The Rise of New Santri on Instagram @santridesign: Community Branding and Mainstreaming of Moderate Da'wah

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Abstract

The consequences of the development of communication technology and the information society in Indonesia made to a new concept in the form of New Santri. This study aims to see the New Santri movement in Santri Design Community (SDC) on Instagram @santridesign through community branding and moderate da’wah content. The research method used a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observations and documentation, data analysis techniques using community branding theory, content analysis and qualitative data analysis techniques in the form of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The result of the study was that Santri Design Community (SDC) carried out community branding by using maintaining good relations between customers and products (Customer-Product Relationship) through consistency in creating creative content and building community networks through the madrasah design and regional chapters. Santri Design Community (SDC) has mainstreamed moderate da’wah through containing ulama quotes, biography of Ulama, commemoration of Great Day Islam, challenge and sharing designs.

Keywords: New Santri; Instagram; @santridesign; community branding; moderate da’wah

Abstrak

Konsekwensi dari perkembangan teknologi komunikasi dan masyarakat informasi di Indonesia melahirkan konsep baru berupa New Santri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat gerakan New Santri dalam Santri Design Community (SDC) di Instagram @santridesign melalui branding komunitas dan isi konten da’wah moderat. Metode penelitian yang digunakan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi, teknik analisis data menggunakan teori community branding, content analysis dan teknik analisis data kualitatif berupa reduksi data, penayangan data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian adalah Santri Design Community (SDC) melakukan community branding dengan menggunakan menjaga hubungan baik antara pelanggan dan produk (Customer-Product Relationship) melalui konsistensi dalam menciptakan konten kreatif dan membangun jaringan komunitas melalui desain madrasah dan chapter wilayah. Santri Design Community (SDC) telah mengarusutamakan da’wah moderat melalui konten yang berisi kutipan ulama, biografi Ulama, peringatan hari besar Islam, perlombaan, dan berbagi desain.

Kata Kunci: New Santri; Instagram; @santridesign; brand komunitas; da’wah moderat

Introduction

The concept of santri is no longer understood as someone who is studying in a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) nurtured by kiai, but now penetrates the concept of new santri (pious individuals). The concept of new santri is a redefinition of challenges in religious authority that come into contact with social media and the information society (Norshahril
Saat & Burhani, 2020). New santri can be understood as the one who adopts Islam as his or her religion and makes Islamic values central to his or her life and responds to the times especially on new media by maintaining the distinctive religious character of pesantren.

The roots of the New Santri Movement in Indonesia come from the santri encounter with popular culture and the development of communication technology in Indonesia. This is evidenced by the existence of the pesantren literary movement in the 1990s. Pesantren literature is a literary work written by students or works themed pesantren. The form of pesantren literature can be poetry or novel. Pesantren literature figures include 1960s generation; Djamal Suherman, the next generations are in the 1970s Mathori A. Elwa, Hamdi Salad, Nasruddin Anshory, Kuswaidi Syafi’i, and Abidah El Khalieqy (Muniroch, 2014). The new santri movement in Indonesia then penetrated film and television in the 2000s (Heryanto, 2015; Marwantika, 2019; Rakhmani, 2014). 3 Doa 3 Cinta in 2008, became the first Indonesian Film to be directed by a santri filmmaker, the film marked a rise in the cinematic santri among the pesantren people. It refers to a substantial segment of younger generation of santri who recently began to organize various forms of cinematic practices, such as film making, film screening, film workshops, and film discussions across the santri communities (Huda, 2020). The development of a new santri movement from popular culture or known as popular Islam which is strengthened by the mass media then shifted to online media and social media in the 2010s.

The new santri movement shifted following the development of the media and changes in the media audience environment. In the 2000s, websites became the choice to access information and spread Islamic messages or da’wah. One of the reasons for the use of websites by santri is as a means to prevent radicalism, terrorism and transnational Islamic issues (Ahyar, 2017; Akmaliah, 2020). In this period websites containing Islamic content were dominated by radicalism and terrorism movements such as arrahmah.com, voa-islam.com, ghur4ba.blogspot.com, panjimas.com, thoriqua.com, dakwatura.com, kafilahmujahid.com, an-najah.net. From among moderate Islam then also counter-narrative through antiradicalism, anti-terrorism, Islamic moderate and peaceful Islamic movements on websites such as nu.or.id, muhammadiah.or.id, and also develop websites that carry a peaceful Islam. From the 2010s until now the new santri movement was amplified by social media. Social media has characteristics in the form of user-generated content, interactivity, and archiving (Nasrullah, 2016) used as a movement for creative da’wah (Nisa, 2018), contestation of ideology or Islamic discourse through hashtags (Hidayah & Mukhlison, 2020; Rohmatulloh & Marwantika, 2021), or the formation of Islamic group identity (Chakim, 2022; Rahman et al., 2021).

