Development Communication in Empowering Digital Santri Preneurs for Creative Economy at Asshidiqiyah

Lathifa Prima Ghanistyana, Raden Nita Rohmatunisa*, Afifah Fitriah

Universitas Muhammadiyah Tangerang, Kota Tangerang, Indonesia
*radennita.umt@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the development communication patterns at Asshiddiqiyah Islamic Boarding School in West Jakarta, identify strategies for strengthening santri's digital literacy and entrepreneurship, and formulate an applicable development communication model based on digital santri. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study method through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and focus group discussions (FGDs), allowing for an in-depth exploration of communication practices and barriers to technological access within the pesantren environment. The findings reveal that development communication is participatory and dialogical, involving caregivers, administrators, and santri from program planning to implementation. Strategies for strengthening digital literacy were carried out through a project-based curriculum, entrepreneurship training, provision of shared facilities, and the creation of a competitive ecosystem. The novelty of this research lies in the design of a development communication model for digital santri in the form of an Integrated Communication Matrix*, which integrates hierarchical structures, Islamic values, and the creative participation of santri. This model fills the gap in the literature on pesantren-based development communication in the digital era and offers practical solutions to enhance literacy, economic independence, and the competitiveness of santri, while also being replicable in other pesantren.*

Keywords : Development Communication; Digital Literacy; Digital Entrepreneur Santri; Asshiddiqiyah Islamic Boarding School

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pola komunikasi pembangunan di Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta Barat, mengidentifikasi strategi literasi digital dan kewirausahaan santri, serta merumuskan model komunikasi pembangunan berbasis santri digital yang aplikatif. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan FGD, sehingga dapat menggali praktik komunikasi dan hambatan akses teknologi di lingkungan pesantren. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi pembangunan bersifat partisipatif dan dialogis, melibatkan pengasuh, pengelola, dan santri dari perencanaan hingga pelaksanaan program. Strategi penguatan literasi digital dilakukan melalui kurikulum berbasis proyek, pelatihan kewirausahaan, penyediaan fasilitas bersama, dan ekosistem kompetitif. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada desain model komunikasi pembangunan berbasis santri digital berupa perumusan Matriks Komunikasi Terpadu yang mengintegrasikan struktur hierarkis, nilai Islam, dan partisipasi kreatif santri. Model ini mengisi kekosongan literatur komunikasi pembangunan pesantren di era digital serta menawarkan solusi praktis untuk meningkatkan literasi, kemandirian ekonomi, dan daya saing santri yang dapat direplikasi di pesantren lain.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Pembangunan; Literasi Digital; Santri Digital Preneur; Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah

INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) has become inevitable, particularly after the Indonesian Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, invited the students of Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta to participate in developing the creative economy sector (Septiana, 2023). Nevertheless, one of the major challenges faced by *pesantren* is the low level of digital literacy among *santri* and their limited access to technology-based economic opportunities, even though many *pesantren* have begun to develop digital and entrepreneurial training programs (Lundeto et al., 2021). Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah was selected for this study because it has initiated several digital skills and entrepreneurship training programs, although a comprehensive development communication strategy is still lacking (Purwanto et al., 2024).

Pesantren play a vital role in community development, not only in religious education and character formation but also in empowering society through value-based approaches (Aijat Mau, 2024). Within the framework of development communication, *pesantren* possess significant potential to drive value-oriented social transformation (Purwanto et al., 2021). Their contribution to the digital creative economy, although emerging, is constrained by the absence of participatory development communication and by limited technological and market networks (Mukarromah et al., 2024). Therefore, a transformative and participatory development communication approach is essential to foster collaboration and strategic use of digital media (Qizam et al., 2025).

In response to these challenges, the concept of the Santri Digital Preneur has emerged. This term not only refers to technologically literate *santri*, but specifically defines those capable of actively utilizing digital skills and platforms to create, manage, and grow independent enterprises in the creative economy sector. A Santri Digital Preneur integrates three key pillars: (1) technical digital competencies such as digital marketing, graphic design, and content management; (2) an entrepreneurial spirit characterized by innovation, risk-taking, and market orientation; and (3) a value-based character rooted in Islamic boarding school principles such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *istiqomah* (steadfastness), and independence. This concept repositions *santri* from being mere objects of development into subjects and key players in technology-based creative ventures. Efforts to realize the Santri Digital Preneur profile include strengthening digital literacy, providing entrepreneurship training, and utilizing digital media for production and marketing (Arifah et al., 2024). The concept is highly relevant for reinforcing the role of *pesantren* in the broader community development ecosystem (Rahman et al., 2023). Yet, persistent challenges remain, including income sustainability, infrastructure limitations, and weak market access. Addressing these issues requires a sustainable digital entrepreneurship education strategy, including teacher training and curriculum development (Dirawan, 2023). Considering that the creative economy is one of the main pillars of Indonesia's digital economic growth, these steps are urgent (Septiyana et al., 2020).

Economic empowerment programs in *pesantren* support not only the financial independence of *santri* but also generate wider social impact (Kusmanto & Amin, 2022)—for example, by enhancing the competitiveness of human resources (Hidayati et al., 2023) and enabling *pesantren* to actively contribute to community-based economic development (Masturin, 2022). However, internal obstacles remain, such as limited understanding among caretakers regarding innovative teaching methods, weak internal communication, and program management constraints (Herianto et al., 2023). Development communication is therefore crucial to bridge social change processes, transfer knowledge, and strengthen collective participation within *pesantren* communities (Wahono et al., 2023).

