

Visuality and Digital Religiosity in Instagram Da'wah: Negotiating Islamic Normativity and Religious Authority

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how visuality in Instagram da'wah contributes to the construction of digital religiosity through the negotiation of artistic creativity, Islamic normativity, and religious authority. Focusing on the Instagram account @egg_winner, the study investigates how visual choices communicate religious meaning beyond conventional Islamic symbols and how these representations are negotiated through audience interaction. **Methodology:** The study employs a qualitative single-case design centered on one Instagram Reel selected from content observed between August and November 2025. The analysis integrates visual culture analysis with Van Dijk's sociocognitive Critical Discourse Analysis and interprets the findings through Glock and Stark's dimensions of religiosity and Campbell's concept of networked religion. The analytical corpus includes visual composition, character design, color, typography, overlay text, and publicly available audience comments. **Findings:** The Reel constructs religiosity primarily through visual practice rather than explicit religious iconography. The deliberate omission of facial features functions as a visual response to the Islamic discourse of *tasywir*, while color, composition, character design, and text overlays translate religious considerations into an accessible digital aesthetic. Informal language and dialogic prompts encourage audience participation and create a less hierarchical communicative relationship between creator and followers. Audience interactions further indicate that aesthetic appreciation and religious evaluation intersect within the comment space. These practices suggest that digitally visible creators can participate in the mediation of religious knowledge and authority, although such authority remains informal and platform-dependent. **Implications:** The findings show that Instagram da'wah should be understood not merely as the digital transmission of religious messages but as a visual and participatory practice in which Islamic norms are interpreted, aestheticized, and negotiated. The study also highlights the need for greater attention to the relationship between visual literacy, platform logic, and religious authority in contemporary digital Islam. **Originality:** This study contributes to scholarship on digital religion and visual culture by demonstrating how religious meaning can be produced through aesthetic decisions embedded in everyday creative practice. It extends the concept of networked religion by foregrounding visuality as a mechanism through which Muslim identity, Islamic normativity, and emerging forms of digital religious authority are negotiated on short-form social media.

Keywords: Digital Da'wah; Digital Religiosity; Instagram; Islamic Normativity; Religious Authority

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest Muslim populations in the world and has become an important setting for examining the transformation of Islamic communication in digital environments. Together with Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Egypt, Indonesia forms part of a group of countries that accounts for approximately 52% of the global Muslim population (Hackett, 2025). At the same time, the rapid expansion of social media has altered how religious knowledge is produced, circulated, and interpreted. Instagram has become particularly influential in this transformation because its image-based and short-form video features enable religious messages to be communicated through colors, illustrations, typography, editing rhythms, and interactive features. By October 2025, Instagram's penetration rate reportedly reached 82.4% among Indonesian internet users aged sixteen and older (We Are Social, 2026). This level of use positions Instagram not merely as an entertainment platform but as a socio-cultural

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Received: April 16, 2025; Revised: May 1, 2025; Accepted: November 29, 2025

infrastructure through which religious identities, practices, and forms of authority are increasingly negotiated.

The growing importance of visual communication is especially evident in contemporary digital da'wah. Unlike conventional preaching, which generally relies on sermons, textual explanations, and the authority of religious institutions, Instagram da'wah often conveys Islamic values through short videos, personal narratives, illustrations, captions, and aesthetically curated images. This transformation corresponds with the media habits of younger Muslims, who are accustomed to consuming concise, visual, and interactive content (Briandana, Caturida, Shahir, & Wan, 2020; Roslan, Zafrina, Zahari, Zulkifli, & Ghani, 2025). Religious messages are consequently no longer encountered only in mosques, classrooms, books, or formal sermons. They are also embedded in everyday digital practices, including scrolling through social media feeds, watching Reels, responding to comments, and sharing content with online networks. Digital platforms, therefore, reshape not only the distribution of da'wah but also the forms through which religiosity is expressed, experienced, and recognized (Campbell & Tsuria, 2022; Choirin, Abdul Kadir, Setiyanti, Larhzizer, & Iqbal, 2025). In addition, religious resources available in various audiovisual formats on digital media are becoming increasingly accessible. The shift from conventional da'wah practices to digital ones is linked to the dynamics of postmodernism, characterized by the tide of globalization, advances in information and communication technology, and the rapid development of mass media, all of which have helped shape new ways of understanding and practicing religious life (Çuhadar, 2021; Virga, Shovmayanti, Yusoff, & Rosa, 2025). Early studies have shown that the digitalization of religion not only expands access to religious knowledge but also redistributes religious authority from clerics and formal institutions toward content creators and influencers operating on social media (Kamil, Langaji, Ilham, Harun, & Anggoro, 2025; Khairani, Faustyna, & Ginting, 2025; Virga et al., 2025).

Research on digital da'wah has grown rapidly over the past decade. Several studies have examined the use of social media as a means of distributing religious messages, the effectiveness of digital communication in an Islamic context, and the dynamics of authority and participation in online Muslim discourse (Choirin et al., 2025; Jima'ain, 2023; Nisa, 2018; Purwani, Antin, Pratiwi, Puspitasari, & Nusa, 2025). In the field of visual culture, research has shown that visual representations are ideological; images are not neutral but rather carry and reproduce specific social meanings (Mirzoeff, 2006; Mitchell, 2005). Nevertheless, these two fields of study have proceeded in parallel without adequate analytical integration.

These strands of scholarship have produced important insights, but they have largely developed in parallel. Research on digital da'wah explains changes in religious communication; visual culture studies reveal the ideological power of images; and digital religion scholarship examines networked communities and shifting authority. What remains insufficiently explored is the intersection of these three areas: how visual elements in social media da'wah operate as discursive practices that construct religious meaning, shape digital religiosity, and negotiate religious authority. Existing research frequently treats visuals as attractive packaging, supplementary illustrations, or tools for increasing engagement. Such approaches do not fully explain how particular aesthetic decisions can embody interpretations of Islamic norms and produce recognizable forms of Muslim identity.

