

The Commercialisation Of Da'wah In The Digital Age: An Analysis Through Fiqh Al-Da'wah And The Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah

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ABSTRAK

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis transformasi dakwah digital melalui perspektif gabungan *fiqh al-da'wah* dan *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, serta merumuskan model konseptual yang menjaga keseimbangan antara inovasi teknologi dengan tujuan-tujuan Syariah. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif berbasis pustaka, penelitian ini mengintegrasikan analisis tematik terhadap sumber-sumber klasik dan kontemporer dengan analisis wacana kritis mengenai wacana seputar algoritma, ekonomi platform, dan viralitas. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa algoritma dan media digital merupakan sarana yang netral secara moral. Masalah substantifnya adalah pergeseran orientasi yang terjadi ketika kesuksesan diukur terutama berdasarkan popularitas, keterlibatan, dan pendapatan, alih-alih pencapaian tujuan syariat. Penelitian ini mengusulkan "Model Reorientasi Dakwah Digital Berdasarkan *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*" yang memposisikan teknologi digital sebagai wasilah *mutaghayyirah* (sarana yang dapat berubah) dan *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* sebagai *ghāyah thābitah* (tujuan yang tetap). Model ini mendefinisikan ulang kesuksesan dalam hal menjaga agama, membentuk karakter moral, memperkuat literasi Islam, dan mewujudkan malaah (kepentingan umum) umat Islam.

Abstract: This study analyses the transformation of digital da'wah through the combined lens of *fiqh al-da'wah* and the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, and formulates a conceptual model that keeps technological innovation in balance with the objectives of Sharia. Using a qualitative library-research design, the study integrates thematic analysis of classical and contemporary sources with critical discourse analysis of the discourse surrounding algorithms, the platform economy and virality. The findings show that algorithms and digital media are morally neutral means. The substantive problem is a shift of orientation that occurs when success is measured mainly by popularity, engagement and revenue rather than by the attainment of Sharia objectives. The study proposes a Model for the Reorientation of Digital Da'wah Based on the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, which positions digital technology as a *wasilah mutaghayyirah* (variable means) and the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a *ghāyah thābitah* (fixed end). The model redefines success in terms of safeguarding religion, forming moral character, strengthening Islamic literacy and realising the public good *maṣlaḥah* of the *ummah*.



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A. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the communication of religion in Indonesia, particularly through the rapid expansion of social media and internet-based platforms. Religious information that was previously transmitted primarily through mosques, Islamic educational institutions, printed publications, and face-to-face gatherings is now increasingly accessed through YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and other digital platforms. These developments have expanded the reach of Islamic preaching (*da'wah*), enabling preachers and religious institutions to communicate with audiences beyond geographical and institutional boundaries (Hakim et al., 2026). Social media has consequently become an important arena for the production, circulation, and consumption of Islamic knowledge, while simultaneously creating new forms of interaction between preachers and their audiences. Recent studies further demonstrate that digital platforms have transformed not only the medium of *da'wah* but also the structure of religious communication and authority in Indonesia (Asbi et al., 2025).

The transformation of *da'wah*, however, is not merely a matter of technological change. Social-media platforms operate through algorithmic systems that select, rank, recommend, and distribute content according to patterns of user engagement, interaction, personalization, and visibility (Kahfi et al., 2024). Consequently, the circulation of Islamic messages is increasingly influenced by platform mechanisms that may privilege content capable of generating attention, emotional responses, and sustained audience engagement. Recent studies of Indonesian digital *da'wah* indicate that algorithms can influence the visibility and distribution of Islamic narratives, while encouraging preachers to adapt their content to platform-specific formats and audience preferences (Kamal Basir et al., 2025). The rise of digital religious influencers has also contributed to a transformation of religious authority, in which popularity, visibility, audience interaction, and digital presence may become important sources of legitimacy alongside conventional indicators such as scholarly competence and institutional affiliation (Dede Sihabudin, Eko Carles, Idi Warsah, 2024).

The development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the communication and dissemination of Islamic teachings by expanding the accessibility, interactivity, and reach of *da'wah*. Previous studies demonstrate that social media has created new spaces in which religious knowledge is produced, circulated, and consumed beyond conventional institutional settings. Muzayana (2023), for example, found that the emergence of *da'wah* influencers on TikTok has introduced new actors into the contemporary religious communication landscape, although their authority tends to operate in continuity with, rather than simply replacing, traditional religious figures. Hannan & Mursyidi (2023) found that the extensive use of social media among Indonesian Muslims has contributed to the fragmentation of religious authority through the emergence of popular and digitally active religious figures. Rachman et

al. (2025) further demonstrate that digitalisation has shifted religious authority from traditional hierarchical structures toward popularity-based authority, in which celebrity preachers and Islamic influencers gain visibility through social-media platforms. These studies collectively indicate that digital *da'wah* has expanded opportunities for Islamic communication while simultaneously transforming the actors, patterns of religious knowledge circulation, and mechanisms through which religious authority is constructed and recognised.

