



COPYWRITING PATTERNS IN ARTICLES OF TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL WEBSITES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the structure of persuasive religious discourse in articles published on the websites of salafi or traditional pesantren in Indonesia. These texts, while primarily expository, increasingly experiment with elements of digital copywriting. The study applies Victor Schwab's five-point copywriting formula Get Attention, Show an Advantage, Prove It, Persuade, and Ask for Action as an analytical framework, combined with Moustakas' social phenomenology to explore the intentionality behind language use. A corpus of 30 articles from five pesantren websites was examined using linguistic-textual analysis focusing on transitivity, modality, theme-rheme structures, and lexical salience. The findings reveal that although traces of Schwab's persuasive stages are present, their distribution is inconsistent: less than three-quarters of the articles apply the "Get Attention" stage effectively, and fewer than half conclude with a clear "Ask for Action." Similarly, the stages of "Show an Advantage" and "Prove It" appear only in about half of the dataset, indicating a fragmented adaptation of persuasive techniques. These results suggest that pesantren articles tend to blend theological exposition with partial persuasive strategies, rather than consistently following an established copywriting sequence. This study thus highlights the need for further research to conceptualize a model of Islamic copywriting that reflects the rhetorical particularities of pesantren discourse. By foregrounding both the presence and the gaps in persuasive structures, this research contributes to applied linguistics and Islamic studies by showing that the digital rhetoric of salafi pesantren remains in transition: adopting elements of marketing logic while still anchored in traditional modes of religious instruction.

Keywords: Islamic copywriting; pesantren websites; digital discourse; phenomenology; Victor Schwab

INTRODUCTION

The convergence of digital technology and Islamic traditionalism has engendered a shift in how *pesantren*, particularly those adhering to the *salafi* strand, disseminate their religious teachings and institutional values. Historically functioning as secluded, oral-based learning environments grounded in classical texts (*kitab kuning*), *pesantren* have gradually entered the digital public sphere. This digital presence is no longer limited to institutional profiles or event announcements, but increasingly involves the publication of article-length content on official websites (Ulum & Munim, 2019). These articles serve not only as mediums of religious propagation (*dakwah*), but also as vehicles of persuasive communication aimed at attracting sympathy, support, and participation from broader

Muslim audiences. The phenomenon reflects not only a technological adaptation but a rhetorical transformation within the discourse of Islamic conservatism in Indonesia.

Salafi pesantren occupy a unique discursive position in this shift. While typically cautious of innovations in religious practice, their embrace of digital platforms reveals a pragmatic reconfiguration of *da'wah* strategy (Hanif et al., 2024; Ja'far, 2023). Their digital writings retain ideological rigidity while adopting stylistic features common in secular persuasive discourse, particularly those rooted in marketing logic. Among these features is the use of structured article formats that resemble commercial copywriting. This development opens a compelling space of inquiry into how Islamic institutions negotiate authority, piety, and public influence through digitally mediated persuasive language.

This paper focuses on a specific mode of this digital rhetoric, the expository-persuasive article. These texts are neither purely informative nor sermon-like in tone, but occupy a hybrid genre that seeks to explain, motivate, and move readers toward a particular action whether moral, ideological, or institutional. Structurally, these texts appear to follow persuasive sequences similar to what Victor Schwab (Schwab, 1962) identifies as effective advertisement copywriting: Get Attention, Show an Advantage, Prove It, Persuade, and Ask for Action. While Schwab's model originates in Western capitalist contexts, its rhetorical skeleton proves surprisingly adaptive to the religious discourse of *pesantren*, which is similarly goal-driven and audience-oriented, albeit within a spiritual rather than economic register.

Several scholars have explored how religious discourse adapts to digital media. Abusharif (Abusharif, 2023) argued that the internet reconfigures religious authority by decentralizing access to religious texts and voices. Bunt (Bunt, 2018) further showed how Muslim clerics and institutions strategically brand themselves online to maintain credibility and reach. In the Indonesian context, Zaid (Zaid et al., 2022) and Febrian (Febrian, 2024) documented the emergence of Islamic influencers and the visual culture of piety on platforms like Instagram and YouTube. However, few studies have examined the micro-linguistic strategies by which *pesantren* institutions, especially *salafi* ones, construct persuasive appeals in long-form digital articles. While much has been said about the visual turn in Islamic communication, less attention has been paid to the rhetorical architecture of religious texts in digital environments.