This gap is particularly relevant to the Instagram account @egg_winner, which combines character illustration, digital visual culture, and discussion of Islamic boundaries concerning the depiction of living beings. Rather than relying primarily on conventional Islamic symbols such as Arabic calligraphy, mosque imagery, or scriptural quotation, the account communicates religiosity through artistic decisions. One of its Reels, titled "Drawing According to Sharia Is Actually Fun, You Know," shows the process of creating a faceless character while inviting the audience to reflect on the relationship between artistic creativity and

Islamic law. The omission of facial features implicitly refers to the discourse of *tasywir*, while the Reel's colors, composition, editing, text overlays, and comment interactions situate that discourse within the communicative conventions of Instagram. This content therefore provides an information-rich case for examining how Islamic normativity is translated into visual and participatory practices in digital media.

To analyze this phenomenon, the study combines three conceptual perspectives. First, visibility is understood as a social practice through which images do not simply reflect reality but organize ways of seeing, interpreting, and evaluating it (Mirzoeff, 2006; Mitchell, 2005). From this perspective, colors, characters, compositions, and typography may function as carriers of ideology and religious meaning. Second, religiosity is approached through the multidimensional framework developed by Glock and Stark (Glock & Stark, 1965), which includes ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential dimensions. In the digital context, these dimensions are considered alongside Campbell's networked religion framework, which explains how religious practices and identities are reconstructed through digitally connected communities (Campbell, 2012). Third, Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis is used to examine the relationship between textual and visual structures, social cognition, and the wider social context of digital religious communication (Van Dijk, 2008). The integration of these perspectives enables analysis of visual content not only as an aesthetic object but also as a discourse through which religious knowledge, identity, and power are produced.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how the visibility of @egg_winner's Instagram Reel contributes to the construction of digital religiosity by negotiating between artistic creativity and Islamic values. It addresses three interrelated questions. First, how are symbols, colors, composition, characters, and typography represented in the selected Instagram da'wah content? Second, how do these visual elements function as discursive strategies in constructing religious meaning? Third, how does visibility contribute to the formation of digital religiosity and the negotiation of religious authority on Instagram?

This study argues that visibility in Instagram da'wah does not merely transmit religious messages but operates as a discursive practice through which artistic creativity, Islamic normativity, and digital religious authority are negotiated. The concealment of facial features, the visualization of the creative process, the use of informal language, and the invitation to audience participation collectively transform visual production into a religiously informed form of digital practice. Through these strategies, religious meaning is not communicated solely by formal institutions or explicit scriptural statements but is also produced through aesthetic choices, platform interactions, and the trust established between creators and their online communities. This argument contributes to digital religion scholarship by positioning visual culture as a central mechanism in the formation of contemporary Muslim religiosity rather than as a secondary instrument of religious communication.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative single-case study design to examine how visibility, Islamic normativity, and digital religiosity are negotiated in Instagram da'wah content. A single-case design is appropriate for an information-rich case that enables intensive analysis of a complex and context-dependent phenomenon (Yin, 2018). The study may also be understood as an intrinsic case study because the selected case is examined for its distinctive characteristics rather than for statistical generalization (Stake, 1995). The Instagram account @egg_winner was selected purposively because it: (1) explicitly integrates visual art practices with Islamic religious discourse; (2) maintains a distinctive and relatively consistent visual style; and (3) generates substantial audience

engagement around questions of artistic creativity and Islamic norms. At the time of observation, the account had approximately 453,000 followers.

Primary data were collected through systematic digital observation of content published on @egg_winner between August and November 2025. Thirty posts were identified during this period. From this corpus, one Reel was selected for intensive analysis using three inclusion criteria: (1) the content contained an explicit and identifiable religious message; (2) visual-artistic elements functioned as the primary mode of communication; and (3) the post generated substantive audience interaction through likes, comments, or sharing activity. Personal posts without identifiable religious content and commercial promotional posts were excluded from the analytical corpus.

The selected unit of analysis was a 60-second Reel titled "Drawing According to Sharia Is Actually Fun, You Know," uploaded on November 26, 2025. The post was accompanied by the caption, "It's tough, but fun!! What characters have you created besides faceless ones #boundariesmakeusmorecreative #muslimillustrator #illustration." At the time of data collection, the Reel had received 1,161 likes, 28 substantive comments, and 45 shares. It was selected because it incorporates all five visual dimensions examined in this study: symbolic elements, color, composition, character representation, and text/typography. Secondary data consisted of academic literature on visual culture, digital religiosity, digital da'wah, and religious authority.

To ensure systematic observation, the study employed a visual-analysis protocol covering five analytical dimensions. The protocol was used to guide the identification, description, and interpretation of recurring visual and textual features in the selected Reel.

Table 1. Visual Observation and Coding Protocol

Analytical Dimension	Observation Indicators	Analytical Focus
Symbolic Elements	Explicit religious symbols; popular-culture symbols; platform icons; implicit signs and symbols; references to sacred texts	How religious meaning is expressed explicitly or implicitly through visual signs and symbolic references
Color Palette	Dominant colors; background palette; text-background contrast; color transitions between segments; connotative associations of color	How color contributes to mood, emphasis, visual identity, and possible religious or cultural associations
Visual Composition	Visual hierarchy; placement of overlay text; focal point; rule of thirds; visual movement; rhythm of scene transitions	How composition guides audience attention and structures the relationship between image, text, and movement
Character Representation	Character type; attributes and accessories; facial representation; gender representation; conformity with the	How character design negotiates artistic identity,

	creator's interpretation of Islamic norms; genre and visual-tradition references	Islamic normativity, and visual convention
Text and Typography	Overlay text; lexical choices; font and typographic hierarchy; formal or informal language; rhetorical questions; intertextual references	How verbal language supports visual meaning, audience engagement, and religious framing

Source: Developed by the authors for this study.

