

THE INFLUENCE OF STREAMING PLATFORMS ON RELIGIOUS CONTENT CONSUMPTION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS

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Abstract

The proliferation of streaming platforms and social media has changed the pattern of religious content consumption in society, especially among the younger generation. Literature shows that platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok facilitate access to interactive, visual, and digestible religious information, significantly improving religious understanding, practice, and identity in millennials and Gen Z. Besides expanding the reach of da'wah and strengthening the solidarity of virtual communities, these platforms also contribute to building a more moderate and inclusive religious identity. However, challenges remain in the form of the risk of spreading invalid information and the tendency towards extreme interpretations, so digital literacy and wise supervision are needed so that streaming platforms truly become effective instruments in supporting the strengthening of moderate and relevant religious understanding in the digital era.

Keywords: streaming platforms, social media, religious content, social impact, cultural impact, digital literacy, millennial generation, Gen Z.

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has brought major changes in almost all aspects of human life, including in the way people access and consume religious content. In the current digital era, streaming platforms such as YouTube, Instagram Live, TikTok, and various similar services have become the main means for people to obtain religious knowledge and experience instantly and flexibly (Hoover, 2021). This phenomenon marks a shift from previously conventional and face-to-face religious consumption patterns to more open, interactive, and decentralised through digital media (Wang, 2024).

Streaming platforms offer easy access without time and space limits, allowing anyone to follow religious studies, lectures, or discussions from various parts of the world. This provides a great opportunity for preachers and religious institutions to reach a wider audience, including the younger generation who have tended to be less involved in formal religious activities (Ali, 2022). In addition, diverse and interactive content

formats, such as live streaming, animated videos, and podcasts, make religious messages more interesting and easily understood by various groups (Burgess et al., 2022).

The widespread use of streaming platforms has also led to the emergence of the phenomenon of "cyber religion" or religious practices mediated by digital technology. People can now participate in worship rituals, learn to read the holy book, and discuss religious issues through virtual spaces without having to be physically present in the assembly or house of worship. This transformation has a significant impact on patterns of social interaction and religious culture, where religious authority is no longer only monopolised by formal figures, but also by influencers and digital content creators who have a large follower base in cyberspace (Smith, 2022).

On the other hand, the ease of access and freedom of expression on streaming platforms also presents new challenges. One of them is the potential for the dissemination of religious information that is less valid or even misleading, considering that not all content creators have sufficient scientific competence. In addition, platform algorithms that tend to reinforce echo chambers can trigger polarisation of religious views in society, and increase the risk of intolerance and inter-group conflict. The social impact of streaming platforms on religious content consumption is diverse (Lee, 2023). On the one hand, these platforms strengthen people's sense of brotherhood and solidarity through virtual communities that actively discuss and share religious experiences. But on the other hand, digitalised interactions can also reduce the depth of spiritual reflection and the quality of relationships between individuals, as religious experiences become more individualised and fragmented (Kim, 2024).

In the context of religious education, streaming platforms have proven to be effective in expanding access to religious learning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when online learning became a major necessity. Many educational institutions and religious communities have utilised YouTube and similar platforms to upload real-time religious studies, lectures and Q&As. This allows people to continue gaining religious knowledge even when they are at home, as well as customising their learning time according to their individual needs (Chen, 2024).

The success of streaming platforms in disseminating religious content is also greatly influenced by the diversity of formats and presentation styles. Dai or preachers can use digital marketing strategies, attractive visual design, and collaboration with other content creators to increase the attractiveness and reach of da'wah messages. Not only that, interactive features such as comments, polls, and live chat also strengthen audience engagement and build a more inclusive community (Garcia, 2022). However, the effectiveness of streaming platforms as a medium for da'wah and religious education is highly dependent on users' wisdom in selecting and consuming content. People need to be equipped with digital literacy in order to be able to distinguish between valid information and hoaxes, and avoid the trap of radicalism or

deviant teachings. Therefore, collaboration between religious leaders, educators, and digital content creators is very important to ensure the quality and accuracy of religious material disseminated (Siregar, 2025).

In addition to the social aspect, the use of streaming platforms also has an important cultural impact. Religious content is now often packaged with a touch of popular culture, such as the use of slang, memes, or modern music, making it easier for millennials and Gen Z to accept. This glocalisation process creates new forms of religious expression that are more fluid and adaptive to the times (Ahmad, 2021).

