

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Islam has been known as the largest religion in Indonesia. It is believed that Indonesia is a home for approximately 210 million Muslim people out of 240 million total population of Indonesia (The Jakarta Post). Thus, it can be said that Islam has a big influence in Indonesia.

Historically, Islam has existed in Indonesia since hundred years ago. It was not locally from Indonesia, but from Middle East. Islam came first to Indonesia through Muslim Indian traders who came to Indonesia (Muhsin). Then, they spread and taught this religion to Indonesian people at that time. Eversince Islam has disseminated and developed in Indonesia.

The development of Islam in Indonesia is unique because Islam has acculturated with Indonesian culture. In Java, for example, Islam was spread by *Wali Sanga* (Islamic teachers) through the pre-Islamic culture (Murtadlo). *Wali Sanga* is a group of *ulama* consisting of nine Islamic preachers, known as the pioneers of Islamization in Indonesia. The name *Wali Sanga* was given in order to gain public sympathy (Tarwilah). In teaching Islam, *Wali Sanga* positioned themselves as local citizens instead of strangers; moreover, they got married with local people so that they gained public trust while teaching Islam (Alipah). Additionally, they also made many aspects of Islam receive local culture elements (Muqoyyidin). It means that the

existence of Islam at first was not aimed to change the earlier existing culture or belief radically, but Islam tried to negotiate with Indonesian culture. For example, Sunan Kalijaga, one of *Wali Sanga*, taught Islam by using traditional instruments.

The acculturation of Islam with Indonesian culture also deals with Islamic preacher issue, known as ulama, dai, or ustadz. In Islam culture, Ustadz is a person who specifically takes special expertise on Islamic preaching (Nawawi'). As an Islam preacher, Ustadz is considered as the leader of Islam whose role is to teach Islam and to strengthen the existence of Islam in Indonesia. Moreover, as an Islam preacher, Ustadz is also considered as the representative of Muslim who holds a mandate to uphold rules commanded by God and prophets (Umar). Therefore, Ustadz holds an important position in Islam. In fact, the roles of Ustadz in Indonesia are not only related to religious issues, but also social and politic issues. For instance, Ustadz in Indonesia nowadays has a role as an advisor for a family or for political campaign, even as a trend setter of fashion.

A research conducted by Alias, Fatmawati and Mochtaria shows that Ustadz nowadays becomes a key factor in solving social problem, particularly problems related to youngster. According to them, Ustadz is considered as a prominent figure in society representing a responsibility that will be followed by members of society. Furthermore, Ustadz now also becomes an advisor for parents to control teenager's behavior and their social life so that teenager will not commit crimes (Alias, Fatmawati and Mochtaria).

Moreover, the position of Ustadz as a prominent figure in society provides other benefits. Ustadz often becomes a political force who is involved actively in Indonesian politics. They use their position to collect support for certain political parties in Indonesia. Uniquely, the way they attract people's attention is through a religious activity, such as *shalawatan*.

“Hal yang menarik dikaji adalah karena fungsi pragmatis untuk tujuan dogmatis itulah maka seringkali seorang kiai atau ustad memanfaatkan tradisi ini untuk tujuan lain seperti pemberdayaan politik kaum santri, lebih-lebih ketika tokoh tersebut tokoh partisan yang memihak ke partai politik tertentu maka tradisi tersebut pun selalu dimanfaatkan dalam kampanye pemilu. Akibatnya kampanye yang seharusnya menyampaikan visi, misi, dan program partai politik untuk mengatur sebuah negara secara demokratis berubah menjadi pengajian umum yang sakral dan dogmatis yang memaksa audien untuk mematuhi fatwa politik tersebut. (Muzakha).

“An interesting matter to be examined is the deviation of pragmatic function to dogmatic purpose, which results in a kiai or Ustadz uses this tradition for other purposes such as Islamic student political empowerment, especially when the figure is a partisan figure who supports particular political party. Then, the tradition is always used in election campaign. As a consequence, the campaign, that is supposed to convey vision, mission and party's political program for managing a country democratically changes into a public recitation, which is sacred and dogmatic that force the audience to obey political advices (Muzakha).

