# Habib Syech Assegaf's Preaching Strategy on Social Media: A Review Through Hovland's Response Theory

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https://doi.org/10.51214/biis.v4i1.1496

## ABSTRACT

*Preaching through social media is a new phenomenon among Indonesian society, especially for Gen-Z. Habib Syech Assegaf is a contemporary cleric who has a moderate da'wah school, he provides Islamic values to the wider community through social media. This study examines the da'wah strategy of Habib Syekh Assegaf on social media reviewed through the Response, Stimulus, Organism, Response (SOR) theory proposed by Hovland. This study aims to determine and describe the understanding, attention, and acceptance of Habib Syech Assegaf's Da'wah Response on social media, in more detail the purpose of this study is whether the da'wah can be accepted by society, especially Gen-Z. The response consists of attention, understanding and acceptance. The research method used is qualitative based on literature studies, with data analysis obtained from primary sources (the Qur'an, hadith and related literature) and secondary sources (academic journals, scientific books and the latest research related to the theme). Research findings based on the review of Hovland's Theory, Habib Syech Assegaf's da'wah strategy on social media has proven effective in attracting attention, facilitating understanding, and encouraging acceptance of messages by the audience. The three components of Hovland's Response Theory can be found clearly in his communication patterns on social media, making social media a relevant and impactful means of da'wah in today's digital era.*

## ABSTRAK

Berdakwah melalui media sosial merupakan fenomena baru di tengah masyarakat Indonesia, khususnya bagi generasi Z. Habib Syech Assegaf adalah seorang ulama kontemporer yang menganut corak dakwah moderat dan menyampaikan nilai-nilai Islam kepada masyarakat luas melalui platform media sosial. Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi dakwah Habib Syech Assegaf di media sosial dengan menggunakan tinjauan teori Respons, Stimulus, Organisme, Respons (SOR) yang dikemukakan oleh Hovland, dengan tujuan untuk mengetahui dan mendeskripsikan sejauh mana perhatian, pemahaman, dan penerimaan terhadap dakwahnya, khususnya di kalangan Gen-Z. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, dengan data yang diperoleh dari sumber primer (al-Qur'an, hadis, dan literatur terkait) serta sumber sekunder (jurnal akademik, buku ilmiah, dan penelitian terbaru yang relevan). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi dakwah Habib Syech Assegaf melalui media sosial terbukti efektif dalam menarik perhatian, memfasilitasi pemahaman, dan mendorong penerimaan pesan oleh audiens. Ketiga komponen teori Respons Hovland tampak jelas dalam pola komunikasinya di media sosial, sehingga menjadikan media sosial sebagai sarana dakwah yang relevan dan berdampak di era digital saat ini.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Da'wah is the core of social transformation in Islam,[1] namely a systematic process to convey Islamic teachings to society with the aim of forming an understanding, awareness, and practice of Islamic values in everyday life. Etymologically, the term da'wah comes from the verb da'a-yad'u in Arabic which means to call, summon, or invite. In the terminological context, da'wah is not only interpreted as an invitation to goodness, but also as a value communication strategy that is oriented towards changing attitudes and behavior based on the principles of monotheism, sharia, and morals. As a central element in Islamic civilization, da'wah is not limited to space and time. It develops following the dynamics of society and technological advances. Currently, da'wah is no longer just taking place in mosques or science assemblies, but is also present massively through digital space. The spread of da'wah in the modern era requires an adaptive approach to the characteristics of the audience and the media used. Therefore, the effectiveness of da'wah is greatly influenced by communication strategies, understanding the psychology of the message recipient, and optimal use of information technology.[2]

Da'wah is one of the main foundations in Islam which aims to convey religious teachings to society through a persuasive, educational, and transformative approach. Etymologically, the word da'wah comes from the Arabic *da'a–yad'u* which means to call or invite.[3] In the Qur'an, the call to da'wah is contained in various verses, one of which is in QS. Ali Imran verse 104 which calls for the importance of inviting to goodness and preventing evil. Likewise in QS. An-Nahl verse 125, Allah commands that da'wah be carried out with wisdom, good advice, and polite dialogue.[4] Surah Ali Imran verse 104: *There should be among you a group of people who encourage goodness, enjoin what is good and prevent what is evil. They are the lucky people.*

Along with the development of the times and technological advances, the method of preaching has undergone a transformation. Now, preaching is not only carried out in mosques or religious study groups, but has also penetrated digital spaces. Social media has become an effective means of conveying religious messages, especially to the younger generation who are familiar with technology. Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become platforms that allow the spread of preaching quickly, widely, and interactively.[5] This phenomenon demands an adaptive preaching approach to the characteristics of the media and the target audience.

