



Research Article

Symbolic Representation and Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis of Buya Yahya's Ramadan Recitation

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Abstract

This article analyzes the symbolic representation of Buya Yahya's da'wah in the Ramadan Recitation aired through the Al-Bahjah YouTube channel using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. The purpose of this study is to reveal the layers of meaning contained in Buya Yahya's da'wah messages, which are not only conveyed verbally but also constructed through symbols, language, and emotional expressions. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through video content observation and verbal transcription. The results of the analysis show that each da'wah quote contains three layers of meaning: denotative (literal), connotative (emotional and cultural), and mythical (ideological), which together form an inclusive, spiritual, and transformative Islamic da'wah narrative. The da'wah myths formed include social selectivity, spiritual readiness, digital ethics, and optimism for self-change. Buya Yahya's da'wah is not only a means of delivering teachings, but also building collective awareness of the people through an effective sign system in the digital media era. These findings contribute to the development of da'wah communication studies, digital da'wah strategies, and Islamic communication education based on symbols and narratives.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital communication technology has revolutionized the way Islamic da'wah is delivered in the contemporary era. Da'wah that was previously delivered directly through the mosque pulpit, face-to-face recitation, and print media, is now transforming into digital spaces such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and podcasts. This shift provides a great opportunity for preachers to reach a wider audience, across geographies, and with more flexible time (Muhammad & Subarkah, 2024). This phenomenon makes digital media a strategic new medium for the spread of Islamic values, as well as demanding a new approach in understanding the form and content of da'wah communication.

One of the prominent figures in the dynamics of digital da'wah in Indonesia is Buya Yahya, founder of the Al-Bahjah Da'wah Development Institute. Through his official YouTube channel, Buya Yahya delivers religious lectures with a distinctive communication style: soft, firm, polite, and compassionate. His delivery, which combines popular language with references to classical books, makes his da'wah not only informative,

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but also inspirational for various groups (Saefurohman, 2023). This kind of da'wah style not only presents religious content, but also forms a symbolic structure that is rich in values, meanings, and implied messages. Thus, understanding Buya Yahya's da'wah is not enough only from the literal or textual aspects, but needs a deeper reading, especially in the context of the symbols and representations used.

In Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, every sign or symbol has two layers of meaning: denotative (literal meaning) and connotative (emotional, cultural, or ideological meaning), which can then form a myth-an ideological construction that appears natural but is actually socially and historically shaped (Barthes, 1972; Nasrullah, 2022). This approach is very relevant to analyze Buya Yahya's da'wah as a religious communication practice that not only conveys Islamic teachings verbally, but also shapes meaning through signs, visual symbols, language narratives, and structured emotional expressions, especially in the context of highly visual and symbolic digital media. Research (Syafi'i, 2021) shows how Barthes' theory can be used to parse brief but meaningful expressions in Qur'anic verses, while (Abdullah et al., 2022) highlights the representation of da'wah symbols in the movie *Sang Pencerah*, emphasizing that Barthes' semiotic approach is very relevant to uncovering layers of meaning in Islamic da'wah communication, both verbal and visual.

A number of previous studies have used Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze digital da'wah. For example, Zulmi (Zulmi, n.d.) examines Buya Yahya's da'wah on religious moderation, while Mahira (Mahira, n.d.) analyzes Taqy Malik's da'wah messages. (Aditya & Deni, 2024) outlines Habib Husein Ja'far's da'wah message in the Has Creative YouTube channel, and (Aprilita & Lisnawati, 2023) examines the da'wah animation "Riko The Series" from a semiotic perspective. However, no study has been found that specifically analyzes Buya Yahya's Ramadan Recitation with the Barthes approach in depth, especially in terms of how da'wah symbols form mythological meanings that can influence people's perspective on Islam. This is the research *gap* that this study aims to answer.

This study aims to reveal the meaning of da'wah in the symbolic representations conveyed by Buya Yahya through Ramadan Recitation on YouTube channels. The main focus is to analyze how the da'wah messages contain denotative and connotative meanings, as well as identify myths or ideologies constructed through da'wah symbols and narratives. By dissecting Buya Yahya's lectures in terms of language, visualization, and symbolic context, this research is expected to show that digital da'wah not only conveys religious information, but also becomes a powerful ideological construction tool in shaping Muslims' perceptions of Islamic values.

The method used in this research is a qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method. The main data is in the form of Buya Yahya's recitation transcripts uploaded during the month of Ramadan on Al-Bahjah's official YouTube channel. Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation and passive participatory observation. The analysis procedure includes the identification of denotative, connotative and mythical meanings in the lectures. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of da'wah communication and Islamic semiotics, while practically, it can provide insight to preachers and digital da'wah activists about the importance of using symbols and meanings in building effective and meaningful da'wah messages in the multimedia era.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method that aims to reveal and deeply understand the construction of meaning in Buya Yahya's da'wah messages through digital media. The approach used is Roland Barthes' semiotics, which divides the meaning process into three main levels: denotative meaning (literal or direct meaning), connotative (cultural or emotional meaning), and myth (ideological or veiled meaning) (Barthes, 1972). The subject of this research is Buya Yahya's recitation videos published on the official YouTube channel of LPD Al-Bahjah, with a population of all Ramadan lecture content uploaded over the past few years. From the population, one to two short videos (5-10 minutes) were selected as research samples, using purposive sampling technique with certain criteria, namely symbolically dense content, containing explicit religious messages, and having many viewers.

The data collection technique was carried out through two main stages: first, observation of video content including visualization, communication style, and message delivery structure; and second, verbatim transcription of Buya Yahya's lecture content as text material that was analyzed semiotically. The data analysis

technique follows the stages in Barthes' theory, namely: (1) identifying the signs/significants of the utterances, visual symbols, and verbal expressions used by Buya Yahya; (2) classifying the signs into denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings. The analysis is done descriptively-interpretatively by paying attention to the social and cultural context that accompanies the delivery of da'wah messages. To ensure the validity of the data, this study used source and theoretical triangulation techniques, namely comparing transcription data with video replays and strengthening interpretations with references to Barthes' semiotic theory and literature related to digital da'wah communication. In addition, peer debriefing was conducted in the interpretation process to avoid researcher bias. With this approach, it is expected that the research results will be able to reveal the meaning structure in Buya Yahya's da'wah in depth and systematically in the context of digital media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Understanding Buya Yahya's Message of Da'wah

In the midst of the overwhelming flow of information and the relentless wave of content on social media, the need for enlightening and soothing religious guidance has become increasingly urgent. In this context, the presence of Buya Yahya as a consistent religious scholar who delivers his message through various digital platforms is highly relevant and strategically valuable. Through his gentle, soothing, and wise approach, Buya Yahya is able to present a friendly and inclusive face of Islam that embraces all segments of society.