The analytical procedure combined visual analysis with Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 2008). At the textual or micro level, the analysis examined lexical choices, rhetorical questions, overlay text, syntactic patterns, and the persuasive interaction between verbal and visual elements. At the social-cognitive level, the study examined how the content constructs shared assumptions between creator and audience, particularly regarding Islamic norms on drawing, creative identity, and followers' expected religious knowledge. At the social-context level, the analysis linked the content to broader developments in digital da'wah, changing forms of religious authority, generational patterns of religious media consumption, and the platform conditions through which religious discourse becomes visible.

The visual analysis protocol and the CDA framework were applied sequentially. First, the Reel was repeatedly observed and segmented based on changes in image, color, text, character representation, and editing. Second, these elements were coded using the five visual dimensions presented in Table 1. Third, the identified patterns were interpreted through Van Dijk's textual, social-cognitive, and social-contextual levels. Audience comments were used as supplementary reception data to assess how viewers responded to the aesthetic and religious dimensions identified in the content. The comments were not treated as representative of the entire follower population, but as contextual evidence of observable audience engagement.

Research trustworthiness was strengthened through two procedures. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing the visual and textual analysis of the Reel with audience comments and relevant academic literature. Audience responses were used as supplementary evidence rather than as independent validation of the creator's intended meaning. Second, peer debriefing was conducted through structured discussion with colleagues familiar with critical discourse analysis and Islamic communication in order to examine the consistency of coding and interpretation.

RESULTS

Visual Representation in @egg_winner's Da'wah Content

The selected Instagram Reel was analyzed across five visual dimensions: symbolic elements, color palette, visual composition, character representation, and text/typography. These dimensions were examined to identify how religious meaning is embedded within aesthetic choices and platform-specific visual conventions. Rather than relying primarily on explicit Islamic iconography, the Reel communicates religious orientation through the organization of visual elements, particularly the treatment of character faces, the progression of color, the arrangement

of text and image, and the use of informal verbal prompts. Table 2 summarizes the main empirical findings and their analytical significance.

Table 2. Analysis Visual Representation in @egg_winner

No.	Visual Dimension	Observation Indicators	Empirical Findings	Analytical Interpretation
1	Symbolic Elements	Religious symbols; popular-culture symbols; platform icons; implicit signs; references to sacred texts	The Reel features a faceless humanoid character in a dark-fantasy illustration style. Floral and botanical elements appear prominently around the character's head and body. No conventional Islamic symbols, such as Arabic calligraphy, mosque imagery, or crescent-and-star iconography, are visible. The creator's identity is marked by the "egg_winner" watermark in the final frame.	Religious meaning is conveyed implicitly rather than through conventional Islamic iconography. The omission of facial features functions as the most significant visual marker of the creator's engagement with Islamic norms concerning the depiction of living beings.
2	Color Palette	Dominant colors; background palette; text contrast; color transitions; connotative associations	The Reel progresses through three main color phases: black-and-white during the sketching stage, sage and earthy green during coloring, and deeper green tones in the final rendering. Overlay text is predominantly white with black outlining and occasional neon-yellow highlights.	Color transitions visually structure the creative process and distinguish stages of production. The use of green and earthy tones contributes to a calm, natural visual atmosphere, although any specific religious association with these colors should be interpreted with caution.
3	Visual Composition	Visual hierarchy; text placement; focal points; motion	The character and drawing process occupy the primary visual focus, while overlay text is positioned	The composition prioritizes the drawing process while preserving the

No.	Visual Dimension	Observation Indicators	Empirical Findings	Analytical Interpretation
		dynamics; transition rhythm	mainly in the lower area of the frame. Instagram interface elements remain visible at the bottom. Progressive zooming and relatively rapid transitions are used throughout the Reel.	readability of verbal information. Zooming and rapid transitions adapt the visual narrative to the short-form, attention-oriented conventions of Instagram Reels.
4	Character Representation	Character type; attributes; facial representation; gender representation; conformity with Islamic norms; genre references	The central figure is a faceless humanoid character incorporating spiral plant forms and floral elements. No explicit gender markers are emphasized. The illustration draws on dark-fantasy visual conventions.	The faceless design enables the creator to retain a recognizable artistic style while adapting character representation to a particular understanding of Islamic restrictions on the depiction of living beings. The limited gender coding also makes the figure less tied to a specific social identity.
5	Text and Typography	Overlay text; lexical choices; typography; formal/informal language; rhetorical questions; intertextuality	The Reel contains text such as "DRAWING CHARACTERS ACCORDING TO SHARIA?", "REMOVING THEIR FACES," and "WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?" Informal expressions and direct address are used throughout. Typography consists mainly of bold sans-serif capital letters designed for high visibility.	Overlay text functions both as an explanation and as a means of audience engagement. Informal language reduces communicative distance, while the explicit use of the term "sharia" frames the artistic process within a religious discourse without relying on direct scriptural citation.

As shown in Table 2, the Reel constructs religious meaning through a combination of visual design, verbal framing, and platform-oriented aesthetic choices. The most distinctive features are the absence of conventional Islamic symbols and the deliberate omission of facial features from the central character. This suggests that religiosity is communicated less through explicit iconography than through a visually enacted interpretation of Islamic normativity. The faceless character, therefore, functions as a key point of intersection between artistic practice and religious consideration, allowing the creator to maintain a distinctive illustration style while signaling attention to the discourse of *tasywir*.

Color and composition further structure this negotiation. The transition from monochrome sketching to green and earthy tones visually marks the progression of the creative process and contributes to the Reel's overall atmosphere. Rather than assigning a fixed religious meaning to these colors, the analysis treats them primarily as aesthetic devices that organize visual progression and support the character design's naturalistic qualities. The composition similarly places the drawing process at the center of attention, while text overlays provide explanatory guidance without obscuring the artwork. Progressive zooming and rapid scene changes reflect the communicative conventions of short-form video and help sustain visual continuity within the Reel's limited duration.

