



Short-Form Videos *Da'wah*: Innovative Strategies to Foster Religious Moderation Among Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore innovative strategies for promoting religious moderation among Generation Z through short-form video *da'wah* content on digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach supported by research and development (R&D) methodology, the study used digital media mining tools, including Google Trends, Brand24, and Analisa.io, to identify patterns, engagement levels, and influential contributors in the online discourse on religious moderation between 2019 and 2024. The data analysis revealed a significant increase in public interest and content creation among Gen Z users. Based on these findings, the study developed a Religious Moderation Guidebook that integrates Islamic communication ethics with digital media strategies. The guidebook was piloted among Islamic Communication and Broadcasting students, who produced short-form videos reflecting national commitment, tolerance, anti-radicalism, and cultural accommodation principles. The novelty of this study lies in its development of a dual-pillar framework that systematically bridges classical Islamic communication principles (*tablīgh*, *hiwār*, *tabshīr*) with contemporary digital media management strategies, specifically tailored for Generation Z's short-form video preferences—a model previously absent in Indonesian Islamic communication scholarship. The results demonstrate that, when guided by ethical frameworks and strategic communication planning, short-form video *da'wah* can effectively enhance youth engagement with messages of religious moderation. This research contributes theoretically and practically to Islamic communication scholarship and offers a replicable model for future digital *da'wah* efforts.

Keywords:

Religious Moderation;
Generation Z; Digital
Da'wah.

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INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of religious moderation content on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok marks a significant trend in contemporary Islamic communication (Hadiyanto et al., 2025; Wijayanti & Harlis, 2024). As of December 2024, YouTube displayed 9,400 videos across 5,200 channels under the hashtag #religiousmoderation, while Instagram recorded 52,859 related posts, and TikTok garnered 26.2 million views (Instagram, 2024; TikTok, 2024; YouTube, 2024). Furthermore, data from Google Trends indicates a substantial increase in public interest in religious moderation, with hundreds of uploads recorded consistently from 2019 to 2024. These statistics illustrate how digital platforms have become central arenas for conveying religious values and shaping public discourse around religious tolerance (Google Trends, 2024).

The phenomenon of spreading narratives of religious moderation on social media can be seen as a counterbalance to the increasing volume of divisive religious narratives—such as radicalism, liberalism, exclusivism, and intolerance—circulating online (Hefni, 2020; Kustati et al., 2023; Murad & Rizki, 2022). Often amplified by social media algorithms, such narratives threaten Indonesia's social cohesion and pluralism. Governmental and cultural institutions have mobilized efforts to promote religious moderation. For instance, the Ministry of Religious Affairs outlined strategic goals in PMA No. 18 of 2020 to disseminate religious moderation through digital campaigns. Similarly, religious organizations and individuals have actively contributed to creating content aligned with moderation values (Faisal et al., 2022). These efforts reveal two main patterns of content dissemination: structured campaigns and organic initiatives (Marwantika, 2022).

However, religious moderation content must compete with various other Islamic narratives, particularly when targeting younger audiences such as Generation Z—digital natives who spend 7–10 hours per day online. Gen Z comprises nearly 28% of Indonesia's population and is known for high digital literacy, yet remains vulnerable to exposure to intolerant ideologies (Setara Institute, 2021). This generation tends to be less affiliated with institutional religion but intensely interested in spirituality. Studies show that Gen Z often turns to social media for soul-searching, emotional expression, and personal meaning-making, forming a unique relationship between digital media and religiosity (Abriana; Diaz, 2023; Sugiarto et al., 2022). In Indonesia, Gen Z also shows a growing trend toward choosing religious-themed content for engagement and study (Hopid et al., 2023; Ypulse, 2019).

Short-form video is an increasingly prominent format for engaging Generation Z in religious discourse. The intersection of short-form video content and Gen Z's spiritual expression reveals a dynamic space where religious identity is mediated by creative, personalized, and emotionally resonant storytelling. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have become arenas for digital religious self-expression, enabling young users to articulate their faith in visually engaging and culturally relevant formats (Naz et al., 2025). The role of micro-influencers facilitates intimate, emotionally driven connections with religious content, often bypassing formal institutional narratives (Febrian, 2024). While these media formats offer significant potential for outreach and identity construction, they also risk oversimplifying complex theological messages into aestheticized fragments. Thus, short-form video becomes a contested space where authenticity and depth of religious engagement are continually negotiated (Zulkifli et al., 2023).

Making religious moderation a trending topic in digital media requires active digital media management. It is a strategic process to oversee content from planning and production to distribution and audience engagement (Nasrullah, 2021). It is imperative because the digital media environment is saturated with information, and audiences—now both consumers and producers—navigate these spaces using user-generated content (Marwantika, 2019). The emergence of echo chambers and filter bubbles exacerbates the polarization of religious discourse, limiting opportunities for meaningful dialogue and reinforcing confirmation bias through algorithmic personalization (Barberá et al., 2015). These opportunities and challenges highlight the need for strategic, ethical, and collaborative efforts to strengthen religious moderation in digital spaces.

