



The Existence of *Pesantren* Traditions on Social Media: Content Strategy and Public Engagement on Instagram and TikTok An-Nur II Malang

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Abstract

This study explains the existence of pesantren tradition as represented through social media content, strategies for increasing public engagement, forms and levels of engagement, challenges and opportunities in maintaining the existence of the pesantren on Instagram and TikTok An-Nur II Malang. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, content observation, and literature review. Validity was checked through triangulation, member checking, and referential adequacy check, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman technique. Research findings show that the existence of pesantren tradition on An-Nur II Malang's social media is evident through content that represents scientific, *ubudiyah*, social traditions, and the five key elements of pesantren. Social media management is

differentiated between formal and casual accounts through planning, production, evaluation, and optimization. However, there are challenges in maintaining consistency in production amid the density of the *santri* schedules, balancing content from non-official accounts, and adapting trends to pesantren institutional support, the potential of digital platforms, the capacity of the multimedia team, and digital pesantren innovation. These findings provide references for other pesantren seeking to develop effective content and engagement strategies by leveraging opportunities within the pesantren environment.

Keywords: *content strategy, pesantren traditions, public engagement, social media*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menjelaskan eksistensi tradisi *pesantren* yang direpresentasikan melalui konten media sosial, strategi untuk meningkatkan engagement publik, bentuk dan tingkat keterlibatan, serta tantangan dan peluang dalam mempertahankan eksistensi *pesantren* di Instagram dan TikTok An-Nur II Malang. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi konten, dan studi literatur. Keabsahan data dicek melalui triangulasi, *member checking*, dan *referential adequacy check*, lalu dianalisis menggunakan teknik Miles dan Huberman. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan eksistensi tradisi pesantren di media sosial An-Nur II Malang melalui konten yang merepresentasikan tradisi keilmuan, ubudiyah, sosial kemasyarakatan, berpakaian, dan perilaku *santri*, sekaligus menampilkan lima elemen kunci pesantren. Pengelolaan media sosial dibedakan antara akun formal dan santai melalui perencanaan, produksi, evaluasi, dan optimalisasi. Meskipun terdapat tantangan dalam menjaga konsistensi produksi di tengah jadwal padat para siswa, menyeimbangkan konten dari akun nonresmi, dan menyesuaikan tren dengan nilai-nilai pesantren, peluang muncul melalui pemanfaatan tradisi pesantren sebagai sumber konten autentik, dukungan institusional, potensi platform digital, kapasitas tim multimedia, dan inovasi digital pesantren. Temuan ini memberikan referensi bagi pesantren lain dalam mengembangkan strategi konten dan keterlibatan yang efektif dengan memanfaatkan peluang yang ada di lingkungan pesantren.

Kata Kunci: *tradisi pesantren, media sosial, strategi konten, engagement publik*

A. Introduction

Along with the times, *pesantren* are required to be open to the dynamics of globalization and modernization. This attitude is in line with the philosophy of traditionalist *pesantren*, which does not reject innovation but uses it to respond to the challenges of the times. To keep pace with the flow of modernization and globalization, *pesantren* need to develop openness by balancing traditional heritage with the demands of modernity. As stated by Abdul Hadi in his book entitled *Sikap dan Tradisi Keilmuan Pesantren dalam Rekonstruksi Pendidikan dan Tradisi Religiutas IPTEK*, modernity in the contemporary era cannot be separated from the tradition of *pesantren*. The statement shows that no community is completely free from the influence of modernity, including *pesantren* in the context of increasingly intensive globalization (Abdullah, 2014).

However, in social reality, there is a gap between these ideals and public perceptions. *Pesantren* are often trapped in traditional stereotypes that are considered less adaptive to the times, especially in utilizing social media (Hani et al., 2025). In fact, in the current digital era, various institutions, including An-Nur II Malang, are strengthening their identity and popularity through digital branding strategies. According to Kotler (2019), branding is a method to identify and differentiate products, services, or organizations to make them easier to recognize by the public because of their characteristics (Maulana et al., 2022).

Pesantren have a high urgency to participate in the digital branding process (Maulana et al., 2022). In this case, social media is a strategic tool in building an image, conveying information, and reaching a wider audience (Hani et al., 2025). The existence of social media is also important in maintaining Islamic values, preserving traditions, and facing modernization challenges that can erode the morale of the younger generation (Diana et al., 2024; Zakaria et al., 2022). Social media, as a new interaction space, opens opportunities for *pesantren* to showcase their traditions more broadly and inclusively. In this context, *pesantren* have strategic opportunities to build a positive image, convey traditional values, and establish closer communication with the public.