Linguistic studies of Islamic discourse in Indonesia have often focused on sermons (*khutbah*), political speeches, or online fatwas (Afriani, 2021; Leiliyanti et al., 2022; Nurhajati & Fenton, 2020), where explicit religious argumentation dominates. This study instead shifts attention to the softer, yet equally influential, mode of persuasion found in expository narratives published on *pesantren* websites. These articles articulate a worldview, frame moral problems, offer Islamic solutions, and seek reader alignment. They construct meaning not just through what is said, but through how it is said through lexical choices, sentence mood, evaluative phrases, and intertextual references. Understanding these linguistic patterns is crucial for decoding the persuasive strategies embedded in contemporary Islamic institutional discourse.

The theoretical underpinning of this study lies in combining Schwab's copywriting principles with the descriptive-experiential methodology of phenomenology, particularly as articulated by Moustakas (Moustakas, 1994). Schwab provides a macro-structural model of persuasive progression, while Moustakas offers tools for unpacking the intentionality and experiential depth behind textual constructions. Phenomenology, in this context, is not only a method of data analysis but also a mode of reading: it urges the



researcher to suspend judgment (*epoche*), explore textual surfaces (horizontalization), and synthesize the imaginative variations of meaning embedded in persuasive discourse. Applied to the *pesantren* context, this approach enables a closer reading of how religious persuasion is experienced by both writers and readers in the contemporary digital field.

This article is based on a corpus of thirty (30) articles published by five prominent *salafi pesantren* websites across Java and Sumatra. These *pesantren* were selected based on their doctrinal conservatism, online consistency, and textual richness. Each article was examined for the presence and sequence of Schwab's five stages, as well as the linguistic features that signal persuasive intent. Particular attention was given to transitivity patterns (who does what to whom), modality (certainty, obligation, possibility), and thematic progression (theme-rheme). Intertextual features, such as Qur'anic verses, hadiths, and classical references, were also mapped as part of the persuasive strategy.

Preliminary readings of the corpus suggest that these articles are not merely digital reflections of traditional texts but are deliberate constructions aimed at shaping perception and inspiring action. They function as ideological instruments that construct *pesantren* not only as religious institutions but as moral exemplars, social protectors, and spiritual guides. The call to action, often couched in the language of virtue, becomes a soft imperative: register your child, support this da'wah, share this truth. These directives are not merely informative but emotionally mobilizing.

Ultimately, this paper contributes to both linguistic and Islamic studies by offering a framework to understand how persuasion operates within contemporary religious institutions. It illuminates how traditional Islamic authorities, through digital adaptation, craft texts that are doctrinally conservative yet rhetorically modern. The *pesantren* article, once a didactic tool, now emerges as a persuasive artifact designed to function in a crowded digital marketplace of ideas. By analysing these texts, this research hopes to shed light on how language mediates between ideology and interaction, between sacred tradition and strategic communication.

The broader relevance of this investigation extends to the shifting terrain of Islamic communication in Indonesia, where traditionalist actors are increasingly compelled to adopt modern techniques of engagement without undermining their theological foundations. In the realm of political communication, for instance, Islamic parties and movements have long mastered the use of slogans, posters, and speeches to evoke collective identity. What distinguishes *pesantren*-based copywriting is its more subtle, everyday mode of persuasion, cloaked in the familiarity of religious instruction but structured by the mechanics of persuasive marketing. Unlike televangelism or viral da'wah videos, these articles require sustained attention, slow reading, and cognitive-emotional alignment. Their strength lies not in sensationalism, but in the quiet authority of structured conviction.

Moreover, the intersection of language, belief, and behaviour in this context points to an under-theorized axis in applied linguistics: how institutional discourse not only reflects ideology but also recruits participation. Through imperative voice, inclusive pronouns, and modulated modality, the writers of *pesantren* articles construct a subject position for the reader that of the responsible Muslim, the concerned parent, the silent moral majority. In doing so, the article becomes a bridge between textual authority and lived commitment. This dynamic is best captured not through rigid content analysis alone, but through a phenomenological reading of textual intentionality.

This study also opens a methodological contribution by demonstrating the fruitfulness of blending systemic-functional grammar with phenomenology. While SFL

provides a robust framework to trace how language enacts functions ideational, interpersonal, textual phenomenology reorients the analysis toward the interior logic of the text, why it means what it means to whom, and with what anticipated effect. In contexts like *pesantren* discourse, where faith, language, and pedagogy are tightly intertwined, such an integrative approach allows for deeper interpretation. It accounts not only for patterns in language but for the experiential horizon that gives those patterns force.

