

GEN Z: INTUTIONAL BRANDING STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN FOLLOWERS OF THE GENZI STUDY AT AL AKBAR MOSQUE SURABAYA

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the institutional branding strategy implemented by the Gen Z study community at the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya in strengthening the involvement and loyalty of the younger generation to mosque-based da'wah activities. The study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach to explore how the Gen Z community utilizes social media, the selection of popular sources, and institutional support from the Al Akbar Mosque in forming a positive and relevant image for young audiences. The results of the study show that Brand Identity is realized through the use of the Al Akbar Mosque logo, digital pamphlets, and consistent visual documentation on Instagram, creating a strong association with the image of the mosque as a modern da'wah institution. Brand Personality and Brand Association are strengthened by the presence of popular sources, such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki, who are relevant to the younger generation and increase the appeal of the study. In addition, Brand Benefit and Competence are reflected in the unique experiences offered, such as the implementation of the study at dawn, which creates a deep spiritual experience. A consistent institutional branding strategy, including communication through Instagram and WhatsApp groups, builds a responsive Brand Attitude and Behavior and supports the active involvement of young congregants. This study concludes that planned and consistent institutional branding is able to build strong emotional relationships and loyalty of the younger generation to the da'wah community. This strategy is an effective model in the context of digital da'wah and can be adapted by other mosques to build relevant and sustainable relationships in the digital era.

Keywords: Institutional Branding, Digital Da'wah, Generation Z, Al Akbar Mosque Surabaya, Strategy Management

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi branding institusional yang diterapkan oleh komunitas kajian Gen Z di Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya dalam memperkuat keterlibatan dan loyalitas generasi muda terhadap aktivitas dakwah berbasis masjid. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana komunitas Gen Z memanfaatkan media sosial, pemilihan narasumber populer, dan dukungan institusional dari Masjid Al Akbar dalam membentuk citra positif dan relevan bagi audiens muda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Brand Identity diwujudkan melalui penggunaan logo Masjid Al Akbar, pamflet digital, dan dokumentasi visual yang konsisten di Instagram, menciptakan asosiasi yang kuat dengan citra masjid sebagai institusi dakwah modern. Brand Personality dan Brand Association diperkuat dengan kehadiran narasumber populer, seperti Ustadz Hanan Attaki, yang relevan dengan generasi muda dan meningkatkan daya tarik kajian. Selain itu, Brand Benefit and Competence tercermin dari pengalaman unik yang ditawarkan, seperti pelaksanaan kajian di waktu subuh, yang menciptakan pengalaman spiritual mendalam. Strategi branding institusional yang konsisten, termasuk komunikasi melalui Instagram dan grup WhatsApp, membangun Brand Attitude and Behavior yang responsif dan mendukung keterlibatan aktif jamaah muda. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa branding institusional yang terencana dan konsisten mampu membangun hubungan emosional yang kokoh dan loyalitas generasi muda terhadap komunitas dakwah. Strategi ini menjadi model yang efektif dalam konteks dakwah digital dan dapat diadaptasi oleh masjid lain untuk membangun hubungan yang relevan dan berkelanjutan di era digital. Kata Kunci: Branding institusional, Dakwah Digital, Generasi Z, Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya, Manajemen Strategi



INTRODUCTION

Technological advances resulting from the industrial revolution are able to erase the boundaries between distance and time. This progress is marked by a cyber-physical system that unites connectivity between humans, machines and data and other things.¹ This can happen from the industrial revolution, namely the creation of the internet of things (IoT), which is a concept that connects devices as a communication medium based on the internet, which has a big influence on all aspects of human life.² According to the results of a survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), it shows that the number of Indonesian Internet users will reach 210 million people in 2022 from a population of 275.77 million people. The data proves that there are changes that have occurred in society that are quite rapid due to technological developments.³

The development of internet technology and the situation that accompanies it influences preaching activities.⁴ There are two elements that play a role in determining the direction of digital-based preaching, namely the ability to master internet technology and understanding messages in this technological era.⁵ The ability of internet technology is the speed of a person in responding to every change quickly and successfully in the internet world. While understanding the message in the era of technology today is how the message of preaching can be conveyed without any misunderstanding in it.⁶ So with this, all creators of da'wah, as well as places of da'wah must follow the developing technology, so that da'wah activities can always be relevant at every time.⁷ Also included in the center of preaching, namely the Mosque. One of the vital components in the social structure of Islam is the mosque, because of its very important role in spreading Islamic teachings.

¹ Farid Abdullah, "Fenomena Digital Era Revolusi Industri 4.0," *Jurnal Dimensi DKV Seni Rupa Dan Desain* 4, no. 1 (2019): 47–58, <https://doi.org/10.25105/jdd.v4i1.4560>.

² Ermeilinda Kartina Sari, "Paradigma Dakwah Di Era Milenial," *Spektra* 2, no. 1 (2020): 46–51, <https://doi.org/10.34005/spektra.v2i1.1538>.

