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PESANTREN BRANDING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IN WEST KALIMANTAN: A LITERATURE REVIEW USING THE TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL APPROACH

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Abstract

Purpose: *Digital transformation and rising internet penetration in Indonesia have positioned social media as a strategic instrument in shaping the image of educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This study analyzes the literature on pesantren branding through social media using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and formulates a contextual conceptual framework for pesantren in West Kalimantan, a province with distinctive geosocial and digital characteristics that remains underrepresented in the branding literature.* ***Design/methodology/approach:*** *This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) with a qualitative-interpretative approach, following the SPAR-4-SLR protocol and PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines. Literature was retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar and analyzed using semi-deductive thematic analysis anchored in the core TAM constructs of perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU).* ***Findings:*** *The synthesis identifies four major themes: technology acceptance, social media utilization, institutional branding, and organizational/pesantren-value factors. Social media operates through informative, representational, and relational functions, while digital da'wah functions as a mechanism of institutional identity formation. A conceptual model is proposed linking technology acceptance, social media utilization, institutional communication/digital da'wah, identity representation, and pesantren branding, while accounting for the tension between platform algorithmic logic and pesantren values.* ***Research limitations/implications:*** *As an SLR, the study relies on secondary literature rather than primary data and does not empirically test the proposed model; West Kalimantan is treated as a conceptual rather than an empirical locus, so the model's validity requires further field testing.* ***Practical implications:*** *The synthesis offers pesantren administrators an evidence-based reference for designing social media strategies that are effective yet remain authentic to pesantren values, and offers regional policymakers a basis for digital-literacy support programs.* ***Originality/value:*** *The study extends TAM into an underexplored religious-education setting and bridges two previously disconnected literatures technology acceptance and Islamic/pesantren branding while contextualizing the synthesis within an underrepresented sub-national region.*

Keywords: *Halal signaling, Seller religious identity, Perceived halalness, Consumer trust, Signaling theory*

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study explains why some Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) succeed in building a strong public image through social media while others do not. By reviewing international literature through the Technology Acceptance Model, the study shows that branding success depends not only on having social media accounts, but on how well pesantren leaders and staff perceive social media as useful and easy to use, and on the school's readiness to integrate digital communication with its religious values. The findings offer a practical roadmap for pesantren in West Kalimantan and similar regions to strengthen their visibility without losing their identity.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has altered the way nearly every institution communicates with its public, including educational institutions. The most recent data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia [APJII], 2025) record that internet users in Indonesia have reached 229.4 million people, equivalent to an 80.66% penetration rate, with the majority of online activity directed toward social media use. This phenomenon is not merely a statistical trend; it signals a fundamental shift in how the public searches for information about the educational institutions they will trust to educate the next generation. Across the globe, platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have become the primary channels through which educational institutions build image, extend reach, and sustain relevance amid intensifying competition (Roslan et al., 2024; Xiao et al., 2023). Social media is therefore no longer a complementary communication tool but a core instrument of institutional identity and reputation formation, a shift that has moved the study of educational branding from conventional approaches toward technology-acceptance-based approaches.

The impact of digital transformation on educational institution branding has been extensively documented in the international literature. Perera, Nayak, and Nguyen (2022) found that social media marketing and brand credibility contribute significantly to university brand equity in developing countries, a finding relevant to community-based educational institutions across cultural contexts, while Amado Mateus and Juarez Acosta (2022) confirm through a systematic review that reputation in higher education is increasingly constituted through digital and social visibility. In parallel, the systematic review by Al-Qaysi, Granić, Al-Emran, Ramayah, Garces, and Daim (2023) of 713 studies shows that the institutional adoption of social media in education is strongly shaped by interlocking behavioural, social, and technological factors, a pattern reinforced by Xiao et al.'s (2023) systematic review of university-brand literature, which identifies brand equity, communication strategy, and social-media engagement as central antecedents of institutional brand outcomes. Complementary evidence from Cingillioglu, Gal, and Prokhorov (2023) and Brandão and Ramos (2023) further shows that algorithmically sequenced social media content and emotionally engaging brand communication measurably strengthen higher-education brand equity. Collectively, these studies affirm that the success of an educational institution's digital branding does not depend solely on platform availability, but on how institutional managers perceive and strategically utilize that technology, making technology acceptance a variable that cannot be overlooked in explaining the success or failure of digital branding strategies.

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A robust theoretical framework is required to explain how individuals and institutions accept and adopt new technology, including social media as a branding instrument. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), stands as one of the most influential grand theories explaining technology-acceptance behaviour, positioning perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) as the principal determinants of attitude and behavioural intention toward technology use. TAM's strength lies in its parsimony in explaining complex phenomena, which has sustained its wide application across disciplines, from management information systems to digital marketing communication. Theoretical development did not stop with Davis's original formulation: Venkatesh and Davis (2000) extended TAM through TAM2 by incorporating social-influence and cognitive-instrumental processes affecting perceived usefulness, an extension later integrated by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) into the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which synthesizes eight prior acceptance models into a single comprehensive framework. Contemporary syntheses continue this trajectory: Roslan, Nasharuddin, and Azmi Murad (2024) demonstrate through a systematic review that TAM, UTAUT, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour remain the dominant lenses for explaining social media acceptance, while in the specific domain of social networking sites, Bonfanti, Tommasi, Ceschi, Sartori, and Ruggieri (2023) and Di Stefano, Ruggieri, Bonfanti, and Faraci (2023) show that TAM constructs can be extended with entrepreneurial attitude and perceived risk to explain adoption among resource-constrained micro-organizations a pattern structurally analogous to pesantren, which likewise operate with limited digital resources. This evolution illustrates that TAM is adaptive and continues to be relevant for application in new contexts, including religious educational institutions with distinctive cultural and organizational characteristics.

