

The Algorithmic Turn in Quranic Reception: Reconfiguring Aesthetic Distance and Horizon Fusion on Indonesian Instagram

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Abstract

This study analyzes the shift in the authority of Qur'anic interpretation within digital spaces through the Instagram account @quranreview. Unlike previous research that focused on content aesthetics or creator legitimacy, this study examines the role of the audience as active participants in the reconstruction of meaning. Employing a qualitative case study design and reception theory, the research finds that the Qur'an has undergone an ontological transformation—from a subject that determines meaning to an object of existential negotiation. The issue-anchoring strategy connects the text with viral contemporary issues, while the aesthetic distance mechanism manages the tension between normative authenticity and the pragmatic expectations of the audience. The findings reveal that, in the comment section, a fusion of horizons occurs, transforming the text into a situational aid. These results confirm that the authority of revelation is no longer absolute *ex ante* but is performatively constructed *ex post*. Ultimately, this study asserts that the digitalization of religion demands a paradigm shift in interpretation—from a static discourse to a participatory practice that continuously responds to the urgencies of the times.

Keywords: *Digital Qur'an Reception, Fusion of Horizons, Aesthetic Distance, Instagram, @quranreview.*

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Introduction

The presence of revelation in digital spaces has given rise to an unprecedented anomaly: sacred texts no longer function as untouchable monuments of truth but have transformed into metadata competing for attention amid algorithmic noise. Globally, algorithms shape religious life as platforms dismantle the institutional barriers that once guarded interpretive authority, forcing sacred texts to conform to the logic of speed and



instant usability.¹ This platformization represents a radical ontological shift, in which sacredness is no longer measured by depth of contemplation or doctrinal stability but by the extent to which God's message can adapt to user experience and the demands of volatile relevance. Revelation, which should dictate the times, is now often compelled to serve the subjective urgencies of audiences within the fluid virtual public sphere.

This global shift is vividly exemplified in Indonesia's digital ecosystem through the Instagram account @quranreview. Rather than merely disseminating preaching content, the account engages in hermeneutic engineering, positioning the Qur'an as a situational anchor that responds to viral social dynamics. Here, authority no longer stems from long-standing scholarly legitimacy but emerges from the precision with which verses are applied to the existential anxieties of an anonymously dispersed audience. Studying @quranreview is essential because it serves as a microcosm of a broader transformation in Islamic preaching—one in which the sacred text becomes a flexible, ready-to-use resource. This practice also demonstrates that, in the algorithmic era, interpretive authority has shifted from traditional gatekeepers to audiences who continuously negotiate meaning through digital interactions.²

Existing studies on the Qur'an's interaction with social media generally fall into two main categories. The first focuses on the technical and aesthetic dimension, such as visualization strategies³ and content packaging designed to attract audiences⁴. The second

¹ Tim Hutchings, *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community and New Media* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 172; Heidi A. Campbell and Wendi Bellar, *Digital Religion: The Basics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2023), 78.

² Jeffrey S. Siker, *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 65.

³ Ina Salmah Febriani and Salwa Zharifah Sastra, "The Digitalization of Qur'anic Exegesis on Instagram: A Netnographic Study of @quranreview and Student Reception," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 28, no. 1 (April 30, 2026): 60–75, <https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v28i1.33773>; Ach Fadoli, Sakinah Naziha, and Wasik, "Reception of the Qur'an on Social Media: Case Study of Qur'an Interpretation on the Instagram Account @quranreview," *WARAQAT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (December 2022): 150–59, <https://doi.org/10.51590/WARQAT.V7I2.338>; Rasidin Rasidin et al., "Quranic Interpretation on Instagram: The Shift from Traditional to Digital Platforms in Indonesia," *TAJDID: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 24, no. 1 (June 30, 2025): 376–406, <https://doi.org/10.30631/tjd.v24i1.642>.

⁴ Tamara Maylyana Putri 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, <https://doi.org/10.20414/jurkom.v17i1.12895>; Mahbub Ghozali and Muhammad Toriq Nurmadiansyah, "Media Framing of QS. Al-Nisā' [4]: 34 by @quranreview on Instagram: Glorifying Women Tendencies in Interpretation," *Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 19, no. 2 (July 27, 2023): 225–48, <https://doi.org/10.21009/JSQ.019.2.05>; Romario and Zulfikar Riza Hariz Pohan, "Postmodern Quranic Interpretation in Pop Culture: An Antithesis to

emphasizes shifts in religious authority resulting from digital disruption.⁵ While both approaches offer valuable insights, they remain largely confined to creator-centric and text-centric paradigms. These frameworks limit analysis to message production and actor legitimacy, largely overlooking the complexity of how meaning is actively constructed by audiences. This study addresses that gap by adopting an audience-centered perspective, examining how users function as active participants who reconstruct meaning through the negotiation of horizons in digital spaces. By integrating reception theory into the digital ecosystem, the research analyzes meaning-making processes in the comment sections—bridging the textuality of revelation with users' existential experiences, a dimension empirically neglected in prior production- and legitimacy-focused studies.

To address this academic gap, the present research aims to comprehensively examine the reception mechanisms of the Qur'an in digital spaces through three interrelated analytical frameworks. First, it maps the theological issue-anchoring strategies employed in response to social dynamics, revealing a shift in textual authority from production to consumption. Second, it assesses the gradation of aesthetic distance to demonstrate how the tension between the normative authenticity of revelation and the pragmatic expectations of audiences is managed within an algorithm-mediated environment. Finally, it develops a taxonomy of the fusion of horizons through asynchronous meaning reconstruction in comment sections, empirically illustrating how the Qur'an transforms from a static, meaning-determining subject into a flexible object of existential negotiation for digital audiences.