³ Erwan Efendi, Muhammad Raefaldhi, and M. Salman Al Farisi, "Penggunaan Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Berdakwah," *Da'watuna: Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting* 4, no. 1 (2023): 12–20, <https://doi.org/10.47467/dawatuna.v4i1.3218>.

⁴ Ali Amran, "Dakwah Dan Perubahan Sosial," *Hikmah* 6, no. 1 (2012): 68–86.

⁵ Adi Wibowo et al., "Penggunaan Media Sosial Sebagai Trend Media Dakwah Pendidikan Islam Di Era Digital," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 03, no. 02 (2019): 339–56.

⁶ Reza Pahlevi, "Strategi Dakwah Digital Habib Husein Ja'far Al-Hadar," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Humaniora Dan Seni (JISHS)* 1, no. 2 (2023): 141–51.

⁷ Athok Murtadlo, "Kharisma Pendakwah Sebagai Komunikator," *Jurnal Spektrum Komunikasi* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.37826/spektrum.v7i1.24>.

The mosque is also the main center of preaching that directly interacts with Muslims. Even during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, it was the center of all civilization and activities starting.⁸ The mosque will not be able to operate if it does not have good management.

Management is a process in which a person can organize activities carried out by individuals or groups to achieve previously set goals or organizations by utilizing the cooperation of others. Thus, management can be interpreted as a process in achieving previously set goals or organizations. Of the many managements, there is one called Branding management. Branding is the process of building and managing brand image and identity, including visual elements, values, and associations that you want to convey to consumers. So Branding Management is a process of individuals, groups, or organizations in achieving a predetermined goal or organization by introducing something or a product to the public. Branding Management is a series of activities carried out to manage and build the image of a brand or Brand so that it can be recognized, remembered, and identified well by the public.⁹ The effectiveness of Branding management can contribute significantly to the success of a business, because a strong brand image can influence consumer perception, customer loyalty and purchasing decisions. Actually, this Branding management is already known, in business it usually involves more strategies and tactics to build, manage, and improve brand image in order to achieve the desired business goals.¹⁰ In the world of education, such as in the branding of private schools in facing a tight market. Especially in today's era, branding can be done anywhere, and anytime.¹¹ By using the right strategy, branding can be created through the internet. Just as branding management can be included in business or education. This branding management can also be included in mosques. Mosque branding management involves strategies and efforts to build a strong, positive, and relevant image and identity for the Muslim community and other communities. Mosque branding management is not only about image, but also about building strong relationships with the congregation and the surrounding community, as well as making positive contributions to the lives of the community.

Branding management that is often used is brand image management, which according to Keller and Keller¹² is the perception and belief by consumers, as reflected by associations embedded in the customer's memory, which are always remembered first when hearing a slogan and embedded

⁸ Laksmi Kusuma Wardani and Arinta Prilla Gustinantari, "Penerapan Elemen Hias Pada Interior Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya," *Dimensi Interior* 6, no. 2 (2008).

⁹ Husnan Nurjuman et al., "Personal Branding Da'i Muhammadiyah: Studi Komparatif Pada Ustadz Alfian Tanjung Dan Ustadz Muhammad Ziyad," *Derivatif: Jurnal Manajemen* 16, no. 1 (2022): 184–93.

¹⁰ Bocca Della Verita, Poppy Febriana, and Ainur Rochmaniah, "Pendampingan Branding UMKM Makanan Ringan Melalui Pengelolaan Media Sosial," n.d., 29–35.

¹¹ Najmy Hanifah and Istikomah Istikomah, "Branding Sekolah Swasta Dalam Menghadapi Kebijakan Zonasi," *Idaarah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 6, no. 2 (2022): 274–86, <https://doi.org/10.24252/idaarah.v6i2.32759>.

¹² Keller Kolter Philip and Kevin Lane, *Manajemen Pemasaran Edisi 12* (PT Macanan Jaya cemerlang, 2009).

in the minds of consumers. According to Tjiptono, brand image is a description of consumer associations and beliefs towards a particular brand. Brand image is the observation and belief held by consumers, while according to Raslina,¹³ Brand Image is a collection of brand associations that are formed and attached to the minds of consumers. According to Keller¹⁴ The main dimensions that form a brand image are contained in 4 things, namely brand identity, brand personality, brand association, brand attitude and behavior, brand benefits and advantages. So the components that form a brand image depend on the fulfillment of the needs of the above sections. This theory is not only used as an item or a production. But it can also be used as a management of an activity such as activities in the mosque.

