

**VIRTUAL DA'WAH THROUGH YOUTUBE CHANNEL
(Communication Strategy Of Koh Dennis Lim's Content
In Building Public Trust)**

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Abstract: This study investigates the communication strategies employed by Koh Dennis Lim in his YouTube da'wah activities, focusing on how he builds public trust through digital platforms. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the research analyzes selected videos and viewer feedback to identify effective persuasive techniques. The findings reveal that Koh Dennis employs a combination of ethos, logos, and pathos to engage his audience. His use of historical narratives, personal testimonies, and relatable analogies fosters emotional connections and enhances credibility. The study highlights the importance of moderate positioning and audience inclusivity, demonstrating that effective da'wah can be achieved without confrontation. By creating a welcoming environment for dialogue, Koh Dennis successfully shifts the paradigm of Islamic preaching from a confrontational to a conversational approach. This research contributes to the understanding of modern religious communication, emphasizing the role of digital media in enhancing the reach and impact of religious messages. The implications of these findings suggest that a soft-power model of da'wah is essential in today's pluralistic society, where empathy and authenticity are crucial for building trust and fostering engagement.

Keywords: Digital da'wah, Communication strategies, Public trust.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis strategi komunikasi yang diterapkan oleh Koh Dennis Lim dalam aktivitas dakwahnya di YouTube, dengan fokus pada bagaimana ia membangun kepercayaan publik melalui platform digital. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis video-video terpilih dan umpan balik penonton untuk mengidentifikasi teknik persuasif yang efektif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Koh Dennis menggabungkan elemen ethos, logos, dan pathos untuk melibatkan audiensnya. Penggunaan narasi sejarah, kesaksian pribadi, dan analogi yang dapat dipahami meningkatkan koneksi emosional dan kredibilitas. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya posisi yang moderat dan inklusivitas audiens, menunjukkan bahwa dakwah yang efektif dapat dicapai tanpa konfrontasi. Dengan menciptakan lingkungan yang ramah untuk dialog, Koh Dennis berhasil mengubah paradigma dakwah Islam dari pendekatan konfrontatif menjadi percakapan. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman komunikasi religius modern, menekankan peran media digital dalam meningkatkan jangkauan dan dampak pesan-pesan religius. Implikasi dari temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa model dakwah soft-power sangat penting dalam masyarakat pluralistik saat ini, di mana empati dan keaslian sangat penting untuk membangun kepercayaan dan mendorong keterlibatan.

Kata kunci: Dakwah digital, Strategi komunikasi, Kepercayaan publik.

A. Introduction

In the age of digital communication, social media platforms have significantly transformed how religious messages are disseminated.¹ Platforms like YouTube have become essential tools for modern-day preachers to reach broader and more diverse audiences, particularly among younger generations who consume information primarily through digital media. One prominent figure in this digital shift is Dennis Lim, a young Chinese-Indonesian preacher and convert to Islam, who has successfully leveraged YouTube to build a substantial following of over 98.3K subscribers as of May 2025. His channel features more than 300 videos, with some garnering thousands of views and hundreds of comments, indicating high levels of audience engagement.² His success is attributed to his ability to deliver meaningful and relatable religious content through short, structured, and emotionally resonant videos that reflect both theological insights and personal experiences. This approach represents a modern form of da'wah that not only focuses on religious teachings but also seeks to build trust, credibility, and connection with a heterogeneous audience. As Dennis Lim's online influence continues to grow, analyzing his communication strategies and their role in fostering public trust becomes a significant and timely area of scholarly inquiry

Previous studies have explored various aspects of digital da'wah, focusing on how influencers use social media to disseminate religious messages. One such study is by Hidayah, Milatul (2024) in her thesis titled *Komunikasi Dakwah Virtual Dennis Lim Dalam Meraih Kepercayaan Publik Melalui Akun Tiktok @Kohdennislilm*, published by the Faculty of Ushuluddin Adab and Dakwah, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Pekalongan.³ Hidayah's research focuses on how Dennis Lim uses TikTok to engage with the public and build trust through strategies such as sentimental, rational, and sensory approaches. This study highlights the importance of understanding the methods used by influencers to establish credibility and trust within their audience.⁴ Another notable research is by Fadlei Dzil Ikram (2024) in his thesis titled *Karakteristik Pesan Dakwah Influencer Akun Dennis Lim Di YouTube*, submitted to the Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup. Ikram's research examines the characteristics of Dennis Lim's da'wah messages on YouTube, identifying his approach to

¹ Suci Ramadhani and Muaz Tanjung, "Communication Strategy in Strengthening Da'wah for the Muallaf Community in North Sumatra," *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial* 6, no. 1 (2023): 87–104.

