Creative and Lucrative *Da'wa*: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia

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Abstract

Social media have become part of the private and public lifestyles of youth globally. Drawing on both online and offline research in Indonesia, this article focuses on the use of Instagram by Indonesian Muslim youth. It analyzes how religious messages uploaded on Instagram through posts and captions have a significant effect on the way in which Indonesian Muslim youth understand their religion and accentuate their (pious) identities and life goals. This article argues that Instagram has recently become the ultimate platform for Indonesian female Muslim youth to educate each other in becoming virtuous Muslims. The creativity and zeal of the creators of Instagram *da'wa* (proselytization), and their firm belief that 'a picture is worth a thousand words', has positioned them as social media influencers, which in turn has enabled them to conduct both soft *da'wa* and lucrative *da'wa* through business.

Keywords

da'wa – instagram – Islam – veiling and fashion – youth piety – Indonesia

Introduction

Contemporary Indonesian *da'wa* (proselytization) scenes have been coloured by the active presence of Indonesian Muslim youth on social media platforms. Many activities that are performed to spread Islam and Islamic messages can be classified under the general rubric of *da'wa* (see e.g. Denny 2005: 2225-26). This article focuses on what can be considered soft or light *da'wa* performed

by Muslim youth in Indonesia, particularly female activists, using new media such as Instagram posts. Soft *da'wa*, in this regard, refers to verbal and visual language, especially language containing positive and motivational quotes, used by activists or content creators of Instagram *da'wa*.

Studies on the relation between religion and the internet have become frequent because of the massive use of the internet by believers in diverse religious traditions (see e.g. Brasher 2001; Cantoni & Zyga 2007; Campbell 2010, 2013; Cheong & Poon 2009; Dawson 2000; Hadden & Cowan 2000; Rashi & McCombs 2015; Taylor 2003). Campbell and Vitullo (2016) focus on the intersection between online and offline settings and the evolution of the study of religious communities online and offline. Other scholars study the way in which internet users and religious communities shape media technologies in line with their religious values (see e.g. Dawson & Cowan 2004; Rashi & McCombs 2015).

Recent studies on the use of social media in Islam, however, mostly focus on the conflicts that surround Muslims and the ways in which radical Muslims have been active in using diverse platforms of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Bunt, for example, mentions the phenomenon of 'electronic jihad' or 'e-jihad', alternatively described as an 'inter-fada' referring to a 'virtual conflict' in cyberspace between Palestinian and Israeli interests (Bunt 2003: 244; on Indonesian Islamic radicalism, see also Bräuchler 2003, 2004). Farwell also discusses how ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) 'has employed Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to influence adversaries, friends and journalists alike' (2014: 50). These kinds of studies have been followed by scholarly work on the role of social media in political Islam and the recent uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (Castells 2012; Herrera & Lotfy 2012; Karolak 2016; Mellor & Rinnawi 2016; Miladi 2016).

To date, no scholarly work has focused on Instagram and how images on Instagram are produced and used by Muslim youth in the domain of *da'wa*. This article concentrates on the intersection between *da'wa* and Instagram – a service and platform which was globally launched in October 2010 and is one of the most popular mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social-networking platforms in the world today (see also Beta 2014: 385; Goor 2012: 3-4).

This study uses a combination of online and offline research.¹ Many scholars who focus on religion and the use of the internet as a communication

1 This article is a result of the research project 'Islamic (Inter) Faces of the Internet: Emerging Socialities and Forms of Piety in Indonesia' (FWF P26645-G22) funded by the Austrian Science Fund and led by Martin Slama at the Institute for Social Anthropology, Austrian Academy of Sciences.

technology emphasize the link between the online and offline religious spheres. Campbell and Vitullo argue that contemporary research focuses on the way in which online and offline communities are seen as a continuum (2016: 84; see also Horst & Miller 2012; Postill & Pink 2012). Campbell, for example, defines digital religion as 'the technological and cultural space that is evoked when we talk about how online and offline religious spheres have become blended or integrated' (2013: 4). Following Horst and Miller's argument that 'the digital also provides many new opportunities for anthropology to help us understand what it means to be human' (2012: 4), the religious life worlds of active users can be explored through Instagram *da'wa*.

The offline ethnographic research was conducted in Jakarta between 2015 and 2017. This research mainly focuses on two *da'wa* Instagram accounts, which are currently among the most popular accounts followed by female Indonesian Muslim youth: Ukhtisally (Sister Sally) and Duniajilbab (the World of the Veil). They represent Instagram accounts that spread the message of *da'wa*. Women create the majority of *da'wa* Instagram accounts in Indonesia, and their followers are also mostly women. Therefore, this study concentrates on women and their well-known *da'wa* Instagram accounts. As part of this research, I interviewed thirty-three Instagram users and twenty-nine Instagram 'lurkers'. The subjects were selected after preliminary online and offline research to find the most popular *da'wa* Instagram accounts; afterwards the study traced key informants who had first-hand knowledge of the issue.

Another important facet of this study is the diversity of key informants. Therefore, this research included interviews² not only of content creators, followers, and lurkers of Ukhtisally and Duniajilbab but also internet users in general. Full consent for all the data in this article, including the name of informants, was gained unless the interviewee is identified as 'anonymous'. Informed consent was also obtained for conversations and images used in this article.

The research questions for this study are: What do producing *da'wa* posts on Instagram and consuming products of *da'wa* on Instagram mean to both the producers and the audience? Has producing and consuming Instagram *da'wa* changed the way in which they see themselves as practicing Muslims? The study analyses how religious messages spread through posts and by using captions and whether these practices have a significant effect on how Indonesian Muslim youth explore their religion, identity, and life goals. This article, inspired by scholars such as Saba Mahmood (2005) and Charles Hirschkind (2006), who focus their studies on the cultivation of the virtuous self, argues

2 All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, which is also the first language of the author.

that Instagram has become a platform for female Indonesian Muslim youth, who hold a firm belief that 'a picture is worth a thousand words', to educating one another in being virtuous Muslims. This is achieved through *soft da'wa* whilst conducting lucrative and creative *da'wa*. The inspiring, self-fashioning *hijrah* (transformation) journey to become better Muslims in combination with the creativity of content have led Instagram *da'wa* content creators to become social media influencers among their cohorts.

This article begins with a discussion of *da'wa* and an overview of the role of youth in the Indonesian *da'wa* scene, in general. It follows with an analysis of creative and lucrative *da'wa* of two Instagram *da'wa* accounts: Ukhtisally and Duniajilbab. The last section focuses on the agentic aspect of content creators or producers as well as consumers of Instagram *da'wa*.