Previous literature has explored various dimensions of religious moderation, ranging from social and educational to psychological and technological perspectives. Some studies have highlighted the threats posed by radicalism (Kustati et al., 2023; Turhan Yani et al., 2024), while others propose educational approaches to internalize moderation values (Masturin, 2022; Rusyana et al., 2023). Research also exists on youth perspectives—particularly Millennials and Gen Z—in formal educational settings and on social media (Awal et al., 2025; Febriani & Ritonga, 2022; Hopid et al., 2023).

However, most studies focus on curriculum development or psychological perceptions rather than offering concrete communication strategies tailored for Gen Z. Although studies such as Muzayanah (2025) and Febriani (2022) discuss social media's role in religious discourse, few provide focused frameworks for *da'wah* strategies that promote moderation through digital media. Some explore creative approaches, such as storytelling using augmented reality (Candra et al., 2024), or highlight the use of social media among Millennials (Firmansyah & Idris, 2024). Yet, they rarely address the preferences and patterns unique to Generation Z. This gap demonstrates the urgency of designing a more contextual, strategic digital *da'wah* model grounded in communication ethics and Gen Z digital behavior.

Short-form videos become especially important given the dominance of short-form video among Gen Z in Indonesia. According to a 2024 survey, 69% of Indonesian Gen Z actively use YouTube and 70% use TikTok, both platforms that heavily feature short-form video formats (Mediana, 2024). YouTube reports that 90% of Gen Z in Indonesia engage with Shorts daily (Voi, 2024), while Instagram Reels videos average over 6,000 views per post—higher than TikTok in specific demographics (Saskia, 2024). Despite this trend, the use of short-form video for *da'wah*, especially to promote religious moderation, remains very limited.

Therefore, this study aims to design a more adaptive and relevant digital *da'wah* communication strategy that aligns with Generation Z's media preferences while delivering religious moderation messages in engaging, ethical, and culturally grounded formats. It is assumed that short-form video, guided by Islamic communication ethics—particularly the classical principle of *tablīgh*—and informed by modern communication theories such as Uses and Gratifications, offers substantial potential to engage Generation Z as media consumers and content creators. This study proposes a hybrid model that promotes ethical message dissemination and participatory engagement by combining these perspectives.

The expected outcome of this study is an instructional module for Islamic Communication students, equipping them with theoretical foundations and practical skills to produce impactful, ethical, and resonant short-form religious content. Academically, this research contributes to Islamic communication studies by bridging classical *da'wah* values with contemporary digital media practices. Practically, it equips future Islamic communicators with adaptive skills to meet the communicative needs of a digitally native generation. The study aspires to support the national agenda of promoting religious moderation in the digital public sphere.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach combined with elements of research and development (R&D) design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Sugiyono, 2019). The qualitative approach explored emerging trends and meanings in short-form digital *da'wah*

videos created by Generation Z on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. The R&D element designed and proposed a structured communication model as a Religious Moderation Guidebook to support ethical and strategic digital content production for Islamic communication. This dual approach aligned with the study's goal to map the phenomenon and offer practical solutions.

The research was exploratory and model-development oriented, with two main stages. In the first stage, the study mapped the digital footprint of religious moderation content through big data tools and platform-based analysis. In the second stage, it synthesized findings to construct a two-pillar framework: a Religious Moderation Guidebook that integrated Islamic communication ethics with digital media management strategies (Hefni, 2015a; Nasrullah, 2021).

Data collection used two primary techniques. First, digital trend tracking employed Google Trends to observe public interest in key terms such as “*moderasi beragama*” (religious moderation) and “*toleransi beragama*” (religious tolerance), along with related keywords, between 2019 and 2024. This provided a longitudinal perspective on search volumes and geospatial distribution across Indonesia (Google Trends, 2024). Second, manual observation of social media content searched the hashtag #moderasiberagama across TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This was complemented by social media analytics tools—Brand24 and Analisa.io—to quantify metrics such as content volume, engagement rates, sentiment, keyword associations, and top contributing accounts (Analisa.io, 2021; Brand24, 2024).

The study employed content and social network analysis (SNA) to interpret the data. Content analysis examined how Islamic ethical values and communication principles were embedded in the narrative, visual style, and dissemination strategies of Gen Z short-form videos. It focused on hashtags, scripting, captions, and visual cues to assess alignment with Islamic communication ethics and media best practices (Hefni, 2015). Meanwhile, SNA tracked diffusion patterns of religious moderation discourse, identified influential accounts, and assessed co-occurring hashtag networks across platforms.

To ensure data validity, the study employed triangulation of techniques and sources. Technique triangulation combined quantitative digital metrics (e.g., Google Trends, Brand24, Analisa.io) with qualitative content interpretation of user-generated videos. Source triangulation compared platform-specific data from TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, validated against institutional policies and documentation from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. Reflective analysis by the researcher provided additional self-validation, enabling deeper contextual interpretation and minimizing bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mapping the Digital Landscape of Religious Moderation Content

The digital footprint of religious moderation trends in Indonesia can be traced through digital platforms and social media channels, which function as massive repositories of user-generated content archived through big data technologies. Social media serves as a storage space and enables users to act as producers and consumers (prosumers) of religious content (Chair et al., 2024). In this ecosystem, platforms act as content curators, with algorithms determining which content appears in users' feeds based on their behavior and engagement

history. The interplay between algorithmic curation, user engagement, and content virality facilitates the rise of trending topics, including religious moderation, across digital platforms.

