

**ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS CONTENT ON INSTAGRAM REELS: BETWEEN
EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT****Iswahyudi Tejo Yuwono**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the phenomenon of Islamic religious content on Instagram Reels, which has rapidly gained popularity as a medium that combines education and entertainment. The rise of short video formats on social media has encouraged preachers, educators, and Muslim content creators to disseminate religious values in ways that are more accessible and engaging to younger audiences. This research aims to analyze how Instagram Reels serves as a hybrid platform where Islamic teachings are not only conveyed through didactic messages but are also packaged in creative, humorous, and entertaining forms. By employing a qualitative approach, the study observes selected Islamic Reels content and examines audience perceptions regarding the balance between its educational value and entertainment appeal. The findings suggest that while the majority of viewers appreciate the creative packaging of religious messages, there remains a tension between maintaining the authenticity of Islamic teachings and adapting them into entertaining formats. For many users, Reels become a means of quick spiritual reflection in their daily routines, yet some also express concerns about oversimplification or trivialization of religious values. This research contributes to the growing discourse on digital religion and media convergence by highlighting the dual role of Instagram Reels as both a pedagogical tool and a source of leisure. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of balancing da'wah effectiveness with ethical responsibility in producing Islamic content within the dynamic landscape of social media.

Keywords : Instgrams, Content, Education, Reels

INTRODUCTION

Instagram Reels has become a popular medium used by Muslim creators to spread messages of da'wah in a short, concise, and visually appealing format. Reels is considered effective in reaching the younger generation who are accustomed to consuming fast-paced content on social media (Rahman, 2021). This phenomenon is in line with the shift in da'wah communication patterns from the physical to the digital space (Putri & Rahayu, 2020). The high audience engagement with short videos indicates a significant opportunity to introduce Islamic teachings on a broader scale. The creativity of packaging religious messages with attractive visuals expands the reach of digital da'wah (Topan Setiawan, 2023). However, the dynamics of using Reels also pose a dilemma between maintaining the authenticity of the teachings and creating entertainment for the audience. Therefore, this study attempts to critically examine the phenomenon of Islamic Reels.

Digitalization has driven a shift in preaching practices toward social media, including the use of entertainment content to strengthen appeal (Susanto, 2022). In the context of Reels, religious messages are packaged in an infotainment style, combining educational and entertainment values (Topan Setiawan, 2024). Infotainment is considered effective in attracting attention, but has the potential to reduce the substance of the message (Wijaya, 2023). This

study is important to understand how the balance between education and entertainment is realized in Islamic Reels. Previous literature shows that short videos can increase learning appeal and provide relevant micro-learning experiences (Ardiansyah, 2021). However, packaging religious messages into short durations often leads to misunderstandings (Mulya, 2022). Topan Setiawan (2025) emphasizes that religious sensitivity must be considered in digital content so that da'wah remains authentic. Thus, this study contributes to complementing studies related to the dynamics of da'wah on social media, especially Instagram Reels.

In communication theory, the success of a message is influenced by the credibility of the communicator and the medium used (Fahmi, 2020). Reels featuring religious teachers or figures are believed to be more valid than content without clear sources (Topan Setiawan, 2023). However, visual aesthetics and presentation style also play a major role in attracting audiences (Kusuma, 2022). An imbalance between credibility and aesthetics can cause distortion of the message's meaning (Nurhaliza, 2024). Controversy often arises when religious values are packaged lightly for the sake of virality (Hassan, 2022). There is a risk that messages become too simplistic, thereby reducing their depth of meaning (Topan Setiawan, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand how creators and audiences negotiate the balance between the authenticity of teachings and entertainment formats.

From a digital education perspective, Reels presents the concept of micro-learning, which makes it easier for audiences to acquire brief pieces of knowledge (Setiawan & Kurniawan, 2021). However, the effectiveness of the content depends on the accuracy and relevance of the message (Sari, 2023). This study provides a new perspective on how Islamic content on Reels can serve as a medium for informal learning and entertainment. Based on this background, this study focuses on two main questions: first, how is the balance between education and entertainment in Islamic Reels constructed; second, how does the audience interpret this content. This research is relevant given the increasingly dominant role of Instagram Reels in digital da'wah practices in Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2023). Thus, this study is expected to contribute conceptually and practically to the development of da'wah communication in the digital era (Topan Setiawan, 2025).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was obtained from 20 popular Islamic Reels videos uploaded between January and June 2025 that had high levels of interaction in the form of likes, comments, and shares (Kurniawan, 2025). The videos were analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify educational elements (teachings, arguments) and entertainment elements (visuals, humor, music). The analysis aimed to identify patterns in content packaging and the balance between educational and entertainment aspects. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 active Reels users to explore their perceptions of Islamic content. The interviews focused on the meaning of the message, the credibility of the source, and the impression of entertainment received (Topan Setiawan, 2024). The data was analyzed using a thematic approach to identify patterns of audience interpretation. The validity of the research results was maintained by triangulation between content analysis and interview data (Anggraini, 2023).