Social media user data published by We Are Social shows that Indonesia has 170 million active social media users (Siregar, 2022). In practice, social media such as TikTok and Instagram have become an indispensable part of the lives of Generation Z (Widodo & Husni, 2025). According to data calculated by ByteDance, TikTok usage in Indonesia has grown rapidly, reaching 92.07 million, making Indonesia one of the countries with the highest usage of the application (Salma & Albab, 2023). As of May 2024, there are 90.18 million Instagram users in Indonesia, an increase of 3.15% compared to the previous few years (Fanani & Kusumandyoko, 2024). The popularity of the two platforms makes them a widely usable medium for the needs of individuals and organizations alike. Haris in (Handoko et al., 2025) states that *pesantren* that use Instagram in a structured and consistent manner tend to be better known and appreciated by the public. Hanafi in Hani et al. (2025) shows that inactivity or

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inappropriate use of Instagram can undermine the aim of improving the image of the pesantren.

There have been several studies on the use of social media in pesantren. In general, previous studies have two tendencies. First, social media is a means of branding and promotion. This tendency is discussed in the research of (Handoko et al., 2025; Harahap et al., 2025) which only focuses on training in design creation through editing applications; (Luthfiatun et al., 2024; Palah & Maryono, 2024) have not specifically mentioned social media platforms; (Aziz et al., 2024; Baisan et al., 2025; Fanani & Kusumandyoko, 2024; Hani et al., 2025) focus only on Instagram; (Apriyanto et al., 2023; Irhamni & Fatmawati, 2025; Maulana et al., 2022; Ramadhan et al., 2023; Setiawan, 2024). Even though they have discussed multi-platforms (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube), they have not all touched on the management strategy of the TikTok platform. Second, social media as a means of da'wah and digital education. This tendency is discussed in (Farid et al., 2024; Praselanova & Al Qurny, 2025) without presenting engagement data; (Annisa & Mukaromah, 2025; Zuhri, 2025) without mentioning the strategy to achieve engagement in detail; (Iqbal & Mahfudz, 2025; Munawara et al., 2020) with a multi-platform approach, we have not reviewed strategies on TikTok.

Previous research has not focused on the content of pesantren traditions. Studies on public engagement with pesantren on social media remain minimal. Unstructured public engagement is a challenge in itself. Many pesantren do not have a consistent and impactful digital engagement strategy (Aprilia & Sufirmansyah, 2025). In fact, according to digital communication theory, the involvement and active participation of the community in building a strong and mutually supportive network is highly emphasized (Azizah et al., 2024; Baisan et al., 2025). The absence of this systematic approach raises the urgency to examine in depth how public engagement with the content of pesantren traditions can be optimized as part of a sustainability strategy in the digital era.

In response to this gap, this study offers a more comprehensive approach by simultaneously integrating content strategy analysis and public engagement across the pesantren's Instagram and TikTok platforms. Not only focusing on what is posted on social media, but also critically examining how efforts to attract public engagement, as well as forms of response to content that represent pesantren traditions. This approach allows for a more complete understanding of the dynamics of digital communication in pesantren, as well as opening up space for evaluation of the effectiveness of the interactions that are built.

By using the social media of An-Nur II Malang as a case study, this research is expected to make a conceptual and practical contribution to developing a digital communication model of pesantren that is relevant, adaptive, and still rooted in traditional values. An-Nur II Malang actively manages its digital presence across two platforms: Instagram (@annur2malang), which has been active since 2017 and has grown to 69,400 followers with an average of 903 likes per content, and TikTok, operated through two accounts, active since 2021 with 21,500 followers and an

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average of 903 likes per content (@lensapesantren2), 13,600 followers and an average of 1,241 likes per content (@annur2malang). These figures reflect a substantial and engaged digital audience, reinforcing the relevance of this pesantren as a meaningful case for examining faith-based institutions' adaptation to contemporary digital communication.

This research not only focuses on the representation of pesantren traditions on social media but also examines public engagement strategies systematically. The findings of this study can also be a reference for other pesantren in developing effective content and engagement strategies by utilizing the potential and opportunities in the pesantren environment as an authentic and valuable source of content. In addition, this study opens up a space for the evaluation of the challenges of social media management, as well as showing that pesantren can adapt to technology, build a positive image, and establish wider communication with the public.

B. Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within its context through data collection in a natural setting, with the researcher serving as the main instrument. This research was conducted at the An-Nur II Malang for four months, from July to November 2025. Data were collected through observations of Instagram and TikTok content, in-depth interviews with three multimedia administrators selected through purposive sampling, and a literature review as secondary data. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking with informants, and examination of reference adequacy to maintain data consistency and reliability.

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman, which includes three stages (Fitri & Haryanti, 2020). First, data reduction by selecting and categorizing relevant information regarding the representation of pesantren traditions, strategies to enhance public engagement, and challenges in maintaining pesantren visibility on visual-based social media platforms. Second, data presentation in descriptive paragraphs. Third, conclusion drawing and verification through triangulation to formulate content strategy recommendations and solutions to the challenges encountered.

C. Results and Discussion

The Existence of *Pesantren* Traditions Represented Through Social Media Content on Instagram and TikTok An-Nur II Malang

The tradition of *pesantren* is everything that is habituated, understood, lived, and practiced in *pesantren*, in the form of values and their implementation in daily life, thus forming a culture and civilization that distinguishes it from other educational institutions (Budiyanto et al., 2022), including scientific, *ubudiyah*, and social traditions (Mubarok, 2019). More completely, the tradition of the *pesantren*

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also includes the tradition of dressing and behaving (Abdullah, 2014). In this case, based on the results of observations on content uploaded in October 2024–October 2025 on the Instagram and TikTok accounts of the An-Nur II Malang, traditions represented include kajian kitab kuning through the sorogan and bandongan methods with catur wulan examinations held three times a year, lalaran (memorizing nadzam), scientific discussions through bahtsul masail and *pesantren* deliberations, daurah ilmiah with speakers from Al-Azhar University, majelis ta'lim in the form of Pasar Waqiah and Pengajian Rutin Ahad Legi, mujadah (recitation of Yasin, tahlil, and istighosah), harlah (*pesantren* birthday celebration), haul (commemoration of the death of muslim intellectual), ro'an (cooperation to clean the environment), Ihtifal Maji' Syahri Ramadhan (welcoming Ramadhan), and haflah akhirussanah (Graduation ceremony at the end of the *santri* studies).

Through Instagram and TikTok, the *pesantren* traditions at An-Nur II Malang are represented as visual and audiovisual content. The content features the use of *sarung*, *baju takwa*, and *peci* in the *pesantren* environment. This corroborates Setiawan's finding that sarung and black peci are distinguishing attributes that are consistently associated with the *pesantren* education model (Setiawan, 2024). The use of these attributes also supports Abdullah's statement about the tradition of dressing in *pesantren* (Abdullah, 2014). In addition, the tradition of behavior can be seen in the practice of *mushafahah* (shaking hands), khidmah (devotion), *ta'dzim* to the *kiai*, and sending prayers and khataman Qur'an to the founder of *pesantren* in Jantiko Mantab activities. In accordance with Hadi's research, these practices are a form of tradition of honoring teachers or *kiai* (Hadi, 2021).

The five elements that are the basis of the tradition of the *pesantren* as an educational institution: kitab kuning, *kiai*, *santri*, *pondok*, and mosque (Budiyanto et al., 2022; Haryanti et al., 2022) are the narrative frames consistently represented in the *pesantren*'s social media content. *Kiai* as the central figure is shown through photos and video footage when delivering a study and mauidhah hasanah, giving advice, and welcoming guests. In addition, this role is also expressed through Dhawuh Kyai content, which contains wise messages from the caregivers of An-Nur II Malang. *Santri* appears as the main component in the majority of content across learning activities, worship, art, and daily routines. The *pondok* building serves as a consistent visual backdrop, with drones highlighting the splendor of the *pesantren* from above as an affirmation of the space's identity. The mosque is shown as the center of religious activities, ranging from congregational prayers, kajian kitab kuning, majelis ta'lim, deliberations, and other activities.

Types of Content Uploaded on Instagram and TikTok An-Nur II Malang

The results of observations on An-Nur II Malang's Instagram and TikTok accounts in October 2024–October 2025 show that there are various types of content uploaded, such as birthday celebrations, documentation, information, appreciation, Islamic Holiday Commemoration (PHBI), promotions, quotes, *Dhawuh Kyai/Kajian satu menit*, National Holiday Commemoration (PHBN), education,

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schedule of activities, logo philosophy, history, flashback, countdown, New *Santri* Admissions (PSB), teasers, Potret *Santri*, ustadzuna, drone views, trending video, and daily *santri*.

Some of this content is posted on both platforms, Instagram and TikTok. However, there are also types of content that are only posted on Instagram. In this case, the type of content on TikTok is not as diverse as on Instagram.

