



Religious Development in the Digital Era: An Analysis of Public Interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies

Esli Zuraidah Siregar^{1*}, Anas Habibi Ritonga², Nurharisya
Hasibuan³, Masrul Efendi Umar Harahap⁴, Nur Hasanah
Hasibuan⁵ & Khairul Anwar⁶

¹²³⁴⁵⁶ UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan, Indonesia

*esli@uinsyahada.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze religious development based on public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK) in the digital era. The research employs a quantitative approach using a survey technique targeting members of the public who have an interest in digitally based religious activities. The main variables include public perceptions, trust, interest, and intention toward FDIK as a center for the development of digital da'wah. The results indicate that public interest in FDIK falls within the high category, with mean scores exceeding 3.20 across all indicators. Perception and trust are shown to have a positive and significant influence on public interest, which subsequently encourages individuals' intentions to participate in digital religious activities developed by FDIK. The findings further reveal that these two variables explain 64% of the variance in public interest, thereby demonstrating the relevance of Diffusion of Innovation Theory, Institutional Image, the Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Theory of Planned Behavior in understanding the dynamics of digital da'wah development. Overall, this study concludes that FDIK has strong prospects as a modern, adaptive, and community-oriented center for digital da'wah in the technological era. This research is expected to serve as positive scholarly literature in increasing student enrollment at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies, UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan.

Keywords: *Digital da'wah; public interest; public perception; religious development.*

INTRODUCTION

Digitalization has brought significant changes to almost all aspects of life, including the fields of education and religion. The development of the

digital era has made access to religious materials increasingly affordable, easy, fast, and widespread (Fangestu & Syahrizal, 2023). This condition has led to a growing public interest in studying religious knowledge through various digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, podcasts, and Islamic websites (Mukhroman & Ahmad, 2025). At the same time, this phenomenon presents both opportunities and challenges for public and private Islamic higher education institutions, including the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK), to develop religious education that is relevant to contemporary societal needs (Oktavia & Khotimah, 2023).

Public interest is closely related to public trust in higher education institutions. Trust is formed based on the tangible quality demonstrated by universities through the implementation of the tridharma of higher education, namely education, research and scientific development, and community service. Trust can also be built through recognition from stakeholders of Islamic higher education institutions as strategic partners (Satrio & Asri, 2023).

Furthermore, public interest in religious faculties is not solely determined by academic reputation, but also by the institution's ability to keep pace with technological developments, build a strong digital image, and offer study programs that align with the socio-religious dynamics of modern society. In other words, faculties of da'wah must demonstrate that their graduates are not only competent in Islamic sciences, but also skilled in utilizing digital media as tools for da'wah dissemination and public education. Da'wah must be able to adapt to technological advancements in order to remain relevant and not be perceived as outdated (Halim et al., 2020). The increasing public interest in digital-based religious content indicates the emergence of new demands for religious education models that are more interactive and capable of bridging religious understanding with developments in communication technology (Al Arafat et al., 2025). This condition implies the need for FDIK to develop digital-based religious programs in order to remain relevant in producing prospective preachers and Islamic communicators who are professional, adaptive to social change, and attentive to ethical and managerial considerations (Nathania & Octovian, 2024).

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), individuals consume information or choose educational institutions based on their needs, motivations, and the benefits they seek to obtain (Azis

& Ginting, 2025). When digital media become the primary source for learning religion, educational institutions such as FDIK must adjust their educational and da'wah strategies to meet these expectations. Public interest thus becomes a crucial indicator in determining the direction of religious development required. The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Fishbein dan Ajzen, 1980) explain that an individual's intention is influenced by attitudes and beliefs toward a social object (Ajzen, 1991). Public interest in FDIK is therefore shaped by public trust in the institutional branding that has been established since FDIK's inception as an Islamic higher education institution (Manurung et al., 2020).

Another theoretical framework used to understand how faculties of da'wah introduce digital innovation and communication technology to society is the Diffusion of Innovations Theory proposed by Everett Rogers . The success of an innovation is determined by its acceptability to the public and the ease with which it can be accessed (Mailin et al., 2022). When faculties are able to integrate learning innovations, curriculum development, and digital da'wah media, the public is more likely to perceive them as relevant and worthy of being chosen as educational institutions (Mawaddah et al., 2025).

The digital era is also characterized by a more critical public assessment of educational institutions (Wahyuningrum, 2025). Society increasingly considers factors such as lecturer quality, facilities, curriculum relevance, employment prospects, and institutional capacity in managing information and public communication. This is consistent with Institutional Image Theory, which emphasizes that institutional image is a key factor in shaping prospective students' interest. Faculties of da'wah that are able to build a positive image through digital media tend to attract higher levels of public interest (Rachman et al., 2025).

Previous studies indicate that digital media play an important role in increasing public interest in higher education institutions (Li et al., 2025). Research by Nur Zarliani Uli et al. (2025) revealed that higher education marketing has undergone significant changes with the advancement of digital technology. Their findings show that digital promotion through social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook is effective in increasing engagement through interactive content, although it has not yet been fully effective in converting interest into actual enrollment. In contrast, direct visits were found to have a stronger impact on building trust and increasing enrollment decisions, with interest rising by up to 30%

following offline socialization activities.

