

Between Spirituality and Popularity: Commodification and Shifting Authority in Digital Preaching

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Abstrak : Transformasi digital telah mengubah praktik dakwah dari komunikasi keagamaan berbasis ruang fisik menuju ekosistem media yang dipengaruhi oleh logika platform, algoritma, dan budaya popularitas. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dilema dakwah digital dalam mempertahankan orientasi spiritualitas sekaligus beradaptasi dengan tuntutan visibilitas di ruang digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan (*library research*) melalui telaah kritis terhadap 28 sumber ilmiah yang terbit pada rentang 2018–2025, yang mencakup kajian tentang digital religion, mediatization of religion, otoritas keagamaan digital, dan komodifikasi dakwah. Data dianalisis secara interpretatif melalui proses identifikasi konsep, perbandingan temuan, dan sintesis teoritis. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa dilema utama dakwah digital tidak hanya terletak pada perubahan media, tetapi pada pergeseran logika keberagamaan: dari orientasi pembinaan spiritual menuju tuntutan performativitas digital. Temuan utama penelitian ini berupa model konseptual yang memetakan sembilan dimensi ketegangan antara spiritualitas dan popularitas, meliputi tujuan dakwah, karakter pesan, peran dai, sumber otoritas, media, logika sistem, relasi audiens, produksi konten, dan dampak sosial. Model tersebut menunjukkan bahwa dakwah digital mengalami negosiasi antara otentisitas nilai keagamaan dan mekanisme ekonomi perhatian (*attention economy*), sehingga otoritas keagamaan tidak lagi hanya dibangun melalui legitimasi keilmuan, tetapi juga melalui visibilitas, interaksi, dan resonansi dalam jaringan digital. Penelitian ini berimplikasi pada perlunya strategi dakwah digital yang mampu mengintegrasikan adaptasi teknologi dengan pemeliharaan kedalaman pesan, etika komunikasi, dan keberlanjutan pembinaan spiritual.

Kata Kunci: dakwah digital, komodifikasi, otoritas keagamaan, spiritualitas, popularitas

Abstract: Digital transformation has shifted the practice of da'wah from a physical-based religious communication to a media ecosystem influenced by platform logic, algorithms, and popularity culture. This study aims to analyze the dilemma of digital da'wah in maintaining a spiritual orientation while adapting to the demands of visibility in the digital space. This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method through a critical review of 28 scientific sources published between 2018 and 2025, which include studies on digital religion, the mediatization of religion, digital religious authority, and the commodification of da'wah. Data are analyzed interpretively through a process of concept identification, comparison of findings, and theoretical synthesis. This study found that the main dilemma of digital da'wah lies not only in media changes, but in the shift in the logic of religiosity: from an orientation towards spiritual development to the demands of digital performativity. The main finding of this study is a conceptual model that maps nine dimensions of tension between spirituality and popularity, including the purpose of da'wah, message character, role of da'wah, source of authority, media, system logic, audience relations, content production, and social impact. The model demonstrates that digital da'wah undergoes a negotiation between the authenticity of religious values and the mechanisms of the attention economy, so that religious authority is no longer solely constructed through scholarly legitimacy, but also through visibility, interaction, and resonance within digital networks. This research implies the need for a digital da'wah strategy that integrates technological adaptation with maintaining message depth, communication ethics, and the sustainability of spiritual development.

Keyword: digital preaching, commodification, religious authority, spirituality, popularity.

Introduction

The development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of religious life, particularly in the practice of Islamic da'wah in the contemporary era. Social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok now serve not only as communication tools but have transformed into new spaces for the production, distribution, and consumption of religious discourse. This phenomenon demonstrates that religion is no longer entirely confined to a limited sacred space but has instead entered the logic of a digital public space that is open, fast, and competitive.¹

This transformation has significant implications for changing patterns of authority and religious practices in society. Da'wah, which previously took place in conventional spaces such as mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and religious study groups, is now being disrupted by the emergence of new actors in the digital space. Individuals with communication skills and technological expertise can gain public legitimacy as transmitters of religious messages, even though they do not always possess established scholarly authority.² This shows a shift in religious authority from a hierarchical-institutional form to a more fluid and popularity-based form.

From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon cannot be separated from the logic of digital capitalism, which operates through algorithmic mechanisms, attention, and

¹ Ilham Ansori Hasibuan And Candra Krisna Jaya, "Komunikasi Dakwah Di Era Digital". *Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* Vol. 3 No 1 (2025): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.22515/Jmd.V3i1.10860>.

