

Habib Husein Jafar Al-Hadar's Da'wa Content Commodification on Youtube (The Piety Expression and New Discourse in Religiousness Contestation in the Contemporary Era)

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Abstract

Advances in technology and information provide new opportunities for preachers to be able to take part in spreading Islamic teachings through various social media platforms. One of the preachers who took the role to preach through social media was Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar. This article examines Habib Husein Jafar's missionary activities on the social media platform he uses, Youtube. The researcher analyzes the data by observing virtually and visually (virtual ethnography) on the da'wa content displayed by Habib Husein Jafar through Youtube. The study shows that: 1) the attention to the spiritual enlightenment efforts of the younger generation is the basis of the selection of the social media platform Youtube - because based on previous research, the users of this social media platform are 18-29 years of age; 2) starting from the da'wa consumers who are primarily young people, the content they present is suitable to their needs and lifestyle and 3) by using the concept of the circuit of culture analysis, Habib Husein Jafar in various ranges can reconstruct people's perception of one's definition of holiness. It is not limited based on normative appearance - cloaked and sacrificed, for example - but more on the substantive side, namely by behaving and having knowledgeable skills. With the variety of content, he could visualize himself as a pious young man by not abandoning his social status as a young person.

Keywords: Habib Husein Jafar Al-Hadar, da'wa content commodification, religiousness contestation

Introduction

Recently, the advances of the internet dominate the world's social life. Based on the survey result by The Association Internet Administrator of Indonesia (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia/APIII) shows from 262 Indonesia n population, more than 50% or 143 million have connected with internet network in 2017 (Bohang, 2020).

Internet in practice should be able to provide personal space for the user. The

internet could be a "public sphere" that facilitates the users to communicate and exchange ideas. This activity happens in the religious life context in Indonesia.

Da'wa activities currently deal with an information society synonymous with the high level of public social media consumption (Wibowo, 2018). The massive circulation of information in their communities in various forms (artificial intelligence) proves it. The information network is organized and utilized

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by certain parties, but all society elements also get the same freedom and rights to produce, process and disseminate all forms of information (Baidu, 2014).

Da'wa messages through social media (internet) are more comfortable and faster to be accepted by the object of *da'wa (mad'u)*. The internet documented these messages (digital footprint), making it easier for consumers to "listen" according to their time. Apart from that, there is a community trend that the internet can be a source of reference for knowledge and religious problems (Fakhruroji, 2019).

Habib Husein Ja'far al-Hadar is a content creator who takes part in da'wa activities through social media. The platforms used by Habib Husein in his preaching activities include Facebook, Twitter, Website, and Youtube. The da'wa activities carried out by Habib Husein are quite interesting to discuss. Starting from his social status as a Habib - a descendant of the Prophet, he tried to expand to spread Islamic teachings through his Youtube channel. He often collaborates by being a guest star — on various other youtube channels, such as the Indonesian Funny Council, the Cameo Project, and Geo Live — all of which, incidentally, is not a youtube channel on the mission of spreading Islam. Interestingly, he is not only once or twice as a guest star, but many times or routine.

Furthermore, in the headline *Kultum Pemuda Tersesat* on the Youtube channel of the Indonesian Funny Council, Habib Jafar has made a significant contribution to the spiritual enlightenment for the young generation. Tobe, the speaker for the various questions raised by the audience of his da'wa, which is not from a religious (Islamic) environment, even some are non-Muslim

or even become agnostics (acknowledging the existence of God, but not adhering to a particular religion). To understand this phenomenon, the researcher asked several questions: Why did Habib Husein Jafar choose Youtube in his da'wa activities? What makes Habib Husein so attractive that his colleagues readily accept his da'wa, content creators, and digital congregation?

Some researchers have written studies on da'wa activities on social from various perspectives. Some writers have analyzed the da'wa movement on social media and its influence on its digital congregation (Komalasari, 2012; Syamsiani, 2019). The da'wa activities carried out by "*Ustaz Hijrah*" and religious leaders from their respective communities, such as Ustadz Abdul Somad, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, and Gus Nadirsyah Hosen focused most of their attention. Their digital congregation can also be said the same - having the same ideology - and having a high religious spirit (Saifullah, 2019).¹ The patron-client *Kiai-santri* relationship is stable in their relationship with their *da'wa* listeners, thus making the potential for receiving their da'wa messages highly and readily accepted. In line with Bukhari's research, it seems to be in line (Bukhari, 2015) that the ideological aspect is one reason for *mad'u* to receive da'wa messages.