Posts on TikTok and Instagram consist of the following types of content:

1. Documentation

Through the feed, documentation in the form of photos is packaged as multiple posts, each equipped with information related to the documented series of activities. The documentation in the form of videos posted on Instagram and TikTok reels is the same video. The video is presented in a cinematic style, with sound that aligns with the values of the *pesantren*.

2. Commemoration of Islamic Holidays (PHBI)

PHBI content uploaded by An-Nur II Malang is displayed in two main forms: digital pamphlets and video greetings from caregivers. This content is consistently uploaded at key moments in the Islamic calendar, such as Isra' Mi'raj, Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, the Islamic New Year, and the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

3. Quotes

The content of the quotes is packaged as short videos, featuring *pesantren* settings and activities. The visual background provides relevant context, thereby reinforcing the meaning of the motivational text.

4. Dhawuh Kyai/Kajian satu menit

The *dhawuh* appointed by the caregivers is displayed in the videos and feeds. In video format, this content lasts one minute. It is also called Kajian satu menit, featuring original video and audio footage of advice or explanations delivered by caregivers in study forums. Consistently, this content represents the *kiai* as a central figure in the *pesantren*'s tradition, serving as a source of knowledge, a moral example, and a symbol of spiritual authority at the core of *pesantren* life.

5. New Santri Admissions (PSB)

PSB content is displayed in the form of feeds and videos. To attract the attention of prospective *santri* and the wider community, video content is adapted from viral social media trends. This type of content was uploaded in three registration waves.

6. Information

Information is conveyed through feeds and videos, with adjustments to the platform's characteristics. On Instagram, informational content is displayed in a feed format that presents an official, structured agenda of *pesantren* activities. Meanwhile, on TikTok, information is presented as videos that convey the *pesantren* agenda, introduce *pesantren* facilities, and provide route guidance to specific points within the *pesantren* environment.

7. Teaser

Teaser content is presented as a short video to inform the audience about the next agenda or invite them to watch the latest uploads on the *pesantren*'s social media platform. This format emphasizes audience engagement by presenting concise, attractive visual footage to build anticipation for upcoming activities.

8. Drone View

The drone-view content showcases the beauty of the *pesantren* from above. Through the representation of a magnificent, well-organized physical space, this visualization serves not only as spatial documentation but also as an affirmation of the *pesantren*'s institutional identity. Thus, the drone-view content strengthens the image of the *pesantren* as an educational institution with a religious atmosphere and a distinctive visual appeal.

9. Trending Video

Trending video is a form of adaptation of *pesantren* life to viral phenomena on social media. This content shows the activities of *santri* or the atmosphere of the *pesantren*, which is packaged in a popular style according to the growing trend. The presence of this type of content demonstrates *pesantren*'s flexibility in using digital culture to expand its reach, while emphasizing that *pesantren* traditions can be presented casually without losing their sacred values.

10. Daily Santri

This content elevates the lives of *santri* through feeds and videos. In the feed format, this content is complemented by a philosophical narrative that emphasizes the wisdom behind the *pesantren* traditions shown. Meanwhile, in video format, this content highlights the daily activities of *santri* by showcasing the atmosphere of the *pesantren* environment and interactions between the content creator and the *santri*.

11. Flashback

This content displays footage of *pesantren* activities from time to time. This type of content is uploaded at the end of the year and ahead of big agendas such as the haul and National *Santri* Day (HSN). This content shows the continuity of the *pesantren* tradition over time to strengthen institutional identity through historical documentation presented in digital space.

More diversely, the types of content that are only uploaded on Instagram are as follows.

12. Birthday Celebration

This content contains congratulations on the birthday celebration of caregivers and family council members of the An-Nur II Malang. In the context of the birthday celebration, which is presented as a digital pamphlet, there are greetings in Javanese *krama alus* and Arabic. The choice of language represents respect for and affirmation of the *pesantren*'s identity, rooted in local traditions and Islamic values.

13. Appreciation

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The appreciation content, in the form of a feed, contains expressions of appreciation for the achievements of *santri*, alumni, and members of the An-Nur II family council.

14. Promotion

Promotional content is intended to market goods or services that the *pesantren* can manage. Goods and services promoted on the *pesantren*'s Instagram include calendars, merchandise, and *qurbani* packages.

15. Commemoration of National Holidays (PHBN)

An-Nur II Malang consistently uploads PHBI content at important moments in Indonesian history, such as National *Santri* Day (HSN), Heroes' Day, Teacher's Day, National Education Day (*Hardiknas*), the Anniversary of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Youth Pledge.

