

Navigating the Path to Islam: Evaluating Persuasive Communication in Conversion Guidance Programs at the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Unity Institute (PITI) in Surabaya

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Abstract

Understanding Islam poses a significant challenge for newly converted individuals and groups, underscoring the necessity of companionship and guidance to facilitate their learning and exploration of faith. Recognizing this imperative, the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Unity Institute (PITI) in Surabaya has initiated mentoring activities tailored specifically for new converts of Islam. Employing a persuasive communication approach between mentors and converts, the program aimed to deepen their understanding of faith. This study evaluated the effectiveness of persuasive communication in the development of conversion to Islam at the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association Institute in Surabaya. Using qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach, in-depth interviews with key informants were conducted to gather data. The analytical framework is rooted in the AIDDA concept, encompassing Attention, Interest, Desire, Decision, and Action. The findings reveal that the Surabaya PITI Institute adeptly implements the AIDDA concept in the context of persuasive communication. Beginning with capturing converts' attention through the introduction of the ta'aruf program by da'i, the program proceeds to generate interest by delivering engaging and relevant content. The da'i employs a gentle and persuasive language when imparting Quranic teachings and avoiding coercion. As a result, converts make informed decisions to embrace Islamic practices such as regular prayer, zakat, and fasting, signifying a meaningful behavioral shift towards adherence to Islamic principles. Consequently, converts integrate the teachings presented by the da'i, prioritizing Islamic doctrines derived from the Quran and Hadith while gradually distancing themselves from conflicting Chinese cultural practices. This research provides insights into the role of persuasive communication in guiding converts and offers implications for the development of effective Da'wah strategies and approaches.

Keywords: *Persuasive Communication, Converts to Islam, Indonesian Chinese Islamic Unity Institute.*

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Introduction

The process of converting to Islam is a significant spiritual journey for individuals, especially for those from different cultural and religious backgrounds.¹ In Surabaya, Indonesia, the Chinese community possesses a unique cultural heritage and often holds traditions and beliefs distinct from Islam. Nevertheless, many Chinese individuals are interested in learning and understanding Islam, eventually deciding to embrace the religion.² The importance of introducing and deeply understanding the teachings of Islam for converts, especially those from diverse cultural backgrounds, is the primary focus in this context. There is an urgent need to provide effective companionship and guidance for Chinese converts in Surabaya, enabling them to embark on their religious journey smoothly.³ The use of persuasive communication by da'is in guiding Chinese converts is a crucial aspect in facilitating their understanding of Islam. Effective communication can assist converts in comprehending Islamic principles better and encourage them to accept and adopt appropriate religious practices.⁴ Therefore, research on the use of persuasive communication by da'is in guiding Chinese converts in Surabaya is relevant and essential. This research can provide valuable insights into effective strategies and approaches in the guidance of converts and make significant contributions to the development of better da'wah models in the future.

Based on data from the Indonesian Muallaf Center, the number of individuals converting to Islam has surpassed fifty thousand in 2023. This figure shows a notable increase in the last two years compared with the preceding year. Notably, Chinese ethnicity constitutes the majority of these conversions, with approximately 27% of ethnic Chinese embracing Islam. Moreover, the number of ethnic Chinese converts in Indonesia has exhibited an annual increase of approximately 18%, rising from 2,800 to 3,500 within a one-year period.⁵ According to the Pew Research Center, the Muslim population in Indonesia, particularly among the Muallaf (converted to Islam), is projected to continue its growth trajectory. This is attributed to Islam's rapid expansion, which is expected to outpace global population growth, with Muslims projected to increase from 23% in 2010, comprising 1.6 billion individuals, to 30% by 2050, totaling 2.8 billion people. Moreover, Islam's growth rate is expected to surpass that of Christianity. Additionally, findings from the World Religion Database survey indicate a significant rise in the global Muslim population from 13.6% in 1950 to 24% in 2015. In contrast, the survey revealed a decline in the world's Christian population, decreasing from 35% to 33% of the global population during the same period.⁶

The process of converting religions is undeniably challenging, particularly because of the prevalent perception that Islam conflicts with Chinese culture and traditions. Such beliefs often stem from the misconception that Islam is associated with poverty, ignorance and backwardness. This misperception can be traced back to the colonial legacy of the Dutch era, during which divide-

¹ Lutfan Muntaqo, "Ijazah Sanad Tradition in Pesantren, an Effort to Maintain the Authenticity of Islamic Teachings (Study in Pesantren Maslakul Huda, Kajen, Pati, Central Java)," *Manarul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmiah Studi Islam* 18, no. 1 (2018): 31–51.

² Qurrotun A'yun and dkk, "Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Islam Pada Muallaf Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia (PITI) Surabaya Jawa Timur," *Jurnal Muallimin* 1, no. 1 (2019).

³ Guruh Ryan Aulia, "Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama dalam Perspektif Islam," *Jurnal Ushuluddin: Media Dialog Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 1 (February 27, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.24252/jumdpi.v25i1.36240>.

⁴ Casram Casram, "Membangun Sikap Toleransi Beragama dalam Masyarakat Plural," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 1, no. 2 (August 23, 2016): 187–98, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v1i2.588>.

⁵ <https://cnnindonesia.com/menilik.perjuangan.tionghoa.muslim.diindonesia>, diakses pada minggu 18 Februari 2024 pukul 18.13.

