

## Cyber-Spirituality and Platform Logic: Intertextual Alignment of the Qur'an and the Affective Commodification of Indonesian Muslim Pop Music

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### Abstract

Digital technology penetration has profoundly transformed religious expression among Indonesia's urban Muslims through popular art. This study explores how reinterpretations of the Qur'an within urban pop music aesthetics are shaped by platform logic and the circulation of cyber capital. Using a qualitative digital text case study, it analyzes the audiovisual communication framework on @raimlaode's Instagram account (January–April 2026) through qualitative content analysis and intertextual alignment. The findings reveal an epistemological rupture: the Qur'an's theological script becomes systematically intertwined with musical arrangements and algorithmic processes. Through visual anchoring and the periodic repetition of captions, the focus of religious instruction shifts from traditional doctrinal teaching to transient affective and therapeutic stimulation. Moreover, this research highlights the subjugation of spiritual affect within the political economy of cyber-spirituality, where audiences' existential crises, prayers, and personal reflections are unconsciously commodified as digital labor to meet platform engagement metrics.

Keywords: *Cyber-Spirituality, Platform Logic, the Qur'an, the Commodification of Affect, Muslim Pop Music.*

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## Introduction

The penetration of digital technology into the interaction between Islam, the media, and urban society has triggered a profound redefinition of the boundaries of religious expression. However, mainstream literature remains confined to a traditional polarization that views popular art simplistically—either as an agent of secularization or



as a superficial commodification of sacred symbols.<sup>1</sup> Although this framework effectively captures the surface-level sociological tensions, it tends to overlook a deeper discursive dynamic: the transformation in how modern urban society articulates religiosity by reinterpreting sacred texts within aesthetic spaces.<sup>2</sup> This shift stems from an ontological change in the interpretation of revelation, wherein of the Qur’anic text is no longer approached solely as a rigid, dogmatic, instructive legal source. Instead, it is reappropriated as a flexible, therapeutic, and affective instrument to address the existential fragility of urban life.

Epistemologically, this transformation has significant implications for the media’s communicative dimension, as the articulation of the sacred text must negotiate with the platform’s grammar—governed by the logic of the cyber-political economy. From a media ecology perspective, the architecture of digital messages is never neutral. It requires adherence to technical metadata standards, periodic content packaging, and algorithmic reach optimization; otherwise, the message risks disappearing into the algorithmic wilderness.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, commentary on Qur’anic verses employs a carefully calibrated audio-visual communication strategy—packaged through teasers and periodic captions—designed to capture and sustain audience attention.<sup>4</sup> It is within this precarious landscape that the digital communication on Muslim musician Raim Laode’s Instagram account emerges as a rich theoretical microcosm.

This phenomenon illustrates how media communication engineering paradoxically transforms modern society’s quest for theological tranquility into commodities of affect, traffic data, and quantitative engagement metrics that drive the circulation of cyber-platform capital. While existing literature on the commodification of religion in the digital age has addressed religious authority,<sup>5</sup> identity commodification within the attention

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005), 98.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World: A Cultural Sociological Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84.

<sup>3</sup> Taina Bucher, *If...Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 46.

<sup>4</sup> Jay D. Bolter and Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 24.

<sup>5</sup> Fitra Nabila Kadir, “Komodifikasi Al-Qur’an Di Media TikTok: Analisis Konten Akun Ustadz Raffi Nuraga,” *Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 2 (December 6, 2025): 296–313, <https://doi.org/10.33477/JSI.V14I2.11811>; Adrie Arief Wibisono and Nawiroh Vera, “Komodifikasi Agama Dalam Program Religi Siraman Qalbu Di MNC TV,” *ProTVF* 6, no. 2 (September 29, 2022): 256–75, <https://doi.org/10.24198/ptvf.v6i2.36553>.

economy,<sup>6</sup> and the subjugation of revelation under platform capitalism,<sup>7</sup> it still leaves a theoretical gap at the intersection of urban aesthetic expression and media logic. Most prior studies treat digital platforms merely as passive channels for superficial religious content or focus at the macro level on the deconstruction of theological authority. This research aims to fill that gap by examining how modern urban society's reinterpretation of the Qur'anic text within popular music aesthetics is compelled to conform to the non-neutral architecture of cyber-media communication. Its novelty lies in unpacking a more intimate form of cyber-capitalist penetration: how technical compliance with metadata optimization and periodic message packaging ultimately converts the audience's search for spiritual catharsis into quantitative engagement metrics that sustain the platform's capital circulation.

