

## Research Article

# Using Instagram as a Platform for Dakwah: A Netnographic Study of Instagram Influencer Zhafiraiha

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## Abstract.

The principle of every Muslim is a Da'i and da'wah can be done anywhere and by anyone as long as it is done with the main goal of inviting goodness and preventing evil, so da'wah on the Instagram platform as the most popular platform in the world and the second most used in Indonesia is important. As a Da'i on social media, we can see and then learn from the content of influencers who have already received enthusiasm from netizens but also consistently maintain their Muslim identity. One influencer who has become an inspiration for many young people, seen from the many positive reviews about her on the internet is Zhafira Aqyla Syadzya Syahidah. This study aims to determine how the Instagram account @zhafiraiha as an influencer spreads da'wah on Instagram social media and to find out the variations in the types of content uploaded to netizens on her Instagram. This study uses a qualitative approach with the netnography method, and content analysis techniques. Based on the results and discussion of the analysis, it was concluded that the @zhafiraiha account is consistent, uses additional features, uploads various types of content (multiple slides, reels, IG TV, live), adds captions, maintains relationships with the audience, and uploads varied content. The eight content type variations are trips, family, romance, friendship, work, insight, education, and brand promotion.

**Keywords:** content, da'wah, influencer, Instagram, netnographic, Zhafiraiha

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**Published:** 15 July 2025

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ICDComm 2024 Conference Committee.

## 1. Introduction

The latest research released by Data.ai entitled "Media state of mobile 2024" states that internet users or netizens in Indonesia are the most addicted to gadgets such as smartphones for more than 6 hours a day, this is an increase from the previous year's trend, even though Indonesia has been ranked top as a country whose citizens spend the longest time using cellphones since 2020. From here it can also be concluded that the majority of Indonesian Muslims are the actors considering that Muslims are the largest in Indonesia.

Referring to a global survey conducted by the McKinsey Health Institute (MHI) in 2022, social media has an impact that can be positive or negative on the mental,



social, spiritual, and physical health of its users [1]. This study also revealed that as users age, the negative impact of social media on mental health tends to decrease [1].

Generation Z (born 1997-2012) is the group that most often reports negative impacts of social media on their mental health, at 27%. Meanwhile, millennials or generation Y (born 1981-1996) stated 19%, generation X (born 1965-1980) 14%, and baby boomers (born 1946-1964) reported 9%.[1] Both Generation Z who use social media less than or more than 2 hours a day, both stated that social media has a negative impact on their mental health [1].

According to research children and adolescents ( digital natives ) should be the main priority in preaching because they are important assets that continue to grow [2]. Although previous research said that the lower the age group, the higher the negative impact of social media was reported, they are actually the most active users of social media based on McKinsey Research.[3] So this is a challenge for preachers on social media to be creative in inviting goodness. In addition, the theme of preaching in the information era also needs to include love for fellow human beings, because basically all humans are brothers and sisters of the target of preaching. As preachers, we are responsible for processing and ensuring that the content we share is the best and far from intentional to cause division.

Islam, as the religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin, provides guidance and a vision of life for all mankind. Islamic teachings function as a guide to guide every human being, especially Muslims, to always remember and understand clearly the instructions from the Creator, so that they can live a good life in this world and become provisions for life in the afterlife.

In other sources, it is explained that the concrete formulation of theological perspective can build values and characteristics as Muslims in Islamic education. As a Muslim, his intellectualization must be directed at strengthening commitment, submission, and obedience to Allah SWT.[4] In addition, a Muslim must also reject all views and guidelines for life that do not come from Allah SWT. As a Muslim, it is important to be progressive by always evaluating the quality of life, customs, traditions, and outlook on life. A Muslim must also have a very clear goal, with all efforts, hard work, and life and death aimed solely for Allah SWT. Finally, a Muslim must have monotheism based on a clear vision and mission about life that must be built together with fellow human beings.

Muslims are figures who should implement Islamic teachings and be examples of goodness for all creatures, because Islamic teachings are designed to be a blessing

for all nature. The challenges and opportunities that Muslims face in the current era of disruption are very varied. The social environment formed through the internet increasingly expands opportunities to develop Islamic preaching, of course with methods and approaches that are adjusted to the characteristics of the new media.[2] Preaching can be done anywhere and by anyone, as long as everything is done with the main goal of inviting goodness and preventing evil.[5]

In order for da'wah to remain relevant, responsive, effective, and productive in the information era, there are things that need to be considered, namely: every Muslim is a Da'i.[5] The orientation of da'wah must focus on internalizing, socializing, and actualizing Islamic teachings with an approach that stimulates rationality, cognition, and affection.[2] This approach is expected to deepen the understanding of the object of da'wah regarding the message conveyed, so that the message is transformed into an Islamic attitude or behavior that is reflected in everyday actions. As Da'i on social media, we can see and then learn from the content of influencers who have already received netizen enthusiasm but consistently maintain their Muslim identity.