⁶ "Muallaf Di Indonesia," accessed February 18, 2024, <https://pewresearch.org/>.

and-rule tactics were employed to sow discord between ethnic Chinese and indigenous communities. Unfortunately, this divisive legacy persists, leading to the stigmatization of Chinese converts as individuals with foreign and incompatible beliefs. As a result, many ethnic Chinese who choose to embrace Islam may find themselves ostracized by their extended families and communities.⁷

Previous research relevant to this topic includes the following: Firstly, Perdana Putra Pangestu, “Mobilization of Da'wah Resources for Chinese Muslims in Indonesia”. This study revealed that PITI must take the lead in addressing the social disparities affecting indigenous, Muslim, and Chinese communities. Efforts can be made to optimize their resources to disseminate new narratives through their various da'wah channels.⁸ Second, Imam Machali, et.al conducted research titled “Informal Islamic Education for Minority Muslims: Lessons from Chinese Ethnic Minority Muslims in Yogyakarta”. This study revealed that Education guided by the Islamic vision of *rahmah li al-‘ālamīn* occurs within informal settings such as families, communities, and society. This vision manifests through various approaches within the informal Islamic education of the ethnic Chinese Muslim minority community in Yogyakarta.⁹ Lastly, Yusuf Z. Abidin conducted research titled " Maintaining faith from within: How Chinese Muslim organisations in Indonesia improve converts' understanding of Islam." This study found, although the decision to convert to Islam has led to their exclusion from their extended family, they are still able to uphold their newfound faith by relying on Islamic organizations managed by fellow Chinese Muslims. However, this phenomenon also highlights that their efforts to assimilate with the local Muslim community have not been fully realized.¹⁰

Undergoing a religious conversion is a profoundly delicate and risky decision that significantly impacts the lives of individuals.¹¹ The challenges commonly faced by converts are multifaceted, spanning ideological, psychological, social, and economic dimensions.¹² For instance, converts often encounter economic challenges, particularly those who remain financially dependent on their families of origin. Living with their original families may impede their ability to fully embrace their newfound Islamic beliefs. This circumstance can result in challenges in abstaining from non-halal foods and beverages, as well as participating in ethnic Chinese rituals and traditions.¹³ Preaching the conversion to Islam is a noble endeavor, akin to continuing the mission of Prophet Muhammad and his companions in disseminating the teachings of Islam. Converting to Islam represents a new beginning for individuals who may be unfamiliar with the faith. Therefore, consistent and structured guidance and education are essential for fully embracing Islamic teachings. Newly converted individuals often undergo emotional instability and face various

⁷ Ramli, *Dakwah Terhadap Muslim Etnis Tionghoa di Kota Makassar Perspektif Sosio-Antropologis* (Disertasi: UIN Allauddin Makassar, 2016), 16.

⁸ Perdana Putra Pangestu, “Mobilization of Da'wah Resources for Chinese Muslims in Indonesia,” *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 17, no. 2 (September 21, 2023): 221–30, <https://doi.org/10.24090/komunika.v17i2.7740>.

⁹ Imam Machali et al., “Informal Islamic Education for Minority Muslims: Lessons from Chinese Ethnic Minority Muslims in Yogyakarta,” *Ulumuna* 27, no. 2 (December 29, 2023): 598–623, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v27i2.539>.

¹⁰ Yusuf Z. Abidin, “Maintaining Faith from within: How Chinese Muslim Organisations in Indonesia Improve Converts' Understanding of Islam,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 1 (2022), <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/247243>.

¹¹ Samsul Arifin and Imam Syafi'i, “Dakwah Mualaf Strategi dan Pola Dakwah untuk Mualaf di Masjid Nasional Al-Akbar Surabaya,” *Mukammil: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 1, no. 1 (2018).

¹² Casmini Casmini, “Analysis of Muallaf ‘Aisyiyah Da'Wah Strategy,” *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 14, no. 1 (June 14, 2020): 163–78, <https://doi.org/10.15575/idajhs.v14i1.9238>.

¹³ Al Fakhri Zakirman, Musa Musa, and M. Sholeh Marsudi, “Problem Muallaf Tionghoa Bangka Pasca Konversi Agama,” *Ri'ayah: Jurnal Sosial Dan Keagamaan* 8, no. 1 (July 25, 2023): 63, <https://doi.org/10.32332/riayah.v8i1.6609>.

challenges as they transition to a new religious identity. They must navigate leaving behind their previous religious affiliations and embark on the journey of studying Islam to commence their lives anew as Muslims.¹⁴

Converts, as individuals who have recently embraced Islam, have an obligation to comprehend and practice the teachings of Islam accurately and effectively. Therefore, it is crucial for converts to receive comprehensive guidance in adhering to the principles of Islam, extending beyond mere initiation into the faith.¹⁵ Currently, the guidance provided for conversion in Indonesia is suboptimal and influenced by several factors. Firstly, there is limited involvement from state institutions in supporting converts, placing much of the responsibility on social organizations and individuals with personal interests. Secondly, the availability of dedicated da'is to guide converts is inadequate, leading to less active communication efforts in da'wah activities.¹⁶

The challenges faced by converts during their transition to a new religion involve adapting to a lifestyle that differs from their previous norms. Embracing a different religious understanding requires tailored guidance to navigate these changes effectively. The issues confronted by converts are numerous, ranging from the loss of familial or social support to potential employment repercussions. Additionally, female converts may encounter unique challenges related to their appearance and societal expectations.¹⁷ Therefore, it is crucial to have individuals who can offer continuous support for new converts to Islam, ensuring their steadfastness in embracing Islamic teachings. Through persuasive communication, conversion coaches can serve as bridges for a deeper understanding and immersion in Islam. Coaching converts requires the extensive use of persuasive communication techniques. Consistent coaching is the most effective approach for addressing this issue. Engaging in coaching activities within their local communities, both within the broader Muslim community and in tailored sessions for their specific needs, can significantly help in overcoming these challenges. Their participation in such socio-religious activities within their communities will further reinforce their commitment to Islam.