In the context of creative economy development through digital-preneur programs, development communication plays a key role in supporting innovation adoption, accelerating economic transformation, and fostering community-based collective action (Dey et al., 2019). By promoting innovation, sharing knowledge, and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders, development communication can strengthen the creative industry sector (Purwani, 2022). Effective

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communication fosters active participation of community members in development issues (Buluamang & Handika, 2021). Communication approaches in *pesantren* must be inclusive, locally contextualized, and cross-sectoral, ensuring that Islamic values remain the foundation of the development process (Sari et al., 2022). Furthermore, development communication provides individuals with greater control over their environment—including economic and technological dimensions—leading to beneficial social change and improved quality of life (Carciotto & Dinbabo, 2013).

When designing a communication strategy, Hafied Cangara (2013) identifies five key stages: research, planning, implementation, evaluation, and reporting. This sequence aligns with Hariadi's (2014) perspective that strategic management consists of formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Research begins by identifying communication problems, followed by strategic planning to determine messages, media, and target audiences. Implementation focuses on disseminating information through appropriate channels, evaluation measures program effectiveness, and reporting provides the basis for further development. Together, these stages form a systematic and applicable communication cycle.

Regarding empowerment, Chambers (1995) defines it as a process in which individuals or groups lacking power gain access to and control over resources, thereby enhancing their ability to make decisions that shape their lives. Everett M. Rogers (1976) describes development communication as the systematic use of communication to accelerate social change and development by disseminating innovation and fostering community participation. The goal is to increase knowledge, change attitudes, and shape behaviors so that people can adopt ideas, technologies, or practices that improve their quality of life. Rogers also highlights the role of the communicator as a change agent and the need for a participatory approach to ensure that development aligns with local needs.

Previous studies indicate that *pesantren* have begun moving toward digitalization through digital literacy and entrepreneurship training. Lundeto et al. (2021) underscore the significant potential of the digital creative economy sector within *pesantren*; however, limited access to technology and low levels of digital literacy remain serious barriers. Similarly, Purwanto et al. (2024) note that various digital-based entrepreneurship training programs in *pesantren* are not yet sustainable due to weak program management and a lack of systematic communication strategies. Nevertheless, these studies have largely focused on the technical aspects of digital skills and entrepreneurship, without thoroughly exploring how development communication patterns can function as catalysts for digital transformation. In other words, the critical gap lies in the absence of a development communication model specifically designed for *pesantren*—one capable of bridging digital literacy, economic empowerment, and the internalization of Islamic values. This study addresses that gap by formulating a participatory, dialogic, and integrative development communication model grounded in the Santri Digital Preneur framework. Such a model is expected not only to overcome technological access and digital literacy barriers but also to encourage *santri* to become competitive digital entrepreneurs within the digital economy ecosystem.

Before discussing the research problem, it is important to emphasize that the digital transformation of *pesantren*, particularly at Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta, has significantly altered existing communication patterns. The use of technology in education and entrepreneurship serves not merely as a tool but as a primary driver of *santri*empowerment. The digital-preneurship program implemented in this *pesantren* has shifted the role of *santri* from mere technology users to creators of economic opportunities through digital media. Through a development communication approach involving active participation from various stakeholders—including *pesantren* leaders, *santri*, parents, and the surrounding community—the institution has successfully integrated digital literacy and entrepreneurship into all its activities. However, despite these significant achievements, much remains to be explored and developed. It is therefore essential

to identify effective development communication patterns, as well as strategies and models, to optimize *santri*empowerment in the digital creative economy.

This study aims to address three main research questions: How does the development communication pattern at Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta contribute to empowering *santri* toward participation in the digital creative economy? What strategies are effective in enhancing digital literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and market expansion? And how can a development communication model be designed and replicated to cultivate *santri* as digital entrepreneurs in other *pesantren*? Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to analyze the development communication patterns implemented at the *pesantren*, identify strategies for strengthening *santri* digital literacy and entrepreneurship, and formulate a transformative development communication model that can be replicated within faith-based educational contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study method. A qualitative approach was chosen for its ability to explore and understand the meanings ascribed by individuals or groups to a social or human problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, the case study method was applied because the primary aim of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of *"how development communication contributes to empowering santri as digital entrepreneurs"* within a specific context, namely the Islamic Boarding School (*Pesantren*) Asshiddiqiyah in Jakarta (Yin, 2018).

The study is grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which positions the subjective experiences of the actors—*santri*, teachers, pesantren leaders, alumni, and external partners—as the primary sources of knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This paradigm is highly relevant to the pesantren context, where social meaning and knowledge are not merely transmitted hierarchically but are continuously built and negotiated through the unique social interactions among *kiai*, *santri*, and the wider community. These relationships form a collective reality in which knowledge, entrepreneurial values, and understanding of digital technology are co-constructed through dialogue, role modeling, and practical experiences. Consequently, the process of development communication in the pesantren is viewed as a collective construction rather than a simple top-down instruction.

Research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, in which informants were chosen based on their relevance and direct involvement in the digital entrepreneurship program to ensure rich and pertinent data (Patton, 2015). In total, 17 informants participated: six active *santri*, five teachers and mentors, three alumni, one pesantren leader, and two external partners. This number was deemed sufficient as it reached the point of data saturation. Data saturation occurred when the process of data collection, particularly interviews, no longer generated new themes, insights, or categories of information from additional informants within the same group (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Verification indicated that interviews with the fifteenth to seventeenth informants primarily confirmed and deepened existing themes without introducing substantially new perspectives.

Data were collected using three primary instruments to ensure richness and depth of information. First**,** semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed for flexible exploration of participants' experiences while maintaining focus on the research objectives (Kvale, 1996). Second, participant observation enabled the researcher to join training sessions, business practices, and daily interactions in the pesantren to directly capture the dynamics of communication in its natural context (Spradley, 1980). Third, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to verify preliminary findings, confront data, and compare interpretations across groups—particularly among *santri*, teachers, and alumni (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three interrelated stages. The first stage**,** data reduction, involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting raw data from field notes to generate initial themes. The second stage, data display,

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organized information into thematic matrices, concept maps, and descriptive narratives to visualize patterns and relationships among themes. The final stage, conclusion drawing and verification, was carried out continuously throughout the research by re-checking data, comparing findings with theoretical frameworks, and seeking evidence to support or challenge provisional conclusions.