Da'wa and the World of Youth

The most common use of the term *da'wa* relates to preaching delivered by Muslim scholars. *Da'wa* activists in various Islamic movements in Indonesia, especially Muslim youth, currently use the term in a broader sense (see e.g. Arnez & Nisa 2016: 453; Meuleman 2011: 236; Sakai 2012: 12). Such activists, including those in this study who use Instagram, believe that any religious activity can be considered *da'wa*, such as becoming better believers according to their standards. The Muslim youth in this study believe that motivating one another through their Instagram posts is a way of conducting *da'wa*. These *da'wa* content creators believe that being active on Instagram *da'wa* stems from their commitment to follow God's command in upholding and spreading the principles of enjoining good and forbidding evil, as mentioned in the Qur'an 9:71, 'The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil'.³ The expanded presence of Muslim youth in Indonesia has accompanied the development of the country's *da'wa* scene. Almost all Muslim mass organizations and Muslim-based political parties have youth associations (van Bruinessen 2013: 39). The leaders of Muslim youth and students' associations often become prominent figures in Indonesia, such as Nurcholis Madjid (1939-2005), the leader of the Muslim Students Association (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, or HMI) in the 1960s, who afterwards became one of the most important Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia.

One of the most notable developments in the Indonesian Muslim *da'wa* scene was the presence in the 1980s of the Campus Institute for Religious

3 This translation comes from Ali (1987).

Propagation (Lembaga Dakwah Kampus, or LDK), an umbrella organization of *da'wa* movements at Indonesian universities. The Tarbiyah (Education and Upbringing) movement flourished throughout Indonesian university campuses in the 1980s and, inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, is one of the most influential campus-based *da'wa* movements in the LDK (van Bruinessen 2013: 29). The founders of Instagram *da'wa* in this study also indirectly came out of this movement – ‘indirectly’ because the founders are not formally affiliated with any Islamist movement.

In the pre-digital era, *ulama* (Muslim scholars) had the most influence over the development of *da'wa* in Indonesia. *Da'wa* conducted by *ulama* takes diverse formats, not only in terms of oratory (see Millie 2012; Nisa 2012b) but also in building Islamic institutions, as seen from the presence of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and other similar institutions (Burhanudin 2004: 29). Media have always been an integral part of *da'wa*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, as recorded by Burhanudin, for example, print culture – journals, newspapers, and books – introduced through Dutch imported printing technology was an important medium of *da'wa* in the archipelago (Burhanudin 2004: 38). Later, *da'wa* messages could be accessed from radio and cassettes, which were introduced in the early 1920s and late 1960s, respectively (Jurriëns 2009: 12; Lindsay 1997: 105, 116). The introduction of Indonesian television channels, which first aired in 1962 (Kitley 2000: 74; Rakhmani 2016: 16), signalled another development in the landscape of Indonesian *da'wa*. In the 1990s, the internet was introduced in Indonesia (Hill & Sen 2005: 10), followed by the proliferation of new communication technologies, particularly smartphones, and diverse social media platforms (see Barendregt 2009), resulting in the rise of Muslim youth involved in *da'wa*.

In addition to these diverse types of media, contemporary Indonesia also has *da'i* (male preachers) or *da'iyah* (female preachers) who do not have strong roots in Islamic boarding school or Islamic studies traditions. In the past, the mediation of religious knowledge was performed and ‘monopolized’ by graduates of traditional Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities. In recent times, the landscape of *da'wa* in Indonesia has been diversified by celebrity preachers, also known as pop-preachers or entertainer-preachers (see Hoesterey 2008; Howell 2008), who do not have the same educational background as classic Indonesian *ulama* (Millie 2012: 123; Muzakki 2008: 208). Therefore, the Instagram *da'wa* content creators in this study, who are mostly youth without a traditional Islamic boarding school background, is part of the current Indonesian *da'wa* scene. Throughout its development, young Muslim activists, who are digital natives, were among the first parties that used diverse social media platforms to conduct *da'wa*.

Through the use of Instagram, the activists believe they can conduct *da'wa* by creatively employing social media to present their religious agenda with youthful 'taste' and expressions related to youth culture. Their assumption resonates with a phenomenon seen in numerous Muslim countries, particularly relating to the use of the internet in *da'wa*. Scholars argue that the internet has accelerated the democratization of Islamic knowledge and enabled the growth of 'new interpreters' of Islam (Anderson 2003). Martin van Bruinessen mentions the role of the internet in 'democratizing Islamic knowledge by breaking the monopoly of the *ulama* in accessing and interpreting the main religious sources (Quran and hadith as well as the major *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence] works and fatwa collections)' (2010: 22). The proliferation of *da'wa* Instagram explains the birth of a new group of young computer-literate *da'wa* content creators who have become the amplifiers of particular understandings of Islam. Through their Instagram posts, they attempt to be agents of the transformation of Islamic knowledge, which for them is part of their fulfilment of conducting *da'wa*. They do this by creating *da'wa* posts using references from sources that they consider authoritative. The latter demonstrates that these content creators are not only the amplifiers of their religious teachers and movements – most of whom are members of the Tarbiyah movement, Salafism,⁴ and Hizbut Tahrir (Party of Liberation) Indonesia⁵ – but also key players in Instagram *da'wa* activities.

Instagram has become popular, especially among youth, who are eager to accentuate their performance of identity. Following Giddens (1991: 62) and his reflections on the formation of identity, I would argue that these Muslim youths understand identity as a process of becoming, rather than one of being. Social media platforms and online interaction in general are seen as playing an important role in this process of identity construction and performance, which is a continuous reflexive process among youth (see Beta 2014: 377; Lister *et al.* 2009: 268–69; Lövheim 2004: 59–60; Rocamora 2011: 407). Photographs, as the main form of communication on Instagram, have become a major attraction for youth, especially young females. Although young men are not absent

4 Salafism refers to movements that seek to return to the teachings of the pious ancestors or the early generations of Muslims. In addition, Salafi movements are known as the strictest puritan movements.

5 Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia is the Indonesian chapter of a transnational Islamist movement, Hizbut Tahrir, which seeks to revive the Islamic caliphate in the Islamic world. It was lately banned in Indonesia in July 2017 as well as in several other countries, such as Egypt, Turkey, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, and Russia (Karagiannis 2009: 72, 103; Karagiannis & McCauley 2006: 328).

from Instagram, the visual nature of the platform seems to be more attractive to young women than men (Duggan & Brenner 2013: 6).