Guidance can be optimized when both new converts (muallaf) and the Muslim community in their neighborhood exhibit openness. Religious and community leaders should play an active role in facilitating connections between the muallaf and local Muslim community through various religious activities. Routine events such as yasinan, tahlilan, monthly study groups, lectures on Islamic holidays, and Ramadan gatherings can serve as opportunities for muallafs and the community to interact, fostering mutual support and deepening their religious understanding and experience.¹⁸ Issues surrounding understanding of the Islamic faith persistently accompany the journey of converts to Islam, encompassing challenges such as religious syncretism. Additionally, research findings by Titian Hakiki and Rudi Cahyono indicate variations in converts' understanding of the concept of God. Some perceive God as a singular omnipotent entity, while others view God

¹⁴ Budiarti Santoso Meilanny, Nurliana Cipta Apsari, and Budi M. Taftazani, "The Involvement of Parents in the Children's Care Process; A Comparison Of Various Countries," *EMPATI: Jurnal Ilmu Kesejahteraan Sosial*, 7, no. 1 (2018).

¹⁵ Rini Setiawati and Khomsahrial Romli, "Pembinaan Keagamaan dan Ekonomi bagi Mualaf oleh Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia di Lampung," *Jurnal Dakwah Risalah* 30, no. 2 (December 15, 2019): 154, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jdr.v30i2.8368>.

¹⁶ Aswar Tahir, Hafied Cangara, and Arianto Arianto, "Komunikasi dakwah da'i dalam pembinaan komunitas mualaf di kawasan pegunungan Karomba kabupaten Pinrang," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 40, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 155, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v40.2.6105>.

¹⁷ Muhammad Shodikul Haq, Suprastowo Damarhadi, and Adi Arsoniadi, "Depend on God: the Overview of Spirituality in Mualaf" 3 (2023).

¹⁸ Zakirman, Musa, and Marsudi, "Problem Muallaf Tionghoa Bangka Pasca Konversi Agama."

as a controlling force inherent in human life, among other interpretations. Similarly, converts' comprehension of Islamic teachings also exhibits diverse perspectives. Some individuals may feel their understanding is confined to a basic belief in Allah and struggle to deepen their faith. Others may grapple with accepting the existence of supernatural entities, particularly jinns and demons, within Islamic teachings.

Method

The research method employed in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach, which involves conducting an in-depth exploration of a specific problem to analyze various aspects of understanding. Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research delves into the richness and complexity of human experiences and perceptions.¹⁹ The primary objective of this research is to achieve a structured and in-depth understanding of the case under investigation. This approach allows for a detailed examination of the phenomenon, emphasizing depth rather than breadth. By utilizing qualitative methods, the researcher aims to uncover the nuances and complexities inherent in the problem being studied.²⁰ Qualitative research is particularly suited for this study because it allows for a nuanced exploration of the concept of persuasive communication practiced by Muslim converts within the ethnic Chinese community. This method enables the researcher to capture the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings associated with this phenomenon.²¹

Data collection in this study will involve various techniques, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews will provide insights into the thoughts, beliefs, and experiences of Muslim converts engaged in persuasive communication. Observations will allow the researcher to observe firsthand the dynamics of persuasive communication interactions. Additionally, document analysis will involve examining relevant texts, reports, and documentation related to persuasive communication efforts within the ethnic Chinese Muslim community.²² Overall, the qualitative approach adopted in this study will enable the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of persuasive communication among Muslim converts to ethnic Chinese converts. The findings will be presented through a detailed analysis of data, incorporating quotations, descriptions, and interpretations to provide a rich and nuanced overview of the research results.

Results and Discussion

The Urgency of Persuasive Communication

Da'wah, in essence, is the act of conveying Islamic teachings, promoting virtuous deeds, preventing wrongdoing, and offering guidance and admonition to humanity. Persuasiveness, in this context, can be understood as advocating without coercion to influence a person's conscience, thereby raising awareness to accept the message being conveyed.²³ Persuasive da'wah is conducted with the objective of persuading individuals to implement the teachings presented by the

¹⁹ Lexy J. Meleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2008, n.d.).

²⁰ Burhan Bungin, *Analisis Data Penelitian Kualitatif* (Jakarta: PT Grafindo Persada, 2001).

²¹ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2000).

²² Sugiyono, *Pengumpulan Data Dengan Wawancara, Memahami Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014).

²³ Siti Aisyah, "Bentuk Penerapan Dakwah Persuasif Terhadap Pembinaan Eks Pekerja Seks Komersial Di Panti Sosial Karya Wanita Mattirodeceng Kota Makassar.," *Jurnal Diskursus Islam* 6, no. 1 (2018): 115.

preacher.²⁴ It involves employing a psychological approach to influence communicants effectively.²⁵ Da'wah itself must play a significant role by offering strategic solutions. This is because contemporary material is easily comprehensible and employs a persuasive approach.²⁶ In this case, there is a correlation between da'wah and persuasive communication in the endeavor to invite people to God's teachings. Both in da'wah and communication, there exists a process of delivering a message, whether it entails information or an invitation to the individual being addressed.²⁷

There is a connection between da'wah and persuasive communication in the endeavor to invite people to the teachings of Allah. Both in da'wah and communication, there is a process of delivering messages, whether it involves providing information or extending invitations to the interlocutor. Moreover, persuasive communication aims to influence the motives of the interlocutor so that they align with the desired outcome. With this reference, it can be concluded that da'wah and persuasive communication share close meanings, namely efforts to change beliefs, thoughts, actions, and behavior.²⁸

