



Representation Of Muslim Identity In Digital Media: A Literature Review From The Perspective Of Cultural Studies And Islamic Broadcasting Communication

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ABSTRACT

The exponential growth of the digital media ecosystem has opened up a new arena of representation for Muslim identity that has never existed before. Unlike conventional mass media, which often represents Islam from an external perspective through various stereotypes and simplifications, digital media enables Muslims to actively represent themselves across a wide range of platforms, from blogs, YouTube channels, and Instagram accounts to podcasts and TikTok content with religious dimensions. This dynamic of self-representation generates a complex negotiation of identity between normative Islamic values, the structural demands of digital platforms, audience expectations, and the influence of global popular culture. This study aims to systematically examine how Muslim identity is represented in digital media through the framework of cultural studies and Islamic broadcasting communication. The method used is a systematic literature review of various scientific sources, including books and reputable journal articles published within the last five years. The findings of the study identify three dominant patterns of representation: first, the representation of Muslim identity through the performativity of digital piety; second, the negotiation of identity between Islamic values and popular culture in Muslim content creators; and third, the construction of hybrid and diasporic Muslim identities within the global digital space. These findings affirm that the representation of Muslim identity in digital media is not a static process, but rather a dynamic negotiation between Islamic authenticity and the evolving demands of the digital media ecosystem.

Keywords: *Representation of Muslim Identity, Digital Media, Cultural Studies, Islamic Broadcasting Communication, Performativity of Piety*

INTRODUCTION

Identity is one of the most fundamental issues faced by individuals and communities in their social lives. In the context of the Muslim community, religious identity possesses highly rich and layered dimensions: it encompasses not only theological beliefs and ritual practices, but also ways of dressing, consumption choices, patterns of social interaction, and ways of positioning oneself in relation to scholarly traditions and the broader community (Hall, 2021). Muslim identity, therefore, is not merely a static religious label, but rather a social construction that is continuously shaped, negotiated, and redefined through everyday practices, including practices of communication and media consumption.

The emergence of the digital media ecosystem over the past two decades has introduced an entirely new arena for identity representation for the global Muslim community. Unlike conventional mass media such as television, radio, or newspapers, which historically have often represented Islam and Muslims from an external perspective through various stereotypes, simplifications, and even demonization intensified after the events of September 11, 2001 digital media provides Muslims with the power to represent themselves directly to a global audience (Nasrullah, 2021). This capacity for self-representation constitutes a significant transformation of power in the dynamics of global discourse on Islam and Muslims.

In the context of cultural studies, representation is not merely about “reflecting” an already existing reality, but rather a practice that actively constructs reality through the use of language, images, and symbols available within a culture (Hall, 2021). When a young Muslim woman creates YouTube content about how to combine modest fashion with a modern lifestyle, or when a Muslim shares their experience of practicing religious rituals in Western countries through travel vlogs, they are not simply sharing factual information. They are actively constructing representations of “what it means to be Muslim” in the contemporary era representations that are then received, interpreted, and negotiated by millions of audiences who access them (Bungin, 2021).

Cultural studies offers a highly relevant analytical framework for examining the phenomenon of Muslim identity representation in digital media. As an intellectual tradition that critically examines the relationship between culture, power, and representation, cultural studies provides adequate conceptual tools to unravel the complexities inherent in Muslim self-representation practices in digital spaces (Abdullah, 2022). Concepts such as representation, hybrid identity, cultural negotiation, performativity, and cultural

appropriation can all be applied to analyze how Muslims construct their self-image across various digital platforms and how these images interact with the economic, political, and cultural forces that shape the digital media ecosystem.

When combined with the perspective of Islamic broadcasting communication, this analysis becomes even deeper, as it not only focuses on the cultural dimension of representation but also on the normative and da'wah dimensions embedded in Islamic communication practices. Islamic broadcasting communication views every act of communication performed by a Muslim as an act that carries the potential for da'wah that is, the potential to convey Islamic values to audiences through wise and engaging means (Aziz, 2021). In the context of digital media, this perspective raises important questions: to what extent do contents produced by Muslims in digital media function as effective tools of da'wah, and to what extent are they instead shaped or even undermined by the logic of entertainment and consumption that dominates digital platform ecosystems?