Character representation is particularly significant because the central figure combines dark-fantasy aesthetics with the deliberate removal of facial features. This design choice demonstrates that the creator does not abandon popular visual genres but instead modifies them in response to a particular religious understanding. The result is not a rejection of digital illustration but a negotiated visual form in which artistic identity and Islamic normativity coexist within the same representational practice.

Text and typography reinforce this visual negotiation. Phrases such as "DRAWING CHARACTERS ACCORDING TO SHARIA?" and "REMOVING THEIR FACES" make the religious framing explicit, while the closing question, "WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?", invites audience participation. The use of informal language and direct address casts the creator less as a formal religious authority and more as a peer engaged in an ongoing discussion with followers. Thus, the Reel combines aesthetic explanation, religious framing, and audience engagement within a single visual-discursive structure.

These findings indicate that visual religiosity in the selected @egg_winner Reel is produced through the interaction of character design, aesthetic progression, textual framing, and platform conventions. Religious meaning is not attached to a separate layer of explicitly Islamic imagery but is incorporated into the creative process itself. Visuality therefore functions as a practical site in which artistic creativity and Islamic normativity are negotiated and rendered visible within everyday digital culture.

Visual Elements as Discursive Strategies: CDA Van Dijk Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis: Text, Social Cognition, and Social Context

Drawing on Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Van Dijk, 1993), An analysis of the content of the @egg_winner Instagram Reel can be understood through three main levels: the text level, the social cognition level, and the social context level.

These three levels are interrelated in shaping meaning, ideology, and power relations within visual-based digital communication practices. In this context, visual elements serve not only an aesthetic function but also act as discursive strategies that construct religious narratives, creative identities, and social interactions in digital media.

At the textual level, the central discourse of the Reel concerns the negotiation between artistic creativity and Muslim religious identity. This theme is introduced through the rhetorical question, "DRAWING CHARACTERS ACCORDING TO SHARIA?", which functions simultaneously as an attention-generating device and as the principal framing of the content. The formulation establishes a perceived tension between character illustration and religious norms while presenting the creative process as a possible site for reconciling the two. Subsequent textual elements, including "REMOVING THEIR FACES" and the closing question "WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?", organize the Reel as a short narrative moving from a religiously framed problem toward a visual response and, finally, an invitation for audience evaluation.

The use of informal and conversational language further contributes to this discursive positioning. Rather than adopting the formal register commonly associated with institutional religious instruction, the creator communicates in a peer-oriented style, directly addressing viewers. The closing question, "WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?", is particularly significant because it leaves the interpretation open to audience response instead of presenting the content as a closed religious pronouncement. This dialogic structure reduces communicative distance between creator and followers and positions the comment section as an additional space in which the relationship between artistic practice and Islamic norms can be discussed.

Audience responses shown in Figure 1 illustrate this participatory dimension. One user comments:

"Sketsa yang awal mantep juga tuh bang, komposisinya lebih kerasa"

["The initial sketch was really good too, bro; the composition felt stronger."]

This response focuses specifically on the aesthetic and technical dimensions of the artwork. The reference to the initial sketch and its composition indicates that viewers engage not only with the Reel's religious framing but also with the artistic process itself. The creator responds informally:

"sok gmbar bang"

[approximately, "Go ahead and draw, bro."]

Although brief, this response maintains the conversational register of the Reel and reinforces the impression of creator-audience interaction rather than one-directional communication.



Figure 1. Examples of audience interaction in the comment section of the selected @egg_winner Instagram Reel, showing aesthetic evaluation, religious appreciation, and direct creator-audience exchange

A second comment introduces a more explicitly religious register:

“Respek
Ma sha Allah”

[“Respect. Ma sha Allah.”]

The expression *Ma sha Allah* adds a religious dimension to what is simultaneously an expression of appreciation for the creator’s work. The creator replies:

“barakallahu fiik”

[“May Allah bless you.”]

This exchange is significant because religious language emerges within an otherwise informal interaction surrounding digital illustration. The combination of aesthetic appreciation and expressions such as *Ma sha Allah* and *barakallahu fiik* suggests that the audience does not necessarily separate artistic evaluation from religious affirmation. In this interaction, aesthetic and devotional registers coexist within the same communicative space.

Figure 1, therefore, does not merely demonstrate audience “engagement” in a numerical sense. More importantly, it illustrates the different ways users interpret and respond to the Reel. One response foregrounds artistic composition, while another employs explicitly Islamic language of appreciation. The creator responds to both in an informal and personalized manner. These exchanges support the interpretation of the Instagram comment section as a participatory discursive space in which aesthetic evaluation, religious expression, and interpersonal interaction intersect. However, because the analysis is based on a limited set of publicly visible comments, these responses should be treated as illustrative examples rather than as representative of the account’s entire audience.

Visual representation itself also functions as a discursive strategy. Most notably, the deliberate omission of facial features creates an implicit intertextual relationship with Islamic discussions of *tasywir*, or the representation of living beings. The Reel does not substantiate this

position through quotations from the Qur'an, hadith, or formal legal opinions. Instead, the relevant religious discourse is condensed into the visual act of removing the character's face and the accompanying reference to "sharia." The religious argument is therefore communicated performatively through the drawing process rather than through extended doctrinal explanation.

This implicit form of intertextuality is particularly important for understanding the relationship between visuality and digital da'wah. For viewers already familiar with debates concerning *tasywir*, the faceless character may be recognizable as a visual response to particular interpretations of Islamic norms governing representation. For viewers without such prior knowledge, the juxtaposition of "sharia," the drawing process, and the removal of facial features may function as an entry point into that religious discourse. In both cases, the Reel demonstrates how a complex question of Islamic normativity can be translated into a concise visual narrative tailored to Instagram's communicative conventions.

