

From Ritual to Content: The Mediatization of Dhikr, Duʿa, and Symbolic Participation in Digital Islam

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Abstract

This article examines how Islamic ritual practices, particularly dhikr and duʿa (supplication), are mediated, represented, and transformed into digital content on platform-based media. Employing an interpretive qualitative approach and a lived religion perspective, this study analyzes publicly available digital media artifacts from the Instagram and TikTok accounts of Hanan Attaki and Halimah Alaydrus. The research corpus comprises 32 video posts, 32 post captions, and 640 audience comments, which were examined using qualitative content analysis and interpretive thematic analysis. The findings demonstrate that dhikr and duʿa are reconfigured into short-form audiovisual content through temporal compression, the foregrounding of visual expression, the use of affective textual cues, and the amplification of emotional resonance. Audience interactions, including comments containing duʿa, emojis, affective expressions, and devotional responses, were interpreted as patterns of distributed and asynchronous symbolic ritual participation. In addition, repeated visibility and audience recognition of ritual content contribute to the formation of platform-based religious authority. This article contributes to the study of the mediatization of religion, ritual studies, and lived Islam by positioning ritual practices as a primary analytical site within digital Islam. This study affirms that digital media do not merely serve as channels for the dissemination of religion but also shape how rituals are produced, encountered, and recognized in contemporary Muslim life.

Keywords:

mediatization of religion; digital dhikr; digital duʿa; lived Islam; symbolic ritual participation

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Introduction

The transformation of digital media has shaped new ways in which Islamic ritual practices are presented, distributed, and consumed in platform-based public spaces (Najiha, [2025](#); Tussa'banniya & Yaqin, [2025](#)). This phenomenon is evident in short videos of dhikr and du'a on Instagram Reels and TikTok, which are packaged through visual aesthetics, affective soundscapes, and concise texts to intensify emotional resonance among audiences (Muzayana, [2023](#); Nisa, [2018](#)). Ritual practices that traditionally took place in embodied, collective contexts and were bound to particular spaces and times are now compressed into short audiovisual formats designed for rapid circulation and repeated consumption (Bell, [2010](#); Tsaltsabilla et al., [2025](#)). In this context, comments such as "Aamiin," "MasyaAllah," and folded-hands emojis can be understood as forms of symbolic participation that extend ritual engagement without direct physical presence.

This transformation reflects a process of mediatization, in which religious practices are not only transmitted through media but are also reshaped by media logic (Couldry & Hepp, [2017](#); Hepp, [2020](#); Hjarvard, [2011](#)). Digital platforms prioritize visibility, shareability, emotional resonance, and user engagement, thereby influencing how religious rituals are represented, structured, and experienced (Van Dijck, [2013](#); Zuhri, [2021](#)). Consequently, Islamic rituals that previously depended on the organization of space, time, and physical presence are reconfigured into fragmented and easily replicable media artifacts that are not always bound to a fixed ritual order. This reconfiguration should not necessarily be interpreted as a decline in religiosity, but rather as a shift in religious practice through new forms of lived Islam within digital media infrastructures.

Studies on the mediatization of religion demonstrate that media act as agents of transformation that reshape religious authority, discourse, institutions, and experience (Hjarvard, [2011](#); Perez-Vela, [2023](#)). However, within studies of digital Islam, scholarly attention remains more focused on online da'wa, popular religious figures, digital authority, and ideological contestation than on ritual practices as a primary object of analysis (Azhima et al., [2023](#); Muzayana, [2023](#); Nisa, [2018](#)). Consequently, online ritual practices are often treated as background to religious communication rather than as an analytical site for understanding how platform-based media reconfigure ritual form, temporality, and participation (Tsaltsabilla et al., [2025](#); Tussa'banniya & Yaqin, [2025](#)).

Studies of lived religion and lived Islam emphasize religion as everyday practice, affective experience, and devotion embodied in concrete life (Ammerman, [2016](#); Orsi, [2003](#)). Nevertheless, digital media have not always been understood as constitutive environments in which religious life is shaped and negotiated (Campbell, [2012](#); Hoover, [2025](#)). In many ritual studies, religious practices are still commonly assumed to occur in physical, communal, and synchronous spaces. This assumption does not sufficiently explain how digital mediation transforms ritual forms, temporalities, and modes of participation. The separation between ritual studies, lived religion, and media analysis limits understanding of how contemporary Muslims experience and embody their religiosity within platform ecosystems.