The dissemination of religious moderation content on social media gained momentum following implementing the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' (MoRA) strategic policy in 2019, which promoted religious moderation through structured digital campaigns. In media studies, this initiative falls under the umbrella of social media campaigns (Setia & Haq, 2023). To track the performance of this campaign over the last five years, keyword analysis was conducted using Google Trends for digital content and platform-specific hashtag searches (e.g., #moderasiberagama) on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok.

To assess developments from 2019 to 2024, the researcher utilized Google Trends to conduct digital media data mining. Google Trends offers visual representations of keyword popularity over time and is widely recognized as a valuable tool for analyzing public interest and keyword performance. The analysis revealed that content related to “moderasi beragama” gradually increased following its initial policy rollout. From a baseline of approximately 2.75 average monthly searches in 2019, interest steadily grew to 7.75 in 2020, 22.5 in 2021, and peaked in 2023 with an average of 56.33. The highest single-week spike occurred in December 2024, reaching the maximum index of 100 (Google Trends, 2024). This upward trend highlights a growing engagement with religious moderation discourse in Indonesia’s digital landscape, particularly following increased governmental and institutional efforts to promote the narrative through online platforms.

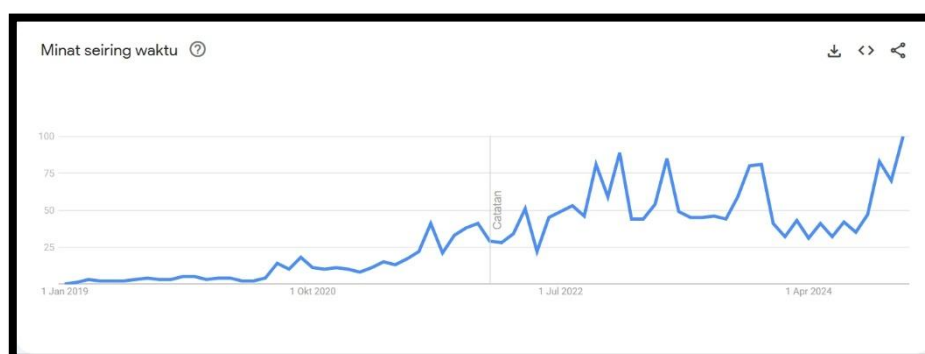


Figure 1. Tracking Religious Moderation Keywords on Google Trends (2019–2024 Period)

Keyword queries during 2019–2024 included basic inquiries such as “moderasi adalah” (moderation is), “moderasi beragama adalah” (religious moderation is), “moderasi Islam” (Islamic moderation), and “contoh moderasi beragama” (examples of religious moderation), indicating the public’s introductory-level interest during the early phase of dissemination. In contrast, 2024 search queries reflected a shift toward practical applications and institutional relevance, such as “soal moderasi beragama,” “moderasi beragama kemenag,” and “soal PPPK moderasi beragama,” likely due to civil service exam requirements.

This trend is further supported by the rise of related queries such as “nilai-nilai moderasi beragama,” “soal-soal moderasi beragama,” and “moderasi beragama PDF,” suggesting a growing demand for structured educational materials and exam-oriented content. Institutional keywords like “Kemenag” and “Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia” in the related entities

also confirm the increasing association between religious moderation discourse and formal governmental initiatives. These developments highlight a broader shift from conceptual awareness to implementation and institutionalization, especially within state-managed educational and bureaucratic frameworks.

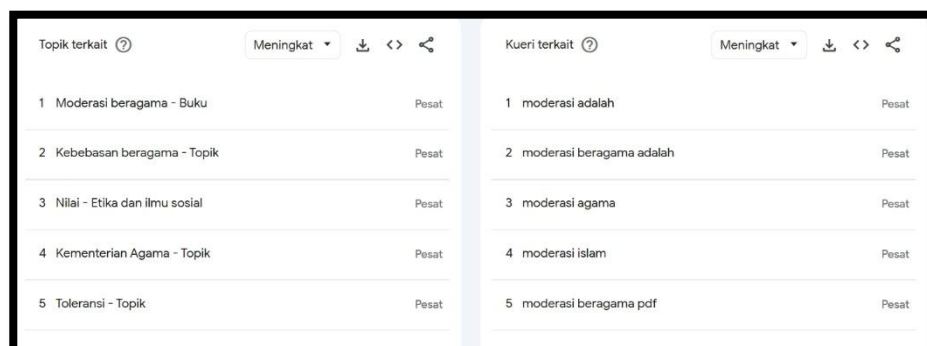


Figure 2. Tracking Religious Moderation Topics and Queries on Google Trends (2019–2024 Period)

Google Trends also provided a geographical mapping of public interest in religious moderation, covering 34 provinces across Indonesia with varying levels of engagement. The five provinces with the highest levels of search activity were West Sulawesi, Bengkulu, Southeast Sulawesi, Aceh, and Gorontalo regions, located outside of Java and known for their relatively high degrees of religious and cultural diversity (Google Trends, 2024). This distribution suggests that public interest in religious moderation is particularly salient in areas where pluralism is a lived reality. In these regions, interfaith interactions are not merely theoretical but woven into the fabric of everyday life, making the values of moderation essential for maintaining social harmony. These provinces could thus serve as valuable case studies for analyzing the practical implementation of religious moderation in socially and religiously diverse environments, especially in contexts where communal tensions, historical conflict, or cultural intersections demand a nuanced approach to religious expression and coexistence.