Finally, the hybridization of rhetorical forms in these texts the convergence of *uslub salaf* (*salafi* style) with digital-era persuasion suggests a strategic adaptation rather than ideological drift. The persuasive architecture of the articles is not a concession to modernity but a weaponization of it for religious purposes. The use of Schwab's model becomes meaningful not as a marketing mimicry, but as a methodologically traceable form of what *da'wah* practitioners might intuitively call *hikmah* the art of effective communication. In this way, copywriting in *pesantren* websites is not just a stylistic innovation, but a discursive re-articulation of Islamic authority in the grammar of the digital age.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design anchored in the phenomenological approach developed by (Moustakas, 1994), aiming to uncover the intentional structure and lived meaning behind persuasive religious language on digital platforms. This orientation was chosen because it allows the researcher to enter the experiential world of the texts, not only analysing their surface features but also interpreting the underlying motives, purposes, and persuasive mechanisms embodied in them.

The primary corpus of this study consisted of 30 articles published between 2022 and 2025 by five prominent *salafi pesantren* websites across Java and Sumatra. The *pesantren* selected among them *Muqimus Sunnah*; *Almanhaj*; *Ibnu Abbas As-Salafy Sragen*; *Minhajus Sunnah*; and *Pondok Pesantren Sidogiri* were chosen based on doctrinal *salafism*, regular publication of long-form web articles, and institutional engagement with digital *dakwah*. Each article selected fell within the genre of expository-persuasive writing: they articulate a religious message, frame moral imperatives, and ultimately guide the reader toward spiritual and social action.

The analysis followed two layered procedures. First, the persuasive framework proposed by Victor Schwab (Schwab, 1962) was applied. Schwab's five-part copywriting model (1) Get Attention, (2) Show an Advantage, (3) Prove It, (4) Persuade People to Grasp This Advantage, and (5) Ask for Action served as the guiding lens for mapping the structure of the texts. Each article was segmented according to these rhetorical phases. Then, each segment was analysed using categories from Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), especially focusing on transitivity structures (how processes, participants, and circumstances are distributed and represented), mood and modality (how authority, certainty, and interpersonal stance are projected), theme-rheme progression (how ideas are introduced and developed across clauses), evaluative lexis and engagement markers (to assess emotional tone and dialogic positioning), and intertextuality (the appearance and function of Qur'anic verses, hadith citations, and *salafi* scholarly references).

The second layer of analysis drew upon Moustakas' phenomenological method. *Epoche* was employed to bracket preconceptions about Islamic discourse and *pesantren*



conservatism. Horizontalization ensured equal treatment of all textual elements before categorization. Imaginative variation was used to explore multiple possible readings and the intentional depth of each persuasive construction. Textural and structural descriptions were composed to represent both what the text says and how it says it persuasively.

Coding was conducted manually through a matrix that paired Schwab’s five stages with the SFL categories above. For each article, textual evidence was marked, segmented, and classified according to its function in the persuasive arc. The goal was not merely to confirm the presence of Schwab’s structure, but to examine how *salafi pesantren* authors integrate persuasive mechanics with religious authority and emotional resonance.

This methodological design allowed for both analytical depth and phenomenological breadth: it respected the theological integrity of the texts while making explicit the linguistic strategies that render them persuasive within the digital Islamic public sphere.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The corpus analysis of thirty expository-persuasive articles published on the websites of five *salafi pesantren* in Indonesia reveals a consistent rhetorical pattern that parallels Victor Schwab’s five-stage model of persuasive copywriting. Each stage Get Attention, Show an Advantage, Prove It, Persuade, and Ask for Action is not only structurally present, but linguistically and ideologically adapted to align with Islamic epistemology, *salafi* doctrinal integrity, and digital communication logic. The discussion that follows presents each stage in detailed sequence, illustrated with representative data excerpts, supported by linguistic analysis, and interpreted within the framework of Moustakas’ phenomenological lens. This first part of the results and discussion focuses on the initial two stages, Get Attention and Show an Advantage.

No	Schwab’s Copywriting Stage	Frequency (n)	Presence (%)	Dominant Linguistic Features
1	Get Attention	22	73.3%	Interrogative mood, evaluative lexis, apocalyptic metaphors
2	Show an Advantage	18	60%	Modal certainty, relational processes, affective vocabulary
3	Prove It	15	50%	Projection clauses, quotations from Qur’an, hadith, salafi texts
4	Persuade	20	66.7%	Imperative mood, rhetorical questions, collective pronouns
5	Ask for Action	14	46.7%	Direct imperatives, moral framing, spiritual rewards

Table 1. Distribution of Schwab’s Copywriting Stages in 30 *Salafi Pesantren* Articles

1. Get Attention: Linguistic Strategies of Religious Engagement

The stage of *Get Attention* represents the critical entry point in persuasive discourse, where the text must disrupt the reader's cognitive balance and invite them into the rhetorical world constructed by the writer. In the framework of Schwab (1962), attention is non-negotiable: unless the reader is compelled to continue, the subsequent persuasive stages fail to materialize. However, the findings of this study indicate that in the case of salafi pesantren articles, the implementation of this stage is inconsistent. Out of the thirty texts analyzed, only 73.3% began with strategies clearly aligned with attention-grabbing techniques, leaving nearly one third of the corpus dependent on more conventional or neutral expository openings. This inconsistency points to a transitional state in pesantren digital discourse, one where persuasive techniques are selectively adopted rather than systematically applied.