Behind the considerable potential of social media as a branding instrument lies a fundamental problem: a technology-adoption gap in institutions that are historically traditional. Fu, Silalahi, Yang, and Eunike (2024), studying 508 small and medium enterprises in Indonesia, found reluctance to adopt social media marketing rooted in technological concerns over complexity, cost, and perceived benefit a pattern corroborated by Ramphele and Msosa (2022) and Kwarteng (2023) among micro, small, and medium enterprises in other emerging economies. A similar pattern is plausible in religious educational institutions such as pesantren, which have historically been characterized by centralized leadership around the kiai and a value orientation emphasizing simplicity and distance from popular culture. Abbasi, Abdul Rahim, Wu, Iranmanesh, and Ng Chee Keong (2022) affirm that top-management support is a critical determinant of digital-marketing-adoption decisions, implying that the success of pesantren branding through social media depends heavily on the perceptions and endorsement of pesantren caretakers and administrators themselves. It is precisely this tension between traditional pesantren values and the demands of digital visibility that constitutes the core problem requiring further examination, and it is compounded by urgency: competition among educational institutions, pesantren included, in attracting new students is no longer determined solely by scholarly reputation, but also by digital visibility in the eyes of prospective students and parents, most of whom belong to the digital-native generation. Feng, Yu, Tan, Dai, and Li (2025), through a systematic review of educational technology-acceptance literature spanning 2015–2024, confirm that perceived performance or usefulness is the most dominant factor driving technology adoption in educational settings. Should pesantren fail to understand and optimize this technology

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acceptance, the risk of losing competitiveness in attracting santri and sustaining institutional existence in the digital public sphere will only intensify, demanding a more systematic understanding of the technology-acceptance factors that shape the success of pesantren branding through social media, rather than relying on trial-and-error practices unanchored in a clear theoretical framework.

This problem becomes increasingly salient when contextualized within West Kalimantan, a province with distinctive geographic and sociocultural characteristics. According to APJII (2025) data, internet penetration in the Kalimantan region reaches 78.72%, slightly below the national average yet still indicating a significant growth trend in digital connectivity. West Kalimantan itself is a province with a substantial Muslim population and a pesantren network spread across various regencies, from urban areas such as Pontianak City to border and remote regions confronting direct challenges of digital infrastructure accessibility. This geosocial characteristic creates unique dynamics in technology adoption, because intra-provincial digital divides can differentially shape how each pesantren responds to social-media branding opportunities. Pesantren in West Kalimantan therefore cannot be equated with pesantren in Java, which has thus far been the primary locus of most existing pesantren-branding research. The distinctive character of pesantren as institutions further differentiates branding research in this context from commercial branding studies generally: Alserhan (2010) explains that Islamic branding carries value dimensions distinct from conventional commercial branding, involving elements of trust, moral credibility, and shariah conformity that cannot always be captured by ordinary marketing indicators. Recent empirical work confirms this distinctiveness in practice Maemonah, Zuhri, Masturin, Syafii, and Aziz (2023) document identity contestation among Islamic educational institutions on social media, Mahsusi, Hudaa, Fahmi, Kusen, Haryanti, and Wajdi (2024) show that digital transformation in madrasah management must be reconciled with Islamic cultural preservation, and Kholili, Izudin, and Hakim (2024) highlight the regulatory and authority challenges attending digital da'wah in Indonesia. Yet, upon closer examination, a substantial research gap persists at the intersection of these three themes pesantren branding, social media, and the Technology Acceptance Model since most TAM–social-media research, as shown by Al-Qaysi et al. (2023) and Asghar, Rasool, Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, Arif, and Bano (2023), remains centred on formal higher-education or commercial-sector contexts dominated by individualistic populations outside the Islamic milieu, while existing pesantren-branding studies tend to adopt descriptive qualitative case-study designs on a single pesantren without an explicit technology-acceptance framework, making them difficult to generalize or compare across cases a double gap, theoretical and regional, that this study seeks to fill.

The novelty of this study lies in bridging two hitherto separate streams of inquiry: theoretically mature technology-acceptance scholarship with minimal Islamic context, and contextually rich pesantren-branding scholarship with a limited theoretical foundation. Through a literature-analysis approach, this study synthesizes findings from both streams to build a conceptual understanding of how TAM constructs can explain the process of social media adoption as a pesantren-branding instrument, while accounting for the distinctive characteristics of West Kalimantan as the locus of inquiry. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the literature on pesantren branding through social media using the Technology Acceptance Model approach and to formulate a contextual conceptual framework for pesantren in West Kalimantan. Theoretically, the study is expected to extend TAM's application to religious educational

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institutions that have received limited attention in mainstream technology-acceptance literature while enriching Islamic-branding discourse with a digital-technology-acceptance perspective; practically, the literature synthesis is intended to serve as a reference for pesantren caretakers and administrators in West Kalimantan in formulating more targeted and effective social-media branding strategies that remain authentic to pesantren values, and as a consideration for regional religious-education policymakers in designing digital-literacy assistance programmes suited to the needs and characteristics of pesantren in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEWW

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical discussion in this study draws comprehensively on authoritative and internationally reputable academic sources to provide a coherent conceptual foundation. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) constitutes the grand theory of this study, positioning perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) as the principal antecedents of attitude toward, and behavioural intention to use, a given technology (Davis, 1989). PU is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular technology will enhance the effectiveness of the activity performed, whereas PEOU refers to the degree to which a technology is perceived as free of effort to learn and operate. Subsequent theoretical refinement extended these constructs: TAM2 (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000) incorporated social-influence processes (subjective norm, image) and cognitive-instrumental processes (job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability) into the explanation of PU, while UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003) integrated performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions into a single unified model. Contemporary systematic reviews confirm that this theoretical lineage remains the dominant paradigm for explaining social media acceptance and use: Roslan et al. (2024) synthesize UTAUT, TAM, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour as the three most frequently applied frameworks in social-media-acceptance research, while Asghar et al. (2023) demonstrate that TAM can be meaningfully integrated with contemporary constructs such as authentic leadership to explain social-media-based learning acceptance in richer terms. Parallel to the technology-acceptance stream, the branding literature provides the conceptual apparatus for understanding institutional image formation. University brand is constituted through brand equity, brand identity, and communication strategy (Xiao et al., 2023), while brand credibility and social media marketing jointly shape higher-education brand equity, particularly in emerging-market contexts (Perera et al., 2022). Islamic branding, however, is theoretically distinct from conventional branding, incorporating trust, moral credibility, and shariah conformity as value dimensions that cannot be reduced to ordinary marketing indicators (Alserhan, 2010). Integrating these two theoretical streams—technology acceptance and institutional/Islamic branding—provides the conceptual scaffolding through which this study interprets how social media adoption functions as a mechanism of pesantren branding.

