

# Da'wah as a Commodity: Analysis of Commodification and Mediatization of Religion in the Religious Talk Show Program of *Wisata Hati* and *Islam Itu Indah*

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## Article Information

## Abstract

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In this modern era, da'wah is often exploited for material gain. Da'wah activities should be used to disseminate Islamic values to its adherents, as the saying "Ballighu 'aani Walau ayat" (convey even one verse). This is different from the religious command, this study aims to analyze the phenomenon of commodification and mediatization of religion in the television da'wah programs *Wisata Hati* and *Islam Itu Indah* (Islam Itu Indah). Using qualitative methods through literature study and digital observation, this study utilizes Vincent Mosco's Commodification theory and Stig Hjarvard and Stewart Hoover's Mediatization of Religion theory to understand the dynamics of da'wah message production in the media. The results of the study indicate that both programs underwent a commodification process that included the commodification of content, the commodification of audiences, and the commodification of preaching figures, where spiritual values were processed according to market and broadcasting industry demands. Furthermore, mediatization was seen through message visualization, content segmentation, personalization of ustadz figures, and the integration of entertainment elements that formed a new, more emotive and popular religiosity. The important findings of this study formulated the concept of Hybrid Da'wah, namely a da'wah model born from the negotiation between the sacredness of teachings and the rationality of the media industry. This concept shows the paradox between expanding access to da'wah and the potential for simplifying spiritual meaning. This research contributes to the study of religious communication in the context of modern media culture in Indonesia.

## Abstrak

Dakwah di era modern ini, sering dimanfaatkan untuk mendulang keuntungan materi. Aktivitas dakwah semestinya digunakan untuk menyebar luaskan nilai-nilai ajaran Islam kepada pemeluknya, sebagaimana kalimat "Ballighu 'aani walau ayat" (sampaikanlah walaupun satu ayat). Berbeda dengan perintah agama, penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis fenomena komodifikasi dan mediatisasi agama dalam program dakwah televisi *Wisata Hati* dan *Islam Itu Indah*. Dengan metode kualitatif melalui studi pustaka dan observasi digital, penelitian ini memanfaatkan teori Komodifikasi Vincent Mosco serta teori Mediatisasi Agama Stig Hjarvard dan Stewart Hoover untuk memahami dinamika produksi pesan dakwah di media. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua program mengalami proses komodifikasi yang mencakup komodifikasi isi, komodifikasi kehalayak, dan komodifikasi figur dakwah, di mana nilai-nilai spiritual diolah mengikuti tuntutan pasar dan industri penyiaran. Selain itu, mediatisasi terlibat melalui visualisasi pesan, segmentasi konten, personalisasi figur ustadz, serta integrasi unsur hiburan yang membentuk religiusitas baru yang lebih emotif dan populer. Temuan penting penelitian ini merumuskan konsep Dakwah hybrid, yakni model dakwah yang lahir dari negosiasi antara sakralitas ajaran dan rasionalitas industri media. Konsep ini memperlihatkan paradoks antara perluasan akses dakwah dan potensi penyederhanaan makna spiritual. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada kajian komunikasi agama dalam konteks budaya media modern di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Da'wah,  
Komodifikasi, Mediatisasi

## INTRODUCTION

The development of communication technology and mass media has brought fundamental changes to the way society understands, accesses, and expresses religion. Religion, which was once positioned as a spiritual and sacred domain, now also appears in the public sphere, that is increasingly colored by elements of entertainment, commercialization, and popular culture. This transformation reflects the phenomenon of commodification and mediatization of religion, in which spiritual values are produced, represented, and consumed according to the logic of the media industry (Hjarvard, 2008; Hoover, 2006).

In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon is clearly visible in various religious television programs such as *Wisata Hati* hosted by Ustadz Yusuf Mansur and *Islam Itu Indah* hosted by Ustadz Maulana. Both programs present Islamic preaching (*dakwah*) in a popular, communicative, and entertaining format. Preaching is no longer delivered solely in sacred spaces such as mosques, but through television media that emphasize aesthetics, dramatization, and audience appeal. As a result, religious messages have a transformation process into commodities with economic and symbolic value (Mosco, 2009; Kitiarsa, 2008).

