

Fatwa Communication in the Digital Era: Synergy of Conventional Media and Digital Technology in Disseminating the Fatwa on ‘Uang Panai’ by the MUI of South Sulawesi

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the communication strategy used by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of South Sulawesi in disseminating fatwas related to dowry in the digital era. Panai, as a tradition of the Bugis-Makassar community in marriage, often causes polemics related to the amount of value that is considered burdensome. The MUI of South Sulawesi plays a role in providing religious guidance through fatwas, which must be disseminated effectively to the wider community. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, where data is collected through interviews, document analysis, and observation. This study focuses on how digital technology, such as social media and online platforms, is utilized to reach a wider audience, as well as the challenges faced in conveying religious messages in the modern era. The results of this study indicate that the MUI South Sulawesi communication strategy elaborates conventional and digital approaches, which include optimizing social media, collaborating with community leaders, and disseminating information through the official website. This study suggests further development in terms of digital innovation and increasing digital literacy to ensure that fatwas can be understood and well received by all groups.

Keywords: Fatwa, Bride Price, MUI, Communication Strategy, Digital Era, South Sulawesi

Introduction

In the Bugis-Makassar wedding tradition, dowry money is considered sacred because it is often used as a form of appreciation for the woman’s family (Avita et al., 2022). However, along with the development of the times, the amount of dowry money is often a matter of debate in society. (White, 2017). This tradition, which was originally intended to honor the bride-to-be, is now seen as a heavy economic burden for the groom. (Ibnu Azka & Yusril Bariki, 2023). This phenomenon has given rise to public discussion regarding the relevance and management of dowry money in the modern socio-economic context.

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of South Sulawesi, as a religious institution, has the authority to provide guidance and fatwas in religious matters. (Latipah et al., 2019), so it

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is necessary to respond to this polemic. MUI plays an important role in providing direction regarding how dowry money should be implemented from a sharia perspective. The fatwa issued is expected to provide enlightenment and overcome the social tensions that arise, while maintaining local traditions that are full of cultural meaning.

The many cases of irregularities that occurred due to the dowry money were responded to by the South Sulawesi MUI to issue a fatwa as an appeal regarding several realities that occurred in society such as elopement (*silariang*), psychological pressure, cancelled marriages, suicide and others. (FATWA UANG PANAI.Pdf, 2022). In addition, the South Sulawesi MUI claims that the reason for issuing the fatwa was due to several public reports about concerns about the dowry, which prompted the South Sulawesi MUI to immediately issue the fatwa. The South Sulawesi MUI Fatwa Commission issued and announced the dowry fatwa through a press conference at its office on Jl. Masjid Raya Makassar which was also broadcast live via social media Youtube, Facebook, Instagram with the official South Sulawesi MUI Live Streaming Channel at 16.30 WITA (Sulsel, 2022).

According to Hosen, since the beginning, large mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah, NU and MUI have been at the forefront in responding to the challenges and problems faced by Muslims by issuing fatwas and disseminating them to the public, but the dissemination process that is carried out still uses conventional methods by distributing them through paper, this makes every fatwa issued experience many obstacles, such as in the case of NU for example, the distribution of books that have been compiled is not distributed massively even in large libraries. Likewise, the case in Muhammadiyah, although the distribution of its books in various educational and religious institutions can be referred to by lecturers, preachers and teachers, the books still use language that is difficult to understand and is considered outdated, even the use of paper and poor layout makes the books that have been issued reap a lot of criticism. (Nadirisyah, 2008).

Likewise, the case that occurred in the Indonesian Ulema Council, although it has published a compilation of its fatwas, its distribution is very limited so that the public finds it difficult to access the fatwas, for example when holding a seminar in Yogyakarta, many people did not know about the fatwa on abortion, which means that the distribution has not reached the public at large and it is necessary to carry out more massive dissemination to inform the fatwas that have been issued by the MUI (Hosen, 2004).