The mosque is a place to seek knowledge recommended by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, in fact the beginning of Islamic civilization originated from the mosque.¹⁵ A mosque is a place where Muslims gather and perform prayers in congregation, with the main aim of strengthening solidarity and fostering friendship among them.¹⁶ From a theoretical and conceptual perspective, the mosque is considered the center of Islamic culture, the place where Islamic preaching begins, covering worldly and hereafter aspects, both material and spiritual. The mosque has a very important role in preaching because it is a spiritual foothold that supports the worldly life of the people.¹⁷ One of the mosques that continues to make progress in preaching that follows the development of the times is the Al Akbar National Mosque in Surabaya. This mosque, located in the center of Surabaya, is one of the mosques that is a reference and role model for mosques in the surrounding area, and is a source of pride for Muslims there, because its location is very strategic and is the center of the development of Islam in the future.¹⁸ This mosque has many da'wah development programs starting from book recitations which are held every Tuesday, general studies every Wednesday, and special studies on Sundays, and empowerment programs such as age-

¹³ Roslina, "Citra Merek : Dimensi, Proses Pengembangan Serta Pengukurannya," *Jurnal Bisnis Dan Manajemen* 6, no. 3 (2010).

¹⁴ Kevin Lane Keller, *Strategic Brand Management : Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2013.

¹⁵ Moh Arifin and Sahoria, "Revitalisasi Masjid Sebagai Pusat Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Ummat Di Surabaya," *Ulumuna: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 8, no. 2 (2022): 269–83.

¹⁶ Nuriyanto Lilam Kadarin, "The Effect of Masjid Management on People Empowerment in Surabaya City Pengaruh Pengelolaan Masjid Terhadap Pemberdayaan Umat Di Kota Surabaya," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 11, no. IV (2018): 749–82.

¹⁷ K Akbar and K P Lamadang, "Pengelolaan Masjid Sebagai Pusat Pengembangan Budaya Islam Melalui Manajerial Guru Pai Di Sma Negeri 1 Masama," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Dan Sosial ...* 2, no. 3 (2023): 529–38.

¹⁸ Faiz Alan Fahmi and A.Syifa'ul Qulub, "Pelaksanaan Fungsi Manajemen (Planning, Organizing, Actualizing, Controlling) Pada Manajmeen Masjid Al-Akbar Surabaya," *Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah Teori Dan Terapan* 4, no. 12 (2017): 968, <https://doi.org/10.20473/vol4iss201712pp968-976>.

appropriate recitations, Al-Quran learning recitations and many more.¹⁹ Al Akbar National Mosque Surabaya recently launched a program that is very relevant to today's youth, namely MSG or Majelis Subuh Genzi. The author's observation results are that the Majelis Subuh Genzi has succeeded in attracting the interest of young people. As during the study of Ustadz Syam Elmarusy in December 2023. because seeing the interest of young people to participate in the program routinely which is held once a month, the researcher was finally interested in researching the Branding management of the Genzi study at the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya. Because in addition to being a center for preaching, this Majelis Subuh Genzi is a center for developing young people to channel their talents. Genzi is the term for generation Z. Quoting from the Central Statistics Agency of Indonesia which groups the Indonesian population into six generations, namely Post Generation Z (Post Gen Z), Generation Z (Gen Z) (1997-2012), Millennials (1981-1996), Generation X (Gen X) (1965-1980), Baby Boomer (1946-1964), and Pre Boomer (Born Before 1945). The term for generation Z or known as iGen or the Internet Generation. A generation born in an established digital era. Those who grew up with smartphones, social media, and the Internet that intersect in daily activities.²⁰

Previous research conducted by Lalu Adam Zikrullah highlighted the importance of studies conducted in mosques, especially at the Hubbul Wathan Islamic Center Grand Mosque from NTB. They applied management principles in their study programs, such as planning before implementation, organizing tasks between related fields, implementing according to plan, and evaluating activities. The purpose of implementing this management is to facilitate and meet the needs of the community related to religious knowledge. With the support of the local government, mosques can be more optimal in implementing these programs.²¹ Management makes everything look clearer and more organized, while in another study, namely by Aleq Dinillah and Muhammad Al faith, which explains the management of Islamic boarding schools in managing agribusiness-based entrepreneurship at the Attanwir Jember Islamic boarding school, where the management of Islamic boarding schools in managing agribusiness-based entrepreneurship consists of several aspects, namely Curriculum management, management of facilities and infrastructure, and other management. However, the most important thing is Branding management, which carries out Branding for its coffee business by using Brand identity, namely the coffee boarding school which

¹⁹ Uun Dwi Al Muddatstsir, Dessy Noor Farida, and Early Ridho Kismawadi, "Praktik Akuntabilitas Masjid: Studi Kasus Pada Masjid Al-Akbar Surabaya," *Economica: Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 9, no. 2 (December 1, 2018): 207–31, <https://doi.org/10.21580/economica.2018.9.2.2350>.

²⁰ Siti Mutmainah, "Kompetensi Pendakwah Gen Z Di Jawa Timur" (Universitas Islam Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2022).