The focus of this research is new santri movements on Instagram. Instagram is a social media that send photos and videos on the internet network instantly and quickly. Instagram includes a visual culture that amplifies religious content and da’wah. The use of Instagram according to Data Digital Report Indonesia 2022, the number of Instagram users in Indonesia 2022 amounted to 99.15 million people, in 2021 it was 85 million people. There is an increase of 14.15 million Instagram users in Indonesia. The percentage of Instagram
users is female at 52.3%, while the percentage of Instagram users is male at 47.7% (Global Digital Report, 2022).

Instagram is a social media used by santri has three characteristics First, as an additional skill through graphic design capabilities in this digital era (Muktafa & Marwantika, 2022). Second, as a santri movement in counter-narrative against radicalism like cyber warrior volunteers are being trained by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Volunteers are taught photo and video-editing skills and are taught how to optimize posts for Instagram. Most cyber warrior accounts publicly state their NU affiliation on their profile, while others do not claim any formal affiliation, but their content often explicitly promotes NU and Islam (Schmidt, 2021). Most followed cyberwarrior on Instagram accounts like @ikwanrembang 416.000 followers, @ala_nu 701.000 followers and @ansor_jatim 214.000 followers. Third, as an expression of activities and santri identity that is seen on Instagram accounts such as @santrisolehah 320.000 followers, @santridaily 296.000 followers, @ala_santri 274.000 followers, @santri.online 268.000 followers, @santrigayengco 227.000 followers, and @duniasantri 169.000 followers.

The use of Instagram by santri is categorized into three: Instagram as a skill to learn graphic design, Instagram as a counter narrative media of the Islamic radicalism movement, and Instagram as an expression of activities & santri identity. Unlike the other Instagram categorization, @aisnusantara 69.800 followers and @santridesign 47.200 followers has merged all three categories Instagram as a skill to learn graphic design, Instagram as a counter narrative media of the Islamic radicalism movement, and Instagram as an expression of activities & santri identity. Instagram account @aisnusantara is a medium of Arus Informasi Santri (AIS) Nusantara was established since 2016 consisting of santri who have knowledge dan understanding Islamic moderatism. The goal of AIS Nusantara is to prevent Islamic radicalism on social media with actively posts a content of peaceful Islam based on Islam rahmatan lil alamin. For the consolidation of members held activities like Kopi Darat Wilayah and Ngaji Sosial Media (Syahputra, 2020). While Instagram @santridesign is a graphic designer community consisting of santri, were established on December 20, 2016. The goals of Santri Design Community (SDC) is to continue the journey of da'wah ulama, kyai, ustadz with visual culture on social media.

This research focuses on Instagram @santridesign as a new santri movement in the field of design graphic or visual culture by analyzing using community branding and content analytics. This research aims to find out the role of @santridesign as a community of graphic design and mainstreaming da'wah moderate.

Method

Research on the rise of new santri on Instagram @santridesign using a qualitative approach, with descriptive types that describe data or objects @santridesign naturally, and objectively (Kriyantono, 2014). The main data source is the Instagram @santridesign Community feature, by analyzes various views, posts, and also features used from Instagram @santridesign.
Data collection techniques in this study are in the form of interviews, observations and documentation. The interview was conducted to admin Instagram @santridesign namely Dodik Nurcahyo as the chairman of Santri Design Community (SDC) and other @santridesign admins. Observations were made by observing posts on Instagram @santridesign during January-Mei 2022 period. Documentation is done by collecting PrintScreen posts @santridesign, photos, and supporting documents of research. Data analysis of this research using interactive model data analysis techniques by Miles & Huberman; in the form of data reduction, data presentation, and inference (Lestari & Sugiyono, 2021). In addition, researchers analyzed using community branding theory and content analysis.

Result and Discussion

Santri Design Community (SDC) Profile

Santri Design Community (SDC) was initiated by Dodik Nurcahyo, and the initiative of santri such as Abdulloh Hamid, Muhammad Afifi, Syukron Dossy, Ainul, Gus Helmi, and Gus Anwar. Santri Design Community (SDC) was established on Tuesday, December 20, 2016 in Tumpang, Pasuruan, East Java. Santri Design Community (SDC) aims to continue the journey of da'wah of scholars, kyai, ustadz, in the field of graphic design.

