

The Commodification of Pain: Gender-Based Emotional Exploitation through the Figures of Holy Women in the Qur'an on Instagram in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study engages with the global scholarly debate on digital religion by examining how the mediatization of sacred texts reshapes Qur'anic representation among urban Muslims. While conventional media sociology argues that digital participation enriches religiosity through connection and community, this article demonstrates how such participation functions as sign circulation that diminishes theological meaning. Employing a netnographic approach combined with multimodal discourse analysis, it investigates the domestication of Qur'anic female figures—Mary, Hagar, and the mother of Moses—on the Indonesian Instagram account @quranreview. The findings reveal a systematic shift from theological use-value to affective sign-value, escalating in stages from doctrinal reference through psychological distortion to commercial simulacra, sustained by audience participation. This study contributes a novel framework, “Cosmetic Hyper-Piety,” conceptualizing @quranreview as a site where the commodification of sacred suffering reconstructs a new form of religious simulacrum within digital culture.

Keywords: *Digital Religion, Commodification, Sign Value, Qur'anic Women, Instagram.*

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Introduction

Global media studies have long criticized cyberspace as an agent of secularization that diminishes the sacredness of religion through the superficiality of visual



representations.¹ However, recent developments in the digital ecosystem reveal a more complex shift than mere trivialization. Influenced by platform algorithms, sacred texts that once demanded contemplation are now circulated not to be internalized for their meaning but to be consumed for their affective resonance. Theological doctrines originally grounded in submission are aesthetically refined through smartphone screens, presenting themselves as psychological solace that alleviates the existential tensions of urban society.² The blurring of boundaries between the sacred and the profane in this digital consumption space does not automatically eliminate religion; rather, it transforms the way religion functions—from a source of transcendental meaning into a commodity of signs valued for their viral potential. The problem is that mainstream literature tends to stop at diagnosing this trivialization or, conversely, celebrating its therapeutic dimension, without sufficiently examining how the theological value of the sacred text itself is restructured when it must compete in the attention economy. This is where an important academic gap emerges: how the sacredness of a text is reconfigured—from utilitarian value to symbolic value—precisely at the moment it appears closest to its audience.

The Instagram account @quranreview in Indonesia serves as an empirical case study illustrating the transformation of religiosity among urban middle-class Muslims. Through visual curation that domesticates the stories of the Qur'an's female figures—Mary, Hagar, and the mother of Moses—prophetic suffering, historically rooted in submission to Allah, is repackaged using popular psychological idioms such as “healing,”³ “overthinking,”⁴ and “mental health,”⁵ some of which ultimately led to commercial appeals. Prophetic narratives are no longer treated as binding communal dogma but are casually consumed as fluid elements of personal identity, easily shared on smartphone screens. An in-depth examination of this case is crucial to address a gap overlooked by conventional media sociology: to reveal how the desacralization of cyber mass communication not only trivializes religion but also restructures sacred texts into affective commodities that circulate devoid of their theological content.

¹ Pauline Hope Cheong, “The Vitality of New Media and Religion: Communicative Perspectives, Practices, and Changing Authority in Spiritual Organization,” *New Media & Society* 19, no. 1 (January 2017): 25–33.

² Stig Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Culture and Society* (London: Routledge, 2013), 140.

³ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Healing Buibu,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified July 31, 2024, accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C-Em4Z5BdJL/?igsh=dXRnMXhia3llaDJp>.

⁴ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Overthinking Dengan Kondisi Negeri Sendiri?,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified August 31, 2025, accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DOBUED0E5yi>.

⁵ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?”

Previous studies on religious expression in new media have generally employed three main approaches. First, the functional-authoritative approach examines the effectiveness of digital da'wah messages in influencing individuals' religiosity,⁶ the restructuring of cyber-preachers' authority,⁷ and the shift of da'wah from subtle appeals toward economically profitable forms⁸. Second, the cultural commodification approach critiques the hybridization of popular media for subordinating piety to market interests, thereby producing simulacra of sacred spaces and artificial identities.⁹ Third, the social-participatory approach interprets digital platforms as spaces that connect audiences and foster affective bonds and religious solidarity.¹⁰ More specifically, an analysis of studies on the @quranreview account reveals two clusters: the cluster of tafsir digitization and the cluster of da'wah media, which view the account as an innovative form of da'wah that bridges Qur'anic messages with contemporary issues through a blend of textual-contextual

⁶ Syaif Uddin and Abdul Muhid, "Efektivitas Pesan Dakwah Di Media Sosial Terhadap Religiusitas Masyarakat Muslim: Analisis Literature Review," *Alhadharah: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 20, no. 1 (September 9, 2021): 17.

⁷ 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; Hifsa Nurrahim and Muhammad Ruhul Jadid, "Commodifying the Unseen: Cyber-Capitalism, Rationalized Rituals, and the Reconfiguration of Religious Authority," *Journal of Islam, Media and Society* 1, no. 1 (June 18, 2026): 22–42.

⁸ Eva F. Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, no. 1–2 (February 14, 2018): 68–99; Puji Izzatulbuhthiah and Ola Fedda Mona Denona, "Cyber-Spirituality and Platform Logic: Intertextual Alignment of the Qur'an and the Affective Commodification of Indonesian Muslim Pop Music," *Journal of Islam, Media and Society* 1, no. 1 (June 18, 2026): 43–62.

⁹ Annisa R Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics: Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Groups as Religious Influencers," *New Media & Society* 21, no. 10 (October 10, 2019): 2140–2159; Rendy Pradana and Amanansyah Sakti Marito Harahap, "Ontological Flattening on the Screen: Spiritual Domestication and the Syncretism of Pop-Sufi Art Consumption among Urban Indonesian Muslims," *Journal of Islam, Media and Society* 1, no. 1 (June 20, 2026): 63–87.