²¹ Lalu Adam Zikrullah, "Manajemen Program Kajian Masjid Raya Hubbul Wathan Islamic Center Nusa Tenggara Barat," *Mudabbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 4, no. 1 (2023): 400–415, <https://doi.org/10.20414/mudabbir.v4i1.7775>.

makes it better known to the wider community.²² Then there is a study presented by Makmur Syukri and Vena Annisa Harahap which explains that Branding Management also helps in Introduction in the realm of education, which is better known now as Islamic school branding, which is an effort to build a school image as an educational institution that has strong Islamic values. The branding strategy carried out starts from curriculum development, development of extracurricular activities, development of facilities and infrastructure, and development of Islamic school culture which are displayed through social media and the internet so that they are better known by the wider community.²³

Based on the description above, there are several research gaps that can be explored further to deepen understanding regarding branding management of Al Akbar Mosque Surabaya, especially in attracting the interest of generation Z through Majelis Subuh Genzi activities. First, although this study focuses on branding strategies to attract the attention of the younger generation, the analysis of the long-term effectiveness of the strategy has not been discussed. It is important to know whether this branding is able to maintain the loyalty of young congregants in the longer term, or is only effective in the short term. Second, although social media, especially Instagram, is actively used in promotions, this study has not explored the types of content or social media formats that are most effective in increasing congregation engagement. Content in the form of videos, infographics, or live streaming may have varying effectiveness in attracting the interest of the younger generation. Further research can explore what types of content are most effective in maximizing the interaction and interest of young congregants.

Furthermore, this study focuses on the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya without comparing it with other mosques that have digital da'wah programs for the younger generation. Comparative analysis with other mosques, both in Indonesia and abroad, can identify best practices that may be adopted to strengthen the branding strategy of the Al Akbar Mosque. In addition, the current study focuses more on the Majelis Subuh Genzi as the main attraction for generation Z, without examining other programs or activities that may also have an influence in attracting young congregants. Further research can explore whether there are other programs outside the Majelis Subuh Genzi that also support the success of mosque branding in reaching the younger generation.

Another research gap is a more in-depth analysis related to the community's response to the time of the study which is conducted at dawn. Dawn time may be a challenge for some young worshipers who are not used to waking up early. Additional research could explore how this time

²² A Dinillah and M Al-Fatih, "Manajemen Pondok Pesantren Dalam Pengelolaan Wirausaha Berbasis Agrobisnis Di Pondok Pesantren Attanwir Jember," *Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Dan Bisnis* ... 1, no. 3 (2024): 14.

²³ M Syukri and V A Harahap, "Sekolah/Madrasah Bertaraf (Branding): Islami, Boarding School, Dan Terpadu," *Journal on Education* 06, no. 02 (2024): 11711–20.

of implementation affects their interest and engagement, and whether there are alternatives or solutions to overcome this obstacle. Finally, brand identity is mentioned as an important element in attracting the attention of the younger generation, but it has not been discussed how this element can shape the long-term loyalty of the congregation. Further research could explore how visual identity and other branding elements contribute to retaining the congregation to continue following the mosque's programs in the long term. Filling these research gaps will provide more comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of the Al Akbar Mosque branding strategy in attracting and maintaining the interest of the younger generation, while improving the quality of da'wah programs that are relevant to technological developments. So that the study aims to analyze the Al Akbar Mosque Branding Strategy in Attracting Gen Z's Interest in the Genzi Subuh Assembly Activities.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research with a case study approach. The research method involves exploring and interpreting the meaning of individual and group behavior, and providing an overview of social or humanitarian problems.²⁴ Data collection was conducted through observation at the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya, with the aim of understanding the essential phenomena in the participants' life experiences. Data collection instruments included interviews with the Head of the Genzi Akbar Community, Maulana Azka EL Fata, and one attendee of the GENZI Subuh Assembly, and documentation from YouTube on the Al Akbar Mosque TV Channel, and social media, namely the GENZI Subuh Assembly Instagram. Data analysis using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model involves four main interrelated steps, namely data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. First, researchers collect data through various methods such as interviews and observations. After that, the collected data is condensed to filter and simplify the information into a more concise and focused form. Furthermore, the condensed data is presented in an easy-to-understand format, such as a table or graph, to facilitate analysis. Finally, researchers draw conclusions from the analysis and verify to ensure the accuracy of the findings. This process is interactive, allowing researchers to return to previous steps to make adjustments based on new findings that emerge during the analysis.²⁵

²⁴ Kaharuddin Kaharuddin, "Kualitatif: Ciri Dan Karakter Sebagai Metodologi," *Equilibrium: Jurnal Pendidikan* 9, no. 1 (2020): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.26618/equilibrium.v9i1.4489>.