In other words, religious activity of Ustadz does not only contain a religious message, in this case Islamic teaching, but also political campaign and propaganda by utilizing religious message as a weapon to encourage people to support certain party's mission and vision.

After the development of technology and media, Ustadz's role has also developed and integrated with media. Nowadays, the way of Ustadz delivers his

speech or preaching is more various by using mass media as a channel. For instance, the existence of television leads to the invention of a program related to Islamic preaching, named *Da'I Muda Pilihan* as an example of how Ustadz adapts and acculturates with technology and media. *Da'i Muda Pilihan AnTV* is a television program looking for young talented Islamic preacher, and the audition is held in several places (Deviansyah)."

The success of TV programs raising Islam and Ustadz as the main issues proves that Ustadz is no longer considered only as a preacher. Furthermore, since it is related to TV and mass media, it is possible to categorize Ustadz as a celebrity whose existence is supported by TV programs. Nurudin, the chief of Communication Major of Muhammadiyah University Malang, stated that Ustadz can be categorized as a celebrity because of his existence on TV.

"Status Ustadz seharusnya diberikan oleh masyarakat atau komunitas karena memang dia seorang pengajar, pemberi nasihat, guru (biasanya di bidang agama Islam). Sementara itu, status Ustadz Solmed lebih banyak diberikan (diframing/dibingkai) oleh televisi yang kemudian diikuti masyarakat umum.

Kenyataan itu mengungkapkan, apapun julukan yang diberikan oleh televisi maka itu semua realitas televisi, bukan realitas sebenarnya. Contoh lain, mengapa seseorang disebut dengan artis atau selebritis sementara yang lainnya tidak? Alasannya, ia dikenal masyarakat luas karena ekspos media, terutama televisi. Kalau ada anggota DPR yang sering muncul di televisi pun tak jarang dijuluki sebagai artis politik pula. Dalam hal ini, faktor televisi menjadi penentu julukan yang melekat pada seseorang itu" (Nurudin).

The title Ustadz is usually attributed to someone by society or a community because he holds position a teacher, an advisor, a teacher (in Islamic issue). Meanwhile, the title of Ustadz Solmed is rather given by television, which is then followed by society.

That fact shows whatever title given by television, it is only television reality, not true reality. Another question is why a person is called

Ustadz or celebrity while others not? The reason is the fact that they are known by society because of media exposure, mainly television. If there is house of representative's member who often appear on television, he/she can be called as politician celebrity too. In this case, television is a determinant factor of why a title is addressed to a person (Nurudin).

Categorization of Ustadz as celebrity results in new point of view towards his profession. Some Ustadz become a trend setter in fashion. Their existence on Television makes them change their appearance become more casual. One of the most well-known Ustadz who became a trend setter in fashion is Ustad Jefry Al Buchory. Based on Thaib's writing, Ustad Jefry claimed himself that he is a "*Ustad Gaul*" or fashionable Islamic preacher. The way Ustad Jefry dress attracts youngster, which causes certain model of cloth sold up (Thaib).

In addition, because of the development of media, some Ustadz now also succeed as entrepreneurs, such as Abdullah Gymnastiar, Valentino Dinsi, and Yusuf Mansur. Abdullah Gymnastiar has a successful business with his Islamic Café (Suara Merdeka), Valentino Dinsi with his Majelis Ta'lim Wirausaha and his program Santri Preneur (Rumah Wirausaha), and Yusuf Mansur with his Wisatahati group and several small groups of business in online media.

Yusuf Mansur, moreover, is a famous Ustadz in Indonesia who owns some industries such as *Patungan Usaha, Daarul Quran Foundation, Daqu Printing, PPAShop, Daqu Hajj and Umrah, and Daqu TV* (Cipta). Ustadz Yusuf Mansur as an entrepreneur also sells Islamic stuffs, such as cloths, praying kits, books, and

arranged Islamic events. Yusuf Mansur often promotes his products using Islamic symbols and signs.

