



Generation Alpha's Impulsive Engagement with Spirituality on Social Media Platforms

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Abstract:

This research examines the phenomenon of Generation Alpha's consumption of religious content through social media at the Madura State Islamic Institute. The main focus of the research is to explore how Generation Alpha accesses and consumes religious information through social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube and to identify the challenges regarding the validity of the information. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach and in-depth interviews as data collection techniques. Data sources were obtained from IAIN Madura students who represent Generation Alpha and actively use social media for religious purposes. Data analysis was conducted by adapting data reduction, display, and verification techniques to find patterns and central themes in consuming religious information. The results show that Generation Alpha is more likely to consume religious content impulsively, prioritizing ease of access and attractive formats, such as short videos and infographics, without checking the authenticity of the source. Although social media provides convenience in obtaining information, the findings also reveal that the lack of information verification can lead to misunderstanding religious teachings. This study implies the need for a better educational approach to religious digital literacy to educate Generation Alpha in critically filtering information and prioritizing valid sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith. This research provides new insights for developing more effective and accurate digital-based religious learning.

Key Words: *Social media, Generation Alpha, Religious information consumption, Digital literacy*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena konsumsi konten keagamaan oleh Generation Alpha melalui media sosial di Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura. Fokus utama penelitian adalah untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana Generation Alpha mengakses dan mengonsumsi informasi keagamaan melalui platform media sosial seperti TikTok, Instagram, dan YouTube, serta untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan yang muncul terkait validitas informasi tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus dan wawancara mendalam sebagai teknik pengumpulan data. Sumber data diperoleh dari mahasiswa IAIN Madura yang mewakili Generation Alpha dan aktif dalam penggunaan media sosial untuk keperluan keagamaan. Analisis data dilakukan dengan mengadaptasi teknik reduksi, display, dan verifikasi data untuk menemukan pola dan tema utama dalam konsumsi informasi keagamaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Generation Alpha lebih cenderung mengonsumsi konten keagamaan secara impulsif, mengutamakan kemudahan akses dan format yang

menarik seperti video pendek dan infografis, tanpa memeriksa keaslian sumber. Meskipun media sosial memberikan kemudahan dalam memperoleh informasi, temuan ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa minimnya verifikasi informasi dapat berpotensi mengarah pada kesalahpahaman terhadap ajaran agama. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah perlunya pendekatan pendidikan yang lebih baik dalam literasi digital keagamaan untuk mengedukasi Generation Alpha dalam menyaring informasi secara kritis dan mengedepankan sumber yang sahih seperti Al-Qur'an dan Hadist. Penelitian ini juga memberikan wawasan baru bagi pengembangan pembelajaran agama berbasis digital yang lebih efektif dan akurat.

Kata Kunci: *Media sosial, Generation Alpha, Konsumsi informasi keagamaan, Literasi digital*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, especially among Generation Alpha, who grew up with the development of digital technology (Meet et al., 2022; Stahl & Literat, 2023; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). This generation relies on social media to fulfil various information needs, including religious understanding (Ogie et al., 2022; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022; Zaid et al., 2022). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube have opened up broad access to religious content, offering visually appealing presentations through short videos, infographics and inspirational quotes (Hallinan et al., 2022; Nurhaeni et al., 2024; Schwaiger et al., 2022). In regions such as Madura, where religious traditions have a significant influence on social life, the use of social media as a means of religious learning has become increasingly prominent (Rahma et al., 2024; Susilo et al., 2021; Wahab et al., 2024). This phenomenon shows how technology is changing the way religion is learned and reveals the risks of consuming content without verification. Reliance on social media often exposes Generation Alpha to religious information that does not include authentic references, making the potential for misunderstanding religious teachings challenging to avoid.

Existing literature shows that social media significantly influences how Generation Alpha learns and understands religious teachings. The study by Andok (2024) highlights that social media is not only a channel for delivering religious messages but also shapes its users' mindset and religious behaviour. Creatively presented digital content has successfully attracted the attention of the younger generation, but the literature also notes that much of the content in circulation is not supported by authentic sources, such as the Qur'an and Hadith. Previous research by Paraman et al. (2022) suggests that impulsive consumption patterns of religious information are often due to social media's ease of access and interactivity. However, in-depth research on how this phenomenon occurs in a specific environment, such as Madura State Islamic Institute, is still minimal. This opens up opportunities to further understand the dynamics of religious information consumption in the digital era.