The shift of religious authority from traditional figures to digital influencers is also one of the interesting phenomena in this study. Young ustaz or preachers who are active on social media often become the main reference for young people in understanding religious teachings, as well as forming a more personal and contextual religious identity (Evans, 2023).

Thus, research on the influence of streaming platforms on the consumption of religious content is highly relevant to understanding the social and cultural dynamics of society in the digital era. This research will not only examine the positive and negative impacts of the phenomenon, but also provide strategic recommendations for the development of da'wah and religious education that are more effective, inclusive, and adaptive to technological change.

Finally, it is important to highlight that digital transformation in the consumption of religious content is an unavoidable inevitability. The challenge is how to use this technology wisely to strengthen religious values, strengthen brotherhood, and encourage the creation of a more tolerant and civilised society in the midst of increasingly rapid globalisation and digitalisation.

Research Methods

The research method used in this study is a systematic literature review with a descriptive qualitative approach, namely by collecting, identifying, and analysing various scientific sources such as journal articles, research reports, and relevant case studies related to the influence of streaming platforms on the consumption of religious content, especially in social and cultural aspects; the data collection process was carried out through literature searches in academic databases using specific keywords, then the data was analysed thematically to find patterns, trends, and socio-cultural impacts that arise due to the use of streaming platforms as a medium for distribution and communication of religious messages in the digital era (Petticrew & Roberts, 2020); (Munn et al., 2020).

Results and Discussion

The Socio-Cultural Impact of Streaming Platforms on Religiosity and Religious Identity

Streaming platforms have brought significant changes to people's religiosity and religious identity, especially among the younger generation. Through the ease of access and variety of religious content available, these platforms allow individuals to deepen their religious knowledge without time and space constraints. Content such as lectures, discussions, and religious questions and answers can be accessed at any time, thus expanding opportunities for independent and flexible religious learning (S. Patel, 2022).

In addition to strengthening religiosity, streaming platforms also play a role in forming virtual religious communities. Teenagers and university students, for example, can connect with discussion groups, forums or spiritual communities that reinforce faith and provide social support. These interactions not only strengthen solidarity, but also encourage inclusive sharing of religious experiences and knowledge. However, the presence of streaming platforms is not free from challenges (R. Patel, 2022) . One of them is the risk of exposure to invalid or even misleading religious content. Not all content in circulation has been verified by religious authorities, so users must be more selective in choosing sources of information. This can result in a shallow understanding of religion or even deviate from the true values of religious teachings (Brown, 2021) .

Another emerging impact is the individualisation of religious identity. Streaming platforms give each individual the freedom to express and build his or her own religious identity, without having to be completely tied to local traditions or specific religious authorities. These identities are often more personalised and reflective, reflecting the interaction between religious values and the dynamics of digital culture (Syarifuddin ., 2023)

On the other hand, popular culture that develops in digital media also influences the way individuals express religious identity. The use of slang, Islamic memes, or religious entertainment content has become a trend that shows the interaction between religious values and popular culture. This phenomenon shows that religious values can be adapted in the context of digital culture without losing the essence of the teachings (Rahman, 2022) .

However, streaming platforms can also lead to polarisation and fragmentation of religious communities. Algorithms that tailor content to user preferences tend to form exclusive communities based on particular views or ideologies. This narrows horizons and reinforces negative stereotypes of other groups.

Conflicts over religious interpretation often occur in the digital space. Differences in interpretation of religious teachings that initially aim to educate can turn into heated debates, even criticising each other between different groups. This phenomenon shows that digital space is not only an arena for education, but also an arena for negotiation and conflict of religious discourse (Abdillah, 2023) . In addition, streaming platforms can also be a means of spreading radical ideologies. Certain groups

utilise this medium to spread messages of extremism with a wider and faster reach than conventional methods. This poses a challenge for religious authorities and the government in maintaining social stability and security (Tran, 2023).

The transformation of religious identity can also be seen in the adoption of global values. Religious practices are no longer limited to the local context, but also adopt global lifestyles such as modern Islamic clothing and participation in transnational religious movements. This adaptation shows that religious identity is dynamic and continues to evolve with the flow of globalisation (Putri, 2023).