The urgency of this research arises from the widening gap between the rapid evolution of digital religious behavior and the relatively static nature of traditional hermeneutic frameworks. The migration of sacred texts into cyberspace represents not

The Authority of Traditional Interpretation,” *Kodifikasia* 19, no. 1 (May 2025): 119–32, <https://doi.org/10.21154/kodifikasia.v19i1.9994>.

⁵ Asykhariil Gustama Abay, “The Qur'an on Social Media: Questioning Authenticity and Negotiating the Authority of Interpretation,” *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies* 8, no. 3 (July 2025): 70–84, <https://doi.org/10.31943/AFKARJOURNAL.V8I3.2273>; Risma Hikmawati, “Authority and Ethics of Interpretation in Da'wah Content on Social Media,” *Hadara: Journal of Da'wah and Islamic Civilization* 1, no. 2 (November 6, 2025): 135–55, <https://doi.org/10.61630/hjdic.v1i2.23>; 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>; Amin Majidifard and Majid Fouladiyan, “Alter-Making on Iranian Instagram: The Mechanisms of Influence of Instagram Reference Groups among Iranian Youth,” *Journal of Culture-Communication Studies* 26, no. 71 (September 2025): 9–41, <https://doi.org/10.22083/JCCS.2024.475031.3928>.

merely a change in medium but a profound ontological restructuring of how individuals engage with revelation.⁶ While classical traditions maintain textual authority through hermeneutic distance,⁷ the digital ecosystem demands a radical fusion of boundaries between texts and users' everyday realities to sustain relevance. Neglecting the meaning-negotiation mechanisms occurring in comment sections risks confining academic understandings of contemporary religiosity trapped in the reductive assumption that audiences are passive recipients. Therefore, this study seeks to move beyond content-production discourse and toward a deeper analysis of asynchronous meaning-making processes—capturing how sacred texts are continuously reconstructed as living, responsive entities within the complex flows of public interaction.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design⁸ to examine the practice of Qur'anic reception in digital spaces. The material focus of the study is the content of the Instagram account @quranreview, selected through purposive sampling. This account was chosen for its significance as a contemporary mediator between the sacred text and viral issues, as well as its notable ability to reframe Qur'anic verses within trending topics. The case selection is based on the account's capacity to generate high levels of unique audience engagement, which maps the dialectic between the text and social reality. Data for this study consist of secondary sources, including visual materials (carousel posts), captions, and audience comments. These elements naturally reflect the encounter between the creator's narrative and the audience's horizon of expectations within the platform ecosystem.

Data collection was conducted through digital observation, involving the systematic archiving of posts, captions, and audience interactions over a predetermined observation period. The data analysis proceeded in three main phases:⁹ thematic-situational mapping; measurement of aesthetic distance through comparative analysis of audience responses to the presented textual meanings; and reconstruction of fusion-of-

⁶ Siker, *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World*, 65.

⁷ Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," in *Paul Ricoeur Hermeneutics and The Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 133.

⁸ Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): 219–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>.

⁹ Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

horizons patterns using discourse analysis techniques to reveal the dialectic between the condensed text and the audience’s pre-understandings. The analysis focused on identifying patterns of meaning shifts (horizon shifts) and categorizing reception modes in order to understand how the authority of the sacred text is performatively reconstructed within the social media ecosystem.

Issue Anchoring and Horizon Negotiation: Thematic and Situational Mapping in Digital Qur'anic Reception

Negotiation of meaning in the digital reception of sacred texts operates through a thematic-situational mapping strategy that systematically bridges the absolute horizon of the text and the fluctuating horizon of the audience. In this process, meaning-making is not a passive transmission of knowledge but an active dialectic between the reader’s pre-understanding—shaped by sociocultural backgrounds—and the text’s intended meaning.¹⁰ When religious narratives serve as theological anchors amid volatile information flows, the authority of meaning ceases to be monolithic and instead becomes a dynamic arena of negotiation. In this dialectic, every encounter between the ideality of the text and the complexity of social reality requires precise issue-anchoring, through which sacred truth is continually reconstructed via the clash and fusion of horizons to address the audience’s immediate concerns.

The content strategy of @quranreview demonstrates a responsive approach to popular issues by positioning the Qur’anic text as a theological anchor within the dynamics of the digital social sphere. This anchoring mechanism typically begins by citing specific verses as a framing hook on the opening slide of the carousel (see Figure 1).



Source: @quranreview Instagram account.

Figure 1. The Function of Issue Framing in Relation to the Qur’an

¹⁰ Jauss, 40.

Figure 1 illustrates how @quranreview performs thematic-situational mapping by juxtaposing specific verses with currently trending viral issues. Examples include QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:11 addressing the issue of insulting iced tea sellers,¹¹ QS. al-Falaq [113]:2 as a response to the KM 92 accident,¹² and QS. al-Ḥadīd [57]:23 discussing the viral lost tumbler phenomenon¹³. These cases demonstrate that the authority of the Qur’anic text is immediately activated by audiences as an instrument of moral and theological legitimacy. The high engagement rates, particularly on issues involving moral sensitivities, confirm that the content successfully fosters discursive involvement—an outcome of the convergence between the creator’s horizon and the audience’s horizon of expectation.

This meeting of horizons occurs through the negotiation of meaning between the creator’s narrative strategy and the pre-understandings (fore-meanings) that audiences bring to the content. These dynamics are evident in the mapping of @quranreview’s discursive tactics against audience comments that appear before the full interpretive text is read (see Table 1).