The textual and visual features show that the Reel constructs religious discourse through the interplay of rhetorical questions, informal language, artistic demonstrations, and audience invitations. Islamic normativity is not presented primarily through formal preaching or explicit scriptural citation; it is embedded in the creative process itself and made discussable through platform-based interaction. At this textual level, visuality therefore operates as a discursive mechanism through which the relationship between religious observance and artistic creativity becomes visible, negotiable, and accessible within everyday social media culture.

Social Cognition: Shared Mental Models and Religious Meaning

Within Van Dijk's sociocognitive framework, discourse is mediated through socially shared knowledge, beliefs, and mental models that shape how particular representations become intelligible (Van Dijk, 2001). In the present case, the @egg_winner Reel can be read as inviting two interrelated mental models concerning the relationship between artistic creativity and Muslim religiosity. The first positions artistic practice and religious observance as potentially compatible rather than inherently contradictory. By displaying the drawing process and deliberately removing the character's facial features, the creator visually presents artistic modification as a way of negotiating perceived religious boundaries. The Reel therefore frames creative practice not as necessarily opposed to Islamic commitment, but as something that can be adapted in accordance with a particular understanding of religious norms.

The second mental model concerns the applicability of Islamic legal discourse to contemporary creative practices. The Reel translates the issue of *tasywir*, commonly discussed in Islamic jurisprudential contexts, into a concise and visually accessible social-media format. Rather than explaining the issue through extended doctrinal argument or formal legal citation, the content incorporates it into the everyday act of digital illustration. This translation makes a complex religious question communicatively accessible within the conventions of short-form video and potentially enables audiences to relate Islamic normativity to familiar creative activities.

These representations suggest an interpretive orientation in which religious boundaries are presented as conditions for creative negotiation rather than simply as prohibitions. The content does not reject religious norms, nor does it present artistic autonomy as unrestricted. Instead, it visually constructs a possible accommodation between the two. Such a framing may be understood as a contextualized mode of digital religiosity in which Islamic values are articulated through everyday creative decisions. However, because this study does not include interviews or other

direct measures of audience cognition, these mental models should be understood as discursive positions made available by the content rather than as empirically verified beliefs held by viewers.

From this perspective, viscosity performs an important sociocognitive function. The faceless character, the step-by-step creative process, and the accompanying references to “sharia” provide viewers with a recognizable interpretive framework through which Muslim identity and artistic practice can be imagined as coexisting. Religious meaning is therefore produced not only through verbal propositions but also through visual solutions that organize the relationship between creativity and normativity.

Social Context: Access to Religious Discourse and Emerging Digital Authority

At the level of social context, Van Dijk emphasizes that access to public discourse is closely related to social power because actors with greater communicative access are better positioned to circulate particular interpretations and frames (Van Dijk, 1993). Social media platforms modify this structure of access by allowing non-institutional actors to participate in the production and circulation of religious discourse. In this context, @egg_winner provides an illustrative case of how a digital creator can introduce an interpretation of Islamic norms through artistic practice without speaking from the institutional position of a formal religious scholar.

This pattern is relevant to Campbell's (2012) concept of shifting authority, in which religious authority in networked environments becomes increasingly dispersed across institutions, communities, media actors, and digitally visible individuals. The @egg_winner Reel does not demonstrate a complete transfer of religious authority from formal scholars to digital creators. Rather, it shows how creators may acquire limited discursive visibility and credibility within specific online communities through aesthetic competence, content consistency, interpersonal interaction, and perceived religious commitment. In this sense, the creator participates in the mediation of religious knowledge even without claiming formal scholarly authority.

Audience engagement provides one indication of this visibility. The Reel received 1,161 likes, 28 substantive comments, and 45 shares at the time of observation. These metrics indicate that the content circulated beyond passive viewing and generated observable interaction. They should not, however, be treated as direct evidence that the creator possesses religious authority or has changed audience beliefs. Instead, engagement demonstrates that the creator has access to a communicative space where questions about art and Islamic norms can become publicly visible and discussable.

Visual competence itself contributes to this communicative access. The creator's ability to translate a question of *tasywir* into a short-form visual narrative makes religious discourse compatible with Instagram's aesthetic and temporal conventions. In this context, viscosity functions as a resource for making religious interpretation accessible, recognizable, and shareable. The authority that may emerge from such practices is therefore mediated in part by platform-specific forms of visibility, audience familiarity, and aesthetic credibility, rather than exclusively by conventional religious credentials.

This form of digital authority must nevertheless be interpreted critically. Platform visibility is shaped not only by the substantive quality of religious arguments but also by the attention economy of social media. Content that is visually compelling, emotionally resonant, or highly interactive may receive greater circulation regardless of the scholarly robustness of the religious interpretation it presents. For this reason, popularity, engagement, and religious validity should not

be treated as equivalent. The case, therefore, illustrates a broader epistemological tension in digital religion: platforms can expand participation in religious discourse while simultaneously complicating the mechanisms through which religious knowledge is evaluated and legitimized.

The social-context analysis indicates that @egg_winner's content operates within a digital environment in which access to religious discourse is becoming more distributed, and the boundaries between creative practice, entertainment, religious communication, and informal religious learning are increasingly porous. The creator's role is best understood not as replacing formal religious authority, but as participating in a broader network of actors through which Islamic norms are interpreted and circulated online. Within this environment, visibility serves not merely as an aesthetic device but as a communicative resource through which religious meaning can gain visibility, generate interaction, and enter contemporary debates about Muslim creativity and religious normativity.

