

## **Barthesian Semiotics of Digital Hijrah Narratives: Celebrity Piety and Spiritual Transformation on YouTube**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study examines how celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube construct meanings of spiritual transformation and shape public understandings of Islamic piety in contemporary Indonesia. Although hijrah has been widely studied as a form of Islamic identity formation, digital dakwah, and religious media practice, limited attention has been given to how celebrity hijrah testimonies produce ideological meanings through layered verbal, visual, and symbolic signs. **Methodology:** This study employs a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm using Roland Barthes's semiotic framework. The data were drawn from a Kasisolusi YouTube podcast episode featuring Uki Kautsar, former guitarist of NOAH, who underwent hijrah and left the music industry. The analysis focused on verbal dialogue, non-verbal expressions, and visual elements, which were examined through three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. **Findings:** The findings show that Uki Kautsar's hijrah narrative constructs spiritual transformation as a multidimensional process involving theological inquiry, emotional struggle, family support, social accountability, economic uncertainty, moral boundary-making, and the reorientation of worldly skills toward religiously acceptable purposes. Denotatively, the narrative presents a personal journey of leaving the music industry. Connotatively, it conveys sincerity, sacrifice, intellectual humility, moral consistency, and social support. Mythologically, it naturalizes hijrah as an ideal model of contemporary Muslim identity marked by moral firmness, visible transformation, and communal validation. **Implication:** This study shows that digital hijrah narratives can function as accessible religious resources for young Muslims, while also requiring more nuanced digital religious communication to avoid narrow standards of piety and performative religiosity. **Originality:** This study contributes to digital religion scholarship by extending Barthesian semiotics to the analysis of celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube, showing how personal testimony, visual performance, digital authority, and mythological meanings interact to construct Islamic piety in the digital public sphere.

Keywords: Barthesian semiotics; celebrity piety; digital dakwah; hijrah; YouTube.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The hijrah phenomenon has developed into a significant socio-religious movement in contemporary Indonesian society, particularly among urban Muslim youth seeking spiritual authenticity amid the pressures of modern life. Hijrah, etymologically meaning "to migrate" or "to leave" (Aisyah, Hardivizon, & Yunita, 2021), has evolved from its historical reference to Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina into a contemporary concept denoting religious and lifestyle transformation from a secular-materialistic orientation toward a more explicitly Islamic way of life (Kamal, 2025). In this transformation, social media platforms have become important digital spaces where hijrah narratives are produced, circulated, and interpreted by wider Muslim audiences. DataReportal (2025), reported that YouTube's advertising reach in Indonesia reached 143 million users in early 2025, equivalent to 50.2% of the national population, although this figure should not be interpreted as monthly active users. YouTube's capacity for long-form audiovisual storytelling makes it a strategic medium for digital dakwah, especially because personal testimonies can combine verbal narratives, emotional expression, visual framing, and audience engagement in a single communicative space (Maula, 2021; Slama, 2018). The Kasisolusi podcast interview with Uki Kautsar, former guitarist of the prominent Indonesian band NOAH, who underwent hijrah and left the music industry, attracted approximately 1.3 million views, demonstrating substantial

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public resonance with celebrity spiritual transformation narratives among contemporary Indonesian Muslims.

More specifically, celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube have become a prominent form of digital religious testimony because they connect personal spiritual transformation with public visibility, popular culture, and Muslim audience identification. In the Indonesian context, public figures who leave entertainment careers or reorient their professional identities after hijrah often attract wide public attention because their stories are perceived not merely as private religious experiences but as symbolic examples of moral courage, sacrifice, and renewed Islamic commitment. The case of Uki Kautsar is significant in this regard because his previous identity as a guitarist of NOAH, one of Indonesia's most popular bands, placed his hijrah narrative at the intersection of celebrity culture, music controversy, digital dakwah, and contemporary debates on authentic Muslim piety. Through the Kasisolusi podcast, his personal testimony was transformed into a public religious narrative that allowed audiences to witness, evaluate, and emotionally engage with the process of spiritual change. This indicates that YouTube does not simply function as a medium for disseminating dakwah messages, but also as a symbolic arena where models of hijrah, religious authority, and ideal Islamic identity are visually and verbally constructed.

Previous studies on digital hijrah can be grouped into three main categories: first, studies that examine hijrah as a form of Islamic identity formation among Indonesian Muslim youth; second, studies that discuss digital dakwah, celebrity piety, and the commodification of religion on social media; and third, studies that employ semiotic or multimodal approaches to analyze religious messages in digital media. The first category shows that hijrah has increasingly been understood not merely as an individual act of repentance, but as a collective process of identity formation shaped by urban culture, peer communities, religious authority, and social media. Rahman, Nurnisya, Nurjanah, and Hifziati (2021) demonstrate that Instagram has become an important arena where Indonesian millennials articulate Islamic identity through hijrah narratives, visual symbols, and community-based religious expressions. In a similar direction, Rijal (2025) shows that urban Muslim youth pursue hijrah as a quest for self-transformation, often by integrating Salafi-oriented values into daily practices, dress codes, study circles, and moral discipline. Hasan (2019) further indicates that public events such as Hijrah Festival in Jakarta provide collective spaces where religious commitment, youth culture, and popular Islamic expression intersect. Fansuri (2024) situates hijrah within broader post-Suharto transformations of faith and religious subjectivity, showing that hijrah is connected not only to personal piety but also to wider changes in Indonesian Muslim social life. However, this body of scholarship also notes potential tensions within the hijrah movement, including exclusivist interpretations, conservative shifts in youth religious practices, and the possibility of social fragmentation when Islamic identity is framed through rigid moral boundaries (Jailani, 2024; R. Rahman, Ilyas, Alwi, & Zailani, 2024). These studies are important because they establish hijrah as a dynamic intersection of digital technology, urban piety, youth identity, and religious authority; however, they have not yet sufficiently explained how celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube construct Islamic identity through layered visual and verbal signs.

The second category consists of studies that examine digital dakwah, religious influencers, celebrity piety, and the commodification of religion in online Islamic communication. This body of scholarship shows that digital platforms have transformed Islamic preaching from institutionally centered religious communication into a more personalized, visual, and performative form of religious authority. Febrian (2024) demonstrates that religious influencers on Instagram construct authority through visual strategies that combine familiarity, aesthetic presentation, and symbolic distance, allowing them to appear both relatable and authoritative. Raya (2024) similarly shows that celebrity preachers in contemporary

Indonesia package religious messages through persuasive styles, personal branding, and media-friendly performances that appeal to urban Muslim audiences. In a broader discussion of digital religious authority, Andok (2024) argues that online media reshapes how religious authority is perceived, negotiated, and validated by audiences, while Wahyudi, Srimulyani, Shadiqin, and Gumilang (2025) show that digital mediation also produces hybrid forms of authority in online religious practices, such as cyber-Sufism and mediated ritual communities. More specifically, Raya (2025) identifies digital Islam as a new space where authority and commodification intersect, as Islamic preachers increasingly operate within platform economies, audience metrics, and market-oriented religious visibility. This concern is also reflected in Beta's (2019) study of young Muslim women's groups as religious influencers, where piety, commerce, and politics are intertwined in the production of Islamic public identity. Dewi, Fata, and Fauzi (2024) further demonstrate that hijrah celebrities perform piety by engaging with Salafi-oriented dakwah while adapting religious commitments to middle-class lifestyles and public visibility. Meanwhile, Mahzumi et al. (2025) and Rohid et al. (2025) indicate that digital Islamic activism shapes youth religiosity and contemporary Islamic movements through social media, but also raises concerns about polarization, authority shifts, and ideological contestation. These studies are important because they reveal how authenticity, performance, authority, and commodification structure digital Islamic communication; however, they have not yet sufficiently examined how celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube produce ideological meanings through the layered interaction of verbal testimony, visual signs, and mythological constructions of piety.

