of packaging Islamic boarding school traditions in sorogan kitab in digital form. A good network is built between the sender and the recipient. This includes audiences who are connected virtually to become subscribers and viewers of the YouTube channel (Zabalbeascoa, 2025). Figure 12 below shows the connectedness of virtual communication participants.

Figure 12. Visual Communication Participant Network on the YouTube Platform.
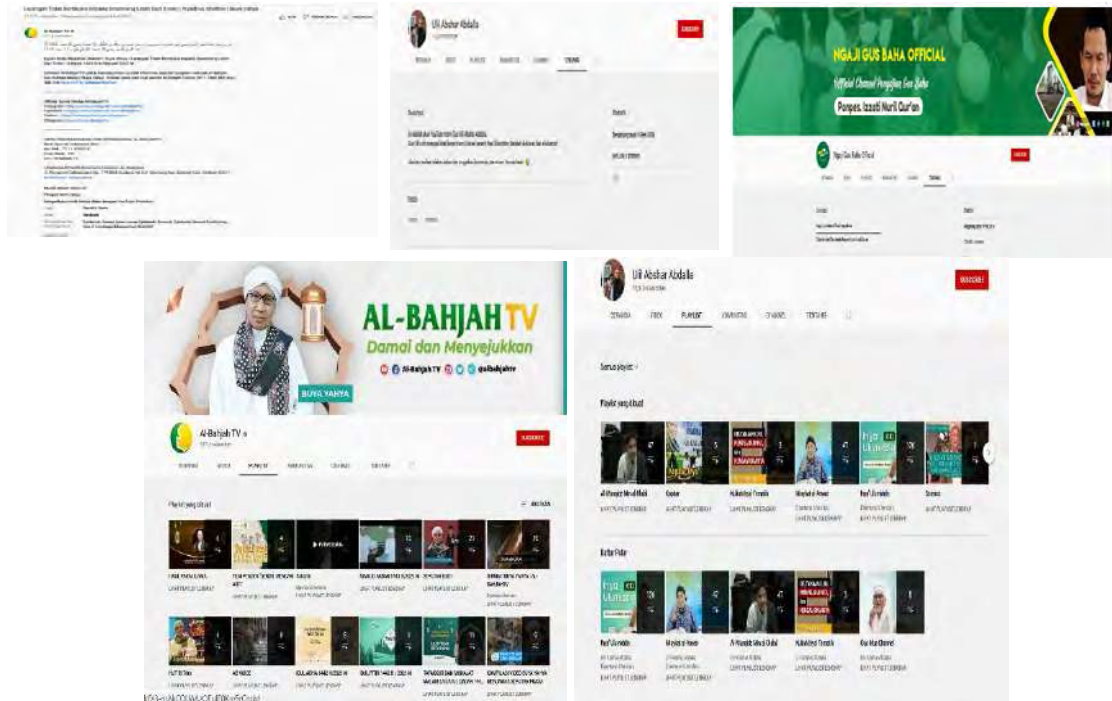

Source: Author's Observations, 2021

Figure 12 is a network of communication participants depicted through the interaction between the media and the audience. This can be seen from the number of subscribers, viewers and interactions in the form of comments. Both on the Al-Bahjah TV, Ngaji Gus Baha Official, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla channels, all three appeared to show virtual interaction and interactivity, as well as providing feedback to each other.

Second, social media has become a space for producing, distributing and disseminating information. In this case, social media is a place to create ideas (content) and display one's identity through profiles on social media accounts (Aurélio et al., 2025). Buya Yahya, Gus Baha and Ulil Abshar Abdalla emerged as visual communication actors with charismatic kiai and appeared on digital platforms. So it is more widely and wisely (M.

Li, 2025). The three of them have become icons of the YouTube channel which practices visual communication through packaging content based on text, sound, symbols, images and graphics. Figure 13 shows the identity of the social media account that presents the study content of Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla.

Figure 13. YouTube Channel Profile Information

Source: Author's Observations, 2021

Figure 13 shows YouTube account information that presents study content from Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla. The three accounts appear to display manager information, content production locations, official institutions, official media for the three scholars, and even an image display showing photos of the three. Including the identity of the account profile is important as a first step for the audience to verify the authenticity of the account and the credibility of the account when presenting content (Dekoninck & Schmuck, 2025). So, in turn, it can determine the audience's appeal and even encourage the audience to think, do and act.