The presence of the internet in this era provides an alternative for Islamic mass organizations to participate in disseminating fatwas that have been issued to be disseminated to the community, which means that the relationship between religion and cyberspace allows every fatwa to fill internet spaces. There are many studies on the presence of religion on the internet, one of which is the work written by Bunt, in his book "*Virtually Islamic*", Bunt discusses how Islam and all its elements can be integrated into a communication system based on computer media. Bunt states that Islam can be integrated with this communication system without losing its Islamic identity (Gary R. Bunt, 2000). In fact, in his book "*iMuslims*" he explains that computer-mediated communication can provide a spirit of transformation to Islamic teachings and Muslims to understand the context of Islamic teachings. (Gary R. Bunt, 2009).

In the digital era, the main challenge faced by the MUI is how to disseminate the fatwa to the public effectively and on target. Information and communication technology, especially social media, has become the main platform for disseminating information in various levels of society. (Arisanty et al., 2020). MUI South Sulawesi is required to be able to utilize this media optimally to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation who are more familiar with digital technology. Therefore, adaptive and innovative communication strategies are important points in ensuring that the fatwa message can be conveyed properly.

This study focuses on how the MUI of South Sulawesi formulates and implements communication strategies in disseminating fatwas related to dowry in the digital era. Based on

social realities and their dynamics and changes in communication patterns in the modern era, this study will examine how the MUI utilizes digital technology to disseminate fatwas effectively, as well as the challenges faced in the process.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method (Baškarada, 2014) to analyze the communication strategy implemented by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of South Sulawesi in disseminating fatwas related to dowry. Case studies are used to analyze the communication process of fatwas involving both media, namely conventional (such as lectures, sermons, print media) and digital (such as social media, websites, and communication applications). Data collection techniques are through observation, interviews with sources, namely the Chairperson of the MUI of South Sulawesi, the Secretary of the MUI, the MUI Fatwa Commission, and the MUI Communication Commission. Additional data are taken from official MUI documents, publications related to fatwas on dowry, news articles, and literature analysis on digital and conventional communication.

Synergy of Conventional and Digital Media

The Sulsel MUI disseminates the Uang Panai' fatwa using conventional approaches so that the Uang Panai' fatwa can be conveyed clearly and clearly to the public, several forms of dissemination of the MUI Sulsel in the conventional way are as follows.

Using the pulpit of the sermon

MUI administrators are known as Ulama, Muslim Scholars as well as Academics, all administrators have their respective sermon schedules at mosques in South Sulawesi (Al-Rasyid & Ilyas, 2022), this is a separate space that is utilized by the South Sulawesi MUI management to convey every fatwa or announcement that has been issued as a an appeal for the unrest that has been occurring in the community, including the fatwa Uang Panai'.

Based on the results of an interview with gurutta Muhammad Firdaus he said that:

"The management of the South Sulawesi MUI is based on the background of all the lecturers, they have schedules in the mosques, both Friday sermons and other Islamic studies. This momentum usually becomes a space for conveying fatwas, or sometimes it can be interspersed with other fatwas that are not yet known by the public and that is quite effective because the community can hear them directly" Interview Muhammad Firdaus "Media Komunikasi MUI Sulsel," Februari 1,2023.

The results of these interviews show that, in disseminating fatwas, the South Sulawesi MUI often conveys strategic fatwas to the public through the pulpit of the mosque, with a background as a lecturer, the South Sulawesi MUI has a lot of space to disseminate its fatwas that have not reached the public, including the Uang Panai' fatwa itself.

Dissemination at the Taklim Assembly

Due to his background as a preacher, South Sulawesi MUI officials also have many calls to fill in recitations at the Taklim Assembly in the South Sulawesi region and Makassar City in particular. This momentum is used by every MUI administrator to deliver their fatwas, including the banai' fatwa among parents so they can understand the legality of panai' from the perspective of Islamic law.