The validity or credibility of findings in this qualitative study was maintained through several strategies. The primary strategy was triangulation, which included source triangulation (comparing data from different informants), methodological triangulation (using interviews, observations, and FGDs), and time triangulation (Denzin, 2017). Data trustworthiness was further strengthened using the framework of Lincoln and Guba (1985). First, credibility was enhanced through member checking (verifying findings with informants), peer debriefing, and sustained engagement in the field. Second, transferability was ensured by providing thick description of the pesantren context, informant characteristics, and program details, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to other settings. Third, dependability was maintained by keeping a transparent audit trail that included records of data collection, analytic memos, and systematic documentation of research procedures.

Thus, this study emphasizes that the understanding of development communication in pesantren is not a static entity but a dynamic social construction formed through interaction, collective experience, and shared reflection among the actors. Through this rigorous methodological approach, the research aims to produce a development communication model that is not only contextually grounded and practically applicable but also replicable to strengthen *santri* empowerment in the digital era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

At Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah, a new cohort of santri digital preneur has emerged—students who not only study classical Islamic texts but also skillfully develop business ideas through cameras, digital platforms, and social media networks. Guided by the Media Hub and the P52RA curriculum, they create original content, manage internal brands such as Eskimar ice cream and Eskiwater bottled water, and have even won provincial and national advertising competitions through the "Laundry Pesantren" campaign. Their presence signals a shift in the role of *santri*—from mere technology consumers to economic creators—by integrating digital literacy, entrepreneurial spirit, and Islamic ethics (*adab*), thereby strengthening Asshiddiqiyah's position as a pioneer of the digital pesantren in the creative economy.

Development communication at Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta has become the key to empowering these santri digital preneur for participation in the creative economy, summarized as follows:

Development Communication Patterns for Empowering Santri toward a Digital Creative Economy

The development communication pattern at Asshiddiqiyah Islamic Boarding School represents a practical application of Everett M. Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory. Rogers emphasizes that innovation spreads more effectively when communication involves active community participation, supported by mechanisms linking decision-making centers to the grassroots. At this pesantren, diffusion occurs through a tiered communication chain—ranging from weekly leadership meetings to the distribution of official documents—that ensures message consistency. Yet, consistent with Rogers's view, success depends not only on hierarchical structure but also on the participation of *santri* as agents of innovation. The involvement of *santri* in creating digital content and developing entrepreneurship demonstrates that diffusion is not merely a linear top-down process, but a creative negotiation that reinforces collective ownership of innovation.

The development communication structure effectively enables the rise of santri digital preneur by adopting a hybrid model. This model integrates two key theoretical frameworks: the structured diffusion of innovation of Everett M. Rogers (2003) and the participatory development communication of Jan Servaes (2008). This integration creates an ecosystem in which innovation can

be consistently disseminated from the top down while being executed creatively and legitimately from the bottom up.

Following Rogers's (2003) theory, digital entrepreneurial innovation at Asshiddiqiyah spreads through a structured, tiered communication chain. The process begins with weekly leadership meetings as the center of strategic decision-making. These decisions are then documented in official PDF files and distributed uniformly**.** Analysis as Enabler: This mechanism serves not only to disseminate information but also to safeguard brand stability and identity. In a highly competitive digital economy, message consistency—such as with the Eskimar brand or the "Laundry Pesantren" campaign—is critical to building market trust. Without this clear chain of command, the diverse initiatives of *santri* could become sporadic, unfocused, and even counterproductive to the pesantren's image. The structure ensures that all products and digital content share the same "DNA," derived from the leadership's vision. For the santri digital preneur, this consistency is a crucial asset in penetrating the digital market.

This top-down structure, however, does not operate rigidly. The pesantren deliberately adopts the principle of participatory communication proposed by Servaes (2008), where two-way dialogue is essential. Participation is realized through two key mechanisms: the Central Media Team as facilitator and *musyawarah* (deliberation) as a normative foundation. Analysis as Enabler (Central Media Team): The Central Media Team does not act as a content police, but as a translational bridge between strategic vision and creative execution. They mentor student units, provide technical expertise, and help refine grassroots ideas. Here Servaes's theory comes alive: *santri* are not passive recipients but dialogical partners. Without the technical and creative guidance of this team, the brilliant ideas of the *santri* might fail to meet the quality standards demanded by the digital market.

Analysis as Enabler (Musyawarah and Adab): This element is critical. Every innovation or content idea from the *santri* must pass through a value filter via *musyawarah* (deliberation) and *adab* (Islamic ethics). Far from stifling creativity, this mechanism grants social and spiritual legitimacy. Without *musyawarah*, innovation would lack the endorsement of the pesantren's leadership and community. A "viral" advertisement that violates *adab* would quickly lose support. Thus, this communication process ensures that every digital-preneurship product is not only commercially viable but also ethically valid, ultimately becoming their unique competitive advantage.

At the pesantren, *santri* participation in creating and distributing digital content is not limited to top-down instructions but also involves creativity and grassroots initiative. This structure maintains message consistency and alignment with religious values. The starting point is the weekly leadership meeting—attended by the caretakers, principals, and curriculum representatives—which formulates the digital entrepreneurship agenda. Decisions are translated into official PDF documents and distributed to the Central Media Team and a network of class advisors and mentors. This "leader → filtering → dissemination" scheme ensures that messages are delivered uniformly, preventing distortion as they reach *santri* and parents.

