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Gen Z as Digital Catalysts in Transforming Mosque Communication Service

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Abstract: In the context of rapid digital transformation and shifting patterns of religious engagement among younger generations, effective communication has become a critical challenge for mosque institutions in urban Muslim societies. This study examines the communication gap between mosque administrators and Generation Z in Makassar, exploring the potential of Gen Z as digital catalysts in transforming mosque communication for inclusive community service. The research employs a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires from 300 Gen Z individuals, while qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including mosque administrators, religious leaders, community leaders, and youth figures, to explore their perspectives and communication challenges. The findings reveal that Gen Z heavily relies on visual and interactive digital platforms (Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp) and feels that current mosque communication is unengaging and irrelevant. There is broad acknowledgment of this communication gap from all stakeholders. Key findings indicate Gen Z's willingness to get involved and use their digital skills to manage mosque social media, with a strong desire for creative freedom.

Keywords: Generation Z, mosque communication, digital preaching, community service

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the inevitable flow of globalization and technological acceleration, the role of technology, media, and communication has become the

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backbone of humanitarian advocacy efforts across various sectors, enabling the rapid dissemination of information and mobilization of support on a global scale. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argue that contemporary civic and organizational engagement is increasingly shaped by digitally networked communication, posing challenges for traditional institutions such as religious organizations in engaging younger generations like Gen Z. This generation, born and raised in the digital age, has very different communication preferences, prioritizing online platforms, rapid interactions, and relevant visual content, a stark departure from the traditional communication approaches often employed by religious institutions (Prensky, 2001). Unfortunately, many mosque administrators still rely on conventional communication methods that often do not resonate with Gen Z, creating a communication gap that can hinder their participation in mosque activities and, more broadly, in community service and humanitarian advocacy. This gap not only has the potential to alienate this dynamic demographic from crucial community roles, but also misses a significant opportunity to harness Gen Z's digital potential to expand the reach and effectiveness of mosque-based humanitarian efforts. Therefore, exploring and finding solutions to this phenomenon is crucial to ensuring the continued relevance of mosques as centers of advocacy and inclusive community service in the digital age.

Although mosques have historically been centers of social and religious activity, their effective communication with Generation Z currently faces significant obstacles. This gap manifests itself in several crucial aspects: first, the minimal use of digital platforms and social media by mosque administrators to disseminate information and engage Gen Z in humanitarian programs, despite the fact that Gen Z relies heavily on the digital ecosystem for information consumption and social interaction (Tapscott, 2002). Second, there is a lack of relevant and visually engaging content that can capture the attention of Gen Z, who are accustomed to short, dynamic, and interactive narratives from various platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube. Third, the hierarchical and formal communication structures often implemented in mosques may not align with the preferences of Gen Z, who tend to prefer horizontal, participatory, and authentic communication (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). As a result, Gen Z's significant potential as agents of change and active participants in mosque-based humanitarian advocacy is often underutilized. This issue is crucial because without effective communication, mosques' efforts in community service, fundraising, or socio-humanitarian campaigns can lose their relevance to future generations, threatening the mosque's continued role as a pillar of the community.

Based on the identified issues, this study has several crucial, interrelated objectives. First, it seeks to identify and analyze Generation Z's digital communication preferences in the context of religious and humanitarian activities, in order to understand the platforms, content formats, and

interaction styles that are most effective for them. Second, we aim to explore Gen Z's potential as digital catalysts who can be empowered to transform mosque communication strategies, not merely as recipients of information but as co-creators and ambassadors in conveying religious and humanitarian messages. Third, this research will formulate practical recommendations for mosque administrators and relevant stakeholders regarding the adaptation of inclusive digital communication to increase Gen Z's involvement in mosque-based community services and humanitarian advocacy. By achieving these goals, it is hoped that this research will bridge the intergenerational communication gap, ensure the relevance of mosques in the digital age, and optimize Gen Z's vital role in community building and humanitarian advocacy.

To achieve its stated objectives, this research will attempt to answer several key questions focused on the communication dynamics between Generation Z and mosque administrators in the context of community service and humanitarian advocacy. These questions are: (1) How can Generation Z's digital communication preferences, including platforms, content formats, and interaction styles, be effectively integrated into mosque communication strategies for community service activities? (2) In what capacity can Generation Z be empowered and engaged as active digital catalysts in the mosque's communication transformation process, rather than simply as passive audiences? (3) What are the key obstacles and opportunities that arise when attempting to align Generation Z's digital communication approach with existing traditions and structures within mosque management? By comprehensively answering these questions, this research is expected to provide in-depth understanding and practical guidance for bridging the intergenerational communication gap, so that mosques can be more relevant and effective in serving the congregation in the digital age. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both theory and practice: theoretically, it extends scholarly discussions on digital religion, intergenerational communication, and connective action by positioning Generation Z as agents of institutional transformation; practically, it offers evidence-based insights and actionable strategies for mosque administrators, religious leaders, and policymakers to design inclusive, participatory, and digitally adaptive communication models that enhance community engagement and sustainability of mosque-based services in contemporary urban contexts