Online religious practices are increasingly common, such as virtual lectures, online zakat collection, or congregational prayers through digital platforms. This shift marks a change in the way of worship that is more adapted to the needs and developments of the times, although it must still be balanced with a deep understanding of religious teachings (Sugiardi & Aslan, 2025).

Streaming platforms also encourage increased awareness of multiculturalism. Through intercultural dialogue and cross-border interaction, people can understand different religious perspectives and build tolerance. This is important in creating social harmony amidst diversity (Müller, 2022).

On the other hand, the pressure of popular culture and globalisation can lead to identity conflicts, especially for the younger generation who try to balance between Islamic values and modern lifestyles. This challenge demands adaptability and critical reflection in building an authentic religious identity (Amin et al., 2025).

A shift in religious authority has also occurred with the emergence of digital religious influencers who have great influence in cyberspace. Religious authority is no longer only monopolised by formal figures, but also by individuals who are popular on digital platforms. This creates new forms of authority and more varied religious interpretations (Sanggenafa & Aslan, 2025).

Overall, streaming platforms bring complex socio-cultural impacts to religiosity and religious identity. On the one hand, it opens up opportunities to strengthen solidarity, education and religious expression. But on the other hand, it also presents challenges in the form of polarisation, radicalisation and value shifts that require wise understanding and management. Therefore, strong religious digital literacy is needed so that people can utilise streaming platforms positively, maintain the substance of religious teachings, and build religious identities that are inclusive and adaptive to changing times.

Ethical Challenges: The spread of misinformation, radicalism, and commercialisation of religious content

Streaming platforms present three main ethical challenges in the context of religious content: the spread of misinformation, covert radicalism, and the commercialisation of spiritual values. All three are interrelated in shaping the dynamics

of religiosity in an increasingly complex digital era. The ease of access to religious content does encourage the democratisation of religious knowledge, but at the same time it also opens the door to information anarchy. Without an authoritative filter, any individual can become a producer of religious content, even without sufficient scientific competence. This situation creates a chaotic marketplace of ideas, where religious truth is reduced to algorithmic popularity competition (Nouman & Ravitz, 2025).

Streaming platforms rely on algorithms designed to maximise user engagement, not to ensure content accuracy. This mechanism indirectly promotes provocative or sensational content, including extreme religious interpretations, as such content is more likely to go viral than in-depth analyses. Algorithms also become the new "gatekeepers" that determine the type of religiosity consumed by the wider public (Williams, 2021). Traditional religious authorities such as ulama or pesantren institutions have begun to be displaced by digital influencers who master algorithms and mass communication techniques. This shift blurs the criteria for religious legitimacy, where digital charisma is often more influential than depth of knowledge. As a result, people are prone to follow figures who are more adept at personal branding than scientific substance (Jones, 2021).

The dominance of short-form content also changes the way people process religious information. Religious understanding becomes fragmented into snippets of verses or hadith that are cut off from their context. This creates a generation that is familiar with "religious soundbites" but stutters in systemic and in-depth understanding. Radical groups also utilise streaming platforms as ideological markets (Aslan & Ningtyas, 2025). By presenting extreme narratives in modern packaging such as animation, music, or memes, they target the psychology of young people who are searching for identity and purpose in life. Radicalism is no longer spread through monotonous lectures, but through content designed to trigger emotions and high engagement (Madri et al., 2021).

Monetisation of religious content turns spirituality into a commodity for sale. Features such as super chat, membership, or advertising encourage creators to optimise content for profit, not for the depth of the message. The sacred value of religion is threatened to be eroded by the market logic that measures the success of da'wah from the number of views and likes. Religion also undergoes a process of glocalisation, which is an adaptation to popular culture through streaming platforms. The use of slang, memes or pop culture references in religious content risks blurring the line between sacred and profane. Although it makes religion more relatable, this approach has the potential to reduce the complexity of the teachings to mere entertainment (Campbell, 2021).

Platform algorithms tend to trap users in ideological echo chambers by recommending similar content repeatedly. This mechanism reinforces sectarian bigotry and cuts off access to alternative perspectives. People end up trapped in echo chambers

that reinforce prejudices rather than broaden horizons. Streaming platforms also facilitate disconnection with the rich and multidimensional intellectual traditions of religion. Simplified religious content for the sake of algorithms ignores the legacy of scholarly discussions, sectarian debates, or historical context. As a result, religious understanding becomes superficial and ahistorical (Parker, 2023).