At the operational level, the Central Media Team consists of nine members skilled in videography, photography, scriptwriting, and social media management. The team plays a dual role as content quality guardian and technical mentor for units in the junior high school, senior high school, and *ma'had*. Hierarchy does not limit participation; each unit may propose content ideas, discuss them, and produce materials under the guidance of the central team. In this way, communication evolves from mere instruction delivery to creative negotiation that remains within the bounds of Islamic law (*syariah*).

Modern digital tools such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp groups serve as concrete channels for this communication model. Core content is always uploaded first to maintain brand consistency; thereafter, individual units may repost or create variations. Parents verify the authenticity of announcements through WhatsApp groups, while the broader public responds via comments and direct messages. All responses are monitored by the Central Media Team and compiled as feedback for leadership, thus closing the two-way dialogue loop.

The pesantren's normative foundation—*amanah* (honesty), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and *adab* (Islamic ethics)—filters all content. Ideas that do not align with moral values are refined to remain productive and consistent with religious teachings. The combination of hierarchical structure, participatory dialogue, and Islamic values strengthens public trust, as evidenced by approximately 45,000 Instagram followers and 300,000 TikTok followers who serve both as market and support community for the *santri* digital entrepreneurs. Through this model, the pesantren expands its reach, safeguards its reputation, and prepares *santri* to become active players in the digital creative economy without losing their religious identity.

Meanwhile, the participatory communication model proposed by Servaes provides the theoretical framework for understanding how the pesantren balances authority with dialogue. Servaes emphasizes that development communication is ineffective if it only delivers one-way messages; it must open space for feedback, dialogue, and adaptation to community needs. Practices at Asshiddiqiyah reflect this principle: the Central Media Team not only controls content quality but also enables each educational unit to propose ideas, which are then negotiated within the framework of Islamic law. This process exemplifies the two-way communication central to Servaes's theory, where development actors and the community (pesantren leaders, teachers, and parents) collaborate in decision-making.

The participatory communication model developed by Servaes (2008) theoretically underscores the importance of two-way dialogue between decision-makers and audiences for successful development. This is clearly evident at the pesantren, where leadership collaborates with *santri* and the community to generate creative ideas aligned with Islamic teachings and market needs. Implementation of this communication model has produced significant results, such as rapid growth in social media followers and success in advertising competitions.

Thus, the integration of Rogers's and Servaes's perspectives is clearly reflected in the pesantren's model. From Rogers's standpoint, the pesantren functions as an innovation hub disseminating creative digital ideas through a structured, tiered, and consistent system. From Servaes's perspective, the model's success lies in participatory dialogue that enables *santri* and the community to play an active role in shaping message content. The combination of these approaches yields an adaptive development communication ecosystem in which digital innovation can flourish without compromising Islamic values, while community participation is ensured through multi-level engagement—from leadership to *santri* as digital entrepreneurs.

Gradual Strategy in Developing Digital-Preneur Santri at Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah

The strengthening of digital-creative entrepreneurship at Asshiddiqiyah begins at the curriculum level and forms a crucial foundation for the emergence of santri digital preneur. Through the P52RA project—a component of the *Merdeka* Curriculum—10th-grade students are required to design products or services rooted in local wisdom, prepare cost reports, and market their work during Santri Creation Week. This policy embeds digital literacy and entrepreneurship into the formal schedule, making business skills a core competency rather than merely an extracurricular activity, while preparing the santri digital preneur to become active players in a pesantren-based creative economy.

The advancement of digital-creative entrepreneurship at Asshiddiqiyah aligns with entrepreneurial education theory, which emphasizes integrating practical skills with conceptual understanding. Gartner (1988) asserted that entrepreneurship is not merely the result of innate talent but can be cultivated through systematic education initiated at an early stage. The implementation of the P52RA project in the formal curriculum exemplifies this approach, as *santri* not only learn entrepreneurial theory but also practice designing products based on local wisdom, calculating costs, and marketing products digitally. This reinforces the view that entrepreneurship must be developed through real experiences rather than purely theoretical

instruction. For the santri digital preneur, this combination of theory and practice provides a critical foundation for building confidence and business capacity.

The next step involves intensive skill transfer through the national-level *Santri Digital Trainer* (SDKI 2023) program. Over three days, *santri* participated in structured training on scriptwriting, storyboarding, and video advertisement production—methods later adopted as internal standards at the pesantren. Evidence of its impact is reflected in the pesantren team's victories in regional media competitions and a national award for the "Pesantren Laundry" advertisement, which also popularized student-created brands such as Eskimar ice cream and Eskiwater bottled water. These achievements created a demonstration effect, motivating other *santri* to compete in producing promotional content for pesantren products. This structured training solidified the identity of the santri digital preneur as a generation not only technologically proficient but also capable of excelling in national-level creative competitions.

The intensive training program through SDKI 2023 further emphasized the importance of practical skills in developing digital entrepreneurship. More broadly, the program illustrated the real application of experiential learning in entrepreneurship education. Cunningham et al. (2018) highlight that digital entrepreneurial skills develop optimally through intensive practice requiring adaptation to technological changes. The three-day training not only enhanced technical skills in digital media production but also fostered self-confidence to compete at regional and national levels. The success of *santri* in advertising competitions and the popularity of local products such as Eskimar and Eskiwater serve as indicators that experiential, skill-based approaches effectively nurture an entrepreneurial mindset.

To overcome limitations in personal device usage, the pesantren established a shared media laboratory equipped with cameras, editing computers, and controlled internet access. Access to the laboratory was scheduled alternately—after *Isya* for male students and after *Asr* for female students—so that each *santri* could practice without violating dormitory rules. This arrangement instilled digital discipline while promoting shared ownership of digital facilities. With the available infrastructure, the pesantren launched a series of internal competitions and exhibitions: weekly Instagram Reels contests, monthly vlogging, and annual advertising competitions for pesantren products. This scheme positioned *santri* as media producers rather than mere consumers. Indicators of success included increased participation in video competitions, growing enthusiasm for product promotion, and the expansion of the Pesantren Laundry service to the surrounding community—an opportunity highly valued by the santri digital preneur.