Research Proposition

Because this study adopts a qualitative-interpretative systematic literature review design rather than a hypothesis-testing quantitative design, the theoretical arguments developed here are formulated as research propositions rather than statistical hypotheses, grounded in strong theoretical reasoning and supported by prior empirical evidence. Findings from previous studies

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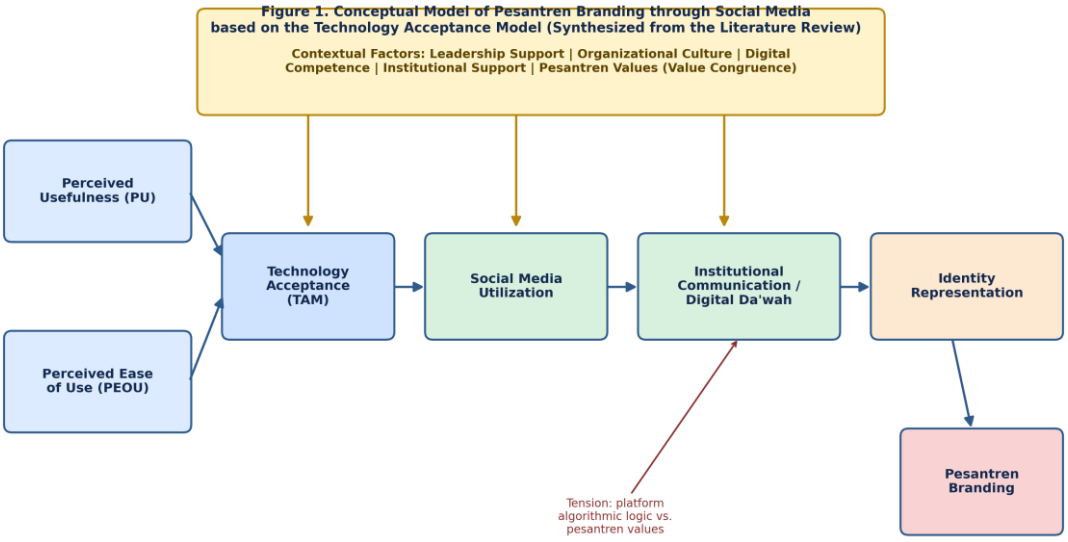
published in reputable international journals are systematically integrated to build a coherent basis for understanding the relationships among the constructs in this study. Prior research is critically evaluated to identify points of convergence, contradiction, and ongoing debate within the literature, thereby demonstrating this study's engagement with existing scholarly discourse. On this basis, the study advances the following propositions: P1 Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use jointly and positively shape technology acceptance among pesantren administrators (Davis, 1989; Feng et al., 2021). P2 Technology acceptance positively shapes the extent and consistency of social media utilization for institutional purposes (Roslan et al., 2024; Fu et al., 2024). P3 Social media utilization enables institutional communication and digital da'wah, which function as mechanisms of identity representation (Manaf et al., 2026; Maulana et al., 2026). P4 Consistent identity representation contributes to institutional branding outcomes, mediated by brand credibility and audience engagement (Perera et al., 2022; Brandão & Ramos, 2023). P5 Organizational factors (leadership support, digital competence, institutional culture) and pesantren-value congruence moderate the strength of the relationships proposed in P1–P4 (Abbasi et al., 2022; Aissani et al., 2026). Through the synthesis of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, these propositions are logically derived and academically justified, and are intended to guide the in-depth conceptual exploration undertaken in the Results and Discussion sections, as well as to provide falsifiable starting points for subsequent empirical research.

Research Model

Building on the propositions above, this study presents a conceptual model (Figure 1) illustrating the hypothesized relationships among the study's constructs, serving as a visual and analytical representation of the underlying theoretical structure. The model translates theoretical assumptions into an operational analytical framework: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use jointly shape technology acceptance; technology acceptance underpins social media utilization; social media utilization enables institutional communication and digital da'wah; this communication process produces identity representation; and identity representation, in turn, contributes to pesantren branding. Organizational factors—leadership support, digital competence, institutional culture, institutional support—and pesantren-value congruence are positioned as contextual moderators that can strengthen or constrain this process, consistent with evidence that leadership commitment and organizational readiness are decisive in technology-adoption outcomes (Abbasi et al., 2022; Kwarteng, 2023; Ramphele & Msosa, 2022). The model further foregrounds a distinctive tension not commonly addressed in mainstream branding literature: the divergence between platform algorithmic logic, which rewards attention-maximizing content, and pesantren values, which emphasize propriety, religious authority, and restraint (Cingillioglu et al., 2023). This tension is depicted as a moderating pathway affecting the institutional-communication/digital-da'wah node. By systematically linking theory with the empirical literature, this conceptual model provides a foundation for the Method and Results sections and enhances the clarity, consistency, and rigor of the research design in accordance with the standards expected of reputable international academic journals; as a product of literature synthesis, however, the model represents a conceptual rather than an empirically tested causal structure.

