

Commodifying the Unseen: Cyber-Capitalism, Rationalized Rituals, and the Reconfiguration of Religious Authority

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Abstract

The debate over digital religion remains confined to a binary opposition between altruistic proselytizing and commercial exploitation. Moving beyond this dichotomy, this article conceptualizes the structural reconfiguration of religious authority through the lens of media political economy. By analyzing cyber content production, this study demonstrates that the systematic demystification of the supernatural does not function as a neutral educational effort but rather as advanced content commodification designed to manufacture rational audience trust. Spatially, this engineered trust is seamlessly integrated by digital infrastructures into algorithmic e-commerce marketing funnels. This extensive expansion facilitates a distinct structuration process, institutionalizing a new religious managerial class capable of subjecting networked piety to capitalist power relations. Ultimately, this article theorizes a novel circular theo-economic circuit, revealing how public spiritual literacy and capital accumulation mutually reinforce each other to sustain financial stability and theological hegemony under global cyber-capitalism.

Keywords: *Religious Commodification, Religious Authority, Media Political Economy, Theo-Economic Circuit, Muhammad Faizar*

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Introduction

The interaction between religion, media, and society—long confined to a binary dichotomy between altruistic and commercial spaces for religious outreach¹—has created a significant academic gap. Contemporary digital media has become an incubator for the

¹ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 13; Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of A Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 109.



resurgence of supernatural authority by exploiting capitalist market logic. This occurs through the demystification of the supernatural realm and the rationalization of exorcism rituals. This model of demystification operates by blending mystical-religious and clinical-secular discourses as a content-production strategy, embedding mystical reasoning within narratives of scientific legitimacy.² Ignoring this hybrid phenomenon results in theoretical blindness regarding how the enlightenment of public literacy no longer negates capital accumulation but is instead tactically engineered to build rational trust that ultimately locks consumers into economic dependence at the downstream end of the digital market. Through this integrated circuit, contemporary religious authority secures both theological influence and economic stability under the imperatives of global cyber-capitalism.

Previous research has largely overlooked this integration, focusing instead on the relationship between religion and media relationship in a partial and binary manner. On the one hand, mediatization studies remain anchored in the assumption that digital platforms merely shift the locus of ritual to virtual spaces while passively preserving doctrinal sacredness.³ On the other hand, the adaptation of religious discourse is often interpreted as a defensive rejection of the secular paradigm aimed at protecting theological authenticity.⁴ This tendency is further by political economy studies that rigidly separate the altruistic role of religious leaders in spreading spiritual understanding from the motives of modern capital accumulation.⁵ This study addresses that gap by

² Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019), 63.

³ Marco Túlio de Sousa, Mihaela-Alexandra Tudor, and Giulia Evolvi, "Media, Religion and Religiosity in the Digital Age," *Tropos: Comunicação, Sociedade e Cultura* 10, no. 1 (2021); Ruth Tsuria, "Digital Media: When God Becomes Everybody—The Blurring of Sacred and Profane," *Religions* 12, no. 2 (February 8, 2021): 110, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020110>; Aden Abdul Malik and Moh. Masrur, "Qur'anic Interpretation of Dhikr and the Reconfiguration of Religious Authority in Digital Media," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society* 10, no. 2 (January 8, 2026): 167–86, <https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v10i2.13194>.

⁴ Sam Han, "Disenchantment Revisited: Formations of the 'Secular' and 'Religious' in the Technological Discourse of Modernity," *Social Compass* 62, no. 1 (March 2, 2015): 76–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768614560960>; Mia Lövhelm and Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatized Conditions of Contemporary Religion: Critical Status and Future Directions," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 8, no. 2 (2019): 206–25, <https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-00802002>; Ida Fitri Nabila, "Social Media Online Ruqyah on Muhammad Faizar's YouTube Videos," *Tanzil: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran* 7, no. 1 (October 8, 2024): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.20871/tjsq.v7i1.341>.

⁵ Aliakbar Jafari et al., "Theorizing Consumption and Markets in the Context of Religion: A Commentary Section on Appau's (2021) 'Divine Economic System,'" *Marketing Theory* 23, no. 3 (September 23, 2023): 533–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14705931231153192>; Greg Fealy, "Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in

demonstrating that, under the influence of new media, the survival of religious authority no longer depends on self-enclosed orthodoxy. Instead, its sustainability is achieved through a cyclical capacity to dissolve the sacred-profane boundary via cinematic spectacle, assimilate mystical discourse into narratives of scientific legitimacy, and leverage public literacy as an entry point that legitimizes reliance on commercial networks in the downstream digital market.

The Muhammad Faizar Official digital ecosystem on YouTube serves as an ideal critical case for examining this theo-economic circuit. Unlike conventional religious actors who preserve the sacredness of rituals or passively transfer them to cyberspace, Muhammad Faizar radically demystifies and rationalizes exorcism (*ruqyah*) rituals by blending mystical-religious discourse with modern clinical-secular reasoning.⁶ Moreover, the industrial-scale production of supernatural knowledge through cinematic visual dramaturgy functions not merely as profane entertainment; rather, it systematically builds rational trust among audiences. This trust then effectively channels spiritual beliefs into the commercial logistics of the downstream market, making it a clear prototype of supernatural authority reconfiguration under cyber-capitalism.