In addition, the provision of a shared media laboratory with scheduled access reflects the principle of equitable access to technology as theorized by Selwyn (2016). Controlled and disciplined access not only facilitates equal learning opportunities but also fosters collective responsibility in technology use. Thus, *santri* are encouraged to become content producers and digital entrepreneurs within an ecosystem that supports collaboration, discipline, and religious ethics. The shared infrastructure established by the pesantren to address limitations in personal devices aligns with Selwyn's (2016) argument that equitable and regulated access to technology can enhance educational quality and skills, particularly in the digital era. The scheduled system ensures that all students can access digital facilities regularly and fairly, reinforcing digital discipline and encouraging shared ownership of technological resources. For the santri digital preneur, this shared facility serves as a fair and well-structured learning space, ensuring that every innovation remains within the moral and religious values of the pesantren.

Overall, the entrepreneurship education model at Asshiddiqiyah demonstrates a staged cycle: project-based curriculum → intensive training → provision of shared infrastructure → continuous competition. This cycle not only prepares *santri* as digital entrepreneurs but also shows that value-based and community-oriented entrepreneurship education can function harmoniously within the pesantren framework. This recurring cycle—curriculum, training, facilities, and

competition—is deliberately designed to cultivate santri digital preneur who are competent, creative, and firmly grounded in the religious identity of the pesantren.

Table 1. Number of Social Media Followers of Asshiddiqiyah Digital Santri

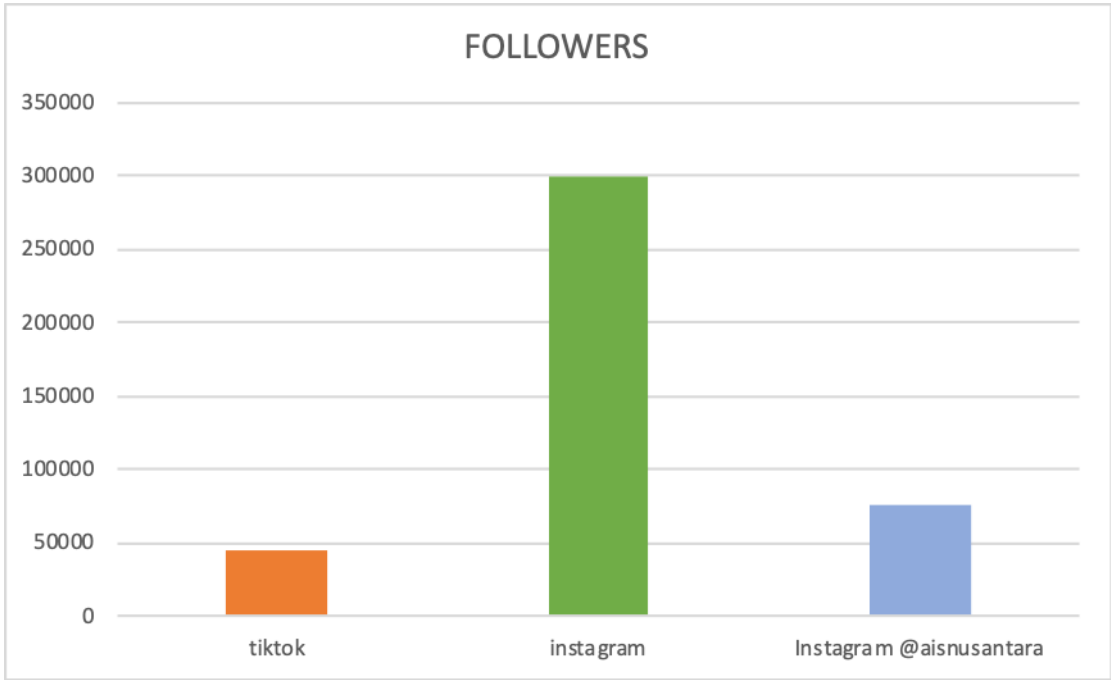| SOCIAL MEDIA	FOLLOWERS	CONTEST WON	YEAR	COMPETITION ACHIEVEMENTS
tiktok	45000	Provincial Advertising Contest	2023	Provincial Advertising Contest Winners
instagram	30000	National Advertising Contest	2023	National Advertising Contest Winners
Instagram @aisnusantara	74800	-	2023	Popularizing Content Among Islamic Boarding Schools

Figure 1. Number of Social Media Followers of Asshiddiqiyah Digital Santri

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, TikTok records the highest number of followers compared with other social-media platforms, highlighting the dominance of short-video content in the *santri* digital communication strategy (Source: Asshiddiqiyah Digital Santri Internal Data, 2025). This trend illustrates how Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah Jakarta has successfully transformed the traditional role of *santri* from mere technology consumers into content creators and active players in the creative economy through digital-preneur empowerment. Supported by targeted mentoring, a project-based curriculum, intensive skill training, and shared digital facilities, the *santri* have acquired and refined the competencies required to compete in both digital and entrepreneurial arenas. Their achievements—evidenced by the significant growth in social-media followers and repeated victories in advertising competitions—demonstrate that digital-preneur empowerment can serve as an effective alternative for Islamic boarding schools to create new economic opportunities while strengthening *santri* competitiveness in the digital era.

The most striking finding from the social-media analysis of Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah is the dominance of its TikTok account, which has attracted approximately 45,000 followers, far exceeding the 30,000 followers of the school's main Instagram account. This substantial gap indicates a marked platform preference among audiences and reveals a dynamic of digital communication that is particularly valuable for the santri digital preneur.