Santri Design Community (SDC) is a unifying generation of Muslim designers, the majority of whom come from NU youth, to be more active in contributing to social piety, sharing knowledge, and providing real benefits for the nation's successors in the digital era. Santri Design Community (SDC) Management Structure, Advisory Board, namely Hakim Jayli TV9, Fauzi Priambodo (branding expert), Syukron Dossy (Kyai PWNU Jatim), and Abdullah Hamid (Lecturer of UINSA Surabaya). The Chairman of SDC is Dodik Nurcahyo, the Secretary is Zidni N Akbar, the Treasurer is Muhammad Ahya, and the members are Yordanis, Via, Ari, Fuad, Rifqy.

Figure1. The Logo of Santri Design Community

SDC began to be known to many circles, including Indonesian millennials from various regions. Therefore, the chairman of SDC, Dodik Nurcahyo, made chapters in all corners of Indonesia. The chapters then grow to solid. Until 2020, there are already 19 regions that form chapters, such as Jakarta, Banyuwangi, Sampang, Pasuruan, Malang, Surabaya, Mojokerto, Tuban, Probolinggo, Jombang, Nganjuk, Madiun, Sragen, Central Java, Jepara, Tasikmalaya, Garut, Lamongan, Lumajang, and Gresik.

Santri Design Community (SDC) has an official Instagram account @santridesign, as of May 9, 2022, it was recorded to have 47,200 followers with a total of 1,770 posts and videos. The results of instagram analytic account @santridesign are an average engagement
rate per post of 451 or 0.95%, average likes per post 446 or 0.94%, and average comments per post of 5 or 0.01% (Analisa.io, 2022).

Figure 2. Instagram Profile @santridesign

Community Branding Santri Design Community (SDC)

The definition of brand community according to McAlexander (2018) is customer-centered, the existence and meaning of the community here the customer experience and is much better than a brand surrounded by an ongoing experience. According to Muniz and O'Guinn(2001), the definition of a brand community is a special community, which is non-geographically bound and is based on a set of social relations among the admirers of a particular brand. It is characterized by the sharing of consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. Based on the two definitions above, it can be concluded that a brand community is a customer-centric community and is formed based on social relationships created among admirers of a particular brand.

According to McAlexander, in the brand community there are four customer-centered relationships, namely: 1) Customer-Product Relationship (Good relationship between customers and products), 2) Customer-Brand Relationship (Good relationship between customer and brand), 3) Customer-Company Relationship (Good relationship between customer and company), 4) Customer-Customer Relationship (Good relationship between customers and other customers) performs the law of good will (McAlexander et al., 2018). Meanwhile, the benefits of brand community are to increase brand awareness, get views on products and services, achieve customer success, and increase brand community.

The result of the interview with the admin @santridesign namely the community branding strategy used by santri design is to make a good relationship between followers or santri and admins, one of the strategies that has been implemented by the Instagram Santri Design Community (SDC) is to hold a competition or challenge, and also sharing design that way it indirectly makes the followers more appreciated and also paid attention to. The strategy used by community design santri is in accordance with one of the theories of community branding, namely maintaining good relations between customers and products (Customer-Product Relationship).
"By holding competitions or challenges, in order to maintain our commitments such as producers with consumers or between our accounts and our jamaah or followers. It's part of establishing the familiarity of the members." (Nurcahyo, 2022)

McAlexander's four community branding theories cannot be applied to analyze the Santri Design Community (SDC), because SDC is not a company that pursues profit, but is an organic movement of Santri and is a social volunteerism. So that the appropriate community branding theory is only (Customer-Product Relationship). The strategy of Santri Design Community (SDC) in forming a brand awareness image to followers does not refer to the theory of brand awareness, in this community it frees all members to work according to their respective preferences, in forming brand awareness from customers or followers do not use the Instagram engagement analytic. If the work given is deemed satisfactory, then the followers will follow by themselves. However, it is not far from the strategy used, which is to always be consistent and build a community. To create a design requires the ability in the form of ideas or creative process that will be poured into a visual work. In working on a design, Santri Design Community helps provide references to Islamic designs that are simple and also elegant.

"Our benchmark is only consistent and when that person already likes our posts continuously will follow our characteristics" (Nurcahyo, 2022)

The characteristic of the Instagram of santri Design Community (SDC) is proselytizing content in a contemporary graphic design, and to spread religion Islam, especially wanting to make the Nahdlatul Ulama organization better known to the wider community, especially among young people.

"The benchmark is just NU and santri with the current issues, our characteristic is not far from that, because we have to display that" (Admin, 2022).