This study addresses three fundamental issues related to the hybridization of religious authority in cyberspace. First, it examines how traditional ritual spaces are reconstructed through digital dramaturgy and cinematic aesthetics, thereby shifting religious legitimacy into a quantifiable virtual framework. Second, it analyzes the epistemological strategies employed by religious figures use to blend mystical-religious discourse with clinical-secular narratives, thereby rationalizing the supernatural for a networked society. Third, it explores the political-economic circuits of the media that transform public spiritual literacy into a marketing funnel, ensuring both theological sustainability and circular economic stability within the imperatives of global cyber-capitalism.

This study argues that the success of reconstructing religious authority in the digital age depends entirely on religious actors' ability to navigate the economic transformation of media in a simultaneous and integrated manner. Public epistemological enlightenment, achieved through the demystification of the supernatural, no longer functions as a neutral or altruistic activity. Instead, it has become a strategic process for

Indonesia," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealey and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008), 15–39, <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812308528-011>.

⁶ Muhammad Faizar, "Sedang Asyik Ngobrol, Tiba-Tiba Jin Dasim Muncul," YouTube Video, December 9, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy18rUC8AdU>.

converting the intrinsic value of sacred texts into the exchange value of content, specifically designed to cultivate audience trust.⁷ The rational trust thus established is then reinforced through the expansion of cyber-spatial reach, which dissolves traditional geographical boundaries while extending the supply chain by integrating new media ecosystems into marketing channels directly linked to digital market platforms (e-commerce). It is through this extensive spatial access that the institutionalization of a new religious managerial class is facilitated—a class that systematically subjugates the piety and psychological vulnerability of networked communities to capitalist power relations.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach within a critical paradigm to examine the dynamics of discourse hybridization and the commodification of religious preaching in the digital ecosystem.⁸ The analysis utilizes Vincent Mosco's political economy of communication model, focusing on three key domains: commodification, spatialization, and structuration. The primary data corpus consists of audiovisual materials from the official YouTube channel "Muhammad Faizar Official," encompassing content produced and broadcast between 2025 and 2026. These materials include pre-*ruqyah* dialogue sessions, clinical-psychological narratives, horror aesthetics in visual representations, product placements, and active e-commerce links in the video descriptions. Data were collected through engaged digital observation and textual-spatial documentation to comprehensively map the circulation of theological discourse and commercial logistics generated by this religious figure in cyberspace.

The Muhammad Faizar Official digital ecosystem was selected through purposive sampling as a critical case study. This research does not aim for statistical generalization, seeking to test and expand the conceptual boundaries of contemporary sociology of religion. This case was chosen because it represents one of the most radical manifestations of hybridization, wherein which the demystification of sacred texts, the rationalization of exorcism rituals, cinematic aesthetics, and commercial business networks are managed holistically within a single operational framework. Its extensive influence makes it an ideal site for analyzing how global cyber-capitalism reconfigures traditional religious authority in digital spaces.

⁷ Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication* (London: Sage, 2009), 133.

⁸ Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (California: SAGE Publications Inc., 2005), 191.

Data analysis was conducted systematically through data reduction, data presentation, and critical inference, all integrated within the framework of the mediatization of religion.⁹ In the initial stage, textual and visual data were separated to distinguish elements of religious literacy (such as the demystification of exorcism) from instruments of capital accumulation (including the marketing of herbal products and literature). Interpretive analysis then unpacked how the convergence of secular-objective reasoning and spiritual authority produces new knowledge that transcends demographic boundaries. The validity and reliability of the findings were ensured through theoretical triangulation, which involved confronting empirical observations with literature from critical sociology, the political economy of new media, and global studies on digital religious authority. This framework enables the research to reveal how circular economic stability and theological sustainability are jointly constructed by a religious managerial figure under the imperatives of global cyber-capitalism.

Spatial Contextualization of Digital Platforms: Algorithmic Architecture and Virtual Demographics of Cyber Da'wah Networks

The Muhammad Faizar Official YouTube channel is deeply rooted in the spiritual cosmology of Indonesian Muslims, who uphold a longstanding tradition of belief in the supernatural realm and the healing practice of *ruqyah syar'iyah* (Islamic spiritual healing). This religious cosmology is not a product of the digital age but rather cultural habitus long embedded in traditional spiritual practices within *pesantren* (traditional boarding schools) and *majelis taklim* (informal Islamic educational gatherings).¹⁰ Global cyber media platforms serve as technological infrastructures that mediate, reconfigure, and expand the scope of these originally private and localized communal practices. The migration of ritual spaces into global cyberspace has transformed the mechanisms of religious authority transmission in Indonesia.¹¹ Digital platforms have redefined how contemporary urban Muslim communities engage with Islamic mystical traditions, shifting access from physical encounters to visually mediated experiences across national borders via mobile screens.

