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Mediating Islam in Post-Suharto Indonesia: performing Dakwah through popular TV shows

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Chapter 2

PERFORMING *DAKWAH* ON POPULAR TV SHOWS: Commodity, Piety, and Politics

This chapter deals with the ways *dakwah* is broadcast by commercial TV stations for their audiences and circulated through society. I discuss the process, chosen design, and format of the programmes. The study on the production and reproduction of *dakwah* on Indonesian TV channels is often overlooked due to the assumption that they are all about entertainment (Abaza 2004: 183 and Muzakki 2008: 206). However, we cannot deny that entertainment and popular products shape and reflect ideology and identity in the society, which are negotiated in their production (Heryanto 2014). Moreover, it is proven that Islamic identity and authority can be cultivated through the help of the media like radio (Sunarwoto 2013: 195-214 and Sunarwoto 2016: 203-230) and the Internet (Turner 2007: 177-134). It is, therefore, relevant to see how this happens in TV industry and what is its implication to the changing Indonesian Islam.

Almost all commercial TV stations have sessions for *dakwah* even though some of them are owned by non-Muslims. The contradiction between the faith of the owners and the religious programmes broadcast on their TV channels is worth-investigating. Economic interest can be more important than religious motivation to determine which TV programmes they produce. As mentioned in Chapter 1 that *dakwah* becomes one of the Islamically inspired TV programmes provided by the producers for audiences along with Islamic movies, soap operas, and reality shows. If the producers may see *dakwah* programme merely based on economic interests by imagining what type of audience they address, Muslims may see it as an opportunity to find a programme that fulfils their expectations to be entertained and educated accordingly. The presence of *dakwah* on TV enables them to learn about Islam from anywhere (homes, offices, restaurants and cars) while doing other daily activities. They do not need to go to the studios or mosques where the *dakwah* is performed in conventional ways.

In this chapter, I begin with the process of the production which depicts the tension between the producers and preachers' interests in the programmes. Further, I continue with an analysis the circulation of the programmes in

society. I then elucidate the ways routine appearances and circulation of *dakwah* on TV shape the charisma of the preachers in society.

The production of *dakwah* on TV

In this section, I describe the making of *dakwah* programmes on TV, with an emphasis on the roles played by the producer and preacher in the programme of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* (Mother and Elder Brother in Action) on Indosiar in 2015. I use it as an example to represent the broader range of the programmes. In this regard, the first important issue is a discussion of the format of the stage and topics of the programme between the producers and preachers. The second is how the broadcast is circulated to a broader audience. Together, these two factors are pivotal for analysing and understanding the reasons for decisions made in the production of the programmes and their purposes.

In 2015, the broadcasting time of *dakwah* varied among commercial TV channels. Most TV stations broadcast it every day around the time of morning prayer from 3.30am to 5.30am according to Jakarta time zone.²⁰ It includes, for example, RCTI, SCTV, TransTV, and Trans7. Some broadcast it at 5am to 7am such on Indosiar, and ANTV. TVOne and MetroTV have it every Sunday after afternoon prayer (*zuhur*). In general, TV channels which have daily *dakwah* broadcast do not have it on Sunday, but the time allocation for *dakwah* broadcasting may change, especially in Islamic festive days like in Ramadan. The number of *dakwah* programmes and Islamic variety shows in the fasting month Ramadan are usually aired three times a day. This is to celebrate the fasting month for Muslims. The celebration of Ramadan is obvious not only in the increased aired times of *dakwah* programmes but also in the transformation of a shopping mall to be contained with Islamic themes and decorations to celebrated Muslims' holy month (Schmidt 2012: 384-400).

Since the beginning of 21st century, *dakwah* on TV has involved in Indonesians' everyday practices and discourses together with other *dakwah* activities in the society. The popularity of *dakwah* on TV is not surprising since it has been common in Muslim communities. We can find various versions of *dakwah* activities through Muslim gatherings in rural or urban

²⁰ There are three time zones in Indonesia, which consist of western, central, and eastern part of the archipelago. Western Indonesia time zone covers the island of Java, Sumatera, and Western Borneo, the central time zone includes Sulawesi, Lesser Sunda Islands, Bali, and Eastern Borneo, and the eastern consists of Papua, West Papua, and Maluku. Central time zone is an hour ahead of Jakarta while eastern is two hours ahead of it.

areas, which are conducted in mosques, offices, and houses, focusing on topics such as faith, piety, and prosperity, delivered by variety of preachers with different backgrounds. One of the gatherings is called *Majelis Taklim*, ‘a meeting, sitting or council where Islamic education takes place’ (Abaza 2004:179). It is also a place for preachers, politician, and stakeholders to build and connect networking for economic and political interests (Abaza 2004: 179-180). Several TV preachers gain their connection to TV producers through the networking of *Majelis Taklim* in Kwitang, Jakarta (Abaza 2004: 174). Some of them attend *dakwah* programmes in the studio of TV stations through registration or invitation by the producers. In the case of Mamah Dedeh’s programme in Indosiar channel at 6am, they should register to become live audiences in the studio during the programmes. The waiting to attend it can be several months to two years because there are many members of *Majelis Taklim* register for the programme.

As mentioned above, most *dakwah* programmes are broadcast roughly at the same time in the morning. Only those who are committed to Islam and are awake to perform dawn prayer (*salat subuh*) form the potential audience. However, Rahman, 44 years old, and a producer in Indosiar, assumes that Muslims in Jakarta go to bed early around 9pm and are awake early in the morning to prepare their daily activities before dawn prayer for reasons like to avoid traffic. They can watch *dakwah* programmes at this time or after the prayer before going to work.²¹ Rahman’s opinion reflects other producers’ imagination of how audiences would watch the programmes.

As we can see in the table 2.1, commercial TV stations use various names for *dakwah* programmes with different preachers at relatively the same time. The names indicate the kind of the programmes, which means the characteristics of topics that are delivered by the preachers. For example, when the audience hear *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* (Mother and Brother in Action), most of them will recognise immediately that it is a *dakwah* programme led by Mamah Dedeh. Another example is *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* (The Exegeses of the Lantern), the audience will know it that it is led by *Quraish Shihab*, the author of the *tafsir*. Some use the preachers’ names as the name of the programmes like *Kata Ustadz Solmed* (The Words of Teacher Solmed). These names can change anytime and most of the topics of the preaching are repeated in many occasions by the same or different preachers.

²¹ Interview with Rahman, the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, on Indosiar, Jakarta, January 11, 2015.

It is common in *dakwah* activities that a preacher delivers similar contents in different places and events (Abaza 2004: 172 and Millie 2011: 163).

The fact that a number of *dakwah* is produced at the same time on various TV stations recalls how the call for prayers (*azan*) are echoed at the same time in different mosques when the obligatory prayer time comes to reach any audience in particular places. The amount and intensity of both the broadcast of *dakwah* and the *azan* at the same time in diverse places is not simply about their capacities ‘to disseminate ideas or instil religious ideologies but in its effect on the human sensorium, on the affects, sensibilities, and perceptual habits to its vast audience’ (Hirschkind 2006: 2). In other words, the daily broadcast of Islamic learning, to a certain extent, positions the *dakwah* programmes as legitimate media for Islamic knowledge through which preachers can establish themselves as authorities and reach a vast audience.

Table 2.1.: *Dakwah* programmes broadcast by TV channels in 2015 in Indonesia

Channel	Programme	Broadcast time
SCTV	<i>Indahnya Kebersamaan</i> (Beauty of Togetherness)	Monday at 4 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.
	<i>Kata Ustadz Solmed</i> (The Words of Teacher Solmed)	Tuesday to Sunday at 4 a.m. to 5:30 a.m.
RCTI	<i>Assalamu’alaikum Ustadz</i> (Greeting for Teacher)	Daily 4 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.
MNCTV	<i>Siraman Qalbu</i> (The Splash of the Heart)	Monday to Friday at 4:45 a.m. to 5:25 a.m.
	<i>Hafidz on the Street</i> (Memoriser of the Quran on the Street)	Weekend at 4:45 a.m. to 5 a.m.
ANTEVE	<i>Cahaya Hati</i> (Light of Heart)	Daily at 3:30 a.m. to 3:50 a.m.
INDOSIAR	<i>Mamah dan Aa Beraksi</i>	Daily at 6 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.