This study addresses a theoretical gap by exploring how modern urban communities reinterpret the Qur'anic text through the aesthetics of popular art, compelled to conform to media logic and the circulation of cyber capital. Specifically, it analyzes the audiovisual communication architecture on the Instagram account of Muslim musician Raim Laode, examining how technical elements—such as musical arrangement manipulation, periodic repetition of captions, and the mechanical packaging of teaser clips—interact with the sacredness of revelation. By mapping of digital metrics, the study reveals the profound subjugation of the audience's spiritual affect: the urban public's search for theological catharsis, prayer, and personal reflection amid existential crises no

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<sup>6</sup> Ary Anggraeni and Eka Wenats Wuryanta, "Industri Religi Pada Media Online: Penerapan Teori Ekonomi Politik Vincent Moscow (Komodifikasi) Pada Pemberitaan Umroh Di Tribunnews.Com," *Communications* 2, no. 2 (July 31, 2020): 61–73, <https://doi.org/10.21009/Communications.2.2.4>; Raden Aru Suryoprakoso, Sulfa Fitriani Lamunuhia, and Tri Febri Kurniawan, "Komodifikasi Pada Akun Instagram @lambe\_turah Dalam Perspektif Ekonomi Politik Di New Media," *Jurnal Ilmiah Komunikasi (JIKOM) STIKOM IMA* 15, no. 01 (March 21, 2023): 10, <https://doi.org/10.33221/jikom1.v15i01.261>.

<sup>7</sup> Arief Rachman, Theguh Saumantri, and Taufik Hidayatulloh, "Transformation of Religious Authority in the Digital Era: A Post-Normal Times Analysis by Ziauddin Sardar on the Phenomenon of Social Media Da'wah," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 45, no. 1 (July 6, 2025): 107–22, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v45.1.25644>; Fatjri Nur Tajuddin, Fatmawati A. Rahman, and Muhammad Satar, "Religion and New Media (The Phenomena of New Media Influences on Religion in the Digital Era)," *Jurnal Kajian Manajemen Dakwah* 6, no. 1 (May 5, 2024): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.35905/jkmd.v6i1.8097>; Latifa Dinar Rahmani Hakim, Salwa Aulia Novitasari, and Paramita Andiani, "Islamic Pop Culture and the Commodification of Religion in Muslim Fashion Products on Instagram," *West Science Islamic Studies* 3, no. 04 (October 31, 2025): 353–64, <https://doi.org/10.58812/wsiss.v3i04.2345>; Cut Asri and Moh Soehadha, "Komodifikasi Agama: Studi Analisis Terhadap Tampilan Agama Di Instagram," *Mukaddimah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 7, no. 1 (November 17, 2022): 97–113, <https://doi.org/10.14421/mjsi.71.2931>.

longer operates autonomously but is forcibly converted into traffic data and quantitative engagement metrics that fuel capital accumulation within the cyber-cultural industry.

This study argues that cyberspace is no longer an autonomous, emancipatory medium for religious expression in modern urban society. Instead, it has evolved into a cyber-capitalist communication apparatus that domesticates the transcendence of revelation.<sup>8</sup> This argument is based on the premise that when urban dwellers reinterpret the Qur'anic text through popular art aesthetics to address their existential crises, such practices become inevitably entangled in the platform's media logic, which demands visibility and metadata optimization.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the integration of sacred verses, the manipulation of musical arrangements, and the timing of subtitle uploads are no longer driven solely by religious proclamation but are technically calibrated to maximize audience engagement. At its core, this media communication architecture transforms the theological vibrations, prayers, and emotional vulnerability of the digital congregation into voluntary digital labor—manifested as quantitative engagement metrics—demonstrating that contemporary cyber piety ultimately succumbs to the circulation of capital within the digital cultural industry.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative design using a digital text case study approach to examine the integration of the Qur'anic sacred texts into the aesthetics and structure of the popular music industry.<sup>10</sup> The unit of analysis consists of audiovisual promotional content from the Instagram account @raimlaode, spanning January to April 2026. This case holds significant theological and sociological value, as it documents a fundamental shift in the use of sacred verses—from objects of ritual devotion to instruments anchoring cyber aesthetics. Case selection was conducted through purposive sampling based on strict criteria:<sup>11</sup> short video content (Reels) and carousels that explicitly juxtapose Qur'anic verses, subtitles, and commercial song lyrics. This approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of the hybrid structures underlying religious commodification in digital spaces.

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<sup>8</sup> Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication* (London: Sage, 2009), 84.

<sup>9</sup> David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, *Media Logic* (London: Sage Publication Inc., 1979), 199.

<sup>10</sup> W John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative Adn Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication Inc., 2014), 183.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles: Sage Publication Inc., 2015), 104.