Of course, the things above are different from Habib Husein Jafar, who has a diverse list of listeners and even other faiths. In a word, previous research has focused a lot on preachers from their respective elite groups, so the content of the da'wa is exclusive. Besides that, studies on the inclusiveness of

1 The ideological aspect is very full of Nadirsyah Hosen's preaching on his several social media channels. Hosen openly stated that behind his interpretation, there was an attempt to ground the values of NU.

da'wa from the Habib, for example, are also widely written by researchers. The models are Julia Day Howell, Arif Zamhari, and Ismail Fajri Alatas (Alatas, 2011; Zamhari and Howell, n.d.). They describe the success of Habib's offline preaching in big cities in Indonesia through recitations and assemblies held in open spaces, such as National Monument fields, building or house yards, and so on. According to Zamhari and Howell, their recitation's success is not separable from the inclusive aspect of the da'wa happened, using open space so people from various groups can follow it. Of course, these studies do not focus on preaching on social media but only on Habib's offline da'wa activities.

This article attempts to fill in the gaps in that study by looking at the commodification of Habib Husein Jafar's da'wa content, so his preaching is considered effective-inclusive and readily accepted by the public. It seems to be in line with the assumption conveyed by Sirajuddin (Sirajuddin, 2014) that da'wa must be planned carefully and entirely with professional supporting components in the internet media.

Method

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. It belongs to field research by observing virtually and visually (virtual ethnography) on the da'wa content displayed by Habib Husein Jafar via Youtube. Also, the researchers did a literature study to strengthen the analysis through a review of several previous studies — in the context of da'wa and social media.

The researchers carried out data collection through observations that refer to recorded data obtained from several Youtube

channels, including *Jeda Nulis*, *Majelis Lucu Indonesia*, Cameo Project, and Geo Live. Some of these channels are used — as guest stars — to convey and upload their da'wa content. Furthermore, the analysis is to determine the form of message commodification on the Youtube channel. This research emphasizes the strategy adopted by Habib Husein in using Youtube as an effective social media to convey da'wa messages and attract subscribers.

Result and Discussion

Digital Da'wa: Challenge and Potential

In a sense, da'wa is a call to do good and leave evil (*amr ma'ruf nahi Munkar*). The word da'wa — by the community — (Aziz, 2004) is often understood in sermon activities, recitation, etc. However, the word da'wa has a broader scope than those two terms. Referring to Al-Ghazali, da'wa is a complimentary program that includes all the knowledge needed by humans to explain the purpose of life and reveal the signs of life so someone becomes a person who can distinguish something that they can do and something that is prohibited (al-Ghazali, 1993).

In the spoken sense, Da'wa is a conveying activity that relies on the preacher's communication skills himself. In the terminology of communication science, a preacher is a communicator, so the preacher's primary role is how to convey the message of da'wa to the communicants to be understood. That message is a stimulus to the goodness and to leave the badness.

Today, some carry out direct da'wa still using conventional media. It is in the recitation at certain places or events, such as mosques, *majelis taklim*, Islamic community

organizations (*Ormas*), etc. However, da'wa has progressed and transformed along with the times, from offline to do da'wa online. Since then, da'wa is activities that involve mass communication, and in this perspective of mass communication, da'wa has become cross-border and cross-sectoral (Bungin, 2008).

On the other hand, da'wa communication through social media is also not necessarily better — its da'wa content —offline da'wa activities. Sometimes what they present on social media is not necessarily following religious teachings. Some preachers often only focus on pursuing fame or popularity, so they tend to ignore the material, and the substance of the da'wa messages conveyed (Said and S. Nur, 2016). Therefore, the use of media with da'wa's significance must be relevant, following with the truth. Sayyid Qutb explained that the transmission of da'wa must contain information that does not contradict Islamic faith and law. The achieved results are characterized by tawhid, realistic, balanced, and bring the most significant benefit (Tata, 2013). The role of social media in da'wa was also stated by Faradillah Iqmar Omar as follows:

The media has become an essential source of information about religious issues. In the past, seeking knowledge about Islam was mainly restricted to the mosques, educational institutions, and learning from Imams. These traditional learning opportunities remain intact. Now, Muslims can also learn, question, teach, and network through social networking sites. Thus, religious information and experience become molded according to the demands of popular media genres. Social media has given the public access to all kinds of information and made Islamic literature much more accessible. For instance, Muslims can listen to a lecture on Youtube in any language they want, whenever they want, whereas blogging sites such as Muslims Matters.org

have become extremely popular with both Muslims and non-Muslims to gain information and learn about Islam. Twitter and Facebook have undoubtedly the most active Muslim users, allowing Muslims to connect with Imams, political leaders, scholars, and journalists and enable Muslims to share news and information that matter to Muslims. The Muslims who are using these platforms are slowly changing Islam's perceptions from that of an old-fashioned religion (Omar 2014).