The popularity of Instagram is evidenced in the company's report. According to the company, Instagram.com, it currently has 'over 300 million active users a month, over 70 billion pictures shared, with an average of 70 million new pictures a day' (see also Ferwerda *et al.* 2016: 850). In 2016, 80 per cent of Instagram users were outside the United States (CNN Indonesia 2016). In Indonesia alone, Instagram had 22 million active users a month (CNN Indonesia 2016). Facebook acquired Instagram in 2012 (Goor 2012: 4), after which Instagram became one of the most popular social media platforms in the world, surpassing Twitter (CNN Indonesia 2016).

Users do not need to write words in order to create a post; rather, they can merely post photographs to share their stories with others. To a certain extent, Facebook is a popular site because users have the option to post not only written status updates but also photos. Fans of Instagram use it mainly to post photographs, because for many of them, the platform has taken on the role of a photo album of their life – something that cannot be done to the same extent on Facebook. Today, Instagram is still popular among Indonesian youth, particularly those who prefer a visual platform, rather than reading long texts, as the figures presented below demonstrate, and they love to expose and express who they are through their posts, while being digitally connected to like-minded peers.

For the activists in this study, the use of Instagram for *da'wa* is about establishing an identity as a young Muslim who wants to emphasize the goal of living a proper Islamic life. This relates to the notion of *hijrah*.⁶ The *hijrah* introduced by *da'wa* Instagram in this study refers to the pathways female Muslims should take in order to reach their goal of being better Muslim women. *Hijrah*, for content creators of Instagram *da'wa*, is not only for women but also for men. Instagram *da'wa* accounts that use the term *hijrah* include Hijrah Kampus (Campus), Hijrah Cinta (Love), Kembali (Return) Hijrah, _Hijrahku_15 (_My

6 The term *hijrah* originally refers to the life of the Prophet Muhammad when, in 622 CE, he moved from Mecca to Medina to avoid persecution of himself and his closest followers by the Meccans. Since then, the meaning of the term has been extended by diverse Islamist movements and within the Muslim political discourse to include withdrawal from the un-Islamic path to a new 'correct pathway'. Yusuf (2009) argues that since the 1940s this term 'has been ideologized by neofundamentalist thinkers such as Sayyid Abū al-A'la Mawdūdī (1903-1979) of the Jamā'at-i Islāmī of Pakistan and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) of the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn) in Egypt'. Many Muslims in Indonesia who often use this term are also followers of Islamist movements, in particular the Tarbiyah movement, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, and Salafi groups.

Hijrah_15), and Pemuda (Youth) Hijrah. In Instagram *da'wa*, the majority of accounts focusing on *hijra* are created by women, and their followers are mostly female. Nazhim (personal communication, 19 January 2017), a twenty-two-year-old male university student, says: 'I just have no interest in that kind of account. It is mostly about pictures. Pinky pictures [laughs]. I do not read pictures'. Only a handful of Instagram *da'wa* accounts strictly maintain gender segregation. They do this by permitting their posts to be viewed only by women.⁷ However, most accounts welcome both male and female users, with the goal of making their *da'wa* available to a wide audience.

The posts and captions on Instagram *da'wa* focus on introducing ethical guidance and reminding followers, both active posters and lurkers, of the importance of certain habits that need to be inculcated, such as not only wearing a head covering but also proper Muslim attire and avoiding illicit relationships with men before marriage. Therefore, for many Instagram *da'wa* users, this social media platform is a place for the construction of identity and a 'space for growth', to borrow a phrase from Sherry Turkle (1995: 261-62; see also Lövheim 2004, 2005). Instagram *da'wa*, as can be seen from Ukhtisally and Duniajilbab, which are – as mentioned above – the accounts focused on in this study, serves as a site for constructing better Muslim women, as discussed in the following sections.

Creative and Lucrative *Da'wa*

This section analyses the lucrative and creative aspects of two Instagram *da'wa*: Ukhtisally and Duniajilbab, including the entanglement among Islam, *da'wa*, and business. Many studies explore the entanglement between Islam and business in Indonesia, in particular relating to well-known figures and their products, including training (see e.g. Barendregt 2009; Hoesterey 2016; Rudnycky 2010; Slama 2017; Watson 2005). At the same time, little has been written regarding how Muslim youth engage with lucrative and creative *da'wa*

7 The main reason for using the privacy settings of Instagram *da'wa* accounts in this way is that the account administrators often post pictures of women that they do not want men to see. There is no guarantee, however, that all followers are women – even after limiting access to the Instagram accounts. Piela, in her study of Muslim newsgroups, asserts that men are present in women-only groups, particularly due 'to the degree of anonymity on the Internet' (2012: 7).

in accordance with the rules of proper Muslim dress than *jilbab*.⁸ However, the majority of Indonesian Muslims, who hold moderate views of Islam, and moderate Muslim scholars, who do not agree that wearing a veil is obligatory in Islam, find their Islamic understanding too strict.

Instagram *da'wa* is not only about creative and light *da'wa* that offers visually appealing content to its digitally connected followers. Rather, it is also about using Instagram *da'wa* to market products sold by activists and their business partners. The business of Instagram *da'wa* activists is incorporated under the rubric of *da'wa*, because of their belief that the products offered cater to the needs of those who want to become better Muslims.

The following sections demonstrate the *da'wa* trajectory of the two Instagram *da'wa* accounts studied, which do not differ greatly. The communication traffic is generally unidirectional, with minimal interaction between Ukhtisally's and Duniajilbab's teams and their Instagram *da'wa* followers.⁹ The accounts are both based on online followers. This differs from a number of Islamic social media platforms used by activists as tools for *da'wa*, such as the One Day One Juz, Perjuangan Subuh (Fighters at Dawn) and Sedekah Harian (Daily Charity), which use social media as an important means of *da'wa* on a daily basis and have solid online and offline bases. They emphasize the importance of maintaining the commitment of their followers, while Ukhtisally and Duniajilbab focus on giving motivation without interfering too much in the everyday lives of their followers.

Ukhtisally and Duniajilbab both have followers who are young female Muslims and are keen on *hijrah*. Likewise, the topics of their posts are also similar, namely, regarding motivation. The main difference can be seen in the visual design. Ukhtisally uses more soft and pastel colours, especially pink, to attract its followers. In addition, Ukhtisally posts short movies in *da'wa*. Duniajilbab has more followers than Ukhtisally. On 3 March 2017, for example, Duniajilbab had 1.1 million followers, and Ukhtisally had 431,000 followers.

8 In other countries, however, *jilbab* might refer to a different kind of Muslim women's attire. For example, in many Middle Eastern countries, it refers to a woman's long dress rather than head covering.