Table 1. @quranreview’s Discursive Strategy and Empirical Evidence of the Audience’s Pre-Textual Horizon

| Content | @quranreview’s Discursive Strategy | Audience Comment Evidence (Pre-Textual Horizon) | Theoretical Interpretation |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| <i>Nikah is Scary?</i> | Clickbait title; counter-narrative; gloomy-to-hopeful visuals | “I’m also afraid of marriage but this makes me aware”; active affective horizon | Horizon shaped by Gen-Z discourse; collision strategy |
| <i>Es Teh, G013LOK?</i> | Framing collective anger; verse as moral justification | Criticism of religious figures; “seller is more noble”; normative social justice horizon | Moralistic social justice culture; @quranreview reinforces rather than forms |
| <i>KM 92 Tol Cipularang</i> | Reference to collective memory landmark; verse as “medicine” | Sharing of accident memories; emotional horizon based on traumatic memory | Collective memory horizon; interpretation as coping mechanism |

¹¹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Es Teh, G013lok?,” Instagram Photo, December 4, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDImAxKTvlu/>.

¹² Quranic Stroytelling [@quranreview], “KM 92 Tol Cipularang,” Instagram Photo, November 13, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/DCULOWwzeUp/?img_index=1&igsh=MWo3Z3ZxZmhjZjdy.

¹³ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Dewasa Itu Ketika Tidak Mempermasalahkan Tumbler Yang Hilang!,” Instagram Photo, November 28, 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DRlnBHyk4TV/>.

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|
| <i>Tumbler yang Hilang</i> | Everyday narrative; frame of “emotional maturity” | Reflection on personal loss; affective horizon of <i>pesantren</i> culture | Bridge between <i>pesantren</i> (traditional boarding school) asceticism and digital minimalist values |
| <i>Mangu</i> | Song lyric diction; emotional dilemma framed as theological question | Feeling “validated” or “cornered”; internal community tension | Conflict between emotional and normative horizons; @quranreview as arbitrator |

The interactions above reveal that horizon negotiation in the digital reception of the Qur’an operates through three distinct patterns of horizon collision. First, the affective-personal horizon (e.g., *Nikah is Scary?*,¹⁴ *Tumbler yang Hilang*,¹⁵ *Mangu*¹⁶), in which the sacred text serves as a theological instrument to address psychological vulnerability. Second, the normative-social horizon (e.g., *Es Teh, GO13LOK?*),¹⁷ which illustrates reverse legitimation: Qur’anic verses do not primarily create new moral awareness but are invoked to sacralize collective anger that has already formed in secular contexts. Third, the mnemonic-collective horizon (e.g., *KM 92 Tol Cipularang*),¹⁸ where interpretation transforms public traumatic memory into an eschatological frame. These patterns demonstrate that, in the digital landscape, the Qur’an is performatively activated to resolve immediate worldly tensions rather than being read solely for the transmission of religious knowledge.

This performative activation is further evidenced by a fundamental shift in the starting point of Qur’anic interpretation. While traditional offline study groups typically begin with the mushaf sequence or classical themes, @quranreview’s content originates from trending topics external to the platform. Verses are not presented in the linear mushaf order but are selected based on their affective relevance to contemporary issues. This shift corresponds to a transformation in audience characteristics: from physically present, relatively homogeneous local communities to an anonymous, geographically

¹⁴ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Nikah Is Scary?,” Instagram Photo, August 19, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C-12KCzhe9a/>.

¹⁵ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Dewasa Itu Ketika Tidak Mempermasalahkan Tumbler Yang Hilang!”

¹⁶ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Mangu: Antara Hati Dan Prinsip Hidup,” Instagram Photo, May 23, 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJ-5xMRBDvB/>.

¹⁷ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Es Teh, GO13lok?”

¹⁸ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “KM 92 Tol Cipularang.”

dispersed, and highly heterogeneous digital mass. Consequently, the circulation of the sacred text has transitioned from centralized communal reading to dispersed digital engagement.

The shift from the traditional mushaf sequence to trending topics represents more than a mere technical change in circulation; it signifies a fundamental recalibration of the Qur'an's role within the digital ecosystem. In conventional contexts, the sacred text serves as a source of knowledge that shapes the community's worldview.¹⁹ In digital practice, however, it functions as a situational anchor that responds to viral issues. This transition positions the Qur'an as an instrument engaged with the audience's contemporary concerns. Rather than presenting itself as a narrative that dictates reality from above, the text becomes a mediator of anxieties within a diverse audience. Its binding power in digital spaces thus depends less on the enforcement of its doctrinal content and more on its ability to address situational tensions faced by anonymous users. This reliance on affective relevance is a logical consequence of platform architecture, which governs visibility through data indexing and metadata interconnections. In such an ecosystem, a sacred text gains reach only when it establishes a "tie point" with widely discussed issues.²⁰ The issue-anchoring strategy therefore serves as a technical bridge that aligns verses with audience search patterns and interests.²¹ By linking messages to viral topics, the text is not only discovered by algorithms but also "picked up" by audiences who already possess prior understanding of the issues.

This regime of connectivity shifts the authority of the text from autonomous prescription to contextual performativity—from prescriptive horizon authority (preceding the audience) to performative horizon authority (activated after the issue is established). In the digital ecosystem, textual legitimacy is realized only after audiences define the urgency to be addressed. The sanctity of the text no longer derives primarily from its internal structure²² but from its capacity to be validated through users' existential experiences. Consequently, the Qur'an functions as a ready-to-use interface for organizing subjective narratives, with functional usability in specific situations becoming the primary

¹⁹ Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Mafhūm Al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsat Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Saqāfi al-Arabī, 2014), 24.