Nowadays, people use various types of social media such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and others. From some of these world-famous social platforms, researchers choosing Instagram account as the research site. Instagram was chosen because it is the world's first favorite social media application, and the second most used in Indonesia after WhatsApp.

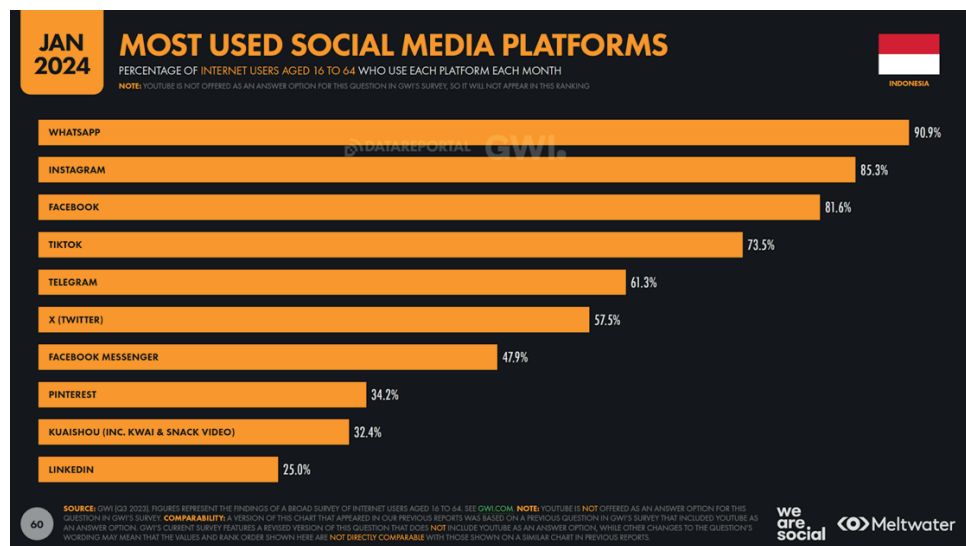


Figure 1:

This study examines the Instagram account @zhafiraiha with a focus on the variety of content categories shared. Instagram was chosen as the research platform because

it has many users from various backgrounds. One of its main features is the ability to quickly create and share photos and videos, as seen on Zhafira Aqyla's Instagram account. The researcher chose the account @zhafiraiha, whose real name is Zhafira Aqyla Syadzya Syahidah and currently has 492 thousand followers, because the content shared by Zhafira often attracts the attention of netizens, especially in terms of sharing daily activities, both in the context of personal life, social, hobbies, work, and education. Interestingly, Zhafira is able to spread positive things while maintaining her identity as a Muslim woman. This account has become an inspiration for many young people, as seen from the many positive reviews about her on the internet. The researcher chose this account to study compared to other Indonesian Muslim influencers because of Zhafira's interesting background.

Zhafira Aqyla was born on April 12, 2000 in Japan, but raised in Indonesia, as the daughter of Dr. Candra Dermawan and Dr. Rini Fura Kirana. At the age of 17, Zhafira went to Japan to continue her undergraduate studies at Osaka University in the International Human Sciences Program, which she completed in 2021. During her studies, she also became a Research Student and earned a Bachelor of Human Sciences degree with a MEXT Scholarship. She founded the Instagram account @taulebih.id in November 2021 which focuses on sexual education campaigns for children and various Islamic-based sexual education information.[6] After taking a gap year for one year, Zhafira continued her education at Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she earned a Master's degree in Learning Design, Innovation, and Technology from 2022 to 2023. Since August 20, 2020, Zhafira has also been married. Currently, Zhafira works as an EF 360 Global Management Trainee at EF Hong Kong Creative Studios. She is not only known as an influencer on Instagram, but is also active on other platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, Blog, and Medium.

Based on the explanation of the background, it can be concluded that the researcher is interested in studying the variation of content categories delivered by an inspiring Muslim influencer on her Instagram platform, namely the @zhafiraiha account. The purpose of the study is to find out how the Instagram account @ zhafiraiha spreads social media da'wah on Instagram social media. Apart from spreading, another goal is to find out how the @ zhafiraiha account presenting various types of content to netizens through her Instagram posts.