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[1] Yasser Muda Lubis, "Social Change in Contemporary Islamic Community Development through Transformative Da'wah Praxis," *Jurnal Al-Hikmah* 23, no. 1 (April 30, 2025): 59, https://doi.org/10.35719/ver8mf80.

[2] Ahmad Anas and Hendri Hermawan Adinugraha, "Dakwah Nabi Muhammad Terhadap Masyarakat Madinah Perspektif Komunikasi Antarbudaya," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 11, no. 1 (July 1, 2017): 53–72, https://doi.org/10.15575/idajhs.v11i1.1356.

[3] Eko Hendro Saputra et al., "Understanding Da'wah and Khatib," *Linguistics and Culture Review*, August 3, 2021, 274, https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v5nS1.1373.

[4] Muhammad Akbar Mawaldi, Andri Nirwana An, and Nazar Fadli, "Analytical Study The Method Of Dakwa In An-Nahl 125-128 In The Testament Of Ma'alim Al-Tanzil By Imam All-Baghawy," *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam* 25, no. 01 (September 25, 2024): 176, https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v25i01.2497.

[5] Liang Zhang, "The Digital Age of Religious Communication: The Shaping and Challenges of Religious Beliefs through Social Media," *Studies on Religion and Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (January 21, 2025): 25–41, https://doi.org/10.71204/de63mn10.

One of the prominent figures in the practice of digital da'wah is Habib Syech Assegaf,[6] a young da'wah preacher who is known for his polite, relevant, and communicative da'wah approach. Through his personal Instagram account, Habib Syech actively conveys Islamic messages that are not only normative, but also contextual to social issues faced by generation Z. His da'wah style is able to attract the attention of thousands of followers and build two-way interactions that are educational. His presence in the digital space is an example of how Islamic values can be conveyed with an approach that is in accordance with the spirit of the times.[7]

Communication can be understood as an activity of conveying messages or ideas in a simple way, da'wah communication activities play an important role in spreading Islam. Da'wah communication is the process of conveying information or messages from a person or group of people to another person or group of people that originates from the Qur'an and Al-hadith using symbols both verbally and nonverbally with the aim of changing attitudes, opinions, or behavior of others to be better in accordance with Islamic teachings, both directly and indirectly through the media.[8] This is in accordance with the word of Allah Surah An-Nahl 125: *Invite (people) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good teachings, and invite them to discuss in a better way. Indeed, it is your Lord who knows better about those who stray from His path and He knows better about those who are guided.*

The development of da'wah through social media has become a significant phenomenon in recent years. Social media provides a broad and fast platform to spread the message of da'wah to a very large and diverse audience around the world. Along with the development of the times, the challenges and obstacles in the communication of da'wah continue to develop and change.[9] Moreover, the world has now entered a new era, namely the Industrial Revolution Era 4.0. This era is marked by the increasingly central role of cyber technology in human life, thus demanding society to have sharp specialization skills, these demands will in turn drag society into a materialistic lifestyle that results in the loss of the true meaning of life. To anticipate the negative impacts of the pace of the industrial revolution 4.0, we must immediately realize and fortify ourselves with various religious knowledge abilities in each individual to remain steadfast in Islam even in any circumstances. One way is through the process of da'wah communication.[10]

In today's information age, the internet plays an important role in all aspects of life. The internet has become a communication medium that is widely used to meet information needs to support fast information needs. The internet in the information age has positioned itself as one of the information centers that can be accessed from various places without being limited

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[6] Arif Zamhari and Imam Mustofa, "The Popular Da'wah Movement In Urban Communities: The Role Of Hadrami Scholars' Da'wah In Response To Religious Radicalism In Indonesia," *Akademika : Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 1 (September 17, 2020): 185, https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v25i1.2385.