⁹ Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis (a Source Book of New Methods)* (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1984), 12–13.

¹⁰ Nisa Ghina Raudhatul Janah and Munirah Munirah, "Living Al-Qur'an Dalam Tradisi Ruqyah Di Pondok Pesantren Syifa'ul Qulub Palangka Raya," *JIQTA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (December 30, 2025): 132–44, <https://doi.org/10.36769/jiqta.v4i2.1463>.

¹¹ Dindin Solahudin and Moch Fakhruroji, "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority," *Religions* 11, no. 1 (December 31, 2019): 19, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010019>.

The sociological dynamics of this cyberspace illustrate the intersection of Indonesian cultural continuity and the logic of the global digital media attention economy. With 7.2 million monthly views, the channel demonstrates the enduring vitality of traditional beliefs in metaphysical intervention in the modern era.¹² The YouTube platform leverages this cultural foundation by repackaging exorcism narratives involving local spirits and ghosts—such as the *pocong*—into audiovisual formats that align with popular culture aesthetics.¹³ High viewer retention rates indicate that rational, tech-savvy urban Muslims continue to seek spiritual anchors to address their existential anxieties. Meanwhile, the comment section has evolved into a new communal discursive space where mystical experiences,¹⁴ personal trauma narratives, and theological solidarity are collectively shared on a daily basis.

Traditional religious practices are simultaneously shaped by the algorithmic architecture of global Silicon Valley platforms. Virtual congregational interactions are regulated through automated filtering systems that align local spiritual preferences with the broader logic of global capital circulation.¹⁵ Through the mechanization of digital metrics, the public's pursuit of inner peace and alternative healing is systematically transformed into quantifiable audience retention data. This technical conditioning fosters a homogeneous cyber environment in which collective awareness of metaphysical threats is continuously managed by artificial intelligence systems.¹⁶ Consequently, local religious expressions in Indonesia remain inextricably linked to transnational technological infrastructures that shape modern habits of consuming and interpreting sacred rituals.

This digital socio-religious ecosystem operates under the influence of global platform capitalism, which seamlessly integrates domestic piety with international

¹² Social Blade, “Muhammad Faizar’s YouTube Statistics,” [socialblade.com](https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCN5G3bjkMMmjx1vczG-fK9Q), March 31, 2026, <https://socialblade.com/youtube/channel/UCN5G3bjkMMmjx1vczG-fK9Q>.

¹³ Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, 93–97.

¹⁴ Martin Slama, “A Subtle Economy of Time: Social Media and the Transformation of Indonesia’s Islamic Preacher Economy,” *Economic Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (January 11, 2017): 94–106, <https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12075>.

¹⁵ Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 30.

¹⁶ Desi Sukmawati, Asep S. Muhtadi, and M. Yusuf Wibisono, “Religious Shifts in Tarogong Kidul: Life in the Social Media Age,” *Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 8, no. 2 (November 13, 2025): 331–46, <https://doi.org/10.15575/hanifiya.v8i2.48937>.

commercial networks.¹⁷ The transformation of *ruqyah* mediation into a mechanism for cyber capital accumulation is evident in Google AdSense's monetization system, which generates substantial revenue. Within this space, the boundaries between sincere Islamic da'wah, media professionalism, and religious capitalism have become increasingly blurred due to the involvement of professional creative management teams. Urban Muslim communities are no longer passive congregations but are actively constructed as consumers within a transnational market for herbal health products, religious literature, and Islamic lifestyle goods.¹⁸ This pattern positions Indonesia as a prominent case study for understanding how cyber-capitalism is reshaping the circulation of contemporary religious economies.

The Cinematic Aesthetics of Digital *Ruqyah*: The Commodification of the Supernatural and the Visual Dramaturgy of Religious Content

The framing of sacred verses in news discourse reveals how media institutions actively employ cognitive mechanisms to select and emphasize specific aspects of digital religious realities. Through this textual apparatus, the media does not merely report facts but actively defines the boundaries of the issue, identifies root causes, and establishes moral justifications for societal responses to the interpretation of religious texts.¹⁹ This mediated construction of religious issues exposes a dialectic among the sacredness of Islam, the economic imperatives of the media, and the broader demand for sociocultural stability. Consequently, parodies in cyberspace no longer remain isolated theological matters; instead, they are transformed into commodified public discourse, framed in markedly different ways by national and local media.

The visual dialectic between commodification and the supernatural reveals the dynamics of the political economy of religious media in cyberspace. This media transition is no longer merely a passive documentation of healing rituals but a deliberate visual cultural strategy rooted in the architecture of the attention economy. From a sociology of communication perspective, the sensory shift from sacred auditory dimensions to empirical visual spectacle clearly manifests commodification, wherein abstract theological content and patients' personal traumatic experiences are reconfigured into culturally

¹⁷ Couldry and Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*, 47.

¹⁸ Fealy, "Expressing Islam Relig. Life Polit. Indones.," 2–3.