The third category consists of studies that apply semiotic, Barthesian, or multimodal approaches to religious and ideological media content. Although direct applications of Barthesian semiotics to celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube remain limited, related studies show that semiotic analysis is useful for revealing how religious meanings, authority, and ideology are constructed through the interaction of verbal, visual, and symbolic signs. Wignell, Tan, and O'Halloran (2017), as well as Wignell et al. (2018), demonstrate that extremist religious media use images and texts to produce cohesive ideological narratives, where visual and verbal signs construct moral binaries, religious legitimacy, and collective identity. Aguilera-Carnerero (2021) similarly shows that visual polarization in Islamic State propaganda magazines produces symbolic distinctions between heroes and enemies, indicating how religious media can naturalize ideological boundaries through recurring visual patterns. Beyond extremist media, Salam-Salmaoui, Salam, and Hassan (2024) examine how semiotic choices such as attire, motorcycles, and religious symbols rebrand Islamic authority for younger digital audiences, showing that religious authority can be visually performed and reconstructed through popular media aesthetics. Other studies demonstrate the broader relevance of semiotic analysis in decoding ideological meanings: Al-Momani, Badarneh, and Migdadi (2017) apply Barthesian semiotics to political cartoons by distinguishing denotative and connotative meanings, while Parandavaji and Nasihat (2018) analyze Qur'anic narrative to show how literal events develop into deeper meanings of faith, governance, and belief. Traspe (2024) further uses multimodal semiotic analysis to examine how ritual symbols communicate gratitude, identity, and cultural continuity, while Prilutskiy and Lebedev (2020) reveal how semiotic markers in religious movements construct eschatological myths and theological legitimacy. These studies confirm the analytical value of semiotics in uncovering denotation, connotation, myth, and ideology in religious and media texts; however, they have not yet specifically examined how celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube construct Islamic piety through the layered interaction of personal testimony, visual performance, digital authority, and mythological meanings.

Recent scholarship on Indonesian hijrah revealed emerging patterns and concerns. Rahman, Nurnisya, Nurjanah, and Hifziati (2021) identified hijrah among millennials as a new social identity shaped by community influence and social media exposure. Wati, Alkaf, and Idami (2022) emphasized the visual and inspiring representation of hijrah stories as compelling content that shapes religious aspirations. Beta (2019) documented the rise of "hijabers" as a distinct social category blending Islamic piety with consumer culture. However, Muthhar, Kahar, and Mokhtar, (2024) identified critical ambivalence in religiosity commodification on social media: while digital platforms expand dakwah reach, they simultaneously risk producing symbolic, performative piety detached from substantive spiritual transformation. Fakhruroji (2019) similarly noted tensions between authentic religious communication and commercial interests in Indonesia's digital Islamic economy. In digital dakwah communication, several studies employed semiotic approaches to analyze message construction. Khusnul (2022) analyzed dakwah values in Oki Setiana Dewi's YouTube content, finding integration of creed, sharia, and moral values. Timol (2022) Analyzes a popular Islamic preacher's communication style and methodological innovations in preaching. Ubaidillah and Patriansah (2024) analyzed short films to identify social constructions of ideal Muslim family roles. These studies demonstrated semiotic analysis's utility for understanding religious media messages.

Despite this growing body of work, significant gaps remained in understanding how visual and verbal signs in YouTube content systematically constructed hijrah meanings and influenced public perceptions of Islamic piety. Previous studies focused on general dakwah content or religious values without specifically uncovering ideological meaning layers in celebrity hijrah narratives through Barthesian semiotics distinguishing denotations, connotations, and myths (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Nisa, 2018). Celebrity hijrah narratives possessed strong symbolic power in shaping ideal Muslim identity discourse in the digital age, yet their semiotic mechanisms of ideological production remained under-theorized. Understanding how piety was constructed and naturalized through social media required analytical frameworks capable of revealing multiple signification levels from manifest content to latent ideologies (Evolvi, 2017; Pennington, 2018). This gap was particularly significant given social media's increasing role as primary source of religious knowledge for young Muslims globally (Evolvi, 2017; Sisler, Radde-Antweiler, & Zeiler, 2018).

This study employed Roland Barthes's semiotic theory as its analytical framework. Barthes (1972, 1977) developed a two-level signification model: denotation as literal meaning of signs, and connotation as cultural meaning emerging when signs interact with users' emotions and values. Barthes introduced myth as second-level communication where connotations developed into ideologies accepted as natural truths (Barthes, 1972). Applied to digital religious discourse, this framework enabled analysis of how hijrah messages operated simultaneously as factual information (denotation), cultural-emotional meaning (connotation), and naturalized ideology (myth) (Chandler, 2022; Rose, 2016). In digital dakwah contexts, dakwah messages encompassed Islamic teachings from Qur'an and Hadith packaged as accessible communication (Zaid, Fedtke, Shin, El Kadoussi, & Ibahrine, 2022), increasingly including personal narratives emphasizing spiritual transformation (Slama, 2018). Hijrah, theologically defined as movement from disbelief to faith or abandoning vice for virtue (Suhar et al., 2024), experienced contemporary reactualization as social-cultural movement addressing identity crises and spiritual needs among urban youth (Nisa, 2018; Wati et al., 2022).

Responding to these gaps, this study aims to examine how a celebrity hijrah narrative on YouTube constructs meanings of spiritual transformation through verbal, visual, and symbolic signs. Specifically, this research analyzes the Kasisolusi podcast episode featuring Uki Kautsar by using Roland Barthes's semiotic framework to identify three layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. By focusing

on a celebrity hijrah testimony, this study seeks to move beyond previous research that has mainly discussed hijrah as youth identity formation, digital dakwah as religious communication, or semiotics as a general method for reading religious media. Instead, this study explains how personal testimony, visual performance, digital authority, and popular religious discourse interact to produce a normative model of Islamic piety in the digital public sphere. Through this analysis, the research contributes to digital religion scholarship by showing how YouTube does not merely circulate hijrah stories, but also participates in constructing ideological meanings about authentic Muslim identity, moral transformation, and religious commitment in contemporary Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm, which views meaning as socially and culturally constructed through human interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Nugrahani, 2014). The analytical framework used in this study was Roland Barthes's semiotics, which enables the examination of three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth (Barthes, 1972, 1977; Chandler, 2022; Rose, 2016). This approach was selected because the study focuses on how digital religious narratives construct ideological meanings through verbal expressions, non-verbal performances, and visual signs (Machin, 2013). In this context, Barthesian semiotics is useful for explaining how a hijrah narrative does not merely communicate personal experience, but also produces broader cultural meanings about Islamic piety, spiritual transformation, and religious identity in digital media.