9 Interaction generally occurs only when followers ask about the price of products on their posts (see Figure 1). Many popular Instagram *da'wa* activists are unable to interact directly with their followers because one post can receive thousands of likes and hundreds of comments, which make it impossible for the team behind these Instagram accounts to read and respond to all of them.

Ukhtisally has a smaller number of followers because it has created another eleven accounts dedicated to its separate *hijab syar'i* business.¹⁰

Ukhtisally: From Da'wa Fashion to Da'wa Love

Ukhtisally is a combination of two words, the Arabic term *ukhti* and the name Sally. *Ukhti* is an affectionate term for 'sister', and Sally is an abbreviation of *ṣāliḥa*, which means 'a pious female Muslim'. *Ukhti Sally*, which literally means 'sister Sally', is portrayed as an imaginary friend of Muslim women who are eager to experience *hijrah*. *Ukhtisally* was created in 2013 by Ayu Momalula, a twenty-eight-year-old mother of one child. Ayu and her husband, Viki, created the imaginary character of *Ukhti Sally* because they knew that using a real human figure would be prone to human imperfections, that is, the risk of losing followers if the figure commits an error (personal communication, 20 March 2017). The account name *Ukhtisally* is attractive to Muslims who are younger than Ayu.

I first found out about *Ukhtisally* during one of its offline events in Jakarta, on 26 April 2015, called '#MarriagePartnerWillEventuallyVisit[You]: Achieve His [God's] Love before Achieving His Love' (#JodohPastiBertamu: Raih CintaNya sebelum Cintanya; see Figure 2).¹¹ More than 2200 young female Muslims attended this event, a number that surprised me. The use of offline events has grown and become more popular. Since 2012, they have been used by numerous social media *da'wa* moderators, demonstrating the relationship between online and offline religious activities. The number of young participants attending this kind of event signals that online and offline religious activities can have a high impact on the life of Indonesian Muslim youth. Most of the attendees are university students and recent graduates from eighteen to twenty-six years old, the typical age of activists in campus-based *da'wa*. Indeed, many *Ukhtisally* followers are activists in their campus *da'wa*. Entrance to the events costs between Rp99,000 and Rp120,000 (ca. US\$7-9). The organizers use the returns generated to help recoup expenses and fund other online and offline activities managed by *Ukhtisally*. Vonia, a twenty-five-year-old university student, says:

¹⁰ This number is per 3 March 2017.

¹¹ This hashtag refers to *Ukhtisally*'s group message to all its followers that they have to believe in God in order to find their marriage partners. They need to love God before they can find their true love, because *Ukhtisally* believes that it is only God who can help female Muslims find proper marriage partners.

FIGURE 2 *Ukhtisally's post on the #JodohPastiBertamu event.*

NOTE: THIS WAS THE FIRST POST REGARDING THIS EVENT, WHICH RECEIVED 1,103 'LIKES' AND WAS REPOSTED SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE THE DAY OF THE EVENT. THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN FROM UKHTISALLY'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT: [HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/P/Z2QM1ATSFN/?TAKEN-BY=UKHTISALLY&HL=EN](https://www.instagram.com/p/Z2QM1ATSFN/?taken-by=ukhtisally&hl=en), 2 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 15:03.

This event is not cheap, but I am just very excited to attend, because the speakers are popular public figures, actresses, and a television *ustadz*.¹² I want to know them intimately. (personal communication, 26 April 2015)¹³

Ayu's *hijrah* journey started when she was in high school. Her sister, who was active in a Tarbiyah *halaqah* (study circle), asked Ayu to follow in her footsteps. Throughout her *hijrah* journey, Ayu became closer to Salafism. Although she has not become a staunch follower of any one Salafi movement, she has been an active attendee of religious gatherings of some Muslim scholars who are known to belong to Salafi movements, such as Ustadz Firanda, Ustadz Khalid Basalamah, and Ustadz Syafiq Reza Basalamah.

In April 2015, Ayu mentioned that her Instagram and Twitter accounts @Ukhtisally had 84.000 and 199.500 followers, respectively. On 2 November

12 *Ustadz* is an honorific term of address for a man who has deep religious knowledge. This term usually precedes the person's name.

13 Here, she refers to three actresses who were speakers at this event: Meyda Sefira, Oki Setiana Dewi, and Indri Giana. The television *ustadz* she mentions is Ustadz Riza, the husband of Indri Giana.

2016, Ukhtisally's Instagram and Twitter accounts were followed by 393.000 and 225.000 users, respectively. These numbers show that the popularity of this Instagram account has increased considerably over time. Ayu explained the online-offline encounters of Ukhtisally as follows (personal communication, 26 April 2015):

To maintain our followers [online], we have an [offline] event once every three or four months. If not, they will run away from us....

We want to be closer to our [online] fans and followers. One of the ways to realize it is by organizing an offline event, so they can trust us that we indeed exist.

Initially, this Instagram *da'wa* was born out of the eagerness of its founder to invite her followers to conduct *hijrah* by socializing (and selling) *hijab syar'i*. Ayu created Ukhtisally to educate Muslim women to wear her *hijab syar'i* products. She says (personal communication, 26 April 2015): 'Nowadays, *hijab syar'i* is something new. Therefore, there should be an education on social media'. Throughout its development, Ukhtisally has spurred Ayu's *hijab syar'i* retail business. Ayu considers her business part of her *da'wa* to encourage other Muslim women to wear what she believes to be more proper attire.

Ayu's business has since expanded from selling *hijab syar'i* to becoming a publishing venture. She writes books (see Figure 1) about young female Muslims¹⁴ – *Diary Sally* (*Sally's Diary*) – and love – *Diary Cinta Sally* (*Sally's Love Diary*) and *101 Pesan Cinta* (*101 Love Messages*). Each of these books contains examples of Ayu's *da'wa* for young female Muslims. In *Diary Cinta Sally*, for example, she writes:

The door to my heart is still locked,
open if you have its key: Obedience [towards God] and noble character,
will be enough ☺.

@MOMALULA 2016: 103

This quotation demonstrates that Ayu mixes a unique combination of earthly youthful desires and religion – pious love – which is a typical sentiment that has been utilized by many young activists in Islamist movements, especially

14 The age range of the readership of Ayu's books mirrors the majority of the attendees of Ukhtisally's offline event. They are mainly from sixteen to twenty-six years old.

the Tarbiyah movement,¹⁵ in popular culture, such as the lyrics of famous *nasyid*, a genre of Islamic popular music often played and sung by these activists (Barendregt 2011: 241). Each of Ayu's *da'wa* businesses has an Instagram account: @hijabsallyheart (139,000 followers), @diarysally (33,100 followers), and @diarycintasally (21,800 followers).¹⁶ A public relations graduate, Ayu has successfully shown creativity and talent in 'grabbing' her target market of young Indonesian female Muslims.