Visuality and the Construction of Digital Religiosity

The selected @egg_winner Instagram Reel illustrates how digital visibility can function as a medium through which religiosity is articulated in everyday creative practice. Religious meaning in the content is not communicated primarily through sermons, scriptural quotations, or conventional Islamic iconography. Instead, it emerges through the drawing process, aesthetic decisions, references to *sharia*, and interactions between the creator and audience. Visual practice, therefore, becomes one of the means by which Islamic normativity is rendered visible and negotiated within social media culture. To interpret this process, the analysis draws on Glock and Stark's (1965) multidimensional framework of religiosity and Campbell's (2012).

Within Glock and Stark's ideological dimension, religious commitment is represented through the creator's effort to align artistic practice with a particular understanding of Islamic norms. The absence of direct Qur'anic or hadith quotations does not preclude the Reel's religious framing; rather, religious orientation is conveyed through visual action. Most notably, the removal of facial features is explicitly connected to the creator's understanding of *sharia* and implicitly to the discourse of *tasywir*. Religious belief is therefore represented not through doctrinal exposition but through a creative decision that makes a normative interpretation visually observable.

The practice dimension is evident in how religious considerations are incorporated into the creative process itself. Rather than treating drawing and religious observance as separate domains, the Reel presents artistic modification as part of an effort to work within perceived religious boundaries. The stages of sketching, revising, and removing facial features show how normativity can enter an otherwise ordinary creative activity. It would, however, be too strong to classify drawing itself as a religious ritual on the basis of the available data. More cautiously, the content demonstrates how everyday artistic practice may become religiously informed when creative decisions are consciously framed in relation to Islamic norms.

The intellectual dimension concerns the mediation of religious knowledge. The Reel translates a question associated with the Islamic discourse of *tasywir* into a concise visual format without providing an extended explanation of jurisprudential terminology or legal sources. Religious knowledge is therefore condensed into a combination of visual demonstration and short textual prompts. For viewers already familiar with debates over depictions of living beings, the Reel may reinforce an existing interpretive framework; for others, it may serve as an entry point to the relationship between Islamic normativity and visual art. The content consequently illustrates how

religious knowledge can circulate through informal and visually accessible forms outside conventional educational settings.

The experiential dimension is conveyed through the creator's narration of the difficulties of reconciling artistic creativity with perceived religious boundaries. Informal expressions describing the process as difficult yet enjoyable, along with repeated sketch revisions and visible modifications, frame religiosity as negotiated through everyday creative experience rather than simply declared in doctrinal statements. The Reel invites viewers to witness this negotiation and potentially identify with it. Because the study does not include interviews with viewers, it cannot establish the audience's actual religious experience; instead, the data show how the content makes such an experiential interpretation available.

The consequential dimension is the most difficult to establish directly from the available material. The closing question, "WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK?", encourages viewers to reflect on the relationship between artistic practice and Islamic norms, while comments and shares demonstrate observable forms of participation and circulation. These interactions suggest that the content extends beyond passive viewing and may prompt further discussion about creative practice and *sharia*. Nevertheless, likes, comments, and shares cannot by themselves demonstrate behavioral or attitudinal change. The findings, therefore, indicate the potential for reflection and further circulation rather than providing evidence of actual transformation in audience behavior.

The Reel can also be interpreted through Campbell's (2012) framework of networked religion, particularly its emphasis on networked community, storied identities, shifting authority, convergent practice, and multisite reality. The first characteristic, networked community, is visible in the interaction between the creator and followers through comments and responses. The comment section provides a digital space where aesthetic judgments and religious expressions coexist, enabling conversations about art and Islamic norms to take place outside formal religious institutions. These interactions do not necessarily constitute a stable religious community, but they demonstrate how platform affordances enable temporary and interest-based religious conversations to form around shared content.

The second characteristic, storied identity, is evident in how the creator presents their identity as a Muslim illustrator navigating creativity alongside religious commitment. This identity is constructed through repeated visual practices, communication style, artistic choices, and explicit references to *sharia* rather than through formal religious titles or conventional religious symbols. The Reel, therefore, contributes to a narrative in which the creator is understood as someone whose artistic and Muslim identities are not mutually exclusive but are continuously negotiated through creative practice.

The third characteristic, shifting authority, appears in the creator's participation in discussions concerning the permissibility and boundaries of visual representation. The available evidence does not establish @egg_winner as a religious authority comparable to a scholar or institution. It does, however, show that a non-institutional creator can gain discursive visibility and become a reference point for followers interested in the relationship between visual art and Islamic norms. Such visibility illustrates a more distributed religious communication environment in which creators can participate in mediating religious knowledge alongside established authorities.

The fourth characteristic, convergent practice, is particularly relevant because artistic activity and religious reflection are integrated within the same digital practice. Drawing functions

as both creative production and entertainment content, and as a site for negotiating Islamic normativity. Likewise, audiences may encounter artistic technique and religious discussion within the same Reel. This convergence blurs the boundary between religious communication and popular digital culture, allowing Islamic values to become embedded in content not conventionally categorized as preaching.

Finally, multisite reality helps explain how religious meaning circulates beyond conventionally sacred or institutional spaces. The Reel can be accessed, viewed, commented on, and shared in everyday settings, allowing religious discourse to become integrated into ordinary patterns of social media use. Instagram, therefore, mediates a form of religiosity that is spatially dispersed and embedded in daily digital routines. Rather than replacing offline religious life, such content extends religious meaning into networked environments in which artistic practice, social interaction, and religious reflection coexist.