## 2. Methods

This study adopts a qualitative approach using the netnography method. This method was chosen by the researcher because the research was conducted in the internet realm. Netnography has implementation guidelines similar to ethnographic research, but its focus is on online studies. This study explores behavior and communication patterns in virtual communities, which are developed as part of traditional ethnography and are often referred to as “virtual ethnography” or “netnography.” This term was introduced in 1997 by Robert V. Kozinets, who is known as one of the leading researchers in the application of netnography in the fields of marketing and consumer behavior.[7]

Through the netnography method, researchers can examine the beliefs, values, customs, and behavior of individuals or certain groups in cyberspace. The use of this method is an adaptation of ethnography that is adjusted to the network-based social environment. Netnography by Kozinets is defined as a qualitative research methodology that modifies ethnographic techniques to understand the culture and communities formed through digital communication.[8] The netnography method is used to understand social interactions in the analysis of social networks on the internet, such as on social media. This study utilizes the social network method which emphasizes the structure and pattern of relationships between social actors in a network. Netnography analyzes the structure and pattern of interactions between members of society called actors (nodes), as well as the relationships between them called ties.[8] Actors in this method can include individuals, teams, organizations, ideas, messages, or other concepts.

This method considers various forms of resources communicated between members in an online community, such as text, graphics, animation, audio, photography, or audiovisual content. The form of communication can be sharing information, work-related discussions, rumors, sharing advice, providing emotional support, or building friendships. Research with this method requires a relatively short time like ethnographic research, only focusing on interaction patterns in a society. Netnography is the only method specifically designed to study online culture and communities.[9]

The subject of the study is a person, place, or object that is observed and which will be subject to the conclusions of the research results.[10]. While the object of the study is an aspect that is the focus of the study that refers to the characteristics or conditions of something, someone, or something else that is the center of attention and the target of the research [10]. These characteristics or conditions can include the nature,

quantity, and quality related to behavior, activities, opinions, views, assessments, and pro-contra or sympathy-antipathy attitudes. The subject of this study is the Instagram account @zhafiraiha with the object of the study being the variation of positive content information categories that the account shares.

The primary data in this study comes from observations of the Instagram of the research subject as an influencer who is considered to consistently demonstrate the implementation of Islamic values so that it receives a positive response from netizens. Qualitative data collection was carried out in August 2024, with online data obtained from posts on Instagram social media. The actor selected in this study was Zhafira Aqyla Syadzya Syahidah (@zhafiraiha). The participating actors have been using Instagram for more than 3 years and have shown high concern for spreading positive content in the form of Islamic education and preaching with various types of content.

### 3. Results and Discussion

As one of the most widely used social media, Instagram plays an important role for Muslims, especially as a means of education and information. In this case, the @zhafiraiha account uses Instagram to preach about productivity, relationships, education, and also related to the Islamic-based sexuality education campaign with the @taulebih.id account that she founded to her followers. As an influencer, @zhafiraiha uses the number of her followers to spread information about how Muslim women can be active without leaving their identities. This can be seen from @zhafiraiha's uploads which contain educational elements such as input, educators, and output. Input here refers to the target of education, namely the followers of the @zhafiraiha account and Instagram users who view her educational content. The educator in this context is the @zhafiraiha account itself. The expected output from the educational content uploaded by @zhafiraiha is an increase in public understanding in carrying out daily activities by applying the concept of Rahmatan lil 'Alamin.

In the netnography method used, researchers focused on uploads in the form of post content, not Instagram stories. Currently, Instagram has several features for sharing information. First, uploading photos or video clips up to a maximum of 20 slides. Second, uploading video reels with a maximum duration of 90 seconds. Third, uploading long videos that can be saved as a series and fourth, Instagram live. These four features can be saved as post content that will appear on the user's account homepage, divided into the Instagram feeds homepage or Instagram reels.

This research was conducted on the @zhafiraiha account for the past two months. To answer the research hypothesis, the researcher classified content elements based on type, content, caption, and additional activities.

TABLE 1: Classification of Content Types and Their Support.

	By Type	Contents	Caption	Addition
1	Slide / Multiple	Trip	Short, English	Hashtags
2	Reels	Family	Short, Language	Tag
3	Series / IG TV	Romance	Long, English	Collaboration
4	Live	Friendship	Length, Language	Location
5		Work	Do not use	Music / Songs
6		Outlook		Linking Other Links
7		Education		Response Poll
8		Brand promotion		

**Sources:** Based on data findings in the form of content uploads from June 14, 2024 to August 13, 2024, 24 content upload activities were found.