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Figure 1
Conceptual Model of Pesantren Branding through Social Media based on the Technology Acceptance Model



Source: Synthesized by the authors from the reviewed literature.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) design with a qualitative-interpretative approach to analyze and synthesize the literature on pesantren branding through social media within the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework. This design was selected because SLR enables the researcher to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant findings systematically, transparently, and reproducibly, thereby minimizing the subjective bias commonly found in conventional narrative literature reviews (Paul, Lim, O'Cass, Hao, & Bresciani, 2021). The research procedure follows the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews (SPAR-4-SLR) protocol, comprising three main stages: assembling, arranging, and assessing (Paul et al., 2021). An interpretative approach is applied at the synthesis stage to make contextual sense of cross-study findings, given that TAM constructs in the pesantren context require reinterpretation that cannot be fully captured through a purely quantitative-deductive lens (Al-Qaysi et al., 2023). The combination of the SPAR-4-SLR procedural framework and an interpretative approach enables the study to produce a conceptual map that is not merely descriptive but also reflective of the value tension between pesantren tradition and the demands of digitalization. This design is consistent with methodological trends in social-media-based educational-institution branding research, which has increasingly adopted SLR designs to map theory, context, and method in an integrated manner (Pawar, 2024; Xiao et al., 2023).

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Research Procedure

Literature collection followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines, which provide a four-stage workflow encompassing identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion to ensure transparency and reproducibility of the selection process (Page et al., 2021), as illustrated in Figure 2. Literature searches combined keywords representing the study's three core constructs—"pesantren branding," "social media adoption," "Islamic educational institution," and "Technology Acceptance Model"—using Boolean AND/OR operators applied to the title, abstract, and keyword fields. Inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed journal articles published in English or Indonesian addressing technology acceptance and/or educational-institution branding through social media, and indexed in reputable databases. Exclusion criteria comprised conference papers without full peer review, opinion pieces or editorials, books and book chapters, and studies lacking conceptual linkage to TAM or value-based institutional branding. The screening stage proceeded through title-and-abstract review followed by full-text assessment of articles passing the initial screen, consistent with common practice in SLRs on social-media marketing of educational institutions (Pawar, 2024). This layered approach is consistent with the methodological practice recommended by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003) for developing evidence-informed management knowledge through systematic review.

Research Corpus

The subject of this study is not individual respondents but a corpus of scientific articles constituting the unit of analysis, consistent with the character of literature-review-based research (Kitchenham, 2004). The initial search population encompassed all articles addressing technology acceptance, social media, and educational-institution branding published within the past ten years, with particular emphasis on publications from the past five years to preserve theoretical and empirical relevance. Following the layered screening and eligibility process, qualifying articles were grouped into three thematic clusters: the technology-acceptance cluster (TAM/UTAUT, exemplified by Roslan et al., 2024, and Bonfanti et al., 2023), the social-media-based educational-institution-branding cluster (exemplified by Xiao et al., 2023, and Amado Mateus & Juarez Acosta, 2022), and the Islamic-branding/religious-institution cluster (exemplified by Maemonah et al., 2023, and Mahsusi et al., 2024). This thematic grouping facilitated cross-cluster synthesis to map points of convergence and tension across the literature, particularly at the intersection of the three themes central to this study. Articles originating from formal higher-education or commercial-sector contexts were retained as comparators to reveal the conceptual gap relative to the pesantren context, given that most TAM–social-media studies remain concentrated in those two settings (Al-Qaysi et al., 2023).

Data Sources

Data in this study derive from secondary sources in the form of scientific journal articles drawn from internationally reputable databases Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar selected for their broad coverage of multidisciplinary literature in information technology, marketing, and education (Pawar, 2024). Scimago Journal Rank was used as a supplementary database to verify the reputation of the journals in which the included articles were published,

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ensuring that all sources had undergone a rigorous peer-review process. Beyond academic literature, supporting data in the form of official statistical reports—such as internet-penetration data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association—were used to provide empirical context reinforcing the argument for the urgency of this study in the West Kalimantan region. This use of multi-source secondary data is consistent with SLR practice in educational-institution digital-marketing research, which typically combines academic databases with supporting statistical data to strengthen the contextualization of findings (Bryła, Chatterjee, & Ciabiada-Bryła, 2022). All data sources were managed using a structured spreadsheet recording bibliographic metadata, findings summaries, theoretical constructs, and the research context of each article to facilitate the subsequent extraction and synthesis process.

Construct Operationalization

Because this study synthesizes constructs rather than administering an original survey instrument, this subsection reports how the core TAM constructs were operationally defined across the literature reviewed, consistent with established measurement practice, rather than presenting a new psychometric instrument. Perceived usefulness (PU) is operationalized across the reviewed literature as the perceived contribution of social media to organizational goal attainment information dissemination, promotion, stakeholder relations, and identity communication (Feng et al., 2021; Rahman, Mutum, & Ghazali, 2022). Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is operationalized as the perceived effort required to produce content, manage interaction, and maintain platform consistency at the organizational rather than merely the individual level (Blanco-Sánchez & Moreno-Albarracín, 2023; Bonfanti et al., 2023). Both constructs are typically captured in the reviewed quantitative literature via multi-item 5- or 7-point Likert scales adapted from Davis (1989) and Venkatesh et al. (2003), while in the qualitative pesantren-branding literature they are captured through interview and document-analysis protocols examining administrators' perceptions and institutional practice. This dual operationalization across the quantitative and qualitative streams of literature provides the interpretative basis on which the present synthesis reconstructs PU and PEOU for the pesantren context in the Results and Discussion sections.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), comprising six stages: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final synthesis report. This approach was selected for its flexibility combined with systematic rigor in identifying meaningful patterns across studies, making it well suited to synthesizing findings from literature spanning diverse disciplines. Coding was conducted semi-deductively, using the core TAM constructs (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) as the initial coding framework while remaining open to new themes emerging inductively from the pesantren-branding and Islamic-branding literature. Qualitative content analysis was also applied to categorize findings based on similarities in construct, research context, and method employed across prior studies (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Coding results were then synthesized into a thematic matrix to map points of agreement, points of debate, and research gaps at the intersection of pesantren branding, social media, and TAM. Source triangulation was conducted

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by comparing findings across literature clusters to enhance the credibility of interpretation, a step commonly applied in thematic-analysis-based SLRs to preserve the consistency and reliability of synthesis outcomes (Pawar, 2025).