The research object was a YouTube podcast episode featuring a public figure's hijrah testimony. This study specifically analyzed the Kasisolusi podcast episode titled "TERUNGKAP! FAKTA SEBENARNYA ALASAN UKI KELUAR DARI NOAH – Uki Kautsar [PART 1]." The episode was selected through purposive sampling because it met four criteria: first, it gained high public engagement, with approximately 1.3 million views at the time of observation; second, it presented a comprehensive hijrah narrative covering theological inquiry, family negotiation, professional transition, and post-hijrah challenges; third, it featured Uki Kautsar, a publicly recognized figure and former guitarist of NOAH; and fourth, it contained rich audiovisual material suitable for multimodal semiotic analysis. A single-case design was considered appropriate because this study seeks analytical depth rather than statistical generalization (Yin, 2018).

The primary data consisted of verbal dialogue, non-verbal expressions, and visual elements from the 52-minute podcast episode. The verbal data were obtained through verbatim transcription of the conversation between the host and the guest, including statements related to religious reasoning, personal struggle, family support, economic challenges, and moral commitment. The non-verbal data included facial expressions, gestures, intonation, pauses, laughter, and emotional responses that accompanied the verbal narrative. The visual data included camera framing, setting, symbolic objects, text overlays, and compositional elements appearing in the video. In total, the analysis identified 127 dialogue segments and 43 visual scenes as units of analysis. Secondary data were drawn from academic literature on semiotics, digital dakwah, hijrah, digital religion, and Islamic media studies to support theoretical grounding and comparative interpretation.

Data collection was conducted through systematic observation and documentation of the podcast video. The video was watched repeatedly to identify relevant verbal, non-verbal, and visual

signs (Rose, 2016; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2000). Each data unit was timestamped to ensure traceability and to allow the interpretation to be checked against the original audiovisual source. The transcription was reviewed alongside the video to maintain accuracy between spoken dialogue, visual context, and interpretive categorization. The documented data were then organized into preliminary themes before being analyzed through Barthes's three levels of signification.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages (Chandler, 2022; Fiske, 2010). First, denotative analysis identified the literal meanings of verbal and visual signs by describing what was explicitly said, shown, and performed in the podcast. Second, connotative analysis interpreted the cultural, emotional, and socio-religious meanings attached to those signs by considering Indonesian Muslim contexts, values, and audience familiarity with hijrah discourse. Third, mythological analysis examined how repeated signs and meanings naturalized particular ideas about authentic Muslim identity, moral transformation, and ideal piety. Analytical credibility was strengthened through data triangulation by comparing verbal dialogue, non-verbal expressions, and visual elements, as well as literature triangulation by relating the findings to previous studies on hijrah, digital dakwah, and digital religion (Denzin, 2017). Since the data were publicly available on YouTube, this study did not involve direct intervention with research participants. The analysis was conducted by respecting the original context of the content and avoiding interpretations that discredit, sensationalize, or exploit the personal narrative of the figure analyzed.

## RESULTS

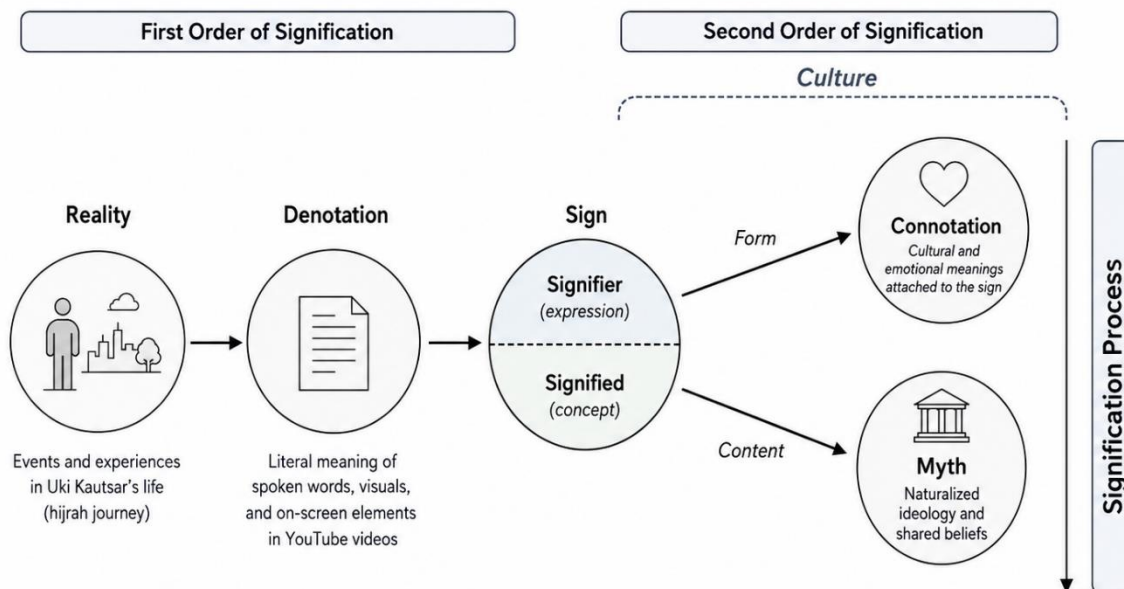
The analyzed Kasisolusi podcast episode featuring Uki Kautsar had attracted approximately 1.3 million views at the time of observation. In this episode, Uki narrated his hijrah journey, beginning with his experience of performing umrah, meeting religious teachers, discussing the Islamic legal status of music, independently searching for religious evidence, and negotiating the consequences of leaving the music industry. The narrative also included his reflections on family support, economic uncertainty, public controversy, and emotional struggles during the process of religious transformation, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Kasisolusi Podcast Episode Featuring Uki Kautsar**

A Barthesian semiotic analysis of the Kasisolusi podcast episode identified fourteen themes across three levels of signification: denotation, connotation, and myth. These themes emerged from the systematic coding of 127 dialogue segments and 43 visual scenes. The findings show that Uki Kautsar’s hijrah narrative was not presented merely as a personal story of leaving the music industry, but as a layered symbolic narrative through which spiritual transformation, religious authority, moral commitment, and Islamic identity were constructed.