Several key factors explain TikTok's dominance. First, TikTok's algorithm—especially the For You Page (FYP) feature—is designed to push content to new audiences on a massive scale, even from accounts with relatively small follower bases. This mechanism enables much faster organic reach than Instagram, whose algorithm tends to prioritize interactions with existing followers. For the *santri digital preneur*, this algorithm provides a major opportunity to expand the distribution of the pesantren's creative content to a broader public without significant promotional costs. Second, TikTok's content format aligns closely with the dynamic character of pesantren life. The platform supports short, authentic, trend-driven videos—an ideal format for showcasing daily activities, Islamic humor sketches, behind-the-scenes production of internal businesses such as Eskimar and Eskiwater, or distinctive *santri* creative challenges. Content that feels "raw" and personal fosters emotional closeness with audiences, increases engagement, and affirms the *santri digital preneur* identity as creative and adaptive. Third, demographic compatibility plays an important role. As members of Generation Z, the *santri* are native creators on TikTok. They not only consume content but also possess an intuitive understanding of what types of material are likely to go viral and resonate with their peers. By creating content that reflects their own world, the *santri* present authentic and appealing narratives, further reinforcing their role as trend-savvy content producers who maintain the pesantren's values.

The dominance of TikTok, coupled with the *santri*'s success in various competitions, carries strategic implications for refining the pesantren's development-communication model. First, these achievements validate the participatory approach. A communication model that positions community members—particularly *santri*—as primary communication agents proves more effective than a rigid top-down pattern. The intuitive skills of the *santri digital preneur* in creating relevant content on TikTok represent an asset that cannot be replicated by hierarchical methods alone. This finding corroborates Servaes's participatory communication theory, which stresses that creative processes and two-way dialogue exert greater influence at the level of content execution. Second, this phenomenon marks a shift from broadcasting to engagement. The experience of the *santri digital preneur* demonstrates that development communication in the digital era is no longer sufficient as one-way message delivery, such as formal announcements. Platforms like TikTok demand the creation of content that stimulates interaction, dialogue, and audience participation. The *santri*'s victories in multiple advertising contests provide concrete evidence of their ability to translate development messages—such as promoting pesantren products and services—into creative formats favored by modern audiences. Third, TikTok's dominance underscores the importance of networking and cross-community collaboration. Data from the Instagram account @aisnusantara, which has reached 74,800 followers, shows that Asshiddiqiyah's communication strategy does not operate in isolation. By collaborating and disseminating content through the *Jaringan Santri Nusantara* (Santri Nusantara Network), the *santri digital preneur* have exponentially expanded their reach and enhanced the legitimacy of their messaging. These findings affirm that an effective development-communication model must be outward-looking and collaborative, linking the pesantren to broader networks.

Through the use of social-media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, combined with outstanding achievements in advertising competitions, the *santri* of Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah have not only introduced their product brands but also positioned the pesantren itself as a pioneer in a values-based digital creative economy. This success shows that the integration of digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and Islamic ethics (*adab*) can create an empowerment model that is both relevant and effective in today's digital era. The *santri*'s accomplishments across multiple media competitions

also reflect the effectiveness of Asshiddiqiyah's approach in empowering *santri* as digital entrepreneurs. One of their greatest achievements was winning a provincial-level advertising contest with the "Laundry Pesantren" campaign, which not only promoted the pesantren's laundry service but also introduced internal brands such as Eskimar ice cream and Eskiwater bottled water. Their subsequent victory in a national advertising competition further strengthened Asshiddiqiyah's position as a pioneer in empowering *santri* through digital entrepreneurship.

These accomplishments have provided a powerful demonstration effect for other *santri*. Inspired by their peers' successes, more students are now motivated to follow the same path, fostering a culture of positive competition within the pesantren. This environment has encouraged wider participation in video contests, promotion of pesantren products, and the development of new ideas that may evolve into future business opportunities for the institution.

Designing a Development Communication Model Applicable and Replicable for Digital-Preneur Santri

The development communication model implemented at As-Siddiqiyah Islamic School, known as the Integrated Communication Matrix, presents a unique and more comprehensive approach compared to previous studies. The findings of this research confirm that the success of empowering *santri* as digital entrepreneurs is determined not merely by the presence of entrepreneurship units or technical training, but by a communication system that is structured, participatory, and value-oriented.

The model that drives *santri* toward digital entrepreneurship at Asshiddiqiyah is grounded in the Integrated Communication Matrix, which combines two complementary frameworks into a cohesive system. This model is academically relevant and also responds to the national call for innovation among *santri*, as highlighted by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, who has actively invited *santri* to collaborate in developing the creative economy (Septiana, 2023). Asshiddiqiyah's approach aligns with the holistic concept of development communication that incorporates structural, participatory, and local-value dimensions in the development process (Servaes, 2008), offering a prototype capable of meeting these challenges.

On the vertical axis, the matrix operates through five structural layers: (1) weekly leadership meetings serving as the policy-making center; (2) the Media Hub, functioning as quality gatekeeper and mentor; (3) the P52RA curriculum project, integrating digital literacy directly into classroom practice; (4) the *santri-preneur* team, responsible for producing and marketing internal brands; and (5) a network of parents, alumni, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), which expands the flow of information and support beyond the pesantren. This hierarchical pathway ensures a clear and authoritative flow of messages from decision-makers to implementers and markets, without suppressing grassroots creativity, as every *santri* idea undergoes curation and mentorship within the system.