In the context of the information society, the pillars of da'wa are a must, as seen in figure 1.

The picture of the pillars above seems to be directly proportional to what was conveyed by Anthony Mayfield that between one element and another must be connectedness (Mayfield, 2008) and openness. Both can occur through a communication process (conversation) to create a da'wa community so the da'wa of a preacher can run effectively and competently.

Youtube as a social media and its popularity in Indonesian society

The presentation of research results from APJII stated that internet service users in Indonesia had reached more than half of Indonesia's population (Bohang, 2020). In other words, the popularity of internet service users in Indonesia is quite a lot. The popularity of social media — is undoubtedly an exciting thing to study more deeply into the object of research. One of the studies on social media by Lovejoy & Saxton (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012) explains the popularity of social media is quite effective and efficient in optimizing the organization as a form of information media, community, and actions or programs carried out by the organization. In other words, social media has an essential role in sending messages and information to

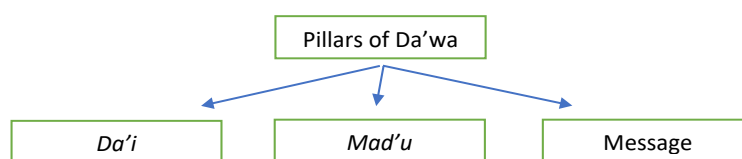


Figure 1. Pillars of Da'wa

the public more massively (Castillo et al., n.d.).

Social media researchers have studied several social media platforms more closely, such as Instagram, showing that social media users - Instagram - are dominated by people 18 to 29 years old. Women 25 to 34 years old dominate Pinterest social media (Ruths and Pfeffer, 2014). Apart from those, some social media also have their specific segmentation within the community.

In Indonesian society, Youtube social media has experienced very significant growth from content creators or even consumers. From January 2016 - January 2017, the duration of watching YouTube by Indonesians has increased 155%, the amount of content uploaded has risen by 278% from 2016 (Dwijaya and Zuliestiana, 2017). Starting from this data, it is not surprising that the popularity of Youtube in Indonesia is extreme, thus producing many Youtube communities in Indonesia have led to a cultural shift, from watching television to watching Youtube.

Youtube can be a social media containing videos and some sound images (Ilahi, 2013). This social media platform was founded in 2005 as an audio-visual medium by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim (Labas and Yasmine, 2007). A pizza stall and Japanese restaurant company in San Mateo, California, inspired the name of Youtube. A year since its inception, Youtube has become a fast-growing site. Until July 2006, there have been approximately 100,000 videos uploaded (Edy, 2007).

Many young people love Youtube, and it is still one of the leading social media platforms. The saturation comes from watching television — because it seems insufficient to meet people's needs for entertainment and education — has made content creators show their existence by creating their own Youtube channels. It is an alternative and "conditioning" the boredom of the Indonesian people with programs on television.

Preacher like Habib Husein Jafar uses this phenomenon of the popularity of the social media Youtube to take a role in the mission of spreading Islamic da'wa (al-Hadar, 2020). Creating its own Youtube channel aims to make the message of da'wa conveyed to the consumers massively and efficiently - where these two aspects are what *mad'u* (partners or da'wa recipients) expect (Mutrofin, 2018).

Habib Husein's Short Profile

Habib Husein's full name is Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar. He was born in Bondowoso on June 21, 1988 (Chandra, 2017). After finishing his education at a pesantren in Bangil, Pasuruan, East Java, he moved to Jakarta to continue his education at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta, majoring in Akidah and Islamic philosophy. After graduating at the undergraduate level (S-1), he continued his studies at the same place by majoring in Hadith Tafseer (Liberti, 2019).