### 3.1. Consistency

In the data findings in the form of content uploads from June 14, 2024 to August 13, 2024, upload activities of 24 contents were found. If averaged one week means he uploaded three contents. The @Zhafiraiha account maintains consistent uploads which are useful for maintaining ukhuwah (keep in touch) with those who follow it. Maintaining consistency needs to be done and accompanied by paying attention to staying relevant without spamming and disturbing others.[11]

The method that Zhafira uses is to immediately share files as content when the event is happening, so that it is still fresh and provokes netizens to feel what she is feeling. In addition, re-uploading old photos or videos can still be done when you don't have the latest material. Content can be in the form of flashbacks of moments, telling stories of struggles, and so on, as Zhafira did in content numbers 4, 5, 17, and 19.

TABLE 2: Upload Time and Content Topics.

	Content	Posting date		Content	Posting date
1	Introducing the Old City of Bukhara	08/13/2024	13	Cambridge Central Mosque	11/07/2024
2	17 photos Udzbekistan picture dump	12/08/2024	14	A day in my life on duty in France	10/07/2024
3	A day in my life as MT	08/09/2024	15	Oxford University rejects 2x	07/07/2024
4	Happy Birthday Greetings for Little Brother	06/08/2024	16	UK dump	06/07/2024
5	With Husband	08/05/2024	17	Cambridge registration struggle story	07/05/2024
6	Introducing Zhafira Medium Platform	07/31/2024	18	6 Uni v listed x skincare	02/07/2024
7	Bangkok Trip with Husband	07/28/2024	19	Flashback content with Umi	06/27/2024
8	Going to Thailand	07/27/2024	20	Sai Kung Summers trip with colleagues	06/23/2024
9	Reel Trends with Friends	07/22/2024	21	Sai Kung Summers trip with colleagues	06/22/2024
10	Trip t four in Japan	07/21/2024	22	Reading activities in Hong Kong park	06/21/2024
11	Reel Trends with friends at restaurants	07/21/2024	23	Reading Books	06/18/2024
12	Reel Trends with friends about fashion	07/20/2024	24	Sexuality education x @pspk-id	06/14/2024

### 3.2. Use Additional Features

Instagram provides additional features that make it easier for its users to reach a wider range of followers. The meaning of additional features here is in addition to the main content, namely photos, videos, and captions. We can choose several of these features simultaneously.

1. Hashtag; The hashtag symbol (#) makes it easier for users to find photos or videos with certain categories on Instagram.
2. Tag; Tag other users by adding the arroba sign (@) in front of their Instagram account name on the photo.[12] This feature is often also called tag, if you use it, photos tagged by other people's accounts can be seen on the home menu in the tag section of that person's account.
3. Collaboration; A feature to create a single content that can be saved on the feed of all collaborating accounts, by one party inviting collaboration and the second party



accepting. This allows for a wider distribution of uploads because the followers of the accounts are certainly different.

4. Location; A feature that displays the location where the photo was taken.[12] The photo will be linked to the location so that when a non-follower netizen opens a certain location, he will also find all the photos that add that location.
5. Music / Song; Feature to add background music or songs to our uploads, either photos or videos.
6. Linking Other Links; If the account is a business account, it will be able to link a link that will direct to the product. Another way for this kind of promotion is to put a link or reference to another platform that you want to convey to netizens in the content, because if you put it in the caption, the link will still not work.
7. Poll; This is a feature when you want to see the audience's enthusiasm for several choices. Their responses will appear and be stored above the comments feature.

In her uploads, Zhafira always uses additional features to increase reach. From the 24 contents analyzed, she added at least one feature and a maximum of 4. Added one feature to six contents, on contents number 1, 15, 16, 22, 23. Added two features to eight contents, on contents number 2, 4, 6, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21. Added three features to ten contents, on contents number 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 24. And added four features to one content, on content number 17.

### 3.3. Upload Different Types of Content

Instagram currently has at least four ways for content to be saved to the Instagram feed.

1. Slide / Multiple ; is a form of upload by selecting a minimum of one and a maximum of twenty photos or videos through the gallery. Gallery is a place to upload and display photos or videos.[13]
2. Reels ; Released in June 2021, this feature allows recording short videos similar to TikTok, with a display similar to the 'For You Page' (FYP) page on TikTok.[13] Reels currently have a maximum duration of 90 seconds.
3. Serial/IG TV; Released in June 2018,[13] this feature allows users to upload Long videos with a maximum duration of 1 hour.

4. Live ; Released in November 2016, this feature allows users to live stream directly from the Stories menu.[13] The maximum live duration is currently 4 hours, then users can add a cover and save it to the feed as an upload.