Persuasive communication can be understood as an intentional effort to effect changes in the target audience by identifying social constructs rooted in their beliefs or values. In this context, language serves as a tool to persuade and prompt alterations in the audience's perspective.²⁹ Implementing programs utilizing persuasive communication entails influencing societal changes through persuasion. This can be achieved by appealing to the community's emotions and fostering connections to local customs and values, thereby inspiring individuals to initiate personal transformations. The effectiveness of such programs relies on clearly defined objectives and directed intentions, thereby influencing a broader audience and instigating a desire for change.³⁰

Human beings, as creations of God, inherently require communication on a daily basis. They belong to a social species that engages in interpersonal interactions, both verbal and non-verbal, on a regular basis. Communication serves as the means through which intended meanings are conveyed and understood. However, in the context of coaching converts, it is imperative for a convert coach to employ appropriate communication methods that do not inflict emotional harm upon the communicant. This necessitates the use of persuasive communication techniques.³¹ Building upon this premise, persuasive communication techniques play a crucial role in coaching converts. Originally rooted in the concept of da'wah, which originates from the Arabic term "tabsyir" or "basyara," meaning to give attention or convey glad tidings, persuasive communication is fundamentally a method of communication intended to be engaging and uplifting. In Indonesian terms, "Tabisyir" represents a communication style that is conveyed in an enjoyable manner. Persuasive communication, therefore, encompasses the process of delivering a communicator's message in a compelling manner with the aim of influencing the recipient (the person being addressed). By utilizing persuasive communication effectively, a convert coach can guide and

²⁴ Slamet, "Efektifitas Komunikasi Dalam Dakwah Persuasif," *Jurnal Dakwah* 10, no. 2 (2009): 181.

²⁵ Achmad Mubarak, *Psikologi Dakwah* (Malang: Madani Press, 2014), 167.

²⁶ Mawardi, *Sosiologi Dakwah: Kajian Teori Sosiologi, al-Qur'an Dan al-Hadist* (Ponorogo: Uwais Insirasi Indonesi, 2018), 8.

²⁷ Mubasyaroh, "Strategi Dakwah Persuasif Dalam Mengubah Perilaku Masyarakat," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 313.

²⁸ Mubasyaroh, "Strategi Dakwah Persuasif Dalam Mengubah Perilaku Masyarakat."

²⁹ Susi Fitria Dewi, *Sosiologi Politik* (Yogyakarta: Gre Publishing, 2017), 162.

³⁰ Irwan and Indraddin, *Strategi Dan Perubahan Sosial* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2016), 28.

³¹ Halimatus Sakdiah, "Urgensi Interpersonal Skill Dalam Dakwah Persuasif," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 35, no. 1 (August 16, 2017): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v35.1.1230>.

support converts in their journey without causing emotional distress, fostering a positive and constructive coaching environment.³²

Yosep Ilardo also expressed his perspective that persuasive communication entails delivering a series of messages aimed at changing behaviors, attitudes, and psychological aspects. When considering its application in the context of da'wah conducted by converts to Islam, persuasive communication becomes a series of processes that influence the psychological state of converts, encouraging them to embark on the journey of learning about the Islamic faith. A coach for converts can employ enjoyable persuasive methods that are not burdensome for the individuals undergoing conversion. By doing so, persuasive communication can effectively facilitate the conversion process. The primary responsibility of a convert coach is to influence the "Mad'u" (the person being coached) so that they can embrace and implement the teachings acquired throughout the coaching process.³³ In Jaluddin Rahmad's book on communication, it is stated that cognitive effects pertain to the audience's knowledge and understanding, encompassing changes in knowledge, beliefs, information, and skills. On the other hand, affective effects manifest when there is a favorable alteration in an individual's emotional values and attitudes. Finally, behavioral effects refer to observable actions or habits that have been witnessed or adopted.³⁴

Persuasive da'wah for converts can be implemented through various approaches, including specialized coaching sessions within a "majlis ta'lim" dedicated to converts and a counseling approach. Both of these methods share the common objective of nurturing "muallaf" (converts) into practicing Muslims through gentle and gradual guidance. The primary distinction lies in the scope of the audience, the frequency of interactions, and the topics covered during the da'wah sessions. Institutions such as the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association play a crucial role in conducting da'wah efforts for converts due to several advantages they offer. Firstly, these da'wah institutions serve as educational hubs where congregants can enhance their knowledge and faith in Islam. Secondly, participation in ta'lim sessions provides converts with opportunities to socialize and connect with fellow worshippers who share similar aspirations. Moreover, these institutions serve as platforms for strengthening interpersonal bonds and fostering community cohesion. Thirdly, the presence of da'wah institutions contributes to the realization of social objectives and aspirations, thereby motivating worshippers to actively engage in initiatives aimed at improving their well-being and the welfare of society.

The Evolution of Conversion: Insights from the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association (PITI) in Surabaya

The Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association, commonly referred to as PITI, is a religious institution situated at the Cheng Hoo Mosque, located on Jalan Gading Number 2 in Surabaya. It serves as a dedicated platform for ethnic Chinese Muslims to engage in religious studies and deepen their understanding of Islam within the premises of the Cheng Hoo Mosque. PITI acts as a conduit for converts seeking to enrich their knowledge of the Islamic faith and engage in direct religious practices under the guidance of the mosque's preachers. Members of the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Association (PITI) face several challenges that may hinder their ability to express their opinions or assert their identity and cultural heritage. These challenges stem from various factors,

³² Onong Uchana Effendy, *Ilmu Komunikasi Teori Dan Praktek* (Jakarta: PT Remaja Rosda Karya, 2017).

³³ Littlejohn, SW, *Theories of Human Communication*. (Wadsworth: Belmont, CA, 1983).