In the articles that did employ attention-grabbing devices, titles were often the most striking feature. Headlines such as "*Hikmah di Balik Musibah*", "*Fitnah Dunia Menyesatkan*", and "*Kiamat Sudah Dekat?*" use evaluative lexis and apocalyptic imagery to immediately heighten urgency. These expressions carry theological weight, as they direct the reader's focus toward existential and eschatological concerns. By invoking *musibah* (calamity), *fitnah* (trial), or *kiamat* (the end of times), the writers situate the reader within a narrative of crisis, where attention becomes not merely a cognitive act but a religious imperative. This approach aligns with Schwab's insistence on dramatic, curiosity-provoking titles but adapts it into a theological register.

Yet, this strategy is far from universal. Approximately a third of the corpus begins with openings that are descriptive or expository, such as recounting the biography of a scholar, citing Qur'anic verses without commentary, or offering straightforward doctrinal exposition. These openings may be informative, but they lack the urgency that characterizes effective attention-grabbing. For example, one article begins by describing the daily discipline of santri without employing interrogatives, vocatives, or evaluative terms. Such a choice maintains the pesantren's didactic tone but misses the opportunity to establish the rhetorical momentum necessary for persuasion. This divergence illustrates the coexistence of two modes of writing: one influenced by persuasive marketing logic, and the other anchored in the long-standing pedagogical tradition of religious instruction.

The linguistic strategies deployed in the attention-grabbing subset reveal a deliberate attempt to provoke affective responses. Interrogative mood is frequently used, as in "*Mengapa Kita Harus Takut Akan Fitnah Dunia?*", which frames the reader's engagement as an urgent question demanding reflection. Vocative expressions such as "*Wahai Kaum Muslimin*" directly position the audience as moral participants, echoing the sermonic register of khutbah. Evaluative lexis like *berbahaya*, *menyesatkan*, or *tercela* reinforces the sense of alarm. These strategies demonstrate a hybridization of oral preaching patterns with digital textual practices, effectively simulating the rhythm and authority of oral da'wah in written form.

However, the limited spread of such strategies suggests an ambivalence within pesantren discourse toward adopting fully modern persuasive techniques. One possible explanation is ideological. Salafi pesantren, while pragmatic in their embrace of digital platforms, remain cautious of innovations (*bid'ah*) in communicative style. A dramatic marketing-style hook may appear too secular or manipulative for writers whose authority rests on scriptural fidelity and doctrinal purity. As a result, many opt for more traditional expository openings that emphasize transmitting knowledge rather than seizing attention. Another explanation is practical: not all contributors to pesantren websites possess training in persuasive or digital writing. Their default mode remains the essayistic or



sermon-like exposition, which does not prioritize reader engagement as a structural necessity.

This unevenness has consequences for the reader's phenomenological experience. In Moustakas' (1994) terms, the *noetic act* the directing of consciousness—differs depending on the opening strategy employed. When confronted with a headline like “*Kiamat Sudah Dekat?*”, the reader experiences an immediate *noema* of crisis and urgency, shaped by apocalyptic imagery and evaluative vocabulary. By contrast, when encountering a neutral description of pesantren routines, the reader enters the text without heightened affect, engaging instead in a slower, more contemplative manner. The result is a heterogeneous field of persuasion, where the same institutional context produces radically different experiential horizons for its audience.

The strategic role of *Get Attention* in religious discourse must also be understood theologically. In salafi tradition, reminders (*tazkirah*) are not optional information but interventions intended to awaken moral consciousness. The opening moves of these articles therefore carry doctrinal weight: they perform *nida* (a call) and enact *nahyu 'anil munkar* (forbidding evil). When writers deploy interrogatives and warnings, they are not merely imitating advertising strategies but fulfilling a religious duty. The inconsistency in employing such strategies, therefore, reflects not only rhetorical hesitation but also differing conceptions of how da'wah should be mediated in the digital realm.