The primary data sources consist of textual and audio-visual corpora collected directly from the @raimlaode Instagram feed. The audio-visual materials include recordings of acoustic performances, visualizations of Arabic text, transliterations, and literal translations of the verses. The textual data comprise chronological caption statements, technical metadata, and quantitative engagement metrics such as likes, shares, reposts, and comment texts. Data collection involved non-participant online observation and structured digital documentation.<sup>12</sup> The researcher captured screenshots and downloaded all relevant technical metadata from the promotional content to preserve the authenticity of the corpus without any artificial manipulation.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis techniques, supplemented by intertextual alignment methods. The process began with data reduction, during which Qur'anic verses were grouped by surah number alongside corresponding song lyric fragments in a correlation table. Subsequent steps included the chronological transcription of call-to-action narratives and the emotional affect expressed in user comment sections. Data validity was verified through triangulation with the platform's quantitative engagement metrics to assess the conversion of spiritual content into cyber capital. The final stage involved drawing descriptive and interpretive conclusions to identify patterns of scriptural anchoring and algorithmic optimization within the contemporary religious pop music ecosystem.

### **Scriptural Remediation and Metric Capitalism: The Politics of Attention in Indonesian Contemporary Religious Pop Music**

Historically, the integration of sacred texts into popular culture—particularly within the music industry—reflects a dynamics interplay of accommodation and negotiation between religious values and the public sphere. Since the late 20th century, popular music has expanded beyond confining divine revelation to liturgical material within orthodox religious institutions.<sup>13</sup> Advances in recording technology and the commercialization of mass culture have transformed sacred texts into poetic narratives that can be casually consumed by broad audiences. Initially, this incorporation served as a bridge to spiritualize everyday social issues. However, it also initiated a process of

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<sup>12</sup> Robert V. Kozinets and Rosella Gambetti, *Netnography Unlimited: Understanding Technoculture Using Qualitative Social Media Research* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 51.

<sup>13</sup> Richard W. Santana and Gregory Erickson, *Religion and Popular Culture: Rescripting the Sacred* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2016), 81–82.

desacralization, wherein which theologically binding religious texts were flexibly adapted to conform to the standardized artistic conventions of the global entertainment industry.

In the Indonesian context, the adaptation of sacred texts into popular cultural commodities is deeply rooted in the distinctive character of the society's religiosity. Religious pop music has flourished as a platform for modern Muslims to express their identity, bridging personal piety with urban modernity.<sup>14</sup> This is evident in the national music industry's tradition of releasing spiritually themed albums ahead of sacred occasions such as Ramadan. Over time, the role of religious music has shifted from conventional preaching (da'wah) to becoming a commodity within the attention market. The deliberate alignment of popular music aesthetics with lyrics derived from divine revelation is designed to trigger virality, positioning religious symbols as highly competitive elements in the national commercial entertainment industry.

Advances in digital technology have further shifted the consumption of religious music into social media ecosystems, particularly Instagram in Indonesia, which now serves as critical infrastructure for capturing public attention. Drawing on Vincent Mosco's concept of the audience commodity,<sup>15</sup> audience attention is quantified through metrics such as likes, views, and shares—tools that translate engagement into exchange value. These platforms provide technical mechanisms that convert spiritual expressions into marketable digital data for algorithms and advertisers. This process exemplifies Mosco's notion of spatialization, whereby massive audience engagement in cyberspace is transformed into liquid assets that generate material capital in the physical world. Every interaction with religious content thus becomes unpaid digital labor that fuels cyber-capital accumulation.

Within this ecosystem, the @raimlaode Instagram account serves as a compelling case study in the strategic deployment of Qur'anic symbols through the release of the songs "Bersanja Gurau" and "Iqro'." Raim Laode skillfully leverages timing and market structures to foster emotional engagement among contemporary Muslim audiences, who are increasingly distancing themselves from traditional religious authorities. The song "Bersanja Gurau" was released on March 7, 2024—exactly four days before Ramadan 1445 H—while "Iqro'" was released on February 6, 2026, ahead of Ramadan 1447 H. The alignment of Qur'anic recitation with the existential anxieties of modern society has proven effective

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<sup>14</sup> R. Franki S. Notosudirdjo, "Islam, Politics, and the Dynamic of Contemporary Music in Indonesia," in *Divine Inspirations: Music and Islam in Indonesia*, ed. David D. Harnish and Anne K. Rasmussen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 297.