² Sihabudin Et Al., "Transformasi Dakwah Islam Melalui Strategi Dan Implementasi Di Era Digital". *Jurnal Khabar : Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam*. Vol 6, No. 2 (2024): 97–108.

monetization. In this context, preaching has the potential to undergo commodification, a process in which spiritual values are packaged into visually and emotionally appealing content to gain public attention.³ As a result, religious messages tend to experience simplification, fragmentation, and even reduction in meaning to suit the fast-paced and instant nature of social media.

Furthermore, this situation raises a fundamental dilemma between spirituality and popularity in digital preaching practices. On the one hand, preaching has a normative function as a means of internalizing profound and transformative religious values. However, on the other hand, the demands of popularity in the social media ecosystem push preachers to adapt content to the tastes of the digital market, which often prioritizes entertainment, sensation, and virality.⁴ This dilemma has the potential to shift the orientation of da'wah from being substantial to being performative.

A further implication of this phenomenon is a transformation in people's religious practices. Widespread access to digital da'wah content is encouraging the emergence of more individual, instant, and selective religious practices based on user preferences. Religious authority is no longer determined by depth of knowledge or institutional legitimacy, but rather by visibility and popularity in the digital space.⁵ This condition has the potential to give rise to fragmentation of religious understanding and weaken traditional authority in guiding the people comprehensively.

Although studies on digital da'wah have developed in recent years, most research still focuses on technical and functional aspects, such as the effectiveness of social media in spreading da'wah messages, digital communication strategies, and opportunities for utilizing technology in religious activities.⁶ These studies tend to be descriptive and normative in nature, so they have not touched on the critical dimension that sees digital da'wah as part of the dynamics of power, economy, and culture in modern society.

On the other hand, existing studies have yet to integrate these three key aspects simultaneously. Hjarvard's (2008) work on the mediatization of religion has indeed laid down an important conceptual framework, but its focus is limited to the Scandinavian context and has not yet addressed the commodification dimension within the platform capitalism ecosystem. Campbell (2010, 2012), in his studies of online religious authority, has identified a shift in legitimacy toward the digital realm, but has not explicitly linked it to the logic of the attention economy that encourages the simplification of da'wah messages. In the Indonesian context, Nawaf (2025) and Hidayatullah (2024) have discussed commodification and digital authority separately, but have not yet developed an integrative model explaining how mediatization, commodification, and the shift in authority mutually shape the spirituality-popularity dilemma as a structural consequence.

³ Rofiqotul Nikmatil Uliyah Et Al., "Dakwah Sebagai Mekanisme Transformasi Sosial Berbasis Nilai Islam". *Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara*. Vol 1, No. 3 (2025): 618–23.

⁴ Derry Ahmad Rizal, Rif Maula, And Nilna Idamatussilmi, "Transformasi Media Sosial Dalam Digitalisasi Agama ; Media Dakwah Dan Wisata Religi". *Mukaddimah: Jurnal Studi Islam* Vol 9, No. 2 (2024): 206–30.

⁵ Paryati Et Al., "Strategi Komunikasi Dakwah Era Digitalisasi Di Pondok Pesantren". *Tabligh: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* Vol 10, No. 2, April (2025): 185–204.

⁶ Kasir, I., & Awali, S., "Peran Dakwah Digital Dalam Menyebarkan Pesan Islam Di Era Modern," *Jurnal An-Nasyr: Jurnal Dakwah Dalam Mata Tinta* 11, No. 1 (2024): 59–68.

The lack of this integrated perspective has often resulted in analyses of digital da'wah being partial and unable to fully explain the complexity of the phenomenon.⁷

Based on this, this research is crucial to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dilemma of digital preaching in the context of contemporary religious life. Using a literature review approach, this research seeks to critically examine the relationship between spirituality, popularity, the commodification of religion, and the shift in religious authority, as well as their implications for the religious practices of modern society.

Research methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research type to critically examine the dilemma between spirituality and popularity in digital preaching and its impact on shifts in contemporary religious practice and authority.⁸ The main focus of the research is directed at how spiritual values in da'wah are negotiated, reduced, or even replaced by the demands of popularity in the digital media ecosystem.

The data sources in this literature review consist of scientific literature organized into two groups. First, primary sources consist of claims and findings reported by authors in journal articles specifically discussing digital da'wah, religious authority in social media, and the phenomenon of preacher popularity. It should be emphasized that in the design of this literature review, the unit of analysis is the authors' scientific arguments, not direct da'wah practice, thus becoming an explicitly acknowledged limitation. Second, secondary sources consist of books and scholarly publications related to the mediatization and commodification of religion from a critical theory perspective. The selection of sources was done purposively, emphasizing relevance to three main focuses: spirituality, popularity, and religious authority.⁹

Data collection was conducted through a documentation study of three academic databases: Garuda (the Ministry of Education and Culture's national journal portal), Moraref (the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Islamic religious journal database), and Google Scholar. The search string used included the following keywords: "digital da'wah," "commodification of religion," "digital religious authority," "mediatization of da'wah," and "social media spirituality," spanning 2018–2025. The search results yielded 67 articles relevant in title and abstract; after selection based on inclusion criteria (topic relevance, full-text availability, and publication in reputable journals), 28 sources were analyzed in this study. The data were then organized into three main analytical themes: (1) digital da'wah practices (content, communication style, and platform), (2) indicators of spirituality versus popularity (message depth vs. engagement), and (3) shifts in religious authority (from scholarly hierarchy to digital popularity-based authority).