Ukhtisally's *da'wa* themes mostly focus on wearing *hijab syar'i* and finding a marriage partner (*jodoh*) in an Islamic way. According to Ayu, most of her followers are young female Muslims who want to practice Islam properly and who are worried about their ability to find a proper husband. This phenomenon developed from the belief that dating (*pacaran*) is forbidden in Islam. However, not all young Indonesian Muslims share the same beliefs on this issue, as is evidenced by young Indonesian Muslims participating in forms of offline and online dating (see Slama 2010). Therefore, the Islamic understandings shared by Ayu and her team are their specific understandings, which may differ from those of other Muslims in Indonesia (see also Smith-Hefner 2005).

Ayu leads a team of five that helps to prepare the content for the Ukhtisally Instagram account. The inspiration for Ukhtisally's posts come from the Qur'an, books of *ḥadīth*¹⁷ compilations, or sources from reliable websites.¹⁸ According to Ayu, browsing the internet is an important way to generate good sources of information. This belief resonates with van Bruinessen (2010: 22), who mentions that the 'availability of digitalized and searchable sources, on CD-ROM and online, has given every computer-literate person with sufficient linguistic

15 Although Ayu is currently closer to Salafism than the Tarbiyah movement, many of Ayu's young followers are Tarbiyah activists. One of the differences between the two is that Salafism is stricter regarding its understanding of Islam. An example of this can be seen in the ethical formation understood by women in the Salafi and the Tarbiyah movements. Salafi women usually adopt stricter bodily acts and performances, such as wearing *gamis* (a head-to-toe wrap) and longer and more sombre hijab colours. Furthermore, the followers and staunch supporters of Salafi movements wear a face veil (see Nisa 2011, 2012a). In contrast, the followers of the Tarbiyah movement often wear tunics, skirts, and shorter veils than Salafi women.

16 These numbers were current as of 2 November 2016.

17 *Ḥadīth* are reports describing the life, words, actions, or habits of the Prophet Muhammad.

18 In this context, 'reliable websites' are those of Muslim scholars or groups that suit Ayu and her team's understandings of Islam. During the interview, Ayu emphasised that 'the most important thing is that the source is clear' (*yang paling penting sumbernya jelas*). Viki often mentioned 'the prophetic teachings' (*ajaran sunnah*). This term is often emphasised by the Salafis.

FIGURE 3 One of Ukhtisally's messages on hijab syar'i.

SOURCE: THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN FROM
UKHTISALLY'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT: [HTTPS://
WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/UKHTISALLY/?HL=EN/](https://www.instagram.com/ukhtisally/?hl=en/),
2 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 17:44.

competence the possibility to rapidly find references to just any issue, in the Quran, hadith collections or any other corpus he or she considers authoritative'. Ayu approves all content for Ukhtisally before it is published on social media. She states that she will not approve content if the sources are from weak or unsound *ḥadīth*. Ayu and her team have a decent level of knowledge of Islamic sources, which they usually cite in their posts.

Figure 3, for example, demonstrates how Ayu and her team¹⁹ promote their understanding of the importance of wearing *hijab syar'i* – which some might see as uncomfortable clothing, especially in the humid climate of Indonesia – by citing the Qur'an.

Qur'an 9:81

Those who were left behind (in the Tabuk expedition) rejoiced in their inaction behind the back of the Messenger of Allah: they hated to strive and fight, with their goods and their persons, in the cause of Allah: they said, 'Go not forth in the heat'. Say, *'The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat'. If only they could understand!*

Choosing to quote only a part of this verse (in italic), they attempt to justify their position regarding the obligation for Muslim women to wear *hijab syar'i*

19 Ayu has seven employees who run her business in addition to the five employees responsible for creating the content of Ukhtisally's posts.

by saying: 'You do not want to wear a *hijab syar'i* because it is sultry?! 'Say, "The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat." If only they could understand!' Note that the post does not mention the context of the verse: an expedition for Islam called the expedition to Tabūk in 630. Rather, they merely quote a section of the verse in order to justify their position on the wearing of a *hijab syar'i*. Ukhtisally's followers did not respond to this 'mashed-up' quotation critically. This seems characteristic in that the followers and lurkers of Ukhtisally's Instagram *da'wa* are mostly those who are like-minded in their goal of *hijrah*.

One interviewee says (Depok, 9 December 2016):

Ukhtisally's posts, for me, are not only giving me more knowledge about how to be a good female Muslim, but also motivate me to have extra energy to be committed to what I have chosen for my life, like this *hijab syar'i*.

In addition, Ayu and her team also strive not to post about controversial issues. They also block negative comments by their followers.

Duniajilbab

Duniajilbab was founded by Fatiya, a twenty-year-old single woman newly graduated from the Kwik Kian Gie School of Business, formerly known as Institut Bisnis Indonesia. Fatiya's *hijrah* has inspired many of her followers. This is how she recounts her story (personal communication, 6 June 2015):

I was a DJ in Jakarta. I used to wear sexy clothes. Then, I met a man who also had a dark past life [*masa lalu yang kelam*]. He wanted to return to Islam, and he asked me a lot. To cut it short, I decided to return to Islam and started learning about Islam, too.

Fatiya's journey to 'find' true Islam began with a short period of membership in Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (LDII; Indonesian Institute for Islamic Predication), a sectarian Islamic movement founded in the 1950s. When she became aware that the MUI had labelled the LDII a deviant sect in 1979 (see also Zulkifli 2013: 43), Fatiya left the LDII and searched for more reliable understandings of Islam. Throughout her *hijrah* journey, she was inspired by *ulama* from diverse Islamist movements, such as Ustadz Felix Siauw and Ustadz Salim A. Fillah.²⁰ She has also attended various circles organized by various Salafi groups.

20 Ustadz Felix Siauw is known as a pop preacher of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (see Siauw 2015), while Salim A. Fillah is affiliated with the Tarbiyah movement.

In 2012, Fatiya created a Twitter account called *Duniajilbab* (also known as *Dije*), which aimed to help young Muslims, ranging from fourteen to thirty years old, become better Muslims. With her team of eight women, who mostly have backgrounds and experience similar to hers, Fatiya began focusing on social media *da'wa*. Fatiya's objective was to help her followers strengthen their intention to engage in *hijrah*. Fatiya uses the term *hijrah* to refer to the transformation of Muslims from being nominal Muslims to pious Muslims. As with Ukhtisally, the primary emphasis of Fatiya's *hijrah da'wa* is inviting female Muslims to wear *hijab syar'i*. Fatiya explains her understanding of *hijrah* as follows (personal communication, 6 June 2015):

It is *hijrah* [to move] from not wearing the *hijab syar'i* to adopting it. I post inspirational stories of other Muslim women's *hijrah*. So, to date, there have been many female Muslims in Indonesia who have adopted *hijab syar'i*.