	(Mother and Brother in Action)	
TVRI	<i>Indahnya Pagi</i> (The Beauty of The Morning)	Daily at 5 a.m. to 6 a.m.
TRANS TV	<i>Islam itu Indah</i> (Islam is Beautiful)	Daily at 5 a.m. to 6:30 a.m.
TRANS7	<i>Rahasia Sunnah</i> (The Secret of The Prophet's Life)	Weekdays at 4:45 a.m. to 5:15 a.m.
	<i>Khazanah</i> (Treasure)	Weekdays at 5:15 a.m. to 5:45 a.m. Saturday at 5:30 a.m. to 6 a.m.
	<i>Poros Surga</i> (The Axis of Heaven)	Sunday at 5:30 a.m. to 6 a.m.
	<i>Khalifah</i> (Muslim Ruler)	Sunday at 6 a.m. to 6:30 a.m.
TVONE	<i>Religi: Tafsir Kehidupan</i> (Religion: Life Exegesis)	Daily at 4 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.
	<i>Damai Indonesiaku</i> (My Indonesia at Peace)	Saturday at 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
	<i>Butiran Ilmu</i> (Grains of Knowledge)	Saturday at 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday at 3:30 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.
METRO TV	<i>Pelita Hati</i> (Light of the Heart)	Daily at 4:05 a.m. to 4:30 a.m.
	<i>Tafsir Al Mishbah</i> (Al-Mishbah Exegesis)	Occasionally in the afternoon

The broadcast time of *dakwah* is arranged in the morning based on the producers' prediction of urban middle-class Muslim routine. Based on my observation in a nuclear family in South Jakarta in 2015, the producers' assumption was correct. In a house of a small family where I stayed during

my fieldwork, their daily routine began at 3 a.m. The wife, Nuraini (33 years old), cooked and prepared breakfast for her family, while the husband, Irfan (37 years old), was taking a shower. Their children would still be sleeping at this. The husband woke up early to avoid traffic on the way to work, as a security officer at one of the manufacturing companies in North Jakarta. If there is no traffic, his commute takes around one hour from his home near Sunday Market area. With traffic it may take more than two hours. After taking a shower he performed midnight prayer (*tahajud*) and then sat in the living room reading several pages of the Quran. When morning prayer time arrived, he would go to the mosque. When he returned from the mosque, he would watch one of *dakwah* programmes together while having breakfast with his wife. He then left for work.

The wife prepared their children and took them to school. She then went to her place of work, a small and modest mobile phone shop. During my fieldwork in Jakarta, I had breakfast in food stall across the street. I watched her watching TV while waiting for customers in her shop. I came to top up the balance of my mobile phone and wanted to know what she was watching in her shop. Often times, she would be watching a *dakwah* programme of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* on Indosiar channel on a small portable TV at that time. I found in several days that she watched the same programme every morning and she told me that it was her favourite *dakwah* programme on TV. As the morning time slot is almost completely occupied by *dakwah* programmes, the scope for choice was limited.

The husband and wife explain that it is their habit to watch TV while having breakfast and that they would watch any programme broadcast at that time. They would often switch between channels to find the most interesting show.²² With regards to watching *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* in her small shop, the wife asserted that it was just to spend time while waiting for the customers and to improve her knowledge about Islam and entertain herself with jokes from the preachers during her time in the shop. The *dakwah* programmes filled the gap of not being able to attend Islamic study groups as she is generally too pre-occupied with attending to her children who are seven and four years old. Her husband too does not attend Islamic study groups.²³

Hamdi (62 years old), a retired security staff in Jamsostek office building in Jakarta, recounts a similar situation when I met him in a mosque one the afternoon. He says always watches *dakwah* programme on TV while

²² Interview with Nuraini and Irfan, Jakarta, December 16, 2014.

²³ Interview with Irfan, Jakarta, December 16, 2014.

drinking a cup of coffee and fried bananas. He says, 'it is better to watch useful programmes rather than the programmes, which do not contain education for us. Watching *dakwah* on TV is part of learning Islam, which in Islam is an obligation since we were born until we die.'²⁴ Further discussion about the audience of *dakwah* programmes on TV will be given in Chapter 5.

The producers have the audiences in the island of Java in mind when they produce the programmes of *dakwah* for their TV channels. Java is important to the producers due to several reasons. Java is the most populous island in the country with more than 145 million inhabitants.²⁵ The producers of the programmes regard Java as their most important market. However, this evidence does not mean that they underestimate other islands in the country. It just means that they have to decide which audience that they should become their priority for the production of *dakwah* in their TV channels. On the other hand, it is important to mention that some commercial TV channels can only be reached in several areas by using additional technological device of satellite. This fact suggests that the producers address the programmes to audiences in cities where they have easy access to commercial TV channels.²⁶

The format of *dakwah* on TV

Some studies have found that *dakwah* grew in popularity in cities such as Jakarta and Medan during the 1980s. *Dakwah* activities are also organised by students in public universities like Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta (Smith-Hefner 2007) and ITB in Bandung (Rosyad 2006), employees of banks (Juoro 2008: 229), large companies and government offices, and others. These activities are viewed as events to motivate their employees and improve their piety at the same time. They are supposed to provide employers and employees alike with greater meaning in their lives. The pious believe that Islam provides solutions for all problems in life and in the afterlife (Rudnyckyj 2010). Their enthusiasm for *dakwah* is one of the reasons that inspires TV producers to re-create *dakwah* in the form of talk show and soap operas.

²⁴ Interview with Hamdi, Jakarta, December 19, 2014.

²⁵ Population in Java island, see Badan Pusat Statistik. February 2018. "Proyeksi Penduduk menurut Provinsi 2010 [Population Projection based on Provinces 2010]." <https://www.bps.go.id/statictable/2014/02/18/1274/proyeksi-penduduk-menurut-provinsi-2010---2035.html>. Last accessed, April 14, 2015.

²⁶ Interview with Rahman, the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, on Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

The competition among TV producers to produce attractive *dakwah* programmes results in the change of the formats, names, designs, and teams of the programmes. Some producers hire a creative team from an external production house to design the programmes. The producers try to keep the programmes interesting and entertaining for the audiences. Rahman explains that:

The key of becoming a producer is creativity to find innovation in order the programmes the producers create are interesting to watch by audience. With workload burden they have; the producers need other opinions (such as from creative team) and products of TV programmes from production houses to reduce the burden. In respect to production houses, the producers usually receive some proposals of TV programmes for *dakwah* and then assess which programmes to be broadcast and duration of the broadcast. The producers buy the programmes based on the agreed contract.²⁷

Production houses, which create *dakwah* programmes on TV, usually produce other programmes such as *sinetron* (soap operas). In regards to the themes of *dakwah* programmes on TV, the producers and preachers mostly discuss them before the shooting session. The preachers often choose themes based on the guidelines from the producers, who ask for basic Islamic knowledge, nothing too philosophical or controversial, for ordinary Muslims. The themes like the miracles of *Dhuha* prayer²⁸ or how to be a good Muslim woman are staples. Rahman suggests that it is important to avoid philosophical topics because audience may feel bored with the content of the programmes. Content must be easily relatable and offer practical advice. Watching TV, for most people, is a means to find pleasure. Controversial topics in the programmes may cause ratings to fall and damage the reputation of the programmes among some audience.²⁹ In fact, some contents of *dakwah* programmes on TV, especially the session of Question and Answer (Q&A), have been heatedly debated in the society as discussed in Chapter 4. The themes of *dakwah* programmes sometimes requires an approval from the chief programme manager above

²⁷ Interview with Rahman, the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, on Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016

²⁸ The time of *Dhuha* prayer is after the rise of *fajar* (dawn) and before *shalat Dzuhur* (Afternoon prayer).

²⁹ Interview with Rahman, the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, on Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

the producers. Likewise, the format and design of the programmes, the producers also discuss them with the preachers.³⁰

In some sessions of *dakwah* programmes on TV, the producers hire a famous male and female actor or comedian to enhance the entertainment value of the programmes. The preachers are chosen by the producers based on their physical appearances and popularity in their community.³¹ This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Several producers invite several Islamic study groups to attend the programme in the studio to become the audience of the programme. In *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* in Indosiar, most of the audience are women, who come from various Islamic study groups around Jakarta. Only few men accompany them to come to the studio because the *dakwah* programmes generally target female audiences. Women often assume the role of safeguarding domestic Islamic piety. For example, we can see this kind of format in the episode of *Ujian dalam Rumah Tangga* (Domestic Challenges).³² The categorisation of the audience will be discussed later in Chapter 4. In Q&A sessions, the studio audience can ask questions to the preachers directly through microphone provided by the team. The producers also receive questions from the preachers from the audiences outside the studio through phone, email, and video calls.

Other formats of propagation of Islam on TV introduce their themes through showing a brief documentary at the start of the show. The preacher of the programme stays to preach while the documentary is being played or after the documentary ends. In this respect, the audience only watch pictures and videos on the screen and at the same listen to the voice of the preacher. There is no Q&A session in this type of programme. One of the TV stations, which use this format is Trans7. For example, we can see this type of format in the programme of *Khalifah* on Trans7.³³ In this kind of programme, there is no audience in the studio. Most of the documentary movies played in the

³⁰ Interview with Rahman, the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, on Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

³¹ Interview with Rahman, the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, on Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

³² See *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*. October 2016. "Ujian dalam Rumah Tangga [Obstacles in Family Lives]." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JIgXFNeFHQ>. Last accessed, December 4, 2016.