The dynamics of Muslim identity representation in digital media become increasingly complex when we consider the diversity of contexts in which Muslims live and produce content. A Muslim in Indonesia who lives in a Muslim-majority environment faces different representational challenges compared to a Muslim in the diaspora living in Europe or North America as a minority. A Muslim woman who wears a hijab faces different representational pressures compared to a Muslim man who does not possess visible markers of Islamic identity. These contextual differences produce a rich variety of representational strategies that deserve in-depth examination (Lim, 2022).

Academic studies on the representation of Muslim identity in digital media have developed rapidly over the past decade, driven by the increasing presence of Muslims across global digital platforms. However, most existing research still tends to focus on Western contexts, particularly the representation of Muslims as minorities in Europe and North America, while representations of Muslim identity in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, or Arab countries have received relatively less proportional attention (Musa, Amir & Ramli, 2023). This gap in perspective creates an incomplete picture of the diversity of Muslim identity representations within the global digital media ecosystem.

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world and one of the countries with very high levels of digital media penetration, provides a rich laboratory for examining the representation of Muslim identity in digital media. The emergence of thousands of Indonesian Muslim content creators across various platforms, the rise of digital da'wah platforms with

millions of followers, and the development of online Muslim communities actively producing Islamic discourse are all manifestations of the ongoing process of Muslim identity representation in Indonesia's digital space (Kurniawan & Suhartono, 2023). Examining this phenomenon within the framework of cultural studies and Islamic broadcasting communication offers meaningful contributions to the development of Islamic communication studies that are more contextual and relevant.

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach with the aim of synthesizing various findings from existing scientific literature in order to build a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of the phenomenon of Muslim identity representation in digital media. This approach is also chosen because the phenomenon under study involves intersecting dimensions from various disciplines, and such interdisciplinary synthesis requires a thorough literature review before substantive conclusions can be drawn with sufficient confidence (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

This article is organized as follows. Following this introduction, the research methodology is presented, explaining the systematic literature review procedures employed. This is followed by the results and discussion section, which analyzes three main themes identified from the literature synthesis: the performativity of digital piety, the negotiation of Muslim identity within digital popular culture, and the construction of hybrid identities among Muslim diaspora communities. The article concludes with a summary of the main findings and their theoretical and practical implications, followed by a list of references containing all sources cited in this study.

METHOD

This study adopts a systematic literature review as the primary methodological framework for data collection and analysis. A systematic literature review is chosen because the main objective of this research is to construct a comprehensive synthesis of knowledge regarding the representation of Muslim identity in digital media based on the accumulation of existing research findings, rather than to generate new empirical data from the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The literature search process was conducted systematically and in a structured manner through several leading academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, as well as national journal portals indexed in SINTA 1 and SINTA 2, which include journals in communication, cultural studies, and Islamic broadcasting.

Four inclusion criteria were established to ensure the quality and relevance of the literature used as the basis of analysis. First, the publication period was

limited to between 2020 and 2024 to ensure timeliness and temporal relevance to the rapidly evolving digital media ecosystem. Second, the thematic focus of the literature had to directly relate to one of four designated thematic clusters: Muslim representation in digital media, Islamic identity and digital platforms, contemporary Muslim cultural studies, or Islamic communication and online identity construction. Third, the quality of the publications had to be verified through a credible peer-review process. Fourth, the literature had to be available in full-text form to allow for in-depth and comprehensive analysis.

Out of a total of 112 initial sources identified through relevant keyword searches, 47 sources met all inclusion criteria and were subsequently used as the primary materials for analysis. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis techniques and theme-based conceptual mapping, referring to the framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), with cultural studies and Islamic broadcasting communication serving as the interpretive lenses guiding the processes of data processing, analysis, and presentation of findings in a comprehensive manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Performativity of Digital Piety as a Strategy of Identity Representation

The first finding that consistently emerges from the entire corpus of literature reviewed is the phenomenon of the performativity of digital piety as a primary strategy in representing Muslim identity in digital media spaces. The concept of performativity, which originates from the intellectual tradition of Judith Butler and was later adapted by various media studies scholars, suggests that identity is not something that is possessed or discovered, but rather something that is produced through the repetition of actions that make the identity appear real and coherent (Hall, 2021). In the context of digital media, Muslim identity is produced and displayed through a series of repeated digital communication practices: uploading content at dawn, sharing photos of breaking the fast, documenting the performance of umrah or hajj, posting Qur'anic or hadith quotations with appealing visual designs, or writing captions with Arabic expressions that reflect Islamic identity.