At the city level, the highest concentrations of interest were observed in Kajen, Parepare, Pamekasan, Langsa, and Ponorogo (Google Trends, 2024). The prominence of these smaller urban centers highlights the widespread reach of the discourse on religious moderation, not only in major metropolitan areas but also in regional and local contexts where religious identity often plays a central role in community life and governance. These cities frequently serve as religious and educational hubs, housing pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), Islamic universities, or active religious organizations that may be key drivers of public engagement with moderate discourse. Furthermore, the involvement of local actors, ranging from religious leaders to civic educators, in amplifying religious moderation through social media and grassroots initiatives may explain the high search interest in these areas. It indicates that religious moderation is not confined to elite or national-level discourse but has taken root in everyday community conversations, facilitated by digital access and contextually relevant content.

These geographic insights reveal that the diffusion of religious moderation content is not strictly a top-down process but also involves bottom-up participation. Localized interest

reflects how digital platforms can democratize access to *da'wah* narratives, enabling smaller regions to contribute meaningfully to national religious conversations. As such, future digital *da'wah* strategies would benefit from paying closer attention to these emerging regional dynamics, customizing content to reflect the linguistic, cultural, and religious nuances of diverse Indonesian localities.

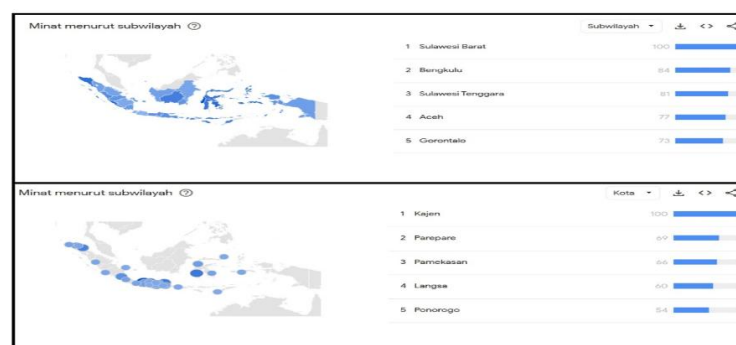


Figure 3. Tracking Regional and Sub-Regional Interest by Province and City on the Topic of Religious Moderation in Google Trends (2019–2024 Period)

Although Google Trends is integrated with YouTube, it does not support trend tracking on platforms like Instagram or TikTok. Still, data on YouTube revealed a significant rise in content, particularly from 2020 onward. In April 2023, content volume peaked with 100 videos related to religious moderation. Average monthly content from 2018 to 2019 hovered around five videos, increasing to 20 per month from 2020 onward.

To complement this digital data mining, the researcher conducted a manual content search across TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube using the hashtag #moderasiberagama. As of December 2024, YouTube hosted 9,400 videos across 5,200 channels, Instagram had 52,859 related posts, and TikTok showed an impressive 26.2 million views, making it the most active platform for this content (Instagram, 2024; TikTok, 2024; YouTube, 2024). TikTok's popularity is attributed to its short-form video format, algorithmic discoverability, and ease of sharing, with Indonesia ranking second globally in TikTok users.

Tabel 1. Tracking of #ModerasiBeragama Content on Social Media

No	Social Media	Number of Content/Views
1	YouTube	9.400
2	Instagram	52.859
3	TikTok	26.200.000

Social Network Analysis (SNA) tools such as Brand24 and Analisa.io were employed to measure keyword engagement and map digital discourse surrounding #moderasiberagama to gain deeper insights. Brand24 revealed that YouTube was the most influential platform for this topic, generating 33 million visits, followed by Twitter (6.6 million) and TikTok (2.1 million). Across the 2019–2024 period, Brand24 recorded an average of 92 hashtag mentions annually, reaching approximately 398,000 users annually (Brand24, 2024).

Numerical summaries from Brand24 indicate 203,000 total interactions, 169,000 average likes, and a positive sentiment ratio of 82%, with content valuation reaching \$28,666. Additionally, trending keywords associated with the hashtag included terms like #BimasIslam,

#kemenagRI, #pendidikan, #hiduptenang, #ceramah, and others that reflect broader thematic discourse surrounding moderation (Brand24, 2024).

In the next stage, the researcher employed Social Network Analysis (SNA) tools to examine religious moderation content on TikTok and Instagram. Two key platforms were used: Brand24 (<https://app.brand24.com>), an advanced social media monitoring tool suitable for businesses of all sizes to track online mentions and engagement across various platforms, and Analisa.io (<https://analisa.io>), an AI-powered social media analytics tool that offers insights into Instagram and TikTok content. Analisa.io provides basic analytics for free using public profiles or hashtags and offers advanced features through flexible pricing plans. These tools enabled the researcher to map user engagement, identify top contributors, and analyze content trends related to the hashtag #moderasiberagama.