Based on the results of an interview with gurutta Yusri M. Arsyad, he said:

"This South Sulawesi MUI fatwa does not immediately spread widely to the public, so all

South Sulawesi MUI officials often also use pulpits and Islamic studies when filling out taklim assemblies. , although sometimes it is not certain whether the people immediately understand what it means, what is clear is that we always try to convey it to the wider community, so that they understand. I personally also because I often give lectures at weddings, I will definitely convey it especially when the momentum is right, so that people know about the law of panai' in Islam, that marriage should not be burdensome, for the sake of glorifying our teenage children to avoid adultery and other irregularities" Interview Yusri M. Arsyad "Staretegi Komunikasi MUI Sulsel," Februari 1,2023.

The results of these interviews show that MUI focuses on its management to always convey the fatwas that have been issued to the public, especially the Uang Panai' fatwa. MUI officials also often give lectures at weddings, according to them, this is the right moment to convey the fatwa Uang Panai' to the public so that they can find out about the law and the consequences of high Uang Panai' for deviations that have occurred so far in society, especially teenagers in South Sulawesi.

Dissemination to Coffee Shops

Dissemination at Coffee Shops (WarKop) has been carried out by MUI Sulsel, this is because MUI Sulsel wants to show that MUI Sulsel officials are not elitist, they are also the same as ordinary people who can hold events in coffee shops, in this case dissemination regarding social and cultural phenomena fatwa.

Based on the results of an interview with gurutta Muhammad Firdaus, he said:

"Once we MUI management took the initiative to organize dissemination activities at coffee shops, and thank God many of them came. We also do this solely to avoid the public's opinion that ulama are elitist, but in fact there are and are the same as ordinary people who have the duty and responsibility to convey amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar. And from the results of this dissemination, MUI officials learned a lot that this kind of dissemination approach is also considered effective, so that people can ask questions directly about information that is not yet clear" Interview Muhammad Firdaus "Media Komunikasi MUI Sulsel," Februari 1,2023.

Consolidation of Fatwas to the Regions

The South Sulawesi MUI, based in Makassar City, is the main base for studying the phenomenon of religious issues in South Sulawesi, which is why the South Sulawesi MUI always consolidates fatwas to the regions for MUI officials in districts and cities in South Sulawesi. This is done so that the fatwas or edicts that have been issued can be disseminated to the public, as well as respond to developments in social and cultural change in each region.

This was conveyed by gurutta Najmuddin HS, That:

"The South Sulawesi MUI also often holds gatherings and consolidates fatwas throughout South Sulawesi, to discuss and respond to religious issues that are developing in society, because basically if there are issues that are important for the public to know, especially those concerning religious issues, it is the ulama who play an important role in answer these things" Interview Najmuddin HS "Strategi Komunikasi MUI Sulsel," Februari 1,2023.

This was also explained by gurutta Muammar Bakri, he said:

"The South Sulawesi MUI always makes friendly visits and consolidates visits to areas in South Sulawesi, this is done to discuss and respond to and identify issues of worship and muamalah, because it is important that we carry out this consolidation so that the fatwas that have been issued can be disseminated by MUI administrators in the regions also need to know that this gathering and consolidation of the MUI fatwa can encourage MUI performance in the regions to be swift in responding to problems that are currently happening in society" Interview Muammar Bakri "Strategi Komunikasi MUI Sulsel," Februari 1,2023

Based on the results of these interviews, it can be understood that one of the conventional methods used by the South Sulawesi MUI in disseminating their fatwas is by holding friendly visits and consolidating fatwas to the regions. cleric. Therefore, this method can support the dissemination of MUI fatwas so that they are massively known by the public.



Figure 1.

The atmosphere of the reading of the fatwa on Uang Panai' by the South Sulawesi MUI

MUI South Sulawesi Digital Media

MUI Sulsel currently has 4 social media accounts namely Youtube, Facebook, Tiktok and Instagram. These 4 social media are used as Islamic information media whose purpose is to provide a good understanding to the public. The public can access this information anytime and anywhere through a variety of information media offered by the South Sulawesi MUI.