This research aims to explore Generation Alpha's religious content consumption patterns through social media, focusing on students at the Madura

State Islamic Institute. This research tries to answer several main questions: How does Generation Alpha use social media to obtain religious information? What are the challenges faced in ensuring the validity of the information consumed? Moreover, how does social media influence their religious understanding and practice? By answering these questions, this research is expected to provide new insights into the dynamics of Generation Alpha's interaction with social media in the context of religious learning. In addition, this research also aims to identify strategies that can be used to improve religious digital literacy so that the younger generation can be more selective and critical in receiving religious information from social media.

This research assumes that social media has a dual role in Generation Alpha's religious life: as a tool that facilitates access to religious information and as a challenge in maintaining the authenticity and validity of that information. This study hypothesizes that Generation Alpha's religious content consumption patterns are strongly influenced by the characteristics of social media that offer ease and speed of access but tend to ignore the verification process of information sources. The provisional answer proposed is that Generation Alpha uses social media to seek religious information and as a platform to explore their religious identity. However, limitations in religious digital literacy are significant obstacles that can lead to misunderstandings of religious teachings. This research argues that with a more targeted approach, social media can be optimally utilized to support valid and relevant religious learning.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research focuses on Generation Alpha within the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Madura as the unit of analysis, considering the area's unique social, cultural, and religious contexts. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply explore the phenomenon of religious content consumption on social media. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore Generation Alpha's behaviour, mindset, and preferences in accessing religious information through digital media. Case studies provide a space to understand how specific individuals or groups interact with social media in a religious context while providing greater insight into the social and religious implications of the phenomenon. With this approach, the research can explain in detail the relationship between digital consumption behaviour and the dynamics of religious learning among the younger generation (Renjith et al., 2021; Riazi et al., 2023; Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

The sources of information in this study involved several resource persons selected by purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research topic. The primary informants were IAIN Madura students who actively searched for religious information on social media. Respondents were selected based on the intensity of social media use, activeness in accessing religious content, and the variety of platforms used. In addition to students, several lecturers and religious

content creators were also involved in providing additional perspectives on the consumption patterns and presentation of religious information on social media. This diversity of sources aims to get a comprehensive picture of how Generation Alpha in Madura understands and consumes religious information. The information provided by the interviewees was coded to maintain their privacy, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Informant Codes				
Source Code	Type of resource	Description		Data Collection Technique
I_A	Student	Active users	TikTok Instagram	Interview, Observation, Documentation
I_B	Student	Active YouTube users		Interview, Observation
I_C	Student	Using multiple platforms		Interview, Observation
I_D	Content Creator	Religious content creator		Interview, Documentation
I_E	Lecturer	Teaching religion	communication	Interview

The research data was collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with selected informants to explore their experiences, views and habits in consuming religious information on social media. Participatory observation was conducted by monitoring the interviewees' activities on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube to understand their social media usage patterns—documentation involved analyzing digital content such as videos, infographics or quotes that the interviewees frequently consumed. Data analysis was conducted through three main stages: data reduction to summarize and filter out important information, data display to visualize the patterns found, and verification to ensure the validity of the findings. These techniques assisted the researcher in identifying key themes and supporting the research conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Utilization of Social Media as a Source of Religious Information for Generation Alpha

This study found that Generation Alpha uses social media as a primary means to obtain religious information. Observations show that platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube are highly accessible spaces for religious content, including short lectures, spiritual motivation and worship tutorials. The data obtained shows that visually appealing and short-duration content is highly sought after by Generation Alpha as it is easy to access and understand. Social media makes it easy for this generation to find religious information quickly without going through traditional methods such as reading books or attending assemblies.