¹⁹ Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm."

consumable commodities with commercial value.²⁰ Through the technological mechanisms of digital platforms, the intimate boundaries of the therapeutic spaces undergo spatialization, transcending geographical barriers to reach global mass audiences. This strategic use of cinematic horror aesthetics ultimately illustrates how contemporary religious authority is domesticated by digital capitalism to maintain its influence within the new media market.

The preservation of authority in *ruqyah* practices on the Muhammad Faizar Official channel reflects a significant shift from auditory elements—primarily the recitation of the Qur'an—to visual spectacle. The videos use low-lighting techniques to create a dark, dramatic atmosphere within the therapeutic setting.

Table 1. Sensory Transformation of Content from Auditory to Tactile

Title	Auditory Elements	Material Actions
<i>Teror Pocong: Luka Batin yang Terpendam</i> (Pocong Terror: Hidden Emotional Wounds)	Recitation of QS. al-Fātiḥah [1]:1-7, QS. al-Baqarah [2]:1-5, QS. al-Baqarah [2]:163-169, QS. al-Baqarah [2]:255-257, and QS. al-Baqarah [2]:284-286 with a low intonation.	Muhammad Faizar places his left hand on the patient's head and gently taps it with the fingers of his right hand while the patient keeps their eyes closed.
<i>Sedang Asyik Ngobrol, Tiba-Tiba Jin Dasim Muncul</i> (In the Middle of a Chatty Conversation, Suddenly the Dasim Jinn Appears)	Recitation of QS. al-Fātiḥah [1]:1-7, QS. al-Baqarah [2]:1-5, and QS. al-Baqarah [2]:97-103, interspersed with the patient's groans.	Muhammad Faizar presses the crown of the patient's head with his right index finger; the patient's body arches backward (opisthotonos).
<i>Indigo Didatangi "Lucifer", Melihat Wajah Pelaku Pesugihan</i> (Indigo is visited by "Lucifer," who reveals the face of the black magic practitioner)	Recitation of QS. al-Fātiḥah [1]:1-7 in a low tone.	Muhammad Faizar presses the back of the patient's neck, accompanied by the patient's groans of pain.
<i>Penampakan pocong di rumah Panji Petualang</i>	Recitation of QS. al-Zumar [39]:22-23, QS. al-An'ām [6]:12-21	Muhammad Faizar presses the patient's back, accompanied by the patient's sobbing.

²⁰ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 96.

(Appearance of a with soft intonation, interspersed pocong in Panji with sobbing. Petualang's house)

Terekam Kamera!!
Muntah Jarum Saat
Terapi Ruqyah
(Caught on Camera!!
Needle Vomiting
During Ruqyah
Therapy)

Recitation of QS. al-Kahfi [18]:29-31 with a soft intonation.

Muhammad Faizar presses the back of the patient's neck, which causes the patient to experience pain and vomiting.

Table 1 illustrates the shift in focus from the verbal recitation of sacred verses to the direct visual documentation of patients' physical reactions. Through dynamic camera work, supernatural disturbances—such as the terror of the *pocong* (Indonesian shroud ghost),²¹ Lucifer,²² the Dasim jinn,²³ or black magic²⁴—are vividly presented to the audience through the *ruqyah* practitioner's physical actions and the patient's visible bodily manifestations. The camera typically employs a wide-angle shot to capture the entire scene within a single frame. This static shot technique aims to emphasize every physical change in the patient throughout the spiritual healing ritual.

In addition to the scenes depicted in the video, a dramatic visual composition is established from the very beginning, even before the viewer plays the content. The graphic elements on the video's digital cover (thumbnail) feature a photo montage that combines contrasting visual objects. The background is dominated by black and dark blue tones, complemented by large title text in bright red and white capital letters (see Figure 1).



²¹ Muhammad Faizar, "Teror Pocong: Luka Batin Yang Terpendam," YouTube Video, December 12, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOCRyxSP79A>; Muhammad Faizar, "Penampakan Pocong Di Rumah Panji Petualang," YouTube Video, December 30, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fosGRPGrA4Y>.

²² Muhammad Faizar, "Indigo Didatangi Lucifer, Melihat Wajah Para Pelaku Kesugihan," YouTube Video, December 19, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exZmJ6vQZ08>.

²³ Muhammad Faizar, "Sedang Asyik Ngobrol, Tiba-Tiba Jin Dasim Muncul."

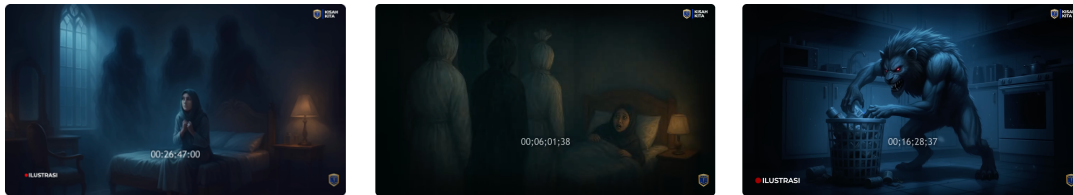
²⁴ Muhammad Faizar, "Terekam Kamera!! Muntah Jarum Saat Terapi Ruqyah," YouTube Video, January 20, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3CxOLiW39U>.