¹⁰ Dayana Lengauer, "Sharing Semangat Taqwa : Social Media and Digital Islamic Socialities in Bandung," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 5–23; Najib Kailani and Martin Slama, "Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: Zakat, Sedekah and the Immediacy of Social Media," *South East Asia Research* 28, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 70–86.

approaches¹¹ and audience reception¹². What has not been widely discussed, however, is how the figures of the Qur'an's holy women are reconstructed as instruments of affective production through the logic of screen interfaces. This article addresses that gap by conceptualizing @quranreview as a space for the commodification of pain, where the suffering of these sacred female figures is transformed from theological utility into affective sign value, producing new forms of religious simulacra in digital culture.

Based on this discussion, this study aims to critically examine how the figures of holy women in the Qur'an—Mary, Hagar, and the mother of Moses—are reconstructed as instruments of affective production within the content of the Instagram account @quranreview. This aim is divided into three interrelated objectives. First, to uncover the mechanisms of sacred-text domestication at both linguistic and visual levels—specifically, how the prophetic sufferings of these figures are reduced from theological significance to affective sign value through the use of popular psychological terminology and the aestheticization of imagery. Second, to trace the trajectory of sign mutation that operates in stages—from theological references, through affective distortion, to capitalist commodification—so that religious representations evolve into commercial simulacra in their final form. Third, to analyze the structure of audience reception that underpins this commodification by mapping patterns of participation in the active circulation of symbolic value and the passive consumption of catharsis. Through these three objectives, this study seeks to demonstrate how the commodification of pain and gender-based emotional exploitation unfold through representations of Qur'anic holy female figures, as well as how this process generates new forms of religious simulacra in digital culture.

This article argues that the convergence of prophetic narratives and digital consumption spaces on the @quranreview account does not merely signify a simplification of da'wah language but rather represents a restructuring of the sacred text's values from within. While media sociology literature generally interprets digital religious participation as a form of connectivity that enriches religiosity,¹³ the visual reality presented by

¹¹ Turkey Al Zhafir, "From Ontological Devotion to Functional Efficacy of Al-Şamad: The Epistemic Shift from 'Knowing' to 'Using' God in Digital Qur'anic Interpretation," *Journal of Quranic Media Studies* 1, no. 1 (June 2, 2026): 24–41; Nabila Alifa Alfawaid, "The Algorithmic Turn in Quranic Reception: Reconfiguring Aesthetic Distance and Horizon Fusion on Indonesian Instagram," *Journal of Quranic Media Studies* 1, no. 1 (June 30, 2026): 95–118.

¹² Tamara Maylyana Putri, "Instagram as A Digital Praching Media: A Case Study of Quranreview," *Komunike: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 17, no. 1 (June 25, 2025): 55–74.

¹³ Lengauer, "Sharing Semangat Taqwa : Social Media and Digital Islamic Socialities in Bandung."

@quranreview reveals another dimension of this phenomenon: when the suffering of the Qur'an's sacred female figures is aesthetically softened through the phone screen, what circulates is no longer a theological truth demanding submission but rather the value of affective signs that gain significance precisely because of their virality and emotional impact.¹⁴ Through a multi-tiered process of domestication—from theological references to popular psychological idioms to commercial appeals—the sacredness of the text is not eradicated but repurposed into a commodity that circulates devoid of its theological content. Thus, the circulation of images of holy women on social media should be understood not as a new spiritual revival but as the commodification of suffering that sustains itself through audience participation—a process that produces a new form of religious simulacrum in which piety is celebrated on its affective surface while losing its transcendental grounding.

Method

This study employs a qualitative design that integrates a netnographic approach with an intrinsic case study method to explore the complexity of the circulation of religious symbols in digital spaces.¹⁵ The unit of analysis is a corpus of posts featuring holy female figures from the Qur'an—Mary, Hagar, and the mother of Moses—on the Instagram account @quranreview. This case was selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria:¹⁶ the sociological significance of the account as a representation of visual da'wah among urban Muslims, the high volume of content circulation, and the elevated level of audience engagement. Data collection focused on posts that consistently highlighted female figures in the Qur'an, revealing a shift from a theological framework toward narratives of psychological healing, responses to social anxieties, and the convergence of sacred ritual symbols with commercial market logic. Data sources comprised three modalities: visual data from eleven selected infographics; captions and carousel narratives curated by the account creators; and public discourse data from the comment sections. Data collection was conducted through passive online observation and the chronological

¹⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (New York: Telos Press, 1981), 66; Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*, 140.

¹⁵ Jaber F. Hubrium and James A. Holstein, "Analytic Inspiration in Ethnographic Fieldwork," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, ed. Uwe Flick (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 42.

¹⁶ Robert E. Stake, *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (New York: Guilford Press, 2006), 24–26.

downloading of text-visual materials without direct interaction.¹⁷ The researcher systematically traced the account's timeline, classifying posting patterns in relation to relevant sectoral or social events. Public comment data were collected manually using text-scraping techniques.

Data analysis employed multimodal discourse analysis, integrating visual semiotics with qualitative content analysis.¹⁸ The process unfolded in three stages. First, data reduction was conducted by labeling visual elements in the images and categorizing the accompanying text according to psychosocial themes. Second, the data were organized horizontally using a coded panel scheme and structural matrix tables to align shifts in traditional theological narratives with expressions of personal psychological healing, while also tracking the trajectory of sign mutation up to its commercial forms. The final stage involved drawing conclusions validated through a functional interpretation of the interplay among captions, visual representations, and audience responses. This approach is framed by Jean Baudrillard's sign-value framework to analyze the economic logic of signs that drives the transformation of religious representations beneath their aesthetic surface.¹⁹

The Domestication of Women's Stories in the Qur'an: Commodification from Theological Use-Value to Affective Sign-Value

The commodification of narratives about female figures in the Qur'an within digital discourse reveals how content creators operate according to the logic of signs by detaching sacred stories from their original functions and recirculating them as markers of affective identity. Within Baudrillard's framework, an object ceases to be consumed for its intrinsic use-value and is instead governed by sign-value—the differential symbolic charge it carries within the sign system, exchanged to signify identity and social differentiation.²⁰ Through this semiotic apparatus, the prophetic experiences of female figures in various narratives no longer function as examples of absolute submission to divine intervention but are reframed as emotional idioms that can be consumed according to the cultural logic of popular psychology. Consequently, sacred narratives are no longer theological matters but

¹⁷ Robert V. Kozinets, "The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities," *Journal of Marketing Research* 39, no. 1 (February 1, 2002): 61–72.