During the interview on 6 June 2015, Fatiya mentioned that the number of *Dije*'s Twitter followers (330.000) exceeded that of its Instagram followers (260.000).²¹ However, by 3 November 2016 the number of *Dije*'s Instagram followers had reached 1.000.000, with a total of 15,119 posts. In comparison, the number of *Dije*'s Twitter followers had reached 373.000 with 66.400 posts by that day.²² This data demonstrates the same trend as that of Ukhtisally, namely, that the groups' Instagram accounts are more popular than accounts on other social media platforms. Fatiya shared her views on the effectiveness of using Instagram for *da'wa* (personal communication, 6 June 2015):

Instagram is booming at the moment. Because if we pay close attention, people love to take a picture of many things, even as small as food, and then upload to Instagram. On Instagram, we can explain our images or captions, while on Twitter it is restricted to 140 characters.²³

Many social media users have accounts on more than one platform. Some scholars have introduced a variety of terms to describe this phenomenon, such as 'media manifold' (Couldry 2011: 220) and 'polymedia' (Madianou & Miller

21 They began using a Twitter account in September 2012.

22 See: <https://www.instagram.com/duniajilbab/>. See also: https://www.twitter.com/duniajilbab?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor/.

23 The caption in Instagram can be up to 2,200 characters.

2012: 172). Users often use the platforms for different reasons and purposes. One interviewee, for example, says (Jakarta, 17 January 2017):

I have Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. However, at the moment I love to use Instagram more than others. Instagram is easier to use; I just post a picture with some hashtags. I usually use Facebook to connect with my old friends and Twitter to share my thoughts and feelings about the current condition in the country.

Like Ayu, Fatiya leads a team whose members are responsible for the content of Dije's posts and captions.²⁴ Dije contributors are required to produce creative posts and captions. The topic of each post should be *da'wa* related and invite others to engage in *hijrah* (see Figure 4). Dije posts can be uploaded as often as every 30 minutes to an hour.²⁵ Most of Dije's posts are on themes

FIGURE 4 A post of Duniajilbab on hijrah.

NOTE: The visual content says, 'My *hijrah* is not a sign that I am now free of all shortcomings'. This post and caption was liked by 6242 people. On 3 November 2016 it was uploaded again and received 2449 likes.

SOURCE: THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN FROM DUNIAJILBAB'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT: [HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/P/BMVXHZRG8NE/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BMVXHZRG8NE/), 3 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 19:07.

- 24 Dije is also open to posting and reposting *da'wa* posts and captions produced by contributors outside the main team, as long as the message fits their *hijrah da'wa* agenda.
- 25 Dije runs on shift work, so it can post twenty-four hours a day.

similar to those posted by Ukhtisally – that is, how to become a better Muslim by engaging in *hijrah* through the adoption of *hijab syar'i*, and how to find a suitable marriage partner. Dije motivates Muslim women to engage in *hijrah* in order to *memantaskan diri* (lit., 'appropriate oneself', which refers to making oneself a better Muslim woman), so that they have the same *kufu'* (in this context, referring to the level of piousness) as their prospective marriage partner. The overarching message is that a woman will find a pious Muslim husband if she first strives to be a pious Muslim woman.

The Dije Instagram account is also simultaneously about business. In addition to being a *da'wa* activist, Fatiya is an entrepreneur who runs a Muslim fashion boutique. Therefore, it can be said that her Instagram *da'wa* benefits her business. In contrast to Ukhtisally, Dije seems to be more active in the paid promotion business. The number of Dije's followers invites people in businesses aligned with Dije's 'tone' or agenda to position Dije as their social media influencer (see Figure 5). Fatiya argues that being a social media influencer is a source of income for Dije, which can be used to pay her team's salaries.²⁶

FIGURE 5 *Dije's post advertising that it accepts requests from those who are interested in promoting their products on Dije's Instagram accounts.*

SOURCE: THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN FROM DIJE'S
 INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT: [HTTPS://WWW.
 .INSTAGRAM.COM/P/BMXYNNSGYPP/?TAKEN-BY=
 DUNIAJILBAB/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BMXYNNSGYPP/?taken-by=dunijajibab), 5 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 11:50.

26 The members of Fatiya's team receive a salary of more than Rp2 million (more than US\$160) per month.

Being Agentic Producers and Consumers

The presence of Ukhtisally and Dije, initiated by two young female Muslims, has coloured the *da'wa* scene for female youth in Indonesia. The number of other *da'wa* accounts following their example is growing, including Sahabat Muslimah, Hijraheart, and Hijab Motion. The characteristics of the people behind Instagram *da'wa* and their followers mirror the characteristics of those who belong to Islamist movements, including ultraconservative movements, such as various Salafi groups (see Nisa 2012a). Therefore in direct contrast to how mainstream users of Instagram – seen as one of the leading platforms for celebrating youth culture through ‘selfies’ (see Freitas 2017) – understand it, Instagram *da'wa* mostly opposes selfies. One example is shown in Figure 6, taken from Dije's account. The first post (left-hand side) was liked by 4666 followers, and the second post (right-hand side), which was posted later, received 2867 likes. Both posts emphasize that the religious messages behind veiling and face veiling will not be meaningful if the wearers upload selfies. This view offers a sharp contrast to that of other Muslim women who are also conducting *da'wa* business, including those who wear a *hijab* and are active in uploading selfies. These women, such as the famous Indonesian Muslim fashion designers Dian Pelangi (see Beta 2014), Zaskia Sungkar, and Anniesa Hasibuan – mostly follow religious ideologies different from those of Ukhtisally and Dije. The second post focuses more on reminding those who wear a veil or face veil that

FIGURE 6 *Anti-selfie posts on Dije's account.*

SOURCE: THESE PICTURES COME FROM DIJE'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT: [HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/P/BMDTR0UG2GS/?TAKEN-BY=DUNIAJILBAB/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BMDTR0UG2GS/?taken-by=DUNIAJILBAB/), 2 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 19:17. [HTTPS://WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/P/BMTYSUXGYL3/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BMTYSUXGYL3/), 5 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 15:46.

FIGURE 7

Ukhtisally and the attainment of happiness.