Source: Screenshot from the Muhammad Faizar Official YouTube Channel.

Figure 1. Visual thumbnail from the Muhammad Faizar Official YouTube channel

Figure 1 displays key visual elements on the thumbnail, including close-up photos of a female patient with her mouth wide open, eyes closed, or body in a collapsed position. Adjacent to the patient's image are digital illustrations: a black horned shadow, a *pocong* wrapped in a white shroud, and other supernatural entities. Muhammad Faizar's photo is prominently positioned in the foreground, with his hand either pointing or holding a copy of the Qur'an, directly facing the illustrated supernatural beings.

As the video begins, the supernatural entities initially depicted only in the thumbnail come to life through extended scenes. Utilizing dynamic camera work and low-lighting techniques, manifestations of supernatural disturbances are no longer merely described verbally but are vividly portrayed through theatrical AI-generated inserts that move in sync with the patient's spoken narrative (see Figure 2).



Source: AI-Generated Scene Clip from the Muhammad Faizar Official YouTube Channel.

Figure 2. AI-Generated Depictions of Supernatural Disturbances and the Patient's Traumatic Expressions

Figure 2 illustrates AI-generated horror visuals depicting supernatural beings, serving as visual representations of the patient's oral narrative. Stories about dreams involving *pocong*s and spirits, or visions of supernatural entities, replace traditional interview footage between the exorcist and the patient. This AI-generated content vividly captures the patient's subjective experience within a single video frame.

The extensive use of visual media in presenting *ruqyah* treatment signifies a notable shift in the contemporary socio-religious landscape. Cyberspace is no longer a neutral channel conduit for transmitting religious teachings; rather, the transition from sacred textual recitation to dramatic visual spectacle generates profound cultural ambiguity.²⁵ On one hand, these structured visualizations and AI-generated renderings help demystify

²⁵ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 364.

supernatural phenomena, aligning them with modern rational thought. On the other hand, they risk reducing sacred theological rituals to banal performative spectacles designed to cater to market algorithms.²⁶ This triadic relationship among faith, technology, and the public illustrates that, in a networked society, expressions of religiosity must continuously negotiate and adapt to the logic of the cyber-cultural industry in order to preserve religious authority amid the dominance of global visual culture.

The visual circulation and cinematic aesthetic manipulations on Muhammad Faizar's platform reflect a fundamental epistemological shift in how religious healing is articulated in cyberspace. This media transposition reveals that *ruqyah*—traditionally rooted in a sacred theological and eschatological dimension—is being reconfigured into a visual commodity of a recreational and profane nature.²⁷ When healing rituals, once reliant on sacred auditory authority, are transformed into subdued attractions and visual dramatizations, the essence of healing shifts from a space of personal recovery to a public spectacle. This suggests that, within the ecosystem of digital capitalism, religious healing must conform to the logic of the contemporary entertainment industry. Here, the authenticity of spirituality is no longer measured by ascetic piety but by the extent to which rituals can be converted into captivating visual spectacles that circulate effectively within cyber algorithms.

This transformation of religious healing into a commercial spectacle in cyberspace expands the classical thesis on the mediatization of religion, which typically views digital platforms merely as extensions of traditional authority. The dynamics within the Muhammad Faizar Official ecosystem demonstrate that cyberspace does not simply relocate rituals from the physical to the virtual realm. Rather, it enacts a radical intervention into the ontology of the ritual itself through the standardization of global entertainment industry logics. While previous studies often framed mediatization as a relatively passive process that preserves doctrinal sacredness,²⁸ the cinematic aesthetics of digital *ruqyah* reveal a reversal: sacred texts are thoroughly domesticated by low-light

²⁶ H. A. Campbell, "Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 64–93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

²⁷ Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Society A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change," *Nordicom Review* 29, no. 2 (2008): 105–34, <https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0181>.

²⁸ Tsuria, "Digital Media: When God Becomes Everybody—The Blurring of Sacred and Profane"; Giulia Evolvi, "Religion, New Media, and Digital Culture," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.917>.

visual dramaturgy and artificial intelligence to generate mass voyeuristic desire. This practice underscores that, in the new media landscape, the boundary between spiritual healing and profane spectacle has largely dissolved under the control of the attention economy. Such a performative shift transcends conventional understandings of religious digitalization, which has long been viewed primarily as an effort to preserve tradition in the modern era.

The Hybridization of Psychospiritual Discourse: Clinical-Psychological Articulation and the Demystification of Contemporary Religious Authority

The asymmetrical framing between national and local newsrooms demonstrates that news production never occurs in a vacuum of interests. Instead, it is deliberately designed to achieve specific pragmatic goals. This operational polarization indicates that each level of the media operates with institutional agendas that extend far beyond journalism's basic role as a conveyor of religious information. Through the selection of sources, dramatization of events, and strategic chronological emphasis, the press actively guides public perception toward either systemic compliance or the restoration of social cohesion at the grassroots level.²⁹ Therefore, deconstructing these contrasting news texts provides a crucial entry point for understanding the teleological motives of contemporary news portals in constructing religious events.