The study emphasizes the importance of a hybrid marketing strategy, combining online and offline promotional approaches (Uli et al., 2025). Similarly, research by Aisyara Agustin (2025) demonstrates that public interest is influenced by several factors, including awareness of the importance of education, economic conditions, media influence, and government policy support. However, disparities in access to and quality of education remain evident across regions, affecting educational participation levels. This research adopts a literature-based approach to provide the public with a comprehensive understanding for making informed educational choices.

Further findings by Agustin and Elisa (2025) confirm that public interest is shaped by educational awareness, economic conditions, media roles, and government policy support. Their study highlights digital media as a critical determinant in increasing public interest in education, while emphasizing the need for strategic quality improvement based on public expectations (Agustin & Elisa, 2025).

Nevertheless, not all faculties of da'wah in Indonesia demonstrate the same level of digital adaptation. Some institutions remain limited in their use of digital media, both in terms of content quality and communication strategies. As a result, segments of society still perceive faculties of da'wah as conservative institutions that are unable to keep up with contemporary developments. If left unaddressed, this perception may reduce public interest in such faculties. In this context, the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies plays a strategic role in innovating religious education. FDIK is not only responsible for teaching principles of da'wah and communication, but also for developing students' competencies in utilizing digital media as effective, engaging, and socially relevant tools for conveying religious messages.

Religious development within FDIK must therefore be directed toward enhancing students' ability to understand social realities, communication technologies, and the dynamics of digital society. This is essential because da'wah in the digital era depends not only on message delivery, but also on the ability to read social contexts and understand the characteristics of digital audiences. Moreover, faculties of da'wah are required to develop curricula that are more responsive to the needs of the Islamic creative industry, digital media, and public communication. With the expansion of career opportunities in the digital sector, FDIK graduates

can pursue roles as Islamic content creators, religious journalists, digital counselors, and competent public communicators (Ilmi, 2023).

Society has become increasingly selective in choosing educational institutions, seeking faculties that offer not only religious knowledge but also practical skills that enable students to adapt to technological advancements and labor market demands. Therefore, religious development at FDIK must integrate religious sciences with communication technology to align with societal needs. It is also important to understand public perceptions regarding the career prospects of da'wah faculty graduates. Many still assume that graduates of Islamic higher education institutions, particularly faculties of da'wah, are limited to traditional religious roles, (Enghariano & Rambe, 2025) whereas digital developments have opened much broader career opportunities for FDIK graduates.

Institutional image has been widely recognized as a significant determinant of students' educational choices and public perceptions of higher education institutions. A positive institutional image contributes to increased trust, stronger stakeholder engagement, and greater attractiveness among prospective students. According to Nguyen and LeBlanc, institutional image functions as a cumulative perception of an institution's quality, reputation, and performance, influencing students' decision-making processes (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). Similarly, Palacio, Meneses, and Pérez found that university image significantly affects student satisfaction and loyalty (Beerli Palacio et al., 2002). In the context of higher education marketing, institutional image serves not only as a promotional asset but also as a strategic resource for maintaining competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic educational environment. For Islamic higher education institutions, institutional image is particularly important because it combines academic reputation with religious credibility. Communities tend to evaluate Islamic institutions based on their ability to provide quality education while maintaining religious values and responding to contemporary societal challenges. Consequently, faculties that successfully integrate Islamic scholarship with technological and professional competencies are more likely to attract public interest and trust.

Trust is a fundamental factor shaping public attitudes toward educational institutions. Trust reflects stakeholders' confidence in an institution's competence, integrity, and commitment to fulfilling educational objectives. According to Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, trust

emerges when stakeholders perceive an organization as capable, benevolent, and reliable (Davis, 1989; Mayer et al., 1995). In educational settings, trust influences students' enrollment decisions, institutional loyalty, and willingness to recommend institutions to others. Within Islamic education, public trust extends beyond academic quality to include ethical values, religious authenticity, and social responsibility. Research by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy demonstrates that trust contributes significantly to institutional effectiveness and stakeholder engagement (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Likewise, studies on Islamic educational institutions suggest that trust is strengthened when institutions consistently demonstrate transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to societal needs. As Islamic higher education institutions increasingly compete within a digitalized educational landscape, maintaining public trust has become essential for institutional sustainability and growth.

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed religious communication worldwide. Campbell (2013) argues that digital media have fundamentally changed how religious messages are produced, disseminated, and consumed. Social media platforms, websites, podcasts, and video-sharing applications have become important channels for religious education and engagement, particularly among younger generations. Religious institutions are therefore required to adapt their communication strategies to remain relevant within digitally connected societies. Studies by Evolvi and Campbell and Tsuria indicate that digital religious communication enables broader audience engagement, interactive learning experiences, and greater accessibility to religious knowledge (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Evolvi, 2022). However, these developments also challenge religious institutions to maintain credibility and authority in increasingly decentralized information environments. For faculties of da'wah and communication studies, digital transformation creates opportunities to strengthen religious outreach while simultaneously requiring innovation in curriculum development, media literacy, and digital communication practices.

Existing studies have extensively examined the role of institutional image in higher education selection, the importance of public trust in educational institutions, and the impact of digital communication on religious engagement. Previous research has also demonstrated that digital promotion and social media utilization can enhance public awareness and interest in higher education institutions (Sikumbang, 2024). However, most

studies have focused on general higher education contexts, educational marketing strategies, or digital communication practices independently. A significant research gap remains regarding the integration of these three dimensions institutional image, public trust, and digital religious communication in explaining public interest toward faculties of da'wah within Islamic higher education institutions. Furthermore, limited empirical research has specifically investigated how these factors influence community interest in Faculties of Da'wah and Communication Studies in Indonesia, particularly in regions undergoing institutional transformation and digital adaptation. Previous studies have rarely examined the relationship between public perceptions, trust, and digital innovation as interconnected determinants of public interest in Islamic higher education.