To clarify the analytical logic used in this study, Figure 2 illustrates the Barthesian signification process as applied to Uki Kautsar’s hijrah narrative on YouTube. The figure adapts Barthes’s model of first-order and second-order signification by showing how events and experiences in Uki’s hijrah journey are first read at the denotative level as literal meanings of spoken words, visual signs, and on-screen elements. These signs are then interpreted at the connotative level through Indonesian Muslim cultural and emotional values, before being naturalized at the mythological level as broader ideological meanings about Islamic piety, moral transformation, and authentic Muslim identity.



**Figure 2. Barthesian Signification Process in Uki Kautsar’s Hijrah Narrative**

As shown in Figure 2, the analytical process moves from reality to denotation, then from sign to connotation and myth. In this study, reality refers to the concrete experiences narrated by Uki Kautsar, such as leaving the music industry, seeking religious guidance, negotiating family support, and facing economic uncertainty. Denotation captures the literal content of these experiences, while connotation explains the cultural and emotional meanings attached to them. At the mythological level, repeated meanings are interpreted as naturalized ideological constructions, showing how the podcast frames hijrah as a model of moral seriousness, social accountability, and religious commitment in contemporary Indonesian digital Islam.

**Denotative Meanings of Hijrah Messages**

Denotative analysis focuses on the literal meanings of signs that appear in the podcast, including what is explicitly said, shown, and performed by the speakers. In this study, denotative meanings were identified through verbal dialogues, facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, pauses, laughter, and visual framing. Table 1 presents fourteen denotative themes found in Uki Kautsar’s hijrah narrative, along with their timestamps, representative dialogues, and literal meanings.

**Table 1. Denotative Meanings of Hijrah Messages in the Kasisolusi Podcast Episode Featuring Uki Kautsar**

No.	Theme	Timestamp	Representative Dialogue	Denotative Meaning
1	Religious Evaluation of Personal Skills	8:23–8:35	“Allah gives the gift of musical skills, but if so, thieves and murderers are also given skills; this cannot simply be accepted.”	Uki responds to the view that musical ability is a gift from Allah by comparing it with other abilities that cannot automatically be justified. His serious expression, giving gesture, laughter, and nodding indicate that he is clarifying the need to evaluate skills through religious and moral considerations.
2	Negotiating Different Opinions on Islamic Law	10:00–10:13	“There are scholars who say music is halal and scholars who say music is haram. I could simply choose, but it does not seem that easy.”	Uki explains that he encountered different scholarly opinions on the Islamic legal status of music. His lowered head, closed eyes, relaxed shoulders, and open hands show hesitation and recognition that the issue is complex and cannot be decided merely by choosing the easiest opinion.
3	Affective Guidance in the Hijrah Process	12:35–13:00	“Ustaz Syafiq did not give a direct answer; he only hugged me and told me to be convinced first.”	Uki recounts his meeting with Ustaz Syafiq, who did not provide an immediate legal answer but gave emotional support through a hug. Deryansha responds with questions and jokes, while Uki emphasizes that the advice was to strengthen conviction and continue personal exploration.
4	Seeking Transnational Religious References	13:55–14:10	“I watched many Islamic lectures on YouTube to find references from foreign scholars about the legal status of music, but many of	Uki describes his effort to search for religious references from both Indonesian and foreign scholars through YouTube. His quoting gesture indicates that he is reporting scholarly opinions while recognizing that these

No.	Theme	Timestamp	Representative Dialogue	Denotative Meaning
			them also said it was haram.”	opinions still need to be examined through stronger religious evidence.
5	Family Support and Practical Readiness	16:00–16:10	“My wife said that I should collect money first before undergoing hijrah, but in my heart I was already convinced to continue.”	Uki explains his hesitation in telling his wife about his intention to undergo hijrah. His facial gesture indicates uneasiness, while his wife’s response shows practical consideration regarding the financial and family consequences of the decision.
6	Moral Environment and Social Encouragement	18:05–18:20	“If you are with good people, there will be an impulse to do good.”	Uki states that a person’s environment influences moral direction. His hand gestures distinguish between good and bad influences, while Deryansha’s smile and affirmation support the statement that companionship can encourage religious consistency.
7	Moral Boundary-Making after Hijrah	20:15–20:22	“Regardless of whether music is considered haram or halal, I refused to perform in cafés.”	Uki states firmly that, beyond the debate over the legal status of music, he personally refused to perform in cafés. His questioning gesture and firm expression indicate that this refusal functions as a personal boundary after hijrah.
8	Reflection on Past Wealth	24:00–24:30	“The fate of my wealth had already happened; what happened, happened.”	Uki reflects on the wealth he had acquired before undergoing hijrah. His resigned tone indicates acceptance of the past, while the statement shows that previous material possessions are being treated as part of a past life that is now being reconsidered through religious reflection.
9	Ethical Professional Transition	27:00–27:20	“I did not dare to simply tell them through a message; I went there directly.”	Uki explains that he did not announce his decision to leave NOAH through WhatsApp because he considered it unethical. His lowered gaze, slow tempo, and careful delivery indicate seriousness, emotional burden, and respect for his professional relationships.

No.	Theme	Timestamp	Representative Dialogue	Denotative Meaning
10	Economic Uncertainty as a Test of Consistency	30:40–30:55	“Satan often disturbs people who undergo hijrah through changes in income.”	Uki expresses his belief that people who undergo hijrah often face economic challenges. Deryansha affirms that income and economic stability may change drastically when someone leaves a previous profession for religious reasons.
11	Discontinuing Music-Related Activities	39:00–39:20	“I was tired of seeing mixing tools and using that knowledge for music-related work.”	Uki explains that after leaving NOAH, he received offers to mix songs for other artists, but he refused because he considered the activity still connected to music work. His laughter and Deryansha’s affirmation present this situation as a recurring challenge in the hijrah process.
12	Reorientation of Worldly Skills	45:30–46:00	“Worldly knowledge is basically permissible unless there is evidence that prohibits it.”	Deryansha explains that abilities given by Allah can be redirected toward positive purposes, such as producing dakwah videos. Uki responds by connecting this idea to his own hijrah experience, showing a discussion about whether previous skills should be abandoned or reoriented toward religiously acceptable activities.
13	Digital Risks in Dakwah Communication	48:35–48:42	“If the content is taken by opponents of Islam, it can be manipulated and weaponized.”	Deryansha discusses the concern that religious lectures may be recorded, cut, and circulated without context. He explains that edited clips can create misunderstanding and may be used irresponsibly to attack religious figures or Islamic messages.
14	Accountability Support in the Hijrah Process	51:35–51:45	“For those who have just undergone hijrah, it is helpful to have a manager or companion who can remind them.”	Uki explains in a relaxed tone that a manager or companion can support someone who has recently undergone hijrah. This support functions as a reminder when a person is tempted to return to old habits or previous activities.

The denotative analysis shows that Uki Kautsar’s hijrah narrative was presented as a multidimensional journey of religious transformation. At the literal level, the podcast displayed several recurring elements: intellectual struggle in understanding the Islamic legal status of music,

active search for religious authority, emotional support from religious figures and family, ethical consideration in leaving the music industry, economic uncertainty, and efforts to maintain consistency after hijrah. These verbal and non-verbal signs indicate that the narrative did not merely describe a change of profession, but documented a broader process involving theological reasoning, emotional negotiation, social support, and material sacrifice.