The articulation of hybrid discourse that merges secular and spiritual narratives employs spatialization mechanisms to extend institutional reach into cyberspace. By blurring the boundaries between profane consultation spaces and sacred ritual arenas, digital platforms overcome conventional institutional limitations. They transform private healing spaces into expansive public arenas of consumption. This interdisciplinary synchronization serves not merely as a modification of discourse but as a spatial strategy to rationalize theological actions, enabling them to transcend the demographic boundaries of contemporary audiences.³⁰ By shifting the locus of legitimacy from traditional doctrinal pulpits to measured, cinematic spatial arrangements, this mediation process simultaneously increases the economic value of content and reaffirms the supremacy of religious authority amid the commodification of the digital cultural industry.

This enhancement of value and restoration of authority is achieved by integrating modern psychological concepts with traditional terms for spiritual disturbances. In pre-*ruqyah* dialogue sessions, Muhammad Faizar consistently employs terms such as “wounded

²⁹ Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm.”

³⁰ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 171.

inner child,” “childhood trauma,”³¹ “depression,”³² and “anxiety.”³³ These clinical concepts are placed on equal footing with mystical phenomena, including attacks by Dasim Jinn, black magic intended for wealth, curses, and the apparition of Lucifer. Patients, such as Dini³⁴ and Yuli³⁵, are guided to recount past memories before the recitation of sacred verses begins. These candid conversations reveal accounts of domestic conflict, absent father figures, physical abuse, and suicidal urges.

The problem-identification process in the video links hysterical reactions or jinn possession to unresolved emotional wounds. When patients cry while recounting family trauma, the exorcist interprets this emotional vulnerability as an entry point for supernatural entities.³⁶ The narrative deliberately avoids traditional terms such as “possession by evil spirits,” instead framing these episodes as physical manifestations of buried psychological burdens. Muhammad Faizar performs a dual role on camera: both as a counselor analyzing the patient’s mental state through a medical lens and as a religious leader delivering theological interventions. Scientific explanations concerning brain function and stress hormones are interwoven with recitations of religious texts.

The horror aesthetic created through digital cover design and AI-generated imagery is not isolated but integrated into the clinical layout of the therapy room. This visual reconstruction of the patient’s traumatic experience is balanced by objective visualizations that contextualize the exorcist’s actions through modern attributes and systematic treatment stages (see Figure 3).



Source: Screenshot from the Muhammad Faizar Official YouTube Channel.

Figure 3. Spatial-Somatic Circulation in Digital *Ruqyah* Therapy

³¹ Muhammad Faizar, “Teror Pocong: Luka Batin Yang Terpendam.”

³² Muhammad Faizar, “Indigo Didatangi Lucifer, Melihat Wajah Para Pelaku Kesugihan.”

³³ Muhammad Faizar, “Sedang Asyik Ngobrol, Tiba-Tiba Jin Dasim Muncul.”

³⁴ Muhammad Faizar.

³⁵ Muhammad Faizar, “Teror Pocong: Luka Batin Yang Terpendam.”

³⁶ Muhammad Faizar, “Sedang Asyik Ngobrol, Tiba-Tiba Jin Dasim Muncul.”

Figure 3 illustrates the hybridization of modern clinical-medical protocols with traditional theological rituals. The sequence forms a performative narrative that progresses linearly from face-to-face consultation formats—thereby institutionalizing modern religious authority—to the materialization of therapeutic action. This visual combination objectively demonstrates how contemporary religious authority is demystified on camera: the practice of jinn exorcism is no longer presented as abstract magic but is rearticulated as a measurable psychospiritual therapeutic process. Its mechanisms can be perceived, documented, and aligned with modern scientific logic on the viewer's mobile screen.

This fusion of cross-border discourses has triggered a significant digital sociological phenomenon: a fundamental shift in the nature of religious authority in response to the demands of cyber modernity. This hybrid construction reveals that theological legitimacy in the contemporary era can no longer stand alone in absolute terms.³⁷ Instead, it must be negotiated and validated through the strategic adoption of rational secular paradigms. The phenomenon illustrates the rationalization of rituals, whereby transcendent elements are drawn into a mechanical and empirical realm.³⁸ This process of demystification highlights the ambivalent condition of modern religion: to maintain public influence, religious agents are compelled to deconstruct traditional mysticism and repackage it into new forms of knowledge compatible with secular, objective reason. Ultimately, the survival of religious authority in the digital age depends less on rigid doctrinal orthodoxy and more on epistemological flexibility in integrating modern discursive structures.

The dynamics of this discursive alignment illustrate an epistemological reconstruction of religious healing models under the influence of cyber-rationality. To maintain its authority before a modern audience, traditional religious healing no longer relies solely on dogmatic practices but transforms them into objective, measurable processes. When abstract metaphysical experiences are translated into mechanical and visual explanatory frameworks, the essence of spiritual healing undergoes a form of secular demystification.³⁹ This adaptation reflects a dual strategy: rationalizing traditional practices to align with contemporary public reasoning while simultaneously reinforcing the supremacy of religious institutions by leveraging dominant secular knowledge tools in cyberspace.