Based on the results of an interview with Gurutta KH Muammar Bakri, he said:

“Social media has been very influential in disseminating the South Sulawesi MUI’s fatwa so far, we are maximizing all the media we have to then disseminate it widely, in line with the borderless nature of the internet and we are sure that this information will reach the public.”¹⁰

The results of the interview show that the South Sulawesi MUI believes that social media has a significant influence in disseminating its fatwas, this effectiveness is believed to be due to the nature of the internet, which is without distance and time limits. Therefore, with the help of social media and other media outside the South Sulawesi MUI which also provided information on the Uang Panai' fatwa, the fatwa reached the public.

Based on the results of an interview with Gurutta Muhammad Firdaus added that:

“Technological progress was welcomed by the South Sulawesi MUI, this can be seen by the use of various MUI social media, with social media making it easier for us to convey information widely.”¹¹

The social media used by the South Sulawesi MUI in disseminating the Uang Panai' fatwa are as follows:

Tik-tok Social Media

Data obtained from Statista shows that until 2021, TikTok is the most popular and widely used social media by the public. On a global scale, the number of active users of TikTok has

reached nearly 83 million users, and Indonesia is one of the largest contributors to that number of users (Rahardaya & Irwansyah, 2021).

With its ever-increasing popularity, TikTok has become a platform that is in great demand by the public for sharing short video content (Miller, 2011). TikTok users can create and share various types of videos covering various themes, from entertainment to creativity to knowledge (Maulidita et al., 2024). Indonesian people, including the people of South Sulawesi, have a high interest in TikTok. They use this platform to interact, get entertainment, and find the latest information. Therefore, in the context of fatwa dissemination by the South Sulawesi MUI, the existence of the South Sulawesi MUI TikTok account is the right strategy to reach and convey religious messages to the public (Klapp, 2023), especially regarding the Uang Panai' fatwa.

Thus, through the Sulsel MUI TikTok account, MUI can optimize the potential of this social media to provide brief, clear, and interesting information about Uang Panai' fatwa. With the large number of TikTok users and high interest from the Indonesian people, the use of TikTok as a communication channel (Yilmaz et al., 2022) by the South Sulawesi MUI can have a significant impact in spreading Islamic messages to the public and increasing their understanding of the fatwa.

This is the main reason why the South Sulawesi MUI also utilizes the social media tick-tock to become an Islamic information medium that can be easily referred to. Apart from that, there are also several other accounts that share the same news, namely about panai money, including accounts @tribunmanado, @pemuda_gowa and many more. With so many social media accounts that also raise the issue of Uang Panai', there is a greater chance for the public to be aware of this fatwa.



Figure 2.

Account of the Manado Tribune which raises information regarding the Uang Panai Fatwa'

Until now, as of March 1, 2023, this information has been watched by 132.6k TikTok users, 1156 likes, 14 comments, 52 saves and shared the video 156 times. That means, that the role of social media tiktok is quite effective in disseminating fatwas or issues that are popularly discussed by the general public.



Figure 3. Accounts of the Gowa Youth Who Contributed to the News of Panai Money'

This news has been watched 65.9k times by Tik-tok users, received 2743 likes, 355 comments, saved 206 times, and shared this information 358 times. This shows that the penetration rate offered by Tik-tok is large enough to be used as information literacy.

Instagram Social Media

Based on a report published by Kumbol.com and strengthened by social media marketing analysis company NapoleonCat, Instagram has become one of the most popular types of social media and is widely used by the people of Indonesia. As of November 2019, the number of active Instagram users in Indonesia is estimated at more than 61,610,000 people (Rahmah, 2021). With such a large number of users, Instagram provides an excellent opportunity for the South Sulawesi MUI to disseminate the fatwa regarding Uang Panai' to the public. Through the official MUI Sulsel Instagram account, they can convey religious messages effectively and efficiently to a wide audience.