On the horizontal axis, the Integrated Communication Matrix activates four transformational components. First, routine needs assessments during leadership meetings ensure that investments in cameras, computers, and studio space are accurately targeted. Second, active participation positions *santri* as content producers: they write scripts, direct the "Laundry Pesantren" advertisements, and promote internal brands such as Eskimar ice cream and Eskiwater bottled water. Activities on platforms like Instagram and TikTok influence not only marketing but also interpersonal interaction and digital communication among *santri* (Baitillah & Ghanistyana, 2024). In this sense, *santri* act not only as marketers but also as agents managing their digital self-presentation. Using the dramaturgical theory approach, they consciously construct a "front stage" as modern and devout digital entrepreneurs—an act of symbolic interaction that shapes public perception and their own self-image (Yolanda et al., 2025). Third, the integration of values such as *amanah*, *musyawarah*, and *adab* filters every creative output, ensuring innovation while remaining fully compliant with Islamic law—as evidenced by tens of thousands of Instagram

followers and hundreds of thousands of TikTok followers. This holistic, value-based approach has proven effective in building a strong institutional identity, a practice also observed in Islamic schools abroad that emphasize value-based missions (Yusufali, 2021). Fourth, collaborative replication through AISNU transforms local success into a national prototype. This replication occurs through AISNU (*Arus Informasi Santri Nusantara*), a media community for *santri* spearheaded by Asshiddiqiyah, which acts as an "amplifier" by distributing training materials, offering online mentoring sessions, and showcasing content to hundreds of pesantren members—thus turning local success into a national model. The Instagram account @aisnusantara now has 74.8 k followers.

To facilitate understanding, the Integrated Communication Matrix at As-Siddiqiyah can be visualized as an interaction between the Vertical Axis (Hierarchical Structure) and the Horizontal Axis (Transformational Components), creating a dynamic ecosystem for innovation and sustainable digital-preneurship.
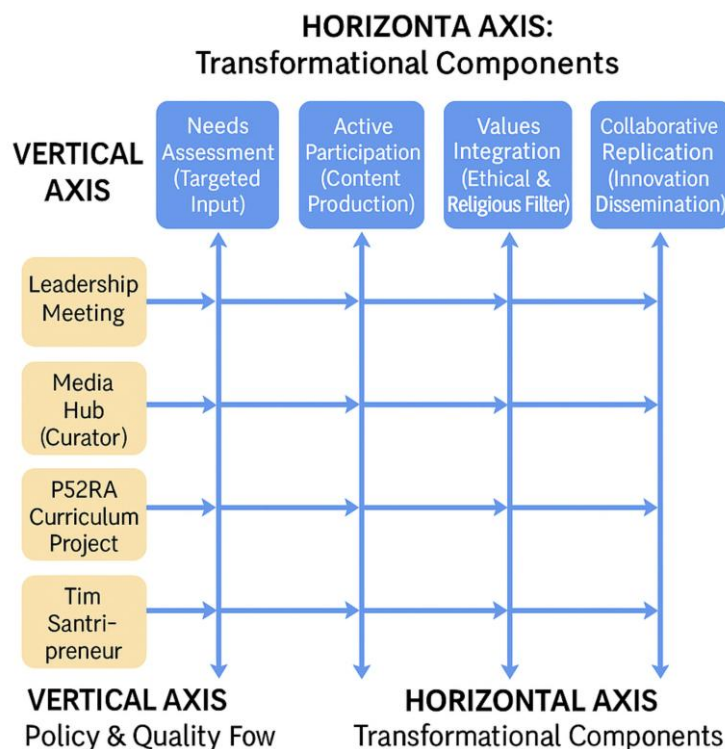

Figure 2. The Integrated Communication Matrix at As-Siddiqiyah

The innovation-development process at Pondok Pesantren Asshiddiqiyah—as illustrated in the Integrated Communication Matrix—operates simultaneously along the vertical and horizontal axes. The first stage is Input and Ideation, when strategic concepts emerge either from weekly Leadership Meetings at the top of the hierarchy or from grassroots initiatives through the *Santri-preneur* Team. This two-way mechanism ensures that the creative ideas of the santri digital preneur remain aligned with the pesantren's policies and strategic needs.

Next, selected ideas move through the Media Hub and the P52RA Curriculum Project on the vertical axis while intersecting with four horizontal components: Needs Assessment, Active Participation, Value Integration, and Collaborative Replication. Within this phase, curation, development, production, and validation take place. The Media Hub integrates promising ideas into the P52RA curriculum for mentoring, while the *Santri-preneur* Team executes them into tangible content or products. Each step is filtered through ethical and religious values so that every output is

not only commercially competitive but also consistent with Islamic *adab*, serving simultaneously as a practical learning process for the santri digital preneur.

In the final stage, the process moves outward to the External Network, marking the dimensions of Dissemination, Feedback, and Replication. Content is marketed through social media and the AISNU network to reach a wider audience, collect market input, and be replicated by other pesantren. By linking every vertical layer to all horizontal components, Asshiddiqiyah's innovation can be systematically reproduced and strengthens the national ecosystem of santri digital preneur.

Implementation of this model demonstrates that effective development communication relies not only on message delivery but also on the active involvement of all stakeholders in the communication process. As noted by Melkote and Steeves (2001), effective development communication must engage community participation at every stage of the development process, from planning through evaluation.

Previous studies highlight the novelty of this approach. Dirawan (2023) and case studies such as the Al-Aziziyah Pesantren (Ladiva, 2023) found that the creative economy in pesantren can be developed through entrepreneurship units. However, these studies tend to focus on business operations and management strategies without detailing how multi-layered digital communication can maintain message consistency while empowering *santri* participation. Likewise, strategies centered on charismatic leaders in *santripreneur* development (Hofiyuddin & Swandari, 2021), while important, risk creating dependency and do not necessarily foster an independent system. The Asshiddiqiyah model transcends these limitations by building an integrated communication ecosystem. Just as an effective issue-based campaign requires structured communication to achieve social change (Budianto & Ghanistyana, 2024), Asshiddiqiyah applies a matrix structure to "campaign" for digital innovation.