Ichwan et al. (2024) demonstrate that digitalisation has transformed the religious literature of Indonesian Muslims by altering the ways religious knowledge is accessed, circulated, and consumed in the Society 5.0 era. Zaid et al. (2022) show that social-media influencers contribute to the reconfiguration of Islamic authority and practices among Muslim millennials, with digital visibility and influencer-mediated communication becoming increasingly important in religious engagement. More recent research by Fuadi (2026) specifically demonstrates that platform algorithms encourage Islamic content creators to adapt their communication strategies through short-form videos, attractive titles, and virality oriented formats in order to increase visibility and engagement. Taken together, these findings indicate that algorithmic systems do not merely function as technical mechanisms for distributing *da'wah* content but also influence the communicative strategies, visibility, and forms of religious authority that develop within digital environments.

Ridwan (2019) demonstrates that the practice of Islamic *da'wah* can become intertwined with commercial and popular-cultural interests, showing how Islamic broadcasting on Indonesian television may transform religious messages into forms of media commodities. More recently, Mazlin et al. (2025) examine the commodification of *da'wah* through Instagram and show how digital preaching can become integrated with audience interaction and social-exchange processes. These studies indicate that the relationship between *da'wah* and commercial interests is not entirely new but has become increasingly complex in the digital environment, where religious content can simultaneously function as a medium of spiritual communication, audience engagement, personal branding, and economic activity. Consequently, the commercialisation of *da'wah* needs to be understood not simply as the presence of monetary transactions but as a broader process through which religious messages, identities, visibility, and audience relationships acquire exchange and economic value.

Despite growing research on digital *da'wah*, existing studies remain fragmented across religious authority, algorithmic mediation, and religious commodification, with limited integration of these dimensions into an Islamic normative framework. This study addresses this gap by integrating the technological and commercial dimensions of digital *da'wah* with *fiqh al-da'wah* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. Its novelty lies in conceptualising digital technology as a *wasilah mutaghayyirah* while positioning the objectives of *Sharia* as a *ghāyah thābitah*. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the

transformation and commercialisation of *da'wah* in the digital age, analyse the influence of algorithmic and monetisation mechanisms on religious content, and develop an ethical framework for commercially oriented digital *da'wah* based on *fiqh al-da'wah* and *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library-research design with a normative-conceptual approach. The study analysed 30 references, consisting of 20 primary Islamic sources and 10 secondary sources published mainly within the last ten years (2016–2026). The primary sources included the Qur'an, selected hadith, and classical works of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, particularly *al-Shātibi's al-Muwāfaqāt* and *al-Ghazālī's Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. The secondary sources comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and relevant institutional reports concerning digital *da'wah*, social-media algorithms, platform economy, religious commodification, monetisation, and Islamic ethics. The literature was collected through Google Scholar, Scopus, Dimensions, Crossref, and Garuda using relevant keywords such as digital *da'wah*, Islamic preaching, social media, algorithm, monetisation, religious commodification, *fiqh al-da'wah*, and *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*. Sources were selected purposively based on thematic relevance, academic credibility, publication recency, and contribution to the research questions, while duplicate, non-scholarly, and irrelevant sources were excluded (Siregar, 2024).

The collected literature was analysed through thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Thematic analysis involved repeated reading, coding, categorisation, and identification of the main themes related to the nature of *da'wah*, digital transformation, algorithmic logic, monetisation, religious commodification, sincerity, and Islamic ethics. CDA was then used to examine how algorithms, engagement, virality, and monetisation shape the discourse and practice of contemporary digital *da'wah* at the textual, discursive, and social levels. Finally, the findings were synthesised with the principles of *fiqh al-da'wah*, *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*, and Islamic ethics to formulate the ethical boundaries and conceptual model of digital *da'wah* (Firman Maulidna et al., 2025).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The essence of *da'wah* is a fixed Sharia orientation, not a media artefact