The Instagram account of MUI South Sulawesi serves as a dynamic platform that provides timely, responsive, and solution-oriented information for individuals seeking a deeper understanding of Islam. This account features a wide array of relevant content, including updates on fatwas, public announcements, Islamic teachings, and visually appealing pamphlets, often shared during significant religious moments. By consistently updating its content, MUI Sulawesi Selatan ensures a continuous connection with the community while offering fresh information on various activities and initiatives.

In the context of disseminating the fatwa on Uang Panai', MUI South Sulawesi can leverage Instagram's visual strengths to deliver concise yet engaging messages. Utilizing images, short videos, and succinct but informative captions, they can effectively explain the concepts, religious rulings, and implications associated with the fatwa. This multimedia approach allows the public to easily grasp the meaning and significance of Uang Panai' from an Islamic perspective, fostering a better understanding of how Islamic principles align with local traditions. By harnessing Instagram's format, the MUI can make its messages more accessible and appealing to a broader audience, including younger, tech-savvy users, ensuring that the teachings are not only informative but also visually engaging.

With the increasing popularity of Instagram and significant active users in Indonesia, the communication strategy through the Sulsel MUI's Instagram account provides a major advantage in achieving the goal of disseminating fatwa to the people of South Sulawesi. Through interesting and up-to-date content, the Sulsel MUI can increase public awareness and understanding of Uang Panai' and invite them to adopt and practice this fatwa in their daily lives.

Currently the Sulsel MUI Instagram has 419 followers, has 296 posts and follows 9. Apart from the Sulsel MUI, there are several other accounts that also raise news about the fatwa Uang Panai' includes @pinrangupdate, this account is a news account about Pinrang Regency with a total of 6,639k followers, this indicates that information regarding the fatwa about Uang Panai' can be known more widely by millennials.

Youtube Social Media

According to a survey released by We Are Social in March 2019, YouTube has become one of the most popular and widely used social media platforms by Indonesians. In the survey, it was revealed that out of a total of 150 million active social media users in Indonesia, around 88% of them access Youtube every day. In fact, the number of viewers on Youtube has approached or even rivaled the number of television viewers (Junaedi, Fajar & Sukmono, 2019)

The existence of Youtube as a communication medium used by the South Sulawesi MUI in disseminating fatwas is an appropriate and strategic step (Huda et al., 2022). Apart from being easily accessible to the public, Youtube also provides a platform that can reach a wide audience (Kita et al., 2016). Thus, the South Sulawesi MUI can communicate religious messages effectively to the public in a more interactive and entertaining way.

Through the YouTube account owned by the South Sulawesi MUI, they can present a variety of content on Islamic studies, discussions, and convey fatwas regarding Uang Panai' in a clear and detailed manner. In the context of fatwa dissemination, Youtube allows the South Sulawesi MUI to use a video format that can provide a better understanding through the use of images, graphics, visualizations and direct explanations by competent sources.

With the high number of active YouTube users in Indonesia, the South Sulawesi MUI has a great opportunity to reach a wider target audience and expand the reach of dissemination (Fakhrullah et al., 2023) of Uang Panai' fatwa. Through this platform, they can take advantage of features such as comments and video sharing to encourage interaction and active participation of the public in discussing and understanding the fatwa.

In this increasingly advanced digital era, YouTube is a very relevant and effective communication channel for spreading religious messages. MUI Sulsel wisely utilizes the potential and popularity of YouTube as a tool to increase public understanding of the Panai' fatwa and expand the impact of their dissemination. By continuing to develop useful and interesting content, the Sulsel MUI can contribute to the dissemination of quality Islamic information through the Youtube platform to the people of South Sulawesi and even outside the region.