16. Education

The educational content uploaded by An-Nur II Malang contains religious materials and knowledge relevant to Islamic traditions, such as the stories of companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the privileges of the noble months, the stories behind the Hijri month, special practices, a review of fiqh on social phenomena, historical events, and the results of *pesantren* deliberations. This type of content contributes to expanding public access to Islamic science.

17. Schedule of Activities

The content, in the form of a feed uploaded to the An-Nur II Malang Instagram, presents a timeline of activities to welcome the 8th Haul. The schedule serves as a guide for *santri*, alumni, and the community to be able to follow the flow of activities regularly. This content serves not only as technical information but also as a representation of the *pesantren*'s readiness to maintain the haul tradition as part of its institutional identity.

18. Philosophers Logo

Content that explains the meaning of each logo element in an activity. On the An-Nur II Malang Instagram account, this type of content was uploaded ahead of the *pesantren* Harlah and Haul *kiai* by explaining the philosophy of the elements in the two logos of the activity.

19. History

Content that outlines past events, figures, places, and developments that are relevant to current conditions. Historical content in the form of a feed uploaded on An-Nur II's Instagram tells the stories of the days leading up to the death of KH. Muhammad Badruddin Anwar. This post ahead of the 8th haul in 2024 affirms the continuation of the tradition of respecting teachers and caregivers in the digital space.

20. Countdown

Countdown content is displayed in the form of a countdown feed that is uploaded consistently a few days before the peak of major events such as harlah and haul. This format serves to build anticipation and increase audience involvement in *pesantren* activities. By presenting a visual of declining numbers,

countdown content creates a dynamic atmosphere of waiting while reinforcing public expectations of the event that will take place.

21. Potret Santri

Potret *Santri* is photographic content in a landscape format that is equipped with touching captions about the meaning behind the uploaded photos. This content presents a representation of *santri* life while strengthening the *pesantren*'s identity as a space for character formation.

22. Ustadzuna

Ustadzuna is a special content for Ramadan that contains studies related to worship in the holy month. The *ustadz* provide a brief explanation of the practices of Ramadan, fiqh law, and spiritual reflection. The presence of this content strengthens the role of *pesantren* as an authoritative source in providing religious guidance that is relevant to the momentum of Ramadan.

Strategies Implemented to Increase Public Engagement with *Pesantren* Tradition Content on Instagram and TikTok An-Nur II Malang

An-Nur II Malang has been actively using social media since 2017, starting with Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook that year, followed by TikTok in 2021. These platforms are managed by a multimedia team of *pesantren* called Mediatech (M-Tech) An-Nur II Malang. In carrying out its duties, M-Tech has several divisions, such as a photography division that focuses on the production of photo content, a videography division that focuses on video content, a design division that focuses on design posts displayed on *pesantren* social media, and a journalist division that focuses on caption and copywriting arrangements. With this division, social media management becomes more organized. This is similar to Hadriyanto and Wiyani's research, which confirms that the existence of a structured social media management team allows educational institutions, including *pesantren*, to manage digital accounts more professionally, actively, and consistently. (Handriyanto & Wiyani, 2023).

In managing *pesantren* social media, M-Tech focuses on two main platforms: Instagram and TikTok. The intention is based on the greater attraction of the public to the two platforms. In an interview conducted on September 27, 2025, the chairman of M-Tech said, "Our *pesantren* uses many social media platforms, but focuses more on Instagram and TikTok because of their appeal to outsiders and alumni,".

In content production, four main stages become the M-Tech framework:

1. Planning

The management of the *pesantren*'s social media aims to build a good reputation outside the *pesantren* environment. With a target audience of *walisantri*, alumni, and the wider community who want to know about An-Nur II Malang, three accounts are managed by M-Tech: TikTok @lensapesantren2 for informal content and Instagram and TikTok @annur2malang for formal content.

The distinction between multi-platform accounts plays a role in maintaining the institution's authority while remaining relevant to the popular culture favored by social media audiences.

The content and form of the messages conveyed on Instagram and TikTok are different. Chairman of M-Tech gave an example of *Dhawuh* Kyai content, "On Instagram, where the theme is 'Child-Friendly Parents' while on TikTok it is 'How Do *Santri* Get Useful Knowledge?'".

Planning is made by preparing content on all social media platforms for the coming month, based on the results of data evaluation from the previous month, maintaining content that can be maintained, and updating content according to trends. In this case, trending content must be adjusted to the *pesantren* code of ethics.