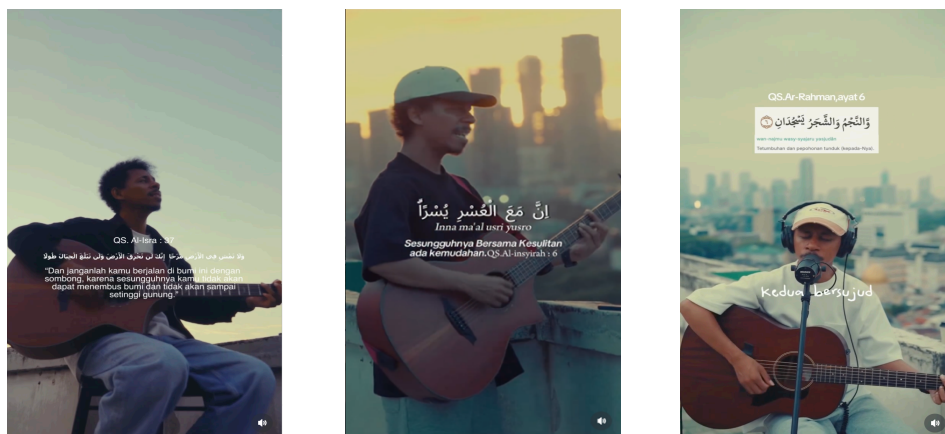
<sup>15</sup> Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 84.

in converting spiritual sentiment into economic gain, as demonstrated by the achievement of 7 million streams in just 19 days on digital music platforms.

### Intertextual Alignment and Visual Anchoring: Integrating of Qur'anic Verses into Raim Laode's Pop Lyrics

The integration of sacred texts into the digital popular music industry no longer functions as a naive expression of personal piety. Instead, it serves as a deliberate cultural strategy to dominate the digital attention market through the competitive commodification of religious symbols. The intertextual alignment between pop lyrics and Qur'anic verses is intentionally crafted not to desacralize revelation but to enlist transcendental authority as a stable anchor of meaning amid the chaotic flow of digital information.<sup>16</sup> When these sacred texts are typographically positioned at the center of the screen, the mechanism of visual anchoring captures the emotions of urban audiences by transforming the aesthetic space of the profane into a high-market-value locus of spiritual contemplation.<sup>17</sup> This hybrid pattern—merging the depth of the Qur'an's sacred message with the structure of commercial songs—reflects a systematic alignment across all digital publication materials on the musician's official Instagram account.

The textual and visual data corpus from the @raimlaode Instagram account documents the systematic integration of Qur'anic texts with commercial song lyrics. Promotional materials are presented as video posts or carousels in the main feed (see Figure 1).



<sup>16</sup> Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 34.

<sup>17</sup> Steward M. Hoover and Nabil Echchaibi, "Media Theory and the Third Spaces of Digital Religion," in *The Third Space of Digital Religion*, ed. Nabil Echchaibi and Steward M. Hoover (London: Routledge, 2023), 13.

Source: Raim Laode's Instagram Account (@raimlaode, 2026).

**Figure 1.** Pairing of Qur'anic Verses with Song Lyrics on the @raimlaode Instagram Account.

Figure 1 illustrates the direct pairing of Qur'anic verses with background audio from relevant lyric excerpts of the songs *Bersenja Gurau* and *Iqro'*. The visualization prominently features Arabic text, transliteration, and literal translations of selected verses, including QS. al-Isrā' [17]:37 (prohibition against arrogance), QS. al-Insyirah [94]:6 (ease after hardship), and QS. al-Rahman [55]:6 (the prostration of plants and trees). These Qur'anic verses are positioned at the center of the video frame as the primary visual element, overlaid on acoustic musical performances.

This central placement empirically aligns with the poetic diction of the song lyrics, which reflect the literal meaning of the verses. Each verse segment serves as the dominant visual anchor, reinforced by the corresponding song excerpt (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Relationship Between Song Lyrics and Qur'anic Texts

Qur'anic Verse Excerpt	Song Lyric Excerpt	Song Title
<i>Wa min kulli syain khalaqnā zaujain la'allakum tazakkarūn</i> (QS. al-Žāriyāt [51]: 49)	<i>Semua Kau cipta berpasang, Sebab hanya Engkau yang satu</i> (You created everything in pairs, For You alone are One)	<i>Iqro'</i>
<i>Wa al-najm wa al-syajar yasjudān</i> (QS. al-Raḥmān [55]: 6)	<i>Bintang-bintang dan pepohonan Kedua bersujud pada-Nya</i> (The stars and the trees Both prostrate themselves before Him)	<i>Iqro'</i>
<i>Fa inna ma'a al-'usr Yusra</i> (QS. al-Insyirah [94]:6)	<i>Sebab Tuhan tlah berjanji Setelah sempit ada kemudahan</i> (For God has promised After hardship comes ease)	<i>Bersenja Gurau</i>
<i>sa asyrifu 'an āyāt al-lazīna yatakabbarūna fi al-arḍi bi-ghair al-ḥaqq</i> (QS. al-A'rāf [7]:146)	<i>Siapakah aku sebenarnya? Hanya atom yang kecil, besar sombongnya</i> (Who am I, really? Just a tiny atom, yet so arrogant)	<i>Iqro'</i>
<i>Wa lā tamsi fi al-arḍi maraḥā innaka lan takhriq al-arḍ wa lan tabluḡ al-jibāl ṭūlan</i> (QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 37)	<i>Siapakah aku sebenarnya? Hanya atom yang kecil, besar sombongnya</i> (Who am I really? Just a tiny atom, yet so arrogant)	<i>Iqro'</i>