[7] Achmad Baidowi and Moh. Salehudin, "Strategi Dakwah di Era New Normal," *Muttaqien; Indonesian Journal of Multidiciplinary Islamic Studies* 2, no. 01 (January 23, 2021): 58–74, https://doi.org/10.52593/mtq.02.1.04.

[8] Dr Muhammad Akram Hureri et al., "The Role Of Media In Islamic Da'wah In A Plural Society: Significance, Prerequisites And Techniques," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6, no. 10 (October 25, 2022): 1242–56, https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/13332.

[9] Mukti Ali and Avin Wimar Budyastomo, "The Impact of Social Media for The Development of Da'wah in Indonesia," *Religia* 24, no. 1 (April 4, 2021): 22–33, https://doi.org/10.28918/religia.v24i1.2224.

[10] Abdul Karim, "Dakwah Melalui Media: Sebuah Tantangan Dan Peluang," *At-Tabsyir: Journal of Islamic Broadcasting Communication* 4, no. 1 (2016): 157–72, https://doi.org/10.21043/at-tabsyir.v4i1.2911.

by space and time. The internet is called an information center without barriers because it can connect one information site to another information site in a short time. The use of the internet as a communication medium requires its users to have knowledge of how to use computer software in general and internet application devices in particular. Communication on the internet, in addition to having a mass communication context, also forms personal communication in large numbers, namely the use of the internet in communicating face to face with many other users who each act as communicators and communicants.[11]

Preaching through social media has shown significant effectiveness in this new media era. Preaching through social media brings various positive impacts in spreading Islamic values and religious education. Preaching is the responsibility of everyone, whatever their job, they must be able to convey the message of preaching so that it can be accepted by the audience or society. Of course, in conveying the message of preaching there must be an effective way. The effectiveness of preaching through social media is currently the main research that is widely studied by many groups because it is very important to know, so that we can measure the extent of the success of preaching activities through social media. The use of social media as a medium or means of preaching in the new era is indeed an alternative for preachers/*dai/ustadz* in carrying out their preaching activities. Various new media platforms are also used to support the preaching process, proving that the internet plays an important role in the process of preaching activities. Therefore, the opportunity for preaching is very large because science and technology are currently developing rapidly. Preaching through the internet will be a means that will play an important role in the process of improvement, balancing, and providing a better direction for life.[12]

Social Media has become a new communication technology media that is developing so rapidly, sophisticated and unlimited, this great development was not planned. Communication technology is faced with various changes in aspects of people's lives. In 2015, Indonesia was ranked 6th as the country with the most internet and social media account owners in the world. This is an extraordinary potential if managed to make preaching a success. The dissemination of information on invitations to preach through the internet can be done in various forms, preaching does not have to be a lecture in the pulpit but with the sophistication of the internet, preaching can be done anywhere and watched by anyone as long as they are connected to the internet. Through the internet media, especially Instagram, you can write messages through social networks, now more and more preachers are familiar with information and communication technology as well as understanding the techniques and strategies in utilizing the media. Not only the ustadz who use Instagram as their preaching media, many ustazah also modify their preaching methods and use social media as their preaching media.[13]

Habib Syech Assegaf is an inspiring preacher for young people. Habib Syech Assegaf is a figure who plays an important role in the world of preaching. He actively increases his insight

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[11] Rijal Mamdud, "Dakwah Islam di Media Massa," *Al-I'lam: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 3, no. 1 (September 25, 2019): 47–54, https://doi.org/10.31764/jail.v3i1.1366.

[12] Yuli Eviyanti, Ricka Handayani, and Romandiah Romandiah, "Social Media Is A Means Of Da'wah In The Digital Era," *Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 5, no. 2 (November 30, 2024): 106–13, https://doi.org/10.24260/j-md.v5i3.3735.