The data analysis used qualitative thematic analysis techniques with a descriptive-analytical and critical approach. Unlike content analysis, which requires a systematic coding scheme for a measured corpus, thematic analysis in the context of this literature review

⁷ Ahmad Zuhdi Et Al., "Digital Da' Wah Strategy For Generation Alpha : Case Study" 4, No. December 2024 (2025): 374–87.

⁸ Abdurrahman, "Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *Adabuna : Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran* Vol. 3, No. 2 (2024): 102–13, <https://doi.org/10.38073/Adabuna.V3i2.1563>.

⁹ Siti Trizuwani, Muhammad Firdaus, And M Yakub, "Lembaga Dakwah , Tujuan , Fungsi Serta Perannya Terhadap Umat Islam" 2 (2025): 1–23.

was conducted by identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring thematic patterns across the analyzed literature.

The three main themes that became the focus of the synthesis were: (a) the dialectical relationship between spirituality and popularity, (b) the mechanism of commodification of religious values in the digital ecosystem, and (c) the shifting forms of legitimacy of religious authority. A critical approach was used to uncover the influence of algorithmic logic, the attention economy, and viral culture in constructing new religious authority in the digital space by directly dialogue with Adorno and Horkheimer's cultural industry framework and Hjarvard's concept of mediatization.

Data validity is maintained through three strategies. First, cross-source corroboration: each interpretive claim is confirmed in at least two different, independent sources. Second, the credibility of the literature is evaluated based on concrete criteria: (a) publication in a reputable journal (indexed in Sinta 1–3, Scopus, or DOAJ), (b) methodological transparency, and (c) consistency of arguments with the foundational literature. Third, the authors' analytical reflexivity explicitly distinguishes between the synthesis of existing findings (description) and the critical interpretation built upon those findings (interpretation). It should be noted that the term “triangulation” here refers to cross-literature corroboration, not methodological triangulation between different types of empirical data, as is an inherent limitation of the narrative literature review design.

Results and Discussion

Mediatization of Religion and the Transformation of Digital Preaching Practices

The literature review shows that the development of digital media has driven the mediatization of religion, significantly changing the patterns of preaching practices in contemporary society. Social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok no longer merely serve as communication channels but have become primary platforms for the production and distribution of religious discourse.¹⁰

In this context, da'wah (Islamic preaching) has undergone a significant transformation from a conventional, face-to-face model to a digital model that is open, instant, and competitive in the attention economy. This shift has not only changed the medium of delivery but also the way religious messages are produced and presented. Da'wah content has tended to be simplified and fragmented to align with the logic of digital media, which prioritizes speed, visualization, and algorithmic appeal.

As a result, religious messages that were previously delivered systematically and in-depth have shifted to become more concise, emotional, and performative. This phenomenon demonstrates that the mediatization of religion has not merely moved preaching to the digital sphere but has also reconstructed the structure of religious communication, including authority, legitimacy, and how society understands and internalizes religious teachings.¹¹

¹⁰ Rohmawati Et Al., “Mediatization And Hypermediation In Digital Religion And The Transformation Of Indonesian Muslim Religious Practices Through Social Media Usage”. *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Dan Perubahan Sosial*. Vol 18, No. 2 (2025). <http://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2024.182-01>.

¹¹ Makalalag Et Al., "Mediatisasi Dakwah Sufistik Di Tik Tok Adaptasi Spiritualitas Dalam Budaya Digital". *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Agama Dan Filsafat* volume. 4 Nomor. 3 Desember 2025. <https://prin.or.id/index.php/jurrafi>.

Furthermore, the mediatization of religion has also impacted changes in people's religious experiences. Religious practices, previously collective and tied to institutional spaces, have now shifted to become more individual and flexible. People have the freedom to access, choose, and interpret religious content according to their individual preferences. Thus, the mediatization of religion contributes to the emergence of more personal and fragmented patterns of religiosity in the digital age.¹²

This has the potential to give rise to a new religious authority based on digital visibility and social legitimacy in cyberspace, rather than solely on traditional scholarly capacity. At this point, digital da'wah faces a dilemma between maintaining the authenticity of its teachings and adapting to a fast-paced, engagement-based media ecosystem.