² Asna Istya Marwantika and Dawam Multazamy Rohmatullah, "Buya Yahya's Da'wah Message and Crisis Communication Strategy in Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 42, no. 2 (2022): 308–26.

³ Milatul Hidayah, "Komunikasi Dakwah Virtual Dennis Lim Dalam Meraih Kepercayaan Publik Melalui Akun Tiktok@ Kohdennislilm" (UIN KH Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, 2024).

⁴ Hidayah.

making religious teachings relevant and accessible through a casual and empathetic style.⁵

The research by Zaini, Akmal Muhamad, and Mauludin, Hilman (2022) titled *Strategi Komunikasi Dakwah Ustaz Marzuki Imron (Ustaz Naruto) di YouTube*, published in *Lanter: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam*, also addresses the role of YouTube as a platform for religious outreach. The study explores the interpersonal communication strategies used by Ustaz Naruto in his video content, highlighting how his use of humor and character-based branding (inspired by the Naruto anime) successfully attracts a younger audience. This research contributes to understanding how popular culture and humor can be integrated into religious messages to enhance their appeal and effectiveness. These studies demonstrate the growing body of literature exploring how social media platforms like YouTube have transformed religious communication, emphasizing the importance of trust-building and audience engagement.⁶

This research builds upon these previous studies by focusing specifically on Dennis Lim's strategies in building trust and fostering engagement through his digital da'wah activities. By examining both his YouTube content, this study aims to contribute further insights into the evolving dynamics of digital religious communication. The research seeks to identify the specific strategies that make Dennis Lim's da'wah effective in building a strong connection with his audience. Additionally, the study will explore the broader implications of these findings for religious communication in the digital age, particularly in how influencers adapt traditional messages to fit the characteristics of modern platforms. This exploration of digital da'wah in the context of trust-building will be a valuable addition to the existing literature on religious communication in the digital era.⁷

This study will use a qualitative approach to analyze Dennis Lim's content and communication techniques, focusing on his audience's response and the underlying strategies that contribute to his success. Through this research, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of how digital platforms can be used effectively to engage audiences in meaningful and impactful religious communication.

⁵ Fadlei Dzil Ikram, Dita Verolyna, and Intan Kurnia Syaputri, "Karakteristik Pesan Dakwah Influencer Akun Dennis Lim Di Youtube" (Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup, 2024).

⁶ Akmal Muhamad Zaini and Hilman Mauludin, "Strategi Komunikasi Dakwah Ustaz Marzuki Imron (Ustaz Naruto) Di Youtube," *Lanter: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 1, no. 1 (2022): 25–38.

⁷ Arif Ramdan Sulaeman, Anhar Fazri, and Fairus Fairus, "Strategi Pemanfaatan Youtube Dalam Bidang Dakwah Oleh Ulama Aceh," *Communication* 11, no. 1 (2020): 81–93.

B. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach combining Klaus Krippendorff's framework with a semiotic analysis to examine the communication strategies employed by Dennis Lim in his YouTube content for digital da'wah. The research aims to explore how these strategies foster public trust and engage a diverse digital audience through symbolic, linguistic, and visual elements. The primary object of analysis is the content of three specific videos uploaded on Dennis Lim's official YouTube channel. These videos were selected purposively based on three main criteria: (1) thematic relevance to Islamic discourse and digital communication, (2) level of audience engagement indicated by views and comments, and (3) variation in format, including both monologic storytelling and live interactions. The videos analyzed are: "*Asal Muasal Uzbekistan Menjadi Negara Muslim*" (published April 25, 2025), "*Dunia Sebagai Ladang Menuju Surga Allah*" (livestreamed May 6, 2025), and "*Kajian Masjid Raudhatul Jannah Lombok*" (livestreamed May 3, 2025).

Data collection was conducted in two stages. First, an in-depth content analysis was applied to each video using Krippendorff's thematic coding categories such as source credibility, message organization, emotional appeal, and framing combined with Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, focusing on denotation, connotation, and myth construction. This allowed for a richer interpretation of the verbal and visual signs used by Dennis Lim in constructing meaning and authority. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 purposively selected viewers to explore their interpretive responses and the extent to which these communication strategies influenced their trust and engagement. Thematic and semiotic analyses were used jointly to identify key communication patterns, symbolic codes, and underlying values within the video content and audience reflections. This integrated approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how meaning is encoded and decoded in digital da'wah narratives and how communication strategies support the building of relational and institutional trust in a pluralistic digital environment.