Third, social media stores published information in an archive. This characteristic allows every user to access information anytime and anywhere. In other words, this content can be accessed at any time and indefinitely as long as it is not deleted by the account owner. Religious content on YouTube channels can be accessed at will according to the audience's needs (Tolbert, 2025). This can be seen in the playlist, which shows the categorization of YouTube content in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14. YouTube Content Document Archive

Source: Author's Observations, 2021

Figure 14 is a form of archiving YouTube content that presents the study of Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla. This archiving has been going on since this channel first joined and published content. In other words, content presented several years ago can be reopened and accessed at any time by the audience as they wish. This shows that the characteristics of social media are able to document study content or preaching messages over a long period of time (Thornborrow et al., 2025).

Fourth, social media makes it possible to create active interactions (interactivity). In this case, social media not only expands friendships (followers), but also strengthens interactions between its users. This interaction can be seen in audience feedback in the form of liking, disliking or commenting (Lindgren-Hansen, 2025). Researchers assess that the three YouTube contents were responded to positively and actively by the audience in the form of comments and liking symbols. It seems that Al-Bahjah TV's YouTube channel gets more comments than other channels. This is because the amount of Al-Bahjah TV content is greater than the others. Picture. 15 shows feedback in the form of camera spotlights on the audience, comments columns and likes on the YouTube channel.

Figure 15. Audience Feedback on YouTube Content
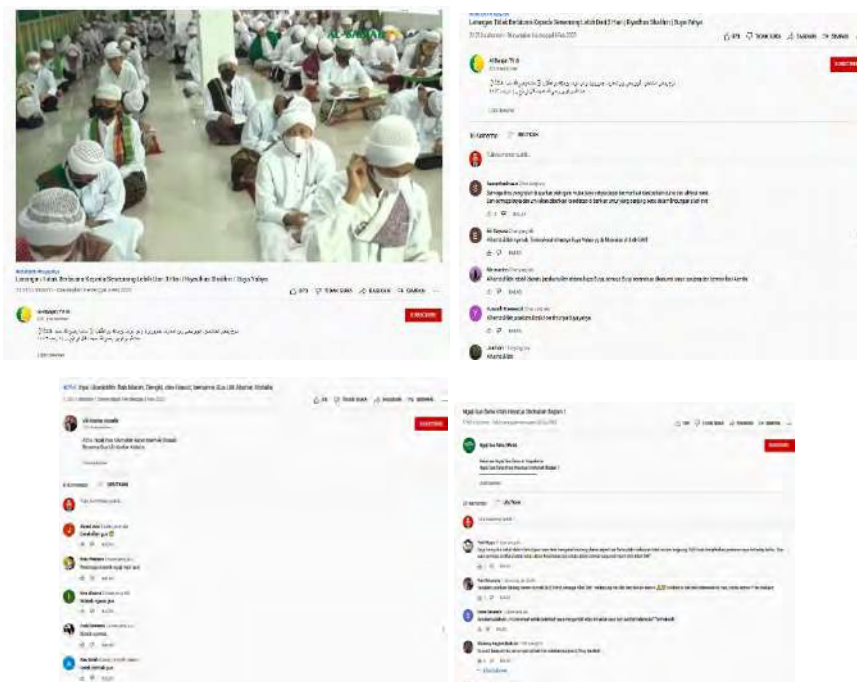
Source: Author's Observations, 2021

Figure 15 shows the feedback from communication participants who are members of the YouTube social media network. Feedback occurs at both personal, group and inter-group levels. Feedback also occurs both in the presentation between the presenters (Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla) and the audience watching live. Between media managers and audiences in the form of subscriptions, views, likes and comments. As well as between the audience and other audiences in the form of liking comments or providing responses and comments to other audience comments. All of this shows that there is active and participatory feedback on YouTube content regarding the study of the Yellow Book presented by the three scholars (Saha et al., 2025).

Fifth, social media has become a medium for social interaction (simulation of social). In this case, social media represents the social reality that is built through the virtual world. Thus forming a virtual community that is connected via a network connection. At the macro level, the visualization and interaction on the YouTube channel display a simulation of social reality (Rahmansyah et al., 2020). On the Al-Bahjah TV channel, the reality simulation is in the form of interactions and image displays not only of Buya Yahya as the kiai but also of the audience who is positioned as the santri. On the Gus Baha channel, no interaction was found between the sender and receiver. It's just that the simulation of reality appears in the audio recording of the original lecture. Meanwhile, on the Ulil Abshar Abdalla channel, the reality simulation appears in the position of Ulil who is sitting

facing the camera and reading a book directly. Where images are displayed in an original way, even though there is no interaction with the audience.

Figure 16. Simulation of Reality as an Effect of YouTube Content

Source: Author's Observations, 2021

Figure 16 shows the existence of social simulation in the packaging of da'wah messages in the yellow book study presented by Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla. Simulation of reality as a reflection in the packaging of preaching messages is carried out through the engineering of text, narrative, sound, graphics, images and certain symbols that are convergent and multi-effect. Even on the Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channel, this reality simulation is also depicted through video highlights showing the congregation directly listening to Buya Yahya's study in the same location. It appears that the audience was the Buya Yahya students at LPD Al-Bahjah.