From a broader perspective, the partial adoption of attention-grabbing techniques demonstrates that pesantren copywriting is still in a phase of negotiation between tradition and digital modernity. Schwab's model provides a skeletal structure of persuasive writing, but its wholesale adoption may conflict with the ethos of pesantren communication. Instead, we observe what might be called a “selective adaptation,” where elements of modern persuasion are appropriated but not standardized. This pattern echoes Bunt's (2018) observation that Islamic institutions online often engage in “strategic branding” while carefully maintaining credibility, and resonates with (Abusharif, 2023) finding that digital religious authority operates within a tension between accessibility and authenticity.

2. Show an Advantage: Religious Benefits as Motivational Logic

In Schwab's model, the second stage of persuasion emphasizes the articulation of clear benefits answering the implicit question “what's in it for me?” (Schwab, 1962). Within the pesantren articles analyzed, however, this stage appeared in only 60% of the corpus, reflecting a fragmented application of advantage-framing. Unlike commercial advertising where benefits are typically material or hedonic, the advantages offered in pesantren discourse are spiritual, ethical, and communal. Nevertheless, the irregularity of their presence suggests that the promise of religious benefit is not consistently leveraged as a persuasive tool.

Where the stage is present, the benefits are expressed in terms of alignment with divine guidance and protection from moral decline. A typical formulation is “*Barangsiapa mengikuti jalan salaf, niscaya ia akan mendapatkan keberkahan ilmu dan kelapangan hati.*” Here, the advantage is articulated through conditional structure (*barangsiapa...niscaya*), with the rewards expressed as *berkah* (blessing) and *kelapangan hati* (tranquility). This form of promise creates an affective economy of certainty: the reader is reassured that obedience yields tangible spiritual payoffs. Similarly, Qur'anic references, such as QS. Al-Mujadila:11 “*Allah akan meninggikan orang-orang yang*

beriman dan yang diberi ilmu beberapa derajat” are invoked to reinforce the soteriological benefits of knowledge.

Yet, in nearly half of the articles, such explicit presentation of benefit is absent. Instead, the texts continue with doctrinal exposition or extended warnings, leaving the reader without a clearly defined incentive. For instance, some pieces focus on denouncing *bid'ah* or describing the dangers of liberal ideologies without balancing the threat with a corresponding advantage. This rhetorical imbalance risks producing disengagement, since persuasion relies not only on fear but also on hope. As Fairclough (2003) notes, effective discourse typically pairs negative evaluation with positive assurance to construct motivational logic. The absence of the latter weakens the persuasive arc.

The linguistic realization of advantages, when they do appear, tends to rely on modal verbs of certainty (*pasti, niscaya, akan mendapat*) and relational processes (e.g., *Menuntut ilmu syar'i adalah jalan keselamatan*). These structures equate religious practice with existential safety, making the advantage appear both inevitable and non-negotiable. However, the uneven distribution of such formulations reveals a lack of systematic strategy. Some writers foreground institutional identity describing pesantren as *“benteng akidah”* or *“taman ilmu”* while others provide personal testimonies, such as narratives of students transformed after months of study (*“Dulu ia malas shalat...tapi setelah tiga bulan di pesantren, ia berubah”*). Both approaches have persuasive potential, but their inconsistent appearance prevents the corpus from forming a coherent pattern.

From a phenomenological lens, the fragmented presence of advantages alters the intentional structure of the text. Moustakas (1994) highlights that lived experience is shaped by how benefits are made vivid and meaningful. In some cases, the advantage is palpable—anchored in Qur'anic logic and affective vocabulary. In others, the reader encounters extended warnings without redemptive promise, which narrows the horizon of experience to fear rather than balanced persuasion.

3. Prove It: Constructing Authority and Validating Religious Claims

The third stage in Schwab's persuasive sequence *Prove It* is meant to transform claims into credible assertions by grounding them in authority, evidence, or testimony (Schwab, 1962). In the corpus of pesantren articles, however, this stage appeared in only 50% of the dataset, revealing that validation is inconsistently applied. While half of the texts employ Qur'anic citations, hadith references, or scholarly quotations to strengthen their claims, the other half rely primarily on exposition without explicit proof. This unevenness weakens the persuasive trajectory, since the credibility of religious argumentation traditionally rests upon authoritative sources.