¹⁸ Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁹ Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

rather commodified affective artifacts whose use-value is subordinated to the resonance and shareability demanded by a digital audience.

The shift in the function of women's stories on the @quranreview account marks an intensification in the diminishing of the sacred text's theological significance to mere superficial affective sign-value. This phenomenon is evident in the appropriation of narratives featuring female figures in the Qur'an, where core values are sacrificed to elicit emotional resonance from the audience (see Table 1).

Table 1. Appropriation of Narratives Featuring Female Figures in the Qur'an

No.	Verse and Figure	Story Fragment	Appropriated Narrative
1	QS. Maryam [19]: 23— Figure of Mary	The story of Mary giving birth under a date palm	<i>Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?</i> (What's Up with That Girl?)
2	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 158— Figure of Hagar	Hagar's isolation in the barren valley of Mecca	<i>Dear Ibu</i> (Dear Mom)
3	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 158— Figure of Hajar	Hagar's isolation in the barren valley of Mecca	<i>"Healing" bu-Ibu</i> (Healing Moms)
4	QS. Maryam [19]: 23— Figure of Mary	The story of Maryam giving birth under a date palm	<i>Bund, Ujian Anak Itu Ternyata Berat Yaa?</i> (Mom, That Child's Trial Was Really Tough, Wasn't It?)
5	QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 7— Figure of Moses' Mother	Moses' mother's anxiety when she set her son adrift on the Nile	<i>Overthinking dengan Kondisi Negeri Sendiri?</i> (Overthinking the State of Your Own Country?)
6	QS. Maryam [19]: 23— Figure of Mary	The story of Mary giving birth under a date palm	<i>Manusia Tidak Dilarang Bersedih dan Menangis</i> (People Are Not Forbidden to Grieve and Cry)
7	QS. Maryam [19]: 23— Figure of Maryam	The story of Mary giving birth under a date palm	<i>Bahkan Hati yang Bertaut Sekalipun Bisa Kesepian</i> (Even Hearts That Are Bound Together Can Feel Lonely)
8	QS. Maryam [19]: 23— Figure of Maryam	The story of Mary giving birth under a date palm	<i>Nggak Ada yang Tahu Seberapa Sedih Aku...</i> (No One Knows How Sad I Am...)
9	QS. Maryam [19]: 18— Figure of Maryam	The arrival of the angel during Mary's exile	<i>Melindungi itu Karena Sayang, Bukan Membatasi</i>

			(Protection Comes from Love, Not Restriction)
10	QS. Maryam [19]: 23— Figure of Maryam	The story of Mary giving birth under a date palm	<i>Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat</i> (If It Feels Hard for You, Then It Really Is Hard)
11	QS. Ibrāhīm [14]: 37 — Figure of Hajar	Hagar's isolation in the barren valley of Mecca	<i>The Power of Ibu</i> (The Power of a mother)

The data in Table 1 reveal the domestication of sacred texts, specifically illustrating how the theological significance of the Qur'anic narrative is diminished to affective sign-value to align with the cultural logic of digital media. The prophetic experiences of Mary,²¹ Hagar,²² and the mother of Moses²³—historically grounded in absolute submission to divine intervention—are decontextualized and transformed into commodities associated with motherhood and popular psychology. Through superficial linguistic adaptations—such as the appropriation of sacred suffering into banal expressions like “*Healing Bu Ibu*,”²⁴ “*Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?*,”²⁵ and “*Overthinking*”²⁶—the spiritual essence is distorted into secular jargon. Consequently, religious discourse loses its original meaning and becomes an emotional spectacle designed to capture the attention of contemporary audiences. This condition confirms that the dominance of sign-based values has reduced sacred texts to artifacts of psychological commodification.

The domestication of sacred texts has accelerated in the posts by @quranreview through a visual aestheticization that systematically depersonalizes the theological

²¹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified May 26, 2023, accessed June 13, 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cssr_uiL8M5/; Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Bund, Ujian Anak Itu Ternyata Berat Yaa?,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified May 30, 2025, accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLgM6Z0hZ0W/>; Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Manusia Tidak Dilarang Bersedih Dan Menangis,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified November 18, 2025, accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DRMxVVOk8st/>; Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Bahkan Hati Yang Bertaut Sekalipun Bisa Kesepian,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified January 16, 2026, accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DTkG0J5E-3v/>.

²² Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Dear Ibu,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified July 29, 2024, accessed June 13, 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/C9_f1trhlGu/; Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Healing Buibu.”

²³ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Overthinking Dengan Kondisi Negeri Sendiri?”

²⁴ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Healing Buibu.”

²⁵ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?”

²⁶ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Overthinking Dengan Kondisi Negeri Sendiri?”

significance of prophetic figures. This aestheticization follows a reductive pattern that transforms sacred suffering into a sterile, romanticized, and ahistorical pop-culture commodity (see Figure 1).



Aestheticization QS.
Maryam [19]: 23

Aestheticization QS. al-
Baqarah [2]: 158

Aestheticization QS. al-
Qaṣaṣ [28]: 7

Figure 1. Visual Aestheticization of Meaning in Popular Imagery.