Figure 4. Tracking the Context of #ModerasiBeragama Discussions on Social Media (2019–2024 Period)

The top 20 hashtags related to religious moderation, based on Brand24 data, included #moderasiberagama, #toleransi, #tolakradikalisme, #tolakterorisme, #indonesia, and #shorts (Analisa.io, 2024). This mapping illustrates that religious moderation discourse is closely linked to broader campaigns against extremism and in favor of national unity. Rather than isolation, the hashtag #moderasiberagama operates within a dense network of adjacent narratives such as calls for tolerance, anti-radicalism, and peaceful coexistence, collectively forming the backbone of Indonesia's digital public sphere on religion.

Gary R. Bunt (2018) states that hashtags are transformative in contemporary Islamic discourse. They allow diverse voices, including ordinary believers, scholars, youth influencers, and institutional actors, to engage in religious conversations, foster community connections, and challenge traditional forms of religious authority. Hashtags thus act as both discursive and algorithmic tools. On one hand, they function rhetorically to signal ideological alignment or community belonging; on the other, they are instrumental in content indexing, enabling social media algorithms to prioritize and recommend content to broader audiences.

In religious moderation, hashtags serve as strategic entry points that increase content visibility, promote intertextuality, and encourage the cross-pollination of ideas between different segments of the online community. For instance, the co-occurrence of

#moderasiberagama with hashtags like #toleransi or #tolakradikalisme reflects a convergence of civil, religious, and state-sponsored narratives, reinforcing the idea that moderation is not merely a religious ideal but a civic imperative in the face of rising polarization. It also reveals a tactical approach by digital *da'wah* actors who carefully curate their hashtags to align with trending socio-political discourse, maximizing reach and relevance.

Moreover, general tags such as #indonesia or format-oriented tags like #shorts indicate an effort to embed religious messages within broader national and digital cultures. It suggests that content creators target religiously inclined audiences and embed moderation messages in entertainment or lifestyle content. Such hybridization blurs the boundaries between religious preaching and digital pop culture, allowing religious moderation values to travel across diverse audience segments more fluidly.

TAGAR	MENYEBUTKAN
1 #moderasiberagama	16
2 #toleransi	3
3 #tolakradikalisme	3
4 #tolakkektremisme	3
5 #tolakintoleransi	3
6 #tolakterorisme	3
7 #viral	2
8 #indonesia	2
9 #lawanekstremisme	1
10 #burnn	1
11 #moderasi	1
12 #shorts	1
13 #kebersamaan	1
14 #viralvideo	1
15 #temanbimasislam	1
16 #binnekatunggalika	1
17 #risetinfid	1
18 #lawanhoax	1
19 #nkr	1
20 #likesforlike	1

Figure 5. Tracking of Popular Mentions of #ModerasiBeragama on Brand24 (2019–2024 Period)

In addition to identifying active platforms, Brand24 also tracked the top 20 public profiles that consistently used the hashtag #moderasiberagama between 2019 and 2024. These profiles fall into two general categories: institutional accounts and individual accounts. Figure 5. highlights the most influential public profiles, while Figure 6 presents the most active profiles regarding frequency of content production related to religious moderation. Prominent accounts such as @bimas_islam, @devinadaj, @bimasbudha, @youngbuddhist, and @syaiful_karim were among those with the highest number of mentions, demonstrating their active role in amplifying the discourse (Brand24, 2024). These profiles indicate a diverse ecosystem of contributors from official government bodies to individual religious influencers who collaboratively shape the narrative of religious moderation in Indonesia.

Profil publik paling aktif

	PROFIL	SUMBER	PENGIRUT	MENYEBUTKAN
1	nury88		1376	9
2	syaiful_karim		1048	8
3	bimasbuddha		1170	4
4	kustantoroni		197	3
5	moderasikalbar		422	3
6	penais.kemenag		2399	2
7	kkn1.semen		16	2
8	kanwil.kemenag.jampung		273	2
9	devinadaj		6108	2
10	bimas_islam		2123	2
11	zanzamustofa91		1165	1
12	youngbuddhistassociation		50 000	1
13	yordil_popiya		408	1
14	user7626393327933		1032	1
15	tusinancomer		1563	1
16	tobadream		30 400	1
17	rizqielgoniah		343	1
18	relawanliterasi1		36	1
19	putraihud207		3282	1
20	posko.17.lembang		6	1

Figure 6. Tracking of Top Public Profiles Mentioning #ModerasiBeragama on Social Media (2019–2024 Period)

Furthermore, Figure 6 shows the most popular mentions associated with these accounts, reinforcing their status as influential actors in the digital conversation. These mentions reflect more than passive visibility; they represent high levels of active engagement, such as replies, shares, and discussions that contribute to the virality and credibility of religious moderation content. It demonstrates the strategic importance of institutional and individual actors, whose consistent activity helps sustain public interest and normalize moderate religious narratives within digital ecosystems.