³³ See, for example, in *Khalifah* Trans7. April 2016. "Kisah Karomah Umar bin Khattab R.A. [Umar bin Khattab's Miracles]." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6NI6_ZMjgg. Last accessed, December 4, 2016.

dakwah programmes on Trans7 are made by Rodja TV. The producers of Trans7 choose and broadcast them for their *dakwah* programmes.³⁴

There are also several *dakwah* programmes, which are designed following storytelling formats. In this type of programme, the preacher, the producer, and the crew member, travel to a particular place to visit Islamic heritage sites. The preacher tells the story of the place related to Islamic history to the audience. For instance, Arifin Nugroho, the preacher for *Poros Surga* (Heaven Axis) on Trans7, broadcasted *Poros Surga* from Medina in Saudi Arabia. The stories of their visit to Medina were divided into several episodes. He told the stories of some important places in Medina including the history of some mosques in Medina, grave of the Prophet Muhammad, and the food in Medina.³⁵ Other heritage sites that they visited include Istanbul and Bursa in Turkey, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. At these heritage sites, Arifin Nugroho repeated these same activities as in Medina.³⁶

Another format is designed like a lecturing session, in which the preacher acts as a teacher, and the audience is positioned as students. He or she writes several verses of the Quran and Hadiths concerning the topic of the programme with a board marker on a whiteboard and explain them to the audience. The audience interacts with the preacher during the broadcast through telephone in Q&A session. The preacher then answers the questions of the audience.

Dakwah on TV is usually broadcast from a studio, mosque, or other locations in Jakarta or other cities in Indonesia. Most of the *dakwah* on TV are broadcast live to make the programme interactive communication between the preachers and audience. The producers sometimes broadcast the recorded version of *dakwah* because the preachers cannot attend the live programmes. The set is usually decorated with flowers, plants, paintings, and other accessories that the producers need for the broadcast. In some *dakwah* programmes, the producers also choreograph the gestures of the host and audience in the studio. They decide which colour of the costumes that the audience in the studio should wear to create uniformity and tidiness. The producers manage the format of programmes as closely as possible: they

³⁴ Interview with Pracoyo, the producer of *dakwah* programmes on Trans7, Jakarta, April 12, 2014.

³⁵ Poros Surga. April 2017. "Berkah Safar di Kota Rasul, Madinah [The Advantages of Travelling in the Prophet's City, Medina]." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7YyrxPdd4M>. Last accessed, May 2, 2017.

³⁶ Poros Surga. May 2016. "Semua Orang Berhak Umroh [Everyone Has Right to do Umrah/Pilgrimage]." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1oof4bxCU8>. Last accessed, May 2, 2017.

decide when to start, to break for advertisement, and to start again after the break. The producers and preachers discuss together which topics are suitable and how they will be addressed. They also choose which questions from the audience to be answered during the show by the preachers.

In the programme *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* on Indosiar, the creative team changes the backdrop of the stage for each broadcast, but the format remains the same. The stage is set up in a circle where the host and preacher sit in the middle surrounded by the audience (see Figure 2.2). The audience in the studio usually comprises five groups of *Majlis Ta'lim* (Islamic Learning Groups), a pedagogical model of Islam used to address Muslim men and women. More women than men attend *dakwah* programmes. The audience in the studio of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* on Indosiar sit in a line of seats like in a movie theatre (see Figure 2.2.). A crew member of the programme stands in a row used as an entrance to the studio. They direct the gestures of the audience when the opening song begins while the host and the preacher are sit patiently in the middle of the stage waiting for the song to end. Behind the host and the preacher, there is a big screen showing the main sponsor of the programme. Afterwards, the host and the preacher greet their audience. The host introduces the topic of the episode first before the preacher preach about the topic in ten minutes. After that, the host pauses the session for the advertisements before starting the Q&A session. These advertisements financially support the broadcast of *dakwah* programmes.³⁷

The audience arrives one hour before the programme is due to begin. *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* opens with a theme song by Islamic band, *Qasidah an-Nabawi*, who sits amongst the audience in the studio. The band consists of five students of Institute of Quranic Studies of Jakarta. They use modern musical instruments in their performance such as piano and guitars. In *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, they perform an opening song, *Insyah Allah*. During the song, the audience in the studio follow the producer's gestures and swing their hands left and right. The host opens the programme by standing and walking in the middle of the audience while explaining the topic for this programme using entertaining gestures and phrases. Afterwards, he gives the floor to the preacher of the show, Mamah Dedeh, to deliver her sermon for about fifteen minutes before the advertisement break. After the break, the question-and-answer section with the audience begins, followed by questions via telephone, e-mail and social media. The programme ends with a concluding remark by the preacher and a song by the Qasida an-Nabawi.

³⁷ Interview with one of the creative team in Indosiar, Jakarta, July 26, 2016.

The set of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* creates an eye-catching, entertaining, and visually exciting scene. The producer selects the setting based on their observation in some *majelis taklim* (regular gatherings of religious learning).³⁸ With the circular formation of seats, the audience is able to see each other during the show (see Figure 2.2.). The audience is usually comprised of five groups from different Women's *majelis taklim*. They dress in the same outfit, but in different colours and cover their heads with veils. The colour differences indicate to which *majelis taklim* that they belong. The members of women's *majelis taklim* usually have uniforms that they wear when they attend religious learnings. Many Women's *majelis taklim* have more than one uniform. Female audiences of *dakwah* programmes from different *majelis taklim* wear their uniforms during the broadcast.



Figure 2.2.: The Setting of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* in the Studio of Indosiar in Jakarta. Source: the official Twitter of Mamah dan Aa Beraksi

To attend the programme, the leader of the gathering of Islamic learning registers prospective members via email or telephone. The audience is not paid to attend the show. This contrasts with some live music programmes, where the participants receive payment for their attendance. In *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, they have a long list of gatherings of Islamic learning, which are eager to attend the programme. The producer asks the participants to wear a

³⁸ Interview with one of the creative team members in Indosiar, Jakarta, July 26, 2016.

uniform based on their gatherings of Islamic learning and informs the producer the colour of the uniform at least a month before the broadcast. This is to avoid participants from different gatherings of Islamic learning wearing the same uniform.³⁹

The women that I interviewed after the show of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* were forty-five to sixty years of age. At this age, Muslim women usually have more time to participate in social gatherings because they are no longer providing full-time childcare to their children. In his study of Islamic preaching and the participation of women in West Java, Julian Millie has observed that some women attend as many as six gatherings of Islamic learning in mosques per week. Muslim women tend to be more enthusiastic and active to participate in Islamic learning than men (Millie 2011: 155–159).

It is worth mentioning that most of the creative team members and producers involved in the production of propagation of Islam through TV are relatively young - ranging from fresh graduates to mid-career professionals. Some of them are students and lecturers from universities in Jakarta. TV professionals are dominant in the production of those programmes. Their motivation to become part of the broadcast team is to promote and propagate Islam as their religion through TV. Besides, they are paid well and happy to build a networking among media professionals. They consider the latter reasons as a reward from God for their good deeds.⁴⁰

With the approval of TV manager, the producer is responsible for recruiting the creative team for the *dakwah* programmes. Both the creative team and the producers have to meet the requirements determined by the managers. However, a few TV companies appoint a team for *dakwah* from the professionals. They usually have experiences and been successful in making other types of TV programmes. This strategy helps TV company to minimise the production budget for their *dakwah* programmes.⁴¹

To stimulate the enthusiasm of the audience, the producers of propagation of Islam employ several strategies. Firstly, they ask the preachers to combine their preaching with jokes or humorous stories since comedy programmes on TV tend to receive high ratings (Hobart 2006). For example, according to several rating institutions in Indonesia, the talk show programme *Pesbukers* on ANTV obtained the highest rating in 2014.⁴² The combination

³⁹ Interview with one of the producers from Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

⁴⁰ Interview with one of the crewmembers of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* from Indosiar, Jakarta, July 15, 2016.