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design to examine the communication gap between mosque administrators and Generation Z (Gen Z), as well as Gen Z's potential role as digital catalysts in mosque communication. Quantitative data were collected first to identify general patterns, followed by qualitative data to explain and

contextualize the quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The quantitative phase involved 300 Gen Z respondents aged 15–29 years residing in three districts of Makassar City. This age range reflects established definitions of Generation Z and represents digitally active individuals relevant to the study focus. Participants were selected using purposive and convenience sampling through an online questionnaire. The qualitative phase included 12 purposively selected informants comprising mosque administrators, religious leaders, community leaders, and youth leaders, chosen based on their direct involvement in mosque communication, management, and youth engagement.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring digital communication preferences, engagement with mosque activities, and perceptions of digital transformation. Content validity was established through expert review and pilot testing, and internal reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, indicating acceptable consistency. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews focusing on mosque communication practices, challenges in engaging Gen Z, experiences with digital media use, and opportunities for youth empowerment. Interviews were conducted until thematic saturation, recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically through coding and theme development. Findings from both phases were integrated at the interpretation stage to provide a comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's role in mosque communication transformation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Communication and Digital Preaching

Communication in Islam is an essential foundation, rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which encourage the dissemination of truth (preaching), dialogue (hiwar), and the development of the community (tarbiyah) with wisdom and good manners (Al-Qur'an, An-Nahl: 125). Historically, da'wah has adapted to various media, from oral and written to modern mass media. However, the advent of the digital era has introduced a new paradigm known as digital da'wah or e-dakwah, fundamentally changing the landscape of disseminating religious messages. This concept goes beyond simply using the internet, but involves communication strategies that leverage the interactive power and broad reach of social media platforms, mobile applications, and multimedia content to convey Islamic values (Latepo et al., 2021). Recent studies highlight that digital da'wah not only expands accessibility to global audiences but also facilitates two-way communication and active community participation—forms of engagement that were previously difficult to achieve through traditional methods (Briandana et al.,

2020). Accordingly, a comprehensive understanding of Islamic communication principles in digital contexts, combined with innovative e-da'wah practices, is essential to ensuring that religious messages remain relevant, engaging, and responsive to Generation Z's digital communication preferences.

Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z (Gen Z), generally defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, is the first generation to be fully digital natives. This means they grew up in the era of the internet, social media, and constantly connected mobile devices, shaping their perspectives and interactions with the world (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). A key characteristic of Gen Z relevant to communication is their reliance on technology for nearly all aspects of life, including education, socialization, and information consumption. They tend to have shorter attention spans and are particularly fond of visual and interactive content such as short videos, infographics, and memes, which they can quickly absorb from various digital platforms (Dimock, 2019). Their preference for instant and personalized communication through social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube demonstrates their appreciation for speed and ease of access to information, as well as the ability to interact directly with content and its creators.

Beyond their digital preferences, Gen Z is also known as a pragmatic, independent, and highly socially conscious generation, with a strong propensity to support humanitarian and social justice issues (Twenge, 2018b). They often mobilize and voice their opinions through online campaigns, demonstrating a desire to make a real impact in the world (Bolton et al., 2013). This means that communication approaches that are authentic, transparent, and enable active participation will resonate more with them than formal, one-way communication. Understanding Gen Z's cognitive landscape, communication behaviors, and core values is key to designing effective strategies to meaningfully engage them in community service and humanitarian advocacy, ensuring that traditional institutions like mosques remain relevant and engaging for this next generation.

The Role of Technology, Media, and Communication in Humanitarian Advocacy

In the past decade, technology, media, and communication have revolutionized the humanitarian advocacy landscape, changing how organizations and individuals respond to crises and mobilize support. Social media platforms and communication apps, for example, now serve as vital tools for the rapid dissemination of information about natural disasters or conflicts, enabling humanitarian agencies to reach a global audience within minutes (Murthy & Gross, 2017). More than simply conveying information, digital media also facilitates efficient fundraising through crowdfunding and viral campaigns, accelerating responses to urgent needs on the ground (Saxton & Wang, 2013)

.Furthermore, technology enables real-time situation monitoring and reporting from crisis zones, increasing transparency and accountability in humanitarian efforts. Digital communication also empowers affected individuals and communities to share their stories directly, shifting the narrative from mere recipients of aid to agents of change with voice (McPherson, 2015). This phenomenon demonstrates that the strategic integration of technology, media, and communication is no longer an option, but an absolute necessity for any entity involved in humanitarian advocacy to achieve maximum and sustainable impact in the modern era.