This study addresses this gap by investigating public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK) at UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan from the perspective of institutional image, public trust, and digital religious communication. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on educational marketing or digital promotion, this research integrates these variables within the broader framework of religious development in the digital era. Therefore, the study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the factors influencing public interest in Islamic higher education and offering strategic recommendations for strengthening the competitiveness and relevance of faculties of da'wah in contemporary society.

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing religious development based on public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK) at UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan. The study is limited to communities in the Tabagsel region, including South Tapanuli, Padangsidimpuan, Mandailing Natal, Padang Lawas, and North Padang Lawas. Based on the foregoing background, this study aims to analyze public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK) and identify the factors that influence such interest in the digital era.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the level of public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK) of UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan among communities in the Tabagsel region?; 2) How do public perceptions of institutional image, digital innovation, and graduate career prospects influence community interest in FDIK?; 3) To

what extent does public trust in FDIK affect community interest in choosing the faculty as a higher education institution?; 4) How can the findings on public interest be utilized to support the development of religious education and strengthen FDIK's competitiveness in the digital era?. The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by enriching the discourse on religious education development in the digital era and providing strategic recommendations for FDIK in improving educational quality, strengthening institutional image, and enhancing its attractiveness to contemporary society.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an explanatory survey design to examine the influence of public perception and trust on community interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK) at UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables the measurement of relationships among variables and the testing of hypotheses through statistical analysis. The study was conducted in the Tabagsel region, encompassing South Tapanuli, Padangsidimpuan, Mandailing Natal, Padang Lawas, and North Padang Lawas, which represent the primary catchment areas of UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan.

The target population consisted of community members residing in the Tabagsel region who were familiar with the existence of FDIK. Since the exact population size could not be determined, the sample size was calculated using Cochran's formula for an unknown population with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The calculation yielded a minimum sample size requirement of 384 respondents. To improve data reliability and accommodate potential incomplete responses, the study involved 400 respondents.

The sampling procedure employed purposive sampling with proportional regional representation. Respondents were selected based on three criteria: they were residents of the Tabagsel region, at least 17 years old, and had prior knowledge or awareness of FDIK as one of the faculties at UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan. To ensure adequate representation from all districts and municipalities within the region, respondents were proportionally distributed across South Tapanuli, Padangsidimpuan, Mandailing Natal, Padang Lawas, and North Padang

Lawas based on accessibility and population coverage.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through both online and offline channels. The instrument consisted of four main constructs: public perception, public trust, public interest, and behavioral intention toward engagement with FDIK. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Prior to the main survey, the instrument was subjected to validity and reliability testing. Construct validity was assessed using Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis, while reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Instruments with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70 were considered reliable.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were employed to describe respondent characteristics and summarize the level of public perception, trust, interest, and intention toward FDIK. Inferential analysis was conducted using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple linear regression to examine the effects of perception and trust on public interest. Before estimating the regression model, classical assumption tests were performed. Normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and normal probability plots, heteroskedasticity was examined using the Glejser test, and multicollinearity was evaluated through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values. The regression model was considered acceptable when the significance level exceeded 0.05 for normality and heteroskedasticity tests, VIF values were below 10, and tolerance values exceeded 0.10. All analyses were conducted using SPSS software at a significance level of 5%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by District/City in the Tabagsel Region

District/City	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Padangsidempuan	90	22.5
South Tapanuli	85	21.3
Mandailing Natal	80	20.0
Padang Lawas	75	18.7

District/City	Frequency	Percentage (%)
North Padang Lawas	70	17.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Author’s Observation, 2026

Table 1 demonstrates that respondents were drawn from all administrative areas within the Tabagsel region, indicating adequate geographical representation. Padangsidimpuan contributed the largest proportion of respondents (22.5%), followed by South Tapanuli (21.3%), Mandailing Natal (20.0%), Padang Lawas (18.7%), and North Padang Lawas (17.5%). This distribution suggests that the findings reflect public perceptions and trust toward FDIK across the broader Tabagsel community rather than a single locality.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	188	47.0
	Female	212	53.0
Age	17–20 years	165	41.3
	21–25 years	132	33.0
	26–35 years	63	15.7
	>35 years	40	10.0
Education	Junior High School	28	7.0
	Senior High School	214	53.5
	Diploma/Bachelor Degree	137	34.3
	Postgraduate Degree	21	5.2

Source: Author’s Observation, 2026

The demographic profile indicates that female respondents slightly outnumbered male respondents. The majority of participants were between 17 and 25 years old, representing the age group most actively engaged with digital media and prospective higher education opportunities. In terms of educational background, most respondents had completed senior high school education, which aligns with the target population of prospective university students and their surrounding communities. These characteristics support the relevance of the sample for examining public interest in FDIK within the context of digital religious communication and

higher education decision-making.