Brand24's cross-platform content tracking in Figure 7 further reveals that TikTok has become the dominant platform for religious moderation content, accounting for approximately 73.9% of dissemination. It is followed by video-based platforms like YouTube and Instagram Reels (14.1%) and Twitter (12%) (Brand24, 2024). The dominance of TikTok highlights a significant generational shift in content consumption habits, especially among Generation Z, who favor short, emotionally resonant, and visually engaging formats (Stahl & Literat, 2023). The platform's algorithm promotes creative, participatory content, pushing religious communicators to reframe *da'wah* messages into storytelling formats that are both entertaining and educational (St. Lawrence, 2024).

This shift signifies more than just a change in platform preference; it reflects a transformation in how religious messages are constructed and validated in the digital age. Engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and follower counts increasingly shape the authority of *da'wah* actors, challenging traditional hierarchies (Fakhrurroji, 2019). For religious moderation campaigns to remain effective, content must be ideologically sound, strategically curated, and culturally relevant. These insights form a critical transition to the next subtheme: how digital media management can serve as a structured framework for developing instructional materials and guidebooks for religious moderation that resonate with today's media-savvy youth.



Figure 7. Tracking of Religious Moderation Content Across Platforms (2019–2024 Period)

These findings underscore the importance of content strategy in digital *da'wah*. High engagement rates are not merely a product of content quantity but also depend on how well the content is curated, formatted, and distributed. Pairing relevant content with platform-specific strategies such as optimizing hashtags, visual storytelling, and influencer collaborations increases visibility and impact. Therefore, understanding the behavior of leading accounts and mapping the ecosystem of content creators is essential for designing effective religious moderation campaigns that resonate with contemporary digital audiences.

The mapping of religious moderation content across digital platforms from 2019 to 2024 reveals a growing volume of online discourse and a maturation in how the topic is framed and engaged with by diverse digital actors. From initial conceptual awareness to increased institutional participation and strategic hashtag use, religious moderation has evolved into a digitally embedded narrative, sustained by government efforts, social influencers, and user-generated content. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have emerged as central arenas where short-form videos, emotionally resonant storytelling, and algorithmic amplification shape public understanding. The high volume of interactions, positive sentiment, and content spread, especially in religiously plural regions, underscore the potential of digital spaces to support *da'wah* messages rooted in tolerance and inclusivity.

However, the digital success of religious moderation narratives does not occur in a vacuum. The visibility and engagement achieved by certain content are often the result of intentional communication strategies, data-driven campaign planning, and systematic content management. Thus, while mapping reveals what has occurred in the digital sphere, exploring how such success can be replicated, structured, and scaled is equally critical. It leads us to the next subtheme, which discusses digital media management as a framework to guide the development of structured instructional materials. By examining the principles of strategic communication, content design, and audience targeting, we can construct a guidebook model for promoting religious moderation through well-managed digital *da'wah* strategies.

Digital Media Management as a Framework for Constructing a Religious Moderation Guidebook

The previous section has demonstrated how religious moderation discourse has evolved in Indonesia's digital landscape. While religious moderation discourse has become increasingly visible in Indonesia across platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, this visibility does not necessarily equate to coherence or strategic impact. The rise in hashtag use and short-form video content reflects an enthusiastic public engagement. However, the content ecosystem remains fragmented, often driven more by trends and virality than educational or theological integrity (Chair et al., 2024; Marwantika, 2022). In this context, there is a clear need for a systematic communication framework beyond spontaneous content creation. Scholars such as Campbell (2010) and Bunt (2018) have shown that religious discourse in digital spaces is increasingly shaped by algorithmic dynamics rather than traditional religious authority, raising concerns about the dilution of meaning and ethical depth in religious communication.

Constructing a Religious Moderation Guidebook is proposed to address this challenge as a strategic and ethical response. Rather than merely compiling thematic content, the guidebook is envisioned as a two-pillar framework: (1) a message pillar, drawn from the four core indicators of religious moderation formulated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs namely national commitment, tolerance, anti-radicalism, and accommodation of local culture (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019); and (2) a strategy pillar, which outlines how these messages are delivered using a hybrid model of Islamic communication principles (Hefni, 2015) and digital media management (Nasrullah, 2021). This dual approach ensures that content is both theologically sound and communicatively practical.

The message pillar rests upon a foundation of Islamic values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *musāwah* (equality), and *syura* (consultation). These values are not merely conceptual ideals but serve as communicative anchors in designing religious content that is context-sensitive and socially responsive. As emphasized in the Qur'anic ethos and the Prophetic model, Islamic communication is about transmitting messages and building ethical relationships through clarity, empathy, and justice. This framework allows the values of religious moderation to be reframed into various media formats, such as text, video, infographics, and podcasts, suited to the digital consumption habits of Generation Z (Stahl & Literat, 2023; Ypulse, 2019).