Generation Gap Theory explains significant differences in values, attitudes, behaviors, and communication preferences between one generation and the next, often driven by differing life experiences, technological developments, and the socio-political contexts that shape them (Twenge, 2018b). In the digital context, this gap is increasingly evident between digital natives (such as Generation Z) who grew up with technology as an integral part of their identity, and digital immigrants (often including more senior mosque administrators) who adopted technology later in life (S. Bennett et al., 2008). These differences manifest themselves in platform preferences (e.g., TikTok vs. WhatsApp Group), communication styles, and the nature of their interactions with others. (visual, concise, interactive vs. textual, formal, linear), and even how they process information and interact with institutions. This gap can hinder collaboration, reduce participation, and create miscommunication within organizations, including mosques, that are trying to reach cross-generational audiences for the purposes of community service and humanitarian advocacy (Bolton et al., 2013). Understanding the roots and manifestations of this generational gap is crucial for designing adaptive and inclusive communication strategies, enabling traditional institutions to remain relevant and engaging with younger generations.

The Gap Between Gen Z Expectations and Mosque Reality

Research shows that Generation Z's expectations for the role of mosques fall into six main domains, with significant gaps between expectations and reality. Approximately 75% of respondents consider attractive branding very important, but only 50% see it implemented (a 25% gap). Fifty-eight percent desire youth-specific programs, but this is only partially implemented, with an estimated 30% gap. Digital engagement is desired by 75% of Generation Z, but only 55% of mosques implement it (a 20% gap). A comfortable environment is a priority for 50% of respondents, but its implementation is uncertain, with an estimated 15–20% gap. The desire for inspirational speakers was expressed by 45% of respondents, but it is not yet a general priority (a 15–20% gap). Meanwhile, modern management involving youth is desired by 50% of respondents, but is often rejected by senior management, with a large gap of

50%. A comparative overview of the six main domains related to the expectations and realities of the research findings can be seen in Table 1.

Similarly, given the magnitude of the gaps and the level of importance of each domain, several areas require urgent attention. High-priority categories include modern management involving youth, which has a 50% gap and is a strong demand from the younger generation; attractive branding, with a 25% gap, is considered very important but is under-implemented; and digital programs, with a 20% gap, have received significant interest but have only been partially implemented. Meanwhile, medium-priority areas include youth-specific programs with a gap of around 30% that have not yet been widely implemented; mosque comfort and atmosphere with a 15–20% gap; and inspirational leadership, with a 15–20% gap, which is still rarely a primary focus.

Table 1. Shows the percentage of the six main domains of Gen Z's opinions regarding the management of mosques in Makassar and the existing reality.

Source : Primary data process, 2025

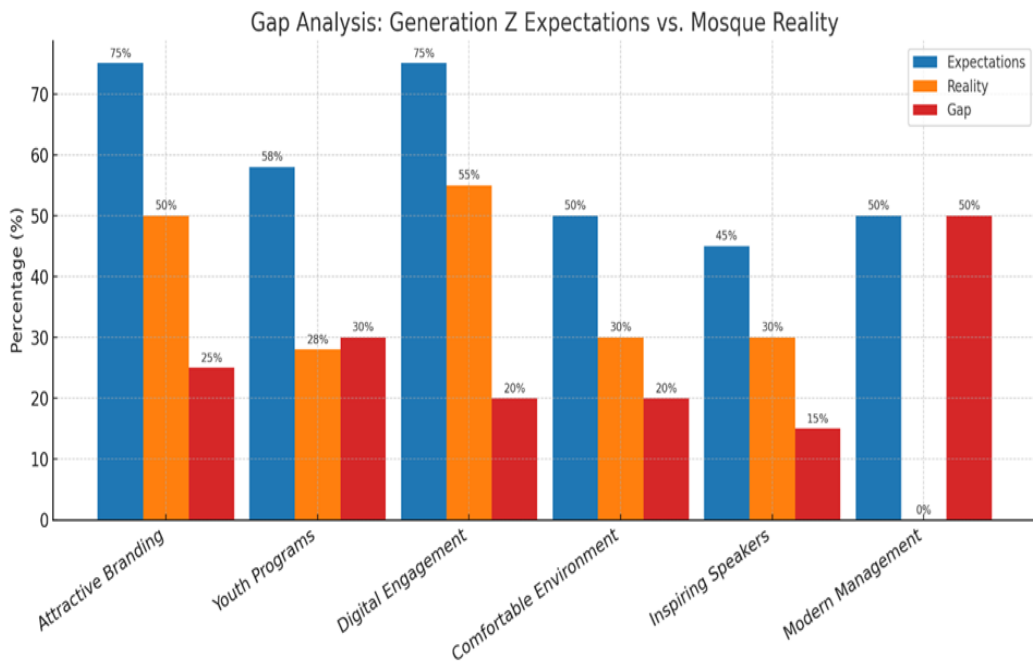
Domain	Expectation (% Agree)	Reality (% Met)	Gap (%)
1. Attractive Branding	75% believe it's crucial	50% see it implemented	25%
2. Youth-Specific Programs	58% want youth events	~Partial, not quantified	30%
3. Digital Engagement	75% interested	55% of mosques doing it	20%
4. Comfortable Environment	50% prioritize atmosphere	Not quantitatively mentioned	15-20%
5. Inspiring Speakers	45% want charismatic Ustadz	Not commonly prioritized	15-20%
6. Modern Management	50% demand youth inclusion	Resisted by older admins	50%