Further observations revealed that content with interactive elements, such as commenting and live streaming features, is one of the main attractions of social media. For example, videos featuring recitation of prayers with animated visualizations or Qur'anic texts receive many positive responses through comments and re-sharing. In addition, content creators often use popular approaches, such as religious-themed challenges, that encourage users to participate actively. However, the findings also show that most content does not include verifiable references, so the reliability of the information is often in doubt. It can then be visualized as Figure 1.

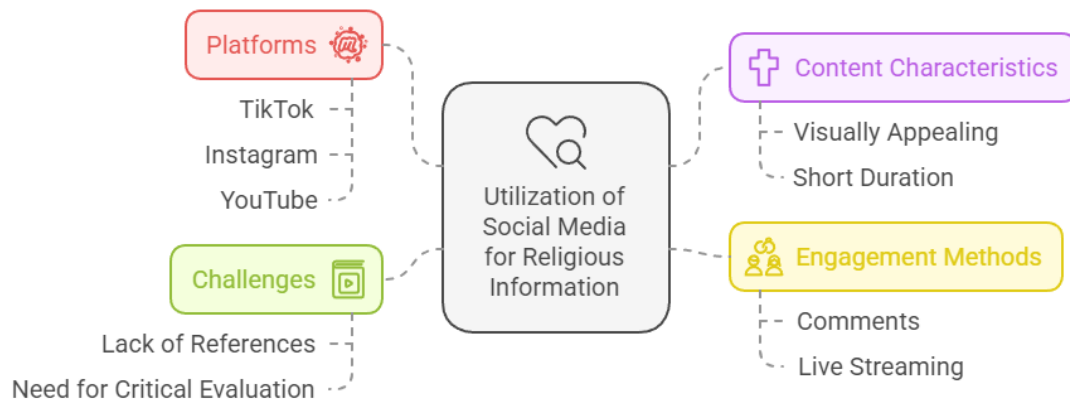


Figure 1. Utilization of Social Media for Religious Information

Social media has become one of the primary sources for Generation Alpha to get religious information, mainly due to its accessible, fast and interactive nature. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram provide space for religious content that is packaged with attractive visuals and is short-duration, making it easier for this generation to understand religious teachings in a practical way (Ummah, 2023; Hartung et al., 2023). The findings reveal that the main appeal of social media for Generation Alpha lies in the flexibility of the format and the ability to interact directly with content creators through features such as comments or live streaming. However, behind these benefits, there is a significant challenge in the lack of clear referencing in much of the content in circulation. This risks users, as the information received does not always match authentic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith. Therefore, Generation Alpha needs to remain critical and cautious in using social media to learn religion by ensuring the accuracy of the information before applying it in daily life.

Manifestations of Impulsivity in Generation Alpha's Religious Information Consumption

Through in-depth interviews, it was found that Generation Alpha tends to be impulsive in seeking and consuming religious information from social media. Interviewees generally mentioned that they prioritize speed and ease of access over ensuring the authenticity of information. This shows a practical

mindset that often ignores the process of analysis and verification. Information visually appealing or delivered by well-known figures on social media is immediately accepted and applied without considering the underlying sources and references.

Interviews with several informants provide a concrete picture of this phenomenon. One interviewee mentioned, "I often follow videos that discuss daily prayers or practices because they seem easy to practice" (I_A, 2023). Another interviewee added, "Sometimes I doubt the authenticity, but I still try it because it is practical" (I_B, 2023). The interviews also found that trust in content is often based on the popularity of the content creator or the number of followers rather than the validity of the material presented. This suggests that Generation Alpha's impulsiveness in consuming religious information is influenced by the appeal of social media and the expectation of instant results. A thematic analysis was conducted from interviews with several informants, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis

Main Theme	Description of Findings	Interview Excerpt
Impulsivity in Information Consumption	Generation Alpha shows a tendency to accept information without analysis or verification readily.	"I often follow videos that discuss prayers or daily practices because they seem easy to practice" (I_A, 2023).
Speed and Ease of Access	Sources prioritize information that is quick and easy to access over sourcing authenticity.	"Sometimes I doubt its authenticity, but I still try it because it's practical" (I_B, 2023).
Belief in Popularity	Trust in content is often based on the popularity of the content creator or the number of followers.	"I trust content with many followers more even if I don't know the exact source" (I_C, 2023).
Lack of Information Verification	Respondents admitted that they rarely confirm the validity of information before putting it into practice.	"I don't always look for other references, if the video is easy to understand, I immediately try it" (I_D, 2023).
The Role of Visual Content in Attraction	Visual content such as short videos and infographics are the main attraction for Generation Alpha when choosing religious information.	"Content with animations or running text is more interesting and makes me focus on the content" (I_E, 2023).