This article addresses this gap by analyzing how Islamic ritual practices, particularly dhikr and du'a, are mediated and transformed into digital content, and how audience interactions can be interpreted as forms of symbolic ritual participation. By examining publicly available short ritual videos, captions, and comment sections, this study proposes a conceptualization of the shift from ritual to content, namely, the process through which religious practices are reformulated according to the logic of digital platforms without entirely losing their devotional meaning. This approach enables an analysis of how ritual transformation is embodied and negotiated through media artifacts, rather than solely through users' experiences reported in interviews.

By integrating mediatization theory, ritual studies, and the lived religion approach, this article contributes to the study of Islam and digital media by positioning ritual practice as a primary analytical site. The article's central argument is that digital platforms do not merely host Islamic rituals but actively reorganize their visual structures, temporalities, visibility, and modes of participation. Accordingly, this article advances an understanding of lived Islam as a religious practice increasingly shaped through, rather than outside, digital mediation.

Specifically, this article addresses three questions: how are dhikr and du'a reformulated into audiovisual content, how do audience interactions shape symbolic ritual participation, and how do visibility and audience recognition shape platform-based religious authority?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This study employed a protocol-guided systematic analysis combined with content analysis to develop an integrative conceptual model. This design was selected because the article aims to synthesize the living Islam literature dispersed across normative, ethnographic, and applied studies and to organize multilevel mechanisms of transformation as formulated in the Introduction. The analytical process comprised corpus mapping, criteria-based selection, thematic coding, mechanism synthesis, and conceptual modeling. Accordingly, this method was not intended to quantify effects, but to explain the conceptual relationships among normative reinterpretation, ethical internalization, collective enactment, institutional mediation, policy translation and public governance, and observable outcomes.

Studies of religion and digital media demonstrate that media not only function as channels for disseminating religious messages but also reshape religious practices, authority, and experiences. In mediatization theory, religion is understood as a social practice that is increasingly intertwined with media logics such as visibility, shareability, speed of circulation, emotional resonance, and audience engagement (Couldry & Hepp, [2017](#); Hepp, [2020](#); Hjarvard, [2011](#)). This framework is important for this article because practices of dhikr and du‘a on digital platforms do not merely move from one medium to another but undergo changes in form, temporality, and modes of participation.

In studies of digital Islam, considerable scholarly attention has been directed toward online da‘wa, popular religious figures, digital authority, visual aesthetics, and the commodification of piety (Campbell, [2012](#); Nisa, [2018](#)). Studies of da‘wa on social media demonstrate that Islamic teachings are often packaged in concise, emotional, and easily shareable visual forms, thereby aligning with the logic of digital platforms (Hidayatullah, [2025](#); Muzayana, [2023](#); Nisa, [2018](#)). However, the focus on da‘wa, identity, and authority often results in ritual practices such as dhikr and du‘a being treated as components of religious communication rather than as primary objects of analysis.

Studies of lived religion and lived Islam help broaden the analysis by positioning religion as everyday practice, affective experience, and a form of devotion embodied in concrete life (Ammerman, [2016](#); Orsi, [2003](#)). This perspective is useful for examining how Muslims experience religiosity through small acts, emotional expressions, and symbolic engagement. However, some studies of lived religion continue to emphasize physical spaces, face-to-face interactions, and offline communities, and therefore do not fully explain how digital media become constitutive environments for contemporary religious experience (Hoover, [2025](#)).

In ritual studies, religious practices are generally understood as structured and repetitive symbolic actions that generate collective meaning (Bell, [2010](#)). When rituals enter platform-based media, these elements do not disappear but are reconfigured through short audiovisual formats, heightened visual salience, audience comments, and repeated consumption. Digital ritual practices therefore need to be analyzed not merely as representations of religion but as media artifacts that produce new forms of ritual engagement. Videos, captions, and user comments become part of the process through which religious meaning is constructed.