The gap analysis results show that the largest gap is in modern management, with a 50% gap. This is due to the almost complete lack of youth involvement in decision-making and transparency in management, despite these high demands among the younger generation. Furthermore, attractive branding has a 25% gap, indicating that while the majority believe in the importance of branding, only half of mosques actually implement it. Digital engagement recorded a 20% gap, indicating that social media and online content, vital for Gen Z connectivity, are still underutilized.

In the medium gap category, youth-specific programs have a gap of around 30%, indicating that their implementation remains sporadic and unstructured in many mosques. Comfort and environment, with a 20% gap, are

also often overlooked, despite significantly influencing Gen Z's sense of belonging to the mosque. Meanwhile, inspirational speakers recorded a 15% gap, where da'wah programs often lack charismatic and relevant figures for the younger generation, resulting in unfulfilled engagement potential. A brief comparative analysis of expectations, reality, and gaps for these areas can be seen in Figure 1.

Fig. 1 a. comparative analysis of Gen Z's expectations, the reality of mosques and the gap between the two sides



Source : Primary data process, 2025

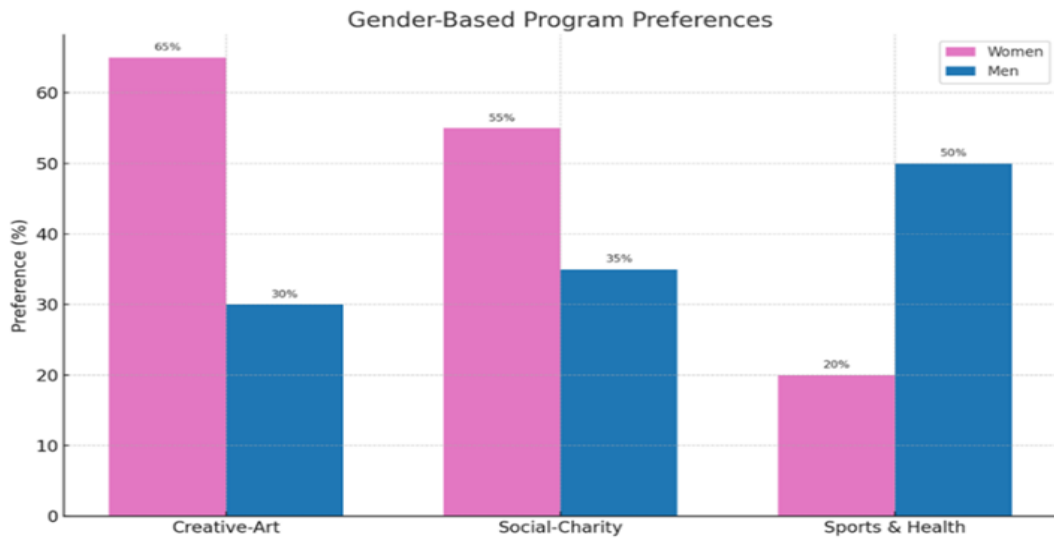
Gender-Based Program Preferences

Based on finding data, significant differences in program preferences between female and male Generation Z respondents are evident. Women showed a dominant interest in creative-arts programs, with an interest rate of 65%, followed by social and charitable activities at 55%, which were strong drivers of engagement. Conversely, women's interest in sports activities was quite low, reaching only 20%, indicating that physical activity is not a top priority for this group.

Meanwhile, men were most interested in sports and health activities, with an interest rate of 50%, making it the most appealing category for them. Men's interest in social and charitable activities was moderate at 35%, while interest in creative-arts programs was even lower at 30%. These differences in patterns demonstrate the need for a mosque program approach that takes

gender-based preferences into account to optimize participation from both groups. A summary of this can be seen in figure 2.

Fig.2 shows a comparison of gender-based preferences in the fields of creative arts, charity and social and sports and health activities.