²⁰ Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 29.

²¹ Heidi Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media* (London: Routledge, 2010), 244.

²² Arthur Jeffery, "The Qur'an as Scripture," *The Muslim World* 40, no. 1 (January 3, 1950): 41–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1950.tb01030.x>; Abū Zayd, *Mafhūm Al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsat Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an*.

mechanism that grants validity to its truth in digital space. This shift from prescriptive to performative horizon recontextualizes ongoing debates about religious authority in digital environments.

While much of the literature has focused on actor contestation²³—how traditional authorities are challenged by new digital figures—this study highlights the ontological transformation of the text itself. The central question in contemporary Qur’anic studies is therefore shifting from “who” has the right to interpret²⁴ to “how” digital infrastructure redesigns the function of the text—from a stable normative guide to a situational aid. This research complements existing media studies on fluid authority by emphasizing a technical dimension:²⁵ in digital spaces, authority not only shifts between actors but also changes mode—from text as law dictating reality to text as performance shaped by algorithmic demands and the heterogeneous horizons of audience expectations.

Measuring Aesthetic Distance: Semantic Reorientation and the Domestication of Qur’anic Authority on Instagram

The transition of authority toward a performative horizon inherently places the text within a field of hermeneutic tension that demands precise measurement of the aesthetic distance between the audience’s worldly expectations and the meaning offered by the text. Within this space, the effectiveness of interpretation is no longer determined by static doctrinal truth but by the text’s ability to navigate the gap between the audience’s fragmented horizons and the projected meaning it provides.²⁶ This negotiation space constitutes the field of aesthetic distance²⁷—a critical variable that determines whether

²³ Ugur Aytac, “Digital Domination: Social Media and Contestatory Democracy,” *Political Studies* 72, no. 1 (February 2024): 6–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217221096564>; Ahmad Fawaid and Nayla Amalia, “The Representation of Muslim Women on Digital Platforms: Contestation and Fragmented Reception on Instagram’s QuranReview Account,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu’ashirah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2025): 144–60, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jim.v22i1.29982>; Cara Reed and Michael Reed, “Expert Authority in Crisis: Making Authority Real Through Struggle,” *Organization Theory* 3, no. 4 (October 9, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877221131587>.

²⁴ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God’s Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women* (London: Oneworld Publication, 2001).

²⁵ Liang Zhang, “The Digital Age of Religious Communication: The Shaping and Challenges of Religious Beliefs through Social Media,” *Studies on Religion and Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (November 8, 2025): 25–41, <https://doi.org/10.71204/de63mn10>; Mónica Andok, “The Impact of Online Media on Religious Authority,” *Religions* 15, no. 9 (September 12, 2024): 1103, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15091103>.

²⁶ Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, 249.

²⁷ Jauss, 14.

content is received as a transformative spiritual challenge or merely as an affirmation of everyday reality. Mapping the dynamics of this distance reveals mechanisms of semantic reorientation and demonstrates how the tension between textual authenticity and audience needs is managed, ultimately reconfiguring the boundaries of religious authority in the digital realm.

In @quranreview's content, semantic reorientation is used to engage audiences, mediated by the degree of aesthetic distance created by each post. The dynamics of this distance are categorized based on the extent of consciousness transformation required from the reader, resulting in three gradations (see Table 2).

Table 2. Map of Meaning Negotiation and Aesthetic Distance Index for @quranreview Content

| Content | Audience Expectation Horizon | Text Meaning Horizon | Aesthetic Distance Index |
|-----------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Nikah is Scary?</i> | Psychological fear and trauma regarding commitment to marriage | Shifting social fear into spiritual responsibility via <i>miṣāqan ghalīzan</i> (QS. al-Nisā' [4]:21) | Moderate (Partial reframing) |
| <i>Es Teh, GO13LOK?</i> | Collective anger and moral indignation based on social class justice | Sacralizing social anger as defense of human dignity (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]:11) | Low (Horizon confirmation) |
| <i>KM 92 Tol Cipularang</i> | Affective response based on tragic grief and fear of disaster | Transforming worldly tragedy into existential-eschatological awareness (QS. al-Falaq [113]:2) | Moderate (Register transformation) |
| <i>Tumbler yang Hilang</i> | Material disappointment over loss of a daily item | Elevating a trivial incident into spiritual acceptance or ascetic practice (QS. al-Ḥadīd [57]:23) | Moderate (Meaning elevation) |
| <i>Mangu</i> | Emotional dilemma between romantic preference and religious norms | Subjugating romantic preference under absolute theological loyalty (QS. al-Baqarah [2]:21) | High (Fundamental reframing) |

The gradation index in Table 2 reveals a central hermeneutic paradox in algorithm-mediated preaching. The predominance of moderate aesthetic distance (as seen in *Nikah is*

Scary?,²⁸ *KM 92 Tol Cipularang*,²⁹ and *Tumbler yang Hilang*³⁰) indicates that @quranreview operates at a hermeneutic equilibrium: the text neither fully subdues the reader’s ego nor leaves the audience without spiritual reflection. However, the true implications of aesthetic distance become apparent at the extremes. At low aesthetic distance (e.g., *Es Teh, GO13LOK?*),³¹ the Qur’an undergoes hermeneutic domestication, functioning primarily as sacred legitimization of existing class-based anger and providing psychological comfort without demanding behavioral change. At high aesthetic distance (e.g., *Mangu*),³² the text generates significant hermeneutic friction by directly confronting the audience’s romantic identity.