Buya Yahya is not only known as a charismatic religious scholar but also as a preacher who adapts to the times. He conveys the profound teachings of Islam in an easy-to-understand manner without judgment. Each of his messages touches on various aspects of the community's life, from issues of faith, worship, social interactions, to social and family matters, grounded in strong scholarly foundations and down-to-earth language.

Buya Yahya's sermons have served as an oasis amidst the arid landscape of religious narratives that often get trapped in divisive rhetoric. His messages emphasize the importance of compassion, noble character, tolerance, and patience in facing differences. His sermons often serve as a source of comfort amid the community's anxieties, while also guiding those seeking spiritual enlightenment. Buya Yahya understands that social media is a sensitive and dynamic public space. Therefore, his approach to preaching is characterized by caution, wisdom, and exemplary behavior. He does not get carried away by the provocations or polarization that often fill the virtual world. Instead, the messages he conveys always contain values of gentleness, compassion, and respect for differences. In every sermon, whether lengthy or short clips widely shared by his followers, Buya Yahya presents Islam as a religion that educates the heart, guides the mind, and directs behavior.

Buya Yahya's da'wah messages do not only address theological or ritualistic issues but also delve into current social, cultural, and moral issues. He often emphasizes the importance of maintaining proper conduct, strengthening family institutions, paying attention to ethical dealings, and addressing differences in schools of thought and opinions in a mature manner. All of this is conveyed in a polite, empathetic manner, free from accusatory tones. This is what makes Buya Yahya's da'wah accepted by diverse groups, from the general public to academics, from young people to the elderly.

It cannot be denied that in today's digital age, not all religious content circulating on social media carries a message of goodness. Many religious narratives actually fuel hatred, division, and even radicalism. In such circumstances, Buya Yahya emerges as a balancing figure, offering high-quality, soothing, and profound religious content. His approach to sensitive issues demonstrates a rare maturity of thought and spiritual depth amid the chaos of digital information. The content of Buya Yahya's recitation includes da'wah messages on choosing associations, spiritual preparation before preaching, da'wah through social interaction, da'wah with a view of compassion, optimism towards hidayah, the privileges of the people of prophet muhammad, visual morality standards in da'wah, ramadan as the deadline for redemption, *golbun salim* as the way to the messenger of allah, digital ethics as a reflection of the heart, and repaying evil with love. For more details, please refer to the following table:

No	Topic	Substance
1	Da'wah Messages on Choosing Associations	The importance of choosing a social environment that can support the growth of a Muslim's faith and morals. Buya emphasized that social interaction is not a trivial matter, but has a major impact on the direction and quality of a person's spiritual life.
2	Spiritual Preparation Before Preaching	Da'wah is not just a verbal activity, but a mission that requires inner readiness, clarity of intention, and a request for help from Allah. Therefore, prayer is the first step to organize the heart and build vertical relations before stepping into horizontal relations.
3	Da'wah through Social Interaction	Buya emphasized that interaction with sinners is not necessarily prohibited, as long as the interaction is framed in the intention and purpose of da'wah, not as a form of compromise on values or as a form of participation in negligent pleasure.
4	Da'wah with a View of Compassion	Buya emphasized that condescension, scorn, or feeling better than others will only be an obstacle in the process of da'wah. In fact, such an attitude actually widens the emotional gap between the preacher and the object of da'wah, and destroys the spirit of gentleness that is the basis of Islamic teachings.
5	Optimism towards Hidayah	Buya invites preachers not to rush to judgment, but rather to build a space of hope for anyone who today seems far from the truth.
6	The Privileges of the People of Prophet Muhammad	Ramadan as a symbol of spiritual honor and privilege, making it not just an annual ritual, but a form of divine love that should be grateful and glorified.
7	Visual Morality Standards in Da'wah	the benchmarking of shame as a reflection of the cleanliness of the heart.
8	Ramadan as the Deadline for Redemption	Ramadan is not only a time of worship, but also an inner struggle that demands awareness and self-control. This warning is not only normative, but carries a deep ideological meaning: that time is a sacred space that determines the direction of one's final destiny
9	Qolbun Salim as the Way to the Messenger of Allah	Cleansing the heart from envy, grudge, and hatred is the Prophet's sunnah, and makes the cause of being with the Prophet in heaven.
10	Digital Ethics as a Reflection of the Heart	Make sure to always speak kindly, and only say good things.
11	Repaying Evil with Love	If you are hurt, don't reply with bad comments. Pray and send a gift. This phrase is a culmination of spiritual teachings that emphasize the power of gentleness in responding to badness. Buya is not offering passivity, but calling for da'wah in the form of loving symbolic action: restraint, prayer, and giving.

Discussion

In the contemporary da'wah landscape characterized by cultural complexity, swift information flow, and audience diversity, religious communication strategies are required to be more than just conveying the truth; they must be able to package values in touching language and meaningful symbols. Buya Yahya, as one of the most popular preachers in the digital era, presents a distinctive approach: his speech is soft, his message is simple, but the reach of its meaning is extremely broad. The short sentences he conveys in recitations or lectures are not just normative appeals, but are full of symbols, emotions, and spiritual values. To dissect the power of these messages, Roland Barthes' semiotic approach is used in this study, focusing on three layers of meaning:

denotative (literal), connotative (symbolic and emotional), and mythical (ideological). Through this analytical knife, we will explore how Buya Yahya's five quotes not only convey messages, but shape the collective consciousness of the ummah, build social ethics, and present a gentle, transformative and down-to-earth face of Islamic da'wah.