Source : Primary data process, 2025

Optimizing Digital Engagement

Based on a platform rating scale of 1 to 10, TikTok topped the list with an average score of 8.6, excelling in short-form video content (10), storytelling (9), and interactivity (9), closely aligning with Generation Z's preferences for short, interactive, and entertaining content. Instagram came in second with an average score of 7.8, excelling in reach and usage (10) and interactivity (8), making it a key platform for visual branding and event promotion. YouTube also had an average score of 7.8, excelling in storytelling (10) and educational content (9), but relatively low in interactivity (6), making it less than optimal for rapid engagement. A brief overview of these findings can be seen in Table 2. These findings suggest that mosques' digital strategies should prioritize TikTok as a primary channel for quickly and engagingly reaching younger generations, leveraging Instagram to expand reach and build a strong visual image, and utilizing YouTube as a platform for in-depth and long-lasting Islamic educational content. By combining these three platforms according to their respective strengths, the potential for Gen Z engagement can be maximized effectively.

Tabel 2 digital content assessment scores are considered more effective and should be prioritized.

Platform	Short Videos	Storytelling	Interactivity	Reach/Usage	Educational Content	Avg Score
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TikTok	10	9	9	8	7	8.6
Instagram	8	7	8	10	6	7.8
YouTube	7	10	6	7	9	7.8

Source : Primary data process, 2025

The Influence of Education Level on Mosque Preferences

The data shows a clear pattern regarding program preferences based on education level. Among those with lower secondary education, the highest interest was seen in community activities (60%) and creative-arts programs (55%), followed by social and charitable activities (50%). They also showed moderate interest in religious education (40%) and digital programs (35%), but the primary preference remained for face-to-face and social activities. The more relaxed and interactive nature of the programs appeared to be more appealing to this group than digital or academic-based content.

Conversely, the higher the education level, the greater the interest in religious education and digital programs. Diploma/Bachelor's degree students showed 65% interest in religious education and 70% in digital programs, while Master's/Doctoral students reached 80% and 85% in these two categories. Their preference tended toward content that was knowledge-based, intellectually interactive, and often relied on digital media. Meanwhile, interest in community and creative activities decreased with increasing education, indicating that the higher-educated group preferred activities that provided learning and insight development value over simply casual social interaction. The comparative overview can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 preferences based on education level

Program Type	High School or Below	D3/S1 (Bachelor's)	S2/S3 (Postgraduate)
Religious Education	40%	65%	80%
Digital Programs	35%	70%	85%
Community Events	60%	55%	40%
Creative-Art	55%	45%	35%
Charity & Social Work	50%	55%	50%

Source : Primary Data Process, 2025

Dynamics of Intergenerational Conflict

Regarding the conflict of interest between the younger and older generations, which is generally represented by the older generation, research results indicate a significant difference in perspective between the older and younger generations in the context of mosque management. The older generation, particularly senior administrators, tends to downplay the importance of mosque branding and digitalization, preferring long-standing traditional management models and programs. This attitude is often based on concerns that implementing new approaches could diminish the authenticity of religious values, leading them to be cautious and even resistant to innovation.

In contrast, younger generations, such as Gen Z activists and millennials, prioritize branding, digital presence, and interactive engagement. They desire transparent, modern mosque management that actively involves young people in decision-making. In delivering da'wah (Islamic outreach) and education, they prefer modern learning formats that are concise, social media-based, and easily accessible, allowing them to reach a wider audience quickly without losing relevance to their generation's lifestyle. A brief overview of this comparison can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4 shows a comparative analysis of the views of the Older Generation and Gen Z in several aspects

Aspect	Senior Leaders	Gen Z Youth
Branding	Not a priority	Essential for engagement
Digitalization	Viewed as optional or risky	Viewed as essential & expected
Program Styles	Formal lectures	Interactive, thematic sessions
Leadership Approach	Hierarchical, experience-based	Collaborative, inclusive
Communication Channels	Announcements, face-to-face	Social media, DMs, digital flyers
Content Format Preference	Long sermons	Short videos, reels, storytelling
Innovation Receptiveness	Low	High

Source : Primary data process, 2025

A comparative analysis reveals fundamental differences between the views of senior and younger generations of leaders regarding mosque management. For senior leaders, branding is not a priority, digitalization is considered optional or even risky, and program styles emphasize formal lectures with a hierarchical, experience-based leadership approach. Communication channels tend to be traditional, such as verbal or face-to-face announcements, and the preferred content format is long sermons. In contrast, Generation Z views branding as essential for engagement, digitalization as an expected necessity, and prefers themed, interactive sessions with collaborative and inclusive leadership. They rely on social media, direct messaging, and digital flyers for communication, and prefer short-form content formats such as video, reels, or storytelling, with a much higher level of acceptance of innovation.