²⁵ Suryana Ahmad, *Metode Penelitian Metode Penelitian, Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*, vol. 3, 2017.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research result

Akbar Maulana Azka El Fata, head of the Gen Z volunteer community at the Al Akbar Mosque, explained that the community was established in May 2024, with the main aim of inviting the younger generation of Muslims to be more active in religious activities at the mosque. The establishment of this community began with the Qiyamul Lail activity held during the month of Ramadan 2023. The activity received very high enthusiasm from teenagers, so the Al Akbar Mosque decided to form a special study community for the younger generation called "Gen Z." Akbar added that one of the branding strategies implemented by this community is the use of social media, especially Instagram, as a platform to promote study activities and bring in speakers who are of interest to the younger generation. Akbar also mentioned that this community has a WhatsApp group and an online form to facilitate registration and monitoring of the number of participants in each event. With this strategy, the number of participants continues to increase, which shows the effectiveness of the social media-based approach in attracting the attention of young congregants.

Another aspect that is a concern in Gen Z community branding is the selection of speakers. According to Akbar, this community strives to present ustadz or religious figures who are popular among the younger generation, such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki and other figures who have an appeal to teenagers. Akbar emphasized that presenting religious figures who are widely known by young people not only attracts new congregations but also provides added value because the congregation feels more connected and interested in studying the da'wah material. Akbar said that the activities of this community are packaged in a relaxed but serious atmosphere, so that participants feel comfortable and interested in continuing to participate in da'wah activities that are relevant to their lives. Akbar also acknowledged the challenge in maintaining follower loyalty, especially in the digital era where more and more da'wah activities are available online. One of the efforts made by the community is to consistently present routine activities such as training and motivational studies, which strengthen togetherness among community members.

On the other hand, Roghib, a student and one of the congregations who actively participates in the Gen Z study, shared his experiences and views as a participant. Roghib admitted that he found out about this study through the Al Akbar Mosque Instagram account and from a friend who is involved in the management of the Gen Z community. As a congregation, Roghib was interested in participating in this study because the speakers were religious figures who were popular on social media and were popular among young people. Roghib said that the euphoria of participating in the study directly at the Al Akbar Mosque was in accordance with what he had imagined when he saw the promotion on social media. According to him, the presence of figures who were relevant to the

younger generation was the main attraction that made the event crowded. Roghib also considered that this event succeeded in attracting the attention of young people, not only because of the theme of the study, but also because of the opportunity to meet and interact with figures they idolize. He admitted that initially many young congregations came because they were curious to meet the speakers, but over time they felt comfortable with the atmosphere of the study and continued to participate in other activities.

When asked about the implementation time of the study which started at dawn, Roghib explained that the dawn time actually provided a positive challenge for young people, especially those who usually wake up late or go back to sleep after dawn. With this study, the participants felt encouraged to start the day with useful activities. Roghib also said that the morning atmosphere made this activity more memorable and provided a different spiritual experience. However, he also realized that the morning implementation time might be an obstacle for some of the congregation who have other activities or live far from the mosque. Personally, Roghib felt that the dawn time was appropriate because it helped build new, more positive habits among the younger generation.

Regarding promotion, Roghib believes that Gen Z community branding can be more effective if it adopts more dynamic promotion trends on social media, such as the use of parody videos or other creative content that suits young people's preferences. He feels that current promotions are still too formal, such as only uploading event flyers on Instagram Stories or feeds. According to him, promotions that are more creative and relevant to youth trends can attract wider attention, for example if they are included in TikTok recommendations or For You Page (FYP). Roghib also highlighted the importance of consistency in inviting popular figures to continue to attract young people's interest in participating in this study.

Overall, the interview results show that the Branding strategy implemented by the Gen Z community at Al Akbar Mosque has been effective in attracting the attention of the younger generation. The use of social media, the selection of popular speakers, and a relaxed but in-depth study atmosphere are considered capable of building loyalty among young congregants. However, suggestions for improving Branding, especially in more creative and interactive promotion methods, remain valuable input to maintain and expand the reach of this community in the future.

In the observations carried out by the researcher, it was seen that there was documentation on the YouTube of the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya, as shown in the image below;