The data in Table 1 demonstrate that song lyric fragments are deliberately synchronized with the translation or core conceptualization of the Qur’anic verses. For instance, the lyric “Who am I really, just a tiny atom, yet so arrogant” is paired with QS. al-Isrā’ [17]:37, which prohibits arrogance on earth.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the lyric “The stars and the trees, both prostrate before Him” accompanies QS. al-Raḥmān [55]:6. The phrase “You created everything in pairs, for You alone are One” further reflects a hybrid intertextual adaptation of QS. al-Ẓāriyāt [51]: 49 in the song *Iqro’*.<sup>19</sup>

The choice of an urban sunset backdrop (golden hour) on an outdoor rooftop is visually anchored by the song’s lyrics, which provide a structured theological context. In *Bersenja Gurau*, the lyric fragment “*Banyak yang salah mengira, senja bukan tentang kopi, lagu indie dan cerita* (Many mistakenly believe that twilight is not about coffee, indie songs, and stories)” is strategically employed to deconstruct stereotypes of commercialized romantic spaces. Through these counter-lyrics, the natural passage of time is reframed as a conceptual anchor for integrating sacred texts. Raim Laode addresses the pressing concerns of contemporary Muslim youth—the search for a life partner, weariness from life’s hardships, and anxiety about the future—and offers solutions through God’s promises of ease, superimposed over soothing dusk visuals.<sup>20</sup> This juxtaposition demonstrates that the sunset backdrop is not merely a superficial pop aesthetic. Instead, the lyrics serve as a guiding signifier, directing the audience to interpret the visual imagery of the sunset as an embodiment of the Qur’an’s sacred message in every promotional video.

The mechanism of intertextual alignment between revelatory texts and urban pop lyrics reflects a fundamental characteristic of contemporary Muslim society: its text-centered orientation. Muslims are culturally conditioned to seek existential legitimacy and emotional resolution through alignment with the Qur’an.<sup>21</sup> By consciously balancing secular poetic diction with literal quotations of verses addressing the prohibition of arrogance or the promise of ease after hardship, Raim Laode leverages the faithful’s cognitive reliance on the sacred text as the ultimate source of meaning. Consequently, fans of religious pop music no longer regard the Qur’anic text as a detached ritual of

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<sup>18</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “QS. Al-Isra: 37.”

<sup>19</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “QS. Az-Zariyat: 49,” Instagram Photo, February 11, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/raimlaode/p/DUm35hjiWeb/>.

<sup>20</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “Adz-Dzariyat Ayat 49,” Instagram Video, February 9, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/raimlaode/reel/DUi125tifD-/>; Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “QS. Al-Insyirah 5-6.”

<sup>21</sup> Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 16.

memorization but as a living, daily affective anchor whose relevance is affirmed through synchronization with the lyrical structures of the commercial songs they consume in digital spaces.

The visual anchoring technique—placing sacred scripture prominently at the center of the screen against an urban backdrop—exemplifies the advanced mediatization of religious aesthetics. Drawing on the concept of the visualizing sacredness in cyber media, the typography of the verses functions as an interpretive frame that compels audiences to subordinate profane visual meanings to the authority of the sacred text.<sup>22</sup> Digital media no longer passively broadcasts religious content; it actively reengineers the production of sacredness through the interplay of moving images and static text.<sup>23</sup> This pattern of hybridization highlights how the authority of the Qur’anic text is deliberately fused with the contemporary urban pop landscape, generating a new form of religious experience that is intimate, instantaneous, and attuned to the visual language of new media.

This tactical juxtaposition reveals an epistemological rupture in the mode of religious transmission—from the verbalism of conventional sermons to the aesthetic realm of popular art. Intertextual alignment and visual anchoring in this content do more than decorate the video; they shift the locus of religious teaching from its original instructive-doctrinal form on the pulpit toward ephemeral, affective stimulation delivered through pop lyrics.<sup>24</sup> This example from the musician’s account exemplifies a broader trend in the modern religious landscape, in which theological awareness of existential crises is deliberately introduced and articulated through the aesthetic comfort of song. Through this packaging technique, rigid religious orthodoxy dissolves into an intimate poetic narrative, allowing it to permeate the audience’s psychological consciousness with minimal doctrinal resistance.