Overview of Respondents

This study involved respondents from diverse educational backgrounds, age groups, and levels of engagement in religious activities. The majority of respondents were adolescents and young adults who actively follow developments in the digital world. The primary respondents of this study were senior high school students (SLTA/SMA/SMEA/SMK/Aliyah) located in the Tabagsel region. The respondent profile indicates that more than 60% of participants expressed an interest in the fields of communication and technology-based da'wah. This finding reflects the high level of public exposure to modern forms of da'wah media. In addition, respondents demonstrated a high level of digital media usage, particularly platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and podcasts as their main sources of religious information.

Validity and Reliability Test Results

Table.3 Validity Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Range of $r_{\text{calculated}}$	r_{table}	Description
Perception	10	0.384 – 0.421	0.098	Valid
Trust	10	0.397 – 0.465	0.098	Valid
Interest	10	0.412 – 0.489	0.098	Valid
Intention	8	0.405 – 0.472	0.098	Valid

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

The validity test results for the research instrument on the analysis of religious development based on public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies indicate that all items across the variables Perception (0.421 and 0.384), Trust (0.397), Interest (0.412), and Intention (0.405) have $r_{\text{calculated}}$ values greater than r_{table} (0.098). Therefore, all questionnaire items are declared valid. The validity of each item confirms that the questionnaire is capable of measuring the intended constructs and can reliably represent public interest in the context of religious development in the digital era. Accordingly, the instrument is appropriate for further analysis, as it demonstrates alignment between the statement items and the research variables.

Reliability Test Results

Table. 4 Reliability Test

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Perception	10	0.86	Reliable
Trust	10	0.84	Reliable
Interest	10	0.88	Highly Reliable
Intention	8	0.81	Reliable
Total Instrument	38	0.87	Highly Reliable

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

The reliability test results show that all research variables have Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.80, indicating that the instrument ranges from reliable to highly reliable. The variables of Perception (0.86), Trust (0.84), and Intention (0.81) demonstrate high internal consistency, while the Interest variable (0.88) falls into the highly reliable category. Overall, the total instrument comprising 38 items has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.87, which is also classified as highly reliable. These findings confirm that all questionnaire items produce consistent and stable results in measuring religious development based on public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies. Thus, the instrument is suitable for further analysis due to its strong reliability.

Classical Assumption Tests

Prior to conducting the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis, several classical assumption tests were performed to ensure that the regression model met the required statistical assumptions.

Table 5. Classical Assumption Test Results

Assumption Test	Indicator	Result	Criterion	Conclusion
Normality Test	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig.	0.127	> 0.05	Normal
Heteroskedasticity Test	Glejser Sig. (X ₁)	0.214	> 0.05	No Heteroskedasticity
Heteroskedasticity Test	Glejser Sig. (X ₂)	0.318	> 0.05	No Heteroskedasticity
Multicollinearity Test	VIF (X ₁)	1.652	< 10	No Multicollinearity
Multicollinearity Test	VIF (X ₂)	1.652	< 10	No Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity Test	Tolerance	0.605	> 0.10	No Multicollinearity
------------------------	-----------	-------	--------	----------------------

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

The results indicate that the regression model satisfies all classical assumptions. The normality test yielded a significance value of 0.127, exceeding the threshold of 0.05, indicating that the residuals are normally distributed. The Glejser test produced significance values greater than 0.05 for all independent variables, suggesting the absence of heteroskedasticity. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were substantially below 10 and tolerance values exceeded 0.10, confirming that multicollinearity is not present among the predictor variables. Consequently, the regression model is appropriate for hypothesis testing and interpretation.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 6. Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	SD (Standard Deviation)	Category
Perception	3.35	0.41	Very High
Trust	3.28	0.45	High
Interest	3.31	0.38	Very High
Intention	3.20	0.42	High

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

The descriptive data indicate that public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies falls within the high to very high category, as reflected by mean values above 3.20 for all variables. Perception (mean = 3.35) and Interest (mean = 3.31) are categorized as very high, with relatively low standard deviations, suggesting consistent positive views and strong interest among respondents toward FDIK. Trust (3.28) and Intention (3.20) are also classified as high, indicating that respondents not only hold positive perceptions and interest, but also demonstrate trust and a tendency to engage or participate in religious development activities organized by FDIK. Overall, these descriptive findings illustrate that FDIK possesses strong appeal and receives positive responses from the community, particularly in the context of religious development in the digital era.

Public Perception and Trust toward

The regression model used in this study is expressed as:

Table 7. $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \epsilon$

Variable	β	T	Sig.	Description
Perception (X ₁)	0.415	6.21	0.000	Significant
Trust (X ₂)	0.389	5.72	0.000	Significant
Constant	1.125	–	–	–
$R^2 = 0.64$			Model is very good	

Source: Author's Observation, 2026

The results indicate that perception and trust have a positive and significant effect on public interest, meaning that both variables serve as primary factors in driving public interest and engagement with the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies in the digital era. Positive public perception is typically formed through impressions of academic quality, religious activities, technology-based da'wah innovation, and a professional institutional image. When the public perceives FDIK as a faculty that is able to keep pace with technological developments while maintaining religious values, such positive perceptions enhance public interest in participating in the religious and academic activities offered by the faculty.

Public trust also plays a crucial role in increasing public interest. Trust emerges when the community recognizes that FDIK possesses credibility, integrity, and a strong track record in developing Islamic education and da'wah. This trust is further strengthened when the faculty offers programs that are relevant to contemporary societal needs, such as da'wah through social media, digital religious content development, and collaboration with religious communities. High levels of trust foster public confidence that FDIK can make meaningful contributions to character building and the strengthening of religious literacy amid rapid technological advancement.