Based on this literature, this article situates digital Islamic rituals at the intersection of the mediatization of religion, ritual studies, and lived Islam. The primary gap it addresses is the lack of analysis concerning how Islamic ritual practices, particularly dhikr and du‘a, are reformulated as digital content and how audience interactions shape symbolic ritual participation. By positioning ritual as both practice and media artifact, this article offers a framework for understanding the shift from ritual to content in the contemporary digital Islamic landscape.

Methods

This study employed an interpretive qualitative design to examine the mediatization of Islamic ritual practices in contemporary digital media. This design was selected because the study focuses on how ritual practices, particularly dhikr and du‘a, are represented, condensed, and negotiated through platform-based media artifacts. The study draws on the lived religion perspective, which views religion as an everyday practice manifested through ritual expressions, affective experiences, and symbolic engagement, rather than solely as institutional doctrine. Accordingly, the study examined three aspects: the transformation of ritual forms into audiovisual

content, the formation of symbolic ritual participation through audience interactions, and the emergence of platform-based religious authority through visibility and audience recognition.

Methodologically, this study adopted a non-reactive digital approach by analyzing publicly available media artifacts. This approach was non-reactive because the researchers did not conduct interviews, participant observation, interventions, or direct interactions with account owners or audiences. The research data comprised short devotional ritual videos, captions, and audience interactions in the form of comments, emojis, and textual responses from the Instagram and TikTok accounts of two religious figures active on digital platforms, Hanan Attaki and Halimah Alaydrus.

The cases were selected purposively based on three considerations. First, both figures consistently produce religious content containing elements of dhikr, du'a, devotional reflection, or calls to piety. Second, their content has sustained visibility within platform-based social media ecosystems. Third, their posts generate sufficient audience responses for qualitative analysis, particularly in the form of comments containing du'a, affective expressions, religious emojis, and brief narratives of religious experience.

Data were collected through systematic digital observation over a six-month period, from October 2025 to March 2026. The final research corpus consisted of 32 video posts, 32 post captions, and 640 audience comments. This sample was selected purposively to obtain an adequate corpus for qualitative analysis, comprising 16 posts from each figure's account. Twenty audience comments were analyzed from each post. Comments were purposively selected based on their relevance to religious expression, du'a, dhikr, affective responses, and symbolic participation, while also considering variations in the forms of audience response. Posts were included if they displayed or referred to devotional ritual practices, particularly dhikr, du'a, reflective appeals, and calls to piety, and included relevant post captions or audience comments. Posts were excluded if they were promotional, consisted of excerpts from general sermons without clear ritual or devotional elements, or were not publicly accessible. Comments were excluded if they were unrelated to religious expression or audience participation.

Data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative content analysis and interpretive thematic analysis. Qualitative content analysis was used to identify patterns in the representation of rituals across videos, captions, and audience comments (Schreier, [2012](#)). Thematic analysis was used to organize patterns of meaning emerging from the digital artifacts and audience responses (Braun & Clarke, [2006](#)). The first stage of analysis involved mapping the units of analysis, namely the visual elements of the videos, caption texts, and audience comments. The second stage involved repeated readings of the data to identify initial patterns, such as the visualization of rituals, temporal compression, affective resonance, forms of audience response, the production of authority through visibility, and expressions of symbolic participation. The third stage involved grouping the codes into broader analytical themes, particularly the visual reconfiguration of ritual practices, shifts in religious authority, and mediated ritual participation. The fourth stage involved interpreting the findings using mediatization theory, ritual studies, and the lived religion perspective.

The credibility of the analysis was maintained through repeated readings of the data corpus, documentation of analytical decisions, examination of consistency among the research objectives, thematic categories, and findings, and theoretical triangulation using literature on the mediatization of religion, ritual studies, and digital Islam. The study involved no direct interaction with users and analyzed only publicly accessible user-generated content. To maintain digital research ethics, no attempt was made to identify users from their comments, and examples of audience responses were interpreted as patterns of collective expression rather than as individual personal data.