⁴¹ Interview with one of the producers from Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

⁴² For more details, see Kumparan News. August 2017. "Viva Group Kuasai Rating TV

of preaching and comedy is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia. Many ordinary preachers in Muslim communities, who do not perform their preaching on TV, combine their preaching with humour. According to the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, humour is an important part of propagation of Islam through TV shows. It has become a vital ingredient for the programmes because, according to the producer ‘Indonesian people are addicted to it.’⁴³

Secondly, they hire well-known actors as the hosts of the programmes. They can attract audience’s attention to watch the programmes. Thirdly, it is to set it up in a format similar to reality, variety, competition or talent searching show. For example, the ratings of young preacher contest, *Pemilihan Dai Cilik* (Recruitment of Young Preachers or *Pildacil*), are so high that TVOne extent its broadcast. In this programme, young Muslims ranging from junior high school to university students register to compete to be the champion. The contestants of *Pildacil* come from provinces across the country. They must compete and win in the provincial level before traveling to Jakarta for the highest level. The producer of *Pildacil* chooses three to four judges, who consist of famous TV preachers and celebrities. The producer hires an actor or actress to judge the fashion and performance of the contestants of *Pildacil*, while the performance and rhetoric are assessed by the famous preachers. It is important to know that *Pildacil* was first broadcast on TV channel LaTivi, which was later taken over by Bakrie. After the acquisition of LaTivi channel, the new owner has since changed the name of the station from LaTivi to TVOne. Many advertising companies compete to finance this contest.⁴⁴

Lastly, many producers prefer the preachers that they know well. The preachers might be their friends or friends of their colleagues. The producer of the programme of propagation of Islam in Indosiar affirmed that he also carefully observes the physical appearance and rhetorical skill of the candidates because they influence the attention of the audience.⁴⁵ The producers of TV channels have their own criteria and qualifications of preachers for their propagation of Islam, which is different from those

Hiburan dan Berita di Indonesia [Viva Group Dominate TV Ratings for Entertainment and News Programmes in Indonesia].” <https://kumparan.com/jofie-yordan/viva-group-kuasai-rating-tv-hiburan-dan-berita-di-indonesia>. Last accessed, August 29, 2017.

⁴³Interview with one of the producers from Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

⁴⁴ Interview with the producer of *Pildacil*, Jakarta, January 5, 2015.

⁴⁵ Interview with one of the producers from Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

understood by Muslim scholars. The detailed analysis on the criteria of TV preachers will be presented in Chapter 3.

In regards to the content, the preacher decides which topic they preach about for each episode of their preaching on TV. Many preachers also have a manager, who organises and manages their activities, chooses their outfits, and recommends a list of topics for their preaching on TV. The list of topics is arranged for several episodes. Afterwards, the preachers discuss the list of topics with the producer. Most of the programmes of *dakwah* through TV shows are concerned with family matters, romantic relationships in Islam, Islamic businesses, and Islamic services. According to the producers, the topics of propagation of Islam on TV must be light, practical, and easy to understand by the audience. They avoid philosophical, debatable, and controversial topics, which can stimulate public debates and protests against the shows.⁴⁶ This evidence shows that producers want to make propagation of Islam entertaining and easily understood by a general audience. The audience should be able to immediately relate to the issues addressed by the preacher.

There is often disagreement between the public about the answers provided by preachers as answers vary over time and context. As a result, the answers given in the programmes becomes opinions, which are talked and debated by the public, rather than a solution to the question, because the preachers have different or contradictory answers. For example, in one of the episodes of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* on July 31, 2017, Mamah Dedeh was asked a question about a difficult decision faced by Muslim veterinarians when they were required to conduct surgery for animals (such as dog or pig), which are considered unclean and forbidden in Islam. Muslims must clean the part of their body, which touches the animals, based on a rigid procedure, which is determined by Islamic jurisprudence. It is important to mention that Muslim scholars have different opinions about to what extent the part of the body must be cleaned by water and how to do that. In response to this question, Mamah Dedeh suggests that Muslims should not choose to become a veterinarian because there are many options of job. Being a veterinarian can harm their services to God because God will not accept them if Muslims are not clean from the forbidden animals.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Interview with one of the producers from Indosiar, Jakarta, July 29, 2016.

⁴⁷ Mamah dan Aa Beraksi. July 2017. "Mertua yang Semena-mena [Parents-in Law Doing What They Like]." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9Icl3avaiQ>. Last accessed, August 3, 2017.

A number of Muslims do not agree with her because Islam provides the procedure to clean the part of body if Muslims touch such animals. The answer provided by Mamah Dedeh was considered to be problematic. In response to Mamah Dedeh's answer, the Association of Indonesia Veterinarians⁴⁸ and several members of NU protested against her opinion. The NU stated their opinion that Mamah Dedeh should carefully study and research some Islamic sources before she answers questions in her propagation of Islam.⁴⁹ After the central board of the Association of Indonesia Veterinarians came to her house in Depok, Bogor in August 2017 to ask her explanation and clarification about her answer, Mamah Dedeh apologised through a video recorded by one of the members of the association in her house that she was lacking information about working as a veterinarian. She stated that she would not answer the question like that if she knew about the profession.⁵⁰ One of the members of NU argues that the controversies of the preachers' answers may happen again because some programmes of *dakwah* do not filter the questions from the audiences and the preachers do not have time to study and research before responding the questions.⁵¹

The following section is about the ways *dakwah* programmes on TV are remediated and circulated to the public. The remediation and circulation play an important role in to attract audiences and increase the popularity of the programmes and preachers in the society.

Remediation and circulation

Many *dakwah* programmes on TV such as *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, *Cahaya Hati*, *Indahnya Kebersamaan*, etc. are remediated through live broadcasting to create immediate experience and interaction with between the preachers

⁴⁸ For complete statement from Mamah Dedeh, see Kumparan News. August 2017. "Mamah Dedeh dan Permintaan Maafnya Soal Ceramah tentang Dokter Hewan [Mamah Dedeh and her apology about her preaching on veterinarians]." <https://kumparan.com/@kumparannews/mamah-dedeh-dan-permintaan-maafnya-soal-ceramah-tentang-dokter-hewan>. Last accessed, August 17, 2017.

⁴⁹ Alex Ramses. August 2017. "Surat Cinta buat Mamah Dedeh tentang Etika Berfatwa dan Dokter Hewan [(Letter to Mamah Dedeh about Ethics to issue Fatwas and Veterinarians).]" <https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/80107/surat-cinta-buat-mamah-dedeh-tentang-etika-berfatwa-dan-dokter-hewan>. Last accessed, August 29, 2017.

⁵⁰ Bukhori Supriyadi Yadi. August 2017. "Mamah Dedeh Klarifikasi Ceramahnya yang Melarang Muslim Menjadi Dokter Hewan [Mamah Dedeh Clarifies Her Preaching about Muslims to not become Veterinarians].]" https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=0G4-Z5k4eZc. Last accessed, August 10, 2017.

⁵¹ Interview with Yahya Cholil Staquf, Jakarta, June 20, 2016.

and audiences. In some cases, there are audience who are present in the locations of the broadcasting to add lively entertaining nuance of the programmes. This helps the preachers to make the programmes more interesting than with no audiences in the locations. The preachers can interact with the audiences through greetings, questions, and humours. For example, in *Indahnya Kebersamaan*, several preachers deliver rhetorical questions just to make the broadcasting livelier and more interesting to watch and follow.

Other programmes like *Rahasia Sunnah*, *Khazanah*, *Poros Surga*, and *Khalifah*, are broadcast from Islamic historical sites that are relevant to the themes of *dakwah* programmes. In this respect, the audiences can watch the real objects, which are explained by the preachers concerning Islam in the programmes. The preachers sometimes explain some cuts of video recordings concerning people, places, or objects that are relevant to the topics of the preaching to provide live experiences for the audiences as if they were there on sites. This way of broadcasting creates hypermediacy which enhances the attractiveness of the programmes. For example, in *Khalifah* in October 2017, the preacher provided a recording video showing some touristic cities in Europe like Paris, Pisa, and Cordoba when he preached about the history of a military commander, Abdurrahman al-Ghofiqi, from Andalusia who occupied France in 732 AD.⁵²

The efforts of the producers and preachers to provides live broadcasting and experiences for the audiences of the programmes are to create remediation which consists of immediacy and hypermediacy. Remediation of the programmes is important because the proliferation of digital technologies is faster than cultural, legal, or educational institutions (Bolter 1999: 4-5). TV company should compete with social media to give live events. It is why remediation become an important part for the broadcasting, which supports the circulation of TV programmes.

Dakwah programmes are circulated through social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube), SMS (short message services), and WhatsApp. Many episodes of the programmes, which were broadcast on particular TV channels, are available on YouTube. The access of Internet makes it possible for audiences to watch *dakwah* at any time they want.⁵³

⁵² *Khalifah*. Oktober 2017. "Syahidnya Penakluk Perancis [the Martyred Occupant of France]." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5KzGcun8Bk>. Last accessed, October 30, 2017.

⁵³ The study of this book is confined to *dakwah* on TV. For more information about Internet in Indonesia, see David T. Hill and Khrisna Sen. 2005. *The Internet in Indonesia's New Democracy*. New York: Routledge.

Shows are uploaded after being broadcast on TV. For example, recent episodes of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* are available on the Indosiar's YouTube account.⁵⁴ Several viewers voluntarily record the programme and then upload them to their personal YouTube accounts. Besides, many TV preachers also post summaries of their preaching on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Several TV preachers also have their managers post the summaries. The Internet has enabled dakwah programmes to reach a broad audience, beyond national borders and at any time. Indonesian Muslims abroad now have access to these programmes. They can watch the programmes anytime they want. The producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* suggests that the intention of uploading the programmes to social media is to spread the messages of the programmes to broader audience and Muslims should take advantage of technologies such as the Internet. 'There are not enough viewers on YouTube for the programme to make profit from it.' It is just the mission of Islam.⁵⁵ Indeed, it does not make profit but it rises the popularity of the programme and preacher. In this respect, only the broadcasting version on TV is profitable.