### Connotative Meanings of Hijrah Messages

Connotative analysis examines the cultural, emotional, and socio-religious meanings associated with the denotative signs identified in the podcast. While denotation describes what is explicitly said and shown, connotation explains how those signs are interpreted within Indonesian Muslim cultural contexts. In Uki Kautsar's hijrah narrative, verbal statements, gestures, facial expressions, and emotional tones do not merely describe personal experience; they also signify moral seriousness, religious sincerity, social support, economic sacrifice, and the struggle to maintain consistency after hijrah. Table 2 presents the connotative meanings generated from the interaction between the podcast's signs and the broader cultural imagination of hijrah among Indonesian Muslims.

**Table 2. Connotative Meanings of Hijrah Messages in the Kasisolusi Podcast Episode Featuring Uki Kautsar**

No.	Theme	Timestamp	Representative Dialogue	Connotative Meaning
1	Religious Evaluation of Personal Skills	8:23–8:35	“Allah gives the gift of musical skills, but if so, thieves and murderers are also given skills; this cannot simply be accepted.”	This statement connotes that personal skills are not morally neutral. A skill may be understood as a gift from God, but its use still requires ethical and religious evaluation. The shift from a serious expression to laughter signifies inner clarification, suggesting that religious commitment involves filtering personal ability through sharia-based moral considerations.
2	Negotiating Different Opinions on Islamic Law	10:00–10:13	“There are scholars who say music is halal and scholars who say music is haram. I could simply choose, but it does not seem that easy.”	This scene connotes intellectual humility in dealing with differences of opinion among Islamic scholars. Rather than choosing the easiest position, the narrative frames religious decision-making as a serious process that requires evidence, openness, and careful consideration of scholarly authority.
3	Affective Guidance in the Hijrah Process	12:35–13:00	“Ustaz Syafiq did not give a direct answer; he only hugged me	The hug connotes affective religious guidance. It signifies that hijrah is not shaped only by legal

No.	Theme	Timestamp	Representative Dialogue	Connotative Meaning
			and told me to be convinced first.”	reasoning or textual explanation, but also by emotional reassurance, care, and moral encouragement from a trusted religious figure. Religious transformation is therefore represented as both intellectual and emotional.
4	Seeking Transnational Religious References	13:55–14:10	“I watched many Islamic lectures on YouTube to find references from foreign scholars about the legal status of music, but many of them also said it was haram.”	This statement connotes the seriousness of seeking religious truth beyond local authority. The act of searching for foreign scholars through YouTube suggests that digital media expands access to transnational Islamic knowledge. At the same time, the narrative implies that religious truth should not be based merely on personal preference, but on stronger scriptural and scholarly foundations.
5	Family Support and Practical Readiness	16:00–16:10	“My wife said that I should collect money first before undergoing hijrah, but in my heart I was already convinced to continue.”	This scene connotes the tension between spiritual conviction and household responsibility. The wife’s response represents practical wisdom, showing that hijrah is not framed merely as an emotional religious decision, but as a transformation that also requires family negotiation, economic planning, and social readiness.
6	Moral Environment and Social Encouragement	18:05–18:20	“If you are with good people, there will be an impulse to do good.”	This statement connotes the importance of moral environment in sustaining hijrah. Good companionship is represented as a social force that strengthens one’s inclination toward religious consistency. Deryansha’s affirmation reinforces the idea that individual piety is socially supported and strengthened through community.
7	Moral Boundary-Making after Hijrah	20:15–20:22	“Regardless of whether music is considered haram or halal, I refused to perform in cafés.”	This statement connotes moral boundary-making. The issue is not only whether music is legally debated as halal or haram, but how Uki marks a clear separation between his past professional

No.	Theme	Timestamp	Representative Dialogue	Connotative Meaning
				identity and his new religious orientation. Refusing to perform in cafés becomes a symbolic sign of consistency after hijrah.
8	Reflection on Past Wealth	24:00–24:30	“The fate of my wealth had already happened; what happened, happened.”	Past wealth is connoted not as a source of pride, but as a reminder of a previous life orientation. The statement suggests acceptance, reflection, and detachment from material achievement. Hijrah is associated with a shift from worldly success toward spiritual accountability and orientation toward the afterlife.
9	Ethical Professional Transition	27:00–27:20	“I did not dare to simply tell them through a message; I went there directly.”	This scene connotes ethics, relational responsibility, and honesty in the hijrah process. Uki’s decision to communicate directly with his bandmates signifies respect for past relationships. The slow delivery and lowered gaze indicate that leaving the music industry was not merely a professional decision, but an emotionally difficult moral transition.
10	Economic Uncertainty as a Test of Consistency	30:40–30:55	“Satan often disturbs people who undergo hijrah through changes in income.”	This statement connotes that hijrah has real socio-economic consequences. Economic uncertainty is framed as a test of religious consistency, where commitment is measured not only through belief, but also through the willingness to endure material risk. The narrative links spiritual transformation with sacrifice and perseverance.
11	Discontinuing Music-Related Activities	39:00–39:20	“I was tired of seeing mixing tools and using that knowledge for music-related work.”	This scene connotes consistency in distancing oneself from the former professional world. Even when music-related work appears to be an alternative path, it is still symbolically connected to the old identity. Uki’s laughter and Deryansha’s affirmation show that such offers are interpreted as subtle tests within the hijrah journey.

No.	Theme	Timestamp	Representative Dialogue	Connotative Meaning
12	Reorientation of Worldly Skills	45:30–46:00	“Worldly knowledge is basically permissible...”	This scene connotes tension between abandoning old skills and reorienting them toward religious purposes. Worldly skills are not necessarily rejected in hijrah, but may be redirected toward dakwah or morally acceptable activities. However, because those skills remain associated with the previous professional world, the narrative also reflects hesitation about whether using them again would compromise religious transformation.
13	Digital Risks in Dakwah Communication	48:35–48:42	“Many ustaz are uncomfortable when their videos are cut and spread. If ordinary people may still accept it, opponents of Islam may manipulate and weaponize it.”	This statement connotes that digital technology functions as both an opportunity and a threat for dakwah. On one hand, recordings can broaden religious communication; on the other, edited clips can distort meaning, damage religious authority, and create misunderstanding. Digital dakwah is therefore associated with vigilance, context preservation, and protection of religious messages from manipulation.
14	Accountability Support in the Hijrah Process	51:35–51:45	“For those who have just undergone hijrah, it is good to have a manager so that someone can remind them.”	This statement connotes that hijrah is not only an individual process, but also requires external support and accountability. A manager or companion functions as a reminder who helps maintain consistency when someone is tempted to return to old habits. Social support is represented as a normal and important part of sustaining spiritual transformation.