Denotative and Connotative

In the world of contemporary da'wah, the power of the message lies not only in the content, but also in the symbols and ways of delivery. Buya Yahya, as a charismatic preacher, often presents a simple yet meaningful narrative. The following five recitation excerpts reflect a strong da'wah communication strategy through empathetic verbal symbols, moral direction, and spiritual approaches. To explore the power of their meaning, Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, especially at the denotative level, is used to reveal the literal meaning of the expressions. In addition, this study also compares it with previous research results to assess its academic relevance and strength. In Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, meaning does not stop at the literal (denotative) level, but continues at the connotative level: the symbolic, emotional and ideological layers of meaning. In da'wah communication, connotations play an important role in conveying Islamic values that are not always said explicitly, but are felt and captured by the audience through language symbols. The following five excerpts from Buya Yahya's recitation not only convey the message straightforwardly, but also form a deeper landscape of meaning, reflecting the values, norms, and ideology of moderate, inclusive, and transformative Islamic da'wah.

First, denotatively, the phrase "Don't make friends except those who make us better" is a normative prohibition that one should not be careless in establishing social relationships, unless the relationship has a positive impact on personal development. From a semantic perspective (Palmer, 1981), this sentence means the restriction of social relations in the context of moral transformation. Lexically, "making friends" means establishing close social relations, "making" functions as a causative verb, and "getting better" indicates self-improvement (Cruse, 1986). The syntax of this sentence contains a negative imperative structure with a conditional clause, as described by (Chomsky, 1957), which indicates that friendship is allowed only when it meets certain ethical conditions.

Connotatively, this expression reflects Islamic values and is corroborated by contemporary scientific studies. The Prophet's Hadith on the example of good and bad friends (HR. Bukhari and Muslim) (An-Nawawi, 2016) emphasizes the influence of friendship on moral and spiritual qualities. The word of Allah in (*Surat At-Taubah Ayat 119*, n.d.) also directs people to be with honest and pious people. (Hartanti, 2023) proves that peers determine the formation of an Islamic personality. In addition, figures such as (Pamungkas, 2023; Suhayib, 2016) emphasize the importance of emulating the Prophet Muhammad in relationships as a strategy to build the character of the younger generation. Thus, Buya Yahya's expression is not merely rhetorical, but an invitation to make association a field of da'wah and a means of meaningful character building. Second, denotatively, the phrase "pray two rak'ahs before preaching" means performing two rak'ahs of sunnah prayer as a form of preparation before carrying out activities to convey the teachings of Islam. This sentence contains a grammatical structure that includes an implicit subject (a da'i), a predicate (to pray), and a time statement (before preaching). This expression does not merely indicate a sequence of actions, but marks the importance of the spiritual readiness of a preacher who wants to carry the divine message. In this case, prayer becomes a means of strengthening the da'i's heart and connecting to Allah SWT before facing this noble task.

Connotatively, the expression reflects the value of spirituality and da'wah ethics rooted in Islamic tradition. Although there is no specific evidence that requires praying two rak'ahs before preaching, this principle is supported by the Prophet's hadith which recommends praying sunnah before doing important business (HR. Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidzi) (An-Nawawi, 2016). Prayer becomes a symbol of tazkiyatun nafs and a plea for help to Allah. The Prophet's seriousness in keeping sunnah prayers, such as qabliyah Fajr (HR. Bukhari and Muslim) (An-Nawawi, 2016), shows the importance of spiritual readiness before facing big moments. Thinkers such as (Siba'i, 1993) emphasize that the power of da'wah does not only come from rhetoric, but from the worship that underlies it. Thus, Buya Yahya's message about praying before preaching revives the spirit of da'i who are not only eloquent, but also fully rely on spiritual strength as the main source of their da'wah influence.

Third, denotatively, the phrase "Hang out with the intention of inviting, not playing" contains an invitation for association to be interpreted as a purposeful activity, not just for entertainment or escapism. This sentence has a structure in the form of an implicit subject (someone), a predicate "hang out", and two contrasting purpose descriptors: "with the intention of inviting" as the purpose of da'wah, and "not playing" as an affirmation of the dangers of directionless association. In semantic terms, this expression directs the function of socializing towards a transformative and educative direction, containing the message that a Muslim, especially the younger generation, should organize social relations as a means to spread goodness and not just waste time.

Connotatively, this expression holds a strong moral message and da'wah strategy: that socializing is a potential da'wah field and not a neutral area. Buya Yahya's message emphasizes that every social interaction must be based on the intention to invite goodness, according to Allah's words in QS. (*Surat Ali 'Imran Ayat 104*, n.d.) about *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. Research (Rustandi & Hanifah, 2019) corroborates this by showing that Islamic youth communities can make socialization a medium for fostering Islamic values. (al-Bayanuni, 1998) also emphasizes that the association of a preacher must be judged by its benefits for da'wah and moral safety. Thus, Buya Yahya's expression is not just practical advice, but a representation of Islamic social ethics that emphasizes da'wah intentions, values, and awareness in every form of social interaction.

Fourth, denotatively, the phrase "Look at them with compassion, not condescension" is an invitation to be empathetic and respect the dignity of fellow human beings, especially those who have not been guided or are in the process of changing themselves. This sentence consists of an implicit subject (us), predicate "look at", object "them", and two contrasting adverbs: "with compassion" as the ideal attitude, and "not demeaning" as the moral prohibition. The literal meaning conveys that a loving humane attitude is preferable to negative judgment, as every individual has the potential to change and develop.

Connotatively, this expression reflects a da'wah paradigm rooted in love, empathy, and respect for humanity, not judgment or spiritual superiority. Da'wah with a face of compassion, as taught by Prophet Muhammad in QS. (*Surat Al-Anbiya' Ayat 107*, n.d.), reflects the prophetic mission as a mercy for all nature. This approach has proven effective, as shown in research (Pratama et al., 2024) on Habib Mundzir Al-Musawa's da'wah strategy in Papua which emphasizes a peaceful, polite, and respectful approach to differences. Support also comes from (al-Bayanuni, 1998) which emphasizes the importance of husnuzan in da'wah as a way of maintaining ukhuwah. Thus, Buya Yahya's expression is not just moral advice, but an inclusive da'wah strategy that forms religious communication that touches, does not hurt; fostering, not reproaching.