One of the TV preachers, Yusuf Mansur, even used SMS to remediate and circulate his preaching via mobile phones. The programme was named SMS advice (*tausiyah*) and was popular between 2010 and 2013. Yusuf Mansur signed a contract with the national mobile phone operator, Telkomsel for this programme. Yusuf Mansur and the provider earned a profit from this programme because Muslims needed to pay a subscription to access the programme. Muslims could easily subscribe to get daily SMS advice or ask questions about religious matters from and to the preachers. Muslims, who subscribed to this network, received Islamic advice from the preachers three times a day: in the morning at ten o'clock, in the afternoon at one o'clock, and in the evening at nine o'clock. The preacher usually asked their assistants to provide and compile Islamic advice for this programme and gave it to the operator of Telkomsel. These assistants also helped the preacher to answer questions from the subscribers of the programme.⁵⁶

In an interview with one of the assistants of Yusuf Mansur, Nurman, in Tangerang in 2015, he stated that it was difficult for Yusuf Mansur to handle this programme alone and therefore he needed other people to help him.

⁵⁴ *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*. September 2017. "Hidupku Dibiayai Suami Orang [My Life is Financed by Other's Husband]." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TH9up_mrsMI. Last accessed, September 4, 2017.

⁵⁵ Interview with Rahman, Jakarta, January 11, 2015.

⁵⁶ Interview with Bisri, Tangerang, June 22, 2016.

Yusuf Mansur usually asked one of the teachers from his Islamic boarding school like him to help run the programme.⁵⁷ Nurman works as a tutor at Yusuf Mansur's Islamic boarding school *Darul Quran* in Tangerang. Most of the contents of the SMS advice are derived from what was delivered by Yusuf Mansur in the programme of propagation of Islam *Cahaya Hati* on ANTEVE. The messages are remediated and circulated through mobile phones. For example, the SMS from Mansur would be delivered in the morning every day to people, who use mobile phone card under Telkomsel as a provider. The messages would be short because of the limitation of character on the phone. Subscribers were able to reply to ask questions. The preacher or one of his assistants would answer some of the questions. The preacher received the profit from this remediation and circulation of their preaching. The manager of Yusuf Mansur, Alfian, suggested that the intention of using a mobile phone to spread Islamic messages was to bring the preacher closer to their audience. Through SMS, the audience can get a direct answer to their questions.⁵⁸

The performances of the preachers on TV are also recorded and remediated by the producers onto CDs, VCDs, and DVDs, which are then sold in supermarkets, markets, shops, and streets with other popular products such as music and movies in big cities like Jakarta and Medan (see Figure 2.3.). Many CDs, VCDs, and DVDs are also pirated and sold at lower prices than the original versions. Although it is forbidden by law in Indonesia, piracy of music, film, computer programmes, and so forth is a common picture. Pirated material is available physically on CDs, and also digitally on websites where viewers can watch what they search for free of charge or low price. The price difference between legal and illegal copies of CDs, VCDs, and DVDs is significant, with an illegal copy costing only 0.5 USD compared to a legal copy which costs around 3 USD.⁵⁹

In this regard, the broadcast of *dakwah* on TV are not different. The performances of TV preachers can be pirated by anyone, who considers doing so to be profitable economically or religiously. Many recordings of the programmes are readily available, either uploaded to social media (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter etc.) They are spread by TV channels or by other people interested in sharing their preaching via their social media accounts. Therefore, it is easy for people to copy them onto CDs, VCDs, and DVDs. Indonesia has a strict regulation about piracy. Yet, implementation of these

⁵⁷ Interview with Nurman, Tangerang, June 20, 2016.

⁵⁸ Interview with Alfian, Tangerang, June 20, 2016.

⁵⁹ Interview with a seller of pirated CDs, VCDs, and DVDs, Jakarta, January 14, 2015.

stringent policies is hard to enforce. In regards to the illegal copies of the *dakwah* programmes through TV, a shopkeeper in Medan stated that she did not know from where the owner of the shop obtains the pirated CDs, VCDs, and DVDs. She stated that she only knows that he comes to the shop to bring new ones twice a week. He brings foreign music and movies more often than Indonesian media, because it is easier to pirate them. It takes months to get Indonesian films on VCDs, or DVDs after they are screened in theatre. The owner of the shop very seldom brings new pirated programmes of propagation of Islam through TV because they sell at lower number than other pirated material.⁶⁰



Figure 2.3.: A shopkeeper in Medan shows a DVD containing the sermons from several TV preachers. Source: the author

The recorded *dakwah* version on TV in the forms of CDs, VCDs, or DVDs in Indonesia and other parts of the Muslim world is a common phenomenon. As stated in his study on the use of recorded propagation of Islam in audiocassettes in Egypt in the 1990s, Hirschkind (2006) found that the

⁶⁰ Interview with Lilik Hasibuan, December 15, 2014.

recordings played an important role in strengthening the will of listeners to continue listening to sermons and recitations of the Quran by popular preachers. Muslims played these recordings on public transportation, mosques, homes and offices. The contents of the sermons consisted of discourses on Islam, modernity, and politics. In this instance, it is the preachers themselves that recorded their sermons into cassettes (Hirschkind 2006).

In Indonesia, in the 1990s, it was easy and affordable for Muslims to buy audiocassettes of famous preachers like Zainuddin MZ (1952–2011) at street stalls and in shops. Zainuddin MZ was a preacher, who was well-known as *Dai berjuta umat* (the preacher with millions of followers). He became popular in the country through recordings before he preached in radio and TV stations. His popularity encouraged him to become the member of one of the political parties in Indonesia, PPP in 1977-1982 (Hadi et. al. 1994). In Indonesia, during my stay on the field I heard the cassettes of the recordings were played in mosques each time before the call to prayers, at homes in the morning after Morning Prayer, or in the afternoon before *Maghrib* prayer. I found that these cassettes were played on public transportation to entertain the passengers, in schools before the learning activities start, or in offices during break time.

The managers of the preachers sometimes record the sermons outside of TV broadcast times. For example, the manager of Mamah Dedeh recorded her sermon in 2014 when she preached in the city of Belitung after being invited to do so by the mayor of the city. He then copied the recording onto VCDs and DVDs to offer them to distributors to buy and sell them. The recordings are also important to play for the programme when a preacher is too ill to perform. The producer will play one of the recordings that the preacher has for his programme.⁶¹

In Bali, I found that it is difficult to see or buy the recordings of *dakwah* programmes on TV in markets and shops because the majority of the population are Hindu. Besides, one of the Muslim sellers of VCDs and DVDs asserted that, after the Bali bombings of 2002, tensions between Muslims and Hindus increased. This led to a decline of *dakwah* in public places. Muslims preferred to conduct such activities in mosques and their homes.⁶²

Indeed, the preachers take advantage of the circulation of pirated VCDs and DVDs. Firstly, the recordings are one of the ways to increase the

⁶¹ Interview with the manager of Mamah Dedeh, Depok, January 13, 2015.

⁶² Interview with Supeno, Denpasar, February 2, 2015.

popularity of the programmes and preachers amongst national audience. This stimulates many Muslim communities to invite the preachers to preach in various districts in the country. Secondly, the circulation of preachers' VCDs and DVDs strengthen their position in society as religious leaders. Evidence of their importance can be seen from their participation in religious discussions and meetings concerning Muslim communities organised by the government. For example, in April 2017, popular TV preachers such as Yusuf Mansur and Arifin Ilham were invited by President Joko Widodo to the *Istana Merdeka* (Independence Palace) to discuss various matters concerning Muslim communities. Other participants included the chairman of MUI, Ma'ruf Amin and the minister of religious affairs, Lukman Hakim Syaifuddin.⁶³ This meeting indicates TV preachers' prominent and influential positions in the society to persuade their audiences in terms of religion and politics.

To summarise, it is clear that besides the broadcasts transmitted widely to several districts in the country, the programmes of *dakwah* on TV are also remediated and circulated via social media, SMS on mobile phones, VCDs and DVDs. This remediation and circulation form the TV preachers' charisma and strengthen the influence and position of preachers in the society as religious teachers or leaders to whom Indonesian Muslims seek answers and advice for religious, economic, and socio-political matters of their lives. In this respect, *dakwah* programmes on TV emerge as sources of religious authority, which are provided for Indonesian Muslims. This emergent religious authority through routine broadcast on TV challenges established authorities such as NU, Muhammadiyah.