C. Results and Discussion

Research Results

This study explores the communication strategies used by Dennis Lim in his digital da'wah activities on YouTube, focusing on how these strategies foster trust among his audience. The research employed content analysis on three selected videos and semi-structured interviews with ten purposively sampled viewers. These interviews aimed to validate how

Dennis Lim's delivery style, thematic focus, and media format contribute to message effectiveness and public trust.

The interview findings revealed that 80% of informants consider Dennis Lim's communication strategies to be "effective," while the remaining 20% rate them as "very effective." These responses indicate a high level of satisfaction with how messages are structured and conveyed in his content. The effectiveness was commonly attributed to two core factors: relevant topics (mentioned by 40% of respondents) and style of delivery (mentioned by 60%). This supports the idea that religious messages today must be not only theologically sound but also emotionally and rhetorically engaging to sustain audience interest.

When examining the preferred content formats, 50% of respondents reported frequently watching "Tanya Jawab Podcast", 30% preferred ceramah (lectures), and 20% favored discussion-style videos. This variation suggests that Dennis Lim's use of multiple formats helps to meet different audience expectations and learning preferences, thereby increasing the reach and inclusivity of his da'wah efforts. Regarding viewer influence, 70% of participants stated they felt "influenced" by Dennis Lim's content, while 30% claimed they were "quite influenced." No respondents reported being unaffected. This reflects the emotional and spiritual impact of his messages, further emphasized by the personal tone he uses, especially when narrating personal experiences or addressing controversial topics calmly and respectfully.

Trust formation was also evaluated. 40% of viewers reported frequently trusting Dennis Lim's content, 50% trusted him occasionally, and 10% rarely trusted the messages. Those with higher trust levels often cited consistency, humility, and emotional sincerity as major contributing factors. This aligns with rhetorical theory, where *ethos*—or speaker credibility—is enhanced through perceived integrity and emotional resonance.

Table 1

Summarizes The Distribution Of Key Themes Across The Interview Data

Variable	Percentage (%)
Communication perceived as effective	80%
Communication perceived as very effective	20%
Preferred format: Tanya Jawab Podcast	50%
Preferred format: Ceramah (Lecture)	30%

Preferred format: Discussion	20%
Influenced by content	70%
Quite influenced by content	30%
Trust messages frequently	40%
Trust messages occasionally	50%
Rarely trust messages	10%
Cited "topic relevance" as key factor	40%
Cited "delivery style" as key factor	60%

Table 2

Summary of Interview Data from 10 Informants on Dennis Lim's Communication Strategies

No	Indicator	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequency of Watching Dennis Lim's Videos	Often	6	60%
		Sometimes	4	40%
2	Preferred Content Format	Tanya Jawab Podcast	5	50%
		Ceramah	3	30%
		Discussion	2	20%
3	Perceived Effectiveness of Communication	Effective	8	80%
		Very Effective	2	20%
4	Main Reason for Attractiveness of Communication	Delivery Style	6	60%
		Relevance of Themes	4	40%
5	Influence of Content	Influenced	7	70%
		Quite Influenced	3	30%

6	Trust in Dennis Lim's Messages	Frequently Trust	4	40%
		Occasionally Trust	5	50%
		Rarely Trust	1	10%

Koh Dennis Lim's Da'wah Communication Strategy on YouTube Content to Build Public Trust

The first analyzed video is titled "*The Origins of Uzbekistan Becoming a Muslim Country*", which premiered on April 25, 2025, and has garnered 2,843 views. In this video, Koh Dennis Lim narrates Islamic history in a calm, structured manner, rooted in classical Islamic historical sources, thereby instilling a sense of credibility among his audience. This approach reflects a persuasive communication strategy grounded in the communicator's credibility a key component in Sherif and Hovland's persuasive communication theory. The use of historical quotes from the caliphate of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, along with discussions on justice and Islamic law, reinforces ethos as a narrative that builds trustworthiness. Koh Dennis presents his message without any intimidating or provocative tone, instead opting for a reflective and informative style, which enhances comfort and trust among a heterogeneous audience. The video's logical structure from beginning to end exemplifies the use of logical appeal, where historical arguments are systematically constructed to foster acceptance of Islamic values. This strategy also demonstrates effective message organization, enabling the message to be accepted without significant resistance, even by non-Muslim viewers. The calm background music and supportive visuals contribute to making the da'wah message more engaging and effective. Koh Dennis's narrative also reflects a moderate position, aligning well with the digital audience mostly youth seeking truth through rational, non-extreme means.