RESULT

Literature Selection Results

This study applies a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to identify, select, and synthesize literature relating to technology acceptance, social media utilization, digital communication, and branding in Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren. The literature-selection process was guided by principles of transparency and traceability to ensure that the articles used align with the research focus. Literature searches combined terms relating to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), technology acceptance, social media, digital branding, pesantren, and Islamic boarding school. This strategy was employed because the literature on the research topic is dispersed across several fields of study and does not always use the explicit term "pesantren branding." Accordingly, the search process was directed not only at articles explicitly mentioning pesantren branding, but also at research providing a theoretical foundation on technology acceptance and digital communication relevant to the pesantren context.

The literature-selection stage proceeded through identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion, as summarized in Table 1 and visualized in Figure 2. At the identification stage, literature was traced through the academic databases constituting the study's search sources. Articles were subsequently examined by title and abstract to assess initial relevance to the research theme; articles unrelated to technology acceptance, social media, digital communication, branding, or a relevant educational context were excluded from the synthesis. Articles meeting the initial criteria were then evaluated for content adequacy and the availability of information required for analysis. Because this study does not employ primary data and the exact counts at each selection stage are not the analytical focus of an interpretative synthesis, this study does not report fabricated or estimated numerical figures at each PRISMA stage; this approach was chosen to avoid the hypothetical population of data that would compromise the validity of SLR reporting. The results therefore emphasize the patterns, themes, constructs, and conceptual relationships identified in the literature reviewed, consistent with the interpretative-synthesis tradition in SLR reporting (Paul et al., 2021).

Table 1
Literature Selection Stages

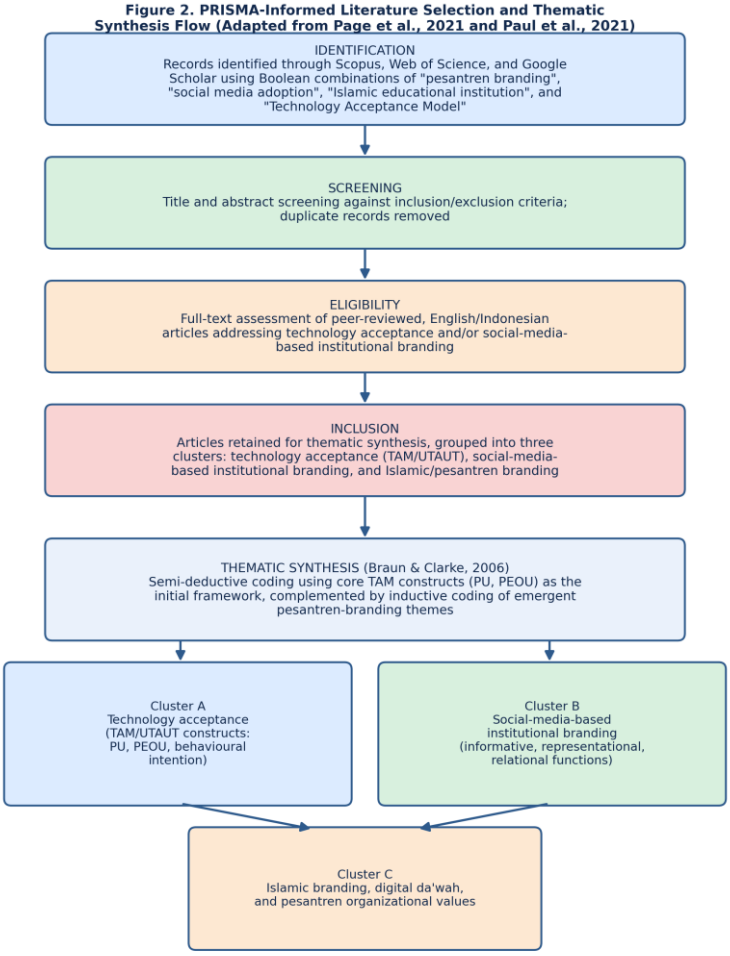
Stage	Process
Identification	Literature search based on the research keywords
Identification	Merging of search results across the databases used
Screening	Title-and-abstract review
Eligibility	Full-text review of candidate articles
Eligibility	Assessment of conformity with inclusion and

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	exclusion criteria
Inclusion	Determination of the articles used in the synthesis

Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2021) PRISMA 2020 workflow and Paul et al. (2021) SPAR-4-SLR protocol.

Figure 2
PRISMA-Informed Literature Selection and Thematic Synthesis Flow



Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2021) and Paul et al. (2021).

Characteristics of the Literature Reviewed

The reviewed literature shows that scholarship on technology, social media, and Islamic educational institutions has developed along several interrelated directions, summarized in Table 2. The first stream centres on technology acceptance, chiefly through TAM, explaining perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989; Roslan et al., 2024). The second stream examines social media as an instrument of communication, promotion, public relations, and

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institutional image formation (Xiao et al., 2023; Amado Mateus & Juarez Acosta, 2022). The third stream concerns pesantren digitalization, digital da'wah, institutional transformation, leadership, and the compatibility of technology with Islamic educational values (Maemonah et al., 2023; Mahsusi et al., 2024; Kholili et al., 2024). These three streams jointly provide the basis for understanding pesantren branding as a process bound up not only with promotion, but also with technology acceptance and institutional-identity communication. Methodologically, technology-acceptance research tends to favour quantitative approaches testing relationships among variables, whereas pesantren and digital-communication research favours qualitative approaches, case studies, literature reviews, or conceptual analysis. Systematic reviews of TAM in education likewise show that TAM is applied across diverse educational contexts and is frequently extended with constructs suited to specific technological or educational characteristics (Lee, Tan, & Bello, 2025). This methodological divergence is important because the present study does not seek to force equivalence among all prior findings, but rather to identify conceptual patterns that can be reconciled across streams; the SLR results are accordingly positioned as a process of cross-stream synthesis.