2. Implementation

M-Tech creates emotional and relevant content to attract attention and active participation from the audience. Suryasuciramadhan et al. (2024) which states that social media must display relevant and interesting content to create high public engagement. Through a call to action, the audience is invited to share their experiences or stories in the comments section. This effort is in line with the research. Suryasuciramadhan et al. (2024) which states that to create high engagement, the content produced must not only touch the emotions of the audience but also encourage them to share stories or experiences.

In content distribution, several features are used, such as reels, stories, and regular posts. The Instagram and TikTok live streaming features are not used because live streaming of religious lectures and events at the An-Nur II Malang is directed to the YouTube platform.

Dhawuh Kyai is uploaded once a week, without a separate account to maintain consistent upload frequency on An-Nur II's social media. Consistency is an important consideration in social media management, as stated by Husna et al. (2024), which notes that it plays a role in building a loyal following and increasing interaction. To maintain this consistency during busy documentation periods, M-Tech uploads content that has been posted on TikTok to Instagram, and vice versa.

Several viral sounds were also used as long as there were no warnings from the caregivers. To maintain content productivity and consider the time relevance of limited trending content, M-Tech tends to upload content as soon as possible, but will take it down if there are warnings. The balance reflects a dynamic negotiation between the need to maintain consistency in content production and the commitment to uphold the ethical values of *pesantren*.

3. Evaluation

M-Tech conducts monthly evaluations called brainstorming akbar. M-Tech creates Social Media Analysis Data (Dasmed) containing details from the professional dashboards of the *pesantren*'s Instagram and TikTok accounts. The team comprehensively reviews follower growth and decline as well as interaction

reach. If a decline is detected, M-Tech will analyze the insights of each post and review the relevance of the content to the audience. Additionally, M-Tech highlights the “winning content” to identify the five best posts. This evaluation aligns with the perspective of (Handriyanto & Wiyani, 2023) who emphasize that the evaluation process can help identify areas that need improvement.

4. Optimization

M-Tech responds to comments on the *pesantren*'s social media content selectively, not always replying intensively, especially if they are only symbols or emojis, in which case a like is considered sufficient. However, when the audience sends direct messages, the admin always tries to reply. M-Tech also creates content requested by the audience. This was observed in one of the drone view posts uploaded on TikTok @annur2malang and @lensapesantren2.

Through observation of posts on the Instagram account of *Pondok Pesantren An-Nur II Malang* uploaded from October 2024 to October 2025, the researcher found several collaborative posts. In this case, in certain posts, Instagram An-Nur II invited collaboration and was also invited to collaborate. This collaboration was carried out with institutional accounts that were involved in the activities shown.

To increase content reach, each TikTok account under the auspices of the foundation cross-posts content. Another effort is to mention accounts of institutions under the auspices of the foundation. In addition, the hashtags used are those related to the name of the activity, type of content, slogan, and relevant terms. Specifically, on the TikTok platform, the hashtag that is always included is the FYP hashtag. Meanwhile, on the Instagram platform, the hashtags that are consistently used include #santri #NU #pesantrenmalang #santrikeran #santrinusantara #aisnusantara #santriindonesia #santrinu #pondok #ngaji #ngajikuy #ngajiyuk #indonesialebihnyantri.

The Level and Form of Public Engagement Towards *Pesantren* Tradition Content Uploaded on Instagram and TikTok An-Nur II Malang

Public engagement with Instagram and TikTok uploads of An-Nur II Malang is shown through likes, comments, shares, reposts, and saves. On Instagram, the number of likes in each upload is more than the number of comments. This form of involvement corroborates Widya's research that giving a response in the form of likes is the easiest way to convey an expression rather than giving a comment or responding to a comment (Widya, 2021).

The public showed high enthusiasm for the type of *Dhawuh Kyai/Kajian satu menit* and trending videos. This is supported by the results of an interview with M-Tech An-Nur II and observations of Instagram and TikTok account uploads of *pesantren* for the period October 2024-October 2025. Engagement on one of *Dhawuh Kyai*'s content pieces on Instagram reached 33.4K likes, 144 comments, 4,158 shares, 2,428 reposts, and 64.2K views. From the type of trending content, reels that respond to the issue of *pesantren* feudalism get 5,708 likes, 909 comments,

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1,027 reposts, and 167K views.