According to Sherif and Hovland's persuasive communication theory, there are three key components to persuasive strategies: the source (communicator), the message, and the audience.⁸ Koh Dennis positions himself as a high-credibility source, as he is widely known as a Chinese convert to Islam who actively preaches across platforms, strengthening the perception of his objectivity. The da'wah message in this video is presented through a historical narrative, supported by moral, social, and spiritual

⁸ Shasha Teng, Kok Wei Khong, and Wei Wei Goh, "Persuasive Communication: A Study of Major Attitude-Behavior Theories in a Social Media Context," *Journal of Internet Commerce* 14, no. 1 (2015): 42–64.

arguments directly connected to contemporary Muslim life. By discussing Islamic justice and the prohibition of warfare without prior da'wah, he appeals to moral values, categorized in Hovland's theory as value-relevant involvement. Koh Dennis avoids extremist positions by explaining that Islam entered Samarkand not merely through military force, but rather through justice demonstrated by the Islamic legal system. This strategy makes his message more acceptable to audiences from various religious and cultural backgrounds.⁹ The audience in this context falls within the latitude of acceptance, as the message is delivered moderately and inclusively. This demonstrates that persuasive da'wah content need not rely on emotional or sensational rhetoric, but can be effective through personal credibility and rational message delivery.¹⁰

The content delivered by Koh Dennis also reflects a two-sided argument strategy acknowledging conflict (the conquest of Samarkand) while presenting a fair and moral resolution (a just trial and the caliph's ruling). This indicates that Koh Dennis's communication is educational rather than indoctrinative, which is crucial for building public trust in the digital age. He not only presents historical information but also reinterprets its meaning to align with universal values such as justice, empathy, and humanism. This is the core strength of his communication strategy in gradually building trust. The use of visual analogies, including animations and supporting images, enhances the message's appeal and maintains audience attention throughout the video. The communication is not one-way Koh Dennis actively engages with viewers through comments and follow-up content, creating a psychological bond between communicator and audience, known in persuasive communication as interpersonal attraction. This fosters a sense of belonging among the audience toward the da'wah community being built.¹¹

Another indicator of persuasive communication present in the video is the use of sequential messaging conveying information gradually, starting from historical context, followed by justice values, and ending with evidence of Islamic principles' superiority.¹² This step-by-step approach allows the audience to logically process the message and gradually accept the da'wah content without pressure. Koh Dennis also utilizes language clarity, using simple and jargon-free language that does not target or demean any group.

⁹ Nuraedah Nuraedah and Mutawakkil Mutawakkil, "The Da'wah Communication Strategy of Jamaah Tabligh in Sub-District of Tondo, Palu City," *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2020): 297–316.

¹⁰ Reka Gunawan and Abdul Muhid, "The Strategy of Da'wah Bil Hal Communication: Literature Review," *KOMUNIKE: Jurnal Komunikasi Penyiaran Islam* 14, no. 1 (2022): 33–50.

¹¹ Marwantika and Rohmatullah, "Buya Yahya's Da'wah Message and Crisis Communication Strategy in Responding to the Covid-19 Pandemic."

¹² Teng, Khong, and Goh, "Persuasive Communication: A Study of Major Attitude-Behavior Theories in a Social Media Context."

His choice of inclusive and non-dogmatic language is highly effective in shaping the perception that his da'wah is friendly and open. This strategy is especially relevant for the diverse YouTube audience, which includes individuals with various ideological backgrounds. He also includes personal reflections as a convert who experienced a journey in seeking truth, which serves as a form of *personal testimony* in persuasive theory. This testimonial strengthens the emotional connection with the audience and bridges the gap between communicator and receiver. Therefore, it can be concluded that this first video employs a balanced combination of persuasive strategies based on *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* to effectively build public trust in Islamic da'wah.

Below is the classification of persuasive communication strategies used by Koh Dennis Lim in the YouTube video titled "*The Origins of Uzbekistan Becoming a Muslim Country*":

Table 3

Persuasive Communication Strategies Used by Koh Dennis Lim in the First Video

No	Indicator (Sherif & Hovland)	Implementation in the Video
1	Source Credibility	Koh Dennis is perceived as an objective communicator and a credible convert.
2	Message Organization	The narrative flows logically from history to Islamic justice values.
3	Moral Value Appeal	Emphasizes Islamic justice in the legal case of Samarkand.
4	Moderate Position	Avoids extremist narratives and highlights universal values.
5	Audience Latitude of Acceptance	Message delivered inclusively and amicably to diverse audiences.
6	Two-Sided Argument	Presents both historical facts and Islamic solutions in a balanced way.
7	Personal Testimony	Shares personal experience as a convert to Islam.
8	Interpersonal Attraction	Engages with audience through comments and community-building.