This generational tension has given rise to several key points of conflict. First, resistance to digital branding, with some senior leaders lacking technological savvy or viewing it as mere entertainment rather than a means of da'wah (Islamic outreach). Second, the limited involvement of younger generations in leadership has left many feeling excluded from decision-making, even though they may have a better understanding of the target audience. Third, there are differences in program design, with senior leaders preferring traditional halaqah (Islamic gatherings), while Generation Z prefers interactive themes such as mental health, media, or social justice. Fourth, the fear of losing

spiritual integrity leads some seniors to associate innovation with a reduction in traditional values, thus creating ideological tensions that need to be bridged.

Generation Z Preferences in Mosque Communication Strategies

Generation Z demonstrates a strong preference for brand identity and consistent visual narratives as part of an effective mosque communication strategy. In a case study of the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya, the regular use of the mosque's logo, digital pamphlets, and visual documentation on Instagram were proven to strengthen the mosque's image as a modern and relevant da'wah institution for Gen Z. The presence of popular figures such as Ustadz Hanan Attaki as resonant speakers for the younger generation also increased their interest and loyalty to the mosque's religious studies. This planned and consistent institutional approach not only builds emotional attachment but also fosters participatory loyalty among young congregants.

Beyond branding, Gen Z also highly values authentic and interactive digital content, as well as the accessibility of religious information through the platforms they use daily. Missier (2025) in an interfaith study in Mumbai, highlighted how younger generations, including Gen Z Muslims, prefer personal, reflective, and contextual religious communication-in digital formats-to formal or one-way approaches. They tend to be actively involved in creating and disseminating authentic and relevant religious content, underscoring the importance of mosques adopting communication approaches that enable dialogue, creative participation, and emotional resonance with Gen Z.

A gap analysis between Generation Z expectations and the reality of mosque engagement in Makassar reveals a substantial mismatch, threatening the relevance of mosques for young people. Six key domains require attention: modern management, branding, digital engagement, youth programs, environmental comfort, and inspirational speakers. For example, a 50% gap was noted in youth engagement in mosque leadership—presenting a structural challenge requiring a change in organizational culture. Furthermore, branding is a significant concern: 75% of young people consider it important, but only half believe mosques implement it effectively. Digital engagement also lags behind at around 20%, despite media such as TikTok, YouTube, and livestreaming having significant potential to reach Gen Z (Binti Roslan et al., 2025).

On the other hand, youth programs are often perceived as less relevant to contemporary youth interests and culture, mosque environments are frequently viewed as unfriendly or rigid, and charismatic clerics capable of creating resonance with younger generations remain relatively rare. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that traditional religious institutions struggle to engage younger audiences when communication styles and program designs fail to reflect digital culture and participatory norms (Ibrahim et al., 2025). However, this study extends prior research by

demonstrating that disengagement does not stem from religious disinterest, but rather from a mismatch between institutional communication practices and Generation Z's expectations for creativity, interactivity, and digital presence.

While earlier studies primarily emphasize structural and leadership limitations within mosques, the present findings highlight the overlooked potential of Generation Z as active contributors rather than passive recipients of religious communication. Recommended mitigation strategies, therefore, include not only rebranding and expanded digital engagement—as commonly suggested in the literature—but also a deeper cultural shift toward cross-generational empowerment and shared leadership. Generation Z is not rejecting mosques; instead, they seek religious spaces that integrate faith with creativity, technology, community belonging, and leadership opportunities. This study argues that when mosques remain hierarchical and communication remains one-directional, youth disengagement is likely to persist. Conversely, when mosques adopt participatory and digitally adaptive approaches, Generation Z's engagement can be revitalized, supporting the argument that institutional openness and innovation are decisive factors shaping the future of youth–mosque relations.

In the era of rapidly evolving digital communications, mosques must maximize their online presence to align with the habits and preferences of Generation Z. Binti Roslan et al. (2025) found that Instagram remains the primary platform used for da'wah (Islamic outreach) by younger Muslims, particularly for branding and announcements, although its effectiveness for education or in-depth engagement remains limited. On the other hand, TikTok shows great potential as a medium well-suited to Generation Z due to its short-video format, emotional storytelling, and high interactivity. Meanwhile, YouTube excels in delivering long-form educational content and in-depth storytelling, making it ideal for more substantial lectures and learning series (Yakut & Oruç, 2025).

These findings further emphasize the importance of an integrated multi-platform strategy: TikTok for building rapid and viral engagement, Instagram for strengthening community identity and brand visibility, and YouTube for deepening detailed Islamic insights. With this approach, mosques can create an effective digital da'wah ecosystem—integrating faith with the digital lifestyles of young people. A mere social media presence is not enough; what is needed is a strategic presence that adapts content to the behaviors and emotional needs of Generation Z (Binti Roslan et al., 2025).