Illustrative Table 1: Shifting Focus of Da'wah Studies (Before and After the Massification of Digital Media)

Aspects	Before Digital Massification (pre-2020)	Post Digital Massification (2020–present)
Da'wah Room	Mosques, Islamic boarding schools, religious study groups	YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, podcasts
Focus of Study	Effectiveness, conventional strategies, preaching rhetoric	Mediatization, commodification, digital authority, attention economy
Dominant Approach	Descriptive-normative	Critical, sociological, integrative
Central Issue	Reach and message delivery	The dilemma of spirituality vs. popularity; the legitimacy of authority

Note: This table is an illustrative representation based on a synthesis of the 28 literatures analyzed; not the result of a quantitative bibliometric analysis.

Based on the literature synthesis analyzed in this study, there is a trend of increasing academic attention to digital da'wah in recent years. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, da'wah studies predominantly focused on conventional practices in physical spaces such as mosques, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), and religious study groups (majelis taklim). Following the massification of social media accelerated by social restrictions in 2020, academic attention has shifted significantly to the phenomenon of digital da'wah on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. This shift in academic focus reflects the rapid transformation of technology-mediated religious practices, as documented in a number of studies analyzed in this literature review.

These changes demonstrate that the mediatization of religion has driven significant transformations in the practice of da'wah. Da'wah is no longer confined to institutional spaces, but has expanded into a more open and competitive digital public space. These findings reinforce the argument that digital media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a structure shaping new patterns in the production and distribution of religious messages.

Furthermore, the increasing number of studies on digital da'wah (Islamic preaching) also demonstrates that this phenomenon is increasingly considered crucial in understanding the dynamics of contemporary religious society. People now have easier

¹² Fauzi. "Strategi Dakwah Di Era Digital Dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Agama Islam Da ' Wah Strategies In The Digital Era In Increasing". *Liwaul Dakwah: Jurnal Kajian Dakwah Dan Masyarakat Islam* Volume 13. No. 1. Januari-Juni 2023 : 35–55. <https://journal.iainlhokseumawe.ac.id/index.php/liwauldakwah>.

access to various online da'wah resources, which ultimately influences how they understand and practice religious teachings. Thus, this graph demonstrates that the mediatization of religion has become a major factor in the transformation of da'wah practices in the digital era.

The Commodification of Religion and the Logic of Digital Capitalism in Da'wah

Further findings indicate that digital da'wah cannot be separated from the logic of digital capitalism, which places attention as the primary commodity. In the social media ecosystem, algorithms play a crucial role in determining the visibility of content. Content that attracts greater attention through compelling visuals, emotions, and sensations tends to be more promoted by platform systems.¹³

In this situation, da'wah undergoes a process of commodification, where religious values are packaged into products that can be widely consumed by the public. Religious messages are conveyed not only for spiritual purposes but also to gain attention, audience engagement, and even economic gain through monetization. This has led to a shift in the orientation of da'wah from a normative-transformative one to a competitive logic of content production.¹⁴

The implication of this commodification is the emergence of a tendency to simplify and fragment religious messages. Complex religious values are often reduced to brief, easily understood content, but potentially losing their depth of meaning. Furthermore, the practice of personal branding is also increasingly dominant, where preachers construct their image as public figures to maintain their presence in the digital space. Thus, preaching is no longer solely within the spiritual realm but has also become part of the digital culture industry.¹⁵

The phenomenon of the commodification of digital preaching cannot be understood simply as a technological adaptation, but as a structural transformation in religious practice. Within the framework of digital capitalism, preaching has shifted from a normative-transformative practice to an attention-based content production logic (attention economy). Social media algorithms systematically prioritize visibility over depth of meaning, so that religious authority is no longer determined by scholarly capacity but by digital performativity and audience popularity.¹⁶

As a result, religious values are reified into commodities that can be mass-produced, distributed, and consumed. This process has led to the simplification of teachings, the fragmentation of authority, and the emergence of pseudo-authority in the digital space. In this context, preachers act not only as agents of religious messages but also as cultural producers and digital economic actors integrated into the logic of the platform industry.¹⁷

¹³ Hakim And Dahri. "Islam Di Media Sosial Sebagai Komodifikasi Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pendidikan Islam". *Andragogi Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* Vol 5, No. 1, Maret 2025 : 187–206.

¹⁴ Ramdani Et Al., "Komodifikasi Islam Dalam Dakwah Digital: Telaah Kritis Perspektif Industri Budaya". *Jrmdk* Vol 7 No. 2 Juli 2025 : 297-310.

