RELIGION STUDIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE: MAPPING THEORIES, METHODOLOGIES, AND APPROACHES IN DIGITAL RELIGION STUDIES

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Abstract: *This study aims to identify and explore trends in Digital Religion Studies, focusing on mapping the development of theories, methodologies, and approaches within this field. The research highlights the theoretical and methodological frameworks applied in analyzing the intersections of religion, media, and digital culture. Employing a qualitative approach through library research, this study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method supplemented by thematic analysis. Based on a rigorous process of data identification and selection using inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study analyzed 41 journal articles and book chapters relevant to Digital Religion Studies. The findings reveal three key insights. First, the theoretical perspectives utilized in this field are predominantly influenced by media and communication theories, particularly those associated with the "Campbell Circle," including theories of mediation, hypermediation, mediatization, deep mediatization, and the Religious-Social Shaping of Technology (RSST). Second, from a methodological perspective, qualitative approaches dominate the field, with limited engagement in quantitative methods. Most studies rely on secondary data from library research to build theoretical or conceptual arguments. Third, thematically, researchers tend to focus on central topics in Digital Religion Studies, such as rituals, communities, identity, and authority. The analysis underscores a predominance of studies addressing global or developed country contexts, with minimal exploration of local phenomena, particularly in Indonesia. This indicates that Digital Religion Studies has substantial potential for further development, especially in bridging the gap between global and local perspectives.*

Keywords: *Digital Religion; Digital Religion Studies; Theory; Methodology; Approach.*

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini akan memetakan teori, metodologi, dan pendekatan yang berkembang dalam Studi Agama Digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis penelitian kepustakaan (library research). Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah Systematic Literature Review (SLR) yang dilengkapi dengan metode analisis tematik (thematic analysis). Berdasarkan proses identifikasi dan seleksi data yang didasarkan pada kriteria inklusi dan eksklusi, penelitian ini memperoleh 41 artikel jurnal dan book chapter yang dinilai relevan dengan studi agama digital. Penelitian ini menghsailkan temuan sebagai berikut. Pertama, perspektif teoretis yang digunakan oleh para peneliti cenderung didominasi oleh teori-teori media dan komunikasi yang dikembangkan oleh apa yang dapat disebut sebagai "Campbell Circle". Kedua, dari segi metodologi, kebanyakan penelitian cenderung didominasi oleh pendekatan kualitatif dan hanya sedikit yang mengeksplorasi pendekatan kuantitatif dalam mengalisis fenomena agama digital. Ketiga, dari segi tema, isu-isu yang dielaborasi oleh para peneliti cenderung berpusat pada subjek atau tema utama studi agama digital seperti ritual, komunitas, identitas, dan otoritas. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar penelitian terpusat pada konteks global atau negara-negara maju, sementara fenomena lokal, terutama di Indonesia, masih minim dieksplorasi. Studi agama digital masih memiliki banyak ruang untuk berkembang, terutama dalam menjembatani kesenjangan antara perspektif global dan lokal.*

Kata Kunci: *Agama Digital; Studi Agama Digital; Teori; Metodologi; Pendekatan.*

Introduction

Over the past three decades, scholars interested in the influence of digital technology on society have shown an increasing interest in exploring the intersection of new media technologies, religion, and digital culture. This interest has driven the emergence of a new field of study known as "Digital Religion Studies." While there is no consensus on whether Digital Religion Studies constitutes a new field of study, a subfield within a larger discipline, or a cross-disciplinary research area, the term is frequently used to describe scholars who focus on examining the intersections of media, religion, and digital culture.[1] Digital Religion Studies adopts an interdisciplinary approach to related subjects such as rituals, community, identity, authenticity, and religious authority in digital spaces.[2] The primary focus of Digital Religion Studies is to highlight how digital media shape and are shaped by religion, as well as how digital media are utilized by individuals or social groups for religious purposes. According to Stewart Hoover, Digital Religion Studies is not solely intended to understand the impact of digitalization on "religion as tradition" or "religion as the past," but primarily to examine "how religion today is being shaped in new ways through digital culture."[3] Consequently, Digital Religion Studies can lead to new understandings of religion, rooted in the unique mediation of meaning through digital technologies.

Heidi Campbell defines "Digital Religion" as "religion that is shaped in new ways through digital media and culture."[4] According to Campbell, Digital Religion does not merely refer to religion displayed and articulated online but also highlights how digital media and spaces shape and are shaped by religious practices.[5] Digital Religion represents a technological and cultural space that emerges when discussing how online and offline religious environments have blended or become integrated. The concept of Digital Religion can be understood as a bridge that connects and extends online religious practices and spaces into offline religious contexts, and vice versa. This merging of new and established religious practices suggests that Digital Religion is shaped by the characteristics of online culture (such as interactivity, convergence, and user-generated content) and traditional religion (such as belief systems and rituals rooted in historically grounded communities).[6] In essence, Digital Religion explores the intersection of new media technologies, religion, and digital culture, encompassing topics such as how religious communities engage with the Internet, social media, and AI; how religiosity is expressed through digital practices; and the extent to which technological engagement can be viewed as a spiritual endeavor.[7]

Digital Religion Studies began in the late 20th century—specifically in the mid-1990s—amid the rise and increasing adoption of internet technologies by society. It is a new field of research that explores how religious beliefs and practices are conducted and understood both online and offline within digital culture.[8] Digital Religion Studies focuses on how the perceptions, beliefs, and practices of established offline religious institutions and communities intersect with the dynamic expressions of spirituality and religiosity found online or in other technology-mediated contexts.[9] The field provides a new framework for understanding research that not only seeks to document, define, and analyze diverse religious practices occurring online or facilitated by emerging technologies such as mobile devices, gaming platforms, or augmented reality.[10] Furthermore, Digital Religion Studies recognizes that traditional or offline religious groups and communities are also impacted by the expansion of the internet and the socio-technical structures underlying contemporary society. Thus, Digital Religion Studies not only explores how religion is practiced online but also examines how religious individuals and communities adapt to, respond to, and engage with digital culture.[11]

Digital Religion Studies has undergone significant evolution over more than two decades, producing foundational texts that help define this field of study. This emerging discipline has also developed recognized terminology, categories, and typologies for classifying forms of religious engagement

in online spaces, such as Cyber-Religion,[12] Online Religion,[13] Religion Online,[14] Digital Religion,[15] and Digital Theology.[16] It has introduced recommended methodologies for studying various types of internet use by religious actors or communities,[17] as well as theoretical approaches to interpret these findings.[18] A unique feature of Digital Religion Studies is its emphasis from the outset on comparative research, qualitative and quantitative approaches, and multidisciplinary collaboration. This field continues to evolve, much like the internet itself—a multifaceted, dynamic, and ever-changing technological platform.

This research aims to identify and explore trends in Digital Religion Studies by focusing on the mapping of theories, methodologies, and approaches that have emerged in this field of study. The primary focus of this research is to highlight the various theoretical and methodological approaches that have developed within Digital Religion Studies, the critical discussions surrounding these issues, and an overview of the direction this ever-evolving field is likely to take. Thus, the central research questions are: 1) What theories, methods, and approaches do researchers use to understand, analyze, and interpret the phenomenon of Digital Religion?; 2) How are these theories, methodologies, and approaches applied in analyzing the intersection of religion, media, and digital culture?

Systematic Literature Review On Digital Religion Studies

This study uses a qualitative method based on library research. The approach employed is the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). SLR is a model of literature review with a clearly stated question and objective, a defined search approach, specified inclusion and exclusion criteria, and results in a qualitative assessment of articles. [19] SLR generally includes a four-step procedure: 1) Defining key terms (inclusion) and research to be excluded (exclusion); 2) Using keywords to identify and gather all available research, searching bibliographic databases, and following up on citations; 3) Screening titles and abstracts; 4) Reducing data, producing categories, and generating final interpretation criteria.[20] SLR is chosen for its ability to provide a comprehensive, systematic, and structured literature review by gathering, organizing, and evaluating relevant related research.[21] The data collection process in SLR involves several stages, including identification, selection, analysis, and interpretation. [22] Through the SLR approach, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive view of the position of Digital Religion Studies within the academic discourse, serving as a foundation for recommendations for further research in this discipline.[23] Each theory, method, and approach developed in Digital Religion Studies

is treated as a collection of themes or patterns with specific definitions, typologies, and characteristics, based on certain ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations in understanding the phenomenon of digital religion.

To achieve the objectives of this research, four research questions have been formulated. The research questions are: what subjects or themes are studied in Digital Religion Studies? What theories are used in Digital Religion Studies? What are the dominant methods in Digital Religion Studies? And Were the studies published in the years 2023-2024? After formulating the research questions, the next step is to conduct a search for relevant articles, commonly known as the "search process." The search process utilizes search engines such as Google, and also includes sources from Google Scholar, JSTOR, DOAJ, ScienceDirect, MDPI Journals, Sage Journals, and others. The keywords used are "digital religion," "religion in the digital age," "cyber religion," "virtual religion," "online religion," "digital theology," and their variations in other languages when necessary.

This SLR research on digital religion is conducted within the period of 2023 to 2024. This timeframe was chosen to encompass the developments in religion post-COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022), which brought significant changes to religious practices in the digital space. The data selection process is carried out to filter out relevant and high-quality journal articles that align with the research questions that have been formulated. This selection stage is crucial, as only the articles that meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria will be retained for further analysis. This process begins with the establishment of clear selection criteria, including topic relevance, research methods, source quality, and publication period. Any article that does not meet these criteria is eliminated, ensuring that the research results are more targeted, in-depth, and reliable.

After the data identification and selection process, the next step is to conduct analysis and interpretation. For the purpose of analysis, this research uses thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify, analyze, organize, describe, interpret, and report themes or patterns found within a set of data. This analysis aims to organize and describe the data in a detailed and rich manner. However, thematic analysis also often goes further by interpreting various aspects of the research topic.[24] Unlike most other qualitative methods, thematic analysis is not tied to a specific epistemological or theoretical perspective, which makes it a highly flexible method.[25] The goal of thematic analysis is to identify themes—patterns in the data that are significant or interesting—and use those themes to answer research questions or provide insights into an issue. However, thematic analysis goes beyond simply summarizing data; a good

thematic analysis strives to interpret and understand it. Therefore, the final stage of the SLR, which is interpretation, is already encompassed in this thematic analysis approach.

Mapping the Field

Based on the data identification and selection process following the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 41 journal articles and book chapters were selected as relevant and of high quality to answer the research questions. These articles and book chapters encompass various perspectives related to the main theories used in digital religion studies, the dominant research methodologies, and current publication trends in 2023-2024. In addition, the selected literature also provides insights into the gaps or challenges still faced in digital religion research, which can guide recommendations for future research. These 41 articles form the foundation for conducting in-depth analysis, aiming not only to understand existing theories and methodologies but also to identify theoretical and methodological aspects that have been underexplored in digital religion studies. Below is a detailed overview of the 41 selected pieces of literature:

No	Journal Article/ Book Chapter	Theme (RQ1)	Theory (RQ2)	Methods (RQ3)	Year (RQ4)
1.	Using YouTube as a Digital Pulpit. The Most Influential Catholic Youtubers in Spanish Speaking Countries: Who They Are and How They Communicate[26]	Authority	Social Networks (Boyd and Ellison, 2007)	Qualitative, Textual Analysis	2023
2.	Catholic Church's Communication in the Era of Bergoglio: Balancing Tradition and a New Leadership[27]	Authority	Religious Celebrity (Kim & Chen, 2020), Charismatic Leadership (Weber, 1978)	Qualitative, Textual Analysis	2023
3.	Assalamu'Alaykum, Can We Add This Sister?": WhatsApp Group Chat as a Homemaking Practice among Dutch-speaking Muhajirat in Morocco[28]	Religion, Identity, Community	Migration, Diaspora (Pozanesi, 2020), Materiality (Evolvi, 2020)	Qualitative, Digital Ethnography	2023

4.	Communicating the Sacred in Religious Advertising in Light of the Mediatization of Religion Theory and Research on Digital Religion[29]	Religion, Sacredness, Religious Advertising	Mediatization (Hjarvard, 2008, 2011; Hepp, 2019; Lovheim, 2011, 2014; Lundby, 2018; Campbell & Evolvi, 2019)	Qualitative, Interview	2023
5.	Digital Necromancy: Users' Perceptions of Digital Afterlife and Posthumous Communication Technologies[30]	Religion, Death	Continuing Bond (Klass et al., 1996), Postmortal Society (Jacobsen, 2017), Posthumous Digital Material (O'Connor, 2020); Mediated Death, (Sumiala, 2021).	Quantitative, Online Survey	2023
6.	Doesn't Seem Like a Place to Interact, or Interact Well": Motivations to Discuss (and Not) Science and Religion on Social Media[31]	Religion, Science, Digital Public Space	Public Sphere (Anderson, 2014; Funch, 2014; Bruns & Highfield, 2015).	Qualitative, Interview	2023
7.	Virtuality: A Theory of Digital Judaism(s)[32]	Religion, Virtuality	RSST (Campbell), Symbolic Judaism (Uzi Rebhun), Online/Offline Cybernetic Space (Mitra & Schwatrz.	Qualitative, Textual Analysis	2023

8.	Religious Media Settlers in Times of Deep Mediatization[33]	Religion, Institutions, Community	RSST (Champbell, 2010, 2016, 2021); Mediatization (Hjarvard, 2011, 2014, 2016); Deep Mediatization (Hepp, 2016, 2017; Campbell & Garner, 2016).	Qualitative, Interview	2023
9.	Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and Self-Socialization in Religious Communities[34]	Authority	Digital Religion (Campbell, 2012, 2020; Hjarvard, 2008; Lövheim & Lynch, 2011; Hoover & Echchaibi, 2014).	Qualitative, Interview	2023
10.	Hands-On(ly) Vlogging: How Turkish Muslim Women Perform "Modesty" and "Piety" in Self-Branding on Their YouTube Cooking Channels[35]	Identity	Self-Branding (Burges & Green, 2009; Marwick, 2013; Banet-Weiser, 2018,) Mediated Intimacy (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020; Kanai, 2017)	Qualitative, Interview, Digital Ethnography	2023
11.	Millennial Jihad in the Digital Age[36]	Discourse, Religious Narrative		Textual Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis	2023
12.	Authority, Religion, and Media[37]	Authority	RSST (Campbell, 2010)	Qualitative, Library Research	2023
13.	Spiritual Leadership - Serving God in the Digital Age: Harnessing Technology for Christian Spiritual Growth[38]	Spirituality, Community, Authenticity	Virtual Community (Volmar & Stine, 2021); Mediation of the Sacred (Tsuria, 2021)	Qualitative, Textual Analysis	2023

14.	Spiritual Leaders in the Digital Age: A Study of the Impact of Digitalization on Spiritual Ministry[39]	Authority	RSST (Heidi Champbell)	Qualitative, Library Research	2023
15.	Religion in the Digital Age: An Irreversible Process[40]	Religion, Theology	Digital Theology (Sutinen & Cooper, 2021)	Qualitative, Library Research	2023
16.	Emptiness Through the Perspective of Existentialism and Religion in The Digital Age[41]	Religion, Existential Void	Existential Philosophy, Philosophy of Emptiness (Gay Watson, 2014)	Qualitative, Library Research	2023
17.	The Courage to Preach in the Digital Age[42]	Ritual, Community, Authority	Mythical Objectivism (Parker Palmer, 2007)	Qualitative, Library Research	2023
18.	Hybrid Pesantren in Indonesia; Analyzing the Transformation of Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Age[43]	Community, Authority	Habitus (Pierre Bourdieu, 2018).	Qualitative, Netnography	2023
19.	Moderation of religion in the Fatwa of Majelis Ulama Indonesia about the Ethics of Da'wah in the Digital Age[44]	Religious Discourse/ Narrative		Normative Qualitative, Literature Study	2023
20.	Religious authorities in the digital age: the case of Muslims in Canada[45]	Authority	The Internet as Democratizing the Traditions of Islam (Bunt, 2018; Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Mandaville, 2007).	Qualitative, Interview	2023

21.	Investigating the Psychological, Social, Cultural, and Religious Predictors of COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake Intention in Digital Age: A Media Dependency Theory Perspective[46]	Community, Faith	Media Dependency Theory (MDT) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model	Quantitative, Cross Sectional, Survey Method	2023
22.	Indonesian Muslimah in Realizing Religious Moderation in the Digital Age[47]	Religion, Gender, Identity	Echo Chamber and Online Radicalization (O'Hara & David, 2015), Religious Authority (Campbell, 2007)	Qualitative, Literature Study	2023
23.	Internet and Religion: Digital Deities and Technoshamanism Changing Our Understanding of Spirituality[48]	Ritual, Community	Networked Theology (Campbell & Garner 2016, Hypermediated Space (Evolvi, 2022)	Qualitative, Literature Study	
24.	Fatwa in the Digital Age: Online Muftī, Social Media, and Alternative Religious Authority[49]	Authority	Muslim Public Sphere (Dale F. Eickelman & Jon W. Anderson, 2003)	Qualitative, Ethnographic	2023
25.	Theological Insight of Digital Religion[50]	Religion, Theology, Digital Media	Campbell, Tsuria, Virtullo, Helland, Lovheim	Qualitative, Literature Study	2023
26.	(Re)imagining Ndau Indigenous Religion of Zimbabwe in the Digital Age[51]	Religion, Tradition, Community	Network Society (Castells, 2010, Geographical Dislocation	Qualitative, Ethnography	2023
27.	Market Religion and Religion Marketplace in Digital World[52]	Religion, Commodification	Religious Commodification (Einstein, 2007)	Qualitative, Literature Study	2023

28.	Will Digital Immortality Replace Religion?[53]	Religion, Immortality, Tanshumanism	Spiritual Robots (Geraci, 2006), Trans-humanism (More, 2013)	Qualitative, Literature Study	2023
29.	The World Congress of Families: Anti-Gender Christianity and Digital Far-Right Populism[54]	Religion, Identity, Social Movements	Hyper-mediation (Evolvi, 2022)	Qualitative, Library Research	2023
30.	The City of God Revisited: Digitalism as a New Technological Religion[55]	Religion, Theology	Techno-Religion Based on Computer (Alonso & Arzoz, 2002)	Qualitative, Library Research	2024
31.	Intuitions about the Digitability of Religion among Transnationally Rooted Digital Natives in Switzerland[56]	Religion, Religiosity	Multisite Reality (Campbell & Bellar, 2022)	Qualitative, Online and Offline Participant Observations and Inter-views	2024
32.	The Interaction of Religion and Technology: Ethical Considerations[57]	Religion, Ethics	Campbell	Qualitative, Literature Study	2024
33.	Digital Da'wah: Indonesia Ulema in the Discourse of Theology[58]	Discourse/ Religious Narrative, Da'wah		Qualitative, Literature Study	2024
34.	Integrating Technology in Learning in Madrasah: Towards the Digital Age[59]	Community, Institution	Globalization & Education (Stromquist, 2014)	Qualitative, Library Research	2024
35.	Digital Media and the Sacred[60]	Discourse/ Narrative, Sacredness	Mediatization (Stig Hjarvard, 2013), Public Sphere (Jurgen Habermas, 2006)	Qualitative, Textual Analysis, Semantic Network Analysis	2024

36.	The Digital as Sacred Space: Exploring the Online Religious Dimension[61]	Religion, Sacred Space	Mediatization (Hjarvard 2011, 2012; Lundby 2009), Media Self-Regulation (Hjarvard 2008)	Qualitative, Library Research	2024
37.	Religion and New Media (The Phenomena of New Media Influences on Religion in the Digital Era)[62]	Religion, Spirituality, Authority	Campbell & Connelly (2015), Evolvi (2021)	Qualitative, Library Research	2024
38.	Lived Religion in a Digital Age: Technology, Affect and the Pervasive Space-Times of 'New' Religious Praxis[63]	Ritual, Digital Prayer	Mediation	Qualitative, Library Research	2024
39.	"Semiotic Cults" As a Phenomenon of Mass Culture in The Digital Age[64]	Community	Mediatization	Qualitative, Textual Analysis	2024
40.	Menghubungkan dan Menganalisa Tren Ustad-Ustad Digital di Indonesia Melalui Studi Agama Digital[65]	Authority	RSST (Heidi Campbell, Ruth Tsuria)	Qualitative, Library Research	2024
41.	Lived Religion and Digital Homemaking: The Case of Indonesian Marriage Migrants[66]	Religion, Lifestyle, Everyday Life	Lived Religion (McGuire, 2008, Everyday Religion (Ammerman, 2007)	Qualitative, Digital Ethnography, Vlog Analysis, In-depth Interview	2024

The data above provides a comprehensive overview of how religion interacts with the dynamic digital landscape. These findings highlight fundamental changes in the theory and methods of digital religion research, as well as the transformation of religious patterns in the online world. Phenomena such as the digitalization of rituals, the formation of virtual communities, and the emergence of new ethical and theological issues have become central to understanding this evolution. Through the interpretation of the data, it becomes evident that technology is not merely a tool but also a catalyst for fundamental changes in the study of religion.

In this study, 41 articles and book chapters on the theme of digital

religion were analyzed using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The findings reveal key patterns in the development of the study of religion in the digital era, including the scarcity of similar research in the context of the Indonesian language, the dominance of certain theories, and the tendency to use specific research methods by scholars. One of the most striking findings is the low number of Indonesian-language publications addressing this topic. The majority of the analyzed articles come from international journals, with English as the primary language. The contexts discussed in these studies predominantly focus on Western countries, with little attention given to religious phenomena occurring in other regions, including Indonesia and Southeast Asia. This highlights that, despite the significant impact of digital transformation on religious practices in Indonesia, academic documentation on this theme remains very limited. The absence of local perspectives presents both a significant challenge and an opportunity to explore how religion and religious culture in Indonesia interact with the digital world.

From a theoretical approach perspective, the articles reviewed employ a diverse range of theoretical frameworks. The theories used by the researchers not only center on contemporary theories in digital religion studies but also draw from traditional social science theories such as habitus, public sphere, globalization, and everyday religion, among others. However, the theoretical perspectives predominantly utilized by the researchers are dominated by media and communication theories developed by what can be referred to as the "Campbell Circle." These include theories such as mediation, hypermediation, mediatization, deep mediatization, and RSST. The term "Campbell Circle" here refers to Heidi Campbell, a leading scholar in the field of religion and digital media who has played a pivotal role in the development of digital religion studies. Figures associated with the "Campbell Circle" include Ruth Tsuria, Giulia Evolvi, Mia Lovheim, Stig Hjarvard, Knut Lundby, and Stewart Hoover. The theories developed by Campbell and colleagues are frequently used to explain how digital technology affects four key dimensions of religion: authority, community, identity, and ritual. These theories provide a robust framework for understanding how religious authority adapts in digital spaces, how religious communities form and interact virtually, and how rituals and religious identities undergo transformation through digital media. The dominance of Campbell's theories reflects the relevance of this approach in digital religion studies, yet it also reveals a heavy reliance on a single analytical framework, with limited efforts to develop alternative theories that are more contextual and diverse.

In terms of methodology, the analysis shows that almost all of the articles reviewed use literature study methods, with a focus on secondary data. These articles rely on existing literature to build theoretical or conceptual arguments. This approach is effective in identifying broad patterns within the literature, but it is less capable of capturing the empirical realities of the ongoing phenomena. For instance, very few studies involve interviews, surveys, or observations to understand the experiences of individuals or communities engaging in religious activities in digital spaces. This creates a gap in understanding the practices and meanings of digital religion from the perspectives of the participants or communities involved. Additionally, most of the research tends to be dominated by qualitative approaches, with only a small number exploring quantitative methods to analyze digital religion phenomena. This highlights the need for more diverse methodological approaches to fully grasp the complexities of religious practices in the digital age.

In terms of themes, many articles focus on issues such as the adaptation of churches and religious institutions to technology, the use of social media as a space for religious outreach or reflection, and the impact of digitalization on religious authority. Phenomena like worship streaming, prayer apps, and virtual religious communities are key topics. In other words, the issues explored by researchers tend to center around the core subjects of digital religion studies, such as rituals, communities, identity, and authority. However, other topics such as religious discourse or narratives, death, immortality, spirituality, religious commodification, and lifestyle also receive significant attention. Despite this, most of the research is concentrated on global or developed countries' contexts, while local phenomena, especially in Indonesia, remain underexplored. In fact, digital religious practices in Indonesia have unique dynamics, such as the interaction between Nusantara Islam traditions and modern technology, or how indigenous communities use digital media to preserve their religious traditions. This gap presents an opportunity for future research to delve deeper into the local and regional aspects of digital religion, providing a richer understanding of how different cultures engage with digital platforms for religious purposes.

This analysis indicates that the study of religion in the digital era still has significant potential for growth, particularly in bridging the gap between global and local perspectives. Research based on the Indonesian context can offer richer insights into how religion transforms amid technological changes. Empirical approaches, such as field studies involving religious communities, could complement the dominance of existing literature-

based research. Furthermore, the development of new theories that are more relevant to the cultural and religious characteristics of Southeast Asia will help expand the knowledge and enrich the global literature in this field. The study of religion in the digital era presents a great opportunity to understand how technology is not only changing how people communicate but also how they believe, worship, and build communities. With more local exploration, diversification of research methods, and theory development, this field of study can make a significant contribution to the global understanding of the relationship between religion and technology in the future.

The sustainability of religious studies in Indonesia within the context of the digital era requires special attention, given the country's unique characteristics, including its rich diversity of religions, cultures, and traditions. The digital era offers significant opportunities to integrate technology with more contextual academic research, opening new spaces for exploring the interaction between religion and digital media. In this regard, the sustainability of digital religion studies in Indonesia requires a focused effort on several important aspects.

First, there is a need to strengthen the literature based on local experience. The scarcity of articles and books in Indonesian about digital religion shows that academic research in this field does not adequately represent local dynamics. Digitalization in Indonesia has transformed many aspects of religious life, from virtual rituals like online recitations to religious campaigns on social media. By developing research based on local experience, digital religion studies can become more relevant and better capture the complexities of Indonesia's context, which involves the interaction between religious traditions, modernization, and technology.

Second, digital religion studies in Indonesia should also begin to explore the ethical and social impacts of digitalization on religion. Digital technology not only offers opportunities but also presents challenges, such as the spread of religiously motivated misinformation (hoaxes), the politicization of religion on social media, and the commercialization of religious practices. In-depth studies on these issues will help create ethical guidelines for society and religious institutions in using technology wisely and responsibly.

Third, interdisciplinary collaboration is also crucial for the sustainability of digital religion studies in Indonesia. This field cannot stand alone within the framework of religious studies alone but needs synergy with other fields such as information technology, communication, sociology, and philosophy. By involving various perspectives, research on digital religion can provide more holistic analyses, not only explaining digital religious phenomena but also their broader impact on society.

The sustainability of digital religion studies in Indonesia depends not only on the quality of research but also on support from various stakeholders, including the government, academic institutions, and religious communities. The government, for instance, can encourage research in this field through funding and policies that support innovation in education and research sectors. Academic institutions can establish digital religion research centers as platforms to develop relevant theories, methodologies, and research practices. Meanwhile, religious communities can serve as active partners in research, playing a role as change agents that utilize technology to strengthen religious practices and social harmony.

Conclusion

Digital religion studies is an ever-evolving field that offers new insights into how technology shapes religious practices, religious identities, and community interactions in the digital age. Through the analysis of existing research, it is evident that this field faces both challenges and significant opportunities, particularly in bridging global and local perspectives, diversifying research approaches, and developing theories that are more relevant to cultural contexts. In the future, this field is expected to explore further the role of emerging technologies, local dynamics, and the ethical implications of religious digitalization. With a focus on methodological innovation and a deep understanding of unique religious phenomena, this field has the potential to make significant contributions to the global study of the relationship between religion and technology.

Digital religion studies sit at the fascinating crossroads of tradition and innovation, highlighting how technology not only serves as a tool but also as a profound agent of change in religious life. In an era where prayer apps, worship streaming, and virtual communities are common, digital transformation has created new spaces for religious interaction. These spaces transcend physical boundaries, enabling geographically dispersed communities to unite in rituals, reflections, or religious discussions once unimaginable. However, this journey is not without challenges. Digital religion research is still dominated by global perspectives that often overlook local contexts, such as the uniqueness of religious practices in Indonesia. The cultural diversity and local religious traditions hold fascinating dynamics that can enrich global understanding of how religion adapts in the digital age. For example, how Nusantara Islam traditions interact with social media, or how indigenous communities use technology to preserve their religious traditions, are crucial questions that need to be explored further.

Endnotes

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