The first finding is that the essence of *da'wah* is fixed by *Sharia* and is unchanged by the medium that carries it. Etymologically, *da'wah* derives from the Arabic *da'ā-yad'ū-da'watan*, meaning to call or invite to something. In juristic terms it is the activity of guiding people to the path of Allah through Islamic teaching conveyed with wisdom and courteous dialogue. The Qur'an itself binds together the end and the method of *da'wah*:

«ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ»

“Invite to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in the best way.” (An-Nahl: 125)

The verse establishes two inseparable dimensions of da'wah: the objective and the method. The expression *sabīl rabbik* indicates that the ultimate orientation of *da'wah* is the path of Allah, while *ḥikmah*, *al-maw'izah al-ḥasanah*, and *al-mujādalah bi-allatī hiya aḥsan* establish ethical requirements for the way that message is communicated. In the context of digital *da'wah*, this distinction is important because technological innovation may change the form, speed, and reach of communication, but it cannot redefine the ultimate purpose or ethical standards of da'wah. YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, algorithms, and other digital technologies can therefore function as *wasīlah* (means), but they should remain subordinate to the *ghāyah* (ultimate objective) of guiding people toward goodness and obedience to Allah (Nurhamidin et al., 2025). Its social and moral horizon is affirmed in another verse:

«وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ»

“Let there be among you a group who call to what is good, enjoin right and forbid wrong; it is they who are successful.” (Al 'Imrān: 104)

The verse provides an important criterion for evaluating digital da'wah: success should not be defined solely by visibility, engagement, follower numbers, or monetisation, but by whether digital communication contributes to the realization of Islamic goodness and moral responsibility. This becomes particularly significant in an algorithmic environment where content visibility is largely measured through views, likes, shares, watch time, and other engagement indicators. When these indicators become the primary measure of *da'wah* success, the platform's logic may gradually replace the Sharia-oriented understanding of success. From the perspective of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, this distinction confirms that technology is a changing instrument, whereas the objectives of Sharia constitute the normative direction that should be preserved. The principle that the rulings of means follow the objectives they serve (*al-wasā'il laḥā aḥkām al-maqāṣid*) provides a basis for understanding the legitimacy of digital media in da'wah. Accordingly, the use of social media, algorithms, and artificial intelligence is not inherently problematic; its ethical status depends on how these instruments are used and whether their use supports or undermines the objectives of da'wah (Hakim et al., 2026). Digital adaptation is therefore permissible and even beneficial when it increases the effectiveness of conveying Islamic teachings without transforming popularity, commercial gain, or algorithmic visibility into the primary objectives of *da'wah*.

The finding consequently suggests that the major transformation brought by digital media is not a transformation of the essence of *da'wah*, but a transformation of the environment and indicators through which *da'wah* is evaluated. The Sharia paradigm emphasizes guidance, moral improvement, and the realization of goodness, whereas the platform paradigm tends to emphasize visibility, engagement, and economic value. The ethical challenge of digital *da'wah* therefore emerges when the means begin to determine the ends: when algorithmic performance and monetisation cease to function as supporting instruments and instead become the principal objectives of religious communication.

2. Digitalisation transforms the ecology of *da'wah*, not its nature

The second finding is that digitalisation changes the ecology of *da'wah* its channels, authority structures and consumption patterns while leaving its nature intact. The digital revolution has shifted communication from linear to networked forms. *Da'wah* once conducted face-to-face in mosques and study circles is now accessible at any time through YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, podcasts and AI-based applications. Consistent with McLuhan's dictum that the medium is the message, this is not merely a technical change. Media reshape how a message is received, so digital *da'wah* is transformed in its patterns of interaction between the *dā'ī* and the *mad'ū* (Firman Maulidna et al., 2025). One visible consequence is the decentralisation of religious authority: audiences now receive religious knowledge not only from institutional scholars but from content creators, influencers and short-form video (Rani, 2024). This carries a double implication. On one side, *da'wah* becomes more inclusive and reaches audiences that conventional methods could not. On the other, the openness of the space intensifies competition, circulates unverified religious claims, and lets religion be absorbed into a digital culture governed by algorithmic logic. Yet the universality of the message is a Qur'anic constant:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا﴾

"We have sent you only to all mankind, as a bearer of good news and a warner."
(Saba': 28)

Because the message is universal, adopting digital media is a legitimate adaptation to the age, provided it still serves the objectives of *Sharia*. *Al-Shātībī's* principle that the welfare underpinning the law is not confined to any one time or place supports this. A change in the medium of communication does not conflict with *Sharia* so long as it continues to lead people toward the public interest. Campbell's (2023) account of digital religion sharpens the point: the digital space is a distinct religious arena, so *da'wah* cannot simply move the sermon from pulpit to platform but must reckon with an interactive, participatory, algorithm-shaped environment (Aliwan & Hakim, 2024).