This process of hybridization illustrates how the theological script of the Qur’an is subjected to a regime of meaning-making governed by the structure of musical arrangement. When sacred texts are combined with acoustic beats and atmospheric visuals, religious validity no longer depends solely on the text’s inherent integrity but on how flexibly the verses can be segmented and integrated into the melody.<sup>25</sup> Consequently,

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<sup>22</sup> Stig Hjarvard, “The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change,” *Northern Lights: Film and Media Studies Yearbook* 6, no. 1 (June 2008): 9–26, [https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9_1).

<sup>23</sup> Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World: A Cultural Sociological Approach*, 87.

<sup>24</sup> Hjarvard, “The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change.”

<sup>25</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 118.

popular music does not merely borrow verses as ornamentation; it functions as a new hermeneutic apparatus that shapes interpretation through the composer's emotional framing. In this digital space, audio-visual orchestration transforms the consumption of sacred texts from a contemplative activity requiring deep engagement with religious law into an instantaneous aesthetic experience, where eschatological truth is measured by the melody's precision in evoking and exploiting the audience's melancholy.

While most previous literature has portrayed religious popular music as a linear medium passively consumed by audiences,<sup>26</sup> the findings from this case reveal more complex dynamics. Modern society increasingly expresses its religious understanding through aesthetic spaces, where religious authority is no longer derived from rigid institutional doctrine but is actively negotiated by individuals who channel their existential crises into visual and auditory rhythms.<sup>27</sup> This marks a shift from superficial theological compliance to the use of art as a personal hermeneutic tool for reinterpreting sacred texts. Ultimately, the articulation of religiosity in the cyber ecosystem depends less on clerical verbal interpretations and more on how flexibly theological scripts can be fused with the melodies and aesthetics of popular melancholy to alleviate the alienation of modernity.

### **Algorithmic Distribution and Technical Metadata: Scriptural Anchoring, Caption Optimization, and Engagement Metrics on @raimlaode**

Expressions of religiosity in modern cyberspace are no longer determined solely by poetic lyrics and visual arrangements; they have increasingly shifted into the realm of technical calculations governed by the logic of global digital platforms. Negotiations over the sacred text of the Qur'an now involve the engineering of message architecture, where caption optimization and scriptural anchoring serve as quantifiable tools for mass

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<sup>26</sup> Stig Hjarvard, "The Mediatisation 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>; Mia Lövheim, "Mediatisation of Religion: A Critical Appraisal," *Culture and Religion* 12, no. 2 (June 2011): 153–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610.2011.579738>.

<sup>27</sup> 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>; Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (January 12, 2022): 69, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069>.

mobilization.<sup>28</sup> Transcendental symbols are no longer allowed to circulate freely but are strategically embedded in descriptive metadata to trigger engagement metrics and compete in the algorithmic attention economy.<sup>29</sup> This transformation reshapes cyber-religious consumption, converting audiences' expressions of piety into data traffic commodities that benefit content creators. Strategically crafted captions on Instagram timelines thus chronicle the sequential deployment of these messages in pursuit of commercial distribution objectives.

Textual data from the @raimlaode account reveal the deliberate use of captions as tools for mass mobilization. These captions incorporate strategic call-to-action (CTA) phrases aligned with chart-ranking and promotional goals. The message structure is consistently anchored by Qur'anic references that blend commercial narratives with sacred authority (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Call-to-Action Statements and Qur'anic Corpus Markers in Posts by the @raimlaode Account

Post Date	Caption Statement	Qur'anic Visual Marker
January 28, 2026	<i>Selalu ada Pelangi</i> (There is always a rainbow)	QS. al-Insyirah [94]: 6
January 30, 2026	<i>Setelah sempit ada kemudahan</i> (After difficulty comes ease)	QS. al-Insyirah [94]: 6
February 2, 2026	<i>Siapa aku sebenarnya?</i> (Who am I really?)	QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 37
February 4, 2026	<i>Siapa aku sebenarnya? Iqro H-2</i> (Who am I really? Iqro H-2)	QS. al-A'rāf [7]: 146
February 7, 2026	<i>Bintang bintang dan pepohonan... 'Iqro' Langsung gas ke youtubeku.. Bismillah trending #1</i> (Stars and trees... 'Iqro' Head straight to my YouTube channel...Bismillah trending #1)	QS. al-Raḥmān [55]: 6
February 7, 2026	<i>Kata kata Februari...</i> (Words of February...)	QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 37
February 20, 2026	<i>Maka sesungguhnya bersama kesulitan ada kemudahan, sesungguhnya bersama kesulitan ada kemudahan. QS. al-Insyirah: 5-6</i> (Indeed, with hardship comes ease; indeed, with hardship comes ease. QS. al-Insyirah: 5-6)	QS. al-Insyirah [94]: 5-6

The data in Table 2 illustrate the chronological development of promotional captions as anchors for the musician's digital strategy. A clear call-to-action appears in the February

<sup>28</sup> Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 91.