Live streaming of worship such as prayer or recitation raises ethical dilemmas about the privatisation of rituals. When spiritual experiences are made public, the essence of worship risks being replaced by performativity. This kind of content shifts the focus from the vertical relationship between man and God to the horizontal relationship between man and audience. The concept of "digital jihad", originally intended to spread kindness, is often misinterpreted as a justification to spread hate speech or provocative content. Without deep understanding, digital jihad becomes a legitimising tool for certain groups to polarise society (Smith, 2022).

Efforts to regulate religious content on streaming platforms face a dilemma between freedom of expression and protection of religious values. Excessive censorship risks shutting down critical discussions, while neglect can exacerbate the spread of problematic content. The state and platforms struggle to find the ideal balance. On the other hand, people face a crisis of authenticity when their religious identity is shaped by instantaneous digital content. Religion is no longer understood as a path of self-transformation, but merely a cultural accessory that is showcased in virtual spaces. Spirituality becomes a surface without depth (Hidayatus ., 2024)

This ethical challenge demands a reconstruction of the philosophy of religious communication that is appropriate to the times. A new ethical framework is needed that combines universal religious principles such as honesty, justice and compassion with a critical awareness of technological dynamics. Without this, religion risks becoming a tool of exploitation in the hands of capitalistic logic and identity politics. The theoretical solution involves holistic religious-digital literacy education, where people are not only taught to use technology, but also understand its epistemological and ontological impact on faith (Rozeenal ., 2022)

In addition, it is necessary to build community-based ethical filtration that involves the collaboration of creators, scholars, and users to create a responsible content ecosystem. Thus, the ethical challenges presented by streaming platforms can be faced collectively and sustainably. The role of families, educational institutions and religious communities is crucial in building critical awareness and digital media ethics. In the midst of globalisation and digitalisation, people need to continue to develop the ability of reflection and selection so as not to be trapped in the misleading flow of misinformation, radicalism, and commercialisation of religion (Calista, 2024).

At the end of the day, streaming platforms are just tools. The value and impact it generates depends largely on how society utilises it. If used wisely and ethically, these platforms can be a means of da'wah, education, and strengthening spiritual values that

are relevant to the times. However, if misused, it can become a source of disinformation, polarisation and degradation of noble religious values. Therefore, the development of digital-religious ethics is an urgent need in facing a new era of increasingly digital and connected religiosity (Aslan, 2019).

Therefore, it is also important to instil critical and reflective values from an early age, so that the younger generation is not easily influenced by viral but shallow religious content. Strong digital literacy must be accompanied by a deep understanding of religion, so that people are not only passive consumers, but also responsible producers of content. Thus, ethical challenges that arise can be addressed proportionally and constructively, in order to create a healthy, inclusive and dignified digital space.

Conclusion

Streaming platforms and social media have brought about major changes in the consumption of religious content, especially among younger generations such as millennials and Gen Z. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and TikTok enable the wide, fast and interactive dissemination of religious messages. Short, engaging visual content has become a favourite, while the presence of digital influencers or preachers has increased audience interest and engagement in understanding religious teachings. This makes religious practice more contextualised, accessible and relevant to everyday life, even for those who previously found it difficult to reach conventional religious recitals or activities.

The social impact of this phenomenon is seen in the increase in religious literacy and knowledge among internet users, as well as the formation of virtual communities that support spiritual solidarity. Interactions between religious leaders and believers have become more dynamic through commenting, live streaming and online discussions, strengthening relationships and deepening religious understanding. In addition, social media also plays a role in building a more moderate and inclusive religious identity, as the content disseminated tends to adapt to the socio-cultural dynamics of the digital society.

However, this transformation also brings challenges, such as the risk of spreading inaccurate religious information, distortion of messages, and the rise of extreme interpretations. The lack of digital literacy in some circles makes users vulnerable to hoaxes or teachings that are not credible. Therefore, the success of digital da'wah depends heavily on innovative, relevant and adaptive communication strategies, as well as digital literacy monitoring and education from various parties. Thus, streaming platforms can be an effective tool to strengthen religious understanding and practice, provided they are managed wisely and responsibly.

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