This pattern illustrates a paradox inherent in social media: the closer a text aligns with the audience’s perspective (low distance), the greater its virality, but the weaker its transformative impact. Conversely, the more a text challenges the audience’s perspective (high distance), the more it maintains normative authenticity, yet the higher the risk of discursive alienation. This asymmetric tension is quantitatively supported by digital amplification metrics, which reveal an inverse correlation exists between aesthetic distance and audience engagement (see Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation of Aesthetic Distance Index with Digital Amplification Metrics

| Content | Aesthetic Distance Index | Interaction Volume (Likes/Comments) | Engagement Ratio (Comments per Like) | Correlation Interpretation |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Es Teh, GO13LOK?</i> | Low | 192,500 / 2,200 | 1.14% | Horizon confirmation triggers extreme mass acceptance |
| <i>Nikah is Scary?</i> | Moderate | 28,300 / 240 | 0.85% | Partial reframing within cognitive tolerance |
| <i>Tumbler yang Hilang</i> | Moderate | 11,800 / 95 | 0.81% | Elevation of niche topic yields proportional interaction |

²⁸ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Nikah Is Scary?”

²⁹ Quranic Stroytelling [@quranreview], “KM 92 Tol Cipularang.”

³⁰ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Dewasa Itu Ketika Tidak Mempermasalahkan Tumbler Yang Hilang!”

³¹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Es Teh, G013lok?”

³² Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Mangu: Antara Hati Dan Prinsip Hidup.”

| | | | | | |
|------------|-----|----------|--------------|-------|---|
| KM 92 | Tol | Moderate | 29,800 / 228 | 0.77% | Stable transformation of grief emotion |
| Cipularang | | | | | |
| Mangu | | High | 8,400 / 67 | 0.80% | Fundamental reframing creates performative resistance |

The matrix in Table 3 illustrates an inverse reception law: lower hermeneutic demand produces higher amplification. Low-distance content (e.g., *Es Teh, G013lok?*)³³ achieves massive engagement because it affirms existing public anger without imposing moral risk. Moderate-distance content³⁴ maintains stable interaction ratios (0.77–0.85%), representing the typical cognitive tolerance threshold of netizens. High-distance content (e.g. *Mangu*) shows a sharp drop in volume,³⁵ reflecting performative reticence: audiences may hesitate to publicly endorse norms (such as the prohibition of interfaith marriage) that could threaten their social capital in heterogeneous networks. To convert the sacred text into shareable units, @quranreview engages in epistemological segmentation of the classical interpretive tradition. The creator trims three key pillars of the classical canon: the complexity of fiqh (as seen in *Nikah is Scary?*),³⁶ the historical context of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (as seen in *Es Teh, G013lok?*),³⁷ and the diversity of scholarly opinions (as seen in *Mangu*)³⁸. This results in strategic reduction—sacrificing nuance and polysemy for black-and-white certainty and accelerated consumption.

Ultimately, the transformation of the Qur’an into an on-demand meaning-making device requires a constant negotiation of aesthetic distance. In the classical tradition, the text maintains an autonomous ontological distance from the reader’s reality.³⁹ In digital practice, however, this distance is actively deconstructed through issue-anchoring strategies that merge the text with the audience’s immediate concerns. Consequently, the effectiveness of meaning is therefore measured less by fidelity to the text’s universal intent

³³ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Es Teh, G013lok?”

³⁴ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Nikah Is Scary?”; Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Dewasa Itu Ketika Tidak Mempermasalahkan Tumbler Yang Hilang!”; Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “KM 92 Tol Cipularang.”

³⁵ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Mangu: Antara Hati Dan Prinsip Hidup.”

³⁶ Abū Ḥayyān Al-Andalusī, *Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ Fī Al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2010), 151.

³⁷ Ismā’īl bin ‘Umar bin Kaṣīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’an Al-‘Azīm*, vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutb al-‘Ilmiyah, 1419), 357.

³⁸ Muḥammad bin Aḥmad Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi’ Li Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risālah, 2006), 67.

³⁹ Daniel A. Madigan, *The Quran’s Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam’s Scripture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 189.

(*maqāṣid al-‘āmm*)⁴⁰ and more by its capacity to precisely interpellate audience realities. Aesthetic distance thus becomes a dynamic negotiation field of negotiation, wherein the sacredness of the text is reconstructed through its functional relevance to the audience’s anxieties—transforming Qur’anic engagement from a distanced scholarly discourse into an intimate, ready-to-use affective practice.

The regulation of aesthetic distance in digital Islamic preaching is fundamentally shaped by platform infrastructure logic, which prioritizes data compatibility above all else. Within this ecosystem, the gap between the audience’s horizon and the meaning conveyed by the text is not a matter of free hermeneutic choice but a variable that must be carefully calibrated to align with the algorithm’s visibility architecture. Platforms require precise control over this distance:⁴¹ too great a gap creates cognitive resistance that disrupts data flow, while too little distance results in redundancy that diminishes the content’s distinctiveness. The management of this gradation by @quranreview exemplifies technical adaptation to these demands. The account transforms Qur’anic verses into interactive modules that maintain a “safe distance” for algorithmic indexing while remaining compatible with users’ search patterns and automatically curated affective behaviors.

Aesthetic distance in digital spaces is essentially a form of “spatial engineering” driven by sociotechnical architecture. This infrastructure compels creators to perform precise calibrations—establishing a buffer between the ideal of the message and the audience’s emotional vulnerability—as a survival strategy against the rapid pace of algorithmic consumption.⁴² Yet, beneath the creator’s technical performance lies a vibrant space of co-creation. Audiences are not passive recipients;⁴³ through affective actions such as sharing, debating, or even deliberate non-response, they actively fill, expand, or collapse this gap. Consequently, aesthetic distance becomes a dynamic field of negotiation, where the successful transmission of meaning depends less on the creator’s ability to construct distance and more on the audience’s capacity to inhabit it. In an ecosystem that demands efficient information consumption, audience digital behavior ultimately determines the depth or shallowness of meaning absorbed.