<sup>29</sup> Bucher, *If...Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*, 46.

7, 2026 post—“*Langsung gas ke youtubeku... Bismillah trending #1* (Head straight to my YouTube channel... Bismillah trending #1)”—accompanied by the visual reference to QS. al-Raḥmān [55]:6.<sup>30</sup> A commercial marketing pattern is also evident in the February 4, 2026 post (“*Siapa aku sebenarnya? Iqro H-2* (Who am I really? Iqro’ H-2)”), which builds anticipation ahead of the song’s release.<sup>31</sup> The consistent synchronization between captions and Qur’anic verses (e.g., the repeated use of QS. al-Isrā’ [17]: 37 on February 2 and February 7)<sup>32</sup> demonstrates that the sacred text is deliberately positioned as the central communicative element across the promotional content.

Beyond direct mobilization through captions, the technical packaging of messages is reinforced by the periodic repetition of theological phrases across multiple posts. Chronological data show that on January 28 and 30, 2026,<sup>33</sup> Raim Laode deliberately reused concise phrases such as “*Selalu ada Pelangi* (There is always a rainbow)” and “*Setelah sempit ada kemudahan* (After hardship comes ease),” closely tied to the visual marker of QS. al-Insyirah [94]:6. This pattern of metadata deployment sustains audience emotional engagement before culminating in the more detailed caption on February 20, 2026, which provides the full literal translation of the verse.<sup>34</sup> The entire sequence of explanatory text and subtitles is strategically designed to reinforce the auditory message in the main video uploads. Quantitative engagement metrics reveal strong audience interaction with every promotional video on the @raimlaode Instagram account. For instance, the promotional content for *Bersenja Gurau*, released on February 20, 2026, recorded 658,000 likes, 26,200 shares, 71,900 reposts, and 15,900 saves. Similarly, the promotional video for “Iqro’,” posted on February 2, 2026, garnered 80,800 likes, 2,973 shares, 2,638 saves, and 5,829 reposts. These figures demonstrate the substantial volume of public attention captured by strategically pairing Qur’anic symbols with commercial content.

Comment-section data further illustrate the reconceptualization of the traditional congregation into quantitative engagement metrics. One user (@Ari\*\*\*wigan\*\*\*tyas) expressed voluntary support.

<sup>30</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “QS. Ar-Rahman: 6.”

<sup>31</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “QS. Al-A’raf: 146,” Instagram Video, February 4, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/raimlaode/reel/DUVWCSJCWzp/>.

<sup>32</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “QS. Al-Isra: 37”; Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “Kata Kata Februari...,” Instagram Video, February 7, 2026, [https://www.instagram.com/p/DUb\\_88tkoxU/](https://www.instagram.com/p/DUb_88tkoxU/).

<sup>33</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “Selalu Ada Pelangi,” Instagram Video, January 25, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/raimlaode/reel/DUFdJgIiTc0/>; Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “Selalu Ada Pelangi,” Instagram Video, January 28, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/raimlaode/reel/DUDVcdViSz/>.

<sup>34</sup> Raim Laode [@raimlaode], “QS. Al-Insyirah 5-6.”

*Meski nilai dolar ku dari menonton dan mendengar lagumu dari akunku tak seberapa bagimu, tapi aku selalu menonton dari official akunmu, agar kau terus membuat karya doa yang terdengar indah*

(Although the monetary value I contribute by watching and listening to your songs on my account may be insignificant to you, I always watch from your official account to support that in continuing to create beautiful prayers.)

Another user (@Sh\*\*\*khha) noted, “*aku suka semua lagu raim laode karena di setiap lagu-lagu romantisnya pasti terselip ayat-ayat Al-Qur’an* (I love all of Raim Laode’s songs because in every one of his romantic songs, there are always verses from the Qur’an).” Such comments express piety, prayer, and personal reflection, which are systematically transformed into economically valuable traffic data that enhances the creator’s position in the digital marketplace.

The chronological integration of commercial appeals and theological scripts in captions marks a new phase in media studies, where digital piety is deliberately subordinated to algorithmic rationality. The Qur’anic text no longer functions solely as an independent moral guide but is repurposed as tactical metadata designed to extend audience dwell time.<sup>35</sup> When marketing appeals are juxtaposed with periodic verse quotations, the verse’s theological function is diminished—from transcendental revelation to optimized attention bait compliant with platform algorithms and release schedules.<sup>36</sup> This case illustrates that expressions of cyber-religiosity are increasingly shaped not by pure spiritual impulse but by platform architectures that demand the subordination of the sacred to machine readability and commercial periodicity.