Fifth, denotatively, the phrase "*Today he plays dice, tomorrow he can be better than us*" states that someone who appears to be making a mistake today - symbolized by the metaphor of "playing dice" (bad or not ideal behavior) - still has the opportunity to change for the better in the future, even more than us who feel we are on the path of goodness. The elements of this sentence include the subject ("he"), time adverbs ("today" and "tomorrow"), action predicates ("playing dice" and "can be better"), and a comparator ("than us"). This structure implies that one's moral position is not fixed, and change is possible.

Connotatively, this expression contains a deep spiritual message of optimism towards guidance, respect for the inner process of man, and rejection of past-based judgment. Buya Yahya through this message encourages humanist and inclusive da'wah, by giving space to anyone to change and develop. This message is reinforced by (Yakub, 2021) which emphasizes that true da'wah is da'wah that respects human dignity and provides space for growth through empathy and trust. The attitude of the Prophet Muhammad in the event of Fathu Makkah, who forgave his enemies with the words "*Idzhabû fa antumuth-thulaqâ*", (Ibnu Katsir, n.d.) is a concrete example that successful da'wah is not built on judgment, but on compassion and forgiveness. This is also in line with the spirit of QS. (*Surat An-Nashr*, n.d.) and the principle of da'wah (al-Bayanuni, 1998), which emphasizes the importance of being kind and making room for change. Thus, this expression becomes the ethical and strategic foundation of da'wah that glorifies hope, builds trust in human nature, and makes love a bridge of transformation towards goodness.

Sixth, denotatively, the statement "Ramadan is a special gift from Allah that was not owned by the previous people" conveys the literal meaning that Ramadan is a special gift from Allah SWT which is only given to the people of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This is confirmed in the word of Allah: "The month of Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an is revealed as a guide for mankind..." QS. (*Surat Al-Baqarah Ayat*

185, n.d.). This verse shows that Ramadan has a double privilege: as a month of fasting and as a time when the Qur'an is revealed. Thus, Ramadan is understood as a holy time that has a shari'a and historical dimension that previous people did not have.

On a connotative level, the phrase "special gift" symbolizes divine love, trust and spiritual honor for Muslims. Ramadan is understood as not just an obligation, but a moment of grace and moral renewal that emphasizes the identity of the ummah as the recipient of a great mandate. In the context of da'wah communication, it serves as a symbolic narrative that builds collective consciousness and strengthens transcendence values. As stated by (Nur Syam, 2003), the success of da'wah is not only determined by the content of the message, but by its ability to form symbolic meanings that live in the culture of the people. Ramadan, in this case, represents a sacred narrative that unites the spiritual and social dimensions of Islamic life.

Seventh, denotatively, the phrase "If you are ashamed to watch something in front of good people, then it is not worth watching" states that the shame of watching something in the presence of moral people indicates the incompatibility of the content with ethical values. "Shame" becomes an indicator of moral awareness, while "good people" serves as an external mirror to judge the appropriateness of the spectacle. This is in line with Allah's command in QS. (*Surat An-Nur Ayat 30*, n.d.) which commands believers to restrain their gaze and maintain chastity. So, if someone feels reluctant to watch certain shows in the presence of pious people, it indicates that these shows are also not worth seeing in the presence of Allah SWT, the All-Seeing.

At the connotative level, this expression forms a symbolic narrative about visual ethics: spectacle reflects self-worth and moral identity. The "good person" in the sentence represents social conscience and spiritual awareness, which in a da'wah perspective is in line with the principle of *ihسان-doing* as if seen by Allah-as said by Prophet Muhammad in HR. Muslim (An-Nawawi, 2016). In the context of contemporary da'wah, as explained by (Nur Syam, 2003), effective da'wah is not only conveying propositions, but also inserting ethical symbols that live in the culture of the people. This expression symbolically teaches the importance of building moral awareness in spectacle consumption, making the standard of goodness a guideline, and shame as a guardian of personal integrity.

Eighth, denotatively, the statement "If he is not forgiven in Ramadan, then he is lost, and he is cursed" states that Ramadan is the main moment to gain Allah's forgiveness, and anyone who does not take advantage of it is considered a great loss. Ramadan is not an ordinary month, but a time of spiritual privilege. It is affirmed in QS. (*Surat Al-Baqarah Ayat 222*, n.d.) that "Allah loves those who repent and purify themselves", indicating that Ramadan is a great opportunity for self-cleansing that should not be wasted.

On a connotative level, this expression symbolizes spiritual failure. The terms "loss" and "damned" reflect the spiritual emptiness of failing to take advantage of divine compassion. In *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, al (Ghozali, t.t.) asserts that whoever does not improve himself in Ramadan, then when will he change. In the perspective of (Nur Syam, 2003), this is a form of symbolic da'wah that arouses the moral awareness of the people. Thus, the phrase becomes an inner call: Ramadan is a turning point, and negligence in it is a rejection of God's love.

Ninth, Denotatively, the quote "Cleansing the heart of spite, vengeance and hatred is the Prophet's sunnah, and makes the cause of being with the Prophet in heaven" conveys that eliminating mental illness is an important teaching in Islam that has an impact on salvation in the hereafter. This is affirmed in the Qur'an: "And We wiped out every grudge that was in their hearts..." QS. (*Surat Al-Hijr Ayat 47*, n.d.), which describes the clean inner condition of the dwellers of Paradise. Thus, in a literal sense, the cleansing of the heart becomes part of the piety that is highly valued in the view of the Shari'ah.

Connotatively, this quote forms a spiritual myth about purity of heart as a prophetic path. The phrase "with the Prophet in heaven" symbolizes the peak of existential closeness to the Islamic ideal, making the control of negative emotions a symbol of spiritual maturity. In *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, al (Ghozali, n.d.) mentions that "*envy is a disease worse than lust because it destroys goodness as fire burns dry wood*". From a da'wah perspective, as stated by (Nur Syam, 2003), a strong ethical message is one that is built through symbols and inner awareness. Thus, this quote does not only advise normatively, but evokes a symbolic awareness that the cleansing of the heart is a condition of closeness to the prophetic light.