SOURCE: THIS PICTURE COMES FROM UKHTISALLY'S INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT: [HTTP://INSTALIGA.COM/UKHTISALLY/1095254080444876613_289053504/](http://instaliga.com/UKHTISALLY/1095254080444876613_289053504/), 8 NOVEMBER 2016, AT 16:24.

the aim of donning this type of attire is to prevent them from *fitnah* (in this context, referring to seduction). Dije believe that uploading selfies on Instagram is counterproductive to this aim because selfies can attract male attention.

The central theme of Ukhtisally and Dije, as well as other Instagram *da'wa* accounts that follow in their stead, is to ask female Muslims to refashion as pious female Muslims. The ultimate goal of *hijrah* through this refashioning is happiness (*kebahagiaan*). One of Ukhtisally's posts says (Figure 7):

Happiness is created!
Let's create your happiness!

This is a light *da'wa* – containing visual illustration and eye-catching quotes, while avoiding controversial issues – and can be regarded as the ultimate objective of the *da'wa* introduced by Ukhtisally and Dije. When I asked Fatiya (personal communication, 6 June 2015) whether she and her team have been active in campaigning against the presence of Shi'a in Indonesia, one of the most hotly debated topics at the time of the interview, she responded:

No, Kak [Sister] Eva. I try not to touch that kind of complicated issue. We just want to touch their hearts. We do not want to create disputes or emphasize certain opinions from Muslim scholars. We do not want to blame others. We just want to help ease their ways to *hijrah*.

Although Fatiya and Ayu emphasize that they do not want to be involved in disputes on issues relating to Islam, particularly regarding different understandings of it, the captions on their Instagram pages demonstrate that they are involved in emphasizing certain perceptions of the faith, which might be seen by other Muslims as debatable.

How do these groups define happiness? Each Instagram site offers different definitions. Most of them refer to well-being beyond the more secular type of happiness. For example, Ukhtisally added a caption to the post in Figure 7 outlining twelve tips to help female Muslims achieve happiness. Number one on the list of tips is 'being pious' (*bertaqwa*). The caption reads: 'If everything is for Allah [God], this guarantees that your heart will be tranquil'.

Interestingly, the focus of happiness as understood by both groups is not entirely spiritual happiness; rather, they refer to worldly happiness. This is evidenced in the same list of tips that Ukhtisally and Dije offer followers to help them find proper marriage partners. Similarly, the way in which they encourage their followers to establish goals in life can lead to worldly happiness. This includes how they create their Instagram *da'wa* accounts as means to generate a portion of the lucrative business. Therefore, the creativity of Ukhtisally and Dije revealed in this study also demonstrates the phenomenon of combining Islam and enterprise. Ukhtisally and Dije do not see contradictions inherent in trying to marry Islam and business because, for them, their business is part of *da'wa*. This type of *da'wa* is often categorized by the practitioners as *da'wa bi al-hal* (proselytism with deeds, including community service; see also Meuleman 2011: 260). For these activists, followers, and lurkers, Instagram *da'wa* is about attaining the kind of happiness mentioned in Qur'an 2:201, which spans good in the world and in the hereafter.

The efforts of the followers of Ukhtisally and Dije in engaging in *hijrah* resonate with the efforts of women in the Islamic revival movement in Mahmood's (2005) study. Mahmood, in her study of a women's mosque movement in Egypt, analyses the role of Islam in constituting the self and moral subjectivities of women. Even though most activities of the women in my study differ from those in Mahmood's research, the phenomenon of greater involvement of women in the *da'wa* scene is similar. Mahmood suggests that the increasing involvement of women in *da'wa* is made possible by access to modern education and new technologies for text dissemination. Although the technology to which Mahmood refers differs from those used by my informants, the creation of activist groups, such as Ukhtisally and Dije, is similarly made possible by modern education and new technology. In comparison to female preachers (*dā'iyyāt*) in piety movements who are active in the effort to reread Islamic jurisprudential texts (Mahmood 2005: 99), women who use Instagram *da'wa* have generally not reached this level of literacy because of their lack of religious scholarship, as most Instagram *da'wa* activists 'found' religion later in life.

Despite many apparent differences between women in piety movements in Mahmood's study and those involved in Instagram *da'wa*, their religious

experiences share some common features – namely, that their proposed agenda primarily stresses the importance of the ethical dimensions of certain bodily practices, especially veiling. This can be seen in the main concern of Instagram *da'wa* on the wearing of *hijab syar'i* by Muslim women. Many Instagram *da'wa* activists, followers, and lurkers have started to adopt such practices associated with piety, including wearing *hijab syar'i*. Ayu, Fatiya, their teams, and other like-minded Muslims strive to strengthen the intention and commitment of Indonesian Muslim women who are new to wearing *hijab syar'i*. They understand that donning *hijab syar'i* is something unfamiliar to Muslims in Indonesia, who are more used to wearing *jilbab*. The presence of *hijab syar'i* is, in certain ways, similar to the previous introduction of *jilbab* by Islamist movements in Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s (see Brenner 1996: 674) and Turkey in the 1980s (Gökarıksel & Secor 2009: 8). The type of *jilbab* introduced by Islamist movements in the 1970s and 1980s was also considered strange, because they introduced a long, large covering for women, which was seen as an extremist style of dress and was opposed by many Indonesian Muslims and non-Muslims at the time (Brenner 1996: 674-75). As a result, the wearers faced some difficulty in defending their decision to put on veils. Therefore, the current Instagram *da'wa* activists also believe they need to support each other's commitment to this new type of veil. For example, Mardhiyya, a twenty-one-year-old university student, says (personal communication, 3 January 2016):

I just started donning this *hijab syar'i*, Kak. I find this Instagram account very useful. I like the captions and messages that they post. They help me be strong in wearing this outfit. They were also very helpful when I just started wearing it. Initially, it was difficult to find a proper *hijab syar'i* that is suitable for the taste of young Muslims like me [she giggles]. I did not know where to find *hijab syar'i* before, until I found Ukhtisally.

Indah, a twenty-six-year-old recent graduate, says (personal communication, 28 November 2016):

If many images with good content are spread, it is not impossible that many people will become better people because of these images [*berubah karena gambar*] ... like me. Initially I did not know anything, but now I know many things because of the images [on Instagram].

Mardhiyya, Indah, and many other Instagram *da'wa* followers, in general, have been mesmerized by the visual appeal of Instagram *da'wa* posts.

The images that they see are part of light *da'wa*, which suits their youthful culture and touches their hearts more easily and more rapidly than the words of Muslim preachers. Viki argues (personal communication, 20 March 2017):

Actually, women and men do not like to be preached to. For example, when someone asks me 'Why is your outfit like that? Why do you not grow your beard?' I do not feel comfortable.