The surge in quantitative interactions and affective responses in the comments signifies a radical reconceptualization of the ummah under metric capitalism. Traditional religious communities, once united by shared spiritual rituals in physical spaces, have now been transformed into units of quantifiable data—accumulations of likes, shares, and saves—that generate significant economic value for creators. Audience expressions of prayer, piety, and personal reflection no longer exist as autonomous theological acts; instead, they serve as fuel for cyber-capital circulation within the popular culture industry.<sup>37</sup> This transformation blurs the boundaries of communal piety: the depth of modern viewers’ spiritual experiences is measured and validated not through tangible

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas H. Davenport and John C. Beck, *The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 186.

<sup>36</sup> Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Carrette and King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, 123.

changes in social behavior but through their willingness to act as traffic agents, supplying economic benefits for creators' wealth accumulation in the digital marketplace.

This analysis of theological metadata and accumulated engagement metrics reveals the profound subjugation of spiritual affect within the political economy of cyber-spirituality. Quantitative data and the outpouring of emotional responses in comment sections are not merely indicators of content success; they demonstrate how the audience's deepest religious emotions—guilt, the search for peace, and existential resignation—have been effectively harnessed as voluntary digital labor.<sup>38</sup> In this ecosystem, platforms do not disseminate verses based on doctrinal truth but instead leverage the affective resonance of scriptural anchoring to maximize user engagement.<sup>39</sup> This case exemplifies the transformation of cyber-piety: the audience's prayers and personal reflections are unconsciously exploited by platform architecture, converting the fulfillment of modern spiritual needs from contemplative ritual into the supply of data traffic commodities that generate sustained economic profit for the cyber-capitalist cultural industry.

While most previous literature on the political economy of media and the commodification of religion has focused on the commercialization of sacred symbols to sell physical products or boost television ratings,<sup>40</sup> the engagement metrics in this study reveal a far more intimate and exploitative dimension of cyber-capitalism. Commodification no longer ends with the content itself but extends to the commodification of affect and the voluntary digital labor of the audience. Whereas conventional research interprets emotional responses as evidence of successful religious transmission,<sup>41</sup> this case demonstrates that guilt and existential resignation are algorithmically manipulated to

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<sup>38</sup> Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 77.

<sup>39</sup> Bucher, *If...Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (October 24, 2009): 229–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-009-0096-9>; Stig Hjarvard, "Mediatization and the Changing Authority of Religion," *Media, Culture & Society* 38, no. 1 (January 20, 2016): 8–17, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715615412>.

<sup>41</sup> 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; Solahudin and Fakhruroji, "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority"; Harry Febrian, "Visualizing Authority: Rise of the Religious Influencers on the Instagram," *Social Media + Society* 10, no. 4 (October 6, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241286850>.

capture and sustain attention. This contrast highlights a fundamental rupture: expressions of cyber-piety are no longer judged by their capacity to foster communal moral transformation but by how effectively spiritual resonance can be converted into traffic data and monetized metrics that sustain the cyber-cultural industry.

## **Conclusion**

This study finds no evidence that religious expressions in popular art serve as spaces for pure spiritual contemplation or as naïve alternative media for preaching. Instead, it reveals a radical epistemological rupture: the theological script of the Qur'an is systematically subordinated to a regime of meaning-making governed by musical arrangements and the algorithmic logic of digital platforms. Through visual anchoring and intertextual alignment, the locus of religious instruction has shifted from the doctrinal verbalism of traditional sermons to the ephemeral, affective stimulation of pop lyrics. Furthermore, the research uncovers the subjugation of spiritual affect within the political economy of cyber-spirituality, where audiences' existential crises, prayers, and personal reflections are unconsciously commodified as voluntary digital labor to satisfy platform engagement metrics and fuel the cyber-cultural industry.

The combination of qualitative content analysis, intertextual alignment, and digital metric mapping proved highly effective in dissecting the structure of message architecture and the power dynamics between sacred texts and platform logic. However, this single-case study is limited by its focus on one musician's Instagram account, which restricts its ability to capture broader anthropological variations in audience responses. Future research should therefore adopt broader cyber-ethnographic (netnographic) approaches to explore how digital congregations internalize such artistic hybridization. Comparative cross-platform and cross-genre studies would also help map the wider deconstruction of traditional religious authority within the emerging cyber-spirituality industry.

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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 exclusively utilizes publicly available text-based and audiovisual metadata from Instagram. Since it involves non-participant cyber-observation of a public figure's official account and aggregates public metrics without direct human intervention, it did not require formal institutional ethical review. To protect user privacy, all public comments have been strictly anonymized. The authors declare no conflicts of interest and confirm strict compliance with the platform's Terms of Service.

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