³⁷ Han, "Disenchantment Revisited: Formations of the 'Secular' and 'Religious' in the Technological Discourse of Modernity."

³⁸ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 129.

³⁹ Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 40.

This alignment of discourses in cyberspace expands existing arguments regarding the hybridization of traditional authority, which was long presumed to weaken under advancing scientification. The dynamics within the Muhammad Faizar Official ecosystem demonstrate that discursive adaptation does not operate in binary opposition—where one domain negates the other—but through mutually reinforcing epistemological assimilation strategies. While mainstream religious sociology has often portrayed religious institutions as adopting defensive positions⁴⁰ or rejecting the medical-secular paradigm to preserve doctrinal purity⁴¹, Muhammad Faizar exemplifies tactical flexibility. He re-legitimizes the supernatural by strategically redefining the conceptual boundaries of traditional healing to meet the demands of networked societies for objective evidence.

Platform-Based Commercialization of Da'wah: Constructing Digital Marketing Channels and Circulation Networks for Religious Commodities

The strategic relationship between spiritual healing spaces and cyber media networks ultimately converges into a dynamic model of commodification within the political economy of communication. Through this process, religious healing content—originally immaterial in nature—is systematically transformed into instruments of capital circulation and value accumulation.⁴² This transformation results from the integration of platform ecosystems with market infrastructure, which actively shapes commercial culture. By converting the audience's subjective suffering into integrated spiritual and logistical consumption needs, this mediation mechanism amplifies the economic value of content within the architecture of cyber-capitalism, positioning contemporary religious figures as dominant economic actors in the global market network.

The transformation of value within the digital market is clearly evident in Muhammad Faizar's video broadcasts, which seamlessly blend religious preaching with commercial product promotion through strategic product placement. In the videos, bottles of herbal products, *ruqyah* honey, and stacks of printed books are deliberately positioned on tables or against the backdrop of the practice room, ensuring they are prominently

⁴⁰ Han, "Disenchantment Revisited: Formations of the 'Secular' and 'Religious' in the Technological Discourse of Modernity"; Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (2011): 119–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2011.579719>.

⁴¹ Sahar Khamis, "The Paradoxes of Modern Islamic Discourses and Socio-Religious Transformation in the Digital Age," *Religions* 15, no. 2 (February 8, 2024): 207, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020207>.

⁴² Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 56.

featured on camera. At key moments, Muhammad Faizar offers subtle promotional information about these products to the audience (see Figure 4).



Source: Screenshot from the Muhammad Faizar Official YouTube Channel.

Figure 4. Subtle Products Promotion in the Healing Therapy Video

Figure 4 shows the written description below the video, which contains active links directing viewers to digital marketplaces such as Shopee, Tokopedia, and TikTok Shop. These links provide instructions for purchasing health products, spiritual guidebooks, herbal medicines, skincare items, and for registering for clinical training sessions and mass *ruqyah* certification programs.

The commercial products featured in this digital ecosystem include books authored by Muhammad Faizar, such as *Mukjizat Penyembuhan Ayat Al-Qur'an* (The Healing Miracles of the Quranic Verses), *Rahasia Indigo dan Potensi Ghaib Manusia* (The Secrets of Indigo and the Supernatural Potential of Humans), *Risalah Pelebur Jin Leluhur* (The Treatise on Exorcising Ancestral Jinn), and the “*Ruqyah Novel*” (priced at Rp115,000). Additional titles include practical guidebooks like *Ruqyah itu Mudah* (*Ruqyah Is Easy*) and *Ruqyah Love Story*, all sold through the official Arsyada Yadaka Indonesia online store. The video description also provides detailed specifications for *ruqyah*-recited honey, packaged herbal remedies, and therapeutic scented oils. These products are marketed as essential components of post-*ruqyah* therapy to maintain the patient’s spiritual protection at home.

The channel’s business operations are managed by a professional team responsible for distributing religious goods and services. The videos and community tab prominently feature the Arsyada Ruqyah Therapy clinic, which operates multiple branches across various regions. A dedicated WhatsApp contact number is provided for paid private consultations and herbal medicine orders. The overall content flow is strategically designed to guide viewers experiencing trauma or metaphysical disturbances toward purchasing recommended herbal packages. This integrated model effectively combines educational healing content on YouTube with a comprehensive logistics network that distributes religious literature and Islamic health supplements to both domestic and international markets.

The strategic integration of theological educational broadcasts with the expansion of commercial logistics networks in cyberspace signifies a profound shift in the orientation of contemporary da'wah movements. The role of religious leaders has evolved beyond merely transmitting moral and spiritual guidance; they have become managerial figures overseeing interconnected economic ecosystems. Digital space is no longer used merely to gather virtual congregations; it now serves to transform the audience's psychological vulnerabilities and need for metaphysical protection into measurable, repetitive acts of consumption.⁴³ This reliance on digital market architecture reveals the ambivalent nature of modern piety: on one hand, the provision of physical commodities offers practical, self-reliant solutions for spiritual protection; on the other, it demonstrates how religious sacredness willingly submits to the logic of capital accumulation. This dynamic confirms that contemporary religious authority achieves both theological and economic sustainability simultaneously through the apparatus of global cyber-capitalism.