Tenth, denotatively, the quote "If you want to comment, make sure your comment is a good comment" teaches that every comment, especially in public spaces, should be guarded and positive. This is in line with Allah's words:

"And say to My servants: Let them speak better words." (Surat Al-Isra' Ayat 53, n.d.), as well as the hadith in Riyadhhus Shalihin (An-Nawawi, 2016) which states, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak well or keep silent." (HR. Bukhari and Muslim) Speech is not just an expression, but a moral responsibility.

Connotatively, this sentence symbolizes that comments reflect the content of the heart and the level of faith. In *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, al (Ghozali, n.d.) asserts that the tongue is the path of salvation or destruction depending on the intention and content of the heart. According to (Nur Syam, 2003), the power of da'wah lies in the delivery of ethical symbols that touch the consciousness of the people. So, a good comment is not just digital courtesy, but part of Islamic spirituality that demands clarity of heart and caution in communication.

Eleventh, denotatively, the quote "If you are hurt, don't reply with bad comments. Pray and send gifts." contains a literal message that the response to mistreatment should not be a negative reply, but active kindness in the form of prayers and gifts. This is in line with QS. (Surat Fushshilat Ayat 34, n.d.) "Repel evil in a better way, then suddenly the one between whom you have enmity is like a very loyal friend." In *Riyadhus Shalihin*, Imam (An-Nawawi, 2016) includes this verse in the Chapter on the Virtue of Restraining Anger as evidence that gentleness in retaliating against evil is part of the moral excellence ordered by Sharia. Thus, Buya Yahya's sentence is literally a call to ground the Qur'anic teachings through action, not debate.

Connotatively, this quote forms a moral myth about spiritual victory through gentleness. Prayers and gifts in return for wounds are symbolic of prophetic morals that transcend the logic of revenge. In *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, al (Ghozali, n.d.) writes: "Forgiving the enemy and giving to the one who harmed is part of cleansing the soul and erasing revenge." The perspective of (Nur Syam, 2003) reinforces this by stating that the power of da'wah lies in the symbolic ability to move the hearts of the people through actions of high ethical value. Thus, Buya Yahya's expression is not just interpersonal ethics, but a symbolic da'wah strategy that teaches that love, prayer, and giving are the highest forms of spiritual resistance.

Thus, Buya Yahya's expression is not just a rhetorical message, but a deep da'wah strategy that has proven its effectiveness throughout Islamic history. This attitude reinforces that da'wah is not about cornering those who are wrong, but rather elevating them to a better possibility, and this is the essence of da'wah as a mercy for the universe.

Overall, the eleven quotes denotatively reflect da'wah communication that contains strong moral, spiritual and social values. Barthes' semiotic approach at the literal level shows that Buya Yahya's utterances are very communicative and direct, but still full of values. When compared to previous research, all of these quotes reinforce the finding that successful da'wah is one that combines empathic, spiritual, and contextual aspects. This shows Buya Yahya's consistency in presenting da'wah messages that are not only symbolic, but also strategic in shaping people's awareness.

Myth

In Roland Barthes' semiotics, myths are not just fictional stories or legends, but ideological constructions that work subtly through language and symbols to convey certain values or beliefs in a culture. Myths in the context of da'wah communication function to shape the way people think about good, bad, social relations, and even relations with God. When Buya Yahya delivered short quotes in his recitation, he was actually forming new myths or reinforcing old myths about Islamic morality, compassion, transformation, and social responsibility. This is the power of da'wah symbolic communication that works in the cultural and inner realms of the ummah.

First, the phrase "Don't make friends except those who make us better" forms an ideological narrative that, in Roland Barthes' semiotic perspective, is at the level of myth - a value construction that is absorbed as a natural social norm. The myth formed is that socializing is not just a social interaction, but a field of moral formation and a mirror of self-quality. This message leads to a collective consciousness that choosing friends is a moral responsibility, not a free right. In the Islamic tradition, Imam (Ghozali, n.d.) emphasizes the importance of selectivity in making friends, while the Prophet's hadith states "A person depends on the religion of his friend" (HR. Abu Dawud) (An-Nawawi, 2016), reinforcing that the social environment determines spiritual integrity. Empirically, research (Hernides, 2019) shows that adolescent character is strongly influenced by the peer community, making friendship a catalyst for moral formation or decline. Thus, the phrase is not

simply advice, but a representation of religious ideology that instills awareness of the importance of building spiritually and ethically meaningful social relations.

Second, the phrase "Pray two rak'ahs before preaching" in Roland Barthes' semiotic perspective forms a myth that true preaching is not just oral communication, but an extension of worship that comes from spiritual closeness to Allah. Prayer in this context becomes a symbol of spiritual legitimacy, showing that the power of da'wah is born from a submissive heart, not just the eloquence of words. The community absorbs this myth as a belief that worthy da'i are those who have first prostrated themselves before speaking. This idea is in line with the thoughts of Imam (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* who asserts that da'wah without sincerity and worship will only result in emptiness and *riya'*. The word of Allah in (*Surat Al-Baqarah Ayat 45*, n.d.) also emphasizes the importance of prayer as a source of help in social activities. Research (Pratama et al., 2024) on Habib Mundzir Al-Musawa's da'wah reinforces this narrative, showing that the power of his da'wah was born from prayer and remembrance that preceded the lecture. Thus, the myth that is formed makes worship an absolute requirement in the legitimization of da'wah and frames the ideal preacher as a figure whose spirituality precedes his speech.

Third, the statement "Hang out with the intention of inviting, not playing" in Roland Barthes' semiotics at the myth level forms an ideological construction that association is not a neutral space, but an instrument of da'wah that must be directed towards good values. This sentence implies that social interactions that are not worth proselytizing are considered a form of negligence, because every association will influence and shape values. This process, according to (Barthes, 1972), is called the *naturalization of ideology*, which is when the value of da'wah in association is accepted as a natural and undeniable social norm. This view is supported by Imam (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, who states that associations that do not remind of Allah will only slowly damage the heart. (Al-Bayanuni, 1993) also asserts that the most effective da'wah occurs through social interactions that are full of empathy and exemplary, not just in the formal pulpit. This is reinforced by the findings of (Pratama et al., 2024) in the study of Habib Mundzir Al-Musawa's da'wah, which shows that social closeness and active participation are more effective in conveying Islamic values. Thus, the myth that is formed is that a Muslim is not just present in society, but must be an agent of change through social relations that are worthy of da'wah-making socializing a field of charity, not a mere entertainment arena.