These findings suggest that digital religiosity in the selected Reel is constructed through the integration of visual practice, religious normativity, creator identity, and platform interaction. Religiosity is expressed less through explicit doctrinal representation than through the incorporation of religious considerations into creative decisions and everyday digital communication. In this sense, visuality functions as a central mechanism through which Muslim identity and Islamic norms become visible, interpretable, and negotiable within the networked environment of Instagram.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that the Instagram Reels content of @egg_winner represents a form of digital religiosity constructed through visuality, personal narratives, and interactions on social media platforms. First, religiosity in the content is not displayed through formal Islamic symbols but through visual practices that align with an understanding of Sharia, particularly the concealment of characters' faces in response to the discourse on *tasywir*. Second, visual elements such as color, composition, and the drawing process function not only as aesthetic strategies but also as a medium for producing religious meaning and creative Muslim identity in the digital space. Third, Van Dijk's CDA analysis indicates that the content constructs a participatory discourse that levels power relations between creators and audiences through informal language, dialogic questions, and spaces for comment interaction. Fourth, based on Campbell's concept of networked religion, this study identifies a shift in religious authority from formal institutions toward digital creators who gain legitimacy through visual resonance, engagement, and the trust of online communities.

Digital visuality has become a crucial medium in the transformation of Muslim religious practices in the social media era (Wahyuningsih, Hakki, & Susanti, 2025; Zhandossova, Seitakhmetova, Shaukenova, & Nurov, 2025). Religiosity no longer relies entirely on conventional Islamic symbols such as calligraphy, sermons, or representations of formal religious institutions, but manifests through everyday visual practices negotiated within digital culture. This aligns with Farah's findings analyzing how Muslims visually represent their religion on Instagram. Visuality serves as a medium for constructing religious identity in social media spaces (Hasan, 2022). The creator's decision to remove the characters' faces serves as a form of religious articulation that is implicit yet symbolically powerful. This finding expands our understanding of digital religion by

demonstrating that visual aesthetics can function as an expression of religious devotion without resorting to explicit proselytizing language.

The creator's decision to remove the characters' faces serves as a form of religious articulation that is implicit yet symbolically powerful. This finding expands our understanding of digital religion by demonstrating that visual aesthetics can function as an expression of religious devotion without resorting to explicit proselytizing language (Hew, 2018). This finding is also consistent with Campbell's argument regarding convergent practice (Campbell, 2012), namely the merging of secular and religious activities in everyday digital practices.

Through Van Dijk's CDA, this study confirms that informal language and participatory visual strategies play a crucial role in the production of digital religious discourse. Van Dijk emphasizes that CDA focuses on how discourse structures influence the audience's mental representations and how power is reproduced through texts and conversations (Van Dijk, 1993). The use of words like "I" and "you" creates an emotional closeness that reduces the hierarchical distance between creators and audiences. In the context of social media, the legitimacy of discourse is no longer built solely through institutional authority but also through the ability to create emotional resonance and a sense of community. Research on algorithms and religious preaching authority in Indonesia indicates that algorithms significantly shape the visibility of religious preaching content and influence how young audiences interact with religious messages (La Harisi, Mas'ud, Imran, & Amien, 2026). This suggests a transformation in the patterns of religious preaching communication from a top-down model toward a dialogic and participatory model.

Social media algorithms also shape the construction of digital religiosity. High engagement with content indicates that issues concerning art and Islamic law resonate strongly among the digital Muslim generation. Previous research on informal religious education on Instagram found that religious learning in digital spaces occurs not only through the delivery of verbal material, but also through visual representations, everyday narratives, and user interactions (AlMazaedh, Tahat, Alkhalaileh, & Tahat, 2026). However, this situation also presents a new epistemological problem, as content popularity does not always correlate with scientific validity. In this context, religious authority in the digital space emerges through communicative performance and audience recognition, rather than solely through hierarchical positions within religious institutions. This finding reinforces Campbell's concept of "shifting authority" while demonstrating that digital platforms have transformed how religious authority is produced, negotiated, and accepted by contemporary Muslim audiences.

Previous studies on Muslim social media influencers in the Gulf region have noted that a new generation of tech-savvy digital creators is redefining spiritual practices and religious beliefs among young people (Zaid, Fedtke, Shin, El Kadoussi, & Ibahrine, 2022). Other research indicates that social media has become a crucial space in the formation of digital religiosity, where individuals not only consume religious messages but also negotiate their religious identities online (Khairani et al., 2025; Khoirunnisa & Rafi'i, 2025). This is relevant to the context of @egg_winner, which builds legitimacy not through academic titles or institutional affiliations, but through content consistency, aesthetic resonance, and community closeness. This relevance is evident in how @egg_winner presents light, visual, and relatable da'wah content that aligns with young people's daily experiences. The content created serves not only to convey religious messages but also as a space for interaction and the formation of digital religious identity. Through aesthetically pleasing

visual design, personal narratives, and a casual communication style, @egg_winner establishes a new form of authority on social media, one rooted more in audience engagement and resonance than in institutional legitimacy. Thus, this account demonstrates how the practice of digital religiosity on Instagram is moving toward a more participatory, visual, and community-based direction. Meanwhile, bibliometric studies on Islam and digital technology indicate that since 2021.

Instagram has become a significant space for the expression and discussion of Islamic identity, with women increasingly visible in the highly cited studies in this field (Wahid, 2024). Religious experiences on social media are multisensory and participatory. Audiences do not merely read religious messages but also undergo an emotional process through the visualization of drawing techniques, color changes, editing rhythms, and the creators' personal narratives (Jima'ain, 2023). A literature review on digital da'wah indicates that social media enables da'wah that is visually engaging and emotionally resonant, enhancing interaction between preachers and audiences ('Ulyan, 2023). Thus, digital religiosity operates not only at the cognitive level but also at the affective and aesthetic levels. This phenomenon is relevant to @egg_winner's content practices on Instagram. The content presented not only conveys religious messages informatively but also builds religious experiences through visual illustrations, a soft editing style, aesthetically pleasing color schemes, and reflective narratives closely tied to the daily lives of young Muslim adults. The audience is not merely passive viewers but becomes emotionally engaged through comments, reposts, and personal interpretations of the messages conveyed. From Campbell's perspective on "networked religion," religious authority in the digital space no longer resides entirely within formal institutions but can emerge through content creators who can build communities, foster closeness, and create emotional resonance with their followers. Therefore, the visual elements on the @egg_winner account serve as a crucial medium in shaping a religious experience that is more fluid, personal, participatory, and aligned with the digital culture of the younger generation of Muslims.