One interviewee says (Jakarta, 6 July 2016):

Most of my friends and I, also young people like me, I think now prefer to learn about Islam from Instagram accounts rather than listening to long sermons. The posts are about issues relating to us, people my age. We do not feel like we are being preached to, because the posts are cute and motivating, not blaming.

Many Instagram *da'wa* followers who regularly check and read the daily posts (newsfeed) from Uktisally and Dije believe that they can learn about their religion in a 'fun' way by seeing daily images and captions. The followers of Ukhtisally and Dije feel connected as well as a sense of imagined community with other consumers of light *da'wa* who are also engaged in *hijrah*.

The real financial benefit of using Instagram *da'wa* can be seen in the growth of Ayu's and Fatiya's businesses. The success of Ayu's business has enabled Ukhtisally's management to create segmented Instagram *da'wa* accounts, such as @littlesallyheart for *hijab syar'i* dedicated to little children, @sallyheartschool for school-age children, @sallyheartcampus for university students, and @sallyheartmom for Muslim women. Fatiya has had a similar experience. She does not advertise her products directly through Dije. However, the popularity of Dije has spread awareness of Fatiya and her products to Dije's followers. At present, Fatiya has eight separate Instagram accounts for her business.

The comments shared by followers of these Instagram *da'wa* accounts demonstrate the effectiveness of the platform in reaching the hearts of young Muslims. Ayu recounts (personal communication, 26 April 2015):

Listening to someone preaching directly in front of them, they [the followers and lurkers] may reject him or her [the preacher]. Through Instagram posts, they only need to read them directly. This might possibly be more touching or even hit their hearts.

Like Ayu, Fatiya argues that many young female Muslims have contacted her to share their stories of how touched they were by captions in Dije posts, which led them to follow Dije's *hijrah* agenda.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates the role of Instagram, as one of the most popular social media platforms among Indonesian youth, in creating and expanding an alternative space for Indonesian Muslim women to establish their identity as virtuous Muslims. Utilizing the technology of Instagram with its visual language, young female Muslims have created a forum in which they invite and motivate others to become proper Muslim women by engaging in the *hijrah* journey. For these activists, the goal is to emphasize and remind others of the ideal Islamic life and reach ultimate happiness.

Expanding on the belief that being a pious Muslim requires more than a one-week or one-month effort, the activists remind Muslim youth to strive to learn the true teachings of Islam through their light *da'wa*. Through their posts and captions, they specifically encourage followers and lurkers to don a *hijab syar'i* and avoid free interaction between men and women. The Instagram *da'wa* activists are aware that many Indonesian Muslims perceive their views as too rigid, particularly the wearing of *hijab syar'i* and their discouragement of dating. Therefore, the activists use Instagram *da'wa* to strengthen the resolution of like-minded youth who want to experience *hijrah* by adopting what they believe to be a better understanding of Islam.

Despite promoting a standard of being a better Muslim that is not easily followed by the majority of Indonesian Muslims, Instagram *da'wa* has become popular among Muslim youth who do not have strong religious backgrounds. This success is mainly a result of the creativity of Instagram *da'wa* content creators in introducing light *da'wa* through quotations that aim to reach the hearts and minds of followers and lurkers. The agents behind Instagram *da'wa* are not well versed in traditional religious study; however they understand the tastes of young people and today's popular culture. Most of the activists are also at the same stage of life as their followers – that is, they are young Muslims who have 'found' Islam as young adults and are zealously promoting their version of Islam.

Instagram, which can be accessed by anyone, demonstrates that, for many followers and lurkers, 'consuming' Instagram posts is an effective way to exercise their eagerness to refashion themselves as more pious Muslims. Instagram *da'wa* caters to the needs of a particular segment of young people.

The creativity and gentle manner of the messages resonates with young people, who often do not like to be preached to. The visual content and brief captions in Instagram *da'wa* are more appealing than long texts or long speeches delivered by religious preachers. This ensures that the journey of becoming better Muslims is an enjoyable experience for these women. It also allows followers to feel connected to others who may be on the same path of self-transformation.

Additionally, Instagram *da'wa* supports online business, which caters to the needs of young Muslims who also make up a generation of online consumers. For this segment of young Indonesian women, Instagram *da'wa* can be a one-stop shop for attaining their version of happiness. Followers hope to achieve a balance of both worldly and spiritual happiness by refashioning themselves as wearers of *hijab syar'i* and regulating their socialization with young men. Products sold by Ukhtisally and Dije have a special meaning for their followers. The creativity of Ayu, Fatiya, and their business teams in developing a brand personality for their products successfully appeals to their customers, who wish to convey the image of being good Muslim women. Some observers see a contradiction between business and proselytizing, between worldly desires and religion. Instagram *da'wa* activists, however, do not share this view. For them, business for the sake of religion is part of their '*da'wa* with deeds' (*da'wa bi al-hal*), through which they cater to the needs of their Islamic sisters.

The agents behind these Instagram *da'wa* accounts are neither young scholars nor considered *ustadzah* (a common honorific term of address referring to a woman who has significant religious knowledge). They do, however, have large numbers of virtual followers, as seen from their Instagram accounts. Some might argue that an Instagram *da'wa* account merely has floating-mass followers – although these Instagram *da'wa* accounts have high numbers of followers, those followers do not stay very long – and therefore does not retain strong influence. However, these Instagram *da'wa* content creators are proficient at managing their followers online and offline, with a growing number of participants in their offline events.

The creativity of *da'wa* Instagram content creators in generating soft or light *da'wa* is accompanied by how they put into practice what they share and believe. The combination of their gradual mastery of basic religious knowledge, their inspiring *hijrah* journey, and their ethical disposition empowers them to attract followers. Although Ayu, Fatiya, and their teams have not become recognized religious authorities in Indonesia, their popularity with their followers exceeds that of established religious scholars and famous preachers. It will be interesting to study how these dynamics unfold further, including how long this popularity lasts and whether *da'wa* instagrammers can develop

alternative methods of maintaining followers and strengthening their position in the online and offline youth *da'wa* scene in Indonesia.

Current trends show that the content creators, with their creative and lucrative *da'wa*, and the dynamics of the responses to these Instagram *da'wa* posts illustrate the extent to which Indonesian Muslim youth are active agents in finding ways to become better Muslims in an increasingly technologically mediated world. This study does not cover followers who decide to unfollow Instagram *da'wa* accounts, a topic that could be a source of inspiration for future research as part of increasing understanding of the dynamics of Indonesia's Instagram *da'wa*.

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