Shaping charisma through daily broadcast of *dakwah*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, religious authority is 'local, popular, and customary' (Turner 2007: 120). These three characteristics of religious authority are established through charisma and leadership which will be discussed in Chapter 3. As mentioned in the theoretical framework of this book, charisma can be formed through repetitive forms of learning (Turner 2007: 118) by providing advice for Muslim communities. Likewise, the

⁶³ For more information about the meeting, see Rakhmatulloh. April 2017. "Jokowi Undang Yusuf Mansur, Arifin Ilham, hingga Mahfudz MD ke Istana [Jokowi invites Yusuf Mansur, Arifin Ilham, and Mahfud MD to State Palace]." <https://nasional.sindonews.com/read/1197830/15/jokowi-undang-yusuf-mansur-arifin-ilham-hingga-mahfud-md-ke-istana-1492421639>. Last accessed, August 1, 2017.

broadcast of *dakwah* on TV provides advice and answers for the audiences regarding their religious, cultural, and socio-political matters on daily basis. It is designed in repetitive forms of learning because the same formats of *dakwah* programmes are broadcast routinely everyday with the same preachers. This situation constructs the charisma of TV preachers among their audiences. Many Muslims in Indonesia consider the preachers, who preach on TV, as legitimate as Muslim leaders from the Muslim organisations such as MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah in the society. This is obvious by observing the relationship between TV preachers and their audiences, and daily appearances of the preachers in the broadcast turn them into charismatic leaders among Muslim communities. I will demonstrate this by means of three cases in Jakarta and Medan.

Arin, a 30 years old shop owner in South Jakarta prefers to watch *dakwah* programme on TV, which is led by Mamah Dedeh. She considers what Mamah Dedeh offers to suit her need in seeking religious values for her life as a wife and a mother of two children. She admits that she follows the advice from Mamah Dedeh to deal with her family and religious matters. She regards Mamah Dedeh as a humble and pious Muslim teacher because she does not assume the status of a celebrity. According to Arin, Mamah Dedeh devotes her life for propagation of Islam and to call Muslims to improve their piety and morality.⁶⁴ Arin emphasises her assessment and preferences of preachers on their Islamic knowledge and pious behaviour. She is aware that *dakwah* programmes on TV are cultural products provided by TV industry for the public and to make profits for the producers and preachers. When asked about other TV preachers, she states that Mamah Dedeh is not the only preacher with Islamic knowledge and modest behaviour but she prefers Mamah Dedeh to others. She cannot explain the reason clearly why she prefers Mamah Dedeh to other preachers. Arin says it is just based on a feeling.⁶⁵

In Medan, North Sumatera, I met Arif, a 20-year-old university student in 2015. He had come to my brother's dormitory room to sit together with my brother to discuss his assignment from his lecturer. Having known that I was doing my fieldwork in the city of Medan, my brother introduced him to me. Apparently, he was following popular TV preacher on TVOne, Yusuf Mansur. He stated that he watched Yusuf Mansur's *dakwah* programmes on TVOne and some occasions in other TV channels. He even became a

⁶⁴ Interview with Arin, Jakarta, November 3, 2014.

⁶⁵ Interview with Arin, Jakarta, November 3, 2014.

distributor of one of Yusuf Mansur's products, PayTren, in Medan.⁶⁶ I interviewed him why he preferred Yusuf Mansur's *dakwah* programmes to others. Arif explained that Yusuf Mansur's *dakwah* combine business with religious advice at the same time. Arif continued his explanation that indeed to be pious and rich is taught in Islam because the Prophet Muhammad was also rich and pious. What Arif likes the most from Yusuf Mansur is his personal qualities: although Yusuf Mansur is rich and pious, he is humble and speaks 'the truth', especially about the impacts of almsgiving to the success of Muslims' live.⁶⁷ To Arif and other followers of Yusuf Mansur in the cities of Medan and Jakarta, Yusuf Mansur's humbleness, piety, devotion, and oratorical skills establish his charisma as a religious leader. To them, the fact that Yusuf Mansur never claimed his role as a religious leader is proof of his modesty. In fact, Yusuf Mansur never rejects this role either when his followers attribute it to him. This evidence is similar to the case of the Muslim movement *Ansar Dine* and its charismatic leader Sharif Haidara in urban Mali. In his study, Haidara gains his charisma from the members of *Ansar Dine* through the everyday radio broadcast and audio-cassettes of his preaching (Schulz 2003: 160).

Irwan, a 29 years old outsourcing staff in the governor office of Jakarta, watches *Damai Indonesiaku* on TVOne. He is a graduate from an Islamic university. He argues that the preachers of *Damai Indonesiaku* have better knowledge of Islam than other preachers in other TV stations. He claims that the producer of the programme is trained in Islamic boarding school so that he can choose qualified preachers in Islamic knowledge for his *dakwah* programme.⁶⁸ Several preachers of *Damai Indonesiaku* on TVone become preachers on other TV channels. For example, Yusuf Mansur and Arifin Ilham are the preachers of *dakwah* programmes on SCTV and MNCTV, but they also preach in *Damai Indonesiaku* on TVone.

We can conclude that the charisma of TV preachers is constructed through daily appearances on TV where audiences seek religious advice from TV preachers in the *dakwah* programmes. These daily appearances are

⁶⁶ For further discussion of PayTren and its controversies, see Amalia Qishtyana Amsha. October 2017. "5 Fakta Bisnis Paytren Yusuf Mansur yang Dibekukan BI, Perputaran Uang sampai Konsep Syariah [5 Facts of Paytren Corporate of Yusuf Mansur, which is Blocked by Indonesian Central Bank, from Money Circulation to Sharia Concept]." <https://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2017/10/06/5-fakta-bisnis-paytren-yusuf-mansur-yang-dibekukan-bi-perputaran-uang-sampai-konsep-syariah>. Last accessed, November 26, 2019.

⁶⁷ Interview with Arif, Medan, January 22, 2015.

⁶⁸ Interview with Irwan, Jakarta, October 5, 2014.

understood as ‘repetitive forms of learning’ as explained earlier. TV preachers establish their legitimacy of religious expertise through routine broadcasts on TV. Through these routine appearances, they construct their charisma, one of the concepts of religious authority, to become Muslim scholars. Although the audiences may disagree with the preachers’ advice or opinion, which are delivered in their *dakwah* programmes, the audience will acknowledge the preachers’ charisma as Muslim scholars. Some audiences listen and follow their religious advice. Their charisma is constructed among the audiences after they watch and listen to the preachers’ sermons several times. In this respect, TV has an important role in disseminating the preachers’ charisma and advice to broad audiences.

Between commodity and public piety

In this section, I elucidate the purposes of the TV broadcast of *dakwah*. An increase in its production in Indonesia at the beginning of the 21st century has raised several questions including why does many private TV channels broadcast such programmes? One possible hypothesis was that a private TV company broadcast the programmes primarily to earn profit from advertisement revenues because of the marketability of the programmes in the rise of the visibility of Islam in Indonesian public sphere. On the other hand, the TV preachers are willing to preach on these stations as a means of spreading their Islamic ideas, messages, and propaganda. They intend to improve Muslim public piety. However, such a theory may be oversimplifying the reality of the situation, because although they have an agenda to promote public piety, the preachers also receive a high salary from the broadcast of the programmes. In this respect, I found that the broadcast of propagation of Islam indicates a contestation between the intentions of commodification of Islam and an intensification of public piety. It means that Islam is negotiated with economic profit. In several cases of the TV broadcast of *dakwah*, Islam takes precedence over commercialism, while in other decisions, commercial interests are prioritised over Islamic values.

When I visited Mansur at his boarding school, Darul Quran, in 2015, Yusuf Mansur introduced me to Ardi, one of the producers of entertainment programmes from RCTI, who had come to discuss the TV broadcast contract with him during Ramadan. I witnessed how Yusuf Mansur explained his preferences and criteria for this programme. He criticised the producer of his previous broadcast of his *dakwah* programme in other TV station because some conditions of his *dakwah* performance were not fulfilled. He prefers a

variety of broadcasting formats such as classroom session in his boarding school. When asked about how important his preferences and criteria were, Yusuf Mansur stated firmly that they are vital, because every TV preacher has their preferences and methods to improve their *dakwah*. He explained that his goal was to spread the spirit of reading the Quran by heart. His target is to have a million Indonesian students, who can master to read the Quran by heart in the period of learning process of five years.⁶⁹

After listening to Yusuf Mansur's preferences of the Ramadan programme, Ardi agreed with all his requests and then gave Yusuf Mansur an advance payment for his broadcast contract. I saw him gave the advance cash payment while saying to Yusuf Mansur 'here is the advance money as our almsgiving for your boarding school, the rest will be transferred to your bank account after you sign the contract.' When I interviewed him in his office, Ardi explained that the duration of the contract varies as well as the payment for the preacher. He refused to mention how much he paid for Yusuf Mansur's programme in Ramadan in 2015. However, he mentioned that in general the TV preachers usually receive one to three billion Indonesian rupiahs or around 213 thousand US dollars for the duration of one-year broadcasting contract. The amount depends on their popularity. According to him, they receive more when they preach based on the invitation from government institutions, industrial companies, and Muslim communities.⁷⁰ This fee is more than the salary of Indonesian president, who receives around 62 million a month.⁷¹ I asked about the source of the money to pay the preachers. Ardi asserts that it comes from advertisement revenue and therefore the popularity of the preachers is important to persuade and offer to advert companies (see Figure 2.4.). The more popular the preachers are, the more adverts fund the programmes.⁷² I further asked whether other TV stations also depend on advertisement to broadcast *dakwah* programmes or not. Ardi confirms that he believes other commercial TV channels use the same approach because producers have goals and targeted profit to earn from their programmes.⁷³

⁶⁹ Interview with Yusuf Mansur, Tangerang, October 23, 2014.