9	Language Clarity	Uses simple, clear, and non-provocative language.
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Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

Based on the table above, it is evident that Koh Dennis's communication strategy in this first video comprehensively integrates various indicators from persuasive communication theory. He not only focuses on how the message is constructed and delivered but also deeply understands his audience's characteristics. The combination of communicator credibility, systematic message construction, and emotional engagement through personal reflection makes the da'wah communication feel authentic and impactful. This approach significantly strengthens public trust, particularly on digital platforms like YouTube, where originality and personal connection are essential.¹³

The inclusion of indicators such as *two-sided arguments* and *moderate positioning* is also crucial, as it shows that the da'wah message is not coercive. Instead, Koh Dennis presents a narrative that appeals to the logic and emotions of the audience without making them feel judged. This strategy is highly relevant in the context of Indonesia's plural society, as it opens up room for dialogue and interpretation of Islamic values. Therefore, the communication strategy employed in this video is effective not only in conveying religious teachings but also in establishing lasting relationships and public trust.¹⁴

Koh Dennis Lim's Da'wah Communication Strategy in the Second Video: "Dunia sebagai Ladang Menuju Surga Allah | Ngaji Bareng Koko"

The second video analyzed is entitled "*Dunia sebagai Ladang Menuju Surga Allah | Ngaji Bareng Koko*", a live-streamed session dated May 6, 2025. Unlike the previous video that focused on Islamic history, this video centers around spiritual motivation and life reflection. Koh Dennis uses a calm, contemplative tone to convey that life in this world is temporary and serves merely as preparation for the hereafter. This theme resonates with the audience's emotional and existential concerns.¹⁵

¹³ Ramadhani and Tanjung, "Communication Strategy in Strengthening Da'wah for the Muallaf Community in North Sumatra."

¹⁴ Muhammad Choirin et al., "Nurturing Moderate Islam: Strategic Da'wah Communication in The Digital Era for Generation Z," *International Journal Ihya' Ulum Al-Din* 26, no. 1 (2024): 108–18.

¹⁵ Muhammad Isnaini and Ahmad Fauzi, "Islamic Boarding School Marketing Communication and Da'wah Through Tik-Tok," *Dakwatuna: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 8, no. 2 (2022): 180–92.

He initiates the session with an analogy: “Hidup ini ibarat menanam benih. Dunia ladangnya, akhirat panennya.” (Life is like planting seeds. The world is the field, the hereafter is the harvest). Through this metaphor, he employs the persuasive strategy of *value-relevant involvement* by linking Islamic values to real-life situations. Koh Dennis also shares his personal spiritual journey, explaining how he shifted his priorities from material success to spiritual fulfillment this functions as *testimony-based persuasion*, strengthening his *source credibility*. Visually, the video maintains soft, neutral lighting and supportive text overlays of key Qur'anic verses. He references Surah Al-Mulk verse 2: “(Allah) who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in deed.” This reinforces the message of life as a temporary test, appealing to *pathos* and moral values. His interactive approach reading and responding to live comments enhances *interpersonal closeness* and positions him as a relatable da'i rather than an authoritative preacher. The message is repeatedly framed within the *latitude of acceptance* by emphasizing universal Islamic ethics: sincerity (ikhlas), patience (sabr), and compassion (rahmah). Structurally, the live session flows from personal reflection → Qur'anic validation → audience interaction → practical advice. This dynamic format combines logos (logic and analogies), ethos (personal credibility), and pathos (emotional appeal). He avoids polarizing or absolutist statements, choosing instead to present Islam as a source of inner peace and guidance, which aligns with *moderate persuasive positioning* as emphasized in Hovland's model.¹⁶

Table 4**Semiotik and Da'wah Message Analysis – Second Video**

Quoted Phrase	Semiotic Meaning	Da'wah Message
“Dunia ini ladang, akhirat panennya.”	World as a place of investment for the hereafter	Encouragement to do righteous deeds and prepare for life after death
“Yang penting kita niatnya lurus, Allah yang nilai.”	Sincerity (ikhlas) as a non-visible but decisive value	Faith is measured by intention, not just external results
“Hidup itu sebentar, jangan sampai kita tertipu dengan	World's glamour is a temporary illusion	Warns against materialism and reminds of the temporality of life

¹⁶ Thomas Koch, “Über Die Grundlagen Persuasiver Kommunikation: Communication and Persuasion von Hovland, Irving Und Kelley,” in *Schlüsselwerke Der Werbeforschung* (Springer, 2023), 69–78.

gemerlapnya dunia.”