Results

Characteristics of the Literature Corpus

Based on the analysis of 32 video posts, 32 post captions, and 640 audience comments on the accounts of Hanan Attaki and Halimah Alaydrus, this study identified three main themes. First, the practices of dhikr and du'a were reconfigured into short-form audiovisual content through temporal compression, the foregrounding of visual expression, the use of concise textual cues, and the amplification of affective resonance. Second, audience interactions, including comments containing du'a, emojis, and affective responses, were interpreted as forms of symbolic ritual

participation that extended devotional engagement without direct physical presence. Third, the data suggested that repeated visibility and audience recognition of ritual content were associated with the formation of platform-based religious authority. These three themes indicate that the shift from ritual to content not only transforms the representational form of religious practices but also changes how religious participation and recognition are produced in digital media.

Table 1. Themes Identified in the Analysis of Digital Islamic Ritual Practices

Main theme	Data sources	Empirical patterns	Relevance to the research focus
Reconfiguration of rituals into audiovisual content	Videos and post captions	Dhikr and du‘a are condensed into short videos accompanied by affective textual cues, religious visual symbols, and foregrounded devotional expressions.	Addresses how Islamic ritual practices are transformed into digital content.
Symbolic ritual participation by audiences	Comments and emojis	Responses such as “Aamiin,” “MasyaAllah,” personal du‘a, folded-hands emojis, and expressions of religious commitment emerge as patterns of audience engagement.	Addresses how audience interactions shape mediated ritual engagement.
Visibility-based religious authority	Videos, post captions, and comments	Repeated posts, audience recognition, requests for du‘a, and appreciative responses toward religious figures were associated with stronger digital credibility.	Addresses how visibility and audience recognition contribute to platform-based religious authority.

Reconfiguration of Rituals into Audiovisual Content

The analysis of the videos showed that dhikr and du‘a were rarely presented as complete, extended, and procedural ritual sequences. Instead, these practices were more often presented through short excerpts that foregrounded facial expressions, bodily gestures, brief texts, religious settings, and soundscapes that fostered affective intimacy. Post captions further reinforced this pattern through concise appeals, reflective expressions, or devotional statements that were easy to read and share. Thus, rituals were not merely transferred to digital media but were condensed into audiovisual artifacts that conformed to the consumption rhythms of digital platforms.

On Halimah Alaydrus’s account, content featuring dhikr and du‘a tended to foreground visual serenity, devotional expressions, and gently worded appeals. On Hanan Attaki’s account, ritual content and devotional reflections were more frequently framed through short narratives, emotional intimacy, and language accessible to younger audiences. In both cases, ritual practices appeared as content that could be replayed, commented on, and consumed asynchronously, shifting ritual temporality from shared presence toward repeated digital engagement.

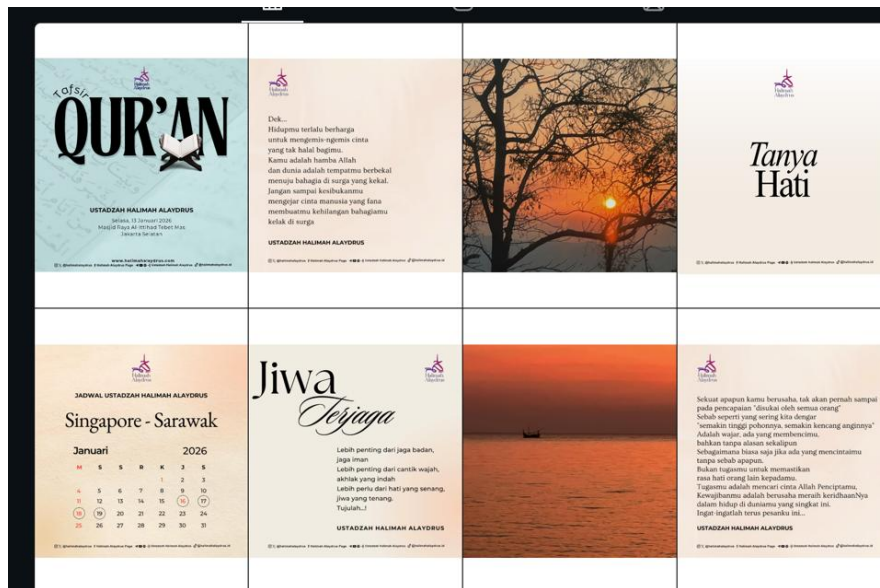


Figure 1. Visual representation of devotional ritual content on Halimah Alaydrus's Instagram account. Note. Screenshot from a public post, accessed March 31, 2026. The identities of users other than the public figure under study were obscured when visible in the image.