The finding, then, is that transformation occurs in the ecology of da'wah, not in its essence.

3. Algorithmic logic reorients success and drives commodification, though the means stay neutral

The third finding is that algorithmic and market logic reorients the indicators of *da'wah*'s success and can drive commodification, even though the underlying technology remains morally neutral. Algorithms extend the reach of religious messages beyond geographical limits, but what they distribute most widely is not the most scholarly content; it is the content that best holds attention (Utomo & Komarudin, 2025). Some creators consequently adapt their style, themes and interaction to algorithmic preference. Algorithms are nonetheless only computational systems acting on behavioural data. They carry no will, values or religious orientation (Syukur et al., 2025), so the ethical question rests with human use, not the tool. The Qur'an itself commends purposeful effort:

﴿وَقُلْ اَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

"Say: work; Allah will see your work, and so will His Messenger and the believers."
(at-Tawbah: 105)

In the digital economy, attention is a commodity. Platforms compete to capture it because it converts into revenue, and therefore privilege content that retains users longest (Wu & Aronson, 2023). This selection pressure reshapes production, so that controversial, emotional or sensational material tends to out-travel careful analysis (Eleazer Nendissa, 2025). Here *fiqh al-da'wah* meets a dilemma. Engaging communication is part of the wisdom of *da'wah*, yet when capturing attention becomes the goal, *da'wah* is placed at risk. Al-Ghazālī fixes the criterion in the intention behind the act:

الإِخْلَاصُ أَنْ تَكُونَ حَرَكَاتُ الْعَبْدِ وَسَكَتَاتُهُ لِلَّهِ تَعَالَى، لَا لِطَلَبِ حُظُوظِ الدُّنْيَا

"Sincerity is that a servant's every act and stillness be for Allah, not for the pursuit of worldly gain." (Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn)

Attention may thus be a by-product of *da'wah*, but not its aim. Beyond attention lies platform capitalism, which treats data, attention and interaction as primary sources of value. Within it, religion is not exempt from commodification (Sya'bani et al., 2024). Commodification of *da'wah* sets in when content is produced less to convey Islam than as a digital product tuned to market taste, trend and algorithm, so that viral themes crowd out what the community actually needs. Islam does not forbid a preacher earning lawful income (Utomo & Komarudin, 2025).

Monetisation as such is not the problem. The problem is when economic ends take priority and begin to dictate content, method and independence. In the terms of the *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*, algorithms are a *wasīlah mutaghayyirah* and the purpose of *da'wah a ghāyah thābitah* (Shamat et al., 2026). Commercialisation, precisely stated, is not in itself a deviation. A preacher may earn from *da'wah* where the income is an incidental consequence of the work and does not compromise its independence. Deviation begins when economic considerations govern the themes, the manner of delivery and even the religious posture displayed in order to satisfy the algorithm. That is the point at which commodification runs against the *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*.

4. Sincerity and ethics as public religious ethics, and the proposed model

The fourth finding reframes sincerity as a public, not merely private, religious ethic, and integrates the analysis into a model. Sincerity (*al-ikhlās*) is foundational to all worship, and *da'wah* is worship before it is communication; its worth is set by the intention beneath it. The Prophet Muhammad made intention the measure of every act:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَّا نَوَىٰ

"Deeds are but by intentions, and each person has only what he intended." (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

So technology, social media and monetisation cannot be judged by their outward form alone but by the purpose behind them. The Qur'an ties worship to pure devotion:

﴿وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ﴾

"They were commanded only to worship Allah, devoting religion purely to Him." (al-Bayyinah: 5)

Al-Ghazālī deepens this, defining sincerity as purifying one's deeds from any regard for created beings and freeing the act from the worldly interests that pull focus away from Allah. In digital conditions, the culture of personal branding tests exactly this. Many preachers use social media well to build community and raise literacy, yet branding can tilt attention from the message to the figure (Rani, 2023). In digital form, *riyā'* need not look as it once did. It can become a quest for validation through followers, views and likes that quietly become the measure of success. The governing standard remains the ethics of delivery. From *fiqh al-da'wah*, success depends not only on communicative effectiveness but on conformity with Sharia honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness, wisdom and gentleness.