“Sabar dan syukur adalah dua sayap menuju surga.”	Patience and gratitude as balanced virtues	Promotes moral resilience through sabr (patience) and shukr (gratitude)
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“Saya dulu juga sibuk cari dunia, tapi akhirnya kosong.”	Personal testimony of spiritual emptiness despite worldly success	Emphasizes transformation through Islam and the pursuit of meaning beyond material life
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Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

The second video utilizes emotional and spiritual themes to construct a persuasive da'wah narrative. Koh Dennis balances personal storytelling with Qur'anic reference to create moral resonance. The communication remains within the *latitude of acceptance*, avoiding confrontation and instead offering reflective insight. Compared to the first video, this session leans more heavily on *pathos* and *ethos*, with less use of historical *logos*. He employs persuasive strategies such as:

- High credibility (personal experience, sincerity)
- Emotional framing (life as a temporary test, gratitude, and patience)
- Interactivity (audience engagement via live chat)
- Moderate tone (inclusive, non-polarizing language)

This proves that persuasive Islamic da'wah on YouTube does not require confrontation, but rather, authenticity, emotional intelligence, and value-based relevance.

Koh Dennis Lim's Da'wah Communication Strategy in the Third Video: “Kajian Masjid Raudhatul Jannah Lombok | Ngaji Bareng Koko”

In this video, Koh Dennis delivers a structured and contemplative lecture before a live audience at Masjid Raudhatul Jannah in Lombok. The tone is respectful and solemn, emphasizing humility and sincerity as prerequisites for receiving and practicing religious knowledge. From a communication perspective, his persuasive approach is deeply rooted in *ethos* (credibility), *moderate positioning*, and *receptive framing*.

He begins the session with praise to Allah and a heartfelt wish that every attendee may receive divine blessings this greeting establishes *interpersonal warmth* and lowers resistance from diverse audience segments. By physically situating himself within the mosque environment, he strengthens his *contextual credibility*. This face-to-face setting, different

from his studio or solo sessions, allows him to use real-time eye contact, facial expressions, and tone shifts that enhance *empathic communication*.¹⁷

His central strategy involves sequential logic, moving from definition → reflection → application. Rather than presenting rigid doctrinal instruction, Koh Dennis offers practical, relatable interpretations, making his message fall within the latitude of acceptance of his audience. He avoids aggressive or exclusive language, instead utilizing *inclusive phrases* like “kita semua,” “mari kita renungkan,” or “semoga kita mampu.” This style fosters a collective identity and avoids triggering defensive attitudes.

In delivering abstract concepts like *zuhud* and *wara'*, he simplifies terms using analogies and everyday language. For instance, instead of strictly quoting classical definitions, he translates them into relatable behaviors, such as “tidak memakai barang orang lain walau sekecil apapun tanpa izin.” This pedagogical technique reflects high audience orientation, one of Hovland’s key components in message adaptation.¹⁸

Unlike YouTube-only content, this session benefits from multimodal communication: he uses verbal emphasis, hand gestures, body posture, and responsive interaction with the mosque audience. His physical presence enables him to detect feedback from facial expressions or murmurs, allowing for immediate *message adjustment* a significant persuasive tool not present in fully digital contexts.

Koh Dennis also displays moderate latitude anchoring by reiterating that spiritual development is a process and no one is instantly perfect. This protects the message from being rejected by those with lower religious involvement, aligning with Sherif’s idea of *anchor repositioning* moving an audience gradually rather than drastically.¹⁹

Table 5

Summary of Key Communication Strategies – Third Video

Strategy		Application in Video
Source (Ethos)	Credibility	Appears in a real mosque, dressed modestly, and uses calm, clear articulation

¹⁷ Muslimin Muslimin and Sri Hertimi, “Da’wah Communication Strategy of Kiai Marogan Islamic Boarding School Palembang in the Mass Media,” *Wardah* 24, no. 1 (2023): 160–78.

¹⁸ Nurul Laila Hidayat, “Strategi Komunikasi Dakwah Penyuluh Agama Islam Dalam Pembinaan Keluarga Sakinah,” *IJIC: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Communication* 3, no. 1 (2020): 40–66.

¹⁹ Aliyandi A Lumbu and S Sos, *STRATEGI KOMUNIKASI DAKWAH Studi Masyarakat Miskin Perkotaan Dalam Peningkatan Pemahaman Ajaran Agama Islam* (Gre Publishing, 2020).