Figure 2. Example of a devotional post on Halimah Alaydrus's Instagram account. Note. Screenshot from a public post, accessed March 31, 2026. The identities of users other than the public figure under study were obscured when visible in the image.

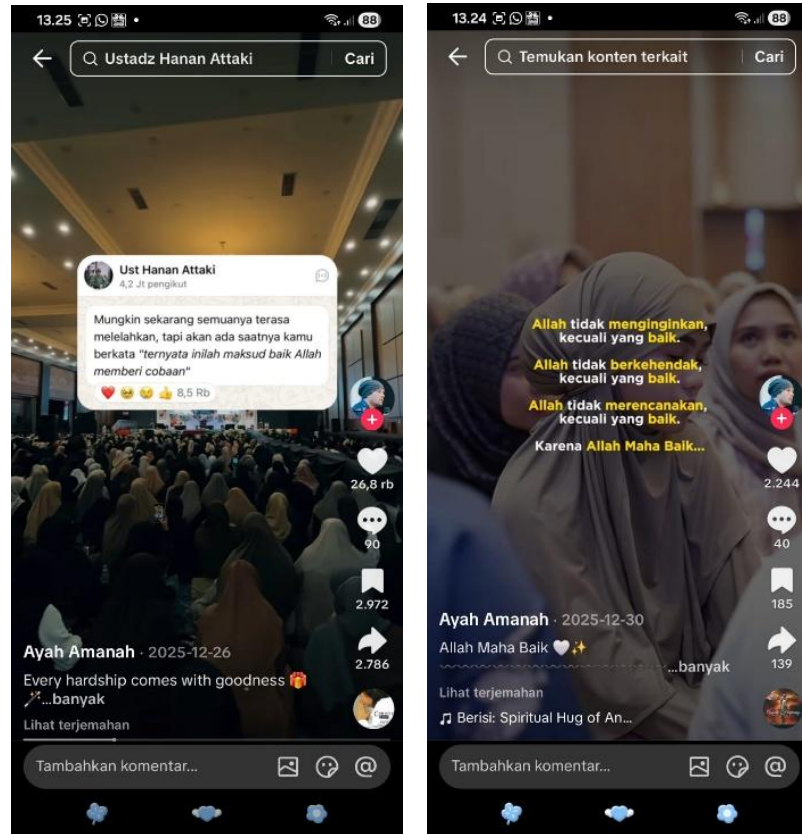


Figure 3. Example of ritual content and devotional reflection on the TikTok account Ayah Amanah (Hanan Attaki). Note. Screenshot from a public post, accessed March 31, 2026. The identities of users other than the public figure under study were obscured when visible in the image.

Audience Interaction as Symbolic Ritual Participation

Audience comments indicated that religious engagement did not end with the act of watching the video. On Halimah Alaydrus's posts, responses such as "Aamiin," "Aamiin ya Rabbal 'alamin," "MasyaAllah," personal du'a, and folded-hands emojis appeared as recurring patterns. These responses indicated that the comment section functioned as a space for symbolic participation in which audiences marked their religious presence, affirmed their affective engagement, and contributed to extending the devotional atmosphere created by the content.

A similar pattern was evident in Hanan Attaki's content, particularly through comments such as "Bismillah hijrah," "May I be able to remain steadfast (istiqamah)," and "Thank you for giving me strength." These comments not only expressed appreciation for the religious message but also conveyed moral commitment, self-reflection, and emotional affiliation with the digital community. Thus, comments, emojis, and textual responses were interpreted as forms of ritual participation that were distributed, asynchronous, and mediated by platforms.