Since he was still in college, his thoughts on Islam have graced the various national

media. He is known as a young Islamic intellectual who is productive in writing. Nearly more than 100 articles he wrote and published in the mixed local and national media. Several essays have also been recorded and published. Some of them are entitled *Menyegerakan Islam Kita* and *Apalagi Islam itu Kalau Bukan Cinta?*

Now Habib Husein not only shares his thoughts through writing but also various social media platforms. He created a Youtube channel; the name is *Jeda Nulis* - which contains studies on Islamic issues. Now, the track has more than 185 thousand subscribers. These are Habib Hussein's "digital" congregation. For him, to reach people, it is no longer enough just to go through religious pulpits - mosques must also go through the instruments they are now fond of, namely social media.

Circuit of Culture: The Social Identity of Habib Husein Jafar and New Media Commodification

The circuit of culture is a popular idea in media studies. At first, a cultural analysis tool by the British Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) used this concept. Later, they developed as an analytical basis for media, culture, and identity studies (Leve, 2012).

On the other hand, social identity is a part of the individual concept that comes from personal knowledge - where this knowledge belongs to a particular social group and the values inherent in it (Hogg and White, 2017). This social identity is formed by other people and used as a reference implemented in him as a satisfaction form (Taylor et al., n.d.). Therefore, identifying the certain discourses through Habib Husein Jafar's Youtube content also needs to be paid close attention

to because these discourses have a role in constructing the meaning and social identity inherent in them (Woodward, 1997). In other words, Habib Jafar Husein's social identity does not appear to the surface immediately. Still, through structuring the discourse he conveyed, it forms a meaning that consumers can accept.

Habib Jafar Husein often uses a "contemporary" discourse by selecting "intriguing" diction, which is often circulated and massively used by young people.² Therefore, it can attract young people's interest and attention to watch Youtube video content. For example, *Menjadi Muslim Millenial* (feat Habib Jindan),³ *Kultum Pemuda Tersesat* (30 episodes) - airing every day during Ramadan,⁴ *Ngobrolin Islam Lewat Corona*,⁵ *Problem Beragama Millenial*,⁶ and so on. The diction is not without reason, but it forms a social identity for the YouTube content he creates.

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, the selection or use of a specific diction results from production and reflection, representing the maker's mind (Wierzbicka, 1992, 34). Based on this, we can see Habib Husein Jafar's mindset, which is a thought that means young people with a choice of diction that reflects the current phenomenon. The personal identity built by Habib Husein Jafar also looks very "contemporary-millennial," with a visual "what it is" - wearing a casual shirt or T-shirt with the inscription of *Islam Cinta*, wearing jeans - and not being supported in a normative dress like a Habib. - robes, *udeng-udeng*, and so

2 Interview to Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar on 30 May 2020.

3 Look at <https://youtu.be/3ngIYRPVUx0>

4 Look at <https://youtu.be/p9ZG2Tgc4Ls>

5 Look at <https://youtu.be/CcK5E4lJoTg>

6 Look at <https://youtu.be/YtNgYOVKxFw>

on. The social identity that a person visualizes in dressing and behaving starts from the base of knowledge and thoughts he carries (Simon, 1992).

On the other hand, Ibrahim and Akhmad said religion is understood substantively-normatively and understood functionally, which refers to social, existential, and transcendental functions (Ibrahim and Akhmad, 2014). As a result, when we look at the current state of the information society, we can also see how religion as a basis for da'wa can result in online faith as a form of spirituality and its follower's religiosity. In practice, delivering da'wa content is more practical by broadcasting it online via Youtube.

Referring to the Hall concept (Hall, 1997a), it analyzes the optimization of social media Youtube for the commodification of da'wa content carried out by Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar. The idea of the circuit of culture states five critical stages in the process analysis, including representation, consumption, production, regulation, and identity.

The first is a representation. In this case, Habib Husein Jafar represents the symbol of the preacher in a "contemporary" and "millennial" style.⁷ Through the diction and discourse that they will present to the digital congregation on Youtube. He represents himself as a pious young man — at his age — by turning to preacher via social media platform Youtube. His relaxed and millennial nature makes him easy to be accepted. It can expand a global audience, so he is considered more effective in the mission of disseminating knowledge-about Islam itself (Saputra and

⁷ Interview to Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar on 30 May 2020.