As shown in Figure 1, Mary's anguish (QS. Maryam [19]: 23) is reduced to an animation of a toddler in a poetically lit room, reinforce the banal catchphrase "*Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?*"²⁷ Hagar's epic journey through the barren desert (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 158) is distorted into a recreational scene bathed in a peach-colored pastel palette, labeled "*Healing Bu Ibu.*"²⁸ Meanwhile, the resignation of Moses' mother (QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 7) is commodified through an illustration of an overthinking figure set against the backdrop of a city in ruins.²⁹ Through a soft color palette, cute character designs, and a sanitized composition, the transcendental trauma of these sacred figures is completely sterilized, transforming theological submission into nothing more than an object of affective consumption for the digital public.

The subjugation of the Qur'anic holy figures' transcendental narratives on the @quranreview account carefully engineered through infographic layouts that serve as visual architecture. This manipulation is accomplished by utilizing negative space to

²⁷ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?"

²⁸ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Healing Buibu."

²⁹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Overthinking Dengan Kondisi Negeri Sendiri?"

separate the illustrations from the text, thereby reducing cognitive load on the reader (see Figure 2).



Visual Symmetrical Balance Asymmetrical Balance Asymmetrical Movement

Figure 2. Utilization of Space in Perceptual-Cognitive Guidance.

In Figure 2, the creator gradually applies the principles of balance and movement to guide the audience's perception. The first panel (QS. Maryam [19]: 23, “*Bund, Ujian Anak Itu Ternyata Berat yaa?*”) employs a centered composition featuring a mother embracing her child, focusing attention on contemplative domestic intimacy.³⁰ The second panel (QS. Maryam [19]: 18, “*Melindungi itu Karena Sayang, Bukan Membatasi*”) utilizes asymmetrical balance—the visual weight of the mother holding an umbrella on the right contrasts with the small figure of the child on the left—thereby creating a spatial tension that resonates with the narrative of emotional protection.³¹ The red-accented key typography “*karena sayang* (because of Love)” anchors the meaning of this panel. The peak of decontextualization occurs in the third panel (QS. Maryam [19]: 23, “*Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat*”) through an asymmetrical movement:³² Maryam’s exclusive anguish during childbirth is masculinized through the figure of a man pulling a wheeled load uphill, representing ahistorical, universal human suffering. The diagonal lines of this figure’s body and load function as leading lines that direct the viewer’s gaze toward the red typography reading “*berat* (heavy)” and “*memang berat* (It Is Indeed Heavy).” Through this

³⁰ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Bund, Ujian Anak Itu Ternyata Berat Yaa?”

³¹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Melindungi Itu Karena Sayang, Bukan Membatasi,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified April 28, 2026, accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DXrSKjhE11-/>.

³² Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified May 6, 2026, accessed June 13, 2026, https://www.instagram.com/p/DX_XpPUExJF/.

synergy of gender alienation, spatial arrangement, and typographic emphasis, the visual architecture uproots the sacred text from its theological foundations in order to commodify populist empathy.

The domestication of prophetic women's narratives into therapeutic idioms reinforces the phenomenon of the mediatization of religion, wherein media logic emerges as a new grammar that shapes how the sacred is understood, experienced, and disseminated.³³ In this context, sacred verses no longer circulate because of their ontological truth but rather due to the affective resonance they evoke. Theological meanings that historically demanded submission are now transformed into light, easily consumable symbolic content, suitable for circulation on social media feeds.³⁴ Sacred suffering, which once served as a model of faith, now circulates purely as a marker of emotional identity—a commodity of signs chosen not to emulate steadfastness but merely to represent feelings and affirm one's allegiance within digital networks.

Behind this widespread domestication lies a logic that Baudrillard refers to as the dominance of "sign-value." In the order of consumer society, an object is no longer valued based on its intrinsic function but rather because of its differential position within the system of signs—that is, what the object represents to the subject who consumes it.³⁵ This is the structural reason why the prophetic stories of Mary, Hagar, and the mother of Moses are treated in such a manner in the digital realm. The theological value of the verses—which historically demanded submission, patience, and absolute faith—is a "heavy" use-value entity requiring depth and self-surrender. In contrast, the digital attention market operates on the opposite logic: it values only what is light, quickly absorbed, and shareable. Content creators, whether consciously or not, resolve this tension by converting theological use-value into affective sign-value. Sacred suffering is no longer experienced as a path of faith but is purely consumed as a marker of emotional identity that serves to communicate the uploader's sensitivity, piety, and social connectedness.³⁶ Thus, this phenomenon of commodification is not merely a shift in visual taste but an inevitable consequence of an economy of signs that demands even sacred entities submit to the laws of divisibility.

³³ Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*, 17.

³⁴ Christopher Helland, "Ritual," in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013), 27.

³⁵ Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 66.

³⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structure* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1998), 25.

This finding intersects with, yet diverges from, several existing studies on the commodification of religiosity in the digital media landscape. Previous research has shown that the physical appearance and religious identity of Muslim women function simultaneously as selling points, thereby transforming piety into a commercialized image.³⁷ In line with this, other studies have demonstrated how influencers market the image of the “modern Muslim woman” by linking religious legitimacy to consumption practices.³⁸ Meanwhile, research on religious authenticity asserts that the authenticity of religiosity is currently constructed and produced entirely through market logic.³⁹ This body of work situates the practice of commodification at the level of the subject—that is, in the bodies, appearances, and identity performances of the faithful. In contrast, the findings of this study operate on a more fundamental level: the entity being commodified is not the performance of the uploader, but the sacred text itself. Verses of the Qur’an are transformed from a theological use-value that demanding absolute submission into mere affective sign-values consumed as markers of emotion. While previous literature has mapped how believers commodify their piety, this study demonstrates how the structure of the verses themselves is manipulated into a sign—a fundamental shift that Baudrillard conceptualized as the absolute dominance of sign-value over use-value.