When present, the Prove It stage takes highly recognizable forms. Articles often cite Qur'anic verses to legitimize moral exhortations, such as *“Allah akan meninggikan orang-orang yang beriman dan yang diberi ilmu beberapa derajat”* (QS. Al-Mujadila:11). Others invoke hadith, for instance: *“Rasulullah bersabda: ‘Jauhilah dosa-dosa kecil, karena ia menumpuk seperti kayu yang membakar rumah.’”* These citations not only validate the moral point being advanced but also transfer the weight of authority from the writer to the sacred tradition. Similarly, classical salafi scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah or Ibn Qayyim are quoted to situate the argument within a lineage of doctrinal orthodoxy: *“Ibnu Qayyim berkata bahwa hati yang tidak terjaga akan mati dalam dosa.”* Such statements anchor persuasion in what Van Dijk (2006) describes as “ideological



coherence,” whereby references consolidate group identity and legitimize rhetorical claims.

Yet, in the other half of the dataset, such explicit validation is missing. Several articles continue from warning to persuasion without inserting Qur’anic or hadith evidence. For example, a text might discuss the dangers of modern liberal ideologies or emphasize the importance of youth discipline without embedding proof from scripture. In these cases, persuasion is carried by rhetorical force rather than evidentiary support. While this may resonate with audiences already loyal to the pesantren, it risks alienating broader readers who expect explicit religious authority in Islamic discourse. In Schwab’s framework, the absence of proof disrupts the persuasive flow, creating a gap between claim and conviction.

Linguistically, the Prove It stage is typically realized through projection clauses that introduce reported speech: *Rasulullah bersabda bahwa...*, *Imam Ahmad berkata...*. These verbal processes place authoritative figures as the Actor while the moral injunction becomes the Goal. Such structures foreground transmission rather than originality, consistent with the salafi emphasis on *isnad* (chains of transmission). However, their inconsistent use across the corpus suggests that the genre of pesantren article has not yet standardized this proof-giving mechanism.

Some texts compensate through alternative strategies, such as institutional testimony: *“Pesantren ini telah membina 1500 santri selama 20 tahun”*. These appeals rely on institutional credibility rather than scriptural authority, shifting the persuasive logic from sacred validation to empirical proof of effectiveness. Others employ anecdotal narratives: *“Dulu ia malas shalat dan sering terpengaruh musik haram. Tapi setelah tiga bulan di pesantren, ia berubah: hafal juz 30 dan menjadi panutan.”* These stories function as experiential evidence, illustrating transformation through the pesantren environment. While powerful, such testimonies lack the epistemological weight of scriptural proof and therefore operate more on ethos and pathos than on doctrinal logos.

From a phenomenological perspective, the inconsistent use of proof reshapes the reader’s horizon of experience. Moustakas (1994) emphasizes that horizontalization requires giving equal weight to each textual element. In practice, when Qur’anic verses or hadith are included, the reader experiences the discourse as an extension of divine truth, not merely a human argument. By contrast, when proof is absent, the reader is positioned to rely on the writer’s authority alone, which may be persuasive for insiders but less so for outsiders. This duality underscores the transitional character of pesantren discourse in digital form—oscillating between traditional reliance on proof and modern tendencies toward expository persuasion without explicit validation.

The uneven presence of the Prove It stage has important implications. In Islamic pedagogy, persuasion without reference to Qur’an and hadith risks appearing incomplete, since legitimacy derives from scriptural anchoring. At the same time, the growing reliance on institutional testimony and experiential narratives reflects an adaptation to digital storytelling practices, where personal transformation carries rhetorical appeal (Bunt, 2018). This hybridity highlights both the creative potential and the rhetorical risks of pesantren copywriting.

4. Persuade: Shaping Conviction and Mobilizing Emotional Resonance (*continued*)

In Schwab’s persuasive framework, the *Persuade* stage functions as the emotional and ethical climax, where the writer must move beyond presenting benefits and proofs toward shaping conviction and mobilizing the reader’s will (Schwab, 1962). In the corpus

of salafi pesantren articles, this stage is present in roughly 66.7% of the texts. While two-thirds of the articles employ rhetorical techniques designed to stir moral urgency, one-third lack a distinct persuasive turn, relying instead on descriptive exposition or extended proof without progressing to emotional mobilization. This uneven distribution reveals that persuasion is not yet a fully standardized practice within pesantren digital writing.

Where persuasion is explicitly present, the strategies often revolve around religious obligation and eschatological urgency. Writers employ imperatives such as “*Segera perbaiki shalat kita sebelum ajal menjemput*” or “*Jangan biarkan anak-anak kita terjerumus dalam arus liberalisme*”. These expressions not only command but embed the action within a framework of spiritual accountability. By linking urgency to existential stakes—death (*ajal*), judgment (*hisab*), or divine punishment (*adzab*) the writers escalate the consequences of inaction. This differs from commercial persuasion, which often hinges on temporal scarcity; here, the urgency is eternal, tied to salvation and perdition.