Meanwhile, Gus Baha's reality simulation is in the form of video clips that are deemed related to the topic of discussion. The reality simulation for Ulil Abshar Abdalla is in the form of a persuasive and interactive delivery style with the public watching live streaming. Even though there was no audience at Ulil's location, Ulil appeared to be interacting with the virtual audience as if they were in front of him directly. This is a simulation of reality that is formed through a series of symbolic codes in the process of packaging messages or preaching content on the YouTube channel (Bakar, 2015).

Sixth, social media has become a media platform that can be accessed and is free to be used by users (user-generated content). The characteristics of social media allow users to access and manage social media according to their wishes. This shows that there is a symbiotic relationship in cyberspace which is a typical feature of digital culture or cyberculture (Šušterič et al., 2025).

In general, the study content of the books of Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla has been accessed by many YouTube users. There is an influence of reality simulation on YouTube channels that is relevant to the context and conditions of users or audiences in real life. Where this is related to the social reality that is developing in society. Apart from that, the background of Buya Yahya, Gus Baha and Ulil Abshar Abdalla was a consideration in receiving their preaching message.

Figure 17. User Accessibility of YouTube Content

Source: Author's Observations, 2021

Figure 17 shows that YouTube users are users who have the freedom to access any content. Through the search feature, YouTube social media users can search for whatever content they need. This shows the existence of a digital culture based on accessibility and freedom in managing social media accounts. Where every user can access, share, interact and build virtual communities with anyone. This strengthens the characteristics of social media which is based on networking and archives. Thus, making it easier for users to build virtual social relationships with various levels and interests (Sudrajat, 2025).

Packaging da'wah messages on YouTube social media is an important aspect of attracting the attention of the audience. Therefore, the construction of religious language is packaged through a visual communication process that converges between text, narrative, graphics, symbols, sound and images. The combination of these visual elements will form a preaching message that is oriented towards a specific goal. Message visualization that does not only rely on audio but also images, narratives, symbols and graphics is the strength of the message, which is able to attract the audience to be actively involved and encourage the audience to act in accordance with the meaning of the message in a participatory manner (Al-Khamisi et al., 2025).

If any message is packaged with an attractive content design, it will have a strong impact on the audience. This relates to the motives, effects and benefits of reality connected online and offline. The message of religious moderation is related to instilling the values of balance, justice and tolerance in responding to the reality of societal diversity (Narawati et al., 2021). It is important to disseminate values oriented toward religious moderation in the digital space as a counter-narrative to content that leads to disharmony and social disintegration. The effect of exposure to social media messages will be able to move the rationality, emotionality, motivation and behavior of the receiving audience. Especially when messages are produced repetitively and transmitted simultaneously (Putri, 2016).

Visual communication through network-based social media is capital in building virtual social relationships. This network connects various users with various interests at various relational levels. Both at the individual level, between individuals, and at the inter-group level. Networked and archived information dissemination makes it easier for users to consume information content presented via the YouTube platform. Therefore, the production and dissemination of religious moderation-based preaching content will fill the cyberspace 'forest' with positive content (Lessig, 1999). So that it becomes capital in building a digital preaching habitus and ecosystem that is moderate, accurate, wise and tolerant.

This is part of the effort to create a digital da'wah infrastructure that does not only show one side of Islam partially, but presents the universality of Islam as a teaching that is *rahmatan lil alamin*. The actualization of the values of religious moderation is carried out by applying the principles of da'wah that touch, leave an impression and move the recipient to think and act in accordance with the normative and actual values of moderate and accurate Islamic teachings. The production and dissemination of da'wah content through certain packaging on social media platforms marks a new chapter in welcoming the future of Islamic da'wah in virtual spaces (Al-Khamisi et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that religious imagology plays an important role in the visual communication structure of digital da'wah based on the values of religious moderation. Through graphic design elements such as images, typography, and color, YouTube channels such as Buya Yahya, Gus Baha, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla convey religious messages that are not only informative but also strengthen tolerance, peace, and moderation. These visual symbols strengthen the relationship between religious messages and audiences, especially the millennial generation, who are actively involved in symbolic interactions through text, emoticons and images. The virtual social relationships formed through this interaction support the spread of religious moderation values, create a harmonious digital space and overcome the potential for radicalization. Religious imagology in digital da'wah helps build a wiser understanding of religion and strengthens critical awareness among social media users. Thus, digital da'wah based on religious moderation has great potential to strengthen social harmony and strengthen a peaceful and tolerant da'wah ecosystem.

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