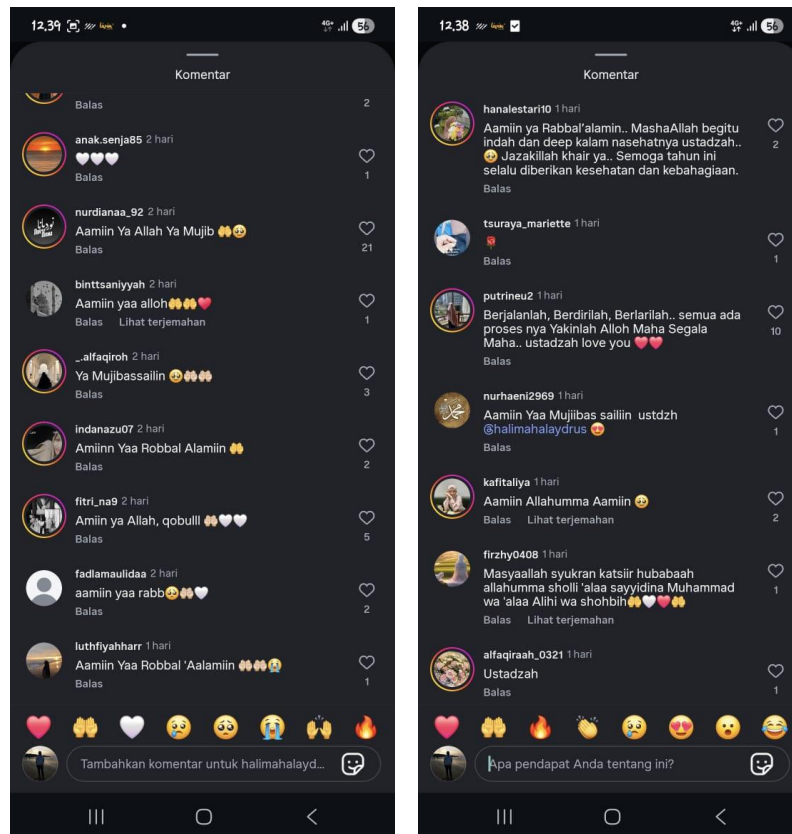


Figure 4. Patterns of audience comments as symbolic ritual participation. Note. Screenshot from a public post, accessed March 31, 2026. The identities of users other than the public figure under study were obscured to maintain digital research ethics.

Visibility and Religious Authority in Digital Ritual Content

The third theme emerged from the relationship among repeated posts, content visibility, and audience responses. The repeated production of ritual content was associated with recurring audience recognition of religious figures. Such recognition was evident in appreciative comments, requests for du'a, comments indicating that users found the content helpful, and responses positioning the figures as sources of spiritual guidance. These patterns suggest that religious authority in digital spaces is associated not only with formal status but also with devotional performances that remain visible and receive audience responses.

Nevertheless, the findings concerning authority should be understood as a secondary thematic finding of the analysis of digital rituals rather than as a claim about quantitatively measured algorithmic influence. The research data reveal patterns of symbolic recognition and affective intimacy but do not measure algorithmic reach, engagement rates, or behavioral effects on audiences. In this study, visibility refers to recurring presence across the sampled posts and explicit audience recognition rather than measured algorithmic reach. Therefore, platform-based authority is understood as a form of authority associated with visibility, repetition, and audience recognition within publicly available media artifacts.