In this context, television functions not only as a channel for distributing religious messages but also as an agency of meaning production that shapes social representations of religiosity and public morality. From the perspective of the political economy of media, this process reflects a form of commodification of preaching, in which spiritual values and religious symbols are constructed to match the market demands and the interests of the broadcasting industry (Mosco, 2009). Meanwhile, the theory of religious mediatization (Hjarvard, 2011) explains that media do not only transmit religious messages, but also have become a new social environment that determines how religion is understood, practiced, and interpreted by modern society.

Yuyun Yuningsih, in a study entitled *Dakwah Between Spirituality and Commodity*, elaborates on the phenomenon of preaching in a capitalist society era where all aspects of life are calculated no more than as economic transactions and individuals are focused on exchange value. Consequently, the commodification of preaching appears to be an inevitability. In the midst of growing religious enthusiasm, people are always able to read market opportunities. Even when preachers reject the term “commodification” in this case, but the label “professional” often becomes an apologetic gesture merely. However, as the massive commodification efforts, preaching nowadays becomes increasingly luxurious, religious messages are spread everywhere, yet at the same time, preaching loses its spiritual essence as it becomes overshadowed by market obsessions.

In the case of *Wisata Hati* program, the program highlights the spiritual teachings oriented toward motivation and financial well-being through narratives about charity and sustenance. Conversely, *Islam Itu Indah* program emphasizes a relaxed, humorous, and educational preaching style with light visualizations. These two formats illustrate how preaching is produced within the framework of the cultural industry (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944) in which religious values are processed into elements of consumption culture and entertainment. This phenomenon produces a conceptual dilemma between spiritual idealism and commercial interests, requiring critical analysis of the transformation of the *dakwah* meaning in the media industry era.

Studies on the commodification and mediatization of preaching are essential to understand how religion undergoes meaning negotiation in a modern society which is increasingly influenced by communication technology. Although *Wisata Hati* program and *Islam Itu Indah* program originate from the phase of conventional mass media consolidation, this research has contemporary urgency. The phenomena of commodification and mediatization recorded in these programs serve as a historical-analytical foundation for understanding the evolution of preaching in this digital era. The patterns of commodification which was previously operated by television ratings are recently re-emerged in the form of monetization algorithms on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Thus, examining these two programs is crucial for revealing the continuity of media market logic underlying the transformation of modern dakwah. This research explores not only to provide description but also to conduct a critical analysis which exposes the paradox between the sacred values of religion and the instrumental rationality of the communication industry.

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach by using content analysis based on library research, integrated with digital observation of the religious television programs, *Wisata Hati* and *Islam Itu Indah*. This approach is chosen because the research aims to deeply understand the phenomena of commodification and mediatization of religion as social and cultural processes, rather than to measure the quantitative relationships among variables (Moleong, 2019).

The qualitative method enables the researcher to interpret the meanings embedded within the texts, narratives, and visuals of the television programs which become the object of study. This approach is relevant because the phenomenon of religious media cannot be reduced to numerical data, but it must be understood through the contexts, ideologies, and meaning-production practices which inherent in it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This research also uses the paradigms of the political economy of media (Mosco, 2009) and religious mediatization (Hjarvard, 2008) to reveal how religious values, religious figures (ustadz), and audiences are transformed into commodities within Indonesia television media industry. Thus, the study is not only descriptive but also critically examines the capitalistic logic that constructs the modern public religious sphere. The objects of this research are two Indonesian religious television programs: *Wisata Hati* (ANTV/YouTube), hosted by Ustadz Yusuf Mansur and *Islam Itu Indah* (Trans TV/YouTube), hosted by Ustadz Maulana. Sampling is conducted specifically by using Digital Archival Data, including the recordings of repost on YouTube, which function as historical case studies to identify patterns of Audience Commodification during the peak popularity of Yusuf Mansur's preaching on television. Viewing metrics (views and watch time) on these repost channels serve as empirical evidence of media market logic and the both programs were selected through purposive sampling because they represent two different models of media da'wah yet they complete each other. *Wisata Hati* as a Capitalism Driver: a program that explicitly displays commodification through financially oriented charity narratives (spiritual capitalism), reinforcing Mosco's three dimensions (Content, Audience, Figure). *Islam Itu Indah* as a Media Logic Adapter: a program that predominantly demonstrates mediatization through adaptation of Islamic values into an entertaining talk-show format, reflecting shifts in religious authority (Hoover) and broadcasting

aesthetics (Hjarvard). The main focus is directed toward: the forms of commodification of preaching (content, figure, and audience), the processes of religious mediatization, and implications for the transformation of the public religiosity meaning.