For instance, Yusuf Mansur promotes his products, such as cosmetics, books, events, clothes, and praying kits through his *Facebook* fanpage account. *Facebook* is commonly used as a medium of advertising. Large businesses agree that using *Facebook* to promote their product is effective (Stelzner). It means that *Facebook* users can post pictures of their products on their own profile, which will be seen by their Facebook friends automatically. Thus, this is a great deal of advertising movement, and it helps the producer to get more costumers.

Yusuf Mansur's fan page on *Facebook* has more than two million fans that always leave comments on every status written by him. On his fan page, Yusuf Mansur also posts many advertisements promoting his series of books and other



Figure 1 Yusuf Mansur facebook account

Islamic stuffs. Thus, it is assumed that how Yusuf Mansur promotes or advertises his products is an example of the commodification of Islam. Commodification of Islam is how Islam is packaged and offered to broader audiences (Hasan), which means *—a new market for commodities, media, advertising, business, and consumer segments identified as “Islamic” has helped in the creation of new culture industry”* (Gökariksel and McLarney).

Basically, commodification is the extension theory of the capitalist ideology included into Marxism stated by Karl Marx. Commodification is how something materializes in order to make an economical profit. The research done by Muzakki and Howel is an example of Islamic commodification. Their research, as quoted by Hariadi, shows that there is new form of preaching activity known as tele-preaching. Tele-preaching is preaching activity done on television. With this tele-preaching, the preacher no longer needs to have basic from *Pesantren* or Islamic school. More tele-preacher is from music, film, and entertainment background. This program has high rating; therefore, it has potential to attract many advertising sponsors and makes this program as a new commodity that can be watched by people on almost every television (Hariyadi). Furthermore, Edward Song mentioned that;

“Marx, who did not coin the term “commodification,” but whose analysis of commodities and alienation are lasting bedrocks of its study. Capitalism differs from other modes of production in that goods are not owned by those who produce them, and their value does not lie in their usefulness but in their exchange value” (Song).

For those reasons, the research is aimed to reveal how the commodification of Islam occurs in advertisements posted on Yusuf Mansur's fan page on *Facebook*. Islam as the object in this research is not as a religion, but as a system dealing with Muslim's life. It is based on the claim of Husain and El-Alami in their book entitled *–Faith Guides for Higher Education; A Guide to Islam*” stating that for Muslim, Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life’ (Hussain and El-Alami). Based on the aim of the study, the writer used commodification theory proposed by Robert Goldman as comprising abstraction, equivalence and reification (Goldman). But for the record, this study did not analyze commodification's relation with capitalism issue.

1.2.Statement of the problem

1. How is Islam commodified by Yusuf Mansur through the advertisements of Islamic stuffs posted on his fan page *Facebook* account?

1.3. Purpose of the study

Based on statement of the problem mentioned above, the purpose of the present study to reveal the commodification of Islam on the advertisements provided by Yusuf Mansur on his Facebook fan page.

1.4. Significance of the study

By analyzing this issue, it is hoped that the present study can give new insight to people who have an interest in religious issue, particularly in Islamic issue. For further significance in the future, the writer hopes that this study can become additional source for future research examining the commodification of religion. In smaller level, the paucity of research on religion commodification at Cultural Studies concentration of Universitas Airlangga can be enriched by the present study. Thus, the present study can become reference for students of Cultural Studies concentration who are interested in Islamic issues or in commodification in the future.

1.5. Definition of key terms

Islam : Islam is not simply a religion but ‘a way of life’. Muslims believe that Islam is a system that encompasses all spheres of life, social and personal (Hussain and El-Alami)

Advertisements : It refers to activities undertaken to increase sales or enhance the image of a product or business. Advertising is used primarily to inform the potential customer of (1) the availability of products or services, (2) when

they are in season, (3) where they are located and (4) anything special about certain products or services (Dunn)

Facebook : Facebook is a social network that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family, coworkers and acquaintances (Facebook A Beginner's Guide)

Yusuf Mansur : One of the most notable Islamic teachers in Indonesia, also known as an entrepreneur

Commodification : This approach finds its roots in the writings of Karl Marx, who did not coin the term "commodification," but whose analysis of commodities and alienation are lasting bedrocks of its study (Song)