Overall, the regression analysis demonstrates that perception and trust together explain 64% of the variance in public interest, indicating that these variables exert a substantial influence on religious development at FDIK. The dominance of these factors highlights the importance of building a positive institutional image and strengthening public trust as strategic priorities for FDIK in enhancing its role in the digital era. The remaining 36% of the variance may be attributed to other factors such as environmental influences, personal experiences, developments in modern da'wah media, and public demand for adaptive and accessible religious education. These findings confirm that religious development at FDIK will

be more effective if the faculty continues to strengthen positive perceptions and public trust through innovation, transparency, and continuous improvement in service quality.

The findings of this study demonstrate that public perception and trust significantly influence public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK), with both variables jointly explaining 64% of the variance in public interest. This result indicates that the model has a strong explanatory power for social science research in the field of Islamic higher education. In studies of educational behavior and institutional image, an R^2 value above 0.50 is generally categorized as strong because public interest is usually influenced by many social and psychological factors simultaneously. Therefore, the value of $R^2 = 0.64$ in this study suggests that perception and trust are dominant predictors of public interest toward FDIK in the digital era.

An Integrative Conceptual Model of Public Interest in Religious Development

The findings of this study reveal that public perception and trust significantly influence public interest in the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies (FDIK), jointly explaining 64% of the variance in public interest. Rather than viewing these variables separately, the results can be understood through an integrative conceptual model that combines Diffusion of Innovation Theory, Institutional Image Theory, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Efendi & Haryanto, 2025). Within this framework, Diffusion of Innovation Theory explains the initial stage through which the public becomes aware of and evaluates FDIK's innovations in digital da'wah, technology-enhanced learning, and contemporary religious communication. The successful diffusion of these innovations creates positive perceptions regarding the relevance, compatibility, and usefulness of FDIK within modern society (Yuliza & Yeneti, 2022). These perceptions subsequently contribute to the formation of a favorable institutional image, as proposed by Institutional Image Theory. A positive institutional image emerges when the public consistently perceives FDIK as academically credible, technologically adaptive, and religiously trustworthy (Faridah & Kuswati, 2024).

Institutional image then serves as the basis for the development of public trust. Trust is not merely an emotional response but a rational

evaluation of institutional competence, integrity, and commitment to serving societal needs. Once trust is established, it influences behavioral intentions as explained by TRA and TPB. According to TRA, positive attitudes generated by favorable perceptions and trust encourage individuals to support, engage with, and recommend FDIK. TPB further extends this explanation by demonstrating that public intentions are strengthened when positive attitudes are supported by social norms and by perceptions that participation in FDIK activities is accessible and beneficial. Accordingly, the four theories form a sequential analytical chain: innovation adoption generates positive perceptions; positive perceptions strengthen institutional image; institutional image fosters public trust; and trust, together with social norms and perceived behavioral control, encourages public interest and participation (Conner, 2020). This integrated model provides a more comprehensive explanation of religious development in the digital era than any single theory alone.

These findings are consistent with several studies conducted in other PTKINs in Indonesia (Hasanah, 2017). Research at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta found that institutional image and digital branding significantly influenced prospective students' interest in Islamic communication programs, particularly through social media engagement and online academic visibility. Similarly, a study at UIN Alauddin Makassar reported that public trust in institutional credibility and alumni quality played a central role in shaping community interest in Islamic higher education. Another study at UIN Walisongo Semarang highlighted that digital religious communication and innovative da'wah programs strengthened public perceptions of institutional relevance in the digital era. Compared with these studies, the present research contributes by integrating perception and trust within a unified theoretical framework and by specifically focusing on the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies as a center of digital religious development in the Tabagsel region.

The interpretation of $R^2 = 0.64$ is particularly important in this context. In educational and communication studies, values between 0.50 and 0.70 are generally considered strong because human behavior is influenced by complex social, cultural, and psychological variables. Thus, the model used in this study demonstrates a substantial explanatory capacity, indicating that perception and trust are highly influential determinants of public interest in FDIK. However, the remaining 36% of unexplained variance suggests that other factors also contribute to public

interest. These factors may include family educational background, socioeconomic conditions, religious commitment, peer influence, exposure to social media content, alumni reputation, accessibility of campus facilities, and broader societal attitudes toward Islamic higher education (Hakim & Rozi, 2024). The existence of this unexplained variance reinforces the need for future studies to adopt more comprehensive models incorporating additional sociological and psychological variables (Hakim & Rozi, 2024).

Public Perception, Trust, and Religious Development from the Perspective of Islamic Communication

The findings can also be interpreted through the perspective of Islamic communication, particularly the principles of *tabligh*, *amar ma'ruf*, *hikmah*, and *dakwah bil hal* (Husna, 2021). In Islamic communication, successful *da'wah* is not measured solely by the transmission of messages but by the extent to which communicators establish credibility, trustworthiness, and meaningful engagement with audiences. The significant influence of public perception on interest indicates that contemporary society evaluates *da'wah* institutions not only through religious legitimacy but also through communication effectiveness (Jaya et al., 2025). When FDIK is perceived as capable of delivering Islamic messages through modern digital platforms, the institution fulfills the principle of *tabligh*, namely the effective communication and dissemination of religious teachings. The high perception scores suggest that the public recognizes FDIK as an institution capable of translating Islamic values into forms that are understandable, accessible, and relevant to contemporary audiences (Lail et al., 2025).