By carrying a vision "menebar pesona dengan karya", Santri Design Community (SDC) as a forum for the unifying generation of graphic designers muslim, the majority of whom come from NU youth, to be more active in contributing to social piety, sharing knowledge, and providing real benefits for the nation's successors in the digital era.

"According to our target from the beginning, we want to welcome a century of Nahdlatul Ulama harlah by presenting one million graphic designers of santri" (Admin, 2022)

Another strategy carried out by Santri Design Community (SDC) in forming brand awareness through community branding is to build communities in various regions, by holding 'madrasah design'. Madrasah desain has been carried out in various regions such as, Jakarta, Banyuwangi, Sampang, Pasuruan, Malang, Surabaya, Mojokerto, Tuban, Probolinggo, Jombang, Nganjuk, Madiun, Sragen, Central Java, Jepara, Tasikmalaya, Garut, Lamongan, Lumajang, and Gresik.

"By holding classes in various cities with the madrasah design method, it becomes one part of the regeneration of our cadres, and developing our da’wah" (Nurcahyo, 2022)

Figure 3. Madrasah Design Santri Design Community (SDC) Activities
From the Madrasah Design activities, the Santri Design Community (SDC) community was formed in various regions including, namely, SDC Sidoarjo, SDC Lumajang, SDC Central Java, SDC Lampung, SDC Jember, SDC West Java, SDC Pangandaran, SDC Malang, SDC Majapahit, SDC Gresik, SDC Kalbar.

**Mainstreaming of Moderate Da’wah on Santri Design Community (SDC)**

Da’wah in Indonesia faces challenges such as the issue of radicalism and terrorism, therefore a formula such as da’wah moderation is needed. This moderation of da’wah is expected to straighten out information related to the Islamic religion, in a more communicative and persuasive way. In practice, this moderation of da’wah is to spread the messages of da’wah, which are more inclusive and universal. There are three characteristics in the moderation of da’wah, namely: *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *ta’adul* (Muzamrill, 2021). Moderate da’wah comes from the concept of Moderate Islam, in accordance with the middle
way concept, is perceived as the solution to various world problems, particularly in the religious sector. This concept encourages people not to succumb to extreme and radical attitudes because they are not the ideal values of religion. It is also widely disseminated in the Islamic community, primarily through the da'wah (Thaib, 2020).

Nahdlatul Ulama’s moderation attitude is not separated from Ahlusunnah waljama‘ab (Aswaja) creed, which is classified as moderate. This attitude is widely taught in various pesantren, and it leads to an authentic character. Since its inception, the pesantren has always displayed a tolerant and peaceful reputation (Farida, 2015). However, moderate character (tawassuth) is the most prominent characteristic of Ablussunah waljama‘ah, asides from i’tidaal (being fair), tawaazun (being balanced), and tasaamuh (being tolerant), to reject all forms of radical actions and thoughts (tatharruf) that tends to give birth to deviations in Islamic teachings. According to the religious concept, a balance (middle way) is developed between the use of revelation (naqliyah) and ratio (’aqliyah) to possibly accommodate changes in the society as long as it does not oppose dogmatic doctrines. Following following the consequences of moderate attitudes,

Moderate da’wah has three principles at the level of praxis: 1) Da’wah by prioritizing tolerance (Tasamuh), 2) Da’wah by considering balance (Tawazun), and 3) Da’wah by prioritizing justice (Ta’adul) (Nawawi, 2019). These three principles must be practiced by a moderate da’i, to create an effort to moderate moderation in the era of information disclosure as it is today.

In addition to these three principles, five strategies must be carried out by Muslims if they want to carry out the practice of proselytizing moderately: First, contextualization; moderate da’wah must be able to adapt to the development of the times that are actual and contextual. Second, tolerance; the most important process in da’wah moderation is to respect the beliefs and beliefs of others. This tolerance becomes a strong capital to be able to realize moderation. Third, tradition; moderate da’wah must have a paradigm of culturally friendly da’wah and tradition-friendly da’wah. Considering that the typology of Indonesian society is very multicultural, moderate da’wah must be able to be actively involved in the preservation of traditions. Fourth, progression; moderate da’wah must be accompanied by progress in terms of thinking and foresight. Da’wah, which has been struggling with normative issues, must slowly shift to progressive discourse. Fifth, liberation; the end to be achieved from this moderate da’wah is an attempt to "liberate" the people from the negative things that can encourage division and divorce in social and religious relations (Mukarom et al., 2020).

The application of the principles and strategies of proselytizing moderation is expected to minimize and even become a counter to radical and terrorism understandings that often carry out hate speech against religion on social media. Hopefully, the results of this study will be input for da’i, social media activists, young Muslim influencers, social proselytizing activists, and related elements so that they can moderate proselytizing in the era of information disclosure.