⁷⁰ Interview with Ardi, the producer of the Ramadan programmes, Jakarta, October 30, 2014.

⁷¹ Istman MP. June 2017. "Dikabarkan Naik, Berapa Gaji Presiden Sekarang? [How Much President's Salary Now?]" [<https://nasional.tempo.co/read/887667/dikabarkan-naik-berapa-gaji-presiden-jokowi-sekarang>]. Last accessed, September 2, 2017.

⁷² Interview with Ardi, the producer of the Ramadan programmes, Jakarta, October 30, 2014.

⁷³ Interview with Ardi, the producer of the Ramadan programmes, Jakarta, October 30, 2014.



Figure 2.4. Yusuf Mansur delivering a sermon during a weekly *dakwah* programme, *Damai Indonesiaku*, on TVOne. Taken from YouTube by author.

When I asked Yusuf Mansur about the payment of TV broadcast, he explains that most of the money that he receives from his *dakwah* activities is donated to his Islamic boarding schools from all over the country. He also spends the money for the broadcast of his *dakwah* on local TV in several cities in Indonesia. He mentions that he needs at least three billion rupiah to broadcast his programme of propagation of Islam in one of the local TV stations in Semarang, Central Java. He argues that the local TV stations cannot pay his programme. Therefore, his motivation of making such programme is only for the betterment of Muslim communities in the country. Beside his programme of reading the Quran by heart, he expects that Muslims in Indonesia can dominate the economic advancement by owning hotels, universities, restaurants, and so forth.⁷⁴

I found that making *dakwah* programmes on local TV stations is financially profitable for Yusuf Mansur and other popular TV preachers. The objective of local broadcast is to expand his businesses including building several branches of Islamic schools, clinics, and hotels in several cities in the country. His popularity on TV attracts Muslims to send their children to his

⁷⁴ Interview with Yusuf Mansur, Tangerang, October 24, 2014.

boarding school or to come to his clinics and hotels. The detailed analysis of his style and his salary will be discussed in Chapter 1.

Ardi, the producer of the programme during Ramadan for Yusuf Mansur suggested that they broadcast *dakwah* programme because it is not uncommon among Muslim communities in Indonesia. During the fasting month Ramadan, TV stations compete to produce good *dakwah* programmes that are entertaining and educating. According to the producer, the main purpose of the broadcasting is to improve Muslims' piety. They explain that the degradation of morality causes Indonesia struggle to compete with other countries in terms of economy and sciences. Ardi states that due to a 'decline in morality', Muslims are behaving in a sinful manner. Therefore, they expect that the daily broadcast of propagation of Islam can improve the piety of Indonesian Muslims.⁷⁵ Moral degradation can be in the forms of free sex, drugs, and corruption, others with poverty, public disorder, and chaos in the governmental system. One point that he considers certain is that these problems of morality result in a vast divide between the rich and the poor.⁷⁶ It means that it creates inequality in terms of wealth and opportunity for a better life.

All of the preachers involved in the production of propagation of Islam through TV share similar opinions on the issue of moral degradation. They appreciate the TV industries' help to overcome these problems. For example, Mamah Dedeh claims that TV stations help to solve the nation's problems of morality by their willingness to broadcast propagation of Islam through their TV. She further suggests that her audience is nation-wide, not limited in Jakarta, due to her *dakwah* programme on TV. She expects that her propagation of Islam can improve Muslims' piety and help the country to solve the moral degradation crisis.⁷⁷

Moreover, one of the Salafi preachers on Trans7, Badrussalam, argues that the broadcast of *dakwah* programmes is a pivotal part of Islamic movement to improve the misleading practices of Islam. In his opinion, the majority of Muslims are misguided in their Islamic rituals, which have been infiltrated by mysticism. These rituals include making pilgrimages to the graves of popular saints, making prayers in particular days after the death, and so forth. Many Muslims in Indonesia practice these activities which are also generally endorsed by NU. Thus, the Salafi preachers invite them to

⁷⁵ Interview with Ardi, Jakarta, October 25, 2014.

⁷⁶ Interview with Kurniawan, Jakarta, October 25, 2014.

⁷⁷ Interview with Dedeh Rosidah, Jakarta, January 10, 2015.

return to their idea of ‘the true Islam’ by returning to the Quran and the prophetic traditions. On many occasions, their *dakwah* has caused controversies and debates among Muslims because they often criticise other Muslims’ rituals and doctrines, particularly those of NU. Of the controversies is the recitation of the first chapter of the Quran, which is used by NU followers to heal illness or to eradicate diseases. Muslims in Indonesia conducted this practice because they believe in the miracle of God from the verses of the chapter.⁷⁸ The debates on Islamic practices between Salafi preachers and Muslim organisations such as NU and FPI will be discussed in Chapter 4. There are various Muslim organisations, which are pro and against such rituals as the visit and prayer in graveyard and so on. In this case, NU and FPI are supportive of such rituals while Muhammadiyah and Persis, together with Salafi preachers, are against them. Further discussion about Salafi preaching on TV is in Chapter 4.

The stated intention of *dakwah* is to increase the piety of Indonesian Muslim audiences. This aim is broadly supported by Muslim organisations. The chairman of NU, Said Aqil Siroj, suggested that TV preachers should promote the essence of Islamic teaching, which comprises of peace and tolerance as a manifestation of Muslims’ piety and religiosity. Being a Muslim is not only about fulfilling ritual duties such as prayer and fasting, but also having a good relationship between fellow Muslims and non-Muslims.⁷⁹ When asked about his opinion on *dakwah* on TV in his office, the chairman of Muhammadiyah and MUI, Din Syamsuddin, supported the broadcast because he believes that the methods of *dakwah* develop and are adapted to the advancement of technology of communication. He argues that when radio arrived in Indonesia, Muslims used it for *dakwah*, just as now preachers are using the TV and Internet. However, he says that the contents of *dakwah* programmes on commercial TV channels should be more educative for audience than just providing humour.⁸⁰ Their criticism of *dakwah* on TV focuses on the preachers and content. According to their opinion, humour still dominates most of the content of the propagation of Islam through TV. They also assert that most TV preachers have limited Islamic knowledge so that the content of the propagation of Islam only discusses practical matters, not until the essence of Islamic teaching.

⁷⁸ Interview with one of the members of the central board of NU, Jakarta, January 15, 2015.

⁷⁹ Interview with Said Aqil Siroj, Jakarta, October 12, 2014.

⁸⁰ Interview with Din Syamsuddin, Jakarta, October 10, 2014.

Both the preachers and producers of *dakwah* programmes on TV intend to improve Muslims' understanding and practices. However, personal economic interests may still be of higher importance than their stated and intended purposes. Propagation of Islam has become a commodity on TV that prioritises wit and humour over Islamic content, furthermore the preachers are chosen for their appearance rather than the depth of their Islamic knowledge. The competition to attract sponsorship and the high contract-based salaries that the preachers earn, demonstrate the importance of economic interests in the broadcast. The presence of these two interests implicitly shows the way that Islam is manufactured, contested, and negotiated in all levels of social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances in the country.

The broadcast of propagation of Islam contributes to the commodification of Islam. The producer sees it as a promising commodity for Indonesian market (especially Muslim audience). Commodification of Islam is part of Islamic popular culture, which flourishes in Indonesia as well as elsewhere in the Muslim world since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Heryanto 2014 and Weintraub 2011). It is embedded in novels, movies, TV programmes and so forth. The emergence of Islamic novels and movies like *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love), *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Wishes 3 Loves), and *Assalamu'alaikum, Beijing* (Greetings to You from Beijing), encourage TV producers and preachers to broadcast propagation of Islam through TV. The preachers see Islamic popular culture as the most effective way to disseminate the ideas of Islam, especially to younger Muslims. The products of popular culture help to carry out the mission of Islam. At the same time, the media industry sees it as a commodity for a promising market, particularly because Indonesia is home to some 200 plus Muslims.