Data collection techniques are conducted through two primary sources: Library Research, where secondary data are collected from books, academic journals, research reports, and scholarly articles related to the theories of commodification and mediatization of religion, including the works by Mosco (2009), Hjarvard (2008), Hoover (2006), and Syahputra (2018). These data are used to construct the theoretical framework and perform conceptual triangulation. Digital Observation, the analysing is done toward the recordings of *Wisata Hati* and *Islam Itu Indah* on platforms such as YouTube, official television websites, and media archives. The goal is to identify patterns of mediatization and commodification within the content structure, communication style, visual presentation, and online audience engagement.

Data analysis techniques were done through open coding and axial coding by using Mosco and Hjarvard as the main coding categories. During the Data Reduction stage, data were selected based on Mosco's three categories (Content, Audience, Figure) and Mediatization aspects (Media Logic, Personification of Authority). This ensures that the connection between empirical phenomena and the theoretical framework are systematic and structured.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### RESULT

#### A. The General Overview of *Wisata Hati* and *Islam Itu Indah* program

##### 1. *Wisata Hati*

The program "*Wisata Hati*" is one of the popular Islamic preaching (dakwah) broadcasts on Indonesian television, popularized by Ustadz Yusuf Mansur in the early 2000s through various TV stations. The show adopts a religious talk show format that combines lectures, inspirational stories, audience testimonials, and spiritual motivation. Unlike conventional sermons delivered in mosques, *Wisata Hati* presents a more popular and emotional communication style, blending religious values with everyday life narratives, particularly concerning sustenance (rezeki), charity (sedekah), and life success.

Yusuf Mansur positions himself as a preacher (*ustadz*) motivator who delivers dakwah through storytelling and *spiritual capitalism* approach, which promotes teachings about the power of charity and the miracles of sustenance as both a form of worship and a solution to modern life challenges. Through the narrative of "The Miracle of Charity," the program successfully captured the attention of a wide audience, especially urban middle-class Muslims who were undergoing spiritual searching in the middle of materialistic lifestyles (Syahputra, 2018; Heryanto, 2019).

Apart from being a dakwah program, *Wisata Hati* also serves as a platform for Yusuf Mansur's personal branding. The show strengthens his image as an inspirational and successful religious figure while expanding his religious-economic network through the *Wisata Hati* Foundation and various Islamic economic products he developed. This indicates a process of dakwah commodification, where the spiritual messages are framed within market logic and capitalized in both symbolic and economic forms.

According to Syahputra (2018), *Wisata Hati* represents a new form of media dakwah that "sells" spiritual values in an entertainment format (religious infotainment). The program's success is measured not only by the depth of its religious messages but also by television ratings and the popularity of the preacher who becomes the center of the narrative.

##### 2. *Islam Itu Indah* program

Program “Islam Itu Indah” is a daily religious show broadcast on Trans TV, which was firstly aired in 2009. It is hosted by Ustadz Maulana, known for his cheerful, light-hearted, and humorous communication style, along with his signature slogan, “*Jamaah oh Jamaah!*”

Unlike *Wisata Hati*, which focuses on spiritual and economic motivation, *Islam Itu Indah* emphasizes an educational, dialogic, and entertaining approach, delivered in a relaxed format with visually engaging elements. The program combines short lectures, interactive Q&A sessions, and Islamic artistic performances. This format reflects a strategy of *mediated religion*, where religious messages are tailored to the rhythm of mass media consumption and the lifestyle of urban viewers.

Haryanto (2015) and Fachrudin (2017) observe that *Islam Itu Indah* is a clear example of how television plays a role in the mediatization of religion, influencing how religion is represented, accessed, and practiced by society. Dakwah is no longer confined exclusively in the sacred spaces but it becomes part of domestic life through daily morning broadcasts.