Islamiyah, 2019).⁸

The second is production. The production is easy to understand as creating a discourse that it will present to the public. In this case, the output of a simple and peaceful Islamic speech - moderate - is a form of Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar's efforts to convey his da'wa. We can see from the clothes he wears, t-shirts that read Islam Love,⁹ Music is not Haram,¹⁰ and so on, uploaded to his YouTube social media and can provide "spiritual enlightenment" consumers or his digital congregation. Habib Husein interprets his content production activities as an agent of change and tries to create social values.¹¹

The third is consumption. The consumption activity is obtaining, using, and disposing of a good or service. In the context of research, consumption activity is a condition that contains elements of strength, ideology, gender, and social class to shape one another (Denzin, 2001). Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar, through his Youtube channel, provides Islamic discourse products that are easy to understand and practical to implement.¹²

The fourth is the regulation. This aspect — indeed it seems — has the impression that it is always related to the various rules. Meanwhile, in the context of media analysis, the regulation is an abstract pattern of behavior — violating previous rules or

⁸ One of the main goals of da'wa through the social media Youtube is to attract and make it easy for the public to study Islam.

⁹ Look at <https://youtu.be/x2-MFlt8pBo>

¹⁰ Look at <https://youtu.be/p9ZG2Tgc4Ls>

¹¹ Interview to Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar on 30 May 2020.

¹² The answers given by Habib Husein Jafar in response to some of the questions given — in some of his Youtube content — are very simple and practical to implement. See the content of Kultum Pemuda Tersesat on <https://youtu.be/p9ZG2Tgc4Ls> and Islam Jadi Asyik feat Coki Pardede—acnoustics, in <https://youtu.be/gu9jQH40njE>

paradigms — from emerging practices of images or description (Hall, 1997b). In this case, Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar can be "violating" the norms and regulations of the previous patterns, which imply that the da'i or preacher must be robed, turban, or so on.¹³ Apart from that, after the 212 Islamic Defend Action, which many media covered, Habib's image seems to be regulated as a closely associated person with radical-extreme movements (Pamungkas and Octaviani n.d., 68). Habib Rizieq Shihab initiated the mass mobilization through a series of actions. In Arie and Gita's research, this action forms pressure for short-term (political) goals by imposing one's will even through violence — both physically and symbolically. Therefore, the da'wa activities carried out by Habib Husein Jafar are by highlighting aspects of religious moderation can also considering as a reconstruction of regulations regarding the image of the Habib after the 212 Islamic Defend Action.

The fifth is identity. The identity is something that has a connection with aspects of regulation and consumption - in this cultural flow. The causal relationship (cause and effect) between identity and law and consumption creates a new way of seeing society towards a paradigm. Therefore, as discussed in the regulation, Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar with the clothes he visualized can be considered an attempt to create a new perspective (identity) of society towards the piety standard of dressing a preacher. That holiness is not always synonymous with robes, turban, sarong, and so on. But holiness

¹³ This is sometimes admitted by his collaboration friend—Coki Pardede— that he was astonished by the casual and straightforward style of Habib Husein Jafar's dress — wearing a t-shirt or pants. Look at content Islam Jadi Asyik feat Coki Pardede in <https://youtu.be/gu9jQH40njE>

is something that comes from one's behavior and knowledge.

Conclusion

The development of the internet that dominates the global community's life and the development of various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube, provides a unique opportunity for the preacher to participate in da'wa activities more quickly and efficiently. It was Habib Husein Ja'far al-Hadar who actively engages in disseminating Islamic da'wah with his style and characteristics.

Starting from selecting digital congregations who are young and of a different faith, the variety of content he creates is adjustable to their lifestyle and needs. It highlights the human aspect of religion, so the teachings that arise from it have relevance to contemporary problems.

From the analysis of the concept of the circuit of culture on the da'wa activities of Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar, we can see that he can break the mainstream paradigm by building a new identity pattern that is different from the previous. By visualizing himself as a pious young man while still not leaving his vital as a millennial.

The development of information has a significant impact on the development of contemporary da'wa. Da'wa is not limited to be carried out through religious pulpits (offline) but has penetrated online. By using various social media platforms that the community love, one of which is Youtube.

Egalitarian social media provides an opportunity for anyone to come out in front of the public to convey da'wa messages. Therefore, the community needs to sort

and select the preacher who is considered competent and credible (have extensive knowledge to obtain information suitable with the religion's teachings).

This research discusses Habib Husein Jafar al-Hadar's commodification of the da'wa content on Youtube, the preacher, which the researcher considers having two aspects above — competence and credibility. From this research, readers will know how digital da'wa activities work. This research still focuses on communicators' aspects and their messages, so the researcher suggests that further research can describe how communicants receive this digital da'wa and positively changes it. The researcher thinks it is essential to do this as a concrete picture of the effectiveness of da'wa through social media carried out by the preacher - one of them is Habib Husen Jafar al-Hadar.

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