The Escalation of the Commodification of Prophetic Narratives: From Psychological Validation to Commercial Simulacra

The success of visual architecture in detaching sacred texts from their theological foundations signifies the intensification of a systematic process of sign mutation. Following Jean Baudrillard’s framework of imagery, this transformation of representation unfolds gradually: from images that reflect the fundamental reality of faith to those that distort their historical meaning for the sake of aesthetic comfort.⁴⁰ As narratives of prophetic suffering are continually domesticated, visual images ultimately serve to conceal the very absence of theological reality itself. This progression culminates in a series of affective infographics that sever their connection to the original substance of the Qur’an,

³⁷ Refti Handini Listyani et al., “Platform-Driven Misrepresentation of Muslim Women on Instagram: Religious Commodification in Indonesia’s Beauty Industry,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 14, no. 2 (May 30, 2026): 1417–1442.

³⁸ Kayla Renée Wheeler, “Marketing the Image of the Modern Muslim Woman in the Age of Black Lives Matter,” *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 11, no. 1 (November 22, 2022): 85–102.

³⁹ Zeeshan Rafiq and Susan Dunnett, “The Inter-Generational Construction of Religious in/Authenticity in the Rituals of British Pakistani Muslims,” *Marketing Theory* 25, no. 1 (March 17, 2025): 35–55.

⁴⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1983), 11.

evolving into simulacra—a system of signs that continues to appropriate sacred references while emptying them of their original meaning, leaving only a hollow semblance of legitimacy for the circulation of commodities.

The mutation of signs in @quranreview's posts began during a phase of reflection, when the figures of Mary, Hagar, and the mother of Moses still referenced QS. Maryam [19]: 18 and 23, QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 158, and QS. al-Qaṣaṣ [28]: 7 as their primary sources. This theological representation gradually shifted into a phase of distortion as the focus of interpretation moved toward addressing the audience's psychological vulnerabilities. Prophetic suffering is reduced to domestic grievances through populist phrases such as "*Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?* (What's Up with Girls Anyway?)",⁴¹ "*Bund, Ujian Anak Itu Ternyata Berat Yaa?* (Mom, That Test Turned Out to Be Really Tough, Didn't It?)",⁴² and "*Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat* (If It Feels Hard for You, Then It Really Is Hard)"⁴³. This distortion is most evident in the portrayal of Moses' mother, whose resignation is recontextualized to validate the phenomenon of overthinking about the country's sociopolitical conditions. This initial shift begins to sterilize historical truth in order to make room for the emotional resonance of the digital marketplace.

The escalation continues as visual imagery conceals the absence of theological reality by assimilating it into contemporary digital culture. The @quranreview account integrates sacred narratives into modern psychological discourse—addressing mental health, self-healing, parenting challenges, emotional resilience, and social anxiety—resulting in the fading of their transcendental essence (see Table 3).

Table 2. Graphic Titles and Slide Narratives as a Substitute for the Absence of Reality

Title	Slide Narrative
<i>Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?</i>	You know, bro, that's just how Allah created women. Whether their faith is strong or weak. Women... often just say what they feel, but that's not actually what they want.
<i>Bund, Ternyata Ujian Anak itu Berat Yaa?</i>	It's not because the mother failed. Allah doesn't choose just any woman to bear the heavy burden of motherhood.
<i>Manusia Tidak Dilarang Bersedih dan Menangis</i>	Our emotional pain is real; it is acknowledged and validated by Allah. That pain doesn't nullify our faith; Allah knows we feel it, and He wants us to acknowledge it. Bottom line: sadness is normal in Allah's eyes—there's nothing wrong with it, and feeling sad isn't a sin.

⁴¹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?"

⁴² Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Bund, Ujian Anak Itu Ternyata Berat Yaa?"

⁴³ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat."

Bahkan Hati Yang Bertaut Sekalipun Bisa Kesepian	Having faith doesn't mean you'll never be hurt, but it means knowing that in every wound there is Allah who heals.
Nggak ada yang tahu seberapa sedih aku...	Faith and pain can coexist. Being a person of faith doesn't mean we lose the ability to grieve or feel shattered.
Melindungi itu Karena Sayang, Bukan Membatasi	Because someone who truly loves you won't let you walk toward danger. God protects you because God loves you.
Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat	Admitting that today is hard doesn't automatically make us weak. Your job isn't to be invincible, but to always know where to go home when you're feeling helpless.
Dear Bu Ibu	When you become a mother, you have the potential to receive extraordinary glory from Allah.
Healing Bu Ibu	How noble a mother is—how greatly Allah honors the woman who becomes a mother.
The Power of Ibu	A mother's struggle isn't on the battlefield, not with weapons, not with bloodshed, but by overcoming fear for the sake of her child's future. A mother's steadfastness in accepting her destiny is the key that unlocks the door to Allah's mercy, which never runs dry. A mother's strength isn't in what she's able to bear, but in how sincerely she surrenders as she takes steps for the sake of her beloved child.
Overthinking dengan Kondisi Sendiri?	Our duty is simply to keep the flame of faith burning in our hearts, so that everything we do for this country is rooted in piety toward Him.