³⁴ Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Psikologi Komunikasi* (2011: Rosdakarya, Bandung).

both individual and organizational, which can undermine their confidence. Consequently, members may find it difficult to vocalize their ideas or embrace their cultural identity within the community.³⁵

Chinese converts encounter the challenge of navigating invitations from non-Muslim families to partake in worship and cultural practices that conflict with Islamic teachings (haram). For instance, during Lunar New Year festivities, Chinese Muslims often seek ways to celebrate their cultural heritage while adhering to Islamic principles. To address this, PITI arranges Chinese New Year celebrations within mosques that exhibit traditional Chinese architectural styles, such as the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya. The converts who engage with PITI hail from diverse religious backgrounds, presenting unique needs and experiences. Consequently, the selection process for convert coaches at PITI is rigorous and tailored to their respective areas of expertise. At PITI Surabaya, two active convert mentors facilitate this process. One mentor, Ustad Supri, specializes in theology and provides foundational understanding for recent converts. According to him, coaching converts requires employing persuasive and enjoyable methods to foster engagement and learning.³⁶

Being a guide for converts to Islam makes me learn and research what I should do first to welcome them, I also think about what material would be suitable for the initial stage of their learning, because converts are diverse, and their reasons for changing religions are also varied, so from It must really be adjusted to the condition of the convert, usually when we first meet, we usually get to know each other briefly or in other terms ta'aruf.

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The initial step undertaken by coaches for converts and individuals converting to Islam involves conducting a brief introduction during the first meeting. These meetings typically take place either at the PITI Surabaya office or at the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya. However, recognizing the psychological sensitivity of converts, convert counselors also offer the option for private guidance sessions if desired.³⁸

Meetings typically take place either at the office or at the Cheng Hoo Mosque. However, some converts may feel uncomfortable meeting in larger groups and prefer more private settings. In such cases, arrangements are made for individual meetings either at their homes or at a designated location of their choice. This approach allows them to gradually acclimate to their new religious community at their own pace, ensuring their comfort during the learning process. Additionally, the materials used in these learning sessions are tailored to meet the specific needs and standards for converts to Islam. Fundamental topics such as worship, *aqidah* (belief), *muammalah* (transactions), and the Quran are covered extensively. As emphasized by Ustad Gunawan, one of the coaches for converts to Islam, this approach ensures that the learning process is effective and conducive to the growth and understanding of the converts.³⁹

Regarding the instructional content, I typically tailor it based on our agreed-upon curriculum. For instance, in the initial stages, we focus on mastering the correct pronunciation of the creed. Following this, we progress to providing guidance on performing prayers, as daily prayers are fundamental to the practice of Islam.

³⁵ Suko Susilo, Eva Putriya Hasanah, and Nur Syam, "Motif Pembangunan Masjid Cheng Ho Surabaya," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 32, no. 2 (August 1, 2021): 367–82, <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v32i2.1557>.

³⁶ Supriyadi, Pembinaan Muallaf PITI Surabaya, November 20, 2023.

³⁷ Gunawan, Tentang PITI Surabaya, November 23, 2023.

³⁸ Gunawan.

³⁹ Gunawan.

Additionally, I integrate stories of the prophets into our lessons to provide a refreshing break and enrich the learning experience.⁴⁰

Guidance sessions are conducted regularly over a period of three months to assess the readiness of converts to take the pledge and obtain a certificate of conversion to Islam. Following this initial period, continued participation in all activities organized by PITI Surabaya and the Cheng Hoo Mosque is strongly encouraged. This ongoing involvement ensures ongoing support and reinforcement of newfound beliefs and practices, facilitating the integration of converts into the Muslim community.

During the typical three-month period preceding the pledge, converts are provided with guidance on the fundamental aspects of Islam. This includes instruction on the Five Pillars of Islam, the Six Pillars of Faith, and practical demonstrations on correct prayer techniques. While emphasis is placed on immediate practice, memorization of prayer recitations is encouraged, albeit not mandatory. The primary focus is on cultivating understanding and proficiency. Within this timeframe, gradual changes are observed among converts, such as a growing comprehension of the obligation to perform the five daily prayers.⁴¹

Within a span of three months, converts receive personalized guidance from the convert advisor at PITI Surabaya in preparation for the pledge ceremony, which takes place at the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya.⁴² In addition, when conducting persuasive communication, both preachers and converters take special measures to ensure that converts feel welcomed and joyful in joining PITI Surabaya. One approach is consistently incorporating themes related to the ethnic Chinese community into every event. For example, during the Chinese New Year celebration, festivities include a traditional lion dance performance held in the courtyard of the Cheng Hoo Mosque. These events attract diverse local communities and extend invitations to orphans and underprivileged individuals, fostering inclusivity and community engagement.⁴³ A mentor for converts to Islam endeavors to be an exemplary motivator and educator by actively engaging in presenting the rich cultural heritage of the Chinese ethnic group, which has existed since ancient times.⁴⁴

Unlocking the Power of Persuasion: A Da'i's Journey in Cultivating Converts Through AIDDA Theory

Expanding on Wilbur Schramm's AIDDA theory, which delineates the sequential stages of Attention, Interest, Desire, Decision, and Action, we can unlock its potential in persuasive da'wah endeavors. The AIDDA framework provides a structured roadmap for effectively engaging and influencing audiences. By strategically applying each stage, communicators can captivate attention, stimulate interest, cultivate desire, prompt decision-making, and ultimately inspire action among their target audience.⁴⁵ Moreover, the AIDDA theory serves as a robust foundation for orchestrating da'wah initiatives that resonate with diverse communities. Its systematic approach facilitates the dissemination of Islamic teachings and principles to a wider audience, transcending

⁴⁰ Gunawan.

⁴¹ Supriyadi, Pembinaan Muallaf PITI Surabaya.

⁴² Supriyadi.