Fourth, the phrase "Look at them with compassion, not condescension" forms an ideological myth that da'wah and social interaction in Islam must be based on empathy, not moral superiority. In Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, this message not only calls for noble morals in a literal way, but constructs the value of compassion as the moral identity of the ummah and the condition for the success of da'wah. The process of naturalization of values makes compassion appear as an undeniable social norm. Imam (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* asserts that gentleness is more effective in touching hard hearts than reproach, and (Al-Bayanuni, 1993) emphasizes that da'wah built on love for the people is more durable than that driven by mere truth claims. Research (Pratama et al., 2024) on Habib Mundzir's da'wah in Papua reinforces this myth-he preaches through a friendly face, soft speech, and inclusive relations, not a confrontational approach. Thus, this expression creates a myth that empathy is not just a personal attitude, but a universal language of da'wah that softens the heart and fertilizes change, and is the key for Muslims in building humanitarian relations rooted in love.

Fifth, the phrase "Today he plays dice, tomorrow he can be better than us" in Roland Barthes' semiotics creates a myth of hope, transformation and anti-judgmentalism in Islam. Denotatively, this sentence states that someone who appears to be doing wrong today still has the possibility to be better than us. However, on a mythical level, this message instills the realization that a person's glory before Allah is not determined by the past, but by his direction and sincerity in changing. (Barthes, 1972) calls it a second-order semiological system, where a simple symbol like "playing dice" hides a critique of moral superiority and social stigma. This view is in line with the teachings of Imam (Ghozali, n.d.) who emphasizes not to underestimate sinners, because repentance is a secret between a servant and his Lord. (Al-Bayanuni, 1993) also emphasizes the importance of da'wah based on *husnuzan* and compassion. The findings (Pratama et al., 2024) show that Habib Mundzir Al-Musawa's da'wah was successful precisely because it opened the space for *hijrah* for anyone without judging his past. Thus, this expression forms a myth about moral flexibility, humility, and the importance of building a humane, inclusive, and hopeful da'wah culture.

Sixth, the phrase "Ramadan is a special gift from Allah that no previous ummah had" in Roland Barthes' semiotic framework forms a religious myth that normalizes Ramadan as a symbol of Muslim spiritual privilege in prophetic history. Denotatively, it states that the month of Ramadan is a unique gift from Allah SWT, while connotatively, this sentence contains the ideology that the people of the Prophet Muhammad SAW have a special position that previous people did not have. In second-order signification, (Barthes, 1972) explains that myths work by absorbing cultural and religious meanings into natural-looking symbols - in this case, Ramadan is mythicized as a symbol of the exclusive closeness between Allah and Muslims. The process of naturalization of ideology makes this belief feel natural and absolute, building a collective awareness that Ramadan is not only an annual act of worship, but also an affirmation of the ummah's position in the history of revelation. This is reinforced by the Prophet's words: "Five things are given to my Ummah in Ramadan that were not given to previous Ummahs..." (HR Ahmad, no. 21695) (Ahmad bin hambal, n.d.), as well as the views of (Al-Suyuthi, 2008) in *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur' ān* who asserts that Ramadan is the month of the revelation of the Qur' ān - a symbol of the birth of Islamic civilization. Even Al (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* calls Ramadan a "madrassa ruhaniyah" where passions are cultivated and the heart is cleansed. Thus, the myth of Ramadan as a "special gift" not only reinforces religious practice, but also shapes the narrative of Muslims' collective identity, loyalty and pride.

Seventh, the phrase "If you are ashamed to watch in front of good people, then it is not worth watching" in Roland Barthes' semiotic perspective forms a moral myth that subtly instills ethical awareness about media consumption standards in everyday life. Denotatively, this sentence conveys that embarrassment when watching something in the presence of people who are considered pious or moral is an indicator that the show is not ethically worthy. However, at the second-order level of signification (Barthes, 1972), this message forms a myth that shame is a measure of internal morality - a cultural value that has been naturalized as a determinant of whether or not behavior in the private sphere is valid. Naturalization of ideology occurs when shame towards humans is assumed to be a reflection of shame towards Allah, making individual Muslims constantly examine their behavior, even in solitude. This sentence leads to a collective awareness that media consumption is not a neutral activity, but a reflection of morals. This value comes from Islamic tradition, as the Prophet said: "*Haya* (shame) is part of faith." (HR. Bukhari, no. 9) (Al-Bukhari, 1422), and affirmed by Imam al (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, that shame is the first bulwark in maintaining the honor of the soul (*hurmat al-nafs*) from despicable acts. Thus, this phrase is not only a moral exhortation, but also a cultural-religious myth that shapes the habitus of Muslim ethics towards what is worthy of visual consumption in digital culture.

Eighth, the phrase "If he is not forgiven in Ramadan, then he is cursed" in Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis at the myth level forms a very strong ideological narrative about the position of Ramadan as the peak moment of forgiveness and purification of the soul. Denotatively, this sentence conveys that someone who fails to achieve forgiveness in the holy month has lost a great opportunity. But connotatively, this statement creates a religious myth that Ramadan is the essential deadline for a Muslim's spiritual transformation, and failure to take advantage of it is not only a personal loss, but also a form of denial of divine grace that leads to social and theological condemnation. In second-order signification (Barthes, 1972), Ramadan is not only a month of worship, but is mythologized as an arena for the determination of the afterlife, a place where divine values such as mercy, *maghfirah*, and deliverance from hell are perceived as "heavenly bonuses" that seem to be automatically available - but only for those who fully activate piety. This expression also refers to the Prophet's hadith: "How wretched is the man who sees Ramadan but his sins are not forgiven." (HR Ahmad, no. 7130) (Ahmad bin hambal, n.d.), which is often quoted by scholars to arouse the moral consciousness of the people. Al (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* also refers to Ramadan as the *mausim al-rahmah* (season of mercy) which, if squandered, indicates coldness of heart and spiritual dryness. Thus, this expression creates the myth that Ramadan is not just a month of worship, but an existential marker, where spiritual failure to fulfill it symbolizes one's disconnection from God's love.