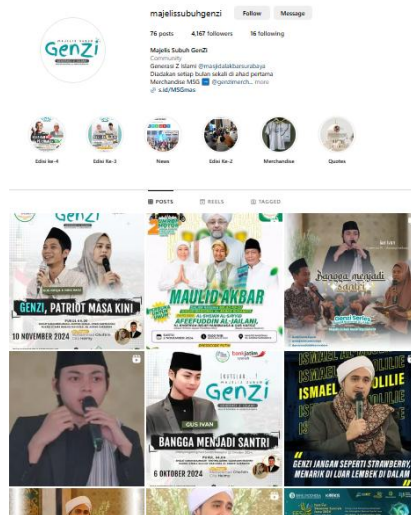
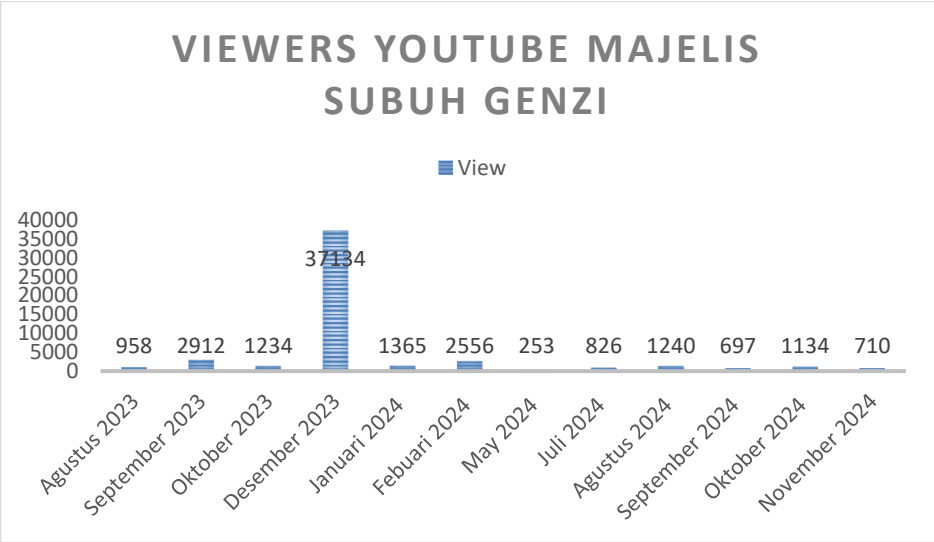


Image 1: Instagram of Majelis Subuh Genzi



Figure 2: Documentation via Youtube: Masjid Al Akbar TV

The observation results show that the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya pays special attention to service and interaction in attracting the congregation, especially the younger generation. A friendly welcome and comfortable facilities are provided to create a positive experience for the study participants. Although the time of the activity carried out at dawn is quite challenging for the habits of young people, the mosque tries to make the congregation feel comfortable and encouraged to come back. In addition, the mosque actively utilizes social media, especially Instagram, as the main platform for event promotion. Through regular posts, attractive visual uploads such as event pamphlets, and study schedule information distributed on Instagram Stories and feeds, the mosque has succeeded in creating close interactions with young congregations. The selection of popular speakers, such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki who is widely known among the younger generation, is a special attraction that maintains the congregation's interest in da'wah activities. Not only that, these activities are packaged in a relaxed but serious atmosphere, so that religious values are still conveyed well. This approach makes the congregation feel comfortable and relevant, making this da'wah activity more interesting and inspiring for their lives. Then those who are far away can see through the rebroadcast uploaded through the Masjid Al Akbar TV youtube. This is also used for documentation through the youtube and Instagram of this community.



Graph 1: Maje's Youtube Viewers

The documentation results show in Graph 1 "YouTube Viewers Majelis Subuh Genzi" shows the number of viewers of the Majelis Subuh Genzi activity video on the Al Akbar Mosque Surabaya YouTube channel from August 2023 to November 2024. There was a significant increase in the number of viewers in December 2023, reaching a peak of around 37,834 views. In other months, the number of viewers was much lower, with numbers around 958 in August 2023, 2912 in October 2023, 1234 in December 2023, and 1365 in January 2024. After the peak in December 2023, the number of views fell again and varied, ranging from 710 to 2555 views in the following months. This trend indicates high interest in certain periods, possibly related to interesting topics or speakers in that month. Overall, this YouTube activity helps spread da'wah but shows a dependence on specific factors that attract wider audience interest. In December 2023, it showed an increase because the speaker was Ustadz Syam, who in addition to having many congregations coming, also many did live broadcasts. This also explains Figure 1 and Figure 2 which show the community's activeness in building a brand image in this digital era.

The results of the study show that creative da'wah activities carried out by Majelis Subuh Genzi have a significant influence on the formation of a positive brand image. This can be seen from the data in Graph 1: Viewers YouTube Majelis Subuh Genzi, which recorded a spike in the number of viewers to 37,734 viewers in January 2024. Compared to previous months, where the number of viewers ranged from 253 to 2,556 viewers, this increase reflects the success of the digital strategy implemented. Majelis Subuh Genzi utilizes a creative da'wah approach through visual content that is relevant to the younger generation and the use of the YouTube platform as the main media to spread da'wah messages.

This success illustrates that interesting and inspiring content can increase public trust in Majelis Subuh Genzi. This surge in viewers also strengthens the positive perception that Majelis

Subuh Genzi is not only a da'wah community, but also a source of relevant spiritual inspiration in the digital era. Comments and feedback from viewers show that the uploaded videos can have a positive impact on the spiritual life of the younger generation, making the brand image of Majelis Subuh Genzi stronger and more trusted.