⁴³ Ahmad Ma'ruf, "Nilai-Nilai Al-Qur'an Dalam Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Etnis Tionghoa Di Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia (Piti Jatim)," *Jurnal Majlum : Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 2 (2017).

⁴⁴ Gunawan, Tentang PITI Surabaya.

⁴⁵ Sugiri, *The Complete Ideal's Guide Brand Management* (Jakarta: Fajar Interpratama, 2004), 52.

cultural and linguistic barriers. This underscores the significance of adopting a multifaceted strategy that encompasses various communication channels, formats, and platforms. Furthermore, the AIDDA framework underscores the importance of tailoring da'wah efforts to address the unique needs and preferences of different segments within the community. By customizing messaging and delivery methods, communicators can effectively connect with individuals from varying backgrounds and foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Islamic teachings.

The AIDDA theory, credited to scientist Wilbur Schramm, delineates a model elucidating consumer behavior and decision-making processes. It commences with a consumer expressing interest in a specific product or service. Subsequently, the consumer scrutinizes and pays attention to the features and benefits offered by the seller. The seller, in turn, employs persuasive techniques to captivate the consumer, evoking satisfaction and fostering genuine interest in the product. This phase of seduction is pivotal in instigating a desire within the consumer to acquire the product, ultimately leading to a decision to purchase. Finally, the consumer takes decisive action, completing the transaction and acquiring the desired product or service.⁴⁶

To capture the interest of consumers and entice them towards what is being offered, the initial step is to seize their attention effectively. According to the AIDDA theory, this initial attention-grabbing moment is crucial as it sets the stage for effective communication between the two parties involved. One way to achieve this is through the communicator's speaking style and overall appearance, both of which play significant roles in engaging the audience. A charismatic and captivating speaking style can draw listeners in, while an attractive appearance can further enhance the communicator's credibility and appeal. By focusing on these aspects, communicators can establish a strong connection with consumers from the outset, laying the groundwork for successful persuasion and engagement.⁴⁷



Figure 1. Effendy, Communication Science: Theory and Practice

According to the AIDDA theory, the initial step is for convert coaches to capture the attention of converts, encouraging them to open up and engage in the learning process. Following this, the coaches aim to cultivate interest by understanding the preferences, likes, and dislikes of the converts. This enables the coaches to tailor the religious learning experience accordingly. It is imperative that the material presented is suitable for the converts' circumstances and devoid of any coercive elements, ensuring that the learning and guidance process remains natural and enjoyable.

⁴⁶ Richard West and Lynn H. Turner, *Pengantar Teori Komunikasi: Analisis Dan Aplikasi. Buku 1 Edisi Ke-3 Terjemahan Maria Natalia Damayanti Maer* (Jakarta: Salemba Humanika, 2008).

⁴⁷ Effendy, *Ilmu Komunikasi Teori Dan Praktek*.

Ultimately, this stage culminates in meaningful action, marked by changes in attitude as converts embrace their new identity as Muslims.⁴⁸

According to the thoughts of Wilbur Schramm as conveyed by Effendy, the AIDDA framework emphasizes the importance of delivering various messages at each stage of communication. This involves several key elements. In captivating messages: It is crucial to present content that captures the audience's attention. For instance, when choosing messages conveyed by converts to Islam, focus on delivering material that is engaging and enjoyable, such as narratives depicting the struggles of prophets or other relevant religious stories. In symbolic and personal narratives: Utilize symbols and personal anecdotes to enrich communication. Convert coaches can share concrete examples of converts' journeys in learning about Islam, illustrating how they have embraced the faith and transformed into devout Muslims. Additionally, providing encouragement and motivation can inspire converts to develop a deeper affinity for Islam. In stimulating messages: Messages should aim to evoke interest and curiosity. Convert coaches should employ effective strategies and methods to spark converts' curiosity and engagement in learning about Islam, making the educational process both compelling and fulfilling. In effective communication strategies: Utilize communication techniques that ensure clarity and impact. Convert coaches should employ a variety of methods to facilitate clear and impactful communication, thereby enhancing understanding and assimilation of religious teachings.⁴⁹ By integrating these principles into the da'wah process, convert coaches can effectively engage and inspire converts, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Islam.

Convert coaches consistently strive to select appropriate teaching materials for their converts, employing persuasive and empathetic communication to ensure that their coaching activities are well-received. Utilizing the AIDDA theoretical model, convert counselors actively engage with their converts, implementing various activities designed to create a comfortable and secure environment. Given the potentially fragile psychological state of converts still adjusting to their new faith, convert coaches exercise caution in their interactions, avoiding sensitive topics and providing guidance with care and sensitivity.⁵⁰ Drawing from Effendy's book outlining the AIDDA theory, one of the central tenets of this concept revolves around cultivating attention between communicators and their audience. This is achieved through the use of an articulate, accurate, and engaging speaking style by the communicator, thereby capturing the interest of the audience in the conveyed message.⁵¹

1. Attention

In the AIDDA theory, the initial step is to capture the attention of converts, thereby piquing their interest in further engagement with the Cheng Ho Mosque Surabaya community. Effendy's Communication book underscores the significance of attention, emphasizing the importance of employing gentle and empathetic language in the initial phase to foster interest. The first stage conducted by a convert advisor involves introducing the converts who have recently taken their vows at the Cheng Ho Mosque. This introductory process between converts and the advisor can

⁴⁸ M. Romli and Asep Syamsul, *Jurnalistik Online: Panduan Praktis Mengelola Media Online* (Bandung: PT Refika Aditama, 2012).

⁴⁹ Effendy, *Ilmu Komunikasi Teori Dan Praktek*.