Ninth, the phrase "Cleansing the heart from spite, revenge, and hatred is the Prophet's sunnah, and makes the cause of being with the Prophet in heaven" in Roland Barthes' semiotic framework forms a moral-religious myth that normalizes purification of the heart as a prophetic path to salvation in the afterlife. In the system of second-order signification (Barthes, 1972), this message not only suggests noble morals as good behavior, but

makes it a symbol of spiritual closeness to the Prophet Muhammad. Through the process of naturalization of ideology, the control of negative emotions such as envy and resentment is assumed to be an absolute requirement for piety, not just an additional virtue. It instills the idea that cleansing the heart is the highest form of spiritual achievement that carries eschatological implications: being with the Prophet in heaven. This message has a strong basis in the Prophet's hadith when he mentions that an inhabitant of heaven is one who does not harbor envy and resentment (HR. Ahmad, no. 12697) (Ahmad bin hambal, n.d.), as well as in Imam (Ghozali, n.d.) 's *Ihya' ' Ulum al-Din*, which calls *taḥkiyat al-nafs* the core of Islamic morals and the highest station in Sufism. Thus, this expression forms a collective awareness that the success of da' wah and the highest spiritual attainment lies not only in external knowledge or deeds, but in inner clarity that emulates the Prophet in essence.

Tenth, the phrase "If you want to comment, make sure your comment is a good comment" forms a myth of communication ethics in Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, which makes speech not just a means of expression, but an indicator of one's moral and spirituality. This sentence, through the mechanism of secondorder signification (Barthes, 1972), not only gives normative advice, but constructs the value that speaking especially in public spaces such as social media-is an act that demands spiritual responsibility. In the process of naturalization of ideology, the habit of commenting is assumed to be a field of reward or sin, and good comments become a symbol of the identity of Muslims who guard their tongues. This message is rooted in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak well or keep silent" (HR. Bukhari, no. 6136) (Al-Bukhari, 1422), which suggests that speech is not a value-free activity, but rather a reflection of faith. Imam (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihyā' ' Ulūm al-Dīn* calls the tongue the mirror of the heart, and guarding it is part of guarding oneself from moral ruin. This expression, then, forms the myth that good commentary is not simply a form of digital courtesy, but an expression of faith inherent in contemporary Islamic proselytizing culture.

Eleventh, the phrase "If you are hurt, don't reply with bad comments. Pray and send gifts." forms a myth of responsive spirituality in Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, namely the symbolic construction that repaying badness with good is not only a noble ethic, but a form of superior spiritual strength. Through second-order signification (Barthes, 1972), the act of repaying with prayers and gifts is interpreted as a symbol of faith that has reached emotional maturity and total submission to divine values. In the process of naturalization of ideology, this behavior is assumed to be a "natural" attitude for an ideal Muslim, as if the pinnacle of morality lies in the ability to restrain oneself, pray, and give when hurt. This teaching refers to QS. (Surat Fushshilat Ayat 34, n.d.), "Repel (evil) in a better way, then suddenly the person between whom you and he had enmity seems to have become a very loyal friend", and is reinforced by the words of the Prophet SAW: "It is not the strong man who wins in wrestling, but who is able to restrain his anger when angry" (HR. Bukhari no. 6114) (Al-Bukhari, 1422). Al (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihyā' ' Ulūm al-Dīn* also emphasizes that the pinnacle of *akhlāq al-karimah* is when a servant repays injustice with love, not negative reactions. Thus, this expression not only shapes the pattern of morals, but also the myth of da'wah that is gentle, compassionate, and transformative in dealing with social conflicts.

This whole excerpt shows that Buya Yahya's da'wah communication not only operates in the realm of verbal messages, but also forms a collective meaning system that lives in the minds of Muslim communities. By embedding moral values into symbolic and empathetic language, Buya Yahya is building a myth of Islamic da'wah as a path of love, social responsibility, and spiritual transcendence. This is in line with the findings of (Nur Syam, 2003) which states that the success of digital era da'wah is largely determined by the ability of preachers to build symbolic and ideological religious narratives. Thus, the myths in Buya Yahya's da'wah are not just a message, but a foundation of values that are integrated into the culture of the people.

Table 1. The Meaning of Da'wah in Buya Yahya's Recitation Based on Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis.

No.	Message Excerpt	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Myth
1	Do not befriend anyone except those who make us better	A normative prohibition against forming random social ties unless they have a positive impact.	A selective approach to social interactions as a moral strategy and Islamic character-building.	Social interaction is a field of da'wah and a reflection of one's moral quality.