Generation Alpha often impulsively seeks religious information through social media, characterized by a tendency to accept information without an in-depth verification process immediately (Gultom, 2023; Yu et al., 2023; Fahriansah et al., 2023). Content with a format that is simple, interesting and easy to understand is the main factor that encourages this behaviour. Based on interviews, many respondents revealed that they prioritize ease of access over ensuring the validity of information. This phenomenon reveals that the popularity of content creators or the number of their followers is often a measure

of trust for users, even though the material presented does not always refer to reliable sources. This impulsivity points to better education on the importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills. By building this awareness, Generation Alpha is expected to be more selective in receiving religious information, ensuring that they receive Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and Hadith so that their worship practices are more focused.

The Phenomenon of Religious Content Consumption

The analysis shows that religious content consumption on social media, especially among Generation Alpha, is growing rapidly with various interesting trends. One of the key findings in this study is Generation Alpha's tendency to access religious content in short and easily digestible formats, such as short videos, infographics and motivational quotes. Social media has become the leading platform for them to seek religious information, given the easy access and interactivity offered by these platforms. This trend reflects the fast and instant information consumption behaviour that is increasingly common in the digital era. This is reflected in the phenomenon where Generation Alpha prefers content that provides immediate answers to their religious questions without the need to conduct a verification process or in-depth analysis of the source of the information. This finding suggests that consumption patterns of religious content include deep understanding and are also shaped by practicality and simplicity of information presentation that can be easily accessed in everyday life.

This finding shows a preference for fast and engaging content formats and reflects an evolution in the way Generation Alpha addresses religious messaging. For example, as shown in the work of IAIN Madura's KPI students through the short film "*Daring*", the younger generation has adapted how religious messages are delivered using more contemporary media, such as short films and videos. This indicates that the younger generation no longer relies solely on traditional forms of da'wah, such as lectures or sermons, but prefers formats that are more relevant to the digital age. In this context, short films and other creative content become effective channels for delivering religious messages, as they can relate religious values to social situations and contexts more easily understood by audiences. However, while these innovative delivery formats can attract audiences, the main challenge remains maintaining the accuracy of the religious content delivered. The presentation of religious messages in a more attractive and digestible form sometimes leads to distortion or blurring of meaning if not balanced with rigorous verification of authentic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith.



Figure 2. "Daring" Short Film of Madura State Islamic Institute

The findings of this study emphasize that while shorter and more engaging formats of religious content are the top choice for Generation Alpha, there is a deep need to integrate delivery creativity with more assured accuracy of information. As shown in this study, Generation Alpha impulsively accesses religious information, preferring content delivered in short videos and infographics that provide immediate answers to their questions. However, in the context of digital da'wah, while delivering messages in more creative and contemporary forms, such as movies or short videos, is highly effective in attracting attention, a significant challenge remains in keeping the content in line with authentic religious sources. Therefore, in the process of learning and understanding religion through social media, it is crucial to promote good religious digital literacy. Generation Alpha must be equipped to analyze and verify the religious content they consume to ensure that the messages they receive are not only interesting but also valid and in line with actual religious teachings.

The main findings in this study show that Generation Alpha accesses religious information on social media with impulsive consumption patterns and without in-depth verification. This phenomenon has significant implications for how the younger generation receives and understands religious teachings, especially in areas with rapid digitization, such as the Madura State Islamic Institute. Given the practicality and speed sought by Generation Alpha, they accept content presented in a brief and attractive format without checking the authenticity of the source.