¹⁵ Yuyun Yuningsih, "Dakwah Antara Spiritualitas Dan Komoditas". *Komunikan: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Dakwah*. Vol. 2 No. 2 (2023) : 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.30993/jurnalkomunikan.v2i2.345>.

¹⁶ Azmi Nawaf, "Komodifikasi Dakwah Digital: Personal Branding Dai Dan Negosiasi Otoritas Keagamaan Melalui Interaksi Audiens Di Media Sosial". *Liwaul Dakwah: Jurnal Kajian Dakwah Dan Masyarakat Islam*. Vol 15, No. 2 (2025). <https://journal.iainhokseumawe.ac.id/index.php/liwauldakwah>.

¹⁷ Ahmad Umar Kadafi Et Al., "Komodifikasi Agama Di Era Dakwah Digital : Etika Dan Implikasinya Bagi Umat". *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* Vol 9. No 3 (2025): 41195–204.

In this context, the role of preachers shifts from merely conveying religious messages to becoming content producers and digital economic actors.

The Shift in Religious Authority in the Digital Age

The analysis shows that the mediatization and commodification of religion have contributed to a shift in religious authority within society. Authority that was previously hierarchical and based on institutions such as ulama, kiai, or religious institutions has now experienced decentralization due to the presence of digital media.¹⁸

In the digital space, religious legitimacy is no longer solely determined by the depth of knowledge or the chain of knowledge, but also by visibility and popularity. Individuals with strong communication skills and the ability to utilize social media can gain significant influence as transmitters of religious messages. This indicates that religious authority has shifted toward a more fluid, open, and competitive form.¹⁹

However, this shift also has serious consequences, namely the emergence of fragmentation of religious authority. Society no longer relies on a single source of authority, but tends to selectively choose and consume various sources. This situation has the potential to give rise to uncontrolled diversity of interpretations and even trigger conflicts over religious understanding in the digital public sphere.²⁰

The shift in religious authority in the digital era not only demonstrates the decentralization of authority, but also represents an epistemological and structural transformation in religious practice. Authority, previously based on scholarly hierarchy and institutional legitimacy, is now shifting toward a fluid and competitive form of networked authority. In this context, legitimacy is no longer determined by depth of knowledge but by visibility, performativity, and emotional resonance within the algorithmic ecosystem.²¹

Furthermore, platform algorithms act as hidden authorities that determine the distribution of religious discourse, thus forming what can be called algorithmic authority. This condition encourages the emergence of fragmented authority and epistemic relativism, where people selectively consume various religious sources without a clear authoritative framework. As a result, religion experiences both individualization and commodification, potentially giving rise to pseudo-authority and weakening traditional religious authority structures. Consequently, while digital da'wah expands religious access, it also poses serious challenges to the validity of knowledge, the legitimacy of authority, and the sustainability of spiritual guidance.

¹⁸ Budi Nurhamidin Et Al., "Transformasi Otoritas Keagamaan Di Era Digital , Analisis Sosiologis Terhadap Pergeseran Pola". *Al-Muqaddimah – Journal Of Educational And Religious Perspectives*. Vol 1, No. 1 (2025): 39–48. <https://Jurnal-Muqaddimah.Or.Id/Index.Php/Al-Muqaddimah/Index>.

¹⁹ Rahmat Hidayatullah, "Otoritas Keagamaan Digital : Pembentukan Otoritas Islam Baru Di Ruang Digital" 10, No. 2 (2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.15408/Ushuluna.V10i02>.

²⁰ Ahmad Nur And Malik Panigoro, "Islam Digital Dan Negosiasi Otoritas Keagamaan Digital Islam And The Negotiation Of Religious Authority". *Jurnal Studi Islam Alhamra*. Volume 6, No. 1, Februari, 2025: 71-90.

²¹ Sulfikar and Yasmine. "PLATFORMIZED RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY: Rethinking Legitimacy in the Age of Social Media Influencers". *Epistemé. Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* Vol. 20, No. 03, December 2025 <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2025.20.02.141-171>.

The Dilemma of Spirituality and Popularity in Digital Preaching Practices

The main findings of this study indicate that digital da'wah (Islamic preaching) faces a dilemma between spirituality and popularity. On the one hand, da'wah's primary goal is to internalize profound and transformative religious values. However, on the other hand, the realities of digital media demand content that can quickly and broadly capture public attention.²²

This dilemma creates a tension between substance and performance in preaching. Preachers are faced with the choice of maintaining the depth of the religious message or adapting the content to media logic that prioritizes entertainment and virality. As a result, a tendency toward performative preaching emerges, where the presentation aspect dominates over the substance of the message.²³