No.	Message Excerpt	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Myth
2	Perform two rak'ahs before preaching	A recommendation to perform two units of sunnah prayer before engaging in da'wah.	A spiritual preparation to reinforce sincerity and intention before delivering religious messages.	Prayer is the spiritual strength and the source of da'wah legitimacy.
3	Socialize with the intention to invite, not just to play	A call to engage in social interactions with the aim of inviting others to Islam, not for mere entertainment.	Social interactions must be transformative and educational as a medium for spreading Islamic values.	Every social interaction carries value and should serve the purpose of da'wah.
4	Look at them with compassion, not with condescension	A call to empathize with others, especially those who haven't received guidance.	Da'wah ethics should be soft, loving, and non-judgmental.	Compassion is the moral identity of Muslims and the most effective da'wah force.
5	Today he plays dice, tomorrow he may be better than us	Anyone can change for the better, even if currently they seem immoral.	A call for optimism and to avoid hastily judging others' pasts.	Guidance belongs to Allah; spiritual transformation must remain open and welcomed.
6	Ramadan is a special gift from Allah not given to previous nations	Ramadan is a divine blessing exclusively for the ummah of Prophet Muhammad SAW.	Ramadan is a spiritual honor and exclusive mercy to be deeply appreciated.	Muslims hold a special status in prophetic history, symbolized by Ramadan.
7	If you feel ashamed to watch it in front of righteous people, then it's not worth watching	Shame indicates that the content is morally inappropriate.	Media ethics reflect personal piety and self-control in media consumption.	Shame is an internal moral compass and a symbol of faith in digital life.
8	If one is not forgiven during Ramadan, then woe to him, cursed is he	Ramadan is a major opportunity for forgiveness; negligence leads to spiritual loss.	A strong warning not to waste the month full of divine mercy.	Ramadan is the critical window for self-redemption and a symbol of divine grace not to be squandered.
9	Purifying the heart from envy, resentment, and hatred is a Sunnah of the Prophet, and it is a means to be with him in paradise	Heart purification is a key Islamic teaching with eschatological consequences.	Controlling negative emotions is a spiritual path to nearness with the Prophet.	Qalbun salim is a prophetic station leading to proximity with the Prophet and eternal glory.
10	If you want to comment, make sure it is a good one	A recommendation to filter and ensure comments are positive.	Comments reflect the piety of the heart and spiritual awareness.	The tongue symbolizes faith; good comments express belief in the digital culture.
11	If you're hurt, don't retaliate with bad comments. Pray and give a gift instead.	An encouragement to respond to harm with prayer and gifts, not harmful words.	Positive responses reflect spiritual strength and mature faith.	Prayer and giving as responses symbolize a transformative and compassionate model of da'wah.

Framing Buya Yahya's Da'wah in Digital Space

The results of the analysis of a number of Buya Yahya's cultic videos spread on digital platforms show a consistent pattern in framing his da'wah messages. Each moral advice and invitation does not stand alone, but forms a framework of meaning that is loaded with ideological, spiritual and ethical content. Using Robert Entman's framing theory, researchers identified that Buya not only conveys normative religious teachings, but also builds a da'wah narrative that influences the way people think and respond to social reality, especially in the context of digital culture.

Buya Yahya positions his digital da'wah in a cultural-transformative frame that emphasizes inner change as the foundation of individual moral formation. With a gentle, contextual, and humanist approach, he targets the problems of the people in the digital era, which is open but prone to deviations in values. His preaching

builds awareness that today's spiritual challenges are not only legal issues, but a crisis of spiritual orientation that needs to be responded to with a narrative of empathy and self-purification. In the perspective of framing theory (Entman, 1993), Buya strategically composes a da'wah narrative that not only conveys information, but also frames the way people think, feel, and act in dealing with social reality.

The issues raised by Buya include various moral and spiritual crises, such as the loss of social selectivity, lack of spiritual readiness before preaching, poor control of comments and media consumption, the emergence of condescension towards others, and the fading of spiritual values in the month of Ramadan. He also highlighted diseases of the heart such as revenge and envy that weaken *ukhuwah Islamiyah*. All of this is framed as the result of weak self-control and lack of spiritual sensitivity in dealing with social dynamics, especially in a permissive digital culture. Buya does not blame individuals frontally, but directs attention to the structural causes within: lack of awareness of Islamic values, weak worship orientation in social activities, ego dominance, and the absence of inner readiness before preaching or interacting in public spaces.

Buya's moral judgment rests on prophetic values: that true Muslims are those who continue to improve themselves and positively influence others. Bad comments and negative media consumption are seen as a reflection of weak faith, while compassion, empathy and good prejudice are considered strong foundations of da'wah. Ramadan is positioned as a great gift that, if wasted, becomes a real spiritual loss. Purification of the heart from spite and revenge is even made a condition of closeness to the Prophet in the afterlife. Hadiths that underlie this message, such as "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak well or be silent" (HR. Bukhari, no. 6136) (Al-Bukhari, 1422) and the saying about the inhabitants of heaven whose hearts are clean from grudges (HR. Ahmad, no. 12697) (Ahmad bin hambal, n.d.), strengthen the narrative of morality that Buya upholds.

The solutions offered are not legalistic, but rather Sufistic and applicable. Buya invites people to be selective in their relationships, start their activities with worship, straighten their intentions in social relations, and make Ramadan a momentum for spiritual awakening. Purification of the heart, control of the tongue, and the attitude of forgiving and repaying evil with prayers and gifts are positioned as the highest form of da'wah spirituality. Al (Ghozali, n.d.) in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* asserts that noble morals and control of passions are the core of a da'i's success. Thus, the values that Buya framed not only function as moral guidelines, but also as a da'wah strategy that touches the inner dimensions of the people, in line with transformative Sufistic teachings.

Thus, Buya Yahya's da'wah framing builds a spiritual-social narrative that positions inner transformation as the root of social change. He does not prioritize a judgmental approach, but rather embraces people with love and introspection. Da'wah is presented not as a mere formalistic obligation, but as a project to re-humanize people that touches the spiritual, social and cultural dimensions. This is in line with Entman's framework, which states that framing is able to shape social reality through problem definition, moral judgment, and solution offers rooted in certain values.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that Buya Yahya's da'wah on the Al-Bahjah YouTube channel not only contains verbal and normative Islamic messages, but also forms a complex construction of meaning through symbols, narratives, and emotional expressions. Using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, it is found that each recitation excerpt contains three layers of meaning: denotative (literal), connotative (emotional and cultural), and mythical (ideological). The myths built in Buya Yahya's recitation reflect an inclusive, spiritual, and transformative Islamic ideology-from social selectivity, spiritual preparation before preaching, to the ethics of commenting in the digital space. The eleven excerpts analyzed prove that Buya Yahya does not merely convey teachings, but also designs a landscape of meaning that shapes the collective awareness of Muslims towards the values of goodness and deep humanity.

These findings have important implications, both for the study of da'wah science, the practice of digital da'wah, and the development of Islamic communication education curriculum. The semiotic approach proves to be relevant for reading da'wah communication strategies that not only convey religious information, but also shape the ideology and moral awareness of the people. For preachers and digital da'wah activists, this research suggests the importance of designing messages that are not only precise in content, but also symbolically strong and emotionally touching. For the academic world, this study enriches the methodology

of analyzing new media-based da'wah, while opening space for further research in the context of other digital platforms that are more concise, visual, and interactive such as Instagram and TikTok.

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