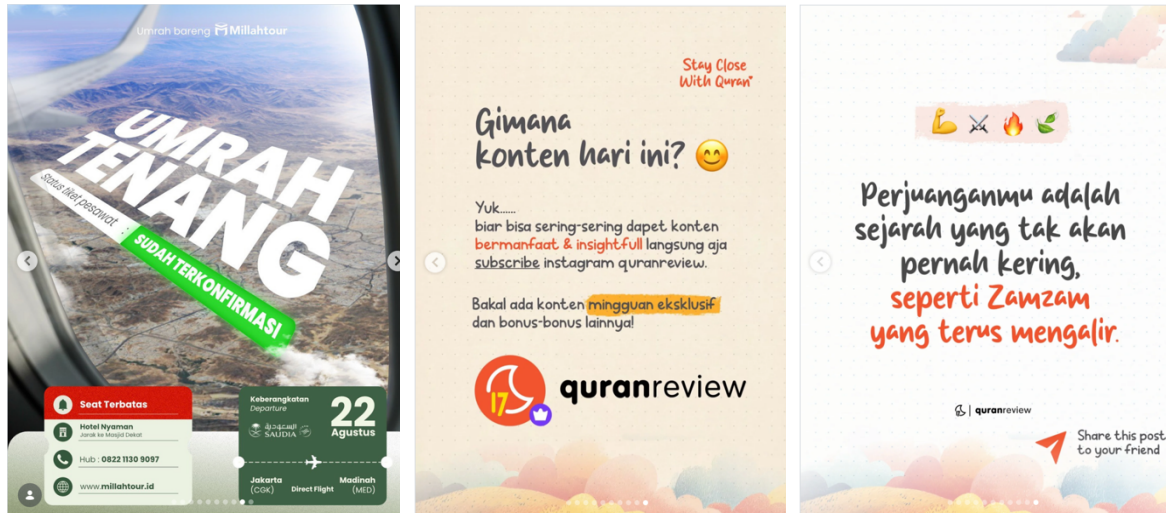
The narrative constellation in Table 2 illustrates how psychological validation—such as the catchphrase “*sedih itu biasa di mata Allah* (sadness is normal in the eyes of God)”⁴⁴ or the ahistorical glorification of motherhood in “*The Power of Ibu* (The Power of a mother)”⁴⁵—can obscure the essence of monotheistic submission. The name of God and the terminology of faith are reduced to mere supplementary legitimization, used to validate the audience's worldly pain, loneliness, and fears. Consequently, prophetic suffering thus begins to lose its original significance in the digital space, and religious narratives tend to be employed as affective tools that fill the existential void of modern society.

This trajectory culminates in a system of signs that has evolved into simulacra: references to the Qur'an are still borrowed but stripped of their eschatological meaning

⁴⁴ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Manusia Tidak Dilarang Bersedih Dan Menangis.”

⁴⁵ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “The Power of Ibu,” *Instagram Photo*, last modified May 12, 2026, accessed June 13, 2026, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DYOzRjcE5Oe/>.

and repurposed as instruments of capitalist commodification. This shift is evident on the @quranreview account through the closing carousel on each post (see Figure 3).



Promoting Umrah through
the Story of Hajar

A Call to Follow through
the Story of Mary

Motivational Inspiration
through the Story of Hajar

Figure 3. Manifestation of the Theological Shift Toward Capitalist Commodification.

In Figure 3, the spiritual narrative shifts into a commercial appeal. The left panel transforms Hajar's historical struggle to find a water source into a call for "healing" that culminates in an advertisement for Umrah travel services, Emphasizing "Limited Seats" and departure schedules.⁴⁶ Here, the reference to the ritual of *sa'i* no longer highlights its religious significance but instead promotes the travel package being sold. The center panel displays a generic closing slide urging the audience to subscribe to the @quranreview account for "useful & insightful content" as well as "exclusive weekly content".⁴⁷ In this context, theological value has completely vanished, replaced by the logic of follower retention. The right panel reduces the story of Hajar's steadfastness to motivational jargon ("like the Zamzam that keeps flowing"),⁴⁸ stripping it of its eschatological foundation and leaving behind a shareable self-affirmation. A similar pattern commonly accompanies the story of Maryam giving birth to promote books such as "Quranic Mom,"⁴⁹ and is frequently

⁴⁶ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Healing Buibu."

⁴⁷ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat."

⁴⁸ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "The Power of Ibu."

⁴⁹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Bund, Ujian Anak Itu Ternyata Berat Yaa?"

positioned as a fixed,⁵⁰ overarching framework for narratives of female figures in the Qur'an. This transformation confirms that the depth of theological value has been diminished, and its space of meaning is gradually being replaced by the circulation of digital economic commodities.

This gradual shift in representation reveals that the ongoing phenomenon is not merely a repackaging of religious messages but a transformation in the very functioning of sacred signs under platform governance. As media logic adopts the form of a religious grammar, algorithms and the demand for shareability gradually supplant the authority of the text as the determinant of circulation-worthiness. Consequently, it is the verses that resonate most emotionally—not those that are theologically profound—that consistently rise to the top of the feed.⁵¹ In this ecosystem, piety becomes a consumable and displayable entity—an aspirational pietism that links religious experience to market logic and markers of identity.⁵² Through this mechanism, a sense of piety can be materialized, circulated, and transformed into an attribute that garners social recognition.⁵³ What is most concerning, in fact, is not merely the banality of commercialization in the closing slide but the fact that this emptying of theological meaning occurs so seamlessly—without feeling like a betrayal—precisely because it is wrapped in a soothing aesthetic and the name of God is still invoked. Herein lies the greatest paradox: the more eloquently a piece of content evokes religious affective resonance, the more it is devoid of the transcendental demands that are the very source of its existence.

This pattern of shift does not arise from a single, instantaneous decision to commodify but is driven by a self-perpetuating logic that makes each stage inevitably demand its continuation. Once prophetic suffering is successfully transformed into emotional resonance, that resonance itself becomes capital that must be further harvested: touching affection invites engagement, high levels of engagement build a mass audience,

⁵⁰ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “The Power of Ibu”; Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Bahkan Hati Yang Bertaut Sekalipun Bisa Kesepian.”

⁵¹ 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.

⁵² 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), 20.

⁵³ Carla Jones, “Materializing Piety: Gendered Anxieties about Faithful Consumption in Contemporary Urban Indonesia,” *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 4 (November 12, 2010): 617–637.

and the accumulated audience ultimately demands conversion into economic value.⁵⁴ This is where these sequential stages differ from a mere shift in meaning; each stage is not an equivalent variation but rather a rung in a continuous process of accumulation, in which religious signs are treated as intangible assets that must continually to generate value. Theological reflection provides the raw material for legitimacy, psychological distortion maximizes its affective reach, and commercial simulacra harvest the accumulated value. This chain cannot stop midway because each stage would lose its essence if not carried forward to the next.⁵⁵ Commodification in the final stage, therefore, is not an end in itself but purely the point of harvest for a sign that, from its very earliest phase, has been treated as an affective investment awaiting its realization.