Public comments on the content on Instagram and TikTok of An-Nur II Malang showed a positive response, both in symbolic and emotional form. In symbolic form, in the form of emojis showing support for the content, while in emotional form, it contains questions, prayers, support, pride, gratitude, sharing stories, and longing for the atmosphere of the *pesantren*. This finding is based on the results of Utomo's research, which states that the activeness of *pesantren* in using social media is also a means for alumni to release their longing for various activities and the atmosphere of life in *pesantren*. (Utomo, 2022).

Although in general, public comments that appear on Instagram and TikTok *pesantren* content show positive support, there are also some comments with negative nuances. When interviewed, the Chairman of M-Tech An-Nur II said that the negative comments that appeared were more related to the tragedy at the *pesantren* in general. Thus, the bad comment was not specifically directed at the *pesantren* An-Nur II in Malang. In this case, social media managers take a policy of deleting the comments so that they do not spread to other audiences.

Challenges and Opportunities in Maintaining the Existence of *Pesantren* Traditions through Visual-Based Social Media and Virality

The development of visual-based social media and virality has created a new space for *pesantren* to maintain and expand their traditions. In practice, some challenges and opportunities arise.

Challenges

Although social media offers great benefits, in practice, there are significant challenges faced by M-Tech An-Nur II Malang.

1. Maintaining Consistency in Content Production Amidst the Density of the *Santri* Schedule

The density of *santri*'s schedules presents its own challenges for M-Tech in maintaining consistency in content production. M-Tech is demanded by the masyayikh to be productive. Thus, M-Tech must manage the time so that *santri* can still produce content in the midst of many *pesantren* activities. In this case, the chairman said that the solution taken by M-Tech An-Nur II Malang was "We allocate a specific time for content production during the day (13.00–14.30 WIB) and night (21.00–23.30 WIB)". In addition, they also repost content that has been uploaded on TikTok to Instagram and vice versa to maintain consistency of publication on both platforms.

2. Compensating Content from Outside the Official Account

An-Nur II Malang does not provide a restriction for anyone to document a *pesantren* as long as it is positively oriented. The production process of non-official content is simpler because it only uses mobile phones and less structured

scenarios. To distinguish it, M-Tech balances content from outside accounts in terms of quality. Confirmed by the chairman of multimedia, "Before producing content, M-Tech makes a short list related to the scene that will be entered every second,".

3. Adapting Trending Content to *Pesantren* Values

Comparing trend videos with *pesantren* style is one of the difficult things for content managers on institutional social media. Without adaptation, not all trendy content is in accordance with the values of the *pesantren*, even though it has high engagement. In practice, there are uploads of trendy content with a large number of viewers that have to be taken down due to a reprimand from caregivers related to the *pesantren*'s code of ethics. Obedience to caregivers remains a key principle. These dynamics show that there is a dialectic between digital creativity and the moral authority of *pesantren*. On the one hand, multimedia teams are trying to take advantage of viral trends to increase the reach of content. On the other hand, caregivers play the role of guardians of values so that the content published does not deviate from the values of the *pesantren*. This can be understood as a continuous negotiation process between the need for digital relevance and a commitment to the integrity of tradition. Thus, the practice of takedown is a corrective mechanism to ensure that the content strategy of the *pesantren* tradition remains rooted in institutional values.

Opportunities

Behind the various challenges faced, social media also presents strategic opportunities for the *pesantren* An-Nur II Malang in strengthening the existence of *pesantren* traditions.

1. The Tradition of *Pesantren* as an Authentic Content Source

The traditions that are alive and practiced in the daily life of *pesantren* are a source of authentic content that has its own appeal on social media in the form of educational and inspirational content, as well as branding for *pesantren*. In addition, the many activities in the *pesantren* environment can also be an opportunity for M-Tech to obtain diverse content material. Not only does it provide opportunities for content production and publication, but the *pesantren* tradition also serves as a medium for attracting public engagement. In practice, in addition to showcasing traditional forms, M-Tech An-Nur II also packages the stories and experiences of *santri* and *wali santri* to present humanistic content that is closer to the audience. This is evident from various posts on the *pesantren*'s social media, such as content containing messages from *santri* to their parents, expressions of feelings from *wali santri* after forty days of not seeing their children due to boarding school, impressions of *santri* after taking exams, light questions about activities carried out on holidays, and reflections from *santri* about their experiences at the *pesantren*.

This type of content has nostalgic power for alumni who miss the atmosphere and moments at the *pesantren*, builds a sense of closeness for *santri*

who feel represented or part of the content being displayed, and fosters a sense of connection for *wali santri* who see their sons as part of the content. Meanwhile, for the wider community, traditional content broadens horizons while sparking curiosity about *pesantren*. Thus, *pesantren* traditions are not only presented as a cultural identity but also as a strategic means of strengthening public engagement in the digital space.