[13] Nurhaya Muchtar and Jeffrey A Ritchey, "Preaching, Community, and Convergence: Use of Old and New Media by Progressive Indonesian Islamic Leaders," *International Communication Gazette* 76, no. 4–5 (June 1, 2014): 367–350, https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514524099.

by studying with various scholars in Jakarta. He inspires young people through preaching on social media. His preaching is watched by thousands or even hundreds of viewers on social media. It is not surprising that he is a popular preaching figure on social media. Habib Syekh Assegaf is a preacher who is already famous everywhere. His preaching is so fast that it reaches remote areas. In addition to preaching through assemblies, Habib Syech Assegaf also preaches through social media. Syekh Habib Assegaf's preaching is widely witnessed by his followers on social media, so it is not surprising that many people like his preaching on Instagram.[14]

The development of information and communication technology in the digital era has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the way of preaching. Social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have now become a new space for preachers and scholars to convey Islamic messages to the wider community, across eras, and across geographies. This phenomenon demands an adaptive and strategic approach to preaching, so that religious messages are not only conveyed but can also be accepted and experienced by the audience.[15]

Habib Syech Assegaf is a religious figure who actively preaches through social media, especially Instagram. His polite, contemporary, and communicative preaching style attracts the attention of many of his followers, especially the younger generation. The messages conveyed are not only normative, but also touch on contemporary social and moral issues. This makes him a representation of a modern preacher who is able to combine traditional values with a digital approach.[16]

To assess the effectiveness of Habib Syech Assegaf's da'wah strategy on social media, this study uses the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) communication theory developed by Carl I. Hovland.[17] This theory explains that effective communication depends on three main components: audience attention, comprehension, and acceptance of the message delivered. These three components are the main analytical framework in examining how Habib Syech's da'wah strategy operates in the social media space and to what extent these messages are able to drive changes in audience attitudes and behavior, especially generation Z. This study is expected to contribute to the development of a more effective and contextual digital da'wah strategy, as well as enrich academic discourse on Islamic da'wah in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 which is marked by technological disruption and changes in community communication patterns.

## B. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using the library research method. This approach was chosen because the main objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of

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[14] Siti Muntoyibah and Ahmad Nurcholis, "Orkestrasi Dakwah Habib Syekh Melalui Musik Religi," *Ath-Thariq: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 5, no. 1 (July 28, 2021): 84–101, https://doi.org/10.32332/ath_thariq.v5i1.3139.

[15] muhammad Zain Fithrotullah, "Peranan Manajemen Dalam Pengelolaan Majelis Sholawat Ahbabul Musthofa (Studi Kasus Majelis Taklim Sholawat Ahbabul Musthofa Habib Syekh Bin Abdul Qodir Assegaf Di Solo Tahun 2017)" (Skripsi, Uin Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2017), https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/24457/.

[16] Ferri Wicaksono, "Kiai Kharismatik Dan Hegemoninya (Telaah Fenomena Habib Syech Bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf)," *Jurnal Pemerintahan Dan Politik* 3, no. 3 (2018): 121–26, https://doi.org/10.36982/jpg.v3i3.678.

[17] Uswatun Hasanah, Ika Nurhayani, and Nurul Chojimah, "The Influence of Twitter Media Exposure on the Language Attitude of Students at Brawijaya University," *Ideas: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature* 9, no. 1 (June 2, 2021): 45, https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v9i1.1783.

the da'wah communication strategy implemented by Habib Syech Assegaf through social media, particularly Instagram, analyzed through the lens of Hovland's Response Theory (Stimulus–Organism–Response/S-O-R).[18] The data sources in this study are categorized into two main types: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the Qur'an and Hadith as the normative foundation of Islamic da'wah, original uploads from Habib Syech Assegaf's official Instagram account (such as captions, short videos, brief lectures, and advisory quotes) accessed directly from his public profile, and direct quotations or statements made by him in either digital or printed form. Meanwhile, secondary sources consist of scholarly literature discussing da'wah communication and persuasive communication theory, especially Hovland's theory; academic journals relevant to digital da'wah strategies and Generation Z communication behavior; and previous research related to social media-based da'wah or similar public figures.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation, which involves tracing and gathering digital content from Habib Syech Assegaf's Instagram account and relevant academic literature. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select Instagram content based on specific criteria: the content explicitly conveys da'wah messages containing elements of moral exhortation, Islamic values, or socio-religious themes; it has a high level of audience engagement (as indicated by likes, comments, or views); and it is directly delivered by Habib Syech Assegaf (not a repost or external link). The data were analyzed using a thematic content analysis approach. The researcher identified the da'wah messages and communication strategies used, and categorized the findings based on the three key components of Hovland's Response Theory: attention (the extent to which the content captures audience interest), comprehension (clarity and audience understanding of the message), and acceptance (the degree of openness or willingness of the audience to accept the da'wah message). To ensure data validity and reliability, this study applies source triangulation by comparing data from various sources (Instagram content, theoretical literature, and prior research findings) to obtain an objective and comprehensive understanding.[19]