Table 2
Characteristics of the Literature Reviewed

Literature Focus	Predominant Approach	Main Constructs/Topics	Relevance to This Study
Technology acceptance	Quantitative, meta-analysis, systematic review	PU, PEOU, technology acceptance	Theoretical foundation (TAM)
Technology in education	Quantitative and systematic review	TAM plus additional constructs	Contextualization of TAM in education
Social media and communication	Qualitative, quantitative, literature review	Social media, digital communication, public interaction	Communication mechanism
University/HEI branding	Systematic review, empirical	Brand equity, brand credibility, engagement	Institutional branding benchmark
Digital PR and institutional image	Empirical/qualitative	Digital PR, institutional image	Institutional branding
Digital da'wah	Literature review and empirical research	Social media, da'wah, religious communication	Islamic identity representation
Pesantren/madrasah digitalization	Case study, literature review	Digital transformation, leadership, competence	Pesantren contextual factors

Source: Synthesized by the authors from the reviewed literature.

Thematic Patterns in the Literature

The synthesis identifies four major themes relevant to the research focus. The first theme is technology acceptance, particularly perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The second theme is social media utilization, encompassing information dissemination, interaction,

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promotion, and institutional communication. The third theme is institutional branding, relating to identity, image, reputation, visibility, and institution–public relations. The fourth theme is organizational factors and pesantren values, encompassing leadership, digital competence, organizational culture, institutional support, and the compatibility of technology use with pesantren values. These four themes show that the literature has developed within each respective domain, yet the relationships among themes have not always been addressed within a single integrated framework: TAM research primarily explains why individuals accept technology, whereas communication and branding literature explains how technology is used to communicate and shape public perception, while pesantren literature more often addresses digital transformation, da'wah, education, and institutional change. This condition creates an opening for synthesis to explain the relationship between technology acceptance and social media utilization as part of the pesantren-branding process.

Perceived Usefulness in Social Media Utilization

Perceived usefulness is one of TAM's core constructs, explaining the extent to which a person views technology as capable of enhancing the effectiveness of an activity. In the social media context, perceived benefit relates not only to the technical capability of the platform, but also to the extent to which the platform helps achieve the user's or organization's objectives. The technology-acceptance literature shows that perceived usefulness is an important factor in explaining technology acceptance, although the strength of the relationship can vary by context of use (Feng et al., 2021). Accordingly, the usefulness of a technology cannot be separated from user needs and objectives.

In the pesantren context, the benefits of social media may include the delivery of educational information, publication of activities, da'wah, communication with the public, alumni relations, program promotion, and the communication of institutional identity. With these functions, social media carries benefits broader than mere promotional media; it can serve as a means of connecting pesantren with various public groups. Perceived usefulness in this study is therefore understood as the perception that social media provides benefit to the performance of pesantren's educational, da'wah, communication, and image-formation functions—an understanding consistent with evidence that platform usefulness for SMEs and micro-organizations is likewise assessed against multiple, not solely commercial, organizational goals (Rahman et al., 2022; Kwarteng, 2023).

Perceived Ease of Use in Social Media Utilization

Perceived ease of use relates to the extent to which a technology is perceived as easy to learn and use. In pesantren's use of social media, ease of use extends beyond the ability to open an application, produce a post, or operate a specific feature. Institutional social media management requires the ability to generate content, understand audience character, maintain communication consistency, respond to interaction, and manage digital reputation. Ease of use at the organizational level therefore has a broader dimension than technical ease at the individual level.

The digital-transformation literature shows that organizational capability and human resources play an important role in determining the success of technology utilization. This implies that a platform that is technically easy to use will not necessarily result in optimal

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utilization if the organization lacks competent managers. In the pesantren context, perceived ease of use is accordingly related to the managers' digital capacity. Competence, experience, training, task allocation, and organizational support can shape pesantren's ability to integrate social media into institutional activity, a proposition consistent with evidence that ease-of-use perceptions among organizational users of social networking sites are shaped by prior digital experience and structured training (Bonfanti et al., 2023; Blanco-Sánchez & Moreno-Albarracín, 2023).

Social Media as an Instrument of Pesantren Institutional Branding

The synthesis indicates that social media performs at least three functions in pesantren institutional branding: informative, representational, and relational. The informative function enables pesantren to convey information about educational programmes, student activities, achievements, facilities, and institutional events. The representational function enables pesantren to display its values, culture, character, and identity to the public. The relational function, meanwhile, enables interaction between pesantren and prospective students, parents, alumni, the community, and other stakeholders—a tripartite functional structure consistent with the content-pillar and engagement patterns documented in university social-media-branding research (Xiao et al., 2023; Amado Mateus & Juarez Acosta, 2022).

Research on digital public-relations strategy in Islamic boarding schools indicates the relevance of digital communication to institutional image formation (Maulana, Saleh, Aryanto, Putri, & Meifiana, 2026). However, branding through social media cannot be entirely controlled by the institution, because the public can comment, share content, and construct their own interpretations; branding through social media is therefore inherently interactive. The identity communicated by pesantren needs to be consistent with public experience and perception in order to form a credible image, a dynamic consistent with evidence that engagement-driven interaction, rather than one-way messaging, is what most strongly predicts brand credibility and audience trust on platforms such as Instagram (Blanco-Sánchez & Moreno-Albarracín, 2023; Brandão & Ramos, 2023).

Digital Da'wah and Institutional Communication

Social media also plays an important role in extending the reach of da'wah communication. The literature on social media and da'wah shows that digital platforms enable religious messages to reach wider audiences and create more open opportunities for interaction (Manaf, Rokimin, Rahman, At Thaariq, & Akhirudin, 2026). In the pesantren context, da'wah activity can proceed alongside educational activity and institutional communication. Content concerning religious study sessions, social activities, student mentoring, character education, and religious events can simultaneously serve as a medium for communicating pesantren identity.

These findings indicate that digital da'wah can be positioned as a mechanism connecting social media use with pesantren branding. Through da'wah content, the public not only obtains information about religious messages, but can also recognize the institution's character and values. Pesantren branding, therefore, does not need to be built through direct promotional messaging; it can develop through communication concerning activities, values, social contribution, and educational orientation—a pattern that aligns with, yet also complicates, findings on the regulatory and authority tensions surrounding digital da'wah broadcasting in Indonesia (Kholili et al., 2024).