Literature analysis shows that the performativity of digital piety operates at two distinct but interconnected levels. At the first level, it functions as a means of authentic self-expression, in which Muslim individuals use digital media to demonstrate to themselves and to their communities that they are consistent and committed in practicing Islamic values. At the second level, it functions as a means of public image construction that enables individuals to build an idealized Muslim self-image before their digital audiences (Nasrullah, 2021). These two

levels do not always operate in harmony, and the tension between the authenticity of Islamic expression and the demands of image construction on social media becomes one of the most frequently identified sources of identity conflict among Muslim users in various studies reviewed.

Pratiwi and Susanto (2022), in their study on digital Islamic identity among Indonesia's Generation Z, found that the performativity of digital piety is increasingly shaped by the logic of social media platforms that prioritize visibility, aesthetics, and audience engagement. Islamic content that gains the most interaction and reaches broader audiences tends to be content that successfully packages Islamic values in formats aligned with the aesthetic standards and audience preferences of digital platforms: visually appealing imagery, emotionally engaging narratives, concise duration, and impactful messages. This finding raises critical questions about the extent to which platform logic shapes how Muslims represent their religiosity, and whether such aesthetic adaptation leads to commodification or rather democratization of religious expression.

From the perspective of Islamic broadcasting communication, the performativity of digital piety presents both opportunities and dilemmas. As an opportunity, it expands the reach of da'wah exponentially and allows Islamic values to enter digital spaces previously dominated by non-religious content. As a dilemma, it risks reducing Islam to merely a lifestyle marker that can be exchanged with other lifestyles in the marketplace of digital identity, thereby obscuring the substance of faith behind aesthetic performance (Aziz, 2021). Understanding this duality is crucial for preachers and Islamic communication practitioners in designing content strategies that are not only visually appealing and algorithmically effective but also substantively Islamic and spiritually meaningful for their audiences.

2. Negotiation of Muslim Identity in the Landscape of Digital Popular Culture

The second dimension strongly identified in the literature is the dynamic of identity negotiation between normative Islamic values on one side and the demands and temptations of digital popular culture on the other. Identity negotiation in this context refers to the process through which Muslim individuals seek to balance often conflicting demands: the need to be authentically Muslim according to religious values, the need to remain relevant and engaging as digital media users within their communities, and the need to respond to the powerful flows of global popular culture circulating through digital platforms (Abdullah, 2022).

One of the most prominent and widely studied arenas of negotiation is the phenomenon of Muslim content creators across various digital platforms. These creators face unique pressures to produce content that is simultaneously Islamic and engaging, educational and entertaining, value-driven and algorithmically popular. The study by Musa, Amir, and Ramli (2023) on Muslim content creators in Southeast Asia found that they develop various creative negotiation strategies: some integrate Islamic values into lifestyle and beauty content without losing Islamic substance, some use humor and storytelling as entry points for deeper da'wah messages, and others explicitly critique popular culture standards from an Islamic perspective as part of their content itself.

The dimension of gender adds a significant layer of complexity to the negotiation of Muslim identity in digital media. Muslim women active in digital spaces face multiple overlapping pressures not experienced by their male counterparts: expectations of modesty and adherence to Islamic gender norms, stereotypes about hijab-wearing women from non-Muslim audiences, aesthetic and beauty expectations imposed by social media logic, and diverse expectations from Muslim communities themselves regarding how a Muslim woman should represent herself in public digital spaces (Lim, 2022). Navigating these intersecting pressures produces highly diverse and often innovative representational strategies, ranging from accounts that consistently advocate for strong and empowered representations of Muslim women to those that celebrate Islamic femininity in ways that challenge the dichotomy between piety and modernity.

Fauzan and Rohman (2022), in their study of Indonesian digital Muslim communities, identify that identity negotiation in digital media often results in what they call the “creolization of digital Islam,” referring to forms of Islamic expression that combine elements of Islamic tradition with local and global popular culture in ways that produce something new, unique, and irreducible to any single cultural source. “Cool Islam,” “humorous da'wah,” or “aesthetic religious content” are examples of this creolization, demonstrating how Muslim identity in digital media is constantly undergoing creative transformation...