2. Support from *Pesantren*

An-Nur II Malang provides support to M-Tech by providing various adequate facilities. *Pesantren* also supports the operational financing of the multimedia team. As a procedure, confirmed by the M-Tech Treasurer, "M-Tech submits a proposal every month,".

3. The Potential of Social Media Platforms

Instagram and TikTok can strengthen content distribution when supported by M-Tech in maintaining consistency in uploads and content differentiation. Instagram has a wide reach and allows for intense interaction, while TikTok presents significant viral opportunities, especially for trend-based content and short reviews that are easily accessible and quickly disseminated by audiences.

The repost and collaboration features can increase the reach of content. In managing An-Nur II Malang's social media content on the TikTok platform, M-Tech headquarters reposts between official accounts under the foundation's auspices. On Instagram, content collaboration is carried out with internal and external accounts that are related to the activities being uploaded.

As a strategic innovation, M-Tech can provide opportunities for unofficial accounts to submit collaboration invitations to open up strategic opportunities. The content produced is more authentic and relatable, in line with the concept of User-Generated Content (UGC), which is considered authentic and builds trust and brand equity (Putri et al., 2026; Saefudin, 2024). This collaboration supports community-based digital branding, where the image of the *pesantren* is strengthened by the active participation of the internal public. However, this innovation also requires consideration regarding the differences in design and color palette between official and non-official accounts, which can result in an inconsistent appearance on social media grids.

4. Multimedia Team Capacity

M-Tech has a structured division of labor. The photography division is responsible for photo production, the videography division for video production, the design division for the production of designs for posts displayed on the *pesantren* social media accounts, and the journalism division for captioning and copywriting. These capabilities extend beyond the internal scope of the organization. With its capacity and network, M-Tech also initiated the M-Tech Academy program as a training ground for *santri* outside of M-Tech who want to explore the field of multimedia.

Each participant chooses one division to focus on during the training

period. The training is conducted over six months, gradually moving from one division to another. The training is delivered by M-Tech alumni themselves over a period of six months, progressing gradually from one division to another. The best participants who have undergone training have the opportunity to join the central multimedia team. Thus, this program also serves as a measurable means of recruiting members to create a sustainable multimedia culture and ensure that the values and quality standards that have been established can be passed on to the next generation.

M-Tech's contribution is not limited to internal *pesantren*. According to information from the Multimedia Center Advisor during the initial observation conducted by researchers on July 24, 2025, "M-Tech has held seminars on social media management in several schools, provided semi-formal materials to several *pesantren*, and been entrusted to be the documentation team for events organized by other *pesantren*,". This external role demonstrates that M-Tech's capacity is recognized more widely, while also strengthening the network between educational institutions and expanding the digital image of An-Nur II Malang.

5. *Pesantren* Digital Innovation

An-Nur II Malang has developed the An-Nur 2 App, which opens up opportunities for integrating *pesantren* traditions into the realm of modern technology. This application is designed to facilitate *santri*, alumni, and the general public to stay connected with *pesantren* traditions in a practical way. It features various religious practices, articles, and *pesantren* schedules that can be accessed anytime. Currently, the application is available on the Play Store for Android users, though it is still under further development. Treasurer of M-Tech, who also has expertise in the field of cyber technology, said: "Through the An-Nur 2 App, *santri* can maintain consistency in performing their daily prayers and rituals even while at home,".

D. Conclusion

The existence of *pesantren* tradition on An-Nur II Malang's social media is evident through content that represents scientific, *ubudiyah*, social traditions, and the five key elements of *pesantren*: kitab kuning, *santri*, *kiai*, *pondok*, and mosque. The social media management strategy is implemented by differentiating the character of posts (formal and casual) on three accounts managed by M-Tech through an engagement strategy that includes planning, production, evaluation, and optimization. Although there are challenges in maintaining consistency in content production amid the dense schedule of *santri*, balancing content from outside the official account, and adapting trending content to *pesantren* values, great opportunities remain open through the utilization of *pesantren* traditions as a source of authentic content, support from *pesantren*, the potential of social media platforms, the capacity of the multimedia team, and *pesantren* digital innovation. The findings in this study provide a reference for other *pesantrens* in developing effective content and engagement strategies by leveraging the potential and

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opportunities available within the *pesantren* environment, while enriching the study of digital communication in *pesantrens* and opening up space for the development of relevant, adaptive, and sustainable digital strategy models.

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