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 1. Short Profile of Habib Syech Assegaf as a Dakwah Communicator

The name Habib Syech bin Abdul Qodir Assegaf is often heard through grand shalawat events held in various cities in Indonesia. Habib Syech is a very famous religious figure. Habib Syech is the son of Al Habib Syech bin Abdul Qodir bin Abdurrahman Assegaf.[20] Habib Syech studied through his teacher and father named Habib Abdul Qodir bin Abdurrahman Assegaf (Imam of Assegaf Solo Mosque). At that time, Habib Syech studied Islam and the noble morals

[18] Pahrudin Pahrudin et al., "The Role of Information Sources on Tourist Behavior Post-Earthquake Disaster in Indonesia: A Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) Approach," *Sustainability* 15, no. 11 (January 2023): 8446, https://doi.org/10.3390/su15118446.

[19] Mayang Sri Pertiwi, Aang Ridwan, and Yuyun Yuningsih, "Respon Warganet Terhadap Gaya Khitobah Halimah Alaydrus," *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 9, no. 1 (March 28, 2024): 25–44, https://doi.org/10.15575/tabligh.v9i1.35075.

[20] Fajar Tofa Kurniawan, "Strategi Dakwah Habib Syech Bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf Dalam Menerapkan Adab Bershalawat Pada Jama'ah Syekhermania Magelang" (Other, Iain Salatiga, 2024), http://e-repository.perpus.uinsalatiga.ac.id/19602/.

of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Habib Syech's current residence is located on Jl. KH. Muzakkir-Gg. Bengawan Solo VI No.12 Semaggi Kidul Surakarta.

He explained that the most inspiring people in his life were none other than his own father and mother. In addition to his beloved father, Habib Syech also received education from his uncle, the late Habib Ahmad bin Abdurrahman Assegaf in Hadramaut. In addition, education and full attention were also given to Habib Syech from the late Al-Imam, Al Aribillah, Al-Habib Muhammad Anis bin Alwiy bin Ali (*Ṣāḥib al-Mawlid Simṭ al-Durar*) bin Muhammad.[21]

## 2. Transformation of Preaching in the Digital and Social Media Era

The beginning of Habib Syech's preaching was only in the form of lectures that reached the villages. During the month of Ramadan, he brought thousands of packages of rice which were then distributed as takjil at the mosque. Sometimes he also waited for the arrival of the congregation. One time, Habib Syech felt that his preaching was not effective enough, therefore he tried to change his preaching model by starting the study with sholawat and then giving a lecture. Over time, thanks to his consistency, until now thousands of congregations have joined his assembly. In this assembly, the congregation together dive into the stories of the Prophet and teach love for Allah through the Prophet.[22] The sholawat chanted by Habib Syech in his preaching activities aims to introduce the culture of sholawat among the community in particular and Muslims in general. This culture has also influenced the increasing enthusiasm for sholawat among congregations in various regions of Indonesia and even abroad such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan.

Habib Syekh in his preaching activities recites qasidah accompanied by hadrah or tambourine music so that the community or congregation is interested in following the study anywhere. As for the Sheikh, when in the assembly, Habib Syech invites the congregation to recite his qasidah shalawat, then after that he is given preaching material. Habib Syech spreads his lectures and sholawat on the Mohammad Syekh YouTube channel which is managed directly by his son. This is one of the preaching methods carried out by Habib Syech by utilizing social media. This can also be part of the socialization of Islamic religious messages. If previously preaching messages were only delivered through traditional media so that they had limitations in spreading religious messages, now the media has developed very rapidly so that religious messages can be spread widely and without limits.[23]

## 3. Hovland Response Theory Review

This study aims to reveal the da'wah strategy carried out by Habib Syech Assegaf through social media within the framework of Hovland's Response Theory. Through a qualitative approach based on literature studies, the researcher examines various da'wah content published by Habib Syech Assegaf and relates it to aspects of persuasive communication according to Hovland: attention, understanding, and acceptance.