3. The Construction of Hybrid and Diasporic Muslim Identities in the Global Digital Space

The third dimension identified in the literature is the pattern of constructing hybrid and diasporic Muslim identities that characteristically emerge within the global digital media context. Hybrid identity, as understood in cultural studies popularized by Homi K. Bhabha and further developed by postcolonial scholars, refers to identities that do not originate from a single cultural source, but are formed in the intersection of multiple cultural forces that interact, negotiate, and

sometimes conflict with one another (Hall, 2021). In the context of Muslim diaspora communities using digital media to maintain their Islamic identity while living in non-Muslim environments, this hybridity takes on concrete and analyzable forms.

Kurniawan and Suhartono (2023) found that Muslim diaspora communities use digital media in at least three interconnected ways to build and sustain their identities. First, as a virtual bridge to Muslim communities in their countries of origin through consuming religious content, following well-known scholars, and participating in online communities with familiar Islamic cultures. Second, as a space for forming new local Muslim communities that connect fellow diaspora Muslims within the same city or country to support one another and build shared Islamic infrastructures. Third, as a platform to negotiate and respond to representations of Islam produced by mainstream media in their host societies.

The hybrid Muslim identity formed through these processes possesses distinctive characteristics: it tends to be more cosmopolitan and inclusive compared to identities formed within homogeneous communities, more critical of simplistic representations of Islam from multiple directions, and more skilled in navigating differences among various interpretations and traditions of Islam encountered within the global digital media ecosystem (Bungin, 2021). At the same time, this hybrid identity also faces significant risks: internal fragmentation due to inconsistencies in integrating diverse cultural elements, vulnerability to commodification by popular culture industries that consume “exotic” identities, and the potential for marginalization by more traditional Muslim communities that may question the authenticity of expressions perceived as overly influenced by Western or global popular culture.

The perspective of Islamic broadcasting communication provides an important normative dimension in understanding the construction of hybrid Muslim identities. Rather than evaluating such identities solely based on orthodoxy or conformity to specific community standards, the *maqasid al-shariah*-based perspective of Islamic communication encourages evaluation based on the extent to which these identity expressions contribute to the preservation and development of core Islamic values, namely the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Aziz, 2021). With this more substantive and goal-oriented evaluative framework, hybrid Muslim identities can be appreciated as creative innovations in *da'wah*, as long as they succeed in embodying and strengthening these Islamic values within new cultural contexts that were previously beyond the reach of more conventional *da'wah* approaches..

CONCLUSION

This literature review study has produced a comprehensive knowledge map of how Muslim identity is represented in digital media, analyzed through the combined framework of cultural studies and Islamic broadcasting communication. From the overall process of literature synthesis, which encompasses 47 reputable scientific sources, three main conclusions can be drawn with strong argumentative foundations.

First, the performativity of digital piety has become the dominant strategy for representing Muslim identity in the era of social media, where expressions of Islam function not only as pure religious communication but also as constructions of self-image that operate within the logic of visibility, aesthetics, and audience engagement inherent in digital platforms. Understanding this dual function is essential for Islamic communication practitioners in order to design content that is not only appealing within platform dynamics but also spiritually substantive.

Second, the negotiation of identity between normative Islamic values and the demands of digital popular culture produces various forms of creolization and innovation in Islamic expression that are dynamic and cannot be narrowly assessed solely based on conventional standards of orthodoxy. The framework of Islamic broadcasting communication based on *maqasid al-shariah* offers more relevant and constructive evaluative criteria for assessing these diverse forms of digital Islamic expression.

Third, the construction of hybrid and diasporic Muslim identities within the global digital space results in forms of Islam that are more cosmopolitan, critical, and adaptive, while simultaneously presenting both opportunities and challenges for the cohesion of Muslim communities. Overall, these findings affirm that the representation of Muslim identity in digital media is a highly dynamic and contextual process that cannot be adequately understood without integrating the perspective of cultural studies with the normative perspective of Islamic broadcasting communication. The development of such an integrative analytical framework constitutes the main theoretical contribution of this study and is an area that should continue to be advanced by scholars of Islamic communication in the future.

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