Overall, this innovative da'wah activity has succeeded in raising public awareness of Majelis Subuh Genzi, while strengthening its reputation as a community that is relevant to the spiritual needs of the younger generation. To maintain this momentum, it is recommended that Majelis Subuh Genzi continue to optimize the use of social media such as Instagram and TikTok, maintain consistency in content quality, and increase interaction with the audience through live streaming features or Q&A sessions. This strategy is expected to continue to strengthen the brand image of Majelis Subuh Genzi and reach a wider audience.

Discussion

A strong and effective branding strategy can strengthen the position of an organization or community in the minds of the public and encourage emotional attachment and loyalty of followers, especially in the context of religious organizations in the digital era. In this case, the branding approach taken by the Gen Z community at the Al Akbar Mosque includes visual identity, values, and experiences that are relevant to the younger generation, in line with the main dimensions of Brand Image introduced by Keller.²⁶



Figure 3: Brand Image Components.

²⁶ Bambang Sukma Wijaya, "Dimensions Of Brand Image : A Conceptual Review From The Perspective Of Brand Communication," *European Journal of Business and Management* 5, no. 31 (2013): 107–14, <https://doi.org/10.13140/ejbm.2013.55.65>.

1. Visual Identity and Uniqueness of Gen Z Study (Brand Identity)

According to Keller's Brand Image theory, visual identity is one of the important elements that makes a brand or organization easily recognizable by the audience.²⁷ In the context of the Gen Z study at Al Akbar Mosque, visual identity is manifested through the use of the Al Akbar Mosque logo and the use of social media, especially Instagram, to strengthen the community's image. On the Instagram platform, this community consistently displays distinctive visuals, such as event pamphlets, study photos, and Instagram Stories, which directly associate them with the famous national mosque. This strengthens the image of the mosque as a relevant and modern da'wah center among young people.

Using consistent visuals through social media helps create a community image that is close to the younger generation. Keller's Brand Image Theory suggests that consistency in visual elements plays an important role in shaping audience memory. In this case, the use of logos and attractive visual content can create a positive perception and help Gen Z studies become more easily recognized and remembered by their followers.

2. Brand Personality and Brand Association: Popular Sources as Added Value (Brand Personality and Brand Association)

Keller also highlighted that brand personality and associations,²⁸ namely the characteristics or values perceived by the audience, play a significant role in strengthening Brand Image.²⁹ In the Gen Z study of Al Akbar Mosque, the presence of popular speakers such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki and other figures who are popular with young people is part of the personality and association of this community. The selection of relevant speakers helps create the image that this study is not only a religious event, but also a forum that understands and resonates with the interests of the younger generation.

In an interview with Akbar Maulana Azka El Fata, the head of the Gen Z community, it was stated that one of the biggest attractions of this event is the famous figures who are relevant to the younger generation. The selection of these figures is in accordance with Keller's theory which states that strong positive associations will form positive perceptions in the audience. Thus, the presence of popular speakers adds to the appeal and enhances the positive image of the Gen Z study as a relevant, inspiring, and youth-interested da'wah community.

²⁷ Manuel Escobar-Farfán, Amparo Cervera-Taulet, and Walesska Schlesinger, "Destination Brand Identity: Challenges, Opportunities, and Future Research Agenda," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2302803>.

²⁸ Christilene du Plessis, Serena D'Hooge, and Steven Sweldens, "The Science of Creating Brand Associations: A Continuous Trinity Model Linking Brand Associations to Learning Processes," *Journal of Consumer Research* 51, no. 1 (2024): 29–41, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucad046>.

²⁹ Rana M. Zaki and Reham I. Elseidi, "Religiosity and Purchase Intention: An Islamic Apparel Brand Personality Perspective," *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 15, no. 2 (2024): 361–96, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-09-2022-0257>.

3. Brand Benefits and Competence: A Pleasant and Memorable Study Experience (Brand Benefit and Competence)

Keller argues that brand benefits and advantages are important components of Brand Image, which includes the benefits that the audience gets from a product or service. In the context of the Gen Z study, these benefits and advantages are seen in the unique experiences offered,³⁰ such as conducting studies at dawn. This time is designed to provide positive challenges and create different experiences from daily activities, especially for young people who are used to waking up late.

According to an interview with Roghib, a congregation member who actively participates in the Gen Z study, the study time at dawn provides a deep spiritual experience and encourages participants to start the day with useful activities. According to Keller's theory, this positive experience can form a strong memory in the minds of the audience, so that they are more likely to return to participate in similar activities in the future. Thus, the unique choice of time is one of the advantages of this community and has succeeded in creating a memorable experience that strengthens the image of the Gen Z study.

4. Consistency in Communication and Interaction through Social Media (Brand Attitude and Behavior)

According to Keller, consistency in communication and interaction is a key element in building a strong brand image and forming audience loyalty. In the case of the Gen Z community of Al Akbar Mosque, this consistency is realized through the use of social media, such as Instagram and WhatsApp groups, as the main communication channels. Through Instagram, this community routinely shares digital pamphlets, event announcements, photo and video documentation of studies, and interactive promotions such as Instagram Stories. This ensures that the congregation always gets the latest information about activities, which ultimately creates a strong relationship between the community and the audience.