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[21] Qomarul Hadi, "Keberadaan Musik Dalam Sholawatan Habib Syekh Bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf" (S1, Insitut Seni Indonesia (Isi) Surakarta, 2020), http://repository.isi-ska.ac.id/4538/.

[22] Wicaksono, "Kiai Kharismatik Dan Hegemoninya (Telaah Fenomena Habib Syech Bin Abdul Qadir Assegaf)."

[23] Hisny Fajrussalam et al., "Penggunaan Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Pengembangan Dakwah Islam," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 3, no. 2 (May 15, 2023): 2337, https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative/article/view/318.
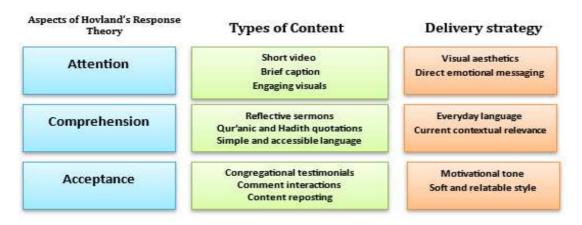
Figure 1. The Classification of Da'wah Content Types by Habib Syech Assegaf

### a. Grabbing Audience Attention

In the framework of Hovland's Response Theory, *attention* constitutes the initial and crucial stage in the persuasive communication process. Habib Syech Assegaf effectively harnesses visual appeal and strategic timing to capture the attention of his social media audience. Several observable delivery strategies reflect this approach. First, his content employs a simple yet aesthetically pleasing visual design, characterized by soothing color combinations and images that portray him as both polite and charismatic. Second, the captions accompanying the content are typically short and direct, yet rich in meaning, often connecting religious messages to ongoing social realities or current events. Third, he frequently uses short video clips—ranging from one to three minutes—that deliver emotionally resonant Islamic messages, a format particularly suited to the fast-paced, attention-limited nature of social media consumption.

This strategy aligns with Sugihartati's argument in the *Digital Communication and Da'wah* journal, which emphasizes that religious content designed with aesthetic appeal and concise messaging is more likely to be received positively by digital audiences. This is especially relevant for younger generations, who tend to be visually oriented and quickly disengaged by lengthy or text-heavy content.[24]

### b. Improving Audience Understanding

Once attention is gained, the next step is to ensure that the message conveyed can be understood well. Habib Syech Assegaf uses simple yet meaningful language, interspersed with references to relevant verses of the Qur'an and hadith. But what stands out most is his ability to explain religious arguments in the context of everyday life.

Examples of studied content show that he often relates Islamic teachings to current events, such as disasters, moral issues in society, and family problems. In one of his videos, he conveys a message about guarding the tongue on social media by quoting a hadith, but delivered in a light and easy-to-understand way.

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24 Afifatur Rohimah et al., "Virtual Communication: Muslim Foodgram Participation Culture," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (December 30, 2021): 163–83, https://doi.org/10.24912/jk.v13i2.10106.

This ability is in line with Hovland's idea that messages that are too complex without being tailored to the audience will fail to influence behavior. Habib Syech Assegaf's preaching actually shows that the power of preaching lies not only in the content, but also in the way it is delivered according to the capacity of the audience.

### c.    Driving Audience Acceptance

The final phase in Hovland's Response Theory is *acceptance*, which refers to the audience's willingness to receive, internalize, and possibly act upon the message conveyed. This stage serves as a key indicator of the effectiveness of persuasive communication. In the context of Habib Syech Assegaf's da'wah, various forms of audience response reflect a high level of message acceptance.

Empirical observations from social media interactions reveal several patterns that signify this acceptance. Many followers leave comments expressing gratitude and personal reflection, with some acknowledging that the message prompted a change in attitude or behavior. Others tag friends or family members in the comment section, suggesting a desire to extend the message's reach beyond themselves. Additionally, sermon clips and excerpts featuring Habib Assegaf are frequently re-shared by other Islamic content creators, signaling broader communal validation and dissemination of his message.