The impulsive pattern of consuming religious information through social media among Generation Alpha can be understood through the "instant gratification" phenomenon that has developed in the digital era. Generation Alpha, who grew up amid advances in information technology, is more likely to choose information that is quick and easy to digest without further verification. This trend is in line with some research conducted previously, which shows that

the desire to get information quickly and without the burden of verification is very dominant among young social media users (Claesson, 2024; Kligler-Vilenchik, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). In addition, social media that offers various interactive features, such as comments and live broadcasts, reinforce this tendency by providing a sense of participation and connectivity, increasing trust in the information presented (Maulidia, 2023; Zaini & Fahmi, 2023; Sanjani et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to understand that this impulsivity phenomenon is caused not only by individual characteristics but also by the digital ecosystem that encourages the consumption of information quickly and without careful consideration.

The second finding found in this study is that religious content on social media often does not include verifiable references, reducing the credibility of the information. This suggests that while social media provides easy and quick access to religious information, the quality of the information is often questionable. For Generation Alpha, which increasingly relies on social media as a primary means of acquiring religious knowledge, this is a significant problem. Religious practices that rely on unverified information may risk leading to worship practices inconsistent with authentic Islamic teachings. As such, these findings underscore the importance of monitoring the content circulating on these platforms so that the younger generation's religious teachings can remain authentic, valid, and grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith as primary sources.

The reason why much religious content on social media does not include explicit references can be traced to the growing phenomenon of "instant information" among content creators. Many religious content creators on social media focus on the speed of presenting information that can attract audience attention rather than the accuracy and validity of the source of the information (Denisova, 2023; Guo et al., 2023; Kondamudi et al., 2023). This is exacerbated by the pressure to create engaging and easy-to-understand content, which in many cases is not accompanied by strong references. Content creators often rely on their understanding or interpretation of religious teachings, which, while it may be true for them, does not necessarily reflect the actual teachings of Islam. This phenomenon is also exacerbated by the popularity of such content, which is based more on visibility and social interaction than the validity of the information presented.

The third interesting finding is Generation Alpha's tendency to prefer content presented in visual formats, such as short videos and infographics, which are easy to understand and attract attention. This has implications for the way digital da'wah needs to adapt to the way of thinking and media consumption patterns that develop among the younger generation. Simple and creative visual formats make it easy for Generation Alpha to access religious information quickly. However, they can also distort understanding if the information lacks adequate context. Given that most of Generation Alpha in Madura and other regions are still searching for a more personalized religious identity, it is

important to ensure that the content they consume is interesting and valid and accountable teachings.

Generation Alpha's tendency to choose visual content that is more interesting and easy to understand is strongly influenced by the habit of fast and instant media consumption. As found in a study by Lim et al. (2022), today's young generation is likelier to choose media that presents information in a simple format but goes straight to the point. This decision to consume more visual and concise content is inseparable from the visual culture that dominates social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. This shows that Generation Alpha is not only looking for relevant and valid information but also for information that can be presented in a quick and engaging way. Therefore, effective digital da'wah must be able to balance the creative aspects of delivering religious messages while maintaining the accuracy and truthfulness of the content of the message. In this context, digital religious education that teaches media literacy and analytical skills becomes essential so Generation Alpha can filter the content they consume wisely.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the role of social media as the primary source of religious information for Generation Alpha, especially within the Madura State Islamic Institute. The findings show that Generation Alpha tends to consume religious content impulsively, prioritizing speed of access and visual appeal over the validity of the information. Social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are the leading platforms due to their ease of access and interactive formats, such as comments and live broadcasts. However, this consumption pattern is often characterized by a lack of verification of information sources, which can risk leading to misunderstandings of religious teachings. This research provides new insights into how the digital age affects young people's religious learning patterns while emphasizing the importance of religious digital literacy in keeping up with the rapid flow of information on social media.

The contribution of this research lies in its revelation of the dynamics of religious content consumption among Generation Alpha, which reflects the transformation of religious proselytization and learning in the digital era. This research enriches the literature by offering a new perspective on the relationship between impulsive behaviour in information consumption and the validity of religious information sources. However, this study has a limited scope, focusing only on Generation Alpha within IAIN Madura. Other factors, such as gender differences, age, and broader geographical context, have not been fully accommodated. Therefore, further research is needed to examine these aspects, including applying broader survey or interview methods to get a more comprehensive picture.

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