Understanding Generation Z's gender preferences is a crucial foundation for designing inclusive and sustainable mosque programs. Research also shows that adolescent girls are more interested in creative arts programs (65%) such as Islamic art workshops, poetry, calligraphy exhibitions, and religious projects, as well as in charitable programs (55%) that focus on community service (Maulana & Ningrum, 2023). Conversely, adolescent boys prefer sports and

health activities (50%) such as tournaments, fitness, and martial arts, while their interest in creative arts and charitable activities appears lower (30% and 35%, respectively) (Ellison & George, 1994) and (Bagby, 2001). This contrasting preference difference underscores the need for program approaches tailored to the characteristics and motivations of each gender to ensure each feels accepted and is further motivated to actively participate.

These differing preferences underlie a dual-track strategy: programs for girls can focus on art exhibitions, creative workshops, and charitable activities; while for boys, mosques can organize sports, health campaigns, and team-based physical education programs. However, cross-gender collaboration remains crucial, for example through youth festivals that combine art, sports, and fundraising simultaneously. This flexible and modular approach encourages choice, autonomy, and a variety of experiences—with the effect of strengthening emotional bonds, increasing participation, and fostering faith. By appropriately responding to gender preferences, mosques can become more dynamic, welcoming, and relevant spaces for Generation Z (Ellison & George, 1994).

Generation Z's Involvement as a Catalyst for Mosque Communication Transformation.

Generation Z (Gen Z) has proven capable of breaking the boundaries of traditional religious communication through the use of digital media—a process that aligns with the phenomenon of "mediatization" in religious studies, namely how religious communities utilize interactive media to disseminate teachings, services, and religious dialogue in a more democratic and decentralized manner. As digital natives, Gen Z are not only consumers but also producers of creative and relevant religious content, particularly through social media platforms that increase reach and participation in religious practices such as mosque da'wah.

In this context, research examining creative da'wah practices on TikTok highlights Gen Z's active role in embedding Islamic content through short, visual, and humorous formats that resonate with their communication styles. Platforms like these facilitate the delivery of religious messages in innovative and accessible ways, enabling mosques and their administrators to communicate more effectively and engage younger generations. Gen Z, as active users, are not merely passive audiences but also play a role in shaping how da'wah is delivered and received.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary studies from India reveal how Gen Y and Gen Z respond to religious authority in the digital age. Gen Z Muslims, for example, demonstrate a strong reliance on digital influencers like Mufti Menk, who offer more open, inclusive, and accessible communication—often replacing traditional authorities in the religious learning process (Missier, 2025). This emphasizes that Gen Z can bridge the gap between tradition and

innovation in mosque communication by channeling a more personalized and contextualized religious approach, particularly in the digital environment.

Furthermore, sociological research in Australia illustrates how Gen Z takes an active role in multireligious communities, forming hybrid and reflective religious identities through interfaith dialogue (Smith, 2022). This spiritual independence is a crucial asset in adapting mosque communications to be more inclusive and responsive to contemporary social dynamics. Thus, Gen Z not only expands the reach of communication but also enriches the quality of religious interactions in the context of congregational service and mosque transformation.

Challenges of Gen Z's Digital Communication Approach to Mosque Management

Various studies indicate that the main challenge of Gen Z's digital communication approach to mosque management is the shift and fragmentation of religious authority in the online space. Social media and computer-mediated communication can either weaken traditional authority or strengthen it—creating new tensions between religious "influencers" and mosque management structures, especially when popularity no longer relies on formal scholarly credentials but rather on attention metrics (likes, views) and account anonymity (Astor et al., 2024). This situation requires mosques to formulate clear communication governance (guidelines, content curation, reference standards) to ensure messages remain accurate, scientifically sound, and avoid becoming trapped in personification or the cult of personality among young congregants.

Another challenge relates to the digital information ecology: platform architecture encourages ephemeral, emotional, and easily viral content—which has the potential to accelerate misinformation, confirmation bias, and intracommunity polarization, including on complex Islamic jurisprudence and socio-religious issues. Research on digital da'wah emphasizes issues of accuracy, source reliability, and the effects of algorithmic amplification. Meanwhile, studies across Muslim and Jewish communities describe social media as a "double-edged sword"—opening access and connectivity while simultaneously increasing the risk of disinformation and conflict (Khamis, 2024). For mosque administrators, this means the need for verification mechanisms, congregational digital literacy, and rapid response protocols to problematic content to maintain an epistemically healthy da'wah space.

At the operational level, mosques face a digital capacity gap (skills gap) between administrators across generations, limited resources for producing quality content, and ethical and privacy issues (congregation data management, comment moderation) on official channels. An international literature review on "digital Islam" and Muslim social media highlights the need for evidence-based strategies: mapping Gen Z audiences, collaborative governance, and

integrating institutional goals (service, education, sustainability) into content design and performance metrics; studies on Islamic digital trends also recommend improving religious media literacy and adapting internal policies (Hasan Wahid, 2024) . In the context of mosque management, these steps are prerequisites for ensuring that digital communications aimed at Gen Z are not only attractive in format, but also effective, safe, inclusive, and in line with the mission of preaching.