The connotative analysis shows that Uki Kautsar’s hijrah narrative carries meanings beyond the literal account of leaving the music industry. The recurring signs in the podcast associate hijrah with sincerity, intellectual humility, emotional support, moral boundary-making, material sacrifice, and social accountability. These meanings are produced through the interaction between verbal testimony, non-verbal expressions, and Indonesian Muslim cultural expectations about religious transformation. At this level, hijrah is framed not merely as a personal decision, but as a

comprehensive spiritual journey that demands consistency across intellectual, emotional, social, professional, and economic dimensions.

### **The Mythological Meaning of the Hijrah Message**

Mythological analysis examines how connotative meanings are naturalized into broader ideological assumptions about hijrah, Islamic piety, and religious identity. At this level, hijrah is not only interpreted as a personal transformation, but also as a symbolic model of ideal Muslim life. The recurring signs in Uki Kautsar’s narrative construct hijrah as a process associated with moral firmness, religious seriousness, family involvement, economic sacrifice, social accountability, and distance from the former secular-professional world. Table 3 presents the mythological meanings through which the podcast frames certain understandings of hijrah as natural, desirable, and socially expected.

**Table 3. Mythological Meanings of Hijrah Messages in the Kasisolusi Podcast Episode Featuring Uki Kautsar**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Naturalized Myth</b>	<b>Ideological Function</b>
1	Religious Evaluation of Personal Skills	Personal talent is not morally neutral; it becomes meaningful only when directed toward religiously acceptable purposes.	This myth positions religious values as the ultimate filter for evaluating skills, abilities, and professional choices.
2	Negotiating Different Opinions on Islamic Law	Serious hijrah is associated with the willingness to pursue a more demanding religious path rather than choosing the most convenient opinion.	This myth constructs piety as intellectual seriousness, self-discipline, and readiness to bear the consequences of religious conviction.
3	Affective Guidance in the Hijrah Process	Hijrah is not only an intellectual process based on legal reasoning, but also an affective journey supported by emotional reassurance.	This myth legitimizes emotional guidance from religious figures as part of spiritual transformation, making affection and moral support central to religious change.
4	Seeking Transnational Religious References	A sincere search for religious truth requires effort beyond local authority, including engagement with wider Islamic scholarly references.	This myth strengthens the idea that digital media expands access to religious knowledge while positioning personal effort as a marker of religious seriousness.
5	Family Support and Practical Readiness	Hijrah is socially responsible when it involves family support, household negotiation, and practical readiness.	This myth shifts hijrah from a purely individual decision into a relational process that must be validated through family involvement and social responsibility.
6	Moral Environment and Social Encouragement	Good companionship is naturalized as a moral force that sustains religious consistency.	This myth reinforces the belief that individual piety depends on a supportive environment, making

No.	Theme	Naturalized Myth	Ideological Function
			community central to the maintenance of hijrah.
7	Moral Boundary-Making after Hijrah	Hijrah requires symbolic distance from activities associated with the former secular-professional world.	This myth constructs moral boundaries as visible signs of transformation, allowing audiences to recognize religious commitment through acts of refusal and separation.
8	Reflection on Past Wealth	Material success before hijrah is reinterpreted as part of a previous life orientation rather than as the ultimate marker of achievement.	This myth reorders value from material accumulation to spiritual accountability, framing detachment from wealth as a sign of deeper religious awareness.
9	Ethical Professional Transition	Hijrah is not only about leaving the past, but also about leaving it ethically, respectfully, and responsibly.	This myth presents religious transformation as morally complete only when it preserves honesty, relational dignity, and respect for previous social ties.
10	Economic Uncertainty as a Test of Consistency	Economic difficulty after hijrah is framed as a test of sincerity and religious commitment.	This myth transforms material uncertainty into spiritual proof, encouraging the view that sacrifice and endurance validate the authenticity of hijrah.
11	Discontinuing Music-Related Activities	Complete distance from the former professional world is idealized as a strong form of hijrah consistency.	This myth naturalizes separation from past work as a sign of moral firmness, even when alternative opportunities appear professionally reasonable.
12	Reorientation of Worldly Skills	Hijrah is not limited to abandoning the past, but may also involve redirecting previous skills toward religiously acceptable purposes.	This myth opens an alternative model of transformation, where old competencies are not rejected entirely but reoriented toward dakwah, moral benefit, and religious service.
13	Digital Risks in Dakwah Communication	Digital media is naturalized as a double-edged space: it can spread religious messages but can also distort, manipulate, and weaponize them.	This myth frames digital vigilance as part of contemporary piety, emphasizing the need to protect religious messages from decontextualization and misuse.
14	Accountability Support in the Hijrah Process	Hijrah is sustained not only by individual willpower, but also by external reminders and accountability mechanisms.	This myth constructs spiritual transformation as a socially supported process, where companions, managers, or communities help maintain religious consistency.

The mythological analysis shows that the podcast frames hijrah as an ideal model of contemporary Muslim identity. Through repeated signs of sacrifice, moral firmness, family support, economic testing, and social accountability, the narrative naturalizes hijrah as a comprehensive transformation rather than a limited personal decision. In this construction, piety is not represented only through ritual observance, but also through the willingness to leave former habits, endure social and economic consequences, and maintain consistency within a supportive religious environment. Thus, the narrative positions hijrah as a culturally powerful model of authentic spiritual transformation in Indonesian digital Islam.

### **Thematic Categorization of Hijrah Messages**

The fourteen themes identified in the analysis can be grouped into five analytical dimensions, as shown in Table 4. This categorization reveals a systematic pattern in the construction of digital hijrah discourse, showing how the narrative links religious reasoning, emotional experience, social relations, material consequences, and practical reorientation into a coherent model of spiritual transformation.

**Table 4. Thematic Categorization of Hijrah Messages in the Kasisolusi Podcast Episode Featuring Uki Kautsar**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Key Characteristics</b>
Theological-Intellectual	1, 2, 4	Islamic legal inquiry, engagement with scholarly authority, evidence-based reasoning, and critical search for religious knowledge
Emotional-Affective	3, 5	Emotional support from religious figures, family negotiation, affective spirituality, and balance between conviction and practical readiness
Social-Relational	6, 9, 14	Moral environment, ethical transition, social support, and accountability mechanisms in sustaining hijrah
Material-Economic	8, 10, 11	Reflection on past wealth, economic uncertainty, discontinuation of former professional activities, and material sacrifice as a sign of religious consistency
Knowledge-Practice	7, 12, 13	Moral boundary-making beyond legal debates, reorientation of worldly skills, digital dakwah challenges, and tension between abandonment and transformation

This categorization shows that Uki Kautsar's hijrah narrative is constructed as a multidimensional process. The narrative does not present hijrah merely as an individual decision to leave the music industry, but as a broader transformation involving intellectual seriousness, emotional struggle, family and community support, material consequences, ethical responsibility, and practical reorientation. Through these five dimensions, the podcast frames hijrah as a comprehensive model of religious transformation in Indonesian digital Islam.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study shows that celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube construct spiritual transformation through layered semiotic processes. The denotative level presents Uki Kautsar's hijrah as a personal journey involving Islamic legal inquiry, the search for scholarly references, family negotiation, ethical professional transition, economic uncertainty, and post-hijrah consistency. The connotative level reveals deeper cultural and emotional meanings, such as sincerity, intellectual humility, moral boundary-making, material sacrifice, social support, and accountability. At the mythological level, these meanings are naturalized into a broader model of Islamic piety in which hijrah is framed as a comprehensive reorientation of life, marked by distance from the former secular-professional world, moral firmness, family and community validation, and the reorientation of skills toward religiously acceptable purposes.