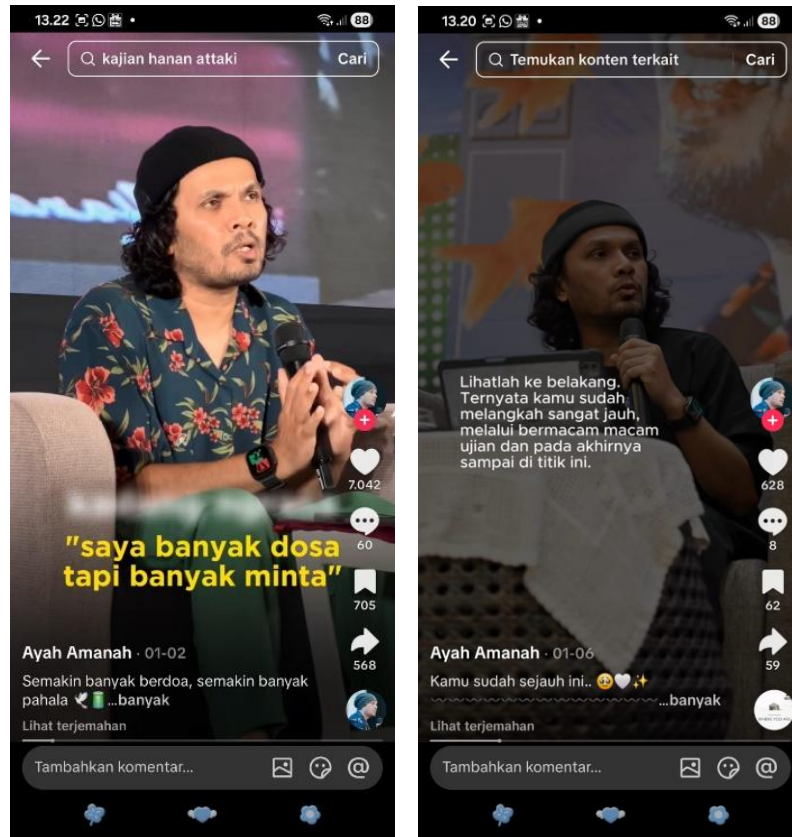


Figure 5. Content visibility and recognition of a religious figure on the TikTok account Ayah Amanah (Hanan Attaki). Note. Screenshot from a public post, accessed March 31, 2026. The identities of users other than the public figure under study were obscured when visible in the image.

Overall, the findings showed that, in the sampled social media posts, dhikr and du'a were represented as concise, visual, and repeatedly accessible digital content rather than as rituals bound to a single space and time. Audience interactions extended this representation through comments and emojis that were interpreted as forms of symbolic ritual participation. Meanwhile, visibility and audience recognition illustrated how ritual content was associated with the formation of religious credibility within platform-based media ecosystems.

Discussion

This discussion interprets the findings in relation to the article's three objectives: explaining how dhikr and du'a are reformulated as audiovisual content, how audience interactions shape symbolic ritual participation, and how visibility and audience recognition contribute to platform-based religious authority. The three main findings demonstrate that digital mediation does not merely transfer ritual practices onto platforms but also transforms their visual forms, temporalities, patterns of engagement, and the ways in which religious authority is recognized in digital spaces. These findings extend the theory of the mediatization of religion by demonstrating that platform logics operate at the level of everyday ritual practices, rather than solely at the level of institutions, da'wa, or formal authority (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Hepp, 2020; Hjarvard, 2011).

First, the reconfiguration of dhikr and du'a into audiovisual content demonstrates that digital rituals operate through the selection, condensation, and foregrounding of symbolic elements that are most readily recognizable visually and affectively. This finding supports mediatization theory, which positions media as environments that shape social practices rather than merely as channels for transmitting religious messages. However, this finding also extends studies of the

mediatization of religion by demonstrating that transformation occurs not only within religious institutions, authority, or discourse but also in micro-level forms of ritual practice. In relation to ritual studies, visual condensation should not necessarily be understood as a loss of ritual meaning but as a transformation in how signs, repetition, and affect organize religious experience within platform spaces (Bell, [2010](#)).

Second, audience participation through comments, brief supplications, and emojis demonstrates that ritual engagement in digital media does not always require physical presence or temporal synchronicity. This finding extends the lived religion perspective, which emphasizes religion as everyday practice, affective experience, and small acts through which religious meaning is produced in everyday life (Ammerman, [2016](#); Orsi, [2003](#)). In this context, the comment section serves not only as a space for responses but also as an arena of symbolic participation in which audiences mark their presence, affiliation, and devotional engagement. Thus, lived Islam in digital media is enacted through micropractices that are distributed, repetitive, and mediated by platform infrastructures.

Third, the findings concerning religious authority suggest that ritual content is associated with stronger recognition of religious figures through visibility, repetition, and affective intimacy. This is consistent with studies of digital Islam showing that religious authority in platform spaces is increasingly relational and performative (Campbell, [2012](#); Muzayana, [2023](#); Nisa, [2018](#)). However, this article further demonstrates that such authority is formed not only through sermons, da'wa, or formal religious knowledge but also through ritual performances that are repeated, commented upon, and recognized as expressions of piety. Digital authority should therefore be understood as emerging from interactions among ritual representation, audience responses, and platform visibility, rather than as a singular attribute inherent in a religious figure.