DISCUSSION

The first analysis shows that most of the content combines quotations from the Qur'an or short hadiths with attractive visuals, such as text animations and soft music (Santoso, 2024). This combination creates visual appeal while directly conveying religious messages. Topan Setiawan (2025) notes that this approach facilitates the absorption of religious material, especially by younger generations who are accustomed to fast-paced and visual formats. However, some videos use a light storytelling style or Islamic humor that can make the message feel “light” but effectively attract engagement (Yanti, 2022). This infotainment method expands the reach of teaching dissemination because of its accessible nature despite its short duration.

Audience interviews revealed that they felt entertained, but also received spiritual messages at the same time (Ibrahim, 2023). One respondent said, “I feel motivated to worship after watching funny Reels, but there is also a message” —an effective infotainment phenomenon (Topan Setiawan, 2024). Meanwhile, overly casual narratives are sometimes considered to diminish the seriousness of religious messages (Hadid, 2022). Several interviews criticized the impression of “playfulness” when religious messages are presented in a style that is too lighthearted, especially in the context of worship or important morals.

Data shows that there's tension between visual aesthetics and message depth (Sofie, 2023). Videos that focus too much on visual effects tend to reduce the depth of teaching delivery—a risk that content creators need to be aware of (Setiawan, 2025). However, content that wisely combines verse text with visuals and brief explanations is seen as an effective model for conveying religious knowledge (Putri, 2021). This reflects the potential of visual-based micro-learning in the religious sphere, if packaged carefully. Topan Setiawan (2023) emphasizes that the credibility of the presenter is a crucial factor in maintaining the integrity of the message. Reels featuring religious figures or ustadz with concise delivery gain higher trust compared to general accounts that merely “adapt” content without clear sources.

In addition, audiences tend to engage in informal fact-checking, such as checking the chain of transmission of hadiths or re-tagging accounts if the content feels ambiguous (Nurdin, 2024). This shows an increased scientific awareness among users, even when it comes to short content. Audience responses to background music and humor also vary—when used moderately, they are considered to strengthen message recall; when excessive, they distract from the core message (Sari, 2023). In some cases, attractive visuals such as moving text or Islamic icons accompanied by quotes from scholars significantly increase engagement (Rizky, 2025). It appears that visual style supports initial appeal and makes the message more ‘sticky’ in the minds of viewers.

Further analysis found that the narrative structure—beginning with everyday problems and ending with religious solutions—helped the audience relate Islamic values to real-life contexts (Arief, 2022). This pattern reinforces the educational function while minimizing the impression of superficiality. However, there is a weakness; the duration is too short, making some content insufficient to explain the context of the argument or differences in interpretation—given that spiritual depth cannot be condensed into a few seconds (Setiawan, 2025). Some creator accounts include explanatory links in the caption or highlights as a complementary strategy—showing awareness that Reels is only an educational gateway, not the end goal (Hidayat, 2021). Such strategies demonstrate the potential synergy between Reels and other platforms—such as YouTube or blogs—in creating a deeper learning flow (Topan Setiawan, 2024). Cross-platform collaboration is crucial for maintaining learning continuity. Overall, Islamic Reels content serves a dual purpose: as a light educational tool that both

educates and entertains, while also serving as an initial gateway to deeper religious knowledge—provided it is accompanied by adequate structure and references (Wijayanti, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic content on Instagram Reels has a dual character: as a means of religious education and digital entertainment. Short-form content has proven effective in conveying Islamic messages concisely through a combination of verses, hadiths, and light narratives, reinforced by attractive visuals and music. For the younger generation, Reels can serve as a brief spiritual reflection medium that is easily accessible amid daily routines. However, challenges arise when aesthetic and entertainment aspects overshadow the depth of substance. The audience generally responds positively to content that combines entertainment with religious values, but some criticize the tendency to simplify the message, which risks causing misunderstandings. The credibility of the presenter has proven to play a major role: content presented by religious teachers or figures is more trusted than videos without clear sources. Creators' strategies of adding further explanations in captions or directing audiences to other platforms are solutions for maintaining the depth of the message.

Thus, Instagram Reels should be viewed as a gateway to micro-learning that briefly introduces Islamic values, rather than as a substitute for in-depth religious studies. Creators are required to maintain a balance between visual creativity and doctrinal accuracy. In practical terms, this study emphasizes the importance of religious digital literacy for audiences to be able to sort out valid content. For academics, this research enriches the discourse on da'wah communication in the digital media era. For further research, it is recommended to explore other platforms such as TikTok or YouTube Shorts, as well as longitudinal studies on the longterm influence of Islamic content on the religious behavior of audiences.

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