Currently the Sulsel MUI YouTube account is quite active, with a subscriber count of 1.26 thousand. This is an opportunity for the fatwa regarding Uang Panai' to be widely known by the public.

Facebook Social Media

Facebook also plays an important role as a forum for information disseminating (Olanrewaju & Ahmad, 2018) the MUI Sulsel fatwa regarding Uang Panai', apart from being used for Live Streaming, Facebook is also used to inform the fatwa Uang Panai', currently the official MUI Sulsel Facebook account has 1,669 followers and 1,211 likes, the goal of communication In fact, many Facebook members come from parents. This can be seen in several documentation of activities up to the community's response to a fatwa (Sci, 2024) or announcement issued by the South Sulawesi MUI. This indicates that what has been done so far by the South Sulawesi MUI is very responsive and solutive in choosing communication media as public servants and Muslims in particular.

Based on the results of an interview with Gurutta KH Najmuddin, he said that:

"We at MUI are open to people who want to express their concerns. Apart from being able to visit the MUI office in person, we provide easy and quick access through a website managed by the South Sulawesi MUI media team so that people who are constrained to come to the office can ask questions through the open chat feature. available 24 hours for the public, when questions come in, we will answer them from the management. For example, there were several reports from the public about the rampant cases of defecation, so we swiftly issued an announcement which was forwarded directly to the Makassar Polresta for follow-up. Apart from that, there were also many reports regarding children on the street who often asked for money, which we then reviewed again, and one of the concerns that the most frequent entry to MUI was regarding the covid vaccine which was busy being discussed" Interview Najmuddin HS "Strategi Komunikasi MUI Sulsel," Februari 1,2023.

The results of the interview above show that openness and providing access to ask questions to the MUI are quite facilitated, the public can quickly ask questions, report or provide responses to what MUI has done so far.

So, thanks to advances in technology, information and communication as well as the development of the internet, this has encouraged the South Sulawesi MUI to continue to make efforts to take an approach that is appropriate to the context of the consumption of public information on social media. This communication and information dissemination strategy continues to be developed so that information related to the South Sulawesi MUI fatwa can be conveyed easily by the public. With the use of various social media as a basis for information to the public, it will be faster, actual and accurate. In addition, dissemination of information regarding fatwasUang Panai' was also assisted by various media press who were also present when the South Sulawesi MUI held a press conference. reachable and the delivery of information to the public on a massive basis.

The Fourth Stage of Evaluation

This stage is the last stage of the description of the communication strategy, after carrying out the dissemination stage with various approaches and selection of communication media, the Sulsel MUI conducts an evaluation to determine the extent to which the media approach used can achieve the expected goals, whether the efforts made are in accordance with the initial plan, or do we need to make improvements to maximize the dissemination process with better approaches and media. The use of these various communication media continues to be developed to this day in order to continue to increase awareness and make it easier for the public to access fatwas that have been issued by the South Sulawesi MUI.

Conclusion

This study found that the MUI of South Sulawesi effectively combines conventional and digital media to disseminate fatwas, where conventional media such as sermons and lectures

remain important for traditional communities, while digital media, such as websites, social media, and messaging applications, are very effective in reaching the younger generation. The use of digital media broadens the reach of fatwas, especially to younger and tech-savvy audiences, who respond better to interactive and informative approaches. Although conventional media remains relevant, limitations in reach and time pose challenges in the dissemination process. In response to these challenges, the MUI of South Sulawesi has adopted digital innovations such as short videos, online discussions, and online Q&A services, further strengthening the institution's role and relevance in the digital era. This study presents a new contribution to the study of fatwa communication by revealing a synergy model between conventional and digital media, encouraging wider audience reach. In addition, this study shows how the use of digital media by the MUI of South Sulawesi strengthens the relevance of fatwas in an era of technological change. The findings also discuss the importance of digital innovation to respond interactively to social challenges, such as the issue of dowry, and how social media changes the dynamics of religious communication by providing more open discussions between the community and religious authorities.

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