Conceptually, this article proposes an understanding of the shift from ritual to content as a process operating through three mechanisms: audiovisual condensation, asynchronous symbolic participation, and visibility-based recognition of religious authority. The first mechanism explains how ritual practices are condensed into brief formats that are readily accessed and recognized. The second explains how audiences extend rituals through symbolic responses in comment sections. The third explains how repetition, recognition, and audience engagement contribute to the formation of religious legitimacy in digital spaces. Within this framework, digital mediation can be understood not as an external context for religion but as part of the contemporary production of religious meaning.

The theoretical implication of these findings is the need to examine the mediatization of religion and lived religion more closely at the level of ritual micropractices. In practical terms, religious educators, Islamic preachers, and managers of digital Muslim communities need to understand that visual forms, textual choices, content duration, and patterns of audience response shape how users encounter and engage with religious content. Ethically, producers of ritual content should consider the accuracy of religious messages, audience privacy, comment moderation, and the risk of commodifying devotion within the digital attention economy. Therefore, studies of digital Islam should not be limited to evaluating the content of da'wa messages but should also consider how platform formats shape religious encounters, participation, and authority.

This study has several limitations. First, the data were limited to publicly available digital artifacts, and the study therefore cannot explain content creators' internal motivations or audiences' subjective experiences. Second, the focus on two religious figures means that the findings cannot be generalized to all digital Islamic ritual practices. Third, this study did not conduct a technical analysis of platform algorithms; therefore, claims concerning visibility should be understood as interpretations based on patterns of representation and engagement rather than as algorithmic measurements. Future research may extend this study through audience interviews, cross-platform comparisons, longitudinal analyses of comments, comparisons between male and female religious figures, and examinations of platform ethics in the production and consumption of Islamic ritual content.

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that Islamic ritual practices, particularly dhikr and du'a, are represented in reconfigured forms in platform-based digital media. Through an analysis of videos, post captions, and audience comments on the accounts of Hanan Attaki and Halimah Alaydrus, this

study finds that rituals are not merely transferred into digital spaces but are reformulated as concise, visually oriented, and affectively charged audiovisual content that can be accessed repeatedly.

The article's main findings identify three important mechanisms in the shift from ritual to content. First, dhikr and du‘a undergo audiovisual condensation through temporal compression, the foregrounding of devotional expressions, the use of concise texts, and the construction of visual and affective atmospheres aligned with platform logics. Second, audience comments, emojis, and textual responses are interpreted as forms of symbolic ritual participation that extend devotional engagement without requiring physical presence or temporal synchronicity. Third, repeated visibility and audience recognition of ritual content are associated with the formation of platform-based religious authority, although this finding should be understood as an interpretive pattern rather than an algorithmic measurement.

Theoretically, this article contributes to studies of the mediatization of religion, ritual studies, and lived Islam by demonstrating that digital media operate at the level of ritual micropractices, rather than solely at the level of da‘wa, institutions, or formal authority. Accordingly, digital Islam should be understood not merely as the transfer of religious messages to social media but as a process through which religious representation, participation, and recognition are reshaped through media artifacts.

This study is limited by its exclusive use of publicly available digital artifacts, its focus on two religious figures, and the absence of interviews with content creators and audiences. Therefore, future research may extend this inquiry through audience interviews, cross-platform comparisons, longitudinal analyses of comments, comparisons between male and female religious figures, and examinations of platform ethics in the production and consumption of Islamic ritual content.

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Author contributions (CRediT)

Derry Ahmad Rizal: Conceptualization, Methodology, Resources, Writing – Original Draft. **Moh Syaiful Bahri:** Formal Analysis, Validation, Investigation, Writing.

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Data availability

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Ethics approval

This study is a library-based investigation of published sources and did not involve human participants, interviews, observations, personal data, or interventions; therefore, formal ethical approval was not required.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Submission/originality statement

This manuscript is original, has not been published previously, and is not under consideration elsewhere.

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