The agendas of improving public piety and commodification seem contradictory to each other, however, in most cases the two parties have managed to negotiate these two different missions (Sakai and Fauzia, 2014). It means that *dakwah* programmes on TV can result in Islamic education by hiring preachers trained in Islamic schools and at the same time profit because the preachers are popular. Does this negotiation between religious and economic interests in the programmes of *dakwah* in Indonesia represent the secularisation of religion, in which Islam attempts to diverge from politics, and decides to track social and cultural paths? Or does it strengthen the assumption of a 'global Islamic revival' (Asad 2007) or 'conservative turn' (Bruinessen 2013: 1-20) in a new form by reinventing new methods and tools

through modern media? Only a few scholars suggest that the turning point of Indonesian politics from authoritarianism to democratisation has been dominated by Islamic visibility, and in this case by Islamic commodities. Many have speculated that Islamic parties would have succeeded in the Indonesian political arena after being politically repressed by the authoritarian government for decades. Many Muslim political leaders have kept a distance from political practices and focus their activities on Muslim communities (Porter 2002). In the era of democracy, they have failed to win the Indonesian public in political arenas at both the national and regional levels. There are several reasons that can explain this failure, two of which are money politics and the fragmentation of Islamic political parties (van Dijk and Kaptein 2016). In fact, Islamic movements have benefited from political change in the post-Suharto era (1998 onwards). They have grown and dominated the Indonesian public sphere in democratic era since the beginning of the twenty first century (Collins 2003). Many Muslim students have initiated the activities of propagation of Islam in cafeterias, university students' gatherings, and so forth (Rosyad 2006), (Heryanto 2014b). Shortly after that, propagation of Islam become a trend, which makes it appealing to media companies for economic benefit.

To better understand the meeting point between Islamic and economic interests in the production of *dakwah* on TV in Indonesia, I suggest that we view its trend from the perspective of popular culture. According to Fiske's popular culture theory, a popular cultural product (like *dakwah* performance on TV) is not produced by cultural industry, but it is created by the people. Cultural industries (such as radio and TV) manufacture a cultural product based on a trend in the society for economic return (John Fiske 1997). Before being broadcast, *dakwah* activities was disseminated by many Muslims in cities in the aftermath of the downfall of the New Order. These are conducted by young Muslim university students and businesswomen, who promoted the notions of being modest, pious, and stylish Muslims in public. Many Muslim women, modify world fashion trend with Islamic dress. They adopt new fashion trends from the West by modifying dresses and adding a light veil to meet the requirements of Islamic jurisprudence.⁸¹ They believe their style of fashion is part of *dakwah* activities. This means that Muslims, who involve in *dakwah* activities have economic and religious motivations. In these groups, they usually discuss Islamic teachings as well as ways to build

⁸¹ For special discussion on fashion in Indonesia, see Carla Jones. 2007. "Fashion and Faith in Urban Indonesia." *Fashion Theory* 11 (2/3): 211-232.

business networks or promote their products to sell to the members of their communities and beyond. The TV industry captured this phenomenon and then brought propagation of Islam to TV.⁸²

The frequency and continuation of the broadcast *dakwah* on TV for more than a decade proves that TV industry still enjoys the profit of the products. Another advantage is to fulfil the educational portion of its programmes. Many critics complaining about TV programmes are about the lack of programmes, which provide education for the audience. The *dakwah* programmes are considered to fulfil both education and entertainment programmes.⁸³

Another evidence of the transformation of propagation of Islam into popular culture is that it has changed over time in terms of format and preachers. The producers have to observe a new form and preacher to avoid the audience feeling bored. Creativity in designing the programmes of *dakwah* is necessary to keep the programmes attractive and interesting for the audience. The producer of the programmes may replace a preacher with a new one because their popularity decreases, or just wants to rejuvenate the programme. The attractiveness or attitude of the preachers can also cause this replacement. For example, the producer of a TV company cancelled Aa Gym's contract and replaced him with another preacher due to the complaints by the audience and the public debate regarding his decision to partake in polygamy. His decision disappointed his audience, most of who were Muslim women.⁸⁴

Like other popular cultural products, the broadcast of *dakwah* on TV is 'potentially open to subversive readings of the people' and may even face the resistance of the public (J. Fiske, 1992). In response to a question about his choice of the programme, Rohudin asserted that he only watches Aa Gym's preaching on TV because it touches the daily matters and heart. Further, he explains that other TV preachers have limited Islamic knowledge and understanding. Their preaching does not touch his heart even though it concerns the daily practices as a Muslim.⁸⁵ The audiences, who do not like *dakwah* programmes on national TV channels, often watch the ones in local or community TV stations. As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are some local TV channels founded by Muslim organisations and Islamic institutions which focus their programmes mainly on Islam. Such an attitude of the audience

⁸² Interview with Pracoyo, Jakarta, September 25, 2014.

⁸³ Interview with Pracoyo, Jakarta, September 25, 2014.

⁸⁴ Interview with the producer of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi*, Jakarta,

⁸⁵ Interview with Rohudin, Jakarta, September 20, 2014.

shows us their resistance to the programmes on private TV. This audience argues that the programmes in local TV are better than those in national one because they are delivered by preachers, who are trained in Islamic schools. This evidence makes several audiences doubtful of their capability in Islamic teaching. It is significant for some Muslims to recognise the affiliation of the preachers because each Muslim organisation has different agendas in their propagation of Islam. Therefore, this provides a means by which audiences can carefully select which programme that they want to watch (further discussions about audiences can be found in Chapter 4).⁸⁶

Another important aspect of the production of a popular commodity is financial support and profit (as mentioned above). To produce a *dakwah* programme, TV company usually either invites or receives requests from sponsorship companies. In general, there is more than one sponsorship company supporting each programme on each TV channel. The motivation behind their support is not merely business but also because it can be considered as a voluntary act of charity from the sponsorship company. The owners of the sponsorship companies believe that God will bless their business with mercies and rewards for performing a charitable act for the *dakwah* programmes through TV.⁸⁷ However, I believe that it is just a matter of profit for TV company and sponsorship companies because even the companies owned by non-Muslims like MNC TV finance *dakwah* programme. I found that many sponsorship companies are willing to finance the programmes for profit. One of the sales managers of the sponsorship companies asserts that the popularity of the programmes is one of the criteria that he should take into account in the discussion of sponsorship because he wants many audiences watch the advertisement of his company.⁸⁸ In return, the popular TV preachers and their programmes have to promote their products through advertisements based on a contract. In this respect, there is no difference between the programmes of *dakwah* and others.

Based on the discussion above, *dakwah* programmes on TV have become a commodity, which are offered to an audience. All the programmes compete to reach a broad as possible audience. The producers of modify creatively and change preachers of the programmes to persuade audience. On the other hand, popular TV preachers also compete to brand their selves to find uniqueness for their *dakwah* to capture media and audience attention.

⁸⁶ Interview with Nugraha, Jakarta, October 30, 2014.

⁸⁷ Interview with Nugraha, Jakarta, October 30, 2014.

⁸⁸ Interview with anonymous, Jakarta, November 1, 2014.

The programmes of *dakwah* on TV are produced, remediated, and circulated for profit enjoyed by all parties involved in the making from the producers, creative teams, and preachers. Economic interests erode religious missions in the negotiation between *dakwah* and profit. This is what happens when religious activism turns into a commodity.

Conclusion

The ways *dakwah* is produced on TV demonstrate the important role of TV industry in shaping the charisma of the preachers through their routine appearances in the *dakwah* programmes. This role has been underestimated in several studies concerning *dakwah* on TV focusing only on the figures of the preachers and the contents of their preaching. The charisma of *Mamah Dedeh* is formed through her daily performances in Indosiar, sermons, and direct firm answers to the questions from the audiences. Through her *dakwah* programmes in Indosiar, Indonesian Muslims see her as an authoritative figure to seek answers for religious, social, and cultural problems in Islam. Moreover, the charisma of TV preachers is enhanced by the circulation of their *dakwah* programmes through other media platforms like social media, YouTube, VCDs, and DVDs reaching various segments of audiences in the society. We can find *Mamah Dedeh*'s recorded sermons in markets and stores in cities. They are played in mosques before prayers or wedding events. TV preachers' legitimacy of Islamic knowledge is established through daily production of sermons on TV and their circulation in the society.

Besides, the programme of *Mamah dan Aa Beraksi* in Indosiar shows the efforts of TV producers to create more attractive forms of *dakwah* for the audience with new designs and formats. The demand of interesting *dakwah* programmes on TV often results in changes in formats and preachers, which shows the competition among TV stations to produce better programmes of *dakwah*. The producers invite an actor or actress or comedian to add the attractiveness of the programmes. Attractiveness is important to invite many audiences and sponsors. Furthermore, TV stations can transform popular preachers to become national leaders whose voices are listened by a group of people. *Mamah Dedeh* delivers advice concerning the elections, state leadership, and justice. This indicates that she not only involves in religious discourses and debates but also in political ones.