⁵⁰ Abdul hadi Hidayatullah, "Relasi Suami-Istri Keluarga Mualaf Dalam Membangun Keluarga Harmonis Perspektif Teori Fungsionalisme Struktural (Studi Terhadap Keluarga Mualaf Di Kabupaten Situbondo)" (Malang, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 2017).

⁵¹ Effendy, *Ilmu Komunikasi Teori Dan Praktek*.

be conducted either within or outside the institution. Considering the emotional turmoil often experienced by converts, flexibility is essential in conducting this process, ensuring that it does not impose additional stress on the converts by requiring them to come to PITI. Following the introduction phase, the subsequent step entails assessing the interest or curiosity of the converts. This involves gauging their receptiveness to further involvement and learning within the community.⁵²

2. Interest

The second stage involves gaining a deeper understanding. Following the initial phase of capturing attention, the convert and their coach embark on a journey of mutual acquaintance. Subsequently, the convert's coach introduces teaching materials that will be studied at the Surabaya PITI institution, covering topics such as Aqidah (faith), Worship, and learning to read the Al-Qur'anul Karim. These subjects are presented in a conducive and pleasant atmosphere, devoid of coercion.⁵³ Each teaching material receives positive feedback from converts, signifying their engagement and receptiveness. Additionally, converts begin to inquire about obligations such as wearing the hijab for women. This curiosity prompts converts to initiate learning about and adopting the practice of wearing the hijab when venturing outside their homes.⁵⁴

Following the initial stage of acquaintance, the convert's coach proceeds to introduce the curriculum of Surabaya PITI, encompassing essential subjects such as Aqidah (faith), Worship, and Quranic studies. These materials are presented in an engaging and congenial environment, devoid of any form of coercion. The teaching approach is carefully crafted to foster a positive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Remarkably, each teaching material garners positive feedback from converts, indicating their active participation and enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, converts begin to inquire about religious obligations, particularly regarding women's attire such as wearing the hijab. This curiosity prompts converts to embark on learning about and adopting the practice of wearing the hijab when venturing outside their homes, demonstrating their growing commitment to embracing Islamic teachings and practices.

3. Desire

As individuals delve deeper into the complexities of subjects such as Aqidah (theology), Fiqh (jurisprudence), prayer procedures, and Quranic recitation, it's common for them to experience a sense of disinterest or fatigue.⁵⁵ The intricacies of these topics can sometimes feel overwhelming, particularly for new converts navigating their way through unfamiliar terrain. However, it is during this critical third stage that the guidance and support of convert coaches or companions become indispensable.⁵⁶ Convert coaches or companions serve as mentors and allies, offering invaluable assistance in navigating the challenges inherent in deepening one's understanding of Islam. They play a pivotal role in revitalizing enthusiasm and motivation, infusing converts with renewed vigor and ensuring they remain comfortable throughout their journey of embracing Islam.

These mentors provide personalized support, tailoring their approach to meet the individual needs and circumstances of each convert. They offer encouragement, provide clarifications, and

⁵² Hew Wai Weng, *Berislam Ala Tionghoa* (Bandung: PT Mizan Pustaka, 2019).

⁵³ Angga Adriano Mongkau, Desie M D Warouw, and Elfie Mingkid, "Strategi Komunikasi Sales Dalam Memasarkan Mobil Bekas Di Kota Manado (Studi Pada Showroom Mobil Bekas Di Wilayah Kecamatan Malalayang Kota Manado)," no. 2 (2017).

⁵⁴ Maghfira Faraaidiany, "Politik Identitas Etnis Tionghoa Di Kota Medan," *Jurnal POLITELA* 8, no. 2 (n.d.): 2016.

⁵⁵ Mubaidi Sulaeman, "Permainan Bahasa Atas Tuduhan Gerakan Fundamentalisme Islam Dalam Politik Barat," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 7, no. 1 (2019): 55–72.

⁵⁶ Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Piety and Politics: Islamism in Contemporary Malaysia* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009).

address any concerns or doubts that may arise along the way. Additionally, they create a supportive and nurturing environment where converts feel safe to explore and ask questions, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. By fostering a positive and encouraging atmosphere, convert coaches or companions help converts overcome obstacles and persevere in their pursuit of knowledge and spiritual growth.⁵⁷ Their guidance not only strengthens the bonds between converts and their faith but also empowers individuals to navigate the complexities of their religious journey with confidence and conviction.

To mitigate the risk of converts reverting to their previous religious beliefs, counselors diligently provide encouragement and foster enthusiasm for learning, whether through private sessions or regular studies conducted at the Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya.⁵⁸ During this phase, converts often find the courage to open up about their challenges and gradually embrace the teachings of Islam. It is during these candid discussions that convert coaches may also share their personal stories, recounting their journey from being a convert to assuming the role of a convert coach. This narrative exchange fosters a sense of connection and solidarity, strengthening the convert-coach relationship and reinforcing the convert's commitment to their newfound faith.

4. Decision

The next crucial step in the conversion process is the Decision phase, as outlined in the AIDDA theory developed by Wilbur Schram. At this juncture, converts and their advisors have engaged in numerous routine meetings, convened either at the Cheng Ho Mosque or as part of regular agendas organized by PITI. Through these meetings and educational sessions, converts undergo a comprehensive preparation, which solidifies their commitment to embracing Islam for the entirety of their lives.⁵⁹ The consistent support and guidance provided by their advisors play a pivotal role in bolstering the resolve of converts, instilling a deep sense of confidence in their decision. As converts progress through this phase, they undergo a gradual transformation in their attitudes, transitioning from their previous religious affiliations, such as Confucianism, to embracing the principles and practices of Islam. Central to this transformation is the adoption of daily prayers, exemplifying their dedication to becoming devout followers of Islam.⁶⁰ By embracing Islam, converts embark on a journey that extends beyond mere religious affiliation; it signifies a profound shift in their worldview and lifestyle. Through ongoing support and guidance, coupled with their unwavering determination, converts navigate this transition with resilience and commitment, ultimately enriching their spiritual lives and fostering a deeper connection with their newfound faith.