Santri Design Community, which is the object of this research, is one of the Instagram accounts that carries da’wah moderate. The results of the analysis using admin interviews and content analysis get posts from @santridesign accounts in the form of posters or da’wah pamphlets packaged in an attractive and informative design. Da’wah currently contains a lot of Kyai, Ulama, and da’wah content.
“SDC is certain is that the content of da’wah, contemporary da’wah is the main point of Santri Design. The name is only Santri, so the content of the content is not far from the realm of Kyai, Ulama, and da’wah.” (Admin, 2022)

The da’wah content displayed by the design santri has a concept following the young people, so many of the designers who imitate the model from the Instagram of this design student come from young students.

“Very inspirational, it is time for the dai to find breakthroughs in the delivery of their da’wah content. Like this design santri conveys proselytizing with digital packaging delivered on Instagram social media, so that millennials get proselytizing without feeling charged.” (Nurcahyo, 2022).

The results of the analysis of 1,770 posts on Instagram @santridesign categorized into fifth stages: 1) Ulama quotes, 2) biography of Ulama, 3) Commemoration Great Day Islam, 4) Challenges, and 5) Sharing design. Ulama Quotes, this post is intended to give da’wah to the wider community through words given by santri that can motivate in interpreting life, lead to the right path, because according to the hadith shahih of the Prophet "Al-Ulama Waratsatul Anbiya" which means that the Ulama are the successors of the Prophets Muhammad.

Figure 4. Ulama Quotes

| Ramadan content | Da’wah Content of KH. Yahya Cholil Staqaf |

Biography of ulama, this Instagram post is intended to provide knowledge about the history of the scholars who contributed in Nahdlatul ulama is aimed at providing knowledge about the history of the scholars who contributed in Nahdlatul ulama.

Figure 5. Biography of Ulama
Commemoration of Islamic Great Day, This Instagram post contains a calendar of the commemoration of the Islamic Great Day which is shown to provide information to the public to provoke the public to enliven the Islamic Great Day such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Maulid Nabi, Isra' Mi'raj, Nisfu Sya'ban

**Figure 6. Commemoration of the Islamic Great Day**

**Challenge, post challenge to provide information about the competition held so that more people take part in the competition. This challenge is also a medium for consolidating SDC members to participate in competitions and see the skills of SDC members.**

**Figure 7. Challenge Event**

**The content of the fun challenge for mudik**

**99th Harlah NU challenge content**
Sharing design is usually given by santri design at the time before commemration the great Islamic day, not only photos of the scholars are given, but such as ornaments, flags, logos that are already in PNG form, and have a high resolution.

The tendency of Instagram content @santridesign in the form of: 1) Ulama quotes, 2) biography of Ulama, 3) Commemoration of Great Day Islam, 4) Challenges, and 5) Sharing design does not clearly carry the concept of da'wah moderate which contains tasamuh, tawazun, and ta'adul. If you look at the composition of the content, there is more content about Nahdlatul Ulama and has not yet created content that is counter-narrative to the issue of radicalism and terrorism. The goal of Santri Design Community is still in the stage of consolidating members through madrasah design and creating chapters of the SDC area by continuing to provide basic graphic design skills. The next stage of the goal is to realize a million graphic design members from the Nahdlatul Ulama youth in harlah 100 years of NU.

As stated by Dodik Nuryanto (Chairman of SDC), SDC is still in the stage of consolidating members by continuing to hone skills, after graphic design skills are the next stage is counter-narrative to the issue of radicalism and terrorism and Indonesian national issues.

Conclusions

Santri Design Community (SDC) is a new santri movement that deals in graphic design to merge three categories of Instagram use as a skill to learn graphic design, Instagram as a counter narrative media of the Islamic radicalism and terrorism movement, and Instagram as an expression of activities & santri identity. As a result of this study, Santri Design Community (SDC) carried out community branding using maintaining good relations between customers and products (Customer-Product Relationship) through consistency in
creating creative content and building community networks through madrasah design and chapter regions. Santri Design Community (SDC) has mainstreaming da'wah moderate through content containing Ulama quotes, biography of Ulama, Commemoration of Great Day Islam, Challenges, and Sharing design.

This research only analyzes the Santri Design Community (SDC) for the 2016-2022 period, it needs further research until 2026 to see the contribution of SDC as a new santri movement in realizing a million cyber army or graphic designers on the 100th anniversary of harlah Nahdlatul Ulama which aims to mainstream of da'wah moderate in Indonesia.

Reference