The main strength of this study lies in its use of a multidisciplinary approach that combines visual culture analysis, theories of digital religiosity, and Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis. This approach allows the study to interpret social media content not only as aesthetic objects but also as discursive practices and constructions of digital religiosity. Furthermore, the focus on the content of the drawing process offers a novel contribution to the study of digital Islam, as most previous research has focused on sermons, verbal da'wah, or explicit religious symbols.

This study also draws strength from its detailed visual analysis of color elements, composition, characters, and overlay text, thereby demonstrating how religious meaning is implicitly constructed through visual strategies. Thus, this study expands the discourse on the relationship between visual culture and Muslim religious practices on social media. However, this study has several limitations. First, the study focuses only on a single Reel from a single creator, so it cannot yet represent the entirety of visual religiosity practices on Instagram. Second, this study employs a textual and visual analysis approach without conducting in-depth interviews with creators or audiences, so interpretations of creators' motivations and audience reception remain limited to observational data. Third, the study has not yet conducted a thorough analysis of Instagram's algorithm's influence on the distribution, visibility, and engagement of visual religious content. Therefore, the results of this study should be understood as exploratory and open the door to broader, more comprehensive follow-up research.

This study contributes to the development of theories of visual religiosity and digital Islam by demonstrating that Muslim digital religiosity in Southeast Asia is increasingly shaped by visual culture, platform aesthetics, and everyday creative practices. The research findings expand on Campbell's concept of "networked religion" by adding a visual dimension as the primary medium for producing religious meaning on short-form video social media platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that digital religiosity does not always manifest as explicit Islamic symbols but also through implicit, performative visual practices. In the context of Southeast Asian Muslims, visibility serves as a space for negotiating identity where global popular culture intersects with local Islamic values. Therefore, this research can serve as a foundational starting point for developing the concept of "visual Islamic piety" within the study of digital communication and contemporary Islamic visual culture.

For da'wah content creators, this study highlights the importance of a visual approach that is dialogic, creative, and contextual in reaching young Muslim generations. Digital da'wah need not always take the form of formal sermons but can be developed through visual storytelling, creative processes, and participatory interactions that align more closely with social media culture. For Islamic educational institutions, the findings of this study can serve as a foundation for developing digital visual literacy within da'wah communication and Islamic media curricula. Educational institutions need to equip students with the ability to critically read, produce, and evaluate visual religious content so they can adapt to the transformation of da'wah in the era of digital platforms. For the government, this research underscores the importance of strengthening digital religious literacy on social media. Digital literacy programs should focus not only on technical media skills but also on understanding authority, validity, and the ethics of producing digital religious content. Additionally, the Ministry of Religion can collaborate with Muslim digital creators to produce religious content that is creative, moderate, and relevant to the visual culture of the younger generation.

Future research is recommended to expand the scope of study by comparing various Muslim visual creators across different platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels to examine variations in the construction of visual-based digital religiosity. Furthermore, future research could employ a netnographic approach to understand the processes of meaning production, religious motivations, and audience reception patterns in relation to religious visual content. Subsequent research should also specifically examine the role of platform algorithms in shaping visibility, engagement, and the legitimacy of digital religious authority. This analysis is crucial for understanding how platform logic influences the dissemination of religious interpretations in contemporary social media spaces. Finally, future research could conduct a comparative analysis of visual representations of Muslim religiosity in Southeast Asia and other Muslim regions, such as the Middle East or Europe, to examine how cultural context influences visually based digital Islamic practices.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the visual elements in the Instagram Reels content of @egg_winner serve as a strategy for shaping digital religiosity through a negotiation between artistic creativity and Islamic values. First, the study found that visual elements such as color, characters, composition, and overlay text are used to implicitly represent religious compliance, particularly through the removal of

characters' faces as a response to the *tasywir* discourse. Second, based on an analysis of digital religiosity, this content shapes a religious experience that is visual, participatory, and contextual through daily creative practices on social media. Third, Van Dijk's CDA analysis indicates that the content operates as a discursive practice that builds a dialogic relationship between creators and audiences, while reflecting a shift in religious authority from formal institutions toward community-based digital creators and engagement platforms.

Theoretically, this study contributes to research on digital Islam, visual religiosity, and digital visual culture by demonstrating that contemporary Muslim religiosity is constructed not only through explicit religious symbols but also through visual practices and the aesthetics of digital platforms. This study also expands Campbell's concept of "networked religion" by positioning visuality as the primary medium for producing religious meaning on short-form video-based social media. In practical terms, this study highlights the importance of a creative, participatory, and contextual visual da'wah approach for reaching young Muslims, while also emphasizing the need to strengthen digital religious literacy to address shifts in authority and the dynamics of social media platform algorithms.

Future research should focus on three main directions. First, expanding the scope of study to various platforms and Muslim visual creators to examine variations in digital religiosity practices across social media. Second, developing digital ethnographic approaches and in-depth interviews to understand creators' motivations and audience reception of visual religious content. Third, conducting a more specific examination of the role of platform algorithms in shaping the visibility, legitimacy, and dissemination of digital religious authority in contemporary social media spaces.

Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing: The author used ChatGPT and Grammarly to assist with grammar editing and improving text readability. The author assumes full responsibility for the content and substance of the entire manuscript.

Author Contribution Statement: E.R. contributed to the conceptualization, research design, data interpretation, and preparation of the manuscript. M.M.N.A. contributed to data collection, visual content analysis, and literature review. F.A.I. contributed to the theoretical framework, critical discourse analysis, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors participated in reviewing the final version of the manuscript and approved it for publication.

Funding Statement: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The author declares no conflict of interest, whether financial or non-financial, regarding the conduct of this research or the publication of this article.

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