Audience Orientation	Simplifies concepts and uses real-life examples to aid understanding
Moderate Positioning (Latitude)	Emphasizes reflection and gradual self-improvement, avoiding extreme or polarizing language
Multimodal Engagement	Uses hand gestures, physical presence, and visual contact with audience
Inclusive Framing	Uses terms like “kita,” “mari,” and shared aspirations to build unity
Repetition and Structure	Repeats core values and structures them in clear sequences (definition → example → reflection → action)
Environmental Credibility	Presence in a sacred setting (masjid) increases contextual trust and symbolic power

Source: Author's Analysis, 2025

In this video, Koh Dennis demonstrates an adaptive and audience-sensitive communication strategy. He maximizes *contextual ethos*, simplifies complex ideas, and maintains a moderate persuasive tone that aligns with Sherif and Hovland's theories. His ability to modulate between online charisma and in-person sincerity shows versatility in delivering Islamic da'wah across diverse platforms.

Discussion

The preaching communication strategy applied by Koh Dennis Lim on his YouTube channel reflects a modern and adaptive approach to digital religious dissemination. Through three observed videos, Koh Dennis demonstrates a persuasive technique that avoids coercion while emphasizing shared values. He integrates narrative storytelling and personal reflection to establish emotional resonance with his audience. This approach aligns with Sherif and Hovland's theory of persuasive communication, particularly the concepts of source credibility and audience latitude of acceptance. By positioning his message within the audience's zone of tolerance, Koh Dennis increases the likelihood of message reception. The inclusion of cultural and historical references strengthens audience relatability. This signals a shift from traditional top-down preaching to interactive and empathetic communication.

In the first video, “The Origins of Uzbekistan as a Muslim Nation,” Koh Dennis employs historical narratives to deliver religious insights. He presents Islamic history not merely as facts, but as lived experiences that connect the past to present realities. His delivery is calm and non-confrontational, inviting reflection rather than resistance. This approach aligns with the principle of non-threatening message framing in persuasive theory. He avoids extreme language and opts for moderate anchoring to accommodate diverse viewer interpretations. The use of gentle transitions and open-ended statements helps reduce psychological resistance. As a result, viewers with limited Islamic knowledge can engage without feeling alienated.

The second video, “The World as a Field to Attain Paradise,” reveals a more contemplative and spiritual tone. Koh Dennis emphasizes internal transformation through simple analogies and relatable struggles. He shares insights about materialism and spiritual poverty in a way that is both personal and universal. His self-disclosure enhances source credibility, which is central to Hovland’s persuasion model. The integration of ethos and emotional appeal allows the message to penetrate deeper into the viewer’s conscience. His humility and sincerity position him as a trustworthy communicator. The video fosters a reflective atmosphere conducive to voluntary acceptance of the message.

In the third video, “Sermon at Raudhatul Jannah Mosque, Lombok,” Koh Dennis adopts a more formal tone while preserving his accessible style. The physical setting of the mosque adds an element of symbolic legitimacy to his message. Despite the formality, he maintains his conversational delivery to ensure audience engagement. His awareness of spatial and cultural contexts demonstrates situational adaptation, a key aspect in persuasive communication. He continues to employ mild language, avoiding authoritarian expressions. The combination of spiritual authority and personal warmth balances the message effectively. Such an approach reinforces both credibility and emotional appeal.

Across all three videos, Koh Dennis adapts his communication style to fit the situational and audience contexts. He does not rely on a single strategy, but modifies his tone, structure, and emphasis based on setting and topic. This reflects strategic message customization, which increases effectiveness according to Sherif and Hovland. His avoidance of confrontation and emphasis on shared human experience lower the risk of audience rejection. The shift from purely didactic to dialogical preaching marks a critical evolution in digital da’wah. Koh Dennis exemplifies how religious communication can evolve without losing its core values. This adaptation enhances inclusivity and reduces perceived threat in diverse audiences.

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His strategy is especially effective for younger, digital-native audiences who are more responsive to emotional intelligence and authenticity. By presenting himself as a fellow seeker rather than a religious authority, he builds parasocial intimacy. This intimacy fosters trust, making the audience more receptive to his spiritual guidance. The presence of humility in his speech acts as a persuasive cue, lowering resistance. Moreover, his consistent message across platforms establishes coherence, a vital element in reinforcing belief change. Such consistency aligns with Hovland's idea that repetitive, credible messages increase retention and persuasion. In turn, this creates a sustainable model of online religious engagement.

One key persuasive element found in Koh Dennis's delivery is emotional appeal through sincerity. He frequently references his own transformation and struggles as a former non-Muslim. This autobiographical persuasion builds a narrative of credibility rooted in lived experience. The emotional vulnerability he shares elicits empathy from his audience, enhancing engagement. In persuasive theory, this is referred to as "identification," where audiences see themselves in the communicator's journey. This identification leads to deeper cognitive and emotional processing of the message. As a result, message internalization becomes more likely.