The involvement of charismatic figures like Ustadz Maulana enhances the personal branding dimension of mediated dakwah. Humor, empathy, and emotional closeness serve as the main communication strategies. Thus, *Islam Itu Indah* demonstrates the commodification of Islamic values within an entertainment format, blending religiosity with entertainment values to appeal the broad audience.

## **B. Forms of Commodification in “Wisata Hati” Program**

Wisata Hati program which is hosted by Ustadz Yusuf Mansur is a clear representation of the commodification of religion in the media. The program highlights stories of repentance, the miracles of charity, and spiritual reflection packaged with dramatic narratives and emotional visuals.

Based on content analysis of several episodes from YouTube reposts (2015–2019), particularly the video “*Wisata Hati: Sedekah, Sabar dan Baik Sangka*”, the following findings emerged:

- a. Video Title: *Wisata Hati Sedekah, Sabar dan Baik Sangka* – Ustadz Yusuf Mansur
- b. Channel Name: Septian Raha
- c. Upload Date: September 25, 2015
- d. Duration: 40 minutes 29 seconds
- e. Content Review:

The video is a recording of a religious sermon (tausiyah) by Ustadz Yusuf Mansur. As suggested by the title, it discusses the practice of charity, the importance of patience, and the virtue of maintaining a positive assumption (husnudzon) toward Allah. The content aims to provide spiritual motivation and religious guidance to viewers.

### **1. Content Commodification**

Religious teachings on charity, patience, and positive thinking (use value) are transformed into digital products aimed at attracting attention (exchange value). In content commodification, narratives about charity shift from transcendent obedience to the instrumental rationality. The message “Miracle of Charity” does not only focus on purifying the soul but also on material outcomes (“sustenance comes quickly”). This shift reflects Carrette & King’s (2005) idea in *Selling Spirituality* which means that spiritual teachings are converted into motivational products with materialistic orientations.

The spiritual content is packaged as videos with specific titles and enticing thumbnails to attract high view counts and watch time. The quality of the religious message becomes a tool for capturing a large audience.

Metrics such as views, likes, and watch time from that content serve as key indicators for earning YouTube advertising revenue.

## 2. Audience Commodification

Viewers who seek spiritual advice (use value) become commodities sold to advertisers (exchange value). Media (YouTube and the channel) “produce” a specific audience segment (Indonesian Muslims seeking religious content) and offer their attention to advertisers. The time viewers spend watching the sermon becomes a tradable asset.

Demographic data and watch time are monetized through pre-roll, mid-roll, and banner ads displayed during the 40-minute video. In effect, audiences themselves become the product being sold.

## 3. Labour Commodification

The commodification evident in the program is not only limited to the content commodification or audience commodification. Ustadz Yusuf Mansur, as a religious scholar and public figure, is the central commodity ensuring the content’s appeal. His charisma, religious authority, and popularity are leveraged by the channel owner (septian raha) to attract viewers massively. His image and personal branding act as promotional magnets, exchanged for channel exposure, video ratings, and greater outreach for his dakwah and business initiatives.

The most structural and material form of commodification occurs through the extension of the program’s brand into real-world business sectors, which confirms the dimensions of Commodification of Labor/Figure (Mosco):

### 1) Transformation of Program into a Business Institution (Brand Extension):

*Wisata Hati* Program, personified by Ustadz Yusuf Mansur, not only serves as a religious talk show, but also transforms into a major promotional platform for affiliated business and charitable institutions.

An example is *Wisatahati Tour & Travel* (or similar). In this context, the figure of Da’i (Ustadz) and the name of the program (*Wisata Hati*) were changed to brand capital that had a direct exchange rate. Spiritual trust built on television screens (sacred trust) is converted into socio-economic capital that encourages the consumption of real services (Umrah/Hajj travel agencies). This is a real-world commodification of Spiritual Credibility; sacred value is sold as commercial value.