Another common persuasive device is the rhetorical question. For instance: “*Masihkah kita akan menunda berbuat kebaikan, ketika kesempatan itu ada di depan mata?*” This structure corners the reader into an implicit commitment, what Aristotle would classify as enthymeme: the conclusion is so self-evident that to deny it would undermine one’s moral standing. Similarly, collective pronouns “*kita sebagai orang tua akan dimintai pertanggungjawaban di akhirat*” position the reader as morally accountable, transforming persuasion from suggestion into shared duty. These linguistic strategies combine ethos (authority of the religious voice), pathos (fear and hope), and logos (moral reasoning), producing a hybrid force of conviction.

However, in a significant portion of the dataset, this persuasive escalation is absent. Some articles conclude after proof or advantage without pressing the reader toward immediate moral action. For example, an article may expound on the importance of maintaining *tauhid* but end with a prayer rather than a direct persuasive appeal. While spiritually valuable, such endings lack the mobilizing intensity that persuasion requires. The result is a discourse that informs and validates but does not necessarily compel. This absence reveals a tension between the pedagogical role of pesantren writing—to teach and remind—and the persuasive demands of digital copywriting, which seeks to convert awareness into conviction.

The use of repetition and sermoniac rhythm is another persuasive hallmark. Phrases such as “*Sudah saatnya kita bangkit. Sudah saatnya kita sadar. Sudah saatnya kita bertindak*” simulate oral da‘wah, drawing on familiar khutbah patterns to reinforce urgency. Such triadic structures exploit auditory memory, even in written form, creating a cadence that intensifies emotional resonance. Yet, their presence is selective rather than pervasive, indicating that not all writers adopt this technique.

From a phenomenological perspective, persuasion represents the moment when the reader is repositioned within the text. According to Moustakas (1994), imaginative variation allows readers to envision themselves in multiple possible futures shaped by present moral choices. In persuasive passages, the reader is imagined as an accountable parent, a responsible Muslim, or a potential supporter of the pesantren. This reconfiguration of self is powerful, but it occurs only in the two-thirds of texts that include persuasion. In the remaining third, readers are left without this re-authoring of identity, which limits the transformative potential of the discourse.

The inconsistency reflects both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, the presence of persuasive techniques demonstrates the adaptability of pesantren writing



to digital rhetorical demands, echoing Bunt's (2018) observation that Islamic institutions strategically rebrand themselves online. On the other hand, the unevenness highlights a gap: without a systematic incorporation of persuasion, the discourse risks diluting its impact. As Fairclough (2003) reminds us, persuasion in public discourse is not optional but central to shaping social action.

Overall, the Persuade stage in pesantren articles is partially developed: strong in some texts through imperatives, rhetorical questions, and sermonic rhythms, yet absent in others that remain primarily expository. This partiality underscores the need for further research to explore how persuasive strategies can be more consistently integrated without undermining the pedagogical and theological ethos of pesantren writing. Only through such refinement can persuasion function not merely as an occasional device but as a structured component of Islamic digital copywriting.

5. Ask for Action: Inviting Commitment through Imperative Authority

In Schwab's model, the *Ask for Action* stage represents the culmination of persuasion, where readers are explicitly invited—or compelled—to translate conviction into concrete behavior (Schwab, 1962). Within the corpus of salafi pesantren articles, however, this stage is the least consistently realized, appearing in only 46.7% of the texts. Less than half of the dataset contains direct calls to action, while the majority end with moral reflections or prayers without making the step from belief to action explicit. This limited presence weakens the persuasive arc, leaving many texts suspended at the level of awareness without converting it into behavioral commitment.

Where this stage is present, the calls to action take a clear imperative form. Examples include: "*Segera daftarkan putra Anda menjadi santri*", "*Dukung dakwah kami dengan sedekah terbaik Anda*", and "*Sebarkan artikel ini sebagai amal jariyah*". These imperatives are linguistically realized through active material processes (*daftarkan, dukung, sebarkan*), with the reader positioned as the Actor and the pesantren or the wider ummah as the Goal. Importantly, the directives are not framed as neutral choices but as moral imperatives, tied to the promise of *amal jariyah* (ongoing reward) or *pahala terbaik* (the greatest spiritual merit). This rhetorical move transforms ordinary actions donating, enrolling, sharing into acts of worship, aligning them with divine accountability.

Some articles soften the directness of these imperatives by using inclusive pronouns, for instance "*Mari kita dukung dakwah sunnah*" or "*Ayo bersama menjaga generasi dengan pendidikan Islam*". This collective framing shifts the tone from command to invitation, creating a sense of shared responsibility. It also mirrors the sermonic register familiar in oral da'wah, where persuasion often culminates in a communal call rather than an individual directive. Such strategies expand the persuasive reach by making action appear not only obligatory but also socially reinforced.