From the observation results, Zhafira more often chooses multiple slide content which reaches 50% of her content in the last 2 months, namely content numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23. Then for reels also reached 50%, namely in content numbers 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 20, 24. If you look before the last two months, Instagram @zhafiraiha also uploaded TV series/IG and live , although not as often as the multiple slide and reel content types .

The content type with the lowest difficulty on Instagram @zhafiraiha is multiple slides. She doesn't really add graphic edits, text, and others except for a few. The majority of photos or video clips on multiple slides are original but have very good quality and look cool and aesthetic.

### 3.4. Writing Captions

Title or commonly called caption has the effect of strengthening the message that you want to convey through photos or videos.[12] Captions are basically optional, but on the @zhafiraiha account in the last two months there has not been a single upload without a caption. In fact, researchers found that captions that were arranged very long, for example in the form of storytelling, experiences, feelings and others received more enthusiasm.

Based on the use of language in the caption, 5 were found to use Indonesian and 19 used English. Instagram currently has a translation feature so that the caption remains easy for Indonesian netizens to consume and can even reach a multinational audience.

Based on the short and long division, there are 4 Long English captions, 2 long Indonesian captions, 15 short English captions, and 3 short Indonesian captions. It can also be followed if the content is in the form of reels which already includes a lot of information, it is recommended for a shorter caption. Meanwhile, if the photo or video is short and lacks information, it is good to put information in the form of a long caption to convey expression and give an impression to the audience. Write a caption even if it is only short to avoid the lack of upload context.

### 3.5. Maintaining Relationships with Audiences

The response from the audience as the target of preaching is a sign of whether our preaching is accepted or not. Although not everyone can be satisfied, preachers can consider several reviews about us for evaluation material and then make improvements if errors are found.

Maintaining communication with mad'u da'wah needs to be done. For the Instagram platform, this can be done by opening a chat session on Instagram live, replying to comments, reacting to repost stories that tag us, or replying to DM messages.

TABLE 3: Audience Response Forms.

	Like	Comment	Response	Interaction
1	Number of Likes	Number of Comments	Positive	Interaction @Zhafiraiha Reply to Comments
2			Negative	No Interaction from @Zhafiraiha

From the research results, Zhafira communicates very well with her followers. For example, she replied to the author when DM asked for permission to conduct this research. The comment column is also often responded to. Of the 24 posts, there were only 2 uploads that did not provide any interaction from netizen comments, namely content numbers 13 and 23. The responses given by netizens through the comments column on the 24 posts were all positive. As for likes and comments, the number varies. After the researcher did the calculation, the @zhafiraiha account received 836,849 likes and 1,651 comments from 24 contents, so that each content received an average of >35,000 likes and >68 comments.

### 3.6. Upload Varied Content

For content topics, each individual actually has different preferences regarding what they want and don't want to share on social media. After an upload is made, anyone has the right to enjoy it. Therefore, filtering before sharing must be done, because the initial goal is to be able to provide inspiration or benefits for netizens or mad'u da'wah who see it, not to cause more bad things. Any variation of the topic is justified as long as it can be responsible for maintaining the identity of a Muslim. This is what Zhafira does through her account, she only shows her positive side and shows her Muslim identity with beautiful da'wah.

Looking at the last 2 months of uploads, the author categorized the 24 contents into 8 categories, namely trips, family, romance, friendship, work, insight, education, and brand promotion. In delivering these contents, Zhafira always gets a positive response from the audience. In fact, the author did not find a single bad comment. This can be a reference for preachers who want to preach without controversy, namely by beautifully wrapping the way we invite or preach on social media.

1. Trip; shows a place visited then packages it into content, either multiple slides or videos such as a day in my life.
2. Family; shows togetherness or an activity related to family.
3. Romance; shows togetherness with a partner or an activity related to a partner.
4. Friendship; showing togetherness with friends or an activity related to friendship. Zhafira successfully shows the side that friends can be with anyone, across tribes, nations and even religions.
5. Job; shows work-related activities, such as her activities and the process by which she carries out her responsibilities.
6. Insight; shows an activity that specifically increases insight, for example, a discussion about Islamic-based sex education that has become a concern with @taulebih.id, books being read, and others.
7. Education; shows the process of her journey in pursuing education from being unsuccessful to being successful.
8. Brand promotion; showing content such as collaboration with brands but always wrapped in other types of content so that the target of preaching still gets insight.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion of the analysis, it was concluded that the @zhafiraiha account is consistent, uses additional features, uploads various types of content (namely; multiple slides, reels, IG TV, live), adds captions, maintains relationships with the audience, and uploads varied content. The eight variations of content types are trips, family, romance, friendship, work, insight, education, and brand promotion.

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