### 2) Cross-Sectoral Commodification:

Another form of commodification, especially in da’wah figures (*Islam Itu Indah*), can be seen from the covert endorsement or affiliation of daily products (for example, herbs, food, Muslim clothing) carried out by Ustadz. The presence of Ustadz Maulana, for example, in advertisements or talk show segments often blurs the limitation between religious advice and product promotion. Commercial Value: The Da’i Figure became a labor force that sells its popularity and religious authority to outside industry, indicating that the Commodification of the Figure had a surplus value beyond the cost of production of the program itself. This is proof that commodification operates structurally across all sectors of the economy."

### C. Forms of Mediatization in “Islam Itu Indah”

The program *Islam Itu Indah* exemplifies the mediatization of dakwah in modern television. It integrates entertainment, education, and spirituality in a light-hearted morning show format.

Mediatization in *Islam Itu Indah* program reflects the subordination of theology to media logic. The infotainment format results in:

1. Fragmentation of Authority: Religious authority shifts from institutions (pesantren/study circles) to media personalities whose credibility depends on media appeal and branding (humorous, charismatic).
2. Decontextualisation of Messages: Complex theological issues are simplified for the rapid of mass consumption. For example, Tahajud is framed with worldly-oriented taglines such as “To Make Your Wishes Come True,” which potentially leads to the superficial religiosity and disconnected from deeper normative teachings.

Although it aims to convey a religious message, the program systematically follows the media industry's logic that is oriented towards ratings, market segmentation, and commercial appeal.

The forms of mediatization in *Islam Itu Indah* can be explained through the following dimensions:

#### 1. Meditization Aspect (Hjarvard)

##### a. Nurturing Media Logic

Religious content is subordinated to the format of TV/YouTube shows. The discourse of Tahajud is broken down into short segments, inserted with advertisements, and using jingles (such as the segment "Tanya Dong Ustaz" [24:56]). The logic of the media (attracting the attention of the audience) is the determinant of the structure.

##### b. “Hibrida” Genre

The video combines traditional religious genres (tausiyah/studies) with popular entertainment genres (talk shows, live interactions). The speakers (Ustaz/Ustadzah) function as religious authority figures as well as media personalities that must be dynamic and entertaining (for example, there is humorous interaction between speakers, as in [03:33] or [59:22]).

##### c. Theological Subordination to Instrumental Rationality Subordinasi

Tahajud narrative with the tagline "In order for the Wish to Be Realized" (*Agar Hajat Terwujud*) [04:16] is an example of instrumental rationality (using worship as a tool/instrument) that dominates substantive rationality (worship as pure obedience). This shows that the logic of market demands instant material benefits, even if it has to simplify the theological meaning, which is oriented to the results and worldly needs of the audience, rather than solely on spiritual obedience, making it as an attractive 'product' for the digital market.

#### 2. Application of St. Hoover's Theory (2006)

##### a. Personalized Faith

Religious authorities (Ustadz/Ustadzah) are present directly in the audience's private room through a screen. The focus of the discussion is directed to the audience's individual problems and personal experiences, such as questions about sins in the past that hinder prayer, the problem of husband betrayal [51:08], or the fear of jinn interference during

Tahajud [15:53].

b. Para-Social Relationships

The media creates the illusion of closeness or intimate connection between viewers and media figures. It can be seen when there are very personal and emotional questions, such as the audience who is curious and hopes that his prayer "can be united in the third of the night" with the prayer of Ustadz Maulana [56:11], showing that Ustadz is no longer just a teacher, but a personalized role model.

c. Fragmentation of Authority and Individualization of Religious Practices.

Tahajud messages are received separately from the institutional context of mosques or pesantren. It has implications for the Fragmentation of Authority where the people choose role models based on media appeal, rather than scientific pedigree, which continuously encourages the individualization of the faith that is separate from institutional control. Authority is transferred to credible media personas, which can be accessed by audience to form their own personal religious practices. This allows ritual practices to be taught without the need of physical present at an assembly of knowledge.

3. Purposive Sampling

Based on the analysis, this video is very effective purposive sample because it comprehensively demonstrates both theoretical frameworks:

- a. Hjarvard: The video shows that media logic (talk show format, segmentation, content commodification) has become the dominant framework in the delivery of the teachings of the Tahajud prayer.
- b. Hoover: The video shows the results of mediatization, namely the individualization of religious practices (paying attention to personal wishes and problems) and the strengthening of para-social relationships between the audience and scholarly figures in the media.