This stands in contrast to other pesantren models. For example, Darul Mursyid relies on agroforestry-based commodities (Kusmanto & Amin, 2022), while Darul Fallah maintains a top-down communication pattern (Purwanto et al., 2024). Asshiddiqiyah, by contrast, places digital media at the core of its innovation-diffusion engine, equipped with quality curation and a replication network. This fundamental distinction provides a critical added value: Asshiddiqiyah not only teaches business skills but also builds a communication engine for innovation.

Similarly, the study by Kusmanto and Amin (2022) at Darul Mursyid emphasizes community-based social entrepreneurship rooted in agroforestry commodities and local contributions. While both models highlight community values and leadership figures, they do not fully integrate modern digital communication strategies. Asshiddiqiyah, on the other hand, places social media as the primary channel for innovation diffusion, complemented by feedback mechanisms and quality curation, thereby adding value in the form of broader market reach.

Furthermore, Purwanto et al. (2024) found that Darul Fallah retains a persistent top-down communication pattern between *kiai* and *santri*, which often limits active participation. Asshiddiqiyah provides a clear contrast by balancing hierarchy with dialogue. Leadership meetings still produce policy, but creative ideas from *santri* are channeled and refined through the mentoring mechanisms of the Media Team. In this way, authority is maintained without diminishing *santri* creativity and initiative.

The following table highlights the added value of the Asshiddiqiyah model compared with other pesantren approaches discussed in these studies.

Table 2. Comparation with Other Pesantren

Comparison Aspect	As-Siddiqiyah Model (Integrated Matrix)	Darul Mursyid Model (Kusmanto & Amin, 2022)	Darul Fallah Model (Purwanto et al., 2024)	General Pesantren Model (Dirawan, 2023; Ladiva, 2023)
Main Focus	Digital	Community-based	Knowledge transfer	Development of business

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	Communication Ecosystem as a driver of entrepreneurship.	social entrepreneurship focused on agroforestry commodities and the local community.	from *Kiai* to *santri*.	units as separate operational enterprises.
Communication Model	Hybrid (Top-down & Bottom-up): Policies originate from leadership while creativity emerges from the grassroots, facilitated by the Media Hub.	Community-Based: Communication centers on community leaders and local needs.	Predominantly Top-down: One-way communication from *Kiai* to *santri*, limiting participation.	Functional/Operational: Communication focuses on business management within the creative ecosystem.
Digital Integration	Centralized & Integrated: Social media serves as the primary channel for marketing, branding, and innovation replication (AISNU).	Limited/Not Specified: Emphasis on local economic contribution rather than digital market reach.	Minimal: Communication remains traditional and has yet to leverage digital media strategically.	Partial: Digitalization may occur but is not systematically integrated into the curriculum and guidance programs.
Santri Participation	Key Actors (Content Producers): *Santri* write scripts, direct, and market content under mentorship.	Community Participants: *Santri* engage in economic activities oriented toward the local community.	Passive Recipients: *Santri* primarily follow instructions rather than initiate creative activities.	Workforce/Operators: *Santri* run business units but are not necessarily creative initiators.
Scalability & Replication	Very High: Designed for replication through AISNU with structured mentoring and national networking.	Moderate: Can be replicated in other pesantren depending on available local resources.	Low: Highly dependent on the central *Kiai* figure, limiting scalability.	Varied: Replication depends on the initiative of individual pesantren without collaborative networks.
Added Value	Building a sustainable, adaptive communication ecosystem capable of disseminating innovation on a broad scale.	Strengthening the local economy and instilling the values of social entrepreneurship rooted in local resources.	Preserving authority and traditional values within the pesantren environment.	Creating income streams and providing *santri* with practical work experience.

Through the Integrated Communication Matrix, Asshiddiqiyah offers a model that is not only applicable—through regular leadership meetings, a coordinated media team, and shared facilities—

but also transformative, as it channels knowledge, values, and networks into the market. Its theoretical implications enrich the literature by demonstrating how the structural approach of Rogers and the participatory approach of Servaes can be integrated within a single functional matrix. Its practical implications provide a blueprint for other pesantren to build a digital–creative economic ecosystem that is economically self-sufficient, value-driven, and highly competitive in the digital era. Other pesantren need only adopt the same five-layer hierarchy, implement the four-component cycle, and join AISNU to establish a digital–creative economic ecosystem grounded in real needs, active *santri* participation, and religious values.

The success of this model in empowering *santri* as digital entrepreneurs also reflects the application of empowerment theory in development communication. According to Narayan (2005), empowerment in development communication involves enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to access resources, make decisions, and control the development process.

Thus, the Asshiddiqiyah model contributes new insights by combining Rogers's structural consistency with Servaes's participatory dialogue, producing development communication that is effective, adaptive, and rooted in local values. Its theoretical implications advance the literature on development communication by illustrating the integration of structural and participatory approaches within a single matrix system, while its practical implications lie in its role as a prototype for other pesantren seeking to build a digital–creative economic ecosystem through clear communication hierarchies, quality-content curation, and replication across pesantren networks.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the development communication patterns at Asshiddiqiyah Islamic Boarding School are participatory, dialogical, and collaborative. The main strategies include needs assessment, program planning, and the implementation of a project-based curriculum combined with digital entrepreneurship training. Santri have been successfully guided to transform from mere technology users into active actors in the creative economy through content creation and entrepreneurial practice.

The development communication model formulated in this study takes the form of an integrative matrix that combines both vertical and horizontal structures. This model not only integrates digital literacy and entrepreneurship but also emphasizes the incorporation of Islamic values and the involvement of all stakeholders. As such, the model has proven to be applicable, transformative, and capable of fostering a sustainable ecosystem of digital-preneur santri.

The practical implication of this research is the provision of a communication framework that can be replicated in other pesantren to accelerate digital transformation. Its theoretical implication enriches the study of development communication by introducing a pesantren-based educational model. Further research is recommended to test the effectiveness of this model across different types of pesantren and to explore its long-term impact on the economic independence of santri.

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