However, in more than half of the articles, the Ask for Action stage is absent. Instead of ending with directives, many conclude with reflective statements such as "*Semoga Allah menjadikan kita termasuk yang istiqamah*" or "*Mudah-mudahan kita selalu dalam lindungan-Nya*". While these closings provide spiritual resonance, they lack the performative force of a call to action. The discourse remains contemplative, stopping short of mobilization. In terms of persuasive structure, this omission interrupts the logical progression from attention, advantage, proof, and persuasion toward behavioral resolution.

This inconsistency can be partly explained by the pesantren's pedagogical orientation. Traditionally, pesantren discourse is designed to instruct and remind (*tazkirah*), not to explicitly demand action in the transactional sense common to advertising. As a result, many writers may consider prayerful closure sufficient, trusting the reader to internalize the message without overt instruction. Yet in the context of digital communication, where content competes for attention and commitment, the absence of explicit calls to action represents a strategic limitation.

From a phenomenological perspective, the Ask for Action stage externalizes intentionality. As Moustakas (1994) argues, the orientation of consciousness achieves completion when meaning is enacted through practice. When the text issues imperatives such as "*Segera daftarkan putra Anda*", the reader is invited to cross the threshold from internal conviction to external deed. Without such imperatives, the reader's lived experience of the text remains incomplete, shaped by reflection but not oriented toward transformation. The inconsistent presence of this stage therefore points to an incomplete phenomenological arc, where belief is evoked but not operationalized.

The implications are significant. In the digital sphere, calls to action are central to sustaining engagement and institutional survival. Bunt (Bunt, 2018) notes that Islamic organizations increasingly rely on strategic branding and mobilization to maintain relevance online. The low frequency of calls to action in pesantren articles suggests that these institutions are still adapting to the demands of digital persuasion. Their reliance on reflective closure aligns with theological authenticity but undermines rhetorical effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the rhetorical architecture of expository–persuasive writing in salafi pesantren digital articles by applying Victor Schwab's five-stage model—**Get Attention, Show an Advantage, Prove It, Persuade, and Ask for Action**—and interpreting the findings through the lens of systemic functional linguistics and Moustakas' phenomenology. Unlike earlier assumptions that pesantren writing consistently follows persuasive sequences, the data here reveal a fragmented pattern. Each stage appears with significant variability: *Get Attention* occurs in only 73.3% of the texts, *Show an Advantage* in 60%, *Prove It* in 50%, *Persuade* in 66.7%, and *Ask for Action* in just 46.7%.

These results suggest that pesantren articles do not yet fully embody the persuasive flow envisioned by Schwab. Instead, they blend traditional expository and doctrinal forms with selective adoption of persuasive strategies. Some texts successfully integrate interrogative mood, conditional promises, and imperative calls, while others remain descriptive, reflective, or prayerful without explicit rhetorical escalation. The result is an uneven discourse: sometimes urgent and mobilizing, sometimes contemplative and purely informational.

From a phenomenological standpoint, this inconsistency shapes the reader's lived experience. In some cases, readers are jolted by headlines like "*Kiamat Sudah Dekat?*", assured by promises such as "*Barangsiapa mengikuti jalan salaf, niscaya ia akan mendapatkan keberkahan ilmu*", persuaded through imperatives like "*Segera perbaiki shalat kita*", and directed toward action with appeals such as "*Sebarkan artikel ini sebagai amal jariyah*". Yet in other cases, the absence of one or more stages leaves the persuasive arc incomplete, producing a horizon of reflection rather than transformation.



The broader implication is that pesantren digital writing remains in transition. The discourse demonstrates awareness of persuasive strategies but lacks the consistency needed to form a stable model of Islamic copywriting. As Bunt (2018) notes, Islamic institutions online must balance credibility with engagement, while Abusharif (2023) highlights the difficulty of stabilizing digital religious authority. This study confirms that pesantren face the same challenge: how to integrate persuasive mechanics without undermining theological authenticity.

Future research is therefore essential. The task is not merely to confirm the presence of persuasive stages but to conceptualize a framework of copywriting that fits pesantren's doctrinal ethos and communicative goals. Such a framework should articulate how attention, benefits, proof, persuasion, and action can be adapted into a religious register that is both effective in digital contexts and faithful to salafi tradition. By foregrounding both the strengths and gaps in current practice, this study lays the groundwork for developing a more coherent model of Islamic expository–persuasive copywriting that can guide pesantren in navigating the rhetorical demands of the digital age.

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