This finding becomes particularly striking when juxtaposed with the existing literature on the commodification of digital religiosity in Indonesia. Previous studies—such as Nisa's research,⁵⁶ Hew's analysis of visual persuasion,⁵⁷ Slama's exploration of social identity,⁵⁸ and Hasan's examination of public piety⁵⁹—treat the theological and commercial dimensions as entities that merely coexist, run parallel, and have become firmly established. Even studies emphasizing the acceleration of religious circulation on social media⁶⁰ interpret this acceleration as an increase in dissemination speed, rather than as a hierarchical escalation of value from the theological to the capitalist. This research moves beyond that paradigm of coexistence. The three stages of transformation—theological reflection, affective distortion, and commercial harvest—are shown not to stand on equal footing but rather to be hierarchically arranged as a chain of accumulation. Each stage is an essential prerequisite for the next. This study not only confirms the commodification

⁵⁴ Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 146.

⁵⁵ Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structure*, 25.

⁵⁶ Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia."

⁵⁷ Wai Weng Hew, "The Art of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 61–79.

⁵⁸ Martin Slama, "Social Media and Islamic Practice: Indonesian Ways of Being Digitally Pious," in *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Divergence*, ed. Edwin Jurriens and Ross Tapsell (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2018).

⁵⁹ 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): 229–250.

⁶⁰ Kailani and Slama, "Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: Zakat, Sedekah and the Immediacy of Social Media."

of sacred texts but also successfully maps the anatomy of its step-by-step escalation from theological value to capital.

The Hegemony of Sign-Value and Immaterial Labor: A Typology of Reception in Indonesia's Consumer Society

Mass audience participation in cyberspace stems from a fundamental shift in how religious texts are consumed in the digital age. Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's theory, individuals in a consumer societies no longer engage with text based on their essential function or theological significance; instead, their consumption is driven by the sign-value these texts possess, which helps construct social identity.⁶¹ This new "grammar of consumption" transforms the audience's relationship with sacred texts: prophetic narratives are no longer internalized as spaces for contemplation but are instead adopted as sign-commodities to project self-images in cyberspace. This shift from use-value to affective sign-value underpins the structure of audience reception, as digital interactions become oriented toward participation aimed at social recognition and the fulfillment of immediate psychological needs.

This condition is confirmed by quantifying interactions on @quranreview's posts. The commodification of sacred texts is not passive; rather, it relies on audience mobilization. The engagement, reflected in hundreds of thousands of interaction metrics, functions as an affective infrastructure that sustains the economic circulation of the associated account (see Table 3).

Table 3. Post Engagement Statistics and Virality Metrics

No.	Post Title	Number of Likes	Number of Comments	Number of Reposts	Total Interactions	Virality Level*
1	<i>Cewek Tuh Kenapa Sih?</i>	64,900	382	2	65,248	High
2	<i>Dear Bu Ibu</i>	22,800	265	2	23,067	Moderate
3	<i>Healing Bu Ibu</i>	4,218	33	0	4,251	Low
4	<i>Bund, Ternyata Ujian Anak itu Berat Yaa?</i>	15,900	205	15	16,120	Moderate
5	<i>Overthinking dengan Kondisi Negeri Sendiri?</i>	14,500	70	2,096	16,666	Moderate

⁶¹ Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structure*, 21.

6	Manusia Tidak Dilarang Bersedih dan Menangis	8,753	56	1,088	9,897	Low
7	Bahkan Hati yang bertautpun bisa kesepian	3,332	7	307	3,646	Low
8	Nggak ada yang tahu seberapa sedih aku...	6,770	37	1,040	7,847	Low
9	Melindungi itu Karena Sayang, Bukan Membatasi	2,161	0	218	2,379	Low
10	Kalau Terasa Berat Untukmu, Berarti Memang Berat	29,000	127	5,707	34,834	Medium
11	The Power of Ibu	16,000	325	3,290	19,615	Moderate
Total		188,334	1,507	13,765	203,606	

* Virality categorization based on total interactions: Low = <15,000; Moderate = 15,000–65,000; High = >65,000.

Referring to Table 3, the accumulated interactions—totaling 203,606 activities, including 188,334 likes, 1,507 comments, and 13,765 reposts—serve as an empirical demonstration of the concept of immaterial labor. In the digital economy, audiences voluntarily devote their attention and emotions to reproducing cultural and informational value for content creators. The varying levels of virality across the eleven posts are not merely indicators of popularity; they transform into a data commodity that fuels algorithms and creates opportunities for monetization, ranging from book sales to religious tour packages. This immaterial labor does not arise in a vacuum but is shaped by patterns of religious consumption that fall into two main typologies: the active pursuit of “sign-value” and the passive search for psychological catharsis.

The first typology—the reception of sign-value—manifests itself through tagging, reposting, and saving content. When the audience tags peers with gestures such as “Tag @hen***zhiess” or “Alhamdulillah, it’s not a lack of faith, right, sis?”, the prophetic narrative is transformed from a theological guide into a tool for social exchange. Drawing on Baudrillard, this distribution of content is driven by the pursuit of sign-value: the

audience uses stories of the suffering of holy figures to project an empathetic self-image and gain social recognition within their social networks.⁶²

The second typology functions through affective catharsis, as audiences express emotional relief, seek instant validation, and engage in spiritual escapism. This trend is evident when Hajar's suffering in the barren valley of Mecca is transformed into a vehicle for escapism, as reflected in the confessions of audiences yearning for "healing at *Shafa-Marwah*" amid domestic exhaustion. Religious narratives are reduced to mere heart-soothing remedies that provide the sensation of "feeling comforted by Allah" at their lowest points, to the extent that viewers claim the content appears precisely when they are experiencing a "mental breakdance phase" [sic]. This repetitive emotional consumption embodies what the author terms "Cosmetic Hyper-Piety"—a superficial form of piety that celebrates religiosity solely on the affective surface, a condition derived from Baudrillard's thesis on the dominance of sign-value over use-value. Ultimately, the hegemony of this commodification of emotions dulls the public's critical reasoning. Theological critique is almost entirely silenced, leaving behind a single anomalous voice that questions the logic of the text—"Is my logic wrong...? Maryam is sad, and then she's told not to be sad—doesn't this imply we're not allowed to be sad?"—a voice that is marginalized and drowned out amid the wave of mass digital empathy.