Such patterns of engagement function as measurable indicators of successful digital da'wah. High levels of interaction—whether through comments, shares, or reposts—demonstrate that the audience not only receives the content but also feels emotionally or spiritually moved to act, reflect, or amplify the message to others.

### d.    Credibility and Ethos of the Communicator

In Hovland's persuasive communication theory, the credibility of the communicator is an important element that influences the effectiveness of the message. Credibility consists of two main aspects: expertise and trustworthiness. In the context of digital preaching, credibility is not only assessed from scientific capacity, but also from reputation, social influence, and personal integrity in the eyes of the audience.

Habib Syech Assegaf is a cleric who has a strong Islamic scientific background. He was raised in a pesantren environment and educated by great clerics such as Al-Habib Muhammad Anis bin Alwi bin Ali. His consistency in preaching, both directly through Islamic study groups and through social media, makes him a figure who is known and respected across generations.

Empirically, the credibility of Habib Syech Assegaf can be identified through several concrete indicators. First, his official Instagram account, @syaikhassegaf, has gained more than 400,000 active followers, indicating a high level of public trust in the religious messages he delivers. This large online following reflects the resonance and appeal of his da'wah content in digital spaces.

Second, he leads a nationally recognized *majelis taklim* that routinely conducts *shalawat* gatherings and Islamic study sessions in various major cities across Indonesia. This widespread preaching network demonstrates both the scope and consistency of his religious influence at a national level.

Third, Habib Syech maintains a public image as a moderate and respectful preacher who consciously avoids conflict-oriented narratives. This approach enables him to be well received

by diverse social groups, including youth and urban communities who tend to favor inclusive and peaceful religious expressions.

In addition to these factors, his active participation in social and humanitarian initiatives—such as distributing *takjil*, organizing fundraising efforts, and promoting intercommunal solidarity—further reinforces his moral credibility and public acceptance. Together, these elements form a strong empirical basis for understanding the scope and effectiveness of his preaching authority.

Habib Syech's communication style that avoids confrontation, does not corner other groups, and always uses soft and soothing language, strengthens the public's perception of him as an authoritative, trustworthy, and compassionate communicator. This character is in line with the principle of da'wah *bil hikmah wa al-mau'izhah al-hasanah* in Surah An-Nahl: 125, which encourages a wise and compassionate approach in conveying the message of Islam.

With a combination of personal credibility, media mastery, and empathy for the audience, Habib Syech Assegaf is able to carry out the three main components of Hovland's Response Theory: attracting attention, facilitating understanding, and generating acceptance. Another advantage lies in his ability to adapt to digital culture without sacrificing the substance of Islamic teachings. This shows that the success of da'wah in the era of social media does not only depend on technology, but also on the art of communication, cultural sensitivity, and moral credibility of the communicator.

## D. CONCLUSION

The da'wah strategy implemented by Habib Syech Assegaf through social media, especially Instagram, reflects the effectiveness of persuasive communication as explained in Hovland's Response Theory. The three main components in the theory—attention, comprehension, and acceptance—are well implemented in every da'wah content. He successfully attracts the attention of the audience through a relevant visual and narrative approach, builds understanding through simple and contextual language, and encourages acceptance of the da'wah message through positive interactions from the audience, such as comments, reposts, and personal testimonies. Habib Syech's personal credibility, supported by his scientific background, moderate preaching style, and social track record, strengthens his role as a communicator who is able to reach and influence audiences, especially the younger generation who are active on social media. This shows that a digital preaching strategy that combines the substance of Islamic teachings with sensitivity to media and audience psychology is a relevant and contextual approach in the digital era.

However, this approach is not without its challenges. The tendency to simplify messages for the sake of accessibility on social media risks reducing the complexity of religious teachings to mere inspirational slogans. In addition, reliance on emotional responses such as "likes" or positive comments does not necessarily guarantee long-term behavioral transformation. Therefore, caution is needed in assessing the success of da'wah based solely on digital metrics. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of digital da'wah on religious understanding and practice, as well as to examine how social media can be developed as a more dialogic and educational da'wah space. Comparative studies between various digital da'wah figures can also provide a broader picture of the patterns of success and challenges of da'wah in the new media era.

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