These four findings converge in the Model for the Reorientation of Digital *Da'wah* Based on the *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* (Figure 2). The model arranges the analysis vertically. At the top, the digital ecosystem platforms, algorithms, monetisation and the attention

economy is positioned as a *wasilah mutaghayyirah*, a variable means. It passes through a normative filter of *fiqh al-da'wah*, in which sincerity, truthfulness, wisdom and trust guard the orientation, method and independence of da'wah. It is then anchored to the *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* as a *ghāyah thābitah*, a fixed end centred on al-dīn and the enduring maslahah of the ummah. The end in turn redefines the indicators of success safeguarding religion, forming moral character, strengthening Islamic literacy and realising the public good and feeds back to evaluate and, where necessary, correct the means.

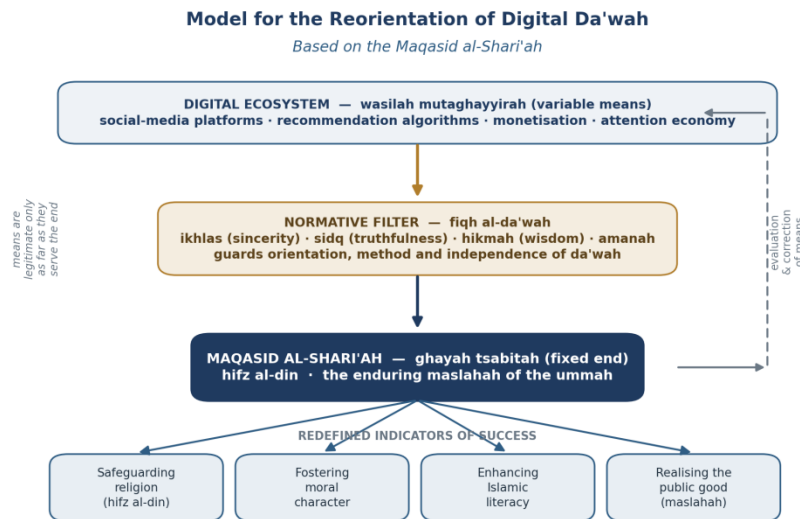


Figure 1. Model for the Reorientation of Digital *Da'wah* Based on the *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*.

These findings extend previous research by providing a normative framework for understanding the transformation and commercialisation of digital da'wah. Rather than viewing digital platforms merely as tools that reshape religious practices, authority, and audience engagement, this study evaluates their use through *fiqh al-da'wah* and *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*. The findings indicate that monetisation is only one dimension of the broader ethical challenges facing digital *da'wah*. Artificial intelligence, synthetic media, religious influencers, opaque platform governance, algorithmic ranking, and echo chambers introduce additional concerns related to responsibility, authenticity, credibility, authority, and social cohesion. These developments demonstrate that the legitimacy of digital *da'wah* cannot be determined solely by reach, engagement, or economic outcomes. Instead, digital technologies should be evaluated according to whether their use supports the substantive objectives of da'wah and protects the ethical values underlying Islamic communication.

Theoretically, this study extends *fiqh al-da'wah* by conceptualising digital platforms as ethically contingent instruments whose legitimacy depends on their alignment with the objectives of *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*. The distinction between *wasilah mutaghayyirah* (variable means) and *ghāyah thābitah* (stable ends) provides an integrated framework for connecting digital-religion studies, the political economy of

attention, and Islamic normative reasoning. Practically, this framework can support Islamic education, counselling, religious organisations, digital preachers, content creators, and policymakers in developing standards for responsible digital da'wah. It can guide curriculum development, content evaluation, organisational guidelines, ethical monetisation, and digital governance while ensuring that technological innovation and economic activity remain subordinate to the substantive objectives of da'wah. Thus, the central practical contribution is a shared criterion for distinguishing the legitimate use of digital technologies from the excessive commodification of religious communication.

D. CONCLUSION

Digital transformation has expanded the reach and practice of Islamic da'wah through social media, algorithms, and monetisation, while also creating challenges when platform metrics such as views, followers, engagement, and revenue overshadow the objectives of Sharia. This study positions digital technology as a *wasilah mutaghayyirah* (variable means) and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* as a *ghāyah thābitah*, providing a normative framework for ensuring that digital innovation and monetisation remain oriented toward sincerity, truthfulness, ethical communication, religious literacy, moral development, and public benefit. However, as a library-based study, the proposed model remains conceptual rather than empirically validated. Future research should therefore test the framework through digital ethnography, surveys, interviews, or social-media analytics across platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram.

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