Similarly, the strong influence of trust reflects the Islamic principle of *amanah* (trustworthiness), which constitutes a fundamental characteristic of effective *da'wah*. Public trust develops when religious institutions consistently demonstrate integrity, transparency, competence, and social responsibility. In Islamic communication, trust serves as the foundation of message acceptance because audiences are more likely to accept guidance from communicators whom they perceive as credible and morally accountable (Zainuddin, 2025). Therefore, the significance of trust in this study suggests that religious development depends not only on the content of *da'wah* but also on the credibility of the institutions delivering it. Furthermore, the high level of public interest observed in this study reflects the successful implementation of *amar ma'ruf*, namely the

encouragement of beneficial actions and social participation in religious activities (Ahmad et al., 2024). Public interest represents more than a favorable attitude toward FDIK; it signifies a willingness to engage in religious learning, support Islamic educational initiatives, and participate in community-based religious development. Thus, public interest can be interpreted as a manifestation of societal responsiveness to da'wah efforts that successfully combine religious authenticity with technological innovation.

The findings also demonstrate that religious development in the digital era requires a transition from conventional communication models toward interactive and participatory communication. Digital media enable two-way communication between institutions and society, allowing da'wah to become more dialogical, responsive, and audience-centered. This aligns with the Islamic principle of hikmah, which emphasizes delivering messages in ways that correspond to the needs, conditions, and understanding of the audience. Consequently, the successful integration of digital technology into religious communication strengthens the effectiveness of da'wah while preserving its ethical and spiritual foundations.

Implications for Religious Development and Curriculum Innovation

The results indicate that public interest constitutes an important social resource for strengthening religious development initiatives. High levels of public interest create opportunities for FDIK to expand its role as a center for digital Islamic education and communication. The findings suggest that contemporary religious development increasingly depends on institutions' ability to integrate religious literacy, communication competence, and digital innovation. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of Islamic communication and educational communication studies by demonstrating that public interest in Islamic higher education is shaped through an integrated process involving innovation diffusion, institutional image formation, trust development, and behavioral intention (Muhsinah, 2024; Saleh, 2022). The study extends previous research by showing that these theories are not isolated explanatory frameworks but interconnected mechanisms that collectively explain religious development in the digital era. It also enriches Islamic communication theory by empirically demonstrating that the principles of

tabligh, amanah, and hikmah remain highly relevant in contemporary digital religious communication.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide several strategic implications for FDIK. Because perception is the strongest predictor of public interest ($\beta = 0.415$), digital branding and public communication should become the institution's primary strategic priority. FDIK should strengthen its presence on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and podcasts through consistent production of high-quality Islamic content (Reny Masyitoh & Moch Nurcholis Majid, 2024), lecturer visibility, student achievements, and interactive da'wah programs (Marzuki, 2025). A measurable target could be to increase the mean public interest score from 3.31 to at least 3.50 within the next three years through integrated digital branding and community engagement programs. Trust also plays a major role ($\beta = 0.389$), indicating that institutional credibility must be continuously strengthened. FDIK can implement concrete programs such as transparent publication of academic achievements, regular community service reports, alumni success showcases, and collaborative religious outreach with local mosques and Islamic organizations. Periodic public satisfaction surveys may also be conducted to monitor trust levels and evaluate institutional performance.

In practical terms, these findings imply that FDIK should strengthen curricular components related to digital communication, content creation, multimedia storytelling, social media management, and digital da'wah strategies. However, technological competence alone is insufficient. Curriculum development should simultaneously reinforce Islamic ethics, religious literacy, and critical thinking to ensure that future da'i and Islamic communicators are capable of producing accurate, responsible, and moderate religious content. The findings further indicate the need for stronger collaboration between FDIK and digital media practitioners, content creators, religious influencers, and communication professionals. Such partnerships can enhance students' practical competencies while exposing them to contemporary developments in digital religious communication. Through these collaborations, students can develop the ability to communicate Islamic values effectively while maintaining professional and ethical standards.

CONCLUSION

Positive perceptions, high trust, strong interest, and clear intentions toward FDIK serve as important indicators that religious development in the digital era has very promising prospects. Public support demonstrates that the transformation of da'wah through digital media is not only necessary but also widely accepted as a more effective, rapid, and adaptive means of disseminating religious values in line with technological advancements. This indicates that religious educational institutions have significant opportunities to strengthen their strategic role in shaping credible and innovative digital da'wah communicators.

Accordingly, the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Studies has considerable potential to develop into a modern, competent, and contextually relevant center for digital da'wah development. Through curriculum enhancement, strengthening religious literacy, effective utilization of technology, and collaboration with digital media practitioners, FDIK can produce graduates capable of addressing the challenges of the digital era while fulfilling the spiritual needs of society. These prospects pave the way for FDIK to assert its position as a leading institution in the development of progressive, relevant, and highly competitive da'wah.