The mechanism of this dual sustainability reveals how the demystification of *ruqyah* serves as the foundation for securing the figure's circular economic stability. The rational, objective knowledge that Muhammad Faizar presents on camera is strategically positioned as a new source of legitimacy. It dismantles the aura of traditional mysticism while shaping the critical reasoning of modern viewers. However, within the media's political-economic circuit, this epistemological enlightenment is tactically converted into a binding marketing funnel. The more audiences rationally understand the anatomy of spiritual disturbances, the more logical it becomes for them to purchase the downstream material solutions—herbal products and literature—offered on the platform.⁴⁴ This demonstrates that the stability of capital accumulation for contemporary religious figures no longer relies on the exploitation of dogmatic doctrines. Instead, it depends on the flexible production of enlightening cyber-knowledge, whereby the expansion of public spiritual intelligence simultaneously reinforces consumers' economic dependence within a sustainable commercial network.

This symbiotic dynamic expands existing discussions on the hybridization of digital religious authority, which have often assumed that platform commodification inevitably exploits audiences in a strictly binary manner. The knowledge production managed by

⁴³ Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 30; Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, "Digital Religion: The Packaging and Persuasion of Celebrity Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 23, no. 67 (April 8, 2024): 80–94.

⁴⁴ Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time: Social Media and the Transformation of Indonesia's Islamic Preacher Economy"; Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, 79.

Muhammad Faizar demonstrates that the expansion of religious literacy and capital accumulation can operate in a mutually reinforcing relationship. While mainstream sociology of religion tends to separate the altruistic dissemination of spiritual understanding from the economic motives of capitalist industry,⁴⁵ this case reveals a radical convergence. Public epistemological enlightenment is deliberately cultivated as an entry point that legitimizes the circulation of commercial logistics. Ultimately, a religious figure's economic sustainability in the new media landscape is no longer achieved through crude commercialization of dogma but through the strategic transformation of audience spiritual intelligence into the primary driver of a digitally integrated commercial market.

Conclusion

The mediation of religious content in cyberspace—long assumed by mainstream sociology of religion to be a purely altruistic space for democratizing spiritual literacy and purifying doctrine from worldly influences—cannot be upheld based on the findings of this study. This research demonstrates that the digitization of exorcism rituals (*ruqyah*) on Muhammad Faizar's YouTube channel constitutes a structured power-knowledge strategy. It integrates digital dramaturgical architecture, the hybridization of clinical-secular discourse, and the marketing channels of digital platforms. These three elements do not function in isolation but operate as an integrated theo-economic circuit in which each mutually reinforces the others. Through this mechanism, the fulfillment of public literacy and epistemological enlightenment regarding the demystification of the supernatural is deliberately produced as a rational source of legitimacy to re-institutionalize religious authority in the contemporary era. Consequently, this study affirms that the construction of piety in networked societies has been effectively domesticated into the logic of capital circulation. Religious figures have transformed into managerial actors capable of simultaneously sustaining theological influence and circular economic stability under the imperatives of global cyber-capitalism.

Methodologically, Vincent Mosco's political economy of communication model proves highly effective in uncovering the closed circuit of capital reproduction from upstream to downstream. By applying the analytical tools of commodification, spatialization, and structuration, this study clearly dissects how symbolic capital rooted in

⁴⁵ Jafari et al., "Theorizing Consumption and Markets in the Context of Religion: A Commentary Section on Appau's (2021) 'Divine Economic System'"; Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008).

religious power is transformed into substantial economic capital through the dynamics of the digital market ecosystem (e-commerce). Nevertheless, the study has notable limitations. It focuses exclusively on the textual-spatial analysis of content production and managerial governance within the figure's political economy, without conducting empirical investigations into audience psychological reception, motivations, or actual consumption behavior in the downstream market. These limitations open promising avenues for future research to explore the sociological dimensions of digital audience reception. Such studies could examine the extent to which this dual process of commodification influences public agency and the reinterpretation of sacred religious values amid the global wave of cyber-secularization.

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Data Availability Statement:

The authors ensure that the datasets necessary to replicate the conclusions of this work are presented in their entirety within the article [and/or] its supplementary information.

Disclosure Statement:

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest and confirm that all data were analyzed objectively and ethically, with proper citation of sources.

Ethical Approval:

This study adheres to the AoIR Internet Research Ethics Guidelines. Since it utilizes publicly available content from Muhammad Faizar's official YouTube ecosystem, institutional informed consent was not required. To protect privacy, the identities of all digital audiences, commenters, and patients featured in the videos have been fully anonymized using pseudonyms. The explicit mention of Muhammad Faizar's name is justified by his status as a prominent public figure, and the data is used solely for objective, structural-academic analysis with no defamatory intent.

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