The implication of this dilemma is a shift in society's religious orientation. Religiousness has become more individualistic, instantaneous, and selective, and tends to be influenced by media preferences. In the long term, this situation has the potential to weaken the function of da'wah as a comprehensive spiritual development process.²⁴

The dilemma between spirituality and popularity in digital da'wah reflects a fundamental tension between the normative orientation of da'wah as a process of spiritual transformation and the logic of digital media, which is based on attention and visibility. In this ecosystem, da'wah no longer functions solely as a medium for internalizing religious values, but also as a performative practice that demands aesthetic and emotional appeal. As a result, piety has shifted from an inner experience to a public representation that can be consumed by the masses.²⁵

Furthermore, the dominance of the attention economy has led to the reduction of spirituality to shallow and fragmented forms of instant consumption. Religious practices have become increasingly individualized, selective, and based on personal preferences, potentially weakening the function of da'wah as a comprehensive and sustainable development process.²⁶ In this context, digital da'wah not only faces technical challenges, but also fundamental ethical and epistemological dilemmas related to the authenticity, depth, and purpose of religiosity itself.

Critical Synthesis: Integration of Mediatization, Commodification, and Authority

Based on the overall findings, this critical synthesis establishes a direct dialogue with three relevant theoretical traditions. First, within the framework of Marx's political economy developed by Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) through the culture industry thesis,

²² Ahmad Nur And Malik Panigoro, "Islam Digital Dan Negosiasi Otoritas Keagamaan Digital Islam And The Negotiation Of Religious Authority". *Jurnal Studi Islam Alhamra*. Volume 6, No. 1, Februari, 2025: 71-90, 2025

²³ Padma Fadhila, Syafah Audina, And Ali Hasan Siswanto, "Mengatasi Reduksi Dakwah Digital Sebagai Content Production : Pendekatan Transformatif Berbasis Integrasi Nilai Spiritual , Budaya Algoritmik , Dan Transformasi Sosial". *Jiic: Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia* Vol : 2 No: 11, November 2025 E-Issn : 3047-7824 Dakwah. Vol 2 No. 11 November (2025): 18002–18014. <https://jicnusantara.com/index.php/jiic>.

²⁴ Maulidatus Syahrotin Naqqiyah Et Al., "Dakwah Siber Dan Pergeseran Religiusitas Masyarakat Kenjeran Surabaya". *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* vol 12, No. 148 (2022) :149-168.

²⁵ Agung Fathul Muhtadin, "Meningkatkan Moderasi Beragama Melalui Dakwah Digital Meningkatkan Moderasi Beragama Melalui Dakwah Digital". *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Kemasyarakatan*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2024): 1–12.

²⁶ Putra Et Al., "Popularitas Ulama Melalui Media Baru". *Jurnalcerdas*, Vol 3, No. 1 (2024): 25–30.

digital da'wah undergoes a structurally similar process: spiritual use value is subordinated to the exchange value of attention. Religious messages are produced, standardized, and distributed according to the logic of the digital cultural market, where spiritual depth becomes a "package" that must compete in the attention economy. This is not merely a technological adaptation, but rather an ontological transformation of da'wah itself.²⁷

Second, Hjarvard's (2008) concept of mediatization, which views the media as a semi-autonomous institution that reshapes the logic of other social fields, including religion, proves relevant in explaining how da'wah does not simply change mediums but undergoes internal restructuring following the logic of the media. Da'wah, which originally followed the logic of the "religious field" (Bourdieu), must now submit to the logic of the "media field": speed, visuality, and emotional resonance replace the depth of argumentation and the chain of knowledge.²⁸

Third, Campbell (2010, 2012) identified that online religious authority is constructed through negotiations between institutional traditions and digital community practices. In recent developments, these negotiations are now increasingly determined by what can be called algorithmic authority where platform algorithms act as "gatekeepers" who determine which religious discourse gets visibility. As a result, religious legitimacy is no longer determined solely by the depth of knowledge, but rather by the content's ability to win algorithmic games. These three theoretical traditions together explain why the spirituality-popularity dilemma in digital preaching is not an anomaly, but rather a predictable structural consequence of the integration of religion into the ecosystem of platform capitalism.²⁹

The transformation of digital da'wah cannot be understood in isolation, but rather as the result of a structural interaction between the mediatization of religion, commodification in digital capitalism, and shifts in religious authority. Mediatization serves as a framework that determines the form and manner of religious representation in the digital public sphere, while commodification explains how religious values are produced, distributed, and consumed within the logic of the market. At the same time, the shift in religious authority demonstrates how religious legitimacy no longer rests on traditional hierarchical structures, but is constructed through algorithmic mechanisms and audience interaction.