The second pillar, the dissemination strategy, combines digital media management's technical strengths with Islamic communication's ethical depth. Digital media management provides a structured model comprising four stages: (1) Research, analyzing the media environment and user behavior; (2) Planning, developing messages, segmenting audiences, and selecting platforms; (3) Implementation, producing, scheduling, and distributing content; and (4) Evaluation, measuring impact through engagement, impressions, and sentiment analysis (Nasrullah, 2021). Each stage addresses key questions about audience behavior, platform algorithms, content formatting, timing, and performance metrics. However, this process is not purely mechanical. It must be ethically guided by Islamic communication methods such as *hiwār* (dialogue), *jidal* (constructive debate), *tablīgh* (truthful conveyance), *tabisyir* (encouragement), and *ta'aruf* (mutual understanding) (Hefni, 2015).

The guidebook bridges religious *da'wah* and digital communication science by embedding these Islamic communication methods into digital content production. For example, *hiwār* promotes two-way interactions through live comments or Q&A sessions; *tabsyir* can be implemented through hopeful narratives or motivational messages; *ta'aruf* can be embodied in campaigns that promote cross-cultural understanding. These methods support value-laden engagement, ensuring that religious communication is not reduced to slogans or visual gimmicks but contributes to moral development and social harmony.

Furthermore, the guidebook highlights Islamic communication ethics as a filter in the digital production process. Principles such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *shidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (responsibility), and *tatsabbut* (verification) become especially relevant in the context of digital *da'wah*, where information flows rapidly, and audiences are vulnerable to misinformation or ideological bias (Hefni, 2015; Pariser, 2011). This ethical foundation can help address the problem of content superficiality, clickbait tactics, and the exploitation of religious sentiments for popularity. Selectivity, validity, information balance, and privacy are crucial in ensuring that digital content respects religious integrity and user dignity.

The guidebook also serves a practical function. It provides templates, guidelines, and evaluation tools that can be adopted across multiple settings, such as academic institutions, *pesantren*, mosques, student organizations, or governmental agencies. For example, lecturers in Islamic Communication or Religious Education may use the guidebook to structure content creation modules or digital *da'wah* projects in university settings. Digital *da'wah* communities can use it to plan campaigns, monitor engagement, and reflect on ethical dilemmas. Institutions can adopt it to coordinate national narratives through locally contextualized messages. This adaptability strengthens the guidebook's role as a multi-sectoral communication model.

Ultimately, this dual-pillar model transforms religious moderation from an abstract ideal into a practical and measurable communication campaign. It ensures that the values of moderation are embedded in both message substance and delivery method. The guidebook cultivates a more inclusive, critical, and spiritually grounded digital public sphere in Indonesia by aligning content design with communication ethics and media literacy. It not only counters exclusivist or radical narratives but also inspires the development of new *da'wah* models that are culturally adaptive and theologically responsible.



Source: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bgEL_QoDDib8zpp3zEK-R_40k0nafxIu/view?usp=sharing

Figure 8. Religious Moderation Guidebook

One of the most practical applications of the guidebook is in designing short-form video campaigns for platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. These platforms thrive on quick, visually engaging content that captures attention within the first few seconds. Using the guidebook's values-based messaging framework, content creators can develop micro-content formats such as 30–60 second videos highlighting one principle at a time (e.g., tolerance, anti-radicalism) through storytelling, animation, or testimonial clips. Scripts can be aligned with Islamic communication ethics, ensuring that even short videos carry truthful, respectful, and socially constructive messages.

To support creators, the guidebook may include templates for video captions, recommended hashtag strategies, and tips on optimizing content for discoverability while preserving ethical integrity. For example, pairing the principle of *tabisyir* (encouragement) with hopeful narratives in Reels, or using *hiwār* (dialogue) techniques in duet formats on TikTok can increase engagement while promoting moderation. These short-form videos serve as accessible entry points for broader audiences, especially Generation Z, transforming abstract religious values into relatable, everyday expressions of faith and coexistence.

The Religious Moderation Guidebook, structured around the dual pillars of message and strategy, offers a conceptual framework for digital *da'wah* and a practical tool for content creators, educators, and institutions navigating today's complex media environment. However, the real test of its effectiveness lies in how these strategies and ethical values are adopted in practice, particularly by Generation Z. As the most active demographic on short-form video platforms, Gen-Z content creators provide a valuable lens through which to examine the practical implementation of religious moderation in digital spaces.

Gen-Z Created Short-Form Videos: Production Patterns and Ethical Elements

Building directly upon the dual-pillar framework proposed in the Religious Moderation Guidebook, this section explores how these values and strategies are embodied in actual media content produced by Generation Z. As digital natives, Gen-Z students are not only the primary consumers of platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts but also emerging content creators who actively shape online religious narratives. Their participation in digital *da'wah* marks a shift from top-down institutional broadcasting toward grassroots, peer-to-peer, emotionally driven, visually dynamic, and algorithmically responsive communication.

To evaluate how well the guidebook is operationalized in real-world content, this section investigates the creative expressions and production patterns of short-form videos developed by students in Islamic Communication and Broadcasting programs. Using the two-pillar framework message and dissemination strategy, this analysis focuses on how student-generated videos integrate Islamic communication ethics and effective digital media practices. From scriptwriting and visual storytelling to captioning and hashtag curation, these videos reflect how young Muslim creators navigate the tension between virality and religious integrity.