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Organizational Factors and Pesantren Values

Technology acceptance and utilization do not occur independently of the organizational environment. Factors such as leadership support, human-resource competence, organizational culture, resource availability, and digital leadership can shape institutional capability in adopting technology. Research on institutional communication transformation demonstrates the importance of organizational culture and leadership in the success of digital transformation (Aissani, Shabaneh, Kanaan, & Elshenawy, 2026). These findings are relevant to pesantren because technology-utilization decisions occur within a specific organizational structure and authority pattern, echoing evidence that top-management support is a critical determinant of digital-marketing adoption among resource-constrained organizations more generally (Abbasi et al., 2022).

Beyond organizational factors, pesantren values constitute an important contextual factor. The use of social media is assessed not only on effectiveness or ease of use, but also on conformity with the norms, ethics, and identity of the pesantren. A technology deemed technically beneficial will not necessarily be accepted if its use is perceived as inconsistent with institutional values. This condition indicates that technology acceptance in pesantren has social and value dimensions that require attention, consistent with the conceptualization of Islamic branding as inherently value-laden rather than purely commercial (Alserhan, 2010).

DISCUSS

Technology Acceptance as the Foundation of Pesantren Digital Branding

The synthesis shows that technology acceptance can be positioned as the initial stage in social media utilization to support pesantren branding. TAM explains that perceptions of usefulness and ease of use form the basis of technology acceptance (Davis, 1989). In the pesantren context, however, technology acceptance cannot be adequately understood merely as an individual decision to use an application; acceptance needs to be understood as readiness to integrate technology into communication, education, da'wah, and institutional-relations activity. Technology acceptance in pesantren thus carries both individual and organizational dimensions.

This view is consistent with research showing that relationships within technology-acceptance models can be shaped by the context of use (Feng et al., 2021). Consequently, TAM in the pesantren context needs to be situated within an organizational environment possessing distinctive characteristics. Leadership structure, institutional culture, digital competence, and religious values can shape how technology is understood and used. In other words, TAM functions as the theoretical foundation, while organizational and value factors provide the context that explains variation in its utilization—an argument reinforced by systematic evidence that leadership commitment moderates technology-adoption outcomes across resource-constrained organizational settings more broadly (Kwarteng, 2023; Ramphele & Msosa, 2022).

Perceived Usefulness as a Driver of Strategic Utilization

In the pesantren context, perceived usefulness can be extended from individual benefit toward institutional strategic benefit. Social media is deemed beneficial when it helps pesantren achieve its communication and institutional objectives. Such objectives may include information delivery, strengthening da'wah, program promotion, communication with parents, alumni

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relations, and enhanced institutional visibility. The broader the perceived benefit, the greater the likelihood that social media will be positioned as part of institutional strategy—consistent with evidence from micro- and small-organization contexts that perceived strategic, rather than merely operational, benefit is what sustains continued platform use (Rahman et al., 2022; Kwarteng, 2023).

The implication is that pesantren need to link social media use to clear objectives. Social media used only to upload documentation of activities has arguably not yet reached its strategic function. Conversely, when every communication activity is directed toward a specific objective, social media can become an instrument for building relationships with the public. From this perspective, perceived usefulness not only explains technology acceptance, but also provides the basis for understanding why social media is used strategically.

Perceived Ease of Use and Digital Capability

Perceived ease of use needs to be understood together with organizational digital capability. Institutional use of social media requires capability more complex than merely operating the platform. Administrators need to understand content production, audience character, digital interaction, identity consistency, and reputational risk. Perceived ease is therefore shaped by administrators' experience and competence.

In the pesantren context, digital-capability enhancement can be achieved through training and clear allocation of responsibility. Organizational support is also required so that social media management does not depend entirely on the capability of particular individuals. With such capacity, social media can be integrated into the routine of institutional communication. This indicates that perceived ease of use can become more meaningful when supported by organizational capacity, a conclusion consistent with organizational-level evidence on technology-acceptance antecedents in entrepreneurial and small-organization settings (Bonfanti et al., 2023; Di Stefano et al., 2023).

Social Media as Institutional Branding Infrastructure

Social media can be positioned as communication infrastructure enabling pesantren to present its identity sustainably. That identity may take the form of educational values, student character, da'wah activity, achievements, social activities, and institutional culture. Content published consistently can help the public form an understanding of the institution's character. Branding, accordingly, is not formed through a single campaign, but through the accumulation of communication experience an accumulation that recent content-pillar research on university Instagram branding shows to be most effective when narrative and inspirational content, rather than purely informational or announcement content, predominate (Xiao et al., 2023; Blanco-Sánchez & Moreno-Albarracín, 2023).

Findings on digital public relations and Islamic-boarding-school image reinforce the importance of digital communication in institutional image formation (Maulana et al., 2026). Nevertheless, image is the product of interaction between the message communicated by the institution and public interpretation. Pesantren therefore need to attend to consistency, credibility, and interaction quality. Social media ultimately functions not merely as a publication medium, but as a space for relationship formation between institution and public, consistent with evidence that emotionally engaging, dialogic communication—rather than one-directional

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broadcasting—is what most strongly builds brand attachment (Brandão & Ramos, 2023; Edwards & Omilion-Hodges, 2022).

Digital Da'wah as a Mechanism of Identity Formation

Digital da'wah occupies a distinctive position in pesantren branding because da'wah activity is part of the institution's basic identity. Da'wah content produced through social media can simultaneously demonstrate the institution's values and character. When pesantren present religious study sessions, social activities, character education, and religious events, the public gains a picture of the institution's orientation. Digital da'wah can therefore function as a mechanism of identity formation.

This position distinguishes pesantren branding from commercial-organization branding. Pesantren branding does not aim solely to attract consumers, but relates to the communication of educational and da'wah missions. Digital communication that remains authentic to institutional values can therefore become part of the branding process. The relationship among da'wah, communication, identity, and branding constitutes one of this study's important conceptual findings, though it also surfaces authority and regulatory tensions documented in the broader digital-da'wah literature (Kholili et al., 2024).

