Religion and New Media
(The Phenomena of New Media Influences on Religion in the Digital Era)

Fatjri Nur Tajuddin[1,] Fatmawati A. Rahman[2], Muhammad Satar[3]

[1] The University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
[2] STIE Tri Dharma Nusantara Makassar, Indonesia
[3] Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare

Correspondence Email:
f.n.tajuddin@uva.nl

Keywords:
New Media; Religion; Media Influence; Digital Era

ABSTRAK
Penelitian ini menggali hubungan rumit antara agama dan media baru dalam masyarakat kontemporer dan bagaimana munculnya teknologi media baru telah mengubah wacana, penyebaran, dan penafsiran agama. Dimulai dengan eksplorasi sejarah evolusi media dari sekedar alat komunikasi menjadi kekuatan ideologis dan komersial yang kuat, penelitian ini menyelidiki dampak media baru terhadap keyakinan, praktik, dan representasi agama. Media baru berfungsi sebagai fasilitator atau sebagai tantangan terhadap nilai-nilai dan institusi agama tradisional. Penelitian ini menelusuri kompleksitas peran media dalam membentuk narasi keagamaan, mengatasi permasalahan objektivitas, bias, dan komodifikasi. Riset ini juga menyelidiki dinamika media Islam, menyoroti perbedaan dalam representasi nilai-nilai Islam dan implikasinya terhadap otoritas agama serta implikasi sosial yang lebih luas dari pengaruh media terhadap spiritualitas dan kehidupan beragama. Melalui analisis kritis terhadap penggambaran media tentang agama dan dampaknya terhadap komunitas beragama, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang interaksi kontemporer antara media, agama, dan budaya.

ABSTRACT
This research explores the complex relationship between religion and new media in contemporary society and how the emergence of new media technologies has changed the discourse, distribution and interpretation of religion. Beginning with an exploration of the historical evolution of media from mere communication tools to powerful ideological and commercial forces, this research investigates the impact of new media on religious beliefs, practices, and representations. New media functions as a facilitator or as a challenge to traditional religious values and institutions. This research explores the complexity of the media's role in shaping religious narratives, overcoming problems of objectivity, bias and commodification. This research also investigates the dynamics of Islamic media, highlighting differences in the representation of Islamic values and their implications for religious authority as well as the broader social implications of media influence on spirituality and religious life. Through critical analysis of media depictions of religion and their impact on religious communities, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of contemporary interactions between media, religion, and culture.

INTRODUCTION

At the present time, the media has a very important role as a fast messenger with a wide range. Today's media plays a role in various fields, be it social, cultural, economy, or political (Akbar 2019; Kuada, Tamowangkay, and Tulung 2023; Zuhrinal M. Nawawi 2022). The more developed the world becomes more modern, the role is expanding. The influence of the media developed after the discovery of radio and television and the last appearance of the internet. Satellites as signal senders now transmit sound and image waves throughout the world, even to remote areas. In relation to religion, in general, the essence of media globality makes religious followers use it to spread the teachings of their religion. Moreover, because in principle that the prophet who receives the revelation has a role in spreading religion, spirituality and guiding humans. At the end, it raises the question that whether new media can be used to spread religious culture, just as media expertise in advertising various products or other things?

Religion and Media, if explored further, on the one hand have the same thing in terms of seeking the truth. The progressive mediation of religion through websites, social networks, apps, and digital devices has created new conditions for religious experiences, practices, and beliefs (Evolvi 2021). The difference is that religion claims to have found the truth, while the media does not say that. One of the media disciplines is to check and verify until they find the truth as close as possible, so that the truth is relative. While the truth for religion is absolute (Munajah 2021). Religion as a world community is a very important part. Especially for people who live in areas with a religious and spiritual population. Apart from the diversity of meanings from the belief in a religion or sect of a religion, but one thing that might be the same is interpreted by adherents of religion that religion is not only a social institution but also as a relationship between humans and their God. This fact makes religious issues very sensitive, including media coverage. So in dealing with a situation like this, the media must reflect this reality and capture the situation so that religious and

media relations can take place in harmony. The media plays an important role as a reflection of society because the media represents the state of a situation or place.