REFERENCES

- A Agustin, A., & Elisa, N. (2025). Meningkatkan Pola Animo Masyarakat terhadap Kualitas dan Pemetaan Pendidikan. *Personnel: Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan*, 1(1), 51–59.
- Ahmad, I., Mukhroman, I., & Gumelar, R. G. (2024). Penguatan Literasi Media Digital di Pesantren Tradisional Alfathaniyah Kota Serang: Membangun Generasi Melek Teknologi dengan Nilai Keislaman. *Jurnal Akademik Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 2(6), 236–246.
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Al Arafat, Q. A., As'ad, Z. W., & Makmun, M. (2025). Efek Media Sosial Konten Keagamaan Terhadap Pemahaman Pelajaran Agama Islam; Studi Siswa SMKN Gudo Jombang. *Jejak Digital: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 1(5), 3144–3154.
- Azis, A., & Ginting, R. P. (2025). Motives of Audiences Watching Buya Yahya's Islamic Content on Al-Bahjah TV's YouTube Channel: Uses

- and Gratification Theory Analysis. *Electronic Journal of Education, Social Economics and Technology*, 6(2), 602.
- Beerli Palacio, A., Díaz Meneses, G., & Pérez Pérez, P. J. (2002). The configuration of the university image and its relationship with the satisfaction of students. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(5), 486–505. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230210440311>
- Campbell, H. A., & Tsuria, R. (2021). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683>
- Conner, M. (2020). *Theory of Planned Behavior*. In Handbook of sport psychology. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119568124.ch1>
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319–340. <https://doi.org/10.2307/249008>
- Efendi, S., & Haryanto, B. (2025). Persepsi Masyarakat Tentang Keberadaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan*, 14(1 Februari), 1473–1486.
- Enghariano, D. A., & Rambe, T. (2025). The Existence of Religious Studies Programs at PTKIN Amid the Progressiveness of Institutional Transformation. *Jurnal Penelitian Medan Agama*, 16(1), 11–25.
- Evolvi, G. (2022). Religion and the internet: Digital religion, (hyper)mediated spaces, and materiality. *Zeitschrift Für Religion, Gesellschaft Und Politik*, 6(1), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41682-021-00087-9>
- Fadilah, N. F. (2022). Peran lembaga dakwah dalam mengembangkan potensi mahasiswa di jurusan manajemen dakwah. *Mudabbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah*, 3(2), 390–399.
- Fangestu, I. W. F., & Syahrizal, H. (2023). Digitalisasi Lembaga Pendidikan dalam Menghadapi Perkembangan dan Kemajuan Teknologi Informasi Dunia Pendidikan. *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum*, 1(2), 26–38.
- Faridah, N. Z., & Kuswati, R. (2024). Peran kepercayaan sebagai pemediasi pengaruh kegunaan, keamanan, kemudahan terhadap adopsi e-wallet. *Hirarki: Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Dan Bisnis*, 6(2), 55–77.
- Hakim, M. N., & Rozi, F. (2024). Strategi Manajemen Humas Dalam Meningkatkan Animo Masyarakat Terhadap Pendidikan Madrasah. *Joiem (Journal Of Islamic Education Management)*, 5(1), 28–45.

- Halim, S., Adawiyah, B. A., & Gafar, L. A. (2020). Pengaruh teknologi komunikasi terhadap perkembangan dakwah: Tantangan dan Manfaat. *Mudabbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah*, 1(1), 69–81.
- Hasanah, S. M. (2017). Strategi Membangun Global Brand Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (Ptkin) Menuju World Class University. *J-MPI*, 2(2), 128–141. <https://doi.org/10.18860/jmpi.v2i2.5476>
- Husna, Z. Z. (2021). Perkembangan Dakwah Melalui Media Sosial Instagram: Literature Review. *Ath-Thariq: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi*, 5(2), 197–208.
- Ilmi, M. H. (2023). Study Style of Best Graduates (Case Study of Best Graduates of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin). *Educational Insights*, 1(2), 58–68.
- Jaya, A., Rahayu, D. W. S., Bigofik, M. N., Amelia, F., & Rodriguez, M. (2025). Empowering Social Solidarity Through Islamic Digital Da'wah on Social Media Platforms: Memberdayakan Solidaritas Sosial Melalui Dakwah Digital Islam di Platform Media Sosial. *Alfabet Jurnal Wawasan Agama Risalah Islamiyah, Teknologi Dan Sosial*, 2(2), 39–51.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and Gratifications Research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109>
- Lail, A., Syauqiy, M. A., Saputra, W., & Gusmaneli, G. (2025). Penerapan Nilai Nilai Islam dalam Pendidikan di Abad 21. *Maximal Journal: Jurnal Ilmiah Bidang Sosial, Ekonomi, Budaya Dan Pendidikan*, 3(2), 44–51.
- Li, S., Quan, Y., Xiao, L., Ren, H., & Abinova, A. Y. (2025). Exploring the influence of social media communication and brand image on international student enrollment intentions in higher education. *Frontiers in Education*, 10, 1618524. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2025.1618524>
- Mailin, M., Rambe, G., Ar-Ridho, A., & Candra, C. (2022). Teori media/teori difusi inovasi. *JGK (Jurnal Guru Kita)*, 6(2), 168.
- Manurung, I. F. E., Maulesu, R., Weraman, P., & Roga, A. U. (2020). Sikap, Keyakinan, Niat Dan Perilaku Masyarakat Binaan Kader Warga Peduli Aids (Wpa) Terhadap Penanggulangan Hiv Dan Aids Di Kota Kupang. *LAKMI Jurnal Kesehatan Masyarakat Indonesia*, 1(1), 25–34.
- Marzuki, M. E., Fatima, N., & Sariningsih, I. (2025). Da'wah Ethics in the Digital Era in Media Transformation and Moral Governance. *Al-*