Another distinctive feature is the strategic use of metaphors and simplified language. Koh Dennis avoids dense theological jargon and instead opts for digestible analogies. This ensures that complex religious values are conveyed in familiar terms. This simplification increases comprehension and reduces the cognitive load for the viewer. In persuasive theory, this is known as "message clarity," a factor that directly affects message retention. The repetition of key phrases and relatable examples further reinforces the main themes. These techniques make his sermons accessible to a broad demographic, including non-practicing Muslims and spiritual seekers.

Koh Dennis's strength also lies in the consistency between his verbal and nonverbal communication. His facial expressions, gestures, and vocal tone align with the sincerity of his message. This congruence enhances perceived honesty, a factor central to persuasive credibility. In contrast to aggressive or overly theatrical preachers, Koh Dennis maintains calmness and presence. His visual simplicity casual clothing, no excessive set design adds to the authenticity effect. According to Hovland, audiences are more likely to believe messages from communicators who appear genuine. This strategy strengthens both message believability and emotional alignment. Ultimately, it builds long-term trust in the digital preaching space.

From an academic perspective, Koh Dennis's strategy illustrates the evolution of da'wah into a soft-power model. Instead of using rigid argumentation, he leverages empathy, storytelling, and shared humanity. This model is particularly relevant in plural societies where direct religious confrontation may cause backlash. By focusing on universal moral values, he appeals to cross-cultural sensibilities. Such an approach aligns with contemporary theories of intercultural communication. It opens the door for dialogue rather than debate. This contribution is significant for both communication scholars and religious practitioners.

Koh Dennis's communication style counteracts stereotypes of Islamic preaching as intolerant or harsh. By showcasing Islam as peaceful, inclusive, and relatable, he reshapes public perceptions. This form of "persuasive soft da'wah" serves as a cultural counter-narrative. It positions Islam within the global discourse of coexistence and compassion. In the age of digital misinformation, such clarity and warmth are invaluable. His strategy promotes religious understanding beyond the Muslim community. Thus, he acts as a bridge between cultures and faiths.

One potential limitation of his approach is the lack of interactive feedback mechanisms. Although comments are allowed, real-time audience engagement remains minimal. A participatory model could strengthen audience involvement and improve message personalization. Adding live Q&A or integrating feedback loops would enhance two-way communication. This limitation highlights the need for hybrid models of digital preaching. Combining monologue-style sermons with dialogic forums would further increase credibility. Future research could explore such integrations in greater depth.

Another concern is the reliance on a singular personal brand. While Koh Dennis's charisma drives engagement, it also risks creating over-dependence on individual presence. Institutionalizing such communication styles could ensure message continuity and collective credibility. Collaborations with diverse scholars may enrich content and avoid monocentric interpretation. From a strategic perspective, building a sustainable communication ecosystem is essential. This mitigates the risks of individual fatigue or reputation crises. Long-term trust must be distributed, not centralized.

Despite these limitations, Koh Dennis's strategy offers a replicable model for contemporary religious communication. His emphasis on empathy, clarity, and authenticity provides a fresh alternative to traditional preaching. This model is especially impactful in digital spaces where attention is fragmented. By aligning with core principles of persuasive theory, his communication reaches both the heart and the intellect. Such

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integration marks a significant contribution to both religious media and communication studies. His work exemplifies how persuasive techniques can be ethically and effectively applied in faith-based messaging. Ultimately, Koh Dennis represents a new archetype of digital preacher empathetic, strategic, and intellectually grounded. His success suggests a growing demand for relational and dialogical preaching. It also affirms that digital media, when used wisely, can amplify the spiritual reach of religious figures. Communication is not merely a tool but a theology of connection in his approach. His content does not preach at people it speaks with them. This subtle yet powerful distinction defines the future of da'wah in the digital era. It is here that communication becomes both the message and the method.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that Koh Dennis Lim's communication strategy in conveying Islamic messages through YouTube effectively exemplifies the principles of persuasive communication as proposed by Sherif and Hovland. His use of emotional appeal, narrative identity, and message clarity creates a preaching style that is inclusive, non-threatening, and engaging to diverse audiences. The credibility of the source, combined with the strategic placement of messages within the audience's latitude of acceptance, significantly enhances the reception and internalization of religious messages. Koh Dennis successfully shifts the paradigm of da'wah from confrontational to conversational, demonstrating that religious preaching can evolve without compromising its spiritual integrity. His approach reflects a soft-power model of Islamic communication that is particularly relevant in pluralistic and digitally-mediated societies. These findings not only contribute to the development of contemporary da'wah strategies but also offer new insights into the application of persuasive communication theories in religious contexts. In essence, Koh Dennis Lim's method bridges religious authenticity with modern communication demands, making it a valuable model for future research and practice in digital religious discourse.

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