The success of this strategy is reflected in the data in Graph 1: Majelis Subuh Genzi YouTube Viewers, which shows a significant increase in the number of viewers in December 2023, reaching 37,734 viewers. Previously, the number of viewers was relatively low, such as 958 viewers in August 2023 and 2,912 viewers in October 2023. This trend indicates that consistency in communication helps increase audience awareness of community activities, especially when there are interesting speakers or relevant study topics.

³⁰ Jane Allyn Piliavin and Hong-Wen Charng, "Altruism: A Review of Recent Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Sociology* 16, no. 1 (August 1990): 27–65, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.000331>.

In addition, the use of WhatsApp groups is also an important means to maintain more personal and intensive communication with the congregation. This group is not only used to convey event information, but also as a discussion and interaction space between administrators and participants. This two-way communication creates a deeper sense of involvement, which according to Keller's theory can strengthen loyalty and increase positive perceptions of the organization.

However, the data also shows that the number of viewers has decreased again after its peak in December 2023, to 1,365 viewers in February 2024 and ranging from 697 to 2,555 viewers in the following months. This decline shows that consistency in communication still needs to be improved, especially in terms of content innovation and promotion. Input from the congregation, as conveyed by Roghib, highlights the need for a more creative approach, such as using short videos with elements of humor or current social media trends, such as TikTok or Instagram Reels.

By maintaining consistent communication through social media accompanied by innovation in promotional content, the Gen Z community can maintain the interest of the congregation and continue to increase audience reach. The graphical data shows that this strategy has great potential to create sustainability in congregation engagement and strengthen the community's brand image as a relevant, responsive, and creative organization in the digital era.

5. Evaluation and Improvement of Brand Image Based on Congregation Feedback

As an evaluation step, Roghib provided input that the promotion of Gen Z studies could be more dynamic and creative, for example by using parody videos or content that is in line with youth trends to attract wider attention on platforms such as TikTok. According to Keller, to maintain the relevance of Brand Image, organizations must be flexible in adjusting their strategies to the needs and preferences of evolving audiences. By paying attention to congregation feedback and improving promotional methods, Gen Z studies can continue to strengthen Brand Image as a community that focuses on the spiritual and social needs of the younger generation in the digital era.³¹

Overall, this discussion shows that the Gen Z study's branding strategy at the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya is in accordance with the main dimensions of Keller's Brand Image theory, namely visual identity, personality, association, benefits, and consistency. By implementing these elements, the Gen Z study community has succeeded in building a positive image as a center for da'wah that is relevant, inspiring, and close to the younger generation. Visual aspects,

³¹ Nasrullah Nursam, "Manajemen Kinerja," *Kelola: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 2, no. 2 (2017): 167–75, <https://doi.org/10.24256/kelola.v2i2.438>.

popular sources, memorable experiences, consistent interactions, and continuous improvement based on congregation feedback strengthen the position of this community as a modern da'wah organization that is in accordance with the needs of the times.

CONCLUSION

Based on Keller's Brand Image theory, the branding strategy of the Gen Z community at the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya has succeeded in building a positive image through the application of five main elements: Brand Identity, Brand Personality, Brand Association, Brand Benefit and Competence, and Brand Attitude and Behavior. The visual identity of this community is strengthened through the consistent use of the Al Akbar Mosque logo, event flyers, and creative content on social media, especially Instagram, which creates a strong association with the image of the mosque as a modern and relevant center of da'wah. Brand personality is highlighted through the presence of popular speakers such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki, who provide their own appeal to the younger generation and strengthen the impression that this community is relevant and follows current trends. In addition, brand associations are built through unique experiences, such as conducting studies at dawn, which provide a deep spiritual impression while encouraging positive habits.

The benefits and advantages of this community also lie in their ability to create memorable and relevant da'wah experiences to the needs of young people. This community utilizes social media as a consistent communication tool, not only to provide information but also to maintain active relationships with the congregation. Thus, the Gen Z community demonstrates the ability to build a responsive and adaptive brand attitude to the needs of its audience. However, evaluations from the congregation show that innovation in promotion through more creative and dynamic content, such as short videos on TikTok, can further increase the effectiveness of branding strategies.

Overall, the branding strategy of the Gen Z community at Al Akbar Mosque has succeeded in creating a positive, relevant, and attractive image for the younger generation. By adopting a branding approach based on Keller's theory, this community is able to answer the challenges of preaching in the digital era while creating strong congregation loyalty. For sustainability, promotional innovation and evaluation of congregation feedback must continue to be carried out so that this community remains relevant and reaches a wider audience in the future.

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