Tension between Algorithmic Logic and Pesantren Values

One issue arising in social media utilization is the divergence between platform algorithmic logic and pesantren institutional values. Social media algorithms generally favour content capable of generating attention, interaction, and user engagement. Pesantren, however, hold norms regarding propriety, appropriateness, religious authority, and value representation. Content with high algorithmic-performance potential is therefore not necessarily consistent with pesantren identity a dynamic that algorithmically sequenced content-strategy research in higher-education marketing likewise identifies as a persistent trade-off between reach and institutional voice (Cingillioglu et al., 2023).

This condition reveals a limitation when TAM is applied too simplistically. A technology may be perceived as beneficial because it enhances communication reach, yet a particular strategy can still be rejected if deemed inconsistent with institutional values. Accordingly, value congruence can be considered a contextual construct in developing a technology-acceptance model for pesantren. This perspective helps explain that technology acceptance is not merely a matter of efficiency, but also a matter of conformity with institutional identity.

Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Institutional Support

Social media utilization in pesantren is strongly influenced by the organizational environment. Leadership can determine the level of legitimacy and support for technology utilization. Organizational culture can shape how technology is accepted and integrated into work. Institutional support, meanwhile, determines resource availability and the sustainability of social media management. Technology, accordingly, does not stand alone in the digital-transformation process. Literature on digital transformation in Islamic educational institutions likewise shows the importance of organizational readiness in confronting technological change (Mahsusi et al., 2024). This reinforces the position of organizational factors as context within the research model. In the pesantren context, leadership support and a clear management

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structure can help transform social media from a supplementary activity into part of the institution's communication strategy. Digital-branding success, therefore, depends not only on the platform, but also on the organization's capacity to manage it.

Position of West Kalimantan in Model Development

In this study, West Kalimantan is positioned as a context for model development and testing, not as a site of primary data collection a methodological consequence of employing an SLR design. Literature synthesis can provide a theoretical basis for understanding the relationships among technology acceptance, social media utilization, and pesantren branding, but cannot be used to claim conditions specific to pesantren throughout West Kalimantan. Accordingly, empirical testing accounting for the region's social, institutional, digital-resource, leadership, and pesantren-value characteristics remains a necessary next step, particularly given the intra-provincial digital divide documented by APJII (2025) between urban centres such as Pontianak and the province's border and remote regencies.

Research Gap and Future Research Agenda

The synthesis reveals a gap between the technology-acceptance literature and the literature on pesantren communication and branding. TAM research has provided a robust framework for explaining technology acceptance, but the research context frequently lies outside the pesantren environment. Conversely, research on pesantren digitalization has addressed social media, da'wah, communication, and institutional transformation, but has not fully integrated TAM constructs to explain the technology-acceptance process. A conceptual space thus exists for connecting these two research streams. Building on this gap, subsequent research can test the relationships among perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, technology acceptance, social media utilization, digital communication, and pesantren branding. Factors such as digital capability, leadership, organizational support, institutional culture, and value congruence can be added to explain pesantren's distinctive characteristics. Specifically in the West Kalimantan context, empirical research can be used to test whether the synthesized model corresponds to local pesantren conditions. Such testing can be conducted through surveys, interviews, case studies, or mixed methods. This SLR can thereby serve as a foundation for developing an empirical model in a subsequent stage of research.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this systematic literature review (SLR), social media utilization for pesantren branding can be understood as a process that begins with technology acceptance and evolves into institutional communication practices. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), particularly perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, provides a theoretical foundation for explaining technology adoption. In the pesantren context, social media extends beyond promotional purposes to encompass education, digital da'wah, information dissemination, public relations, and institutional identity representation. The synthesis identifies three interconnected functions of social media—informativeness, representation, and relationship building—that contribute to institutional image and reputation. Accordingly, pesantren branding is better conceptualized as a process of communicating institutional identity and values rather than merely promoting institutional activities. However, technology acceptance and utilization are also shaped

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by contextual factors, including leadership, digital competence, institutional support, organizational culture, and alignment with pesantren values, emphasizing that algorithmic effectiveness does not necessarily correspond to institutional appropriateness.

Drawing on these findings, this study proposes a conceptual framework linking Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use → Technology Acceptance → Social Media Utilization → Institutional Communication/Digital Da'wah → Identity Representation → Pesantren Branding**.** This framework represents a theoretical synthesis rather than an empirically validated causal model and therefore provides a foundation for future empirical investigation. In the context of West Kalimantan, the findings offer conceptual insights into how pesantren may integrate social media into their institutional communication and branding strategies. Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. As an SLR, this study relies on secondary literature rather than primary data from pesantren social media administrators. Furthermore, variations in theoretical perspectives, research methodologies, institutional characteristics, and technological contexts limit the generalizability of the findings. The limited availability of empirical studies specifically addressing pesantren in West Kalimantan also prevents definitive conclusions regarding regional practices, digital readiness, and institutional branding outcomes.

Future research should empirically examine the proposed framework through quantitative surveys, qualitative investigations, or mixed-methods approaches involving pesantren administrators and institutional stakeholders. Quantitative analysis could assess relationships among perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, technology acceptance, social media utilization, and branding-related outcomes, while qualitative interviews could explore the influence of leadership, organizational culture, institutional values, and digital competence. Comparative studies across different pesantren types, levels of digital readiness, and communication strategies in West Kalimantan would further clarify the contextual conditions shaping technology adoption and institutional branding. Such investigations would contribute to refining and validating the proposed framework while providing evidence-based recommendations for developing culturally appropriate, value-oriented, and sustainable digital communication strategies within Islamic educational institutions.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, D.N. and M.Z.; methodology, D.N.; software, D.N.; validation, D.N., M.Z. and C.C.; formal analysis, D.N.; investigation, D.N.; resources, D.N.; data curation, D.N.; writing original draft preparation, D.N.; writing review and editing, M.Z., C.C. and K.S.; visualization, D.N.; supervision, M.Z.; project administration, D.N.; funding acquisition, S.A.P.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Informed Consent Statement

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During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used a large language model (Claude, Anthropic) to assist with English-language academic drafting, literature-search support, and formatting of the manuscript according to the journal template. After using this tool, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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