The drowning out of this anomalous critical voice reflects a deeper reality: the audience's sincere participation actually functions as a mechanism that drains meaning. Every affective gesture is absorbed as immaterial labor, with participants unaware that their spiritual devotion is being converted into the platform's economic capital.⁶³ This is where the paradox of digital religiosity emerges: the audience feels closer to God precisely when they are most integrated into the circuits of consumption—a moment when piety is transformed into metrics and commodities.⁶⁴ The fatal consequence is the disappearance of the subject's critical capacity to take a step back and question. The suppression of rational critique by a wave of collective empathy demonstrates that absolute commodification does not operate through coercion but conquers through consolation.⁶⁵

⁶² Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 66.

⁶³ Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33–58.

⁶⁴ Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change."

⁶⁵ Howard Prosser, *Dialectic of Enlightenment in the Anglosphere: Horkheimer and Adorno's Remnants of Freedom* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2020), 38.

At this point, the market no longer needs to exert great efforts to defeat faith, for it has successfully transformed itself into a new form of the very experience of faith itself.

The market's success in redefining the experience of faith is ultimately confirmed by the division of audience reception into the two typologies outlined above. Within Baudrillard's framework, both of these patterns of reception are in fact driven by the circulation of sign-value, in which the text is continually reproduced without requiring even the slightest theological compliance.⁶⁶ These are not opposing motives but rather two directions of the same circulation of signs: active reception expands the sign outward for the capitalization of social networks, while passive reception consumes it inward as affective catharsis. The common thread between the two is very clear: the reduction of sacred texts, whose value is now measured solely by their circulation and emotional impact. It is at this crucial juncture that commodification finds its most subtle foundation; it does not impose itself from the outside but rather rides the wave of the audience's digital participation. Consequently, what is constantly celebrated as spiritual closeness is, in reality, nothing more than a circulation machine that continually empties the sacred meaning of the verse itself.

This emptying of meaning through affective circulation simultaneously distances itself from the optimistic tendencies prevalent in the discourse on digital religiosity. Various recent studies—such as Lengauer's concept of “digital Islamic sociality,”⁶⁷ Slama's analysis of identity construction,⁶⁸ Nisa's exploration of networked participation,⁶⁹ and Kailani and Slama's examination of the acceleration of philanthropy⁷⁰—generally share a similar perspective: that participation in cyberspace successfully enriches religiosity and fosters community solidarity. Conversely, this study reveals the exact opposite reality. Affective gestures that sociologically appear to foster connectedness actually function, within the economy of signs, as a circulation that strips texts of their theological content. While previous literature has celebrated what audiences gain from digital participation, this study uncovers what is lost from the text when participation is reduced to a mere form

⁶⁶ Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 66.

⁶⁷ Lengauer, “Sharing Semangat Taqwa : Social Media and Digital Islamic Socialities in Bandung.”

⁶⁸ Martin Slama, “Practising Islam through Social Media in Indonesia,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 1–4.

⁶⁹ Eva F. Nisa, “Social Media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* (2018).

⁷⁰ Kailani and Slama, “Accelerating Islamic Charities in Indonesia: Zakat , Sedekah and the Immediacy of Social Media.”

of consumption. These findings confirm that social connectedness and the emptying of sacred meaning actually occur simultaneously within the same gesture. This paradoxical convergence that is often overlooked in academic readings: that digital religious participation does not operate in a binary manner as either a blessing or a curse, but rather manifests both simultaneously.

Conclusion

The theological representation of the stories of the women in the Qur'an—traditionally grounded in absolute submission to divine intervention—undergoes a systematic erosion of meaning on social media. Through an analysis of posts by @quranreview, this study reveals that the prophetic sufferings of Mary, Hagar, and the mother of Moses are no longer shared for their theological significance but rather for their affective symbolic value. This shift from “use-value” to “sign-value” unfolds through three mutually reinforcing mechanisms: at the level of text and imagery, sacred narratives are domesticated into easily consumable idioms of popular psychology; at the trajectory level, this domestication escalates in stages from theological references, through affective distortions, to commercial exploitation; and at the reception level, this commodification proceeds only because it is sustained by audience participation, whose sharing gestures circulate religious signs stripped of their theological content. The key finding is not merely that sacred texts are commodified, but that this commodification unfolds as an integrated process sustained by audience engagement—a condition the author terms “Cosmetic Hyper-Piety,” a form of piety that celebrates religiosity solely on its affective surface.

A qualitative content analysis approach, combined with reception analysis, proved effective for dissecting the textual, visual, and participatory layers of this phenomenon. Additionally, Baudrillard's sign-value framework facilitated an interpretation that goes beyond the aesthetic surface to reveal the economic logic underlying the sign. However, this study is limited to analyzing digital artifacts—posts and traces of interaction—and therefore cannot determine the actual motives, experiences, or interpretations of the audience. Traces of participation reveal patterns of circulation but not the internal content of meaning. This limitation invites further ethnographic or interview-based research to explore the extent to which the observed emptying of meaning at the level of the sign is experienced within religious practice. Future research could also broaden its scope to include multiple accounts and platforms or investigate the production side—examining creators' motives, strategies, and economic management—to complement the current study, which focuses solely on the text and its reception.

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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.

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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 accessible textual and visual data from Instagram. As the methodology entails non-participant cyber-observation of a public account and relies on the aggregation of public engagement metrics without direct interaction with human subjects, it is exempt from formal institutional ethics committee review. To safeguard user privacy, all cited public comments have been strictly anonymized, ensuring no personally identifiable information (PII) is disclosed aside from the primary public account handle. The data collection process strictly complied with the platform's Terms of Service. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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