Overall, this video illustrates how ritual religious practices (Tahajud) have been fully entered and reshaped by the media arena, transforming rituals from communal/institutional obligations to personalized individual consumption content.

**D. The Paradox of Hybrid Da'wah: between Accessibility and De-Spiritualization.**

Commodification and Mediatization create a paradox for da'wah in Indonesia. On one hand, da'wah has become very communicative, popular, and accessible (Socio-Cultural Implications). However, on the other hand, da'wah is vulnerable to the simplification of meaning and de-spiritualization that shifts appreciation to symbolic appearances for the sake of market demands (Religious Implications). This paradox is the crucial finding in this study

1. Religious Implications: The Transformation of Authority and the Meaning of Da'wah

Both programs marked a paradigm shift in da'wah from textual and traditional sermons to the spiritual performativity. Ustadz Yusuf Mansur and Ustadz Maulana are not only religious messengers, but also religious actors of the media that combine spirituality, motivation, and entertainment. According to Hjarvard (2008), this is a form of mediatization of religion, which is when the media becomes the main intermediary in shaping the way people experience religion. As a result, religious authority shifted from mosques and taklim assemblies to television and digital spaces. The Implications: Da'wah becomes more accessible and communicative, but it is also vulnerable to simplification of the meaning of teachings because it is adjusted to the logic of ratings and market tastes.

2. Socio-Cultural Implications: Da'wah as Popular Culture

Commodification makes da'wah to be part of Indonesian popular culture. The audience no longer separates between watching entertainment and watching da'wah. Ustadz appears like a moral celebrity, and the congregation becomes religious fans. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of religious popularization (Hoover, 2006), where Islamic values undergo recontextualization into a lighter, fun, and emotional form. The implication: Television da'wah expands the reach of religious values to urban audiences and young families. However, on the other hand, religiosity can undergo de-spiritualization, namely shifting from deep spiritual engagement to symbolic performance.

### 3. Media and Industry Implications: Religion as an Economic Commodity

Both programs show that religion has economic value in the media industry. The da'wah message is packaged with cinematography techniques, sponsorship advertising, and personal branding. It confirms the political economy theory of communication (Mosco, 2009) that the media converts symbolic value into exchange value. The implication: The media utilizes the appeal of religion to gain financial profit and ratings. Da'wah is a means of soft power that strengthens the image of TV stations and the personal brand of ustadz. People learn religion as well as become consumers of religious content.

This study concludes that the phenomenon of commodification and mediatization of da'wah in *Wisata Hati* and *Islam itu Indah* program is a real representation of the transformation of Islamic da'wah in the modern media industry landscape in Indonesia.

Overall, this study found that Commodification and Mediatization create a hybrid Da'wah paradox: da'wah becomes highly communicative, popular, and accessible to urban audiences, but at the same time it is vulnerable to decontextualization and spiritualization. The main theoretical contribution of this research is the framework of hybrid da'wah, which strengthens the understanding that religion and media are no longer in opposition relations, but they are in symbiotic relationships that form a new face of Indonesian Muslim religiosity in the era of Cultural Capitalism.

## CONCLUSION

Literature reviews and empirical research results show that the development of communication technology and mass media has brought fundamental changes to the way how people understand, access, and express religion. Religion, which was originally positioned as a spiritual and sacred realm, is currently present in the public space which is colored by elements of entertainment, commercialization, and popular cultural dynamics. The results of the study show that both programs undergo a commodification process that includes the commodification of content, the commodification of the audience, and the commodification of da'wah figures, where spiritual values are processed according to the demands of the market and the broadcasting industry. In addition, mediatization can be seen through message visualization, content segmentation, personalization of ustadz figures, and the integration of entertainment elements that form the more emotive popular new religiosity. The important findings of this study formulate the concept of hybrid da'wah, which is a da'wah model born from the negotiation between the sacredness of teachings and the rationality of the media industry. This concept shows a paradox between expanding access to da'wah and the potential for simplifying spiritual meaning. This research contributes to the study of religious communication in the context of modern media culture in Indonesia.

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