This shift, which positions audience agency as the primary determinant of meaning and depth, challenges the dominant discourse on the platformization of religion that has

⁴⁰ Ibrāhīm bin Mūsā Al-Syāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, Vol. 1 (Khabar: Dār Ibn Affān, 1997), 10.

⁴¹ Jay D. Bolter and Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 23.

⁴² Tarleton Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 212.

⁴³ Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, 249.

prevailed over the past decade.⁴⁴ While previous studies have often been confined to a rigid dichotomy between algorithmic determinism and user resistance,⁴⁵ the present findings offer a synthesis through the concept of aesthetic distance as a strategic meeting point. This perspective broadens contemporary digital hermeneutics by shifting the focus from the interpretation of static texts to “boundary negotiation” as the new essence of religious authority in virtual spaces. Ultimately, these findings indicate that the significance of revelation is increasingly determined by the precision of negotiations within data flows. They enrich our understanding of how da’wah evolves into a technical-affective synchronization attuned to the complexities of the contemporary digital media ecosystem.

Taxonomy of Horizon Fusion: Horizon Shift and Asynchronous Meaning Reconstruction in the Comment Section

The fusion of horizons within the digital ecosystem is not a singular hermeneutic process but rather a fragmented field of meaning negotiation shaped by varying degrees of audience involvement. In the comment section, meaning-making is not a passive transmission of knowledge but an asynchronous dialectic in which the compressed text collides with and interacts with the reader’s fluctuating pre-understandings.⁴⁶ When religious narratives become objects of negotiation amid volatile information flows, the authority of the text ceases to be absolute. Instead, it fragments into diverse patterns of reception that depend on the depth of audience participation.⁴⁷ Mapping the taxonomy of audience reception modes is therefore essential; it not only classifies reception patterns but also demonstrates how horizon shifts manifest empirically, revealing that sacred meaning is continually reconstructed through the clash and fusion of horizons in response to the audience’s daily urgencies.

⁴⁴ Heidi A. Campbell and Giulia Evolvi, “Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies,” *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies* 2, no. 1 (January 9, 2020): 5–17, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.149>; Hutchings, *Creating Church Online: Ritual, Community and New Media*.

⁴⁵ Ya Zhou, Meng Hu, and Cheng Luo, “Decomposing User Resistance to Algorithms on Social Media,” in *ICIS 2025 Proceedings*, 2025, https://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2025/impl_adapt/impl_adapt/1; Emilija Gagrčin, Teresa K. Naab, and Maria F. Grub, “Algorithmic Media Use and Algorithm Literacy: An Integrative Literature Review,” *New Media & Society* 28, no. 1 (January 8, 2026): 423–47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448241291137>; Kelley Cotter, “Practical Knowledge of Algorithms: The Case of BreadTube,” *New Media & Society* 26, no. 4 (April 18, 2024): 2131–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221081802>.

⁴⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2006), 461.

⁴⁷ Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, 76.

This epistemological reduction gains momentum when the compressed text encounters responses in the comment section. Based on the analysis of ten representative comment traces, the dynamics of meaning fusion do not operate linearly but fragment into three primary reception modes: performative internalization, communal discursive construction, and normative resistance (see Table 4).

Table 4. Mapping of Reception Modes and Fusion of Horizons Mechanisms in @quranreview Audience Comments

| Content & Reception Mode | Paraphrase/ Representative Comment | Horizon Shift Pattern | Discursive Mechanism |
|---|---|---|--|
| <i>Marriage Scary?</i> (Meaning Reproduction) | <i>is</i> Audience uses fear of marriage as entry point, then reframes it as a call for resignation. | Affective fear to spiritual readiness | Individual internalization: translating new meaning into personal experience. |
| <i>Marriage Scary?</i> (Interactive Discourse) | <i>is</i> User A expresses doubt; B offers verse-based advice; C affirms B—forming a normative conversation chain. | Individual anxiety to collective norms | Co-construction: audience collaboratively builds interpretation beyond the original post. |
| <i>Iced GO13LOK?</i> (Active Acceptance) | <i>Tea,</i> Massive comments assert that iced tea sellers are “more noble in the sight of Allah,” fully adopting the creator’s frame. | Social anger to moral-theological wisdom | Affirmative validation: acceptance without negotiation (highest engagement: 192.5K likes). |
| <i>Iced GO13LOK?</i> (Re-appropriation) | <i>Tea,</i> Criticism of religious figures using popular language, followed by use of Qur’anic verses as justification. | Social outrage to verse-based justification | Re-appropriation: audience co-opts the text to legitimize pre-existing attitudes. |
| <i>KM 92 Cipularang</i> (Practical Reception) | Users share personal memories of the toll road or losing relatives, linking them to the call for refuge in God. | Collective tragedy to individual religious practice | Memory activation: interpretation unlocks public traumatic memory. |
| <i>KM 92 Cipularang</i> (Ritualistic Reception) | Short comments in the form of prayers (“ <i>lawayin ya Allah,</i> ” “ <i>Al-Fatihah</i> ”). | Disaster news to prayer performance | Performative reception: response through digital ritual acts. |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| <i>Tumbler Hilang</i> (Meaning Reproduction) | Users share stories of similar losses and reflect on their overreactions, feeling “seen.” | Material disappointment to value reflection | Self-identification: personalizing the interpretation. |
| <i>Tumbler Hilang</i> (Interactive Discourse) | Chain of replies: one user shares a loss story; another responds with ascetic reflection. | Individual experiences to mutual reinforcement | Micro-community: temporary emotional support sub-communities form around shared values. |
| <i>Mangu</i> (Active Acceptance) | Audiences who “feel validated” express stronger commitment to avoiding interfaith relationships. | Emotional dilemma to normative firmness | Normative reinforcement: strengthening pre-existing group positions. |
| <i>Mangu</i> (Resistant Reception) | Audience feels “cornered” or “unfair,” sparking defensive and emotional debate. | Emotional dilemma to normative rejection | Horizon rejection: excessive aesthetic distance leads to collision rather than fusion. |