These findings can be explained by the particular nature of celebrity hijrah narratives in digital media. Unlike ordinary personal testimonies, celebrity hijrah stories carry symbolic power because they involve a publicly recognizable figure whose past identity is already familiar to the audience. Uki Kautsar's position as a former guitarist of NOAH makes his transformation narratively powerful because the audience can clearly identify the contrast between his previous professional world and his current religious orientation. This contrast enables the podcast to construct hijrah not only as a private spiritual experience, but also as a visible moral transition. The combination of verbal testimony, emotional expression, gestures, visual framing, and podcast intimacy strengthens the persuasive force of the narrative. Therefore, the meanings produced in the episode do not emerge only from what Uki says, but also from how his story is mediated, performed, and emotionally framed in the YouTube format.

The five analytical dimensions identified in this study can be understood as the result of layered semiotic processes described in the Introduction. Through Barthes's semiotic framework, these dimensions show how Uki Kautsar's hijrah narrative does not operate only as factual information at the denotative level, but also as a system of signs that produces cultural-emotional meanings at the connotative level and naturalized ideological assumptions at the mythological level (Barthes, 1972, 1977; Chandler, 2022; Rose, 2016). The theological-intellectual dimension emerges because the narrative repeatedly presents the search for Islamic legal opinions, religious evidence, and scholarly authority as signs of serious religious transformation. The emotional-affective dimension appears because gestures, hesitation, reassurance, and family negotiation transform hijrah into an affective experience, not merely a doctrinal decision. The social-relational dimension is produced through signs of moral environment, ethical communication, and accountability support, which frame piety as something sustained through community and relational validation. The material-economic dimension appears because wealth, income uncertainty, and the decision to leave music-related work become signs of sacrifice and sincerity. Meanwhile, the knowledge-practice dimension shows how previous skills are not only abandoned, but also negotiated and potentially redirected toward dakwah or morally acceptable purposes. This finding is consistent with the understanding that digital dakwah increasingly packages Islamic teachings and personal religious narratives into accessible media forms (Zaid et al., 2022; Slama, 2018), while contemporary hijrah has been reactualized as a social-cultural movement responding to identity crises and spiritual needs among urban Muslim youth (Nisa, 2018; Wati et al., 2022; Suhar et al., 2024). In this sense, the five dimensions explain why the podcast constructs hijrah as more than a change of profession: it becomes a normative model of Islamic piety in the digital public sphere, where personal testimony, visual performance, digital authority, and popular religious discourse interact to naturalize ideas about authentic Muslim identity, moral transformation, and religious commitment.

The findings of this study both confirm and extend previous research on hijrah as a form of Islamic identity formation among Indonesian Muslim youth. Previous studies have shown that hijrah is not merely an individual act of repentance, but a collective process shaped by urban culture, peer communities, religious authority, and social media. Rahman, Nurnisya, Nurjanah, and Hifziati (2021) demonstrate that Instagram provides an important arena for Indonesian millennials to articulate Islamic identity through hijrah narratives, visual symbols, and community-based religious expressions. Rijal (2025) similarly shows that urban Muslim youth pursue hijrah as a quest for self-transformation through moral discipline, study circles, and everyday religious practices, while Hasan (2019) highlights how public events such as the Hijrah Festival create collective spaces where youth culture and popular Islamic expression intersect. Fansuri (2024) further situates hijrah within broader post-Suharto transformations of faith and religious subjectivity. This study supports these arguments by showing that hijrah is indeed connected to identity formation, public visibility, and social-religious transformation. However, it extends them by explaining how such identity formation is semiotically produced in a celebrity YouTube narrative. Rather than only identifying hijrah as a social identity or youth movement, this study shows how verbal testimony, non-verbal expressions, visual framing, and narrative sequencing transform Uki Kautsar's personal experience into a symbolic model of ideal Muslim piety. This contribution is important because previous studies have noted tensions such as exclusivist interpretations, conservative shifts, and rigid moral boundaries in hijrah communities (Jailani, 2024; R. Rahman, Ilyas, Alwi, & Zailani, 2024), but have not fully explained how those boundaries are constructed through layered visual and verbal signs in digital celebrity testimony.

The findings also contribute to studies on digital dakwah, celebrity piety, religious authority, and the commodification of religion in online Islamic communication. Earlier research has shown that digital platforms have transformed Islamic preaching from institutionally centered communication into a more personalized, visual, and performative form of religious authority. Febrian (2024) demonstrates that religious influencers on Instagram construct authority through visual familiarity, aesthetic presentation, and symbolic distance, while Raya (2024) shows that celebrity preachers package religious messages through persuasive style, personal branding, and media-friendly performance. Andok (2024) argues that online media reshapes how religious authority is perceived and validated by audiences, and Wahyudi, Srimulyani, Shadiqin, and Gumilang (2025) show that digital mediation can produce hybrid forms of religious authority in online ritual communities. Raya (2025) further explains that digital Islam has become a space where authority and commodification intersect through platform visibility, audience metrics, and market-oriented religious presence. This study confirms that digital dakwah is not merely the transmission of religious teachings, but a process of packaging religious transformation through celebrity identity, affective storytelling, and platform-based visibility. However, this study adds a more specific semiotic contribution: it shows that commodification and authority are not only institutional or economic processes, but also symbolic processes. In Uki Kautsar's hijrah narrative, religious authority becomes persuasive through emotional struggle, recognizable celebrity status, moral contrast between past and present, and audiovisual intimacy. This finding complements Beta's (2019) argument that piety, commerce, and politics can intersect in the production of Islamic public identity, as well as Dewi, Fata, and Fauzi's (2024) observation that hijrah celebrities perform piety while adapting religious commitments to middle-class lifestyles and public visibility. It also resonates with Mahzumi et al. (2025) and Rohid et al. (2025), who show that digital Islamic activism shapes youth religiosity while raising issues of authority shift, ideological contestation, and polarization.