In this context, the dilemma between spirituality and popularity is a manifestation of the inherent contradiction in the digital capitalism system which places attention as the main commodity. Therefore, the tension between the depth of meaning and the appeal of media is not a matter for individual preachers, but rather a structural consequence of the integration of religion into the media ecosystem and digital economy. This condition shows that digital da'wah has undergone a transformation from a normative practice to a practice that is integrated in the logic of production, distribution and consumption of digital culture.

²⁷ Moruk Et Al., "Revolusi Digital Dalam Ruang Suci: Dampak Teknologi". *Al Naqdu: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*. Vol 06, No. 01 (2025): 52–61, <https://doi.org/10.58773/Alnaqdu.V.6>

²⁸ Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change" 6 (2008): 9–26, <https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9/1>.

²⁹ Saudi Y, "Media Dan Komodifikasi Dakwah" *Al-I'lam; Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* Vol. 2, No 1, September 2018, Pp. 37-44

As an illustration, not a stand-alone empirical claim, several phenomena documented in the analyzed literature illustrate the spectrum of this shift. Not all ulama play a direct role in formal education; some have expanded their influence into the business, media, and creative industries by leveraging the religious authority established through their da'wah activities. Aripudin (2023) documents how Yusuf Mansur linked the concept of almsgiving as a spiritual teaching with the logic of material well-being in his Paytren business venture, an academically documented example of commodification. The phenomenon of expanding influence through new media is also evident in a number of other popular da'wah (Islamic preachers) who utilize digital platforms to expand their reach. On the other hand, there are also da'wah (Islamic preachers) who build influence through the production of religious literature packaged in a popular and easily accessible manner for the younger generation. These cases are illustrative, illustrating the spectrum of da'wah positions within the spirituality-popularity dilemma, and not a final judgment on the figures mentioned.³⁰

This transformation demonstrates that da'wah is no longer confined to traditional spaces, but has expanded into a wider range of sectors with a more adaptive, popular, and market-focused approach. Da'wah is packaged in a trendier format through television, social media, and other digital platforms, thus reaching the millennial generation, the primary audience in today's digital ecosystem.³¹

This change also correlates with a shift in religious consumption patterns among the millennial generation. Whereas previously, religious understanding was acquired through relatively in-depth processes such as reading scriptures, attending religious studies, or learning directly from religious scholars, there has now been a migration toward instant, partial, and fragmented consumption of religious information via the internet. Digital media has become not only a means of distribution but also shapes ways of thinking and understanding religion, where speed and ease of access often take precedence over depth of substance.³²

In this context, a new dynamic has emerged in the form of an opening up of contestation for religious discourse in the digital realm. Social media channels have become not only a means of preaching, but also an arena for competition between various religious approaches and interpretations, competing for audience attention. This indicates that religious authority is no longer singular and hierarchical, but rather horizontally distributed and competitive in the digital public sphere a condition that directly strengthens the argument about the fragmentation of authority as a structural consequence of the logic of digital platforms.

Critically, this phenomenon demonstrates a fundamental dilemma between spirituality and popularity in contemporary da'wah practices. On the one hand, digitalization opens up significant opportunities to expand the reach of da'wah and increase the accessibility of religious teachings. However, on the other hand, the attention-

³⁰ Acep Aripudin, "When Quranic Learning Goes Online : The Phenomenon Of Yusuf Mansur In Da ' Wah Marketing Facing The Covid-19 Pandemic" *Ilmu Dakwah: Academic Journal For Homiletic Studies* Vol 17, No. 1 June (2023): 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ldajhs.v17i1.23272>.

³¹ Al Kahfi. "Transformasi Pemikiran Manajemen Dakwah : Dari Paradigma Tradisional Ke Era Digital". *Journal Of Da'wah*. Vol. 4 Nomor 1 (2025): 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.32939/Jd.V4i1.5931>.

³² Kasir, I., & Awali, S., "Peran Dakwah Digital Dalam Menyebarkan Pesan Islam Di Era Modern". *Jurnal An-Nasyr: Jurnal Dakwah Dalam Mata Tinta* Vol 11 No. 1 (2024): 59-68.

based logic of digital media encourages the simplification of messages, the commodification of religious values, and a shift in authority from a scientific basis to one based on popularity and visibility. As a result, da'wah has the potential to lose its spiritual depth and become a symbolic performance that emphasizes emotional appeal over substantive transformation.

Thus, this shift impacts not only the practice of da'wah but also the way religious authority is formed, recognized, and maintained in contemporary society. Authority is no longer solely determined by scholarly capacity and traditional sanad (chain of transmission), but also by the ability to manage image, build engagement, and adapt to the logic of digital media. This further emphasizes that digital da'wah is in a dilemma: between maintaining spiritual authenticity and meeting the demands of popularity in an increasingly competitive public space.