5. Action

The culmination of the AIDDA theory is the Action phase, wherein converts actively implement the teachings and obligations of the Islamic faith, marking a transformative shift from their previous habits and beliefs. This phase is pivotal as it represents the practical application of the knowledge imparted by the converts' instructors. Through structured guidance and hands-on instruction, converts are equipped with the necessary skills to perform various religious rituals with

⁵⁷ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Muslim Televangelists in the Making: Conversion Narratives and the Construction of Religious Authority," *The Muslim World* 110, no. 2 (2020): 154–75, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12327>.

⁵⁸ Suko Susilo, Eva Putriya Hasanah, and Nur Syam, "Motif Pembangunan Masjid Cheng Ho Surabaya," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 32, no. 2 (August 1, 2021): 367–82, <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v32i2.1557>.

⁵⁹ Zainal Abidin Eko Putro, "Chinese Muslim Predicament in Indonesia's Post Reformation," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 3, no. 1 (2014): 63–82, <https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v3i1.20>.

⁶⁰ Wahidah Zein Br Siregar and Et Al, "Zhong Yong and Moderation of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia," *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)* 12, no. 2 (April 11, 2021): 646–56.

proficiency and understanding. The curriculum designed for this phase emphasizes direct practice, enabling converts to grasp the intricacies of fundamental Islamic practices, such as ablution and the performance of the five daily prayers. By engaging in these rituals, converts deepen their connection to the faith and cultivate a sense of spiritual discipline.⁶¹

Throughout this process of action, the converts' advisors play a crucial role in providing ongoing support and supervision. They closely monitor the progress and development of each convert, ensuring that they adhere to the teachings of Islam and navigate any challenges they may encounter effectively. This continuous oversight is essential in safeguarding against potential instances of apostasy, as it enables timely intervention and guidance to address any concerns or doubts that may arise. By emphasizing practical application and providing consistent mentorship, the Action phase not only facilitates the integration of converts into the Islamic community but also fosters a sense of accountability and commitment to their newfound faith. Through diligent practice and guidance, converts are empowered to embrace Islam wholeheartedly, enriching their spiritual journey and contributing positively to their religious community.

From this analysis, it becomes evident that the AIDDA theory underscores the importance of capturing the communicant's attention as the initial step in effective communication. By employing strategies to engage and captivate the communicant, communicators can cultivate a growing interest that ultimately leads to the emergence of desire. However, it is crucial to recognize that merely evoking desire is insufficient. Success in communication hinges on progressing beyond desire to prompt a decisive action. In essence, the AIDDA framework highlights the necessity of guiding communicants through a continuum that culminates in action. Without a decisive commitment to action, communication efforts remain incomplete and ineffective. Therefore, communicators must adeptly transition from sparking interest to facilitating a concrete decision, compelling the communicant to take the desired action.⁶²

By providing proper religious guidance to converts, communicators not only fulfill their role in facilitating communication but also facilitate profound spiritual growth. Through structured guidance and mentorship, converts experience a deepening of their faith and devotion to the magnificence of Allah SWT. This transformative journey not only enriches the lives of individual converts but also strengthens the fabric of the Muslim community as a whole, fostering unity and collective spiritual advancement. Thus, effective communication, grounded in the principles of the AIDDA theory, serves as a catalyst for spiritual enlightenment and communal flourishing within the Islamic faith.

Conclusion

Persuasive communication is very important to use for groups that need slow and in-depth guidance. PITI Surabaya has taken various approaches to embrace and protect converts to Islam so that they firmly believe in converting to Islam. By using persuasive communication through the AIDDA stages, namely attention, interest and talent, desire, which means desire, and decision, which is the final stage, namely decision. By conducting an introduction in the first stage to find out the background of the convert, as well as the problems they are facing, the convert coach provides encouragement both in the form of spiritual and mental thoughts through persuasive

⁶¹ Zainal Yusuf, *Manajemen Komunikasi* (Jakarta: CV Pustaka Setia, 2009).

⁶² Sulkipli and Andi Nirwana, "Pembinaan Keagamaan Pada Muallaf Di Kampung Muallaf Kelurahan Betteng Kecamatan Lembang Kabupaten Pinrang," *Macora* 1, no. 1 (2022).

communication from the heart. A convert is a person who must be trained so that he does not lose direction in his new life as a Muslim, therefore a preacher who works at the Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya also accompanies the convert every step of the way. By communicating and learning, preachers can change converts to learn and practice Islamic teachings well. The persuasive communication carried out by a convert to Islam has gone well and is in accordance with the concept of AIDDA theory. The findings produced were that a preacher took a persuasive approach by providing ta'aruf to converts, harmonizing the background of converts with the material to be taught, telling personal biographies as motivation and encouragement to learn about Islam, and also presenting ethnic Chinese culture as a process of acculturation in commemorations. The big day, for example, features a lion dance performance accompanied by donations for orphans, orphans and dhafa'.

Thus, the muallaf in practicing the material delivered by da'i is by upholding the teachings of Islam based on the Qur'an and Hadith and starting to leave Chinese culture and traditions that are contrary to the teachings of Islam. Therefore, the results of this study can be used as material for further studies related to Da'wah Science and also as material for consideration and inspiration for the da'i approach model. From the research that has been done at this time, in the future researchers hope that many who are interested in the topics raised in this study will focus and deepen the theory of AIDDA and Social Penetration that researchers raise. In addition, the number of respondents as informants when conducting interviews can be more so that the resulting output can be more accurate with the state of the field.

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