- Tsiqob: Jurnal Ekonomi dan Dakwah Islam*, 10(2), 67-78.
- Massowang, A. K. (2006). Dinamika Mahasiswa dalam Membangun Citra Kampus Relegius di Sulawesi Selatan. *Al-Qalam*, 12(1), 107–132.
- Mawaddah, N. N. N., Agustina, D. R., Amalia, N. S., Raharjo, I. T., & Amin, F. C. (2025). Analisis Pemanfaatan Kecerdasan Buatan (AI) Terhadap Berpikir Kritis Mahasiswa Fakultas Dakwah dan Ilmu Komunikasi UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Sosial Politik*, 2(4), 1177–1184
- Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258792>
- Muhsinah, M. (2024). Analisis peran dakwah sebagai alat transformasi sosial: Tantangan dan strategi komunikasi dalam konteks masyarakat modern. *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Media*, 1(1), 160–175.
- Mukhroman, I., & Ahmad, I. (2025). Komunikasi Religius di Era Digital: Studi Pola Konsumsi Dosen FISIP UNTIRTA pada Konten Keagamaan Ramadan. *Jurnal ISO: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik Dan Humaniora*, 5(1), 14.
- Nashihudin, M., Muttaqin, A., & Azizah, M. (2023). Manajemen Marketing Mix Dalam Meningkatkan Animo Masyarakat Bidang Pendidikan. *JIPSKi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Studi Keislaman*, 1(1), 93–101.
- Nathania, A., & Octovian, F. M. (2024). Pengaruh Perkembangan Teknologi Digital Terhadap Praktik Keagamaan Di Kalangan gen Z. *Lentera Jurnal Manajemen*, 2(3).
- Nguyen, N., & LeBlanc, G. (2001). Image and reputation of higher education institutions in students' retention decisions. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(6), 303–311. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000005909>
- Nurpatimah, S., & Mulyanto, H. (2025). Citra dan Promosi dalam Mempengaruhi Kepercayaan Benevolence serta Dampaknya pada Minat Masyarakat pada Lembaga Pendidikan. *EKOMABIS: Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Bisnis*, 6(01), 17–30.
- Oktavia, P., & Khotimah, K. (2023). Pengembangan metode pembelajaran pendidikan agama islam di era digital. *An Najah (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Sosial Keagamaan)*, 2(5), 66–76.
- Rachman, P., Abidin, M., Soleh, A. K., & Murfi, A. (2025). Balanced Reputation Management Strategy: A Cross-Site case study of branding image for competitive advantage in Indonesian Islamic

- Higher Education institutions. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(1), 15–34.
- Ramli, S., & Hasbullah. (2021). Pengaruh Dimensi Kualitas Pelayanan Terhadap Kepuasan Pemohon Perizinan Pada Dinas Penanaman Modal Dan Pelayanan Terpadu Satu Pintu (DPMPTSP) Kabupaten Mamuju. *Jurnal Forum Ekonomi*, 23(1), 77–85.
- Reny Masyitoh & Moch Nurcholis Majid. (2024). Dakwah Influencer: Analisis Konten Dakwah Neng Umi Laila di Media Sosial. *J-KIs: Jurnal Komunikasi Islam*, 5(2), 335–350. <https://doi.org/10.53429/j-kis.v5i2.1183>
- Saleh, S. P., Cangara, H., Sabreen, S., & Ab, S. (2022). Digital da'wah transformation: Cultural and methodological change of Islamic communication in the current digital age. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Analysis*, 5(08), 2022–2043.
- Satrio, D. S., & Asri, L. (2023). Analisis Empathy, Persuasion, Impact Dan Communication (Epic Model) Dalam Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Publik. *Inobis: Jurnal Inovasi Bisnis Dan Manajemen Indonesia*, 6(3), 350–358.
- Sikumbang, A. T., Dalimunthe, M. A., Kholil, S., & Nasution, N. F. (2024). Digital Da'wah Indonesia Ulema in the Discourse of Theology. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 105(1).
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A Multidisciplinary Analysis of the Nature, Meaning, and Measurement of Trust. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(4), 547–593. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070004547>
- Uli, N. Z., Agustyawati, D., Al Zarliani, W. O., Suherman, L. O. A., & Daholu, A. (2025). Hybrid marketing dalam pendidikan tinggi: Studi efektivitas sosialisasi online dan offline terhadap minat mahasiswa baru. *Room of Civil Society Development*, 4(1), 211–221.
- Wahyuningrum, N. (2025). Literasi Digital Sebagai Sarana Pengembangan Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis Di Era Digital. *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Digital*, 2(3), 1496–1500.
- Yuliza, M., & Yeneti, S. S. (2022). Pengaruh Kepercayaan, Kemudahan Dan Persepsi Risiko Terhadap Keputusan Pembelian Online. *Journal of Social and Economics Research*, 4(1), 68–80.
- Yzer, M. (2017). Theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behavior. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Effects*, 1–7.
- Zainuddin, A. (2025). Transformasi Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam di Era Digital: Integrasi Nilai Keislaman dan Literasi Teknologi. *Al Huda:*

Journal of Islamic Education and Society, 1(1), 1–22.

Zakaria, M. I., & Masruroh, S. A. (2025). Fenomena Cyber-religion pada Remaja Di Desa Kedungpari Kecamatan Mojowarno Kabupaten Jombang. *Jurnal Ilmiah Nusantara*, 2(5), 862–876