Table 2 Conceptual Dilemma of Digital Preaching

Dimensions	Spirituality (Normative)	Popularity (Digital)	Dilemma Form	The Shift That Occurred	Real Case Examples
The Purpose of Da'wah	Spiritual transformation, faith formation, moral change	Achieve views, likes, engagement	Religious values vs public attention orientation	Da'wah shifts from a development orientation to a digital performance orientation	In-depth study content often loses its reach compared to more easily consumed motivational content for migration (illustrative based on digital religious content consumption patterns). Hjarvard (2008); Campbell (2013); Aripudin (2023).
Message Character	In-depth, systematic, based on evidence	Short, emotional, visual	Depth of knowledge and speed of distribution	There is simplification, truncation, and fragmentation of religious messages.	Long lectures are cut into short 30–60 second videos for TikTok/Reels (documented as a digital media practice) Hjarvard (2008); Nawaf (2025); Hidayatullah (2024).
The Role of Dai	Scholars, spiritual guides	Influencer, public figure	Scientific authority vs personal image	The shift from clerics as sources of knowledge to religious figures based on personal branding	The phenomenon of creative preaching by young people, such as Ustaz Hanan Attaki, who uses a visual approach and popular language (documented) Campbell (2013); Kadafi et al. (2025).

Source of Authority	Sanad of knowledge, institution	Followers, algorithm	Knowledge vs. popularity	Networked religious authority is formed: authority becomes more fluid and competitive.	Preachers with large followings can wield broader influence than local religious figures (a common phenomenon; illustrative). Campbell (2010); Anderson (2016); Ramdani et al. (2025).
Media for Da'wah	Mosques, Islamic boarding schools, assemblies	YouTube, TikTok, Instagram	Sacred spaces and digital public spaces	Religion enters the digital public space	Popularization of sermons through YouTube and video clips of preaching (documented) Hjarvard (2008); Hidayatullah (2024).
System Logic	Nilai, etika, keberlanju Values, ethics, sustainability tan	Attention economy, monetization	Preaching vs capitalism	Commodification of religion	The Use of Religious Identity in Digital Economic Activities (documented case examples of several missionary-business figures) Hjarvard (2011); Aripudin (2023).
Audience Relations	Congregation (collective, directed)	Followers (individual, free)	Guidance and Consumption	Individualization of religion	Individuals learn religion through social media without direct interaction with religious teachers (illustrative) Campbell (2013); Ramdani . (2025).
Content Production	Based on science and methodology	Based on trends and algorithms	Validity vs virality	Performative and sensational	Content themed around threats, sin, or spiritual phenomena often receives high attention due to its emotional power (illustrative). Nawaf (2025); Hidayatullah (2024).
Social Impact	Comprehensive community development	Polarization & information bias	Integration vs fragmentation	Relativism of authority	Religious debates in social media comment sections (documented as digital interaction patterns) Campbell (2013); Kadafi et al. (2025).

The Essence of the Dilemma	Maintaining the authenticity of teachings	Adapting to the digital market	Spirituality vs popularity	Preaching becomes performative	Religious content is consumed as both religious entertainment and a source of learning (phenomenological synthesis) Hjarvard (2008); Campbell (2013); Aripudin (2023).
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Source: Compiled and developed based on a synthesis of literature on digital religion, mediatization of religion, and the transformation of religious authority (Hjarvard, 2008; Campbell, 2010; Campbell, 2013; Anderson, 2016; Aripudin, 2023; Hidayatullah, 2024; Nawaf, 2025; Kadafi et al., 2025; Ramdani et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The transformation of digital da'wah in the contemporary era demonstrates fundamental changes influenced by the interaction between the mediatization of religion, commodification within digital capitalism, and shifts in religious authority. Digital media is no longer simply a means of conveying da'wah, but has become a structure that shapes how religion is produced, distributed, and interpreted. In this context, da'wah has shifted from conventional, in-depth and institutional practices to open, fast-paced, and competitive digital practices. Concurrently, the logic of digital capitalism drives the commodification of religion, where spiritual values are packaged as content oriented toward attention, audience engagement, and popularity, thus resulting in the simplification and fragmentation of religious messages.

Furthermore, this process has shifted religious authority from a hierarchical one to a more fluid form based on digital visibility, thus giving rise to fragmented authority and a plurality of interpretations within society. Within this framework, the dilemma between spirituality and popularity is a structural consequence of the integration of religion into the media ecosystem and digital economy, where depth of meaning often clashes with demands for virality and performativity. Therefore, digital da'wah is not only experiencing technical changes, but also epistemological and cultural transformations, so that a more critical and integrative approach is needed so that the function of da'wah as a spiritual development process is maintained amidst the dynamics of digital media.

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