Compared with previous semiotic and multimodal studies of religious media, this study demonstrates the specific value of Barthesian semiotics for analyzing celebrity hijrah narratives on

YouTube. Prior studies have shown that semiotic analysis is useful for revealing how religious and ideological meanings are constructed through visual, verbal, and symbolic signs. Wignell, Tan, and O'Halloran (2017) and Wignell et al. (2018), for example, show how extremist religious media use images and texts to construct ideological narratives, moral binaries, and collective identity, while Aguilera-Carnerero (2021) demonstrates how visual polarization naturalizes distinctions between heroes and enemies in Islamic State propaganda magazines. Salam-Salmaoui, Salam, and Hassan (2024) further show how semiotic choices can rebrand Islamic authority for younger digital audiences through popular media aesthetics. Other studies also confirm the usefulness of semiotics in decoding ideological meanings in political, Qur'anic, ritual, and religious movement contexts (Al-Momani, Badarneh, & Migdadi, 2017; Parandavaji & Nasihat, 2018; Prilutskiy & Lebedev, 2020; Traspe, 2024). This study builds on that body of work but applies Barthesian semiotics to a different and underexplored object: celebrity hijrah testimony on YouTube. By distinguishing denotation, connotation, and myth, this study shows how digital hijrah narratives do not merely present religious information or inspirational stories. They construct a symbolic system in which ideas such as sacrifice, moral firmness, family support, economic testing, social accountability, and distance from the former secular-professional world are made to appear natural, desirable, and socially expected as signs of authentic religious transformation. In doing so, this study fills the gap identified in previous literature by explaining how personal testimony, visual performance, digital authority, and mythological meanings interact to construct Islamic piety in the digital public sphere.

The positive implication of this finding is that digital hijrah narratives can become accessible religious resources for young Muslims who seek examples of spiritual transformation in familiar media formats. Personal testimony, when presented reflectively, can make religious change more relatable and emotionally meaningful. However, these narratives may also produce unintended dysfunctions when hijrah is represented through narrow standards of piety, visible sacrifice, radical separation from previous lifestyles, or public performance of religious change. Studies on hijrah and youth religiosity show that certain hijrah movements may shift from progressive religious motivation toward more conservative orientations, especially when religious transformation is framed through rigid moral boundaries and literalist interpretations (R. Rahman et al., 2024). The influence of hijrah celebrities on young Muslim fashion consumers also indicates that public figures can shape aspirational models of piety through visible lifestyle markers, including clothing, appearance, and public religious identity (Zain et al., 2024). In digital environments, such visibility can create symbolic pressure for audiences to display religiosity in ways that are publicly recognizable and socially validated. This pressure may marginalize quieter, gradual, or less visible forms of religious transformation, especially when authentic hijrah is imagined as requiring dramatic lifestyle rupture or public testimony. Broader studies on Muslim youth and digital media also show that online religious engagement is closely tied to identity negotiation, family expectations, and social pressures in digital spaces (Douglass et al., 2022). Therefore, the public circulation of hijrah narratives needs to be accompanied by more nuanced religious communication that recognizes diverse pathways of transformation, including private, gradual, ethical, and socially responsible forms of piety.

Based on these findings, several practical implications can be proposed. Digital dakwah content creators should present hijrah narratives not only as stories of leaving the past, but also as stories of building new ethical, social, and productive contributions after transformation. This is important because digital dakwah in the contemporary media environment requires not only attractive content, but also ethical communication, credibility, and sensitivity to audience diversity (Alima, Binti Saaidun, Ibrahim, & Hasanuddin, 2025). Religious transformation narratives can be made more engaging through digital storytelling, but such storytelling should remain grounded in Islamic values and avoid reducing hijrah to

spectacle or personal branding alone (Rasit, Zamri, Rahim, & Anggrayni, 2025). Religious educators and institutions should also strengthen digital religious literacy so that audiences can critically understand how religious messages are framed, edited, emotionalized, and circulated through platforms. This aligns with studies showing that interactive preaching through social media can support youth religious engagement when it encourages reflection, dialogue, and self-improvement rather than one-way moral judgment (Zafri, Opir, & Yahaya, 2023). Preachers and religious communicators should be careful when presenting contested religious issues, such as the legal status of music, by acknowledging scholarly differences and avoiding the naturalization of one pathway as the only legitimate model of piety. At the institutional level, digital dakwah should also be inclusive and socially responsible, as shown in studies on female digital preachers in Aceh who negotiate religious communication, family roles, public engagement, and digital literacy in complex social contexts (Sari & Sikumbang, 2025). Finally, communities that support individuals undergoing hijrah should provide not only moral encouragement, but also practical support related to livelihood, skill reorientation, social adjustment, and peace-oriented religious communication. Such support is necessary because dakwah can contribute to social cohesion when it emphasizes compassion, reconciliation, and constructive transformation rather than polarization or exclusion (Hamid, Firdaus, Uyuni, & Farooq, 2025).

This discussion demonstrates that celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube are not merely inspirational accounts of personal change. They are symbolic systems that construct and circulate meanings of Islamic piety, religious authority, moral sacrifice, and social accountability. Through Barthesian semiotics, this study shows how digital religious narratives move from personal testimony to cultural meaning and then to naturalized ideology. The contribution of this study lies in showing that digital hijrah must be understood not only as a social movement or dakwah content, but also as a semiotic process through which contemporary Muslim identity is made visible, persuasive, and ideologically meaningful in digital society.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that celebrity hijrah narratives on YouTube function as more than personal testimonies of religious change. Through Barthesian semiotic analysis, Uki Kautsar's hijrah narrative in the Kasisolusi podcast is shown to operate through three interconnected levels of meaning. At the denotative level, the narrative presents a personal journey involving Islamic legal inquiry, family negotiation, professional transition, economic uncertainty, and post-hijrah consistency. At the connotative level, these signs produce cultural and emotional meanings related to sincerity, sacrifice, intellectual humility, moral boundary-making, social support, and accountability. At the mythological level, these meanings are naturalized into a broader model of Islamic piety in which hijrah is framed as a comprehensive transformation of identity, morality, livelihood, and social relations.

The main contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how digital hijrah narratives construct Islamic piety through the layered interaction of verbal testimony, non-verbal expression, visual framing, celebrity authority, and platform-based visibility. By applying Barthes's concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth to a celebrity hijrah narrative on YouTube, this study extends previous research on hijrah, digital dakwah, religious influencers, and semiotic analysis of religious media. The study shows that YouTube does not merely circulate hijrah stories as inspirational content, but also participates in producing ideological meanings about authentic Muslim identity, moral transformation, sacrifice, and religious commitment in contemporary Indonesian digital Islam. In this sense, the article contributes to

digital religion scholarship by positioning celebrity hijrah narratives as symbolic systems through which religious authority and ideal piety are made visible, persuasive, and socially meaningful.

However, this study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single podcast episode featuring one public figure, so its findings cannot be generalized to all hijrah narratives, all celebrity testimonies, or all forms of digital dakwah. Second, the analysis is limited to verbal, non-verbal, and visual signs within the video, without examining how audiences actually interpret, accept, negotiate, or resist the meanings constructed in the podcast. Third, although this study identifies visual elements as part of the semiotic process, it does not provide a detailed technical analysis of editing, camera movement, lighting, sound design, or platform algorithms. Future studies may compare multiple hijrah narratives across YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, examine audience reception through interviews or focus groups, and conduct longitudinal research to understand how celebrity hijrah narratives evolve over time. Such research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital platforms shape religious transformation, public piety, and Muslim identity in contemporary society.

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