If we look back, the media at first only functions as a means of communication and as an information channel (Grady et al. 2022). The media at that time did not become an entity that had an ideological character for its users. If we look at the comparison today, of course it is very different from the media that is developing at the moment, it has very ideological and political interests, even other interests. The development of the media with the presence of the internet opens opportunities for the integration of digital stalls. An example is the presence of various online stores such as Amazon.com, ebay.com, Alibaba.com and social media groups such as Facebook, Twitter, and others. Such conditions also lead to economic activities centered from online media. Two advantages of digital stalls are convenience for sales and convenience for buyers (Hasan 2023). For sellers, the costs used will be cheaper. If you have to open a store for billions of rupiahs beforehand, then the digital shop can save you the cost. On the other hand, social media groups are used as a means of disseminating information, in this case if it is associated with religion, the group is used as a medium to establish intimacy and as a media of da'wah.

The media basically has a reciprocal relationship with the community. The media requires the presence of the community, on the contrary the community needs the presence of new media. The emergence of new media in this case is the internet with social media as a derivative, society culture has changed to become more dynamic. Communication which was only limited at first, now tends to be unlimited. With the internet, one can communicate with other people on other continents. The communication process is carried out very easily without being hindered by the time and partition of the country. New media developed into devices that have global effects. New media brings freedom of communication for the world community.

In this essay, I will explore how the phenomenon of new media presence in its influence on religion today. The presence of new media can be seen from its

development in the community in accepting or perhaps being rejected, especially in the spread of religion. In addition, the presence of new media also has an effect on the meaning of diverse religions in society which is used as a new commodity or even used as a benchmark in carrying out daily life like religion.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Religion

Religion can be considered as a means of culture for humans and by that means humans are able to adjust to their experiences in their entire environment including themselves, group members, nature and other environments that are perceived as transcendental (Riady 2021). Human thoughts, feelings and actions towards things that he feels are beyond the reach of his daily experiences with the real world cause people to believe in religion. This can bring people to peace and tranquility, why then religion is considered to be able to build mood and motivation. Religion makes people feel something and also wants to do something. Motivation has a purpose, and is guided by a set of lasting values that have meaning for what they think is good and right. A Buddhist monk feels a strong negative motivation when given a meal of meat.

The concept of religion no longer arises because of belief in things but rather refers to the process of revelation of religion from God to someone who is considered holy (Danz 2020). Humans have begun to realize the process of revelation and the belief in the existence of a Creator who cannot be personified with nature or material things. This makes people believe that religion is something supernatural that controls humans. At that time humans began to look for a more rational thought to look for the nature of Godhead. According to Geertz (1966), religion is a symbolic system that plays a role in building a strong, pervasive, and long-lasting mood and motivation in humans by formulating a general conception of life and wrapping those conceptions with an aura of factuality so that the atmosphere heart and motivation look uniquely unique. The symbol system referred

to by Geertz is everything that brings and conveys an idea to people. For example, a Torah scroll brings the idea to the Jews as a revelation of God, or for example when you see a religious leader who goes to the hospital to bring a warning of the power of God.

New Media

The age of new media is changing the social order of communication (Hasyim and Arafah 2023). New Media is a term intended to include the emergence of digital, computer, or information and communication technology networks in the late 20th century. Most of the technologies described as new media are digital, often having characteristics that can be manipulated, networked, incompressible, interactive and impartial. In simple terms, new media is a medium that is formed from the interaction between humans and computers and the internet in particular. These include websites, online social networks, online forums and others that use computers as their media. Views on new media can have positive and negative effects. Positive influence info from the media is very easy and very fast, can be accessed anywhere and get it very cheap. The negative influence of new media on humanity is that information from the media is unlimited and that the entry of external culture through this new media, if not based on science, will cause negative things to society.

Let us consider how the definition of new media according to Wikipedia that new media is a term meant to encompass the emergence of digital, computerized, or networked information and communication technologies in the later part of the 20th century. New media technologies refer to all kinds of web-related technologies like social networking sites, blogs, online social media networking, and other communication technology forms (Yujie et al. 2022). Most technologies described as "new media" are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial. Some examples may be the Internet, websites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMS, and DVDs. New media is not television programs, feature films, magazines, books, or

paper-based publications. After various modern views have emerged, there are also very large changes in the media sector. The media and technology used will increase along with the changing times and various thoughts that are modern. Scientists at the beginning of the 19th century strongly believed that these various thoughts would bring human transformation to a better level. For example, the development of new media is computers. In the past, computers were large and only as analogs, now they functioned better, even now there are laptops that can be taken if you travel. According to some, New Media can be defined as a product of technology-mediated communication that exists together with digital computers (Creeber and Martin 2009). Another definition of online media is the media in which consists of a combination of various elements. That means there is media convergence in it, where several media are put together (Lievrouw 2011).