To illustrate how the values of the guidebook are translated into visual narratives, we begin with a short-form video posted by @rfnhmima_. This reel presents a compelling micro-narrative that frames Indonesia as a shared national home, symbolizing unity in diversity across ethnic, cultural, and religious lines. Thematically, the message aligns with two of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' core indicators of religious moderation: national commitment and tolerance. The reel exemplifies *tabisyir* (positive messaging) by promoting

mutual respect and national unity, while also implicitly applying the principle of *hiwār* (dialogue) through its inclusive civic address. Though the video does not explicitly reference Islamic texts, its tone and moral clarity reflect Islamic communicative ethics.

Visually, the reel adopts platform-optimized aesthetics typical of Instagram Reels vertical framing, dynamic editing, and emotionally evocative imagery. It likely opens with powerful visuals such as national flags or multicultural scenes that serve as metaphors for pluralism. Background music enhances emotional resonance without overpowering the narrative, reflecting ethical restraint and alignment with digital storytelling standards as emphasized in the strategy pillar (see Figure 9).



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDoD70DzycT/?igsh=MXhyeG9jbzh4bzZydg%3D%3D>

Figure 9. Short-Form Video at account @rfnhmima_

The content uses targeted hashtags such as *#moderasiberagama* and *#komitmenkebangsaan* for digital visibility, embedding the reel into ongoing civic and religious discourses. It demonstrates media literacy and strategic alignment with the guidebook's dissemination pillar. Ethically, the reel upholds *ikhhlās* (sincerity), *shidq* (truthfulness), and *musāwah* (equality), presenting a balanced and inclusive portrayal without sensationalism or provocation.

Yet, despite its ethical strength, the video remains largely monologic; it lacks participatory or interactive features such as comments, prompts, or responses. It indicates a broader pattern among Gen-Z creators: emphasizing visual and emotional impact rather than dialogical engagement. Nevertheless, the reel successfully translates the guidebook's message pillar into digital storytelling that is both effective and ethically responsible.

To further understand the diverse ways Gen-Z creators operationalize the guidebook's principles, we now turn to a second example that situates religious moderation within a more localized, experiential context of life in a *pesantren*. The reel created by @sinta_della28 focuses on daily life within a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), offering a grounded portrayal of religious tolerance in everyday practice. Through its caption and visuals, the reel positions *pesantren* as a harmonious environment that reflects cultural accommodation and tolerance, two key indicators of religious moderation. This video aligns with *tabsyir* and *ta'āruf* (mutual understanding), using the authenticity of lived experience to communicate religious values. It reflects a shift from doctrinal messaging to experiential storytelling, where ethics are not preached, but practiced and observed (see Figure 10).



Source:<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DDmL32ayDBF/?igsh=MTI2Y2huNXQ5YThlZQ=>

Figure 10. Short-Form Video at account @sinta_della28

Aesthetically, the reel favors simplicity, documenting communal meals, shared prayers, and study sessions among diverse students. These visuals build emotional proximity and authenticity, resonating with Gen-Z preferences for intimate, unfiltered content. Soft background music or ambient sound fosters a contemplative tone that reinforces the theme of coexistence without relying on heavy symbolism or overproduction.

Strategically, hashtags such as #ToleransiBeragama and #ToleransiSosialpolitik suggest an intention to insert the reel into broader discussions on religious coexistence and civic life. Though some formatting inconsistencies appear, the effort indicates an awareness of platform dynamics and thematic relevance.

Ethically, the video embraces the principles of *ikhlas*, *shidq*, and *musawah*, avoiding exaggeration or divisive language. It presents *pesantren* life as peaceful, inclusive, and ethically grounded. Yet similar to the previous case, the reel remains one-directional, without dialogic prompts or user interaction. It suggests that while the message pillar is well embodied, the strategy pillar, particularly participatory engagement, is still underdeveloped among Gen-Z creators.

These two case studies demonstrate how the Religious Moderation Guidebook can be translated into effective, ethical, and visually resonant digital content. They reflect a new genre of youth-driven religious communication that merges theological values with platform literacy. While both reels effectively convey moderation and tolerance through visual storytelling, they also reveal an opportunity for further development, particularly in adopting dialogical elements that foster participatory digital *da'wah*.

As such, these examples not only validate the theoretical model of the guidebook but also provide critical feedback for its refinement. Future iterations might include more guidance on interactive content strategies and participatory design, ensuring moderation is seen, heard, and engaged in meaningful, dialogic ways.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that short-form video *da'wah* serves as a powerful, innovative medium for fostering religious moderation among Generation Z in Indonesia's digital landscape. By applying a dual-pillar framework—integrating substantive message pillars (national commitment, tolerance, anti-radicalism, and cultural accommodation) with strategic dissemination pillars (Islamic communication ethics and digital media management)—Gen Z creators can produce algorithmically successful, theologically sound content that boosts engagement with moderation narratives and counters extremist discourses on social media. For future research, longitudinal and experimental studies should empirically assess the long-term impact of this *da'wah* on Gen Z attitudes and behaviors, alongside comparative analyses adapting the framework to other cultural or national contexts and explorations of emerging technologies like AI personalization or augmented reality for ethical religious communication.

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