An analysis of program preferences based on education level shows that the higher the education level of Generation Z, the greater their interest in intellectual and technology-based mosque activities. Those with higher education (D3/S1 and S2/S3) tend to prefer in-depth religious education programs and digital engagement, such as online classes, mosque apps, and interactive Islamic studies. For example, 80% of young postgraduate students are interested in religious education programs, while only 40% of those with a high school education or less show similar interest. Enthusiasm for digital innovation is also very high (85%)—reflecting the educated generation's expectations for a religious experience that is on par with modern academic environments, namely knowledge-based, flexible, and technologically accessible (Selwyn, 2016).

Conversely, young people with lower education levels show a preference for community-based activities (60%) and creative arts (55%), such as sports, Islamic art workshops, community service, and charity work—which are informal, social, and emphasize direct interaction. Based on these findings, mosque program strategies need to be multi-tiered: an intellectual-digital pathway for highly educated youth and a socio-creative pathway for those with lower education. However, these two pathways should be integrated through a hybrid model—for example, educational workshops followed by charitable projects—so that mosques can build inclusive, cohesive youth communities that are intellectually, socially, and spiritually connected (Cenita & Guzman, 2023).

Intergenerational conflict in mosque management emerges as a fundamental challenge, reflecting ideological, cultural, and emotional differences between senior management and the younger generation. Senior leaders tend to be skeptical of branding, digitalization, and innovation due to their strong orientation toward traditional stability, formal lectures, and face-to-face communication (Listianti et al., 2024). In contrast, Generation Z and Millennials view digital presence, branding, and interactive engagement not simply as communication tools but as essential means of conveying spiritual messages, with a preference for collaborative and inclusive leadership models. This tension is further exacerbated by issues of digital branding, the exclusion of youth from decision-making, and differing preferences for program formats: classic halaqah versus contemporary discussions. Seniors often view collaboration with influencers or visual branding as distractions that

undermine the seriousness of religion, while young people view them as forms of da'wah relevant to their lives. When young people feel excluded from authentic mosque leadership, they begin to view these institutions as incompatible with their values. This conflict is not about who is right or wrong, but rather a struggle between preserving tradition and adapting to modernity. The ideal solution is to build a bridge that respects tradition while embracing innovation to keep mosques relevant and inclusive (Mahat et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

To increase Generation Z engagement in mosques, an adaptive approach is needed, addressing their characteristics of being highly familiar with digital technology, open to identity issues, and respecting equal participation. Mosques can develop programs responsive to the needs of the younger generation, such as strengthening religious digital literacy, promoting da'wah-based arts and sports activities, and establishing creative communities managed by mosque youth with the support of mentors from the older generation. This approach will narrow the generational gap by creating a healthy dialogue space, minimizing the potential for conflict and allowing each age group to contribute complementary roles in leadership and religious activities.

Furthermore, mosques' digital branding strategies need to be strengthened by utilizing social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to convey religious messages in a fresh, visual, and interactive communication style that aligns with Generation Z's information consumption patterns. Content can be packaged in the form of short da'wah podcasts, creative videos, or storytelling-based narratives that emphasize Islamic values relevant to contemporary issues, such as social awareness, the environment, and gender justice. By combining inclusive leadership, utilizing digital technology, and empowering young people's potential based on their interests and educational backgrounds, mosques will be better able to attract and maintain sustainable engagement from Generation Z.

This research confirms that the success of transforming mosque communications to reach Generation Z depends on three key aspects: digital strategy, youth empowerment, and intergenerational reconciliation. First, Generation Z's digital communication preferences-visual, concise, and interactive-can be effectively integrated through a multi-platform strategy that optimizes TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube in a complementary manner. Second, Generation Z possesses significant capacity to act as digital catalysts when empowered in creative leadership roles, social media management, and da'wah content production. Third, although challenges such as senior resistance to digital innovation and organizational culture gaps persist, substantial opportunities remain to develop mosques that are inclusive, welcoming, and socially relevant.

The impact of this study lies in its contribution to advancing digital

religion and youth engagement scholarship by repositioning Generation Z from passive audiences to active agents of institutional transformation. Practically, the findings offer evidence-based guidance for mosque administrators, religious leaders, and policymakers to design participatory communication models that strengthen community engagement and institutional sustainability. Thus, mosques in the digital age are encouraged to evolve beyond traditional institutions into hybrid spiritual spaces that integrate faith, creativity, technology, and community. Reconciling tradition and innovation is essential to ensuring mosques continue to function as inclusive, cohesive, and transformative religious centers for Generation Z and other generations. Future research is recommended to explore longitudinal impacts of youth-led digital da'wah initiatives, comparative studies across different cultural or national contexts, and the role of emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence and data analytics—in shaping sustainable mosque communication strategies.

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