If we explore and pay attention to how the new media plays a role, here I give an example of the benefits of the development of new media today. For instamce in the field of education, can be a means of learning and exchanging information for students can even be used to search for information sources such as Wikipedia and others, and a new system called E-learning that facilitates learning systems. In addition, new media has a big influence in the social field or called social networking, which functions as a communication medium for internet users to socialize, for example Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other social media. However, on the other hand, the new media is also believed to have weaknesses such as causing someone to be lazy because it only relies on internet steadiness, for example people who are lazy to do the task will search on google and copy and paste it, and even give unfavorable doctrine to underage people because everyone can use it.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The New Media Revolution in The Society

Many new media technologies have emerged in modern society (Guo 2023).

Utilizing the media to preach religion will increasingly show its urgency when we know how the great western powers are using the mass media to the greatest extent possible to dominate the world. At present the media in Western countries are big and influential when they show and load advertisements. The majority of this kind of media is controlled by the owners of power and rich people. They use the media to guarantee their political and economic greed. The spread of materialistic, free sex, violence and various moral depravities including the original aims of Western media. Now, it's time to use the media properly to spread spirituality, morals and worship to God in order to lead people to perfection. However, does everyone think that way? In fact, this is not only happening in the west but almost in every corner of the world. The need to utilize the media to spread the sacred thoughts of religion is felt more now than in the past because people after a period of time away from religion and spirituality, now they feel the shortcomings. Thus, the media is the most influential tool rather than other tools in conveying the transcendent message and giving the spirit of religion to all people in the world.

In its development, the media does not only become an entity that produces cultural, economic and political products. However, the media is now an energy that brings various ideologies and even religion (Goodarzi, Fahimifar, and Daryani 2021). New media produced from new technology now brings new religious values. If it is explored further the media turns out to bring new theology in religion. Almost all people seek sources of religious law or basic theology from new media. This condition is increasingly evident with the emergence of the internet or what is called new media. New media or the internet bring new values in religion for some people. So with the presence of the new media, some people tend to take religious values through the media. An example is the development of online media that uses Islamic, Christian, Hindu or other religious approaches. This media uses content that uses the teachings of their religion (Campbell and Connelly 2015). Even someone who wants to find a scripture reference they only need to click on an online site, then the reference that is sought will appear.

The new media also functions as an entity to spread religious teachings. The Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities that Campbell (2010) surveys come up with a variety of responses to technology. Some believers set careful boundaries around their media engagement, such as a Jewish family that takes careful preparation to turn off electronic media for Sabbath. Others explore technological possibilities for strengthening and upholding their values, such as a Christian teenager who found her faith, and now frequents those same forums to introduce Christ to others as a form of *e-vangelism*. want to spread religion must take a walk, it is very different from now. New media has provided space for people/ groups/institutions that will spread religion. By using an online site, one can create a program for distributing religious content. The content created penetrates the boundaries of space, time and even state barriers.

Is New Media Becoming A New Religion?

With the importance of new media for the community, it is as if the community will feel dependent on the content presented. So from the attitude of public dependence on new media can affect the daily behavior and their views in interpreting the life of the community, especially in the aspect of the meaning of religious values presented in what is displayed by the new media. For example, in the great celebration of a particular religion, the displayed content will certainly be related to the atmosphere at that time, such as the month of Ramadan on Islam and Christmas in Christianity which promotes religious attributes and so on. But from the amount of content that is presented in religious nuances does the show really display religious values that are in accordance with the essence of the religious text?

To anticipate religious momentum, much between television media and advertising on the internet also advertises religious scents, but is parallel with the consumer's interests in the products of capital owners (Anwar et al. 2022). The media acts as a mouthpiece for the owners of capital, through commercial advertisements and entertainment to ensnare and foster attitudes and consumptive behavior for the audience. In the context of advertising today, shows that are

Jurnal Kajian Manajemen Dakwah
Volume 6, Nomor 1, 2024
Program Studi Manajmen Dakwah
Fakultas Ushuluddin Adab dan Dakwah, IAIN Parepare
Jurnal Kajian Manajemen Dakwah
e-ISSN: 2685-7146

exposed by new media with religious nuances can be interpreted as capitalist agents where the enthusiasm that is carried in the show is able to awaken the imaginary relations of the audience to imitate lifestyle and behavior as a person who has the same character as the show. Even what they say is not necessarily done in their daily lives. Because through the appearance of Islam that is imaged in such a way as to further be only intended to profit from all of the imagery.

Religion as A Commodity in The Digital Era

Seeing the daily interaction between religion and the media in our cultural life, Religion in the Age of New Media is an interesting new assessment of the state of modern religiosity. The past few years have resulted in a demonstration marked far from religions that are institutionalized towards individual, autonomous and individual searches. Film, television, the music industry and the Internet are very important in this process, cutting off the monolithic statements of world religions and giving access to more diverse and fragmented ideals. While the volume and variety of information that occurs through global media changes religious thinking and commitment, human desire for spirituality also refreshes popular culture itself, creating film commodities, world sports, popular music and others as contexts for religious meaning (Pandit et al. 2023).

Drawing interesting research on household media consumption, Hoover (2006) mapped the way media and religion mixed and collided in the cultural experience of media audiences. The results will be an important reading for all who are interested in how mass media is currently related to contemporary religious and spiritual life. Television broadcasts begin to erase or negate the basis of religious reality. Religion as a teaching full of reflection as guidance begins to shift into spectacle. Religion is presented in the form of entertaining, quizzes or full jokes. So that the audience is actually more interested in entertainment, quiz prizes or humor presented than the religious teachings that are conveyed. Television media is relatively easier to anesthetize the logic of common sense that the audience should focus on religious ritual activities. So the phenomenon that always appears on the

surface is the use of Islamic symbols in an effort to double the profits of television media capital owners. Such phenomena are not limited to commercial advertising, but also news, sports, film, soap operas. Such a phenomenon raises religious labels as merchandise. Although this is not a new term, it has happened a long time before, but this impression is increasingly prevalent.

Religion as a private thing as well as a special relationship between people personally with their God must now be published as a necessity if they want to survive and gain the sympathy of the people. In fact, it is always used as a tool to gain the support of the people and also the economy. Unfortunately, commodification of religion will not bring good to the people, because it only encourages people to reduce understanding of the verses that are supposed to be complete. It is not surprising that many religious leaders and high-ranking religious party officials stumble as a result of being out of sync between all religious jargon shouted by personal behavior because religion is forcibly withdrawn only as a selling item and not as a self-barometer.

SIMPULAN

When the times have reached this day, the problem of religion is still the heart of human life, on the other hand technology is growing very rapidly and the capitalist industry is rampant. Even though times and technology have developed, not with religion, the nature of religion that is believed to be noble and sacred does not allow change to become elastic following development. So how when technology develops, new media has become a tool of strength in the world, then how is the position of religion in several places becoming dominant with a large quantity. When the media play a more objective role it will have a very positive impact. Many media always prioritize the objectivity by covering from different, proportional, balanced perspectives and adhering to the ethics code of the press. Media like this certainly help a lot in community reconciliation, change misperceptions, and increase mutual understanding of the causes and consequences

of conflict. Islamic media, for example, does not always represent or represent true Islamic values. The media is sometimes present only representing certain groups and cannot be a reference to reliable Islamic values. The media distributes messages about Islamic values, but the representation of its meaning becomes biased. Something represented by the media is a construct constructed as a fact. So, the audience understands religious messages in different ways. Religious authority becomes very free leading to a libertarian form. Media and religion are two very important things. According to my understanding, even though in reality the media is not more important than religion. As religious people it is not wise to escape from the role of the media. The media with its mighty power should be able to be controlled so that it does not betray its idealistic goals. The media is not a collection of inanimate objects that move and advance by itself, but the most important thing is a group of people who have power over it. The substance of religion should be present in their midst and able to be their guide to stand on the truth of religion. We have seen here that the media is an inevitable, even pervasive dimension of modern life. We further see evidence of how media relate to spiritual and religious life on a daily basis. By this way, we hope to further elaborate on the ways in which the media leads to significance in spiritual and religious life every day. In this modern era religion has become the property of capitalists who are frankly exploited and commodified into industrial products. The problem is how religion is commodified by new media so that it experiences a shift in orientation and value. After experiencing commodification, it is not impossible that new representations will emerge in religion that can be interpreted as cultural texts that have particular meaning.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

Akbar, Rahmandika Syahrial. 2019. "Peran Media Sosial Dalam Perubahan Gaya Hidup Remaja." *Universitas Airlangga* 1(1):1–20.

Anwar, Anas Iswanto, Andi Harmoko Arifin, Sri Undai Nurbayani, Prima Rakhmat Nurul Nugraha, Abdul Rahman, and Hasan Basri Umar. 2022. "Study on The

Acceleration of Economic Recovery for Makassar City." *International Business and Accounting Research* 6(2). doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.35474/ibarj.v6i2.266.

Campbell, Heidi A., and Louise Connelly. 2015. "Religion and New Media." in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences: Second Edition*.

Creeber, Glen, and Royston Martin. 2009. *Digital Cultures Understanding New Media*.

Danz, Christian. 2020. "Religious Diversity and the Concept of Religion: Theology and Religious Pluralism." *Neue Zeitschrift Fur Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie*.

Evolvi, Giulia. 2021. "Religion, New Media, and Digital Culture." in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*.

Goodarzi, Mostafa, Ali Asghar Fahimifar, and Elahe Shakeri Daryani. 2021. "New Media and Ideology: A Critical Perspective." *Journal of Cyberspace Studies* 5(2):137–62.

Grady, Sara M., Ron Tamborini, Allison Eden, and Brandon Van Der Heide. 2022. "The Social Factors and Functions of Media Use." *Journal of Communication* 72(5):523–39. doi: 10.1093/joc/jqac026.

Guo, Hong. 2023. "The Development and Application of New Media Technology in News Communication Industry." *International Journal of Electrical Engineering and Education*. doi: 10.1177/0020720921996593.

Hasan, Adnan. 2023. "Pengaruh Kapasitas Digital Marketing Terhadap Orientasi Kewirausahaan Dan Kinerja Pemasaran UMKM." *SEIKO : Journal of Management & Business* 6(2):237–48. doi: https://doi.org/10.37531/sejaman.v6i2.6194.

Hasyim, Muhammad, and Burhanuddin Arafah. 2023. "Semiotic Multimodality Communication in The Age of New Media." *Studies in Media and Communication* 11(1):96–103. doi: 10.11114/smc.v11i1.5865.

Kuada, Celciane Meykristi, Ventje Tamowangkay, and Trilke Tulung. 2023. "Peran Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Marketing Politik Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (Psi) Provinsi Sulawesi Utara." *Jurnal Sam Ratulangi Politics Review* 1(1):1–6.

Lievrouw, Leah. 2011. *Alternative and Activist New Media*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Munajah, Neneng. 2021. "Agama Dan Tantangan Modernitas." *Tahdzib Al-Akhlaq: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4(1):83–92. doi: 10.34005/tahdzib.v4i1.1433.

Pandit, Ram, Anas Iswanto Anwar, Rakhmat Nurul Prima Nugraha, and Seamus Pandit. 2023. *How Price Rises on Staple Foods Affect Households in South Sulawesi*.

Riady, Ahmad Sugeng. 2021. "Agama Dan Kebudayaan Masyarakat Perspektif Clifford Geertz." *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI)* 2(1):13–22. doi: 10.22373/jsai.v2i1.1199.

Yujie, Zhang, Megat Al Imran Yasin, Syed Agil Bin Shekh Alsagoff, and Ang Lay Hoon. 2022. "The Mediating Role of New Media Engagement in This Digital Age." *Frontiers in Public Health*. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.879530.

Zuhrinal M. Nawawi, Gita Aulyia Utami. 2022. "Peran Media Sosial Dalam Peningkatan Jaringan Pasar." *Journal Economy and Currency Study (JECS)* 4(2):93–98. doi: 10.51178/jecs.v4i2.752.