

PERFORMATIVE MICRO-IDENTITY OF THE FEMALE *DĀ'Ī*: AESTHETIC PIETY AND PLATFORMED AUTHORITY IN OKI SETIANA DEWI'S INSTAGRAM

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Article history: Received: July 14, 2026 | Revised: September 29, 2026 | Available online: September 30, 2026

How to cite this article: Ilaihi, Wahyu, and Aniek Nurhayati. "Performatif Micro-Identity of the Female *Dā'ī*: Aesthetic Piety and Platformed Authority in Oki Setiana Dewi's Instagram." *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 21, no. 1 (2026): 31-57. DOI: [10.15642/islamica.2026.21.1.31-57](https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2026.21.1.31-57)

Abstract: On Instagram, religious authority is increasingly produced through brief, visually mediated performances rather than sustained theological argument. This article examines how Oki Setiana Dewi constructs and sustains female Islamic authority through a performative micro-identity shaped by aesthetic piety, gendered expectations, and platformed commerce. Drawing on six months of non-reactive netnography and Digital Critical Discourse Analysis (January-June 2026), the study analyses 45 high-engagement Instagram posts and 1,500 audience comments using Saldaña's two-cycle coding and Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. The findings identify three recurring micro-performances: soft *shar'ī* styling within tranquil domestic settings, a maternal preaching cadence that recasts sermons as care, and sub-ninety-second moral narratives that translate jurisprudential themes into everyday household wisdom. Together, these practices enable Oki to exercise public religious authority through nurturance rather than doctrinal confrontation. Commercial content further becomes integrated into this authority, as *shar'ī* fashion and skincare are presented as legitimate expressions of modesty and received by followers as compatible with sincerity. The study advances the concept of performative micro-identity as a portable analytical lens for explaining how female religious authority is assembled, negotiated, and sustained within contemporary platformed Islam.

Keywords: Performative Micro-identity; Female *Dā'ī*; Aesthetic Piety; Digital Islam; Platform Capitalism.

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Introduction

Attention on social media is measured in seconds, and religious communication has adapted accordingly. A preacher who once addressed a congregation for an hour must now hold a scrolling viewer within the first moments of a clip, which means the identity on display has to be legible almost immediately. We call the kind of self this environment rewards a micro-identity: a tightly curated, repetitive, modular self-presentation assembled from short clips, stable visual signatures, and a tone of micro-intimacy.¹ Nowhere are the demands on such self-presentation heavier than for the Indonesian female preacher. She is expected to satisfy the visibility logic of a visual algorithm while answering to doctrines of modesty, to gendered expectations of warmth and restraint, and to a religious establishment that remains overwhelmingly male.² Under these conditions, what we term a performative micro-identity—performative in the sense that identity is something done, repeatedly and in public, rather than something one possesses—has become one of the few workable instruments for holding religious legitimacy and audience affection at the same time.³

Oki Setiana Dewi (hereafter, Oki) offers an unusually instructive case. She first became nationally known in the late 2000s as an actress cast in pious screen roles, and then converted that celebrity into scholarly credentials: a doctorate in Islamic studies and Qur’anic sciences, a graduate teaching post, and the founding of Maskanul Huffadz, a boarding institute for female Qur’an memorizers. During the fieldwork window she was studying at Al-Azhar Univer-

¹ Crystal Abidin, *Internet Celebrity: Understanding Fame Online* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2018); Tim Highfield, *Social Media and Everyday Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); Alice Marwick, *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

² Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Eva Nisa, “Creative and Lucrative Da’wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia,” *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, nos. 1-2 (2018): 68-99; Yuyun Sunesti, Noorhaidi Hasan, and Muhammad Najib Azca, “Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah: Agency and Identity Negotiation,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 173-98.

³ Taina Bucher and Anne Helmond, “The Affordances of Social Media Platforms,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*, ed. Jean Burgess, Alice Marwick, and Thomas Poell (London: SAGE Publications, 2018), 233-53; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

sity in Cairo, and her verified Instagram account passed 20.6 million followers in mid-2026, among the largest female religious audiences in the Muslim digital sphere. Scale alone, however, would not justify studying the account; the interest lies in how the persona is constructed. Her profile biography compresses scholar, preacher, mother, institution-builder, and business owner into a few lines, and the feed extends that compression across thousands of posts. Soft-toned *shar'ī* gowns, bookshelves of classical texts, a voice kept low and unhurried: the account operates less as a channel for sermons than as a continuously maintained stage on which celebrity, domestic piety, entrepreneurship, and scholarship are made to appear as one coherent self.⁴

Each element of this performance has attracted its own literature. The commodification of Islam in Indonesia has been mapped in detail,⁵ as have the aesthetics of modest fashion,⁶ the platformization of public life,⁷ and the growing visibility of female preachers online.⁸ These conversations, however, have largely proceeded in parallel, and their separation has left a specific blind spot. Studies of Islamic fashion seldom ask how sartorial aesthetics build religious authority; research on digital *da'wah* tends to privilege message and theology over the visual register in which that message now travels; and work on female preachers has concentrated on figures formed within *pesantren* networks rather than on celebrities who converted screen fame into a pulpit. What remains missing is a close empirical account

⁴ Susie Khamis, Lawrence Ang, and Raymond Welling, "Self-Branding, 'Micro-Celebrity' and the Rise of Social Media Influencers," *Celebrity Studies* 8, no. 2 (2017): 191-208; Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵ Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008); Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (2009): 229-50.

⁶ Carla Jones, "Materializing Piety: Gendered Anxieties about Faithful Consumption in Contemporary Urban Indonesia," *American Ethnologist* 37, no. 4 (2010): 617-37; Reina Lewis, "Marketing Muslim Lifestyle: A New Media Genre," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 6, no. 3 (2010): 58-90; Emma Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith* (Oxford: Berg, 2010).

⁷ José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal, *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁸ Eva Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, nos. 1-2 (2018): 68-99; Sunesti, Hasan, and Azca, "Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah."

of how a celebrity-turned-preacher uses Instagram's short-form features and built-in commerce to assemble a hybrid authority out of aesthetics and affect. The gap, in other words, is not thematic but analytical. Each literature isolates one layer of the phenomenon—dress, message, or biography—so that none can test whether aesthetic piety actually produces religious authority, because that causal question only becomes visible when sartorial, verbal, and commercial data are examined together, in situ, and at scale. Closing this gap is therefore a precondition for valid findings rather than a matter of bibliographic completeness: a study that sampled only sermons, or only fashion posts, or only biographies would systematically misread how the persona works. The three research questions below are drawn directly from this gap, and each finding we report answers one of them.

This article supplies that account through a non-reactive netnography of @okisetianadewi,⁹ designed so that the corpus, the coding, and the interpretive model each correspond to one strand of the gap identified above. The analysis is guided by three questions: through which recurring micro-performances is Oki's performative micro-identity assembled; how does that micro-identity negotiate the gendered constraints of Indonesian Islamic authority; and how do commerce and spiritual legitimacy come to reinforce one another inside her platformed *da'wah*? Throughout, we treat the audience as part of the phenomenon rather than as its recipient, because authority on Instagram is co-produced in comment threads as much as it is staged in posts, and any account of the preacher's stage must include the people who keep it standing.¹⁰

Our argument is as follows. Oki's authority rests on three mutually reinforcing micro-performances: micro-visual choreography, which renders piety photographable; micro-auditory affect, which recasts the sermon as care; and micro-narrative compression, which folds jurisprudential material into household-scale moral arcs. Together these performances operate as a tactical shield, allowing a woman to hold public religious authority in a conservative field by grounding that authority in nurturance rather than doctrinal con-

⁹ Robert Kozinets, *Netnography: Redefined*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2015).

¹⁰ Nancy Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015).

frontation. They also sustain an unusually tight nexus of commerce and devotion, in which branded *shar'ī* fashion and skincare appear inside sermons as sanctioned means of embodying modesty, and in which followers, through their comments, complete the persona the account stages.

To address these questions, we combine non-reactive netnography¹¹ with Digital Critical Discourse Analysis,¹² treating audiences as co-producers of authority rather than passive recipients.¹³ Unobtrusive observation of @okisetianadewi minimized response effects.¹⁴ Fieldwork ran from 1 January to 30 June 2026, covering Ramadan and the account's passage of twenty million followers. Using purposive sampling,¹⁵ we selected posts where *shar'ī* aesthetics, maternal address, and scholarly reference converged, applying thresholds of 50,000 views and 500 organic comments. This yielded 45 posts—30 *Reels* and 15 static/carousel posts—and 1,500 top-liked comments.

Platform materials were locally archived because of their volatility.¹⁶ Reel speech was transcribed verbatim, visual features recorded ethnographically,¹⁷ and comment threads cleaned of bot spam and emoji-only responses.¹⁸ Data were coded in NVivo 14 using Saldaña's two-cycle procedure¹⁹ and interpreted through Fairclough's dimensions of description, interpretation, and explanation.²⁰ Netnographic and discourse-analytic findings were then integrated, with convergence strengthening claims and divergence retained as evi-

¹¹ Kozinets, *Netnography*.

¹² Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹³ Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*.

¹⁴ Kozinets, *Netnography*; Marwick, *Status Update*.

¹⁵ Matthew Miles, Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014).

¹⁶ Sarah Pink, Heather Horst, John Postill, Larissa Hjorth, Tania Lewis, and Jo Tacchi, *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice* (London: SAGE Publications, 2016).

¹⁷ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2016).

¹⁸ Nicholas Hookway, "'Entering the Blogosphere': Some Strategies for Using Blogs in Social Research," *Qualitative Research* 8, no. 1 (2008): 91-113.

¹⁹ Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2021).

²⁰ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

dence. Public posts were treated as public data,²¹ while commenters were anonymized.²² Trustworthiness was supported through investigator triangulation, peer debriefing,²³ cross-checking against Goffman's impression-management framework, and an audit trail of archives, transcripts, and coding records.²⁴

Digital Islam, Aesthetic Piety, and Performative Micro-Identity: A Theoretical Framework

The mediatization of religion has changed not only where Islamic knowledge circulates in Indonesia but also who gets to certify it.²⁵ As religious communication moved onto digital networks, authority loosened from the classical *pesantren* and became available to figures whose qualifications are performative and popular rather than genealogical.²⁶ Piety itself became visible in new ways—through popular culture, through metrics, through the look of a feed.²⁷ Slama captures the resulting arrangement well: a subtle economy in which preaching, entrepreneurship, branding, and engagement statistics are no longer separable activities but aspects of one another.²⁸ Any analysis of digital *da'wah* has to hold the theological and the commercial in view at once.

Within this mediatized field, *aesthetic piety* names the binding of faith to visual style—modest fashion, lifestyle curation, the discipli-

²¹ Kozinets, *Netnography*.

²² Leanne Townsend and Claire Wallace, *Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2016).

²³ Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1985).

²⁴ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

²⁵ Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp, *The Mediated Construction of Reality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016); Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam*; Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam."

²⁶ James Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Popular Televangelist in Indonesia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); Martin Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time: Social Media and the Transformation of Indonesia's Islamic Preacher Economy," *Economic Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (2017): 94-106.

²⁷ Heidi Campbell, ed., *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

²⁸ Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time."

ned appearance of devotion.²⁹ The expansion of Indonesia's Muslim middle class has made modesty something one can express through taste.³⁰ Gokarikel and Secor showed that the visible, veiled body functions as a site where moral agency and consumer identity meet³¹; Beta extended the point to Indonesian Instagram, where young Muslim women's aestheticized feeds operate as instruments of civic engagement and moral leadership rather than as mere displays.³² Aesthetic piety, on this reading, is both a language of faith and a technology of influence. Gender complicates the picture further. Mahmood taught us to read women's piety movements not through secular-feminist expectations but through the disciplined performance of virtue itself—an insight that travels well to social media.³³ Nisa has documented how Indonesian platforms give female preachers room to build independent followings outside male-gated institutions. The freedom is real but conditional.³⁴ A woman who preaches publicly must keep her visibility inside the boundaries of modesty (*ḥayaʾ*), maternal warmth, and domestic propriety, and those boundaries are policed by audiences as much as by clerics.³⁵

This delicate interplay between visual agency and moral policing highlights a broader theoretical debate on the nature of digital pious authority. Scholars like Gokarikel and Secor together with Beta emphasize how aesthetic piety serves as a liberating instrument of moral agency and civic engagement, enabling Muslim women to reclaim public visibility through taste and consumption.³⁶ Conversely, critical perspectives informed by Mahmood and Sunesti

²⁹ Banu Gökarişel and Anna Secor, "Between Fashion and Tesettür: Marketing and Consuming Women's Islamic Dress," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 6, no. 3 (2010): 118-48; Jonathan Schroeder, *Visual Consumption* (London: Routledge, 2002).

³⁰ Jones, "Materializing Piety"; Lewis, "Marketing Muslim Lifestyle"; Tarlo, *Visibly Muslim*.

³¹ Gökarişel and Secor, "Between Fashion and Tesettür."

³² Annisa Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics: Indonesian Young Muslim Women's Groups as Religious Influencers," *New Media & Society* 21, no. 10 (2019): 2140-59.

³³ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

³⁴ Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa."

³⁵ Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa"; Sunesti, Hasan, and Azca, "Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah."

³⁶ Gökarişel and Secor, "Between Fashion and Tesettür"; Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics."

et al. remind us that this visibility remains deeply disciplined by patriarchal surveillance, where agency is contingent upon performative adherence to traditional notions of *ḥaya'* and domestic warmth.³⁷ By placing these scholars in direct conversation, it becomes evident that digital *da'wah* does not simply empower or subjugate female preachers; rather, as Nisa implies, it forces them to operate within a hybrid, highly negotiated landscape.³⁸ Here, the platform acts as both an enabling infrastructure for independent authority and a panoptic arena where commercial aesthetics, algorithmic logic, and audience-enforced moral boundaries constantly calibrate the limits of female religious leadership.

The fourth strand concerns the platform itself. Instagram's *Reels*, its grid, and its ranking systems do not simply carry identity; they dictate the grain size at which identity can be expressed.³⁹ Goffman's dramaturgy⁴⁰ supplies the foundational insight that selfhood is staged through impression management, though his analysis concerned face-to-face encounters rather than mediated environments. For self-presentation on platforms we therefore draw on internet and platform scholarship—Abidin (2018), Highfield (2016), Marwick (2013), and Papacharissi (2015)—which shows how impression management is reorganized under technical constraint, and we use *performative micro-identity* for the result: a self-brand built from repeatable micro-signals—visual, vocal, narrative—that audiences can recognize in a fraction of a second.⁴¹ For a religious figure, such a micro-identity works as an affective bridge, sustaining parasocial closeness and spiritual credibility inside an economy of scrolling.⁴² Table 1 sets out the four clusters and what each contributes to the analysis.

³⁷ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*; Sunesti, Hasan, and Azca, "Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah."

³⁸ Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa."

³⁹ Bucher and Helmond, "The Affordances of Social Media Platforms"; Highfield, *Social Media and Everyday Politics*.

⁴⁰ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

⁴¹ Abidin, *Internet Celebrity*; Marwick, *Status Update*; Theresa Senft, *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁴² Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*; Khamis, Ang, and Welling, "Self-Branding"; Papacharissi, *Affective Publics*.

This performative micro-identity is shaped, in turn, by the vernacularization of Islamic authority within local digital ecosystems. Global platforms supply the infrastructure, but the content and reception of digital *da'wah* remain anchored in localized cultural expression and traditional theological frameworks. Sunarwoto captures this well. His account of Indonesian Islam's digitalization shows popular preachers rendering classical scholarly heritage as digestible, highly visual micro-narratives that travel well among urban Muslim audiences. The result is a continuing negotiation between traditional religious authority, carried by *isnad* and *pesantren* lineages, and algorithmic popularity: online preachers must hold orthodox legitimacy while meeting the demands of digital engagement.⁴³ Performative piety becomes, in this setting, an arena of cultural translation. Classical ideas of modesty, devotion, and community are renegotiated there through short-form video, curated feeds, and interactive digital spaces.

A second process follows from the meeting of digital media, consumer culture, and gendered piety, which we describe as platformized micro-sovereignty. Female digital preachers and pious influencers do more than perform identity for external validation: through platform affordances they build semi-autonomous spheres of moral influence.⁴⁴ Within these spaces, Islamic fashion, halal lifestyle aesthetics, and devotional routines operate as socio-religious capital: they allow women to claim public authority without openly confronting patriarchal orthodoxy.⁴⁵ The performative micro-identity in Indonesian digital Islam is therefore best read as an ongoing calibration. Empowerment, commodification, and disciplined devotion are held in tension here rather than resolved.

⁴³ Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa," Sunarwoto, "Salafi Dakwah Radio: A Contest for Religious Authority," *Archipel* 91 (2016): 203-30.

⁴⁴ Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics"; Hew Wai Weng, *Chinese Muslims in Post-Subarto Indonesia: Cultural Transfer, Local Adaptation, and Islamic Media* (Singapore: ISEAS—Yusof Ishak Institute, 2018).

⁴⁵ Gökarıksel and Secor, "Between Fashion and Tesettür;" Weng, *Chinese Muslims in Post-Subarto Indonesia*.

Table 1. Theoretical Roadmap of the Study

Clustered Theme	Key Scholars & Year	Core Theoretical Contribution to This Study
Digital Islam & Mediatization	Fealy & White (2008); Hasan (2009); Hoesterey (2015); Slama (2017); Campbell (2012)	Explains how religious authority shifts from physical institutions to digital platforms, merging theology with popular culture and digital economies.
Aesthetic Piety & Modesty	Gokarikel & Secor (2010); Jones (2010); Lewis (2010); Tarlo (2010); Beta (2019)	Frames the visual curation of <i>shar‘i</i> fashion and soft-toned aesthetics as a legitimate expression of modern Islamic identity and moral agency.
Gender & Female Authority	Mahmood (2005); Nisa (2018); Sunesti et al. (2018); Kloos & Berenschot (2016)	Provides the analytical lens for understanding how female preachers navigate modesty, patriarchal structures, and religious authority online.
Micro-Identity & Platform Logic	Goffman (1959); Marwick (2013); Abidin (2018); Khamis et al. (2017); Bucher & Helmond (2018)	Offers the framework to decode how short-form media (<i>Reels/Feed</i>) shape identity performance, impression management, and microcelebrity status.

Note: We list the clusters separately for clarity, but the analysis does not keep them apart. Platform affordances (cluster 4) structure the aesthetic (cluster 2) and gendered (cluster 3) performances through which digital Islamic authority (cluster 1) is actually assembled.

Through a digital ethnographic lens, the theoretical taxonomy in this table does not function as isolated compartments, but rather as an interconnected, lived ecosystem continuously co-constructed by the *dā‘i*, platform algorithms, and audience interactions. By immersing into the digital field site, the study observes how the mediatization of Islam⁴⁶ materializes through curated visual artifacts of *shar‘i* modesty,⁴⁷ where female religious authority is performativ-

⁴⁶ Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam*; Campbell, ed., *Digital Religion*.

⁴⁷ Gökarişel and Secor, “Between Fashion and Tesettür;” Beta, “Commerce, Piety and Politics.”

ely negotiated under gendered online expectations.⁴⁸ Crucially, this digital embodiment is operationalized through the micro-architecture of Instagram (*Reels* and *Feed*), where platform logics and impression management⁴⁹ shape a highly disciplined *micro-identity*—allowing spiritual legitimacy, commercial entrepreneurship, and micro-celebrity status to seamlessly collapse into a singular, everyday digital performance.

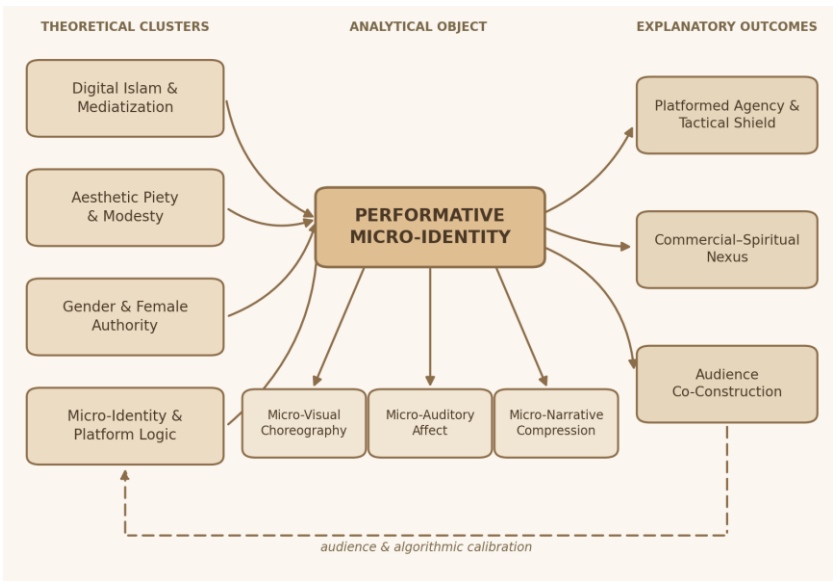


Figure 1. The theoretical framework flow map of the study.

Figure 1 maps the flow of the framework as a whole. The four theoretical clusters on the left do not operate in isolation; they converge on a single analytical object, the performative micro-identity, which the study decomposes into three mutually reinforcing micro-performances—micro-visual choreography, micro-auditory affect, and micro-narrative compression. From this central concept the map branches outward to the three outcomes the framework is built to explain: platformed agency in the form of a tactical shield, the commercial–spiritual nexus, and audience co-construction of the persona. The dashed feedback arrow from the comment space back to platform logic marks the calibration

⁴⁸ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*; Nisa, “Creative and Lucrative Da’wa.”

⁴⁹ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*; Marwick, *Status Update*; Bucher and Helmond, “The Affordances of Social Media Platforms.”

described above: audiences and algorithms continuously police and reward the signals the *da'ir* emits, so the micro-identity is never finished but always in process. Read left to right, the map thus states the article's analytical wager—that mediatized authority, aesthetic piety, gendered constraint, and platform architecture meet in one repeatable, seconds-long performance, and that everything of interest happens at that meeting point.

From Screen Celebrity to Al-Azhar Student: The Trajectory Behind @okisetianadewi

It helps to begin with biography, because the account only makes sense as the product of a particular career. Oki's route to the pulpit ran through the cinema. Her early fame as an actress in religiously themed films gave her something no seminary could: mass recognition and an audience trained to associate her face with piety. Her later turn to scholarship—a doctorate in Islamic studies and Qur'anic sciences, a graduate teaching position, the founding of Maskanul Huffadz, and, by the time of our fieldwork, enrolment at Al-Azhar—gave her something no film career could: textual and institutional legitimacy.⁵⁰ Most Indonesian preachers hold one kind of capital or the other. Oki holds both, and the account is where the two are continuously traded on each other.

The platform data from our fieldwork period give this hybridity a measurable shape. By mid-2026 the account counted roughly 20.6 million followers, and sampled *Reels* routinely reached hundreds of thousands of views. More telling is what automated content classification across her posts during the observation period actually shows. Only about a third of the content sorts as religion and spirituality; the rest distributes across travel, entertainment, fashion, education, and beauty. A conventional reading might take this as dilution. We read it as design. The *da'wah* does not live in a fenced religious niche; it travels inside the everyday genres of a mass female audience—Cairo study diaries, family moments, styling posts—so that piety arrives embedded in the ordinary scroll. This interweaving is the raw material from which the micro-identity is built, and it is why the persona can move between registers without breaking.

⁵⁰ Hoestercey, *Rebranding Islam*.

The Architecture of Performative Micro-Identity

We can now define the central concept more precisely against the empirical case. A micro-identity is not a simplified version of an offline self. It is a concentrated, modular identity unit engineered for rapid consumption.⁵¹ The environment of the *Reel* does not permit slow exposition; authority has to be performed through cues that register in seconds—micro-gestures, micro-diction, micro-visual signatures that a viewer can recognize before deciding whether to keep watching. The corpus bears this out at the aggregate level: of the 45 sampled artefacts, 38 combine all three cue systems—visual, vocal, and narrative—within a single post, and the remaining seven combine two. Reading this distribution through Fairclough's three dimensions clarifies what the numbers mean. At the level of description, the convergence is a textual fact: the same posts carry soft-tone palettes, low maternal diction, and compressed moral arcs as co-occurring features. At the level of interpretation, it is a discursive practice: the *Reels* format rewards exactly this bundling, so the account produces and the algorithm distributes units engineered for multi-channel recognition. At the level of explanation, it is a social practice: only a preacher whose legitimacy must be re-established every few seconds, in a field that doubts women's public authority, needs a persona this densely coded.

This density is what the mediatization of Islam looks like at the scale of a single account: the detachment of authority from *pesantren* genealogy that Hoesterey and Slama describe,⁵² and the fusion of preaching with entrepreneurship that Hasan mapped at the level of the religious market,⁵³ here converge in a production routine in which credential, commerce, and charisma are encoded in the same sixty seconds.

⁵¹ Bucher and Helmond, "The Affordances of Social Media Platforms"; Marwick, *Status Update*.

⁵² Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam*; Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time."

⁵³ Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam."

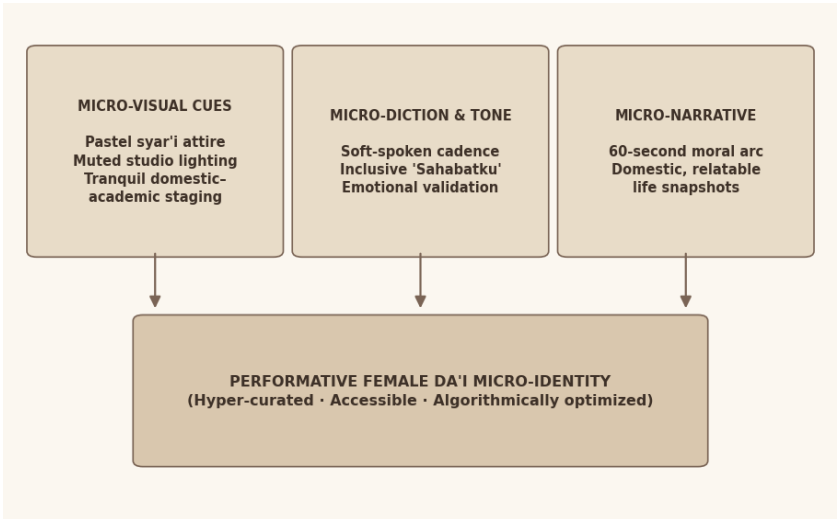


Figure 2. The architecture of the female *da'i*'s performative micro-identity.

The figure maps the three synchronized micro-performances—micro-visual cues, micro-diction and tone, and micro-narrative compression—whose disciplined repetition produces a hyper-curated, accessible, and algorithmically optimized religious persona. On *@okisetianadewi* the micro-identity rests on three performances that run in parallel. The micro-visual layer fixes a signature look: pastel *syar'i* gowns, modest but immaculate makeup, calm interiors that read visually as *sakinah*, tranquility. The micro-auditory layer supplies a matching voice—slow, low, addressed to the viewer as a companion rather than a congregation. The micro-narrative layer compresses religious teaching into sixty-second moral arcs on family, patience, and self-discipline. Each layer would be legible alone; together they abstract classical knowledge from its textual weight and repackage it as something aesthetically pleasing and immediately shareable.⁵⁴

What keeps the three from flying apart is their mutual licensing. The soft image authorizes the soft voice; both make the compressed lesson feel like advice from an elder sister rather than instruction from a pulpit. Table 2 lays the dimensions out systematically; the sections that follow examine each one in the grain of the data.

⁵⁴ Slama, “A Subtle Economy of Time.”

Table 2. Dimensions of Oki’s Performative Micro-identity

Dimension of Micro-Identity	Performance Strategy	Theoretical Integration & Platform Dynamics
Spiritual legitimacy	Display of doctoral credentials, Al-Azhar study, Qur’anic citations, and classical references	<i>Institutional sanad vs. digital sanad</i> : authenticating authority through academic rigor combined with platform reach. ⁵⁵
Gendered affect	Warm smile, slow vocal pace, maternal address (“ <i>Sababatku</i> ”)	<i>Emotional labor</i> : mitigating patriarchal backlash by framing authority as nurturance. ⁵⁶
Commercial integration	Wearing proprietary <i>sh-arʿi</i> lines during <i>daʿwah</i> ; tagging products and storefront links	<i>Subtle economy of daʿwah</i> : sanctifying consumer products as legitimate tools for emulating a pious lifestyle. ⁵⁷

Note: The three pillars never appear alone in the corpus. Every one of the 45 sampled artifacts combined at least two; 38 combined all three.

As summarized in the matrix, the operationalization of Oki’s *performative micro-identity* is structured across three interconnected dimensions that strategically harmonize spiritual authority, affective gender norms, and digital capitalism. In the dimension of spiritual legitimacy, she bridges *institutional sanad* with *digital sanad* by showcasing her doctoral credentials, Al-Azhar background, and scholarly citations to establish academic rigor within platform spaces.⁵⁸ To navigate gendered boundaries, she deploys affective emotional labor through a warm demeanor, measured vocal tempos, and maternal micro-address (“*Sababatku*”), thereby softening potential patriarchal resistance by framing her authority around maternal nurturance rather than confrontational dogmatism.⁵⁹ Concurrently, through commercial integration, she manifests a *subtle economy of daʿwah* by

⁵⁵ Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam*.
⁵⁶ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*; Nisa, “Creative and Lucrative Da’wa.”
⁵⁷ Hasan, “The Making of Public Islam”; Slama, “A Subtle Economy of Time.”
⁵⁸ Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam*.
⁵⁹ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*; Nisa, “Creative and Lucrative Da’wa.”

embedding her proprietary *shar'ī* fashion and tagged storefronts directly into her preaching content, effectively sanctifying consumer items as essential physical tools for embodying an aspirational, modern pious lifestyle.⁶⁰

Micro-Visual Choreography: Aesthetic Piety and Platformed Agency

The first thing an observer notices about the feed is its discipline. Across the 45 sampled artifacts, more than 85 percent work within the same soft palette—earth tones, nude pastels, whites—paired with flowing *shar'ī* garments. The palette is therefore not decoration but doctrine rendered visible: it is the visible, veiled body as a meeting point of moral agency and consumer identity that Gokarikel and Secor theorized,⁶¹ extended to Instagram as an instrument of moral leadership in Beta's sense,⁶² and disciplined, in Mahmood's sense,⁶³ by the very virtues it displays—softness of colour doing the work that softness of conduct does in the piety movement. The settings repeat as insistently as the colours: a sunlit home studio, a private library whose shelves carry classical texts, an academic podium, and, during the Cairo months, the courtyards and study corners around Al-Azhar. These backgrounds do quiet but essential work. They certify that the woman in the pastel gown is also a scholar of the book.

⁶⁰ Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam"; Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time."

⁶¹ Gökariksel and Secor, "Between Fashion and Tesettür."

⁶² Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics."

⁶³ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

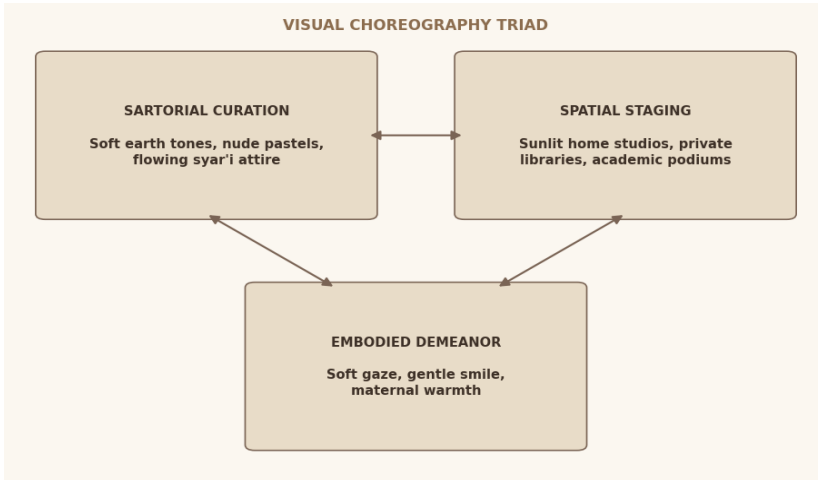


Figure 3. The visual choreography triad.

Note: The figure illustrates how sartorial curation (soft earth tones, flowing *shar'i* attire), spatial staging (home studios, libraries, academic halls), and embodied demeanor (soft gaze, gentle smile, maternal warmth) mutually reinforce one another to produce the account's signature aesthetic piety.

One *Reel* from the Ramadan cycle shows the machinery at its clearest. Oki sits beside a bookshelf of *tafsir* in a cream gown and loosely draped khimar, morning light entering from the left of frame, and speaks for fifty-eight seconds on guarding one's tongue. Every element is placed. The shelf certifies competence; the light sacralizes an ordinary room; the gown makes modesty elegant. The post drew hundreds of thousands of views and thousands of comments, metrics the ranking system reads as quality and rewards with further distribution.⁶⁴

This is aesthetic piety updated for the platform era.⁶⁵ The refinement is not decorative; it is a technology of visibility that satisfies Islamic modesty and Instagram's aesthetic preferences in the same gesture. Beta and Mahmood both show that women's religious agency in public often works through sartorial discipline rather than confrontation,⁶⁶ and Oki is a master of that register. She does not refuse media aesthetics in the name of piety; she perfects

⁶⁴ Bucher and Helmond, "The Affordances of Social Media Platforms."

⁶⁵ Gökarıksel and Secor, "Between Fashion and Tesettür."

⁶⁶ Beta, "Commerce, Piety and Politics;" Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*.

them. We call the resulting capacity *platformed agency*: the veiled body, conventionally read as a sign of submission, becomes here an emblem of sophisticated, elite, visually desirable Muslim womanhood—and the algorithm pays for the transformation with reach.

Micro-Narrative Compression: The Sixty-Second Moral Arc

The third pillar is narrative form. Nearly all of the 30 sampled *Reels* run under ninety seconds, and most follow the same three beats: an everyday problem is named—a sharp word to a spouse, impatience with a child, envy stirred by social media; a Qur’anic or Prophetic principle is invoked; and a gentle, practicable resolution follows, closed with a blessing. Jurisprudential material never appears as *fiqh*. It arrives as household wisdom, and it works because the aura of scholarship is maintained elsewhere—in the credentials, the bookshelves, the Cairo postcode. We call the form *micro-narrative compression*: classical discursive genres shrunk to platform-native duration without losing their claim to authenticity.

This is a description-level regularity with an interpretation-level cause and explanation-level stakes. Described as text, all 30 *Reels* run under ninety seconds and follow the same three-beat arc; interpreted as discursive practice, the arc is produced for, and amplified by, a ranking system that privileges completion rate⁶⁷; explained as social practice, the compression converts jurisprudential authority—classically certified through slow, genealogical transmission—into a household-scale form that a female preacher can carry without claiming the pulpit she is denied. The three-beat arc is, in this respect, impression management rewritten as a technical specification: the front region Goffman located in the physical encounter⁶⁸ is now defined by Bucher and Helmond’s platform affordances,⁶⁹ and what counts as a convincing performance of self is settled less by the performer than by the grain size the *Reel* permits.

The compression is plainly adaptive. Instagram’s ranking rewards completion and immediate affective response, and a sixty-second arc that viewers finish, save, and share will always outrank a

⁶⁷ Bucher and Helmond, “The Affordances of Social Media Platforms,” van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal, *The Platform Society*.

⁶⁸ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

⁶⁹ Bucher and Helmond, “The Affordances of Social Media Platforms.”

forty-minute lecture.⁷⁰ Form follows feed, and the feed quietly reshapes the form of piety itself.⁷¹ But there is a pastoral dividend that a purely cynical reading would miss. Guidance in this format reaches women in the interstices of care work—between chores, on commutes, in the few minutes a day that are actually theirs—audiences for whom lengthy mosque study circles were never structurally available. The simplicity of the micro-narrative is an algorithmic concession and a genuine widening of access at once.

The Commercial-Spiritual Nexus: Sanctifying the Micro-Brand

Identity on Instagram is bound up with monetization, and religious identity is not exempt.⁷² What is striking in this case is how little friction the binding produces. Across the corpus Oki promotes her own *shar'i* label—founded in the mid-2010s and long sold through boutiques and online storefronts—along with her skincare brand, and she does so inside the sermons themselves: an exhortation on patience delivered in the label's newest collection, a product tag set quietly beneath a verse. The boundary between the sermon and the shop is not blurred so much as never drawn.

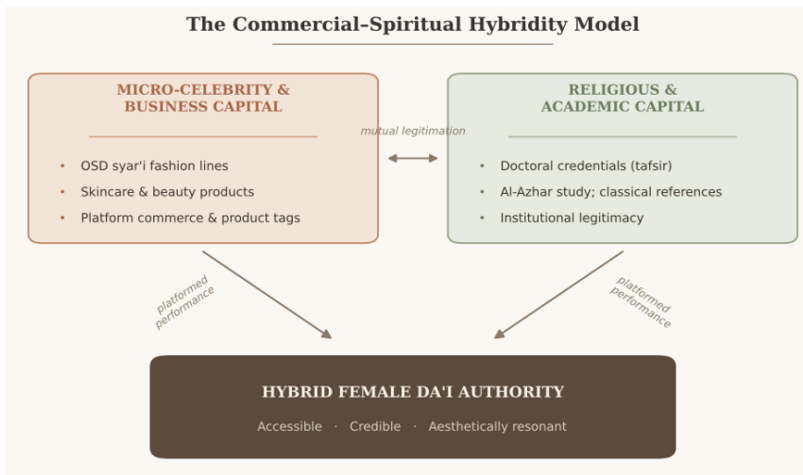


Figure 4. The commercial-spiritual hybridity model.

⁷⁰ Bucher and Helmond, "The Affordances of Social Media Platforms."

⁷¹ van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal, *The Platform Society*.

⁷² Abidin, *Internet Celebrity*; Khamis, Ang, and Welling, "Self-Branding."

The figure shows how micro-celebrity and business capital (fashion lines, skincare products, platform commerce) and religious-academic capital (doctoral credentials, Al-Azhar study, classical references, institutional legitimacy) converge into a single hybrid female *dāʿī* authority that is simultaneously accessible, credible, and aesthetically resonant.

Indonesianists will recognize the pattern as the marketization of Islam documented by Fealy and White,⁷³ Hasan,⁷⁴ and Hoesterer,⁷⁵ but the mechanism here deserves close attention. Commerce and authority do not merely coexist; they feed each other. The doctorate and the Al-Azhar affiliation certify that the preacher knows what modesty requires; the fashion line lets followers buy what she knows; wearing the product while preaching then demonstrates that the knowledge and the goods are one.⁷⁶ Skincare is framed through *ṭahārah*, ritual cleanliness; the *sharʿī* gown through divine command. Consumption is thereby relocated from the realm of appetite to the realm of observance. Because the micro-identity was built from the start on the visual grammar of prosperous modesty, the products arrive not as intrusions into piety but as its props—objects through which followers can physically rehearse the ideal they see on the feed.

The Comment Section as Sanctified Market: Audience Co-Construction

None of this would hold if the audience refused it. The 1,500 sampled comments show, instead, active collaboration. Followers almost never object to product tags or storefront links. The comment section functions at once as a place to unburden oneself and as a marketplace blessed by the presence of the preacher. Three categories dominated the coding; Table 3 summarizes them with typical, anonymized examples.

Table 3. Dominant Categories of Audience Comments on @okisetianadewi and Their Analytical Significance.

⁷³ Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam*.
⁷⁴ Hasan, “The Making of Public Islam.”
⁷⁵ Hoesterer, *Rebranding Islam*.
⁷⁶ Jones, “Materializing Piety”; Slama, “A Subtle Economy of Time.”

Category of Audience Comment	Typical Linguistic Expressions (anonymized)	Analytical Significance (Reception & Platform Theory)
Spiritual emulation	“ <i>MasyaAllah ustadzah, adem banget dengernya...</i> ”; “ <i>Doakan saya bisa istigomah berhijab shar’i seperti ustadzah.</i> ”	Converts visual and vocal performance into an authoritative moral ideal.
Commercial-aesthetic validation	“ <i>Baju yang dipakai ustadzah spill merknya dong...</i> ”; “ <i>MasyaAllah makin glowing ustadzah, pakai skincare apa?</i> ”	Collapses the boundary between religious admiration and consumer desire.
Emotional unburdening	“ <i>Ustadzah, pas banget sama keadaan saya sekarang, terima kasih pengingatnya...</i> ”	Validates the effectiveness of maternal emotional labor in digital space.

Note: Based on two-cycle coding of 1,500 public comments (the 30 top-liked comments on each of the 45 sampled posts). All usernames anonymized per our ethical protocol.

Read closely, the distribution tells its own story. Emulation comments open with devotional formulas—*māshā’llāh*, *bārakallāh*—and treat the persona as a template for a life, confirming that the micro-visual and micro-auditory work registers as religious authority rather than entertainment. Commercial comments are the most revealing: requests for the brand of a dress or the name of a skincare product arrive in the same devotional idiom as requests for prayer, which means consumer desire has been fully naturalized inside the language of piety. Unburdening comments—marital strain, money worries, spiritual exhaustion—show the thread working as a pastoral space: followers confess to the feed, and the feed, through the maternal register, appears to answer them.

This is the shared space of digital piety that Slama describes,⁷⁷ and it corrects any suspicion that monetization reads to audiences as contamination. The pattern coding of the 1,500 comments quantifies the co-production. Spiritual emulation—comments announcing imitation of dress, prayer, or speech—accounts for roughly 44 per cent of the corpus (≈660 comments); commercial-aesthetic validation—praise of outfits, queries about brands, testimonials for the skincare line—for roughly 31 per cent (≈465); and emotional

⁷⁷ Slama, “A Subtle Economy of Time.”

unburdening—confessions, petitions for prayer, declarations of parasocial attachment—for the remaining 25 per cent (≈ 375). Read through Fairclough’s dimensions, the distribution is not merely a count. At description level it shows which linguistic registers the comment space licenses; at interpretation level it reflects a consumption practice shaped by the platform’s ranking, since the thirty most-liked comments per post are the ones the audience itself has voted into visibility; at explanation level it demonstrates that the commercial–spiritual nexus is sustained by the audience’s own interpretive labour, not imposed on it. Followers embrace the prosperous, polished preacher as an aspirational model of modern Muslim womanhood,⁷⁸ and in doing so they do not merely consume the micro-identity—they finish it. This is the conditional freedom Nisa documents⁷⁹ and the audience-enforced boundary Sunesti, Hasan, and Azca describe,⁸⁰ observed from the inside: the same commenters who emulate her also patrol the limits of *ḥayā*’ and maternal propriety, so the independence the platform grants a female preacher remains calibrated, thread by thread, by the community it convenes. Authority here is co-produced, continually, at the point where faith, gender, aesthetics, and platform capitalism meet.

We can now state the findings against the questions that organized the study, and as propositