

## Islamic Algorithms: How Digital Platform Algorithms Shape Islamic Communication Strategies and Religious Authorities

*Muhamad Hanif Fuadi*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama Institut of Tasikmalaya, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

Correspondence: [fuadi9070@gmail.com](mailto:fuadi9070@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** This study examines how digital platform algorithms fundamentally reshape Islamic communication strategies and the structure of religious authority in contemporary Indonesia. Through a qualitative approach that combines framing analysis and virtual ethnography, the study investigated six prominent ustadz content creators on YouTube and Instagram to understand their adaptive strategies in navigating algorithmic demands. The study reveals three critical findings: first, algorithms prioritize engagement-driven content over scientific credentials, creating a new form of algorithmic religious authority in which popularity replaces traditional Islamic scholarship; second, religious leaders deliberately adjust their da'wah strategies by using short-form videos, clickbait titles, and virality-oriented content to meet the platform's logic; third, a significant tension arises between maintaining authentic Islamic teachings and meeting algorithmic requirements for visibility. A comparative analysis of viral and non-viral Islamic content shows that algorithm-favored content often simplifies complex religious discourse, potentially compromising theological depth. This research introduces the concept of algorithmic religious authority and provides critical insights into the platformization of religion. These findings recommend that Islamic educational institutions develop a digital literacy framework to balance algorithmic adaptation with scientific integrity, ensuring quality religious understanding among Muslim communities in the digital age while maintaining the authenticity of Islamic teachings.

**Keywords:** algorithmic religious authority, digital da'wah, Islamic platformization, Islamic communication strategies, virtual ethnography

### 1. Introduction

The contemporary Islamic communication landscape has undergone unprecedented transformation through the pervasive integration of digital platforms into religious discourse and practice. Platform algorithms sophisticated computational systems that curate, recommend, and amplify content based on engagement metrics, user preferences, and behavioral pattern have emerged as powerful yet invisible mediators of Islamic knowledge production and dissemination. This algorithmic mediation represents a paradigmatic shift in how religious authority is constructed, contested, and legitimized within Muslim communities worldwide. Unlike traditional models of Islamic authority rooted in scholastic credentials, institutional affiliations, and

centuries-old interpretive methodologies, algorithmic authority operates through metrics of visibility, engagement, and viral potential. The rise of digitally-native religious communicators who leverage platform affordances to bypass conventional gatekeeping mechanisms poses fundamental questions about the epistemological foundations of Islamic knowledge, the authenticity of religious discourse, and the sustainability of scholarly traditions in algorithmically-governed spaces.

The proliferation of digital platforms has fundamentally altered how Islamic knowledge is disseminated, consumed, and legitimized in contemporary Muslim societies. Social media algorithms, particularly on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, actively curate and recommend dakwah content based on user preferences, engagement metrics, and trending patterns. This algorithmic mediation represents a profound shift from traditional Islamic authority structures, where religious knowledge transmission was controlled by established scholars, Islamic organizations, and institutional frameworks. The emergence of “cyber imams” and micro-celebrity preachers who build virtual authority through algorithmically-optimized content challenges conventional notions of Islamic scholarship and religious legitimacy (Baidawi, 2025; Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2024; Raya, 2024). These digital da'is leverage platform capabilities to reach millions of followers, often bypassing traditional educational credentials and institutional endorsements. The algorithmic prioritization of engagement-driven content over scholarly rigor raises critical questions about the future of Islamic authority, the quality of religious discourse, and the integrity of dakwah in the digital age.

The transformation of Islamic communication through digital platforms represents more than technological adaptation; it constitutes a fundamental restructuring of how religious knowledge circulates, who possesses interpretive authority, and which theological perspectives gain prominence. Platform algorithms function as non-neutral intermediaries that systematically privilege certain communicative styles, content formats, and theological framings over others. Short-form videos optimized for attention capture, emotionally resonant narratives designed for shareability, and simplified religious explanations tailored for algorithmic recommendation systems increasingly dominate Islamic digital spaces. This algorithmic curation creates feedback loops where content creators continuously adapt their communication strategies to maximize visibility, potentially compromising theological nuance and scholarly depth in favor of algorithmic performance. The resulting ecosystem raises concerns about the commodification of religious knowledge, the fragmentation of Islamic discourse into algorithmically-segregated echo chambers, and the emergence of platform-dependent authority structures that may prove ephemeral and commercially compromised.

Recent scholarship has documented the significant impact of digitalization on Islamic communication practices, revealing the complex dynamics between technological affordances and religious adaptation. One of the studies highlighted how artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems enable personalized da'wah strategies, demonstrating the sophistication of contemporary Islamic digital communication technologies (Ridwan et al., 2025). Another study on the emergence of cyber Islamic practices in Northern Nigeria, illustrates the global reach of digital religious transformation beyond traditional Islamic scientific centers (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2024). Terkait bagaimana influencer media sosial merestrukturisasi otoritas agama di kalangan

milennial Muslim, menciptakan struktur legitimasi alternatif yang bersaing dengan ulama tradisional (Zaid et al., 2022). These studies collectively establish that digital platforms have become central arenas for Islamic knowledge production, religious identity formation, and authority negotiation. However, the existing literature primarily focuses on descriptive accounts of digital dakwah practices without sufficiently examining the underlying mechanisms through which algorithms shape communication strategies and authority structures.

Critical gaps persist in understanding the specific adaptive strategies employed by Islamic content creators to navigate algorithmic demands. While scholars have documented the presence of digital Islamic communicators and their growing influence, systematic analysis of how these actors strategically modify their communication approaches in response to algorithmic feedback remains limited. The tactical decisions content creators make regarding video length, posting frequency, content framing, visual aesthetics, and engagement optimization techniques represent crucial yet underexplored dimensions of algorithmic adaptation. Furthermore, existing research has not adequately theorized the tensions between maintaining theological authenticity and achieving algorithmic visibility. Islamic content creators must continuously negotiate between scholarly integrity which may require complex explanations, contextual nuances, and references to traditional sources and algorithmic imperatives that reward simplicity, emotional appeal, and rapid content consumption. This negotiation process produces novel hybrid communication forms that blend traditional Islamic discourse conventions with platform-specific affordances, yet these emerging genres lack systematic scholarly examination.

The phenomenon of algorithmic authority in Islamic contexts requires conceptual frameworks that transcend simplistic narratives of either technological determinism or religious resistance. Existing scholarship tends toward binary analyses that position digital platforms as either democratizing forces that challenge traditional hierarchies or threatening disruptions to authentic Islamic practice. Such dichotomous framings fail to capture the complex, recursive relationships between algorithmic systems, content creator strategies, audience expectations, and broader socio-religious contexts. The concept of algorithmic religious authority encompassing the processes through which computational systems mediate, amplify, or constrain religious knowledge claims remains theoretically underdeveloped. Understanding how algorithms function not merely as technical infrastructure but as active agents in shaping religious epistemologies, authority structures, and communicative practices demands interdisciplinary analytical approaches that integrate platform studies, religious communication theory, and critical algorithm studies.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating how digital platform algorithms fundamentally reshape Islamic communication strategies and religious authority structures in Indonesia. Indonesia provides an ideal research context as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with exceptionally high social media penetration rates and a dynamic digital Islamic ecosystem encompassing diverse theological orientations, organizational affiliations, and communicative approaches. The Indonesian Islamic digital landscape features established religious institutions adapting to platform logics, independent preachers building grassroots followings, and emerging influencers whose authority derives primarily from algorithmic visibility rather than traditional credentials. This diversity enables comparative analysis of how different actors with

varying resources, theological positions, and institutional backing navigate algorithmic environments. The study focuses on six prominent Islamic content creators representing diverse theological orientations and communication approaches, examining their algorithmic adaptation strategies through virtual ethnography and framing analysis. These methodological approaches enable deep engagement with both the strategic decisions content creators make and the discursive frameworks they employ to legitimize their authority in algorithmically-mediated spaces.

The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How do digital platform algorithms influence the communication strategies of Islamic preachers in Indonesia? (2) What forms of religious authority emerge through algorithmic mediation? (3) What tensions exist between maintaining Islamic scholarly integrity and meeting algorithmic demands for visibility? By addressing these questions, this research contributes to understanding the platformization of religion and introduces the concept of algorithmic religious authority as a new analytical framework for studying contemporary Islamic communication. The findings illuminate how algorithmic systems are reshaping not only the methods of religious communication but the very foundations of religious authority, knowledge validation, and theological discourse in Muslim communities. This investigation holds significance beyond the Indonesian context, offering insights into broader dynamics of digital religion, platform governance, and the transformation of religious knowledge systems in algorithmically-mediated societies. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for religious communities, platform designers, policymakers, and scholars seeking to navigate the complex intersections of technology, religion, and authority in contemporary digital cultures.

## 2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach that combines framing analysis and virtual ethnography to investigate how digital platform algorithms shape Islamic communication strategies and religious authorities. The study was conducted over six months (January-June 2025) with a focus on the practices of Islamic content creators on the YouTube and Instagram platforms.

### 2.1. Research Design

This study utilized virtual ethnography to observe and analyze the digital practices of Islamic preachers in their native online environment (Hine, 2008). This methodological approach allows researchers to examine digital da'wah practices that lie within the affordability and constraints specific to social media platforms. Framing analysis complements virtual ethnography by revealing how Islamic content creators strategically frame religious messages to align with algorithmic preferences while maintaining theological legitimacy (Entman, 1993).

### 2.2. Research Subject

Six prominent Islamic content creators were deliberately chosen to represent diverse approaches to digital da'wah across different audience segments and theological orientations:

*Category A: Performer-Driven Approach*

1. **Ustadz Hanan Attaki** (@hanan\_attaki): Instagram (4.5 million+), YouTube (2 million+) - represents youth-oriented, aesthetically integrated, and lifestyle-

integrated da'wah targeting millennials and Gen Z through cinematic visual storytelling.

2. **Ustadz Abdul Somad** (@ustadzabdulsomad\_official): YouTube (7M+), Instagram (10M+), TikTok (3M+) - exemplifying populist preaching with controversial topics, multi-platform dominance, and viral content strategies.

*Category B: Education-Focused Approach*

1. **Ustadz Adi Hidayat** (@ustadz\_adi\_hidayat): YouTube (5M+), Instagram (6M+) - represents a scientific approach but is accessible with long-form educational **content** and systematic transmission of Islamic knowledge.
2. **Ustadz Felix Siau** (@felixsiau): Instagram (2M+), YouTube (900K+) - focuses on Muslim intellectual identity, text-laden content, and contemporary socio-political issues.

*Category C: Moderate & Inclusive Approach*

1. **Ustadz Salim A. Fillah** (@salimafillah): Instagram (1.5 million+), YouTube (500 thousand+) - emphasizes moderate Islamic teachings and family-oriented **content**.

*Category D: Hybrid & Innovative Approaches*

1. **Ustadzah Oki Setiana Dewi** (@okisetianadewi): Instagram (12M+), YouTube (2M+), TikTok (1M+) - represents women's religious authority, celebrity narratives turned preachers, and multi-platform content differentiation targeting Muslim women.

## 2.3. Data Collection

Data is collected through a variety of sources:

- a. **Content Analysis:** 300+ videos and posts (30 per creator) collected on YouTube and Instagram, with a focus on content published between (January-June 2025)
- b. **Engagement Metrics:** Quantitative data including views, likes, comments, shares, and watch time extracted using social media analytics tools.
- c. **Platform Features:** Documentation of algorithmic capabilities including thumbnails, titles, hashtags, video duration, post schedule, and content formats.
- d. **Secondary Data:** Academic literature, platform algorithm documentation, and industry reports on social media algorithms.

## 2.4. Data Analysis

The analysis takes place in three stages:

*Stage 1: Descriptive Mapping* - Catalog content characteristics, engagement patterns, and platform-specific features across all research subjects.

*Stage 2: Framing Analysis* – Identifying how Islamic messages are framed to align with algorithmic preferences, examining the tension between religious authenticity and platform optimization.

*Stage 3: Comparative Analysis* – Comparing high-engagement (viral) versus low-engagement (non-viral) content to identify algorithmic success factors and their implications for religious authority.

## **2.5. Ethical Considerations**

This study analyzed publicly available content on social media platforms. No personal information is accessed, and all content creators are public figures who have consented to public visibility through their social media presence. The study focused on content analysis rather than individual behavior, minimizing privacy concerns while maintaining analytical rigor.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

This analysis reveals three interrelated findings regarding how digital platform algorithms are reshaping Islamic communication strategies and religious authority structures: (1) the emergence of algorithmic religious authorities that prioritize engagement over scientific credentials, (2) the strategic adaptation of da'wah methods to platform logic, and (3) the significant tension between theological authenticity and the demands of algorithmic visibility. Before discussing the empirical findings in detail, we first explain the theoretical contribution of this research and its position in the broader academic discourse.

### **3.1. Algorithmic Religious Authority: Traditional Scientific Transfers**

Digital platform algorithms have created new forms of religious authority that fundamentally challenge traditional Islamic scientific hierarchies. The analysis showed that algorithmic systems prioritize engagement metrics views, likes, comments, shares, and watch time over traditional indicators of religious credibility such as formal Islamic education, institutional support, or scientific ancestry.

The social media context of influencers can reframe the authority and practice of the Islamic religion among Muslim millennials, creating legitimacy through digital popularity rather than traditional credentials (Zaid et al., 2022). Similarly can identify the emergence of “cyber priests” in Northern Nigeria who are building virtual authority through algorithmic visibility, demonstrating the global nature of this transformation (Ibrahim., 2024). It is no less important that digital media empowers micro-celebrity da'i to form virtual religious authority through engagement-driven content strategies (Baidawi, 2025).

The research subjects exemplified this algorithmic authority in different ways. Ustadz Abdul Somad represents the most extreme case, where controversial content generates massive engagement (7 million+ YouTube subscribers, 10 million+ Instagram followers). Its populist approach to using local Malay, humour, and emotional storytelling achieved remarkable algorithmic success through clickbait titles such as “Hukum...” (Result from...) and “Can you...” (Is It Allowed...) which arouses curiosity and controversy.

Instead, Ustadzah Oki Setiana Dewi represents algorithmic authority through a narrative of celebrity transformation, utilizing her pre-existing fame as an actress to build religious credibility. His 12 million+ Instagram followers show how visual appeal, personal migration stories, and lifestyle integration enable the construction of religious authority beyond traditional scholarly paths. This exemplifies what describes as the commodification of religious authority, where da'wah becomes intertwined with fashion branding, beauty standards, and commercial partnerships (Raya, 2024).

Fragmentasi otoritas agama yang dimanifestasikan di seluruh subjek penelitian. Otoritas organisasi tradisional (pesantren, universitas Islam, organisasi Islam arus utama) kini bersaing dengan influencer individu yang membangun merek keagamaan yang dipersonalisasi (Solahudin 2020; Hannan, 2023). Ustadz Hanan Attaki's "Shift Makassar" movement exemplifies this decentralization, creating a youth-oriented Islamic community that operates largely independent of traditional religious institutions.

However, Ustadz Adi Hidayat pointed out that algorithmic success does not need to completely replace scientific credentials. His commentary on the Qur'an and his systematic hadith commentary maintain the scientific rigor of Islam while achieving substantial digital reach (5 million+ YouTube subscribers). His approach shows that long-form educational content can succeed algorithmically if properly optimized through SEO strategies, consistent scheduling, and professional presentations, although this remains the exception rather than the norm.

**Table 1.** Algorithmic Forms of Religious Authority

Types of Authority	Characteristics	Representative	Engagement Strategy	Theological Rigor
Populist Authority	Mass attraction, controversy, emotional connection	Ustadz Abdul Somad	Clickbait, short clips, provocative topics	Analogy
Scolded Seebrit	Pre-existing fame, lifestyle integration	Ustadzah Oki Setiana Dewi	Visual storytelling, personal narrative	Moderate, lifestyle-focused
Scientific Authority	Depth of education, systematic content	Ustadz Adi Hidayat	Long form review, SEO optimization	High, dil-based
Youth Authority	Aesthetic appeal, contemporary relevance	Ustadz Hanan Attaki	Instagram Reels, branding visual	Medium, inspirational

Intellectual Property Authority	Heavy and heavy socio-political analysis	Ustadz Felix Siau	Carousel posts, controversial takeaways	High, ideologically focused
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### 3.2. Adaptasi Strategis: Metode Dakwah di Zaman Algoritma

Islamic content creators deliberately adjust their communication strategies to align with the platform's algorithms while trying to maintain religious authenticity. This analysis identifies five key adaptation strategies used across the study subjects.

#### 3.2.1. Content Format Optimization

The shift towards short-form video content represents the most visible algorithmic adaptation. Straregi with artificial intelligence and platform algorithms drives transformation in prophetic communication patterns, emphasizing brevity, visual appeal, and fast content delivery (Ridwan et al., 2025). Semua subjek penelitian telah merangkul format pendek Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, video TikTok di samping atau sebagai pengganti ceramah Islam tradisional berdurasi panjang.

Ustadz Hanan Attaki exemplifies this strategy through 15-60 seconds of Instagram Reels that combine inspirational Islamic messages with cinematic visuals, contemporary music, and youth-oriented aesthetics. Her content deliberately targets Instagram's algorithmic preferences for Reels, posting 3-5 times a week to maintain algorithmic visibility. Similarly, Ustadz Khalid Basalamah uses content reuse, where one 60-minute YouTube study is segmented into several short clips optimized for different platform algorithms.

However, the compression of this format raises concerns about theological depth. Although short-form content effectively reaches Generation Z, it can simplify complex Islamic teachings. Comparative analysis revealed that viral content (top 10% by engagement) averaged 3.2 minutes long, while non-viral content averaged 18.7 minutes, indicating an algorithmic bias towards depth (Choirin et al., 2024).

#### 3.2.2. Title and Thumbnail Engineering

The study subjects strategically designed titles and thumbnails to maximize click-through rates, often using clickbait techniques bordering on sensationalism. Ustadz Abdul Somad's YouTube channel consistently uses the title of the curiosity gap ("The Law of the Grave Pilgrimage, Must Watch!" The Verdict of the Grave Visit, Must Watch!) combined with a high-contrast thumbnail image featuring dramatic facial expressions.

This practice is in line with what has been described as the capitalist transformation of digital Islamic da'wah, where content is engineered for virality rather than educational value (Fadilla & Idriyani, 2025). The tension between attracting audiences and maintaining scientific integrity is evident in the construction of the title: religious content must compete for attention in an algorithmically mediated environment saturated with entertainment content.

#### 3.2.3. Timing and Consistency Strategy

All research subjects showed awareness of an optimal posting schedule that aligns with the platform's algorithm and audience activity patterns. Ustadz Adi Hidayat maintains strict posting consistency (2-3 times a week), acknowledging that algorithmic systems reward regular content production. Ustadz Abdul Somad strategically arranges the upload times for Friday afternoons and weekends when Muslim viewers receive the most religious content. Consistency in content production is becoming a form of digital workforce that forms a virtual religious authority, where visibility requires ongoing engagement with the demands of the platform (Baidawi, 2025). It transforms da'wah from an occasional teaching moment into a continuous content production process.

#### **3.2.4. Tagar dan Optimasi Search Engine Optimization SEO**

The research subjects used sophisticated hashtag strategies and search engine optimization to improve discoverability. Ustadz Hanan Attaki uses trending hashtags (#pemudahijrah, #shiftmakassar) alongside Islamic tags to bridge the categories of religious and lifestyle content. Ustadz Adi Hidayat optimizes the title of the video with a commonly searched phrase ("Tafsir Surat Al-Baqarah Verse 255") to capture search-driven traffic.

This optimization shows as a professionalization of digital da'wah, where Islamic preachers must develop technical competencies in digital marketing, analytics, and platform dynamics in addition to traditional religious knowledge (Ulyan, 2023).

#### **3.2.5. Diferensiasi Konten Multi-Platform**

Advanced creators such as Ustadzah Oki Setiana Dewi and Ustadz Abdul Somad use platform-specific content strategies, realizing that different algorithms reward different types of content. Ustadzah Oki's approach shows a sophisticated differentiation: Instagram showcases family life and Islamic wisdom through visually appealing posts, YouTube hosts vlog-style studies that integrate cooking and da'wah, while TikTok provides ultra-short motivational content.

This multi-platform strategy maximizes algorithmic visibility across multiple audience segments while enabling the reuse of content that reduces production effort. However, it also intensifies the fragmentation of religious authority which due to the capabilities of different platforms forms different Islamic message frames (Hannan, 2023).

### **3.3. Theological Tensions: Authenticity Versus Algorithmic Visibility**

The most significant findings concern the tension between maintaining Islamic scientific integrity and meeting algorithmic demands for visibility. These tensions manifest in three critical areas: theological simplification, commercial pressures, and polarizing dynamics.

#### **3.3.1. Theological Simplification**

Comparative analysis of viral versus non-viral content reveals systematic differences in theological complexity. Viral content (defined as the top 10% based on engagement rate) showed five characteristics: (1) shorter duration (average 3.2 vs. 18.7 minutes), (2) emotional framing rather than analytical, (3) definitive answers rather than nuanced discussions, (4) the relevance of contemporary lifestyle over classical science, and (5) visual storytelling over textual instruction.

Algorithmic preferences for engaging content can promote oversimplified religious discourse, potentially undermining theological depth (Nuriana & Salwa, 2024; Ulyan, 2023). Ustadz Adi Hidayat's long-form educational content, despite achieving substantial reach, consistently received lower engagement per video than Ustadz Hanan Attaki's short inspirational clips, suggesting that the algorithm favors brevity over depth.

This creates what might be called “algorithmic reductionism” the systematic simplification of complex Islamic teachings to fit the platform's preferred format. Topics that require extensive explanation, nuanced arguments, or references to classical Islamic texts perform algorithmically poorly, potentially creating a knowledge gap among digitally native Muslim audiences.

### **3.3.2. Commercial Pressure and Commodification**

The monetization structure of digital platforms creates economic incentives that may be at odds with religious authenticity. Algorithmic capitalism is transforming digital Islamic da'wah in Indonesia, showing how religious beliefs and authority are becoming commodified through brand partnerships, merchandise sales, and platform monetization (Fadilla & Idriyani, 2025).

Ustadz Hanan Attaki exemplifies this commodification through extensive merchandise branding (Shift clothing, lifestyle products) and commercial partnerships that blur the boundaries between da'wah and marketing. Similarly, the integration of Ustadzah Oki Setiana Dewi's Islamic content with the endorsement of beauty products and simple fashion branding shows the inherent commercial pressures in algorithmic visibility.

Raya (2024) documents how digital Islam created a new space for religious commodification among Islamic preachers in contemporary Indonesia, where popularity allowed for commercial opportunities that could influence content decisions. Research subjects who maintained monetization strategies (YouTube Partner Program, Instagram partnerships, brand collaborations) showed a subtle shift in content to more commercially viable topics and presentation styles.

### **3.3.3. Algorithmic Polarization**

Platform algorithms, designed to maximize engagement, often amplify controversial or emotionally charged content, potentially intensifying religious polarization. Social media can promote inclusive Islam and religious tolerance, but note that algorithms can work against these goals by prioritizing divisive content (Supriatna et al., 2025).

Ustadz Abdul Somad's extraordinary viral success correlates with his willingness to discuss controversial topics and make definitive statements on disputed issues, resulting in strong support and fierce criticism. Its algorithmic success demonstrates what Solahudin & Fakhruroji (2019) identify as religious populism, in which appeal to mass audiences can prioritize engagement over scientific precision.

In contrast, moderate voices such as Ustadz Salim A. Fillah, who emphasized the inclusive and family-oriented teachings of Islam, achieved lower algorithmic visibility despite the potential for broader social benefits. This creates a systemic bias in which algorithmic success correlates with a willingness to stir up controversy, potentially marginalizing moderate Islamic voices.

### 3.3.4. Adaptive Response and Hybrid Strategies

Despite these tensions, some research subjects demonstrated sophisticated strategies for balancing authenticity and visibility. Ustadz Adi Hidayat maintains scientific rigor through detailed interpretation of the Qur'an while optimizing the format of the presentation, creating what might be called "accessible science." His approach shows that theological depth and algorithmic success are not necessarily completely incompatible if enough attention is paid to production quality, SEO optimization, and consistent scheduling.

Ustadz Khalid Basalamah's content reuse strategy offers another model: producing high-quality, long-form content for dedicated learners while creating short clips for wider algorithmic distribution. This two-tier approach recognizes the needs of different audiences and platform capabilities without sacrificing theological rigor.

**Table 2.** The Tension Between Authenticity and Algorithmic Visibility

Tension Areas	Claims of Authenticity	Algorithmic Claims	Case Examples	Potential Impact
Content Depth	Nuanced and detailed explanations	Short and definite answer	Ustadz Adi Hidayat vs. Hanan Attaki	Simplification of knowledge
Theological Rigor	Postulate-based, scientific	Emotional, relatable	Ustadz Khalid Basalamah systematic vs. viral clips	Doctrinal accuracy concerns
Topic Selection	Comprehensive Islamic knowledge	Trending and controversial issues	Ustadz Abdul Somad's controversial topics	Risk of polarization
Commercial Independence	Non-commercial religious teachings	Monetization, brand partnerships	Ustadzah Oki Setiana Dewi brand offer	Commodification of faith
Moderate Messaging	Balanced and inclusive interpretation	Interesting, emotionally charged	Ustadz Salim A. Fillah's moderate approach	Marginalization of moderation

### 3.4. Implications for Islamic Communication and Religious Authority

These findings have profound implications for understanding contemporary Islamic communication and the structure of religious authority. The emergence of

algorithmic religious authority represents not only a technological shift but a fundamental transformation in how Islamic knowledge is produced, legitimized, and transmitted.

### **3.4.1. Democratization and Fragmentation**

Digital algorithms are simultaneously democratizing access to religious authority while breaking traditional scientific consensus. As Zaid et al. (2022) observed, any individual with communication and digital literacy skills has the potential to build religious influence, regardless of traditional credentials. This democratization empowers previously marginalized voices women, youth, regional perspectives – to participate in Islamic discourse.

However, this same democratization breaks down religious authority, potentially weakening the quality control mechanisms that traditionally govern Islamic scholarship. The proliferation of competing voices, each amplified by algorithmic systems, makes it increasingly difficult for audiences to distinguish credible science from popular opinion.

### **3.4.2. Literacy and Ethical Imperatives**

These findings underscore the urgent need for the development of digital literacy in Islamic educational institutions. Ridwan & Rustandi (2025) emphasized that Islamic preachers must develop competencies in AI and digital platforms while maintaining scientific integrity. Ulyan (2023) calls for an ethical framework that governs digital da'wah to ensure religious messages maintain theological accuracy despite platform pressure.

Islamic universities, Islamic boarding schools, and religious organizations must integrate digital communication training into traditional Islamic education, preparing future scholars to navigate the algorithmic environment without sacrificing religious authenticity. These include technical skills (content production, platform analytics) and critical competencies (algorithmic literacy, ethical decision-making).

### **3.4.3. Platform Accountability and Regulation**

These findings raise questions about the platform's accountability for religious content. Salam-Salmaoui et al. (2025) analyze how digital governance shapes Islamic subjectivity, showing that platform algorithms use subtle but powerful influences on the formation of religious identities. If algorithms systematically like sensational, simple, or controversial content, the platform is responsible for the quality of the religious discourse they activate.

This points to the potential role for a regulatory framework that balances freedom of expression with concerns about misinformation, polarization, and the integrity of religious authority. The framework may include transparency requirements for algorithmic curation, content quality indicators, or platform responsibilities for moderating harmful religious content.

## **Figure 1. Conceptual Models of Algorithmic Religious Authority**

Traditional Authority Models    Algorithmic Authority Models



Key Transformation: Authority shifts from institutional credentials to audience engagement, mediated by algorithmic systems that prioritize visibility over scientific rigor.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research shows that digital platform algorithms fundamentally reshape Islamic communication strategies and religious authority structures, creating a new form of algorithmic religious authority that prioritizes engagement metrics over traditional scientific credentials. An analysis of six leading Islamic content creators revealed deliberate adaptive strategies—content format optimization, clickbait engineering, time consistency, SEO optimization, and multi-platform differentiation that were used to navigate algorithmic demands.

However, this adaptation generates a significant tension between maintaining the scientific integrity of Islam and achieving algorithmic visibility. Comparative analysis shows that algorithm-preferred content systematically simplifies theological complexity, potentially undermining the quality of religious understanding. Commercial pressures and polarizing dynamics further complicate efforts to preserve authentic Islamic teachings in an algorithmically mediated environment.

These findings introduce the concept of algorithmic religious authority as an analytical framework for understanding how digital platforms change religious legitimacy, knowledge production, and the formation of society. This transformation simultaneously democratizes access to Islamic discourse while breaking traditional authority structures, with profound implications for religious literacy and the formation of Muslim community identity.

This study recommends that Islamic educational institutions develop a comprehensive digital literacy framework that balances algorithmic adaptation with scientific integrity. Future scholars must be equipped to utilize digital platforms for effective da'wah while maintaining theological rigor and ethical responsibility. Platform accountability mechanisms, ethical guidelines for digital religious content, and critical algorithmic literacy among Muslim audiences are essential to ensure a quality understanding of religion in the digital age.

Future research should examine the longitudinal impact of algorithmic religious authority on the theological understanding of Muslim communities, comparative studies in various national contexts, and experimental interventions that test strategies to balance authenticity and visibility. The platformization of religion constitutes one of the most significant transformations in contemporary Islamic practice, requiring sustained scientific attention and adaptive institutional responses.

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