The mechanism outlined in Table 4 illustrated the plasticity of digital Qur’anic reception across three primary styles. First, fusion of horizons operates most effectively through performative internalization (e.g., *KM 92*,⁴⁸ *Tumbler*,⁴⁹ *Nikah is Scary?*⁵⁰), where the text functions as a script for ritual behavior and asynchronous emotional regulation. Second, the decentralization of interpretive authority produces the anomaly of re-appropriation (e.g., *Es Teh, GO13LOK?*)⁵¹: fusion occurs not through submission to the verse but through the audience’s co-opting of the text to legitimize existing class-based anger. Third, the limits of resistant reception appear in the *Mangu* case;⁵² when aesthetic distance exceeds the audience’s normative tolerance threshold, horizon fusion fails and instead produces collision. These findings support a key postulate: in the digital landscape, the Qur’an shifts from a meaning-determining subject to an object of existential negotiation for its readers.

The spectrum of existential negotiations reflects varying degrees of audience internalization of the sacred text. Cognitive obedience begins with active acceptance—as

⁴⁸ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “KM 92 Tol Cipularang.”

⁴⁹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Dewasa Itu Ketika Tidak Mempermasalahkan Tumbler Yang Hilang!”

⁵⁰ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Nikah Is Scary?”

⁵¹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Es Teh, G013lok?”

⁵² Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], “Mangu: Antara Hati Dan Prinsip Hidup.”

seen in @in***bn's affirmation that "*mencintai Allah... adalah cara terbaik mencintai yang lainnya* (loving Allah... is the best way to love others—*Mangu*)⁵³—and deepens through meaning reproduction. Netizens frequently weave their personal vulnerabilities into the verses, as illustrated by @ke***srr's interpretation of *Marriage is Scary?* ("*berani karena percaya kekuatan Tuhan—be brave because you believe in God's power*")⁵⁴ and @fit***ani.gita's reframing of the lost item incident as "*ikhlas & yakin ada ganti rezeki* (being sincere & confident that there will be a replacement for your fortune)."⁵⁵ This process further evolves into performative action through practical and ritualistic reception (e.g., KM 92 Cipularang), where reflections on tragedy translate into asynchronous digital liturgy, such as @da***rp's exclamation: "*sungguh tidak ada daya... Allah lah sebaik-baik pelindung* (there really is no power... Allah is the best protector)."⁵⁶

While the first trajectory focuses on individual internalization, the second extends beyond personal boundaries into communal discursive construction and the subversion of meaning. The decentralization of mufassir authority is evident in interactive discourse formation (*Nikah is Scary?*),⁵⁷ where @il***a's advice to "*bertahanlah karena Allah* (endure because of Allah)" is affirmed by @Ir***itriani10: "*sependapat bund... tawakal itu ada aja jalannya* (I agree, mother... reliance on Allah always finds a way)." Hermeneutic anomalies appear at the poles of dissent. First, meaning re-appropriation (*Es Teh, G013LOK?*) reverses the direction of interpretation, with users such as @n***ulfs invoking the verse to legitimize class anger: "*si bapak penjual es teh lebih baik... bandingkan nasib mereka yang angkuh mengolok-olok* (the man who sells iced tea is better... compared to the fate of those who arrogantly make fun of it)."⁵⁸ Second, resistant reception (*Mangu*) emerges when audiences feel "cornered" or "unfair treated" by the theological stance on interfaith marriage.⁵⁹

The fusion of horizons within the digital ecosystem is not a singular hermeneutic process but rather a fragmented field of meaning negotiation shaped by varying degrees of audience involvement. It unfolds as an asynchronous dialectic between the compressed

⁵³ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview].

⁵⁴ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Nikah Is Scary?"

⁵⁵ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Dewasa Itu Ketika Tidak Mempermasalahkan Tumbler Yang Hilang!"

⁵⁶ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "KM 92 Tol Cipularang."

⁵⁷ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Nikah Is Scary?"

⁵⁸ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Es Teh, G013lok?"

⁵⁹ Quranic Storytelling [@quranreview], "Mangu: Antara Hati Dan Prinsip Hidup."

text and the reader's fluctuating pre-understandings.⁶⁰ This dynamic extends from individual internalization to communal construction and subversion of meaning, revealing both interactive discourse formation and hermeneutic anomalies such as re-appropriation and resistance. Ultimately, the comment section emerges as a vibrant, malleable arena of contestation. This phenomenon necessitates an ontological redefinition in Qur'anic studies.⁶¹ As the text shifts from a meaning-determining subject to an object of existential negotiation, the authority of revelation no longer rests solely on established doctrine but on its precision in synchronizing with the reader's lived reality. Interpretive studies must, therefore, recognize the comment section as a legitimate hermeneutic arena where sacred truth is continually deconstructed and re-lived as a fluid space of meaning.

When a sacred text enters the speed and accessibility of digital space, it ceases to be a static object of exegesis and instead becomes an entity continuously transformed through fluid negotiations of meaning. Traditional hermeneutic distance⁶² is disrupted by information compression and accelerated interaction. Media infrastructure—both algorithms and comment spaces—plays a decisive role in reshaping relevance and reception. A comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon demands the integration of media studies into interpretive analysis. By doing so, we can better grasp how the authority of revelation is constructed and deconstructed in real time within virtual public spheres.⁶³ The comment section is no longer merely a site of interaction; it has become a legitimate hermeneutic arena where audiences actively live out revelation through prayer, debate, and the inevitable rhythms of everyday digital life.

The presence of sacred texts in digital spaces confirms that authority no longer resides in isolated contemplation but emerges through dynamic social interaction. Comment sections have transformed revelation from a static object of understanding into

⁶⁰ Brian Dolber, "Blindspots and Blurred Lines: Dallas Smythe, the Audience Commodity, and the Transformation of Labor in the Digital Age," *Sociology Compass* 10, no. 9 (September 4, 2016): 747–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12387>.

⁶¹ Mohammed Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*, trans. Robert D. Lee (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 31.

⁶² Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān Fi 'Ulūm Al-Qur'an*, vol. 4 (Beirut: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-'Ammah li al-Kitāb, 1974), 200.

⁶³ Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Nopriani Hasibuan, Eka Mulyo Yunus, and Thohar Ahmad Hsb, "Digital Tafsir and the Construction of Religious Authority: A Critical Analysis of Gus Nur's Quranic Interpretation," *Journal of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought* 3, no. 1 (June 1, 2025): 65–97, <https://doi.org/10.15642/juit.2025.3.1.65-97>.

a shared language that facilitates validation, justification, and confrontation among users. Religious truth has thus become participatory: the validity of meaning is determined by the extent to which the text serves as emotional glue or a catalyst for human relationships.⁶⁴ This process is not merely cognitive but constitutes the formation of value-based communities, in which verses actively foster solidarity and negotiate interpersonal boundaries. Here, the text functions as a living pulse that reconciles personal urgency with collective reality.⁶⁵ The meaningfulness of revelation is no longer measured solely by doctrinal fidelity but by its capacity to support the fluid, ongoing interactions among users.

This transformation—from a vertical to a horizontal model of interpretation—represents a profound shift in the dynamics of the fusion of horizons. In the classical tradition, the merging of horizons is typically guided and moderated by authoritative figures who maintain a hermeneutic distance between text and reader.⁶⁶ In digital spaces, however, this distance collapses, producing far more explosive encounters. The fusion of meaning does not occur in contemplative isolation⁶⁷ but arises from the clash between the audience’s digitally shaped pre-understandings (*habitus*) and the compressed textual offering. The comment section thus becomes an arena where the horizons of text and audience do not merely meet but actively merge through intense negotiation. Every response serves as a point of expansion, transforming the Qur’an into a dynamic horizon of lived experience—no longer merely a text demanding submission, but a dialogue partner continuously reconstructed in the existential rhythm of its readers.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the Qur’an, long regarded as a static, authoritative, and timeless sacred text, undergoes a profound ontological transformation in digital spaces. It

⁶⁴ Ruth Tsuria, “Digital Media: When God Becomes Everybody—The Blurring of Sacred and Profane,” *Religions* 12, no. 2 (February 8, 2021): 110, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020110>; Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

⁶⁵ Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, 160.

⁶⁶ Daniele Battista, “The Digital as Sacred Space: Exploring the Online Religious Dimension,” *Academicus International Scientific Journal* XV, no. 29 (2024): 21–37; Abdul Mufid et al., “Rereading Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd’s Method of Interpreting Religious Texts,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V79I1.8102>; Akiva Berger and Oren Golan, “Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and Self-Socialization in Religious Communities,” *Learning, Media and Technology* 49, no. 2 (April 2, 2024): 274–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2023.2169833>.

⁶⁷ Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, 14.

no longer functions as a meaning-determining subject that dictates reality from above but has become a highly malleable object of existential negotiation. Within the social media ecosystem, the authority of revelation no longer derives from the establishment of traditional doctrine. Instead, it rests on the text's capacity to serve as a "situational anchor," activated retrospectively to mediate anxiety, legitimize class anger, and regulate audience emotions. Thus, the Qur'an operates as an on-demand hermeneutic resource whose validity depends less on fidelity to its original intent and more on its precise synchronization with the lived realities of a fragmented audience.

A reception hermeneutics approach, contextualized within the logic of platform architecture, effectively maps aesthetic distance as a key variable bridging the ideality of the text and the fragmentation of audience horizons. This framework reveals that digital engagement is not passive consumption but a dynamic field of boundary negotiation. However, this study has limitations. Its observations focus on a single Instagram account (@quranreview) during a specific period, limiting its ability to capture broader discursive variations across different platforms and contexts. Future research should therefore expand its scope through cross-platform comparative studies, large-scale data analytics, and longitudinal designs. Such approaches are essential for understanding how evolving algorithms and shifting audience habitus continue to reshape the authority of sacred texts.

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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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Ethical Approval:

Ethical approval was not required for this study as it relies entirely on the analysis of digital content that is within the public domain. Data was collected solely from public accounts on Instagram with unrestricted public access. The data collection process adhered to the

platform's Terms of Use and community guidelines. To further ensure ethical standards and protect user privacy, any potentially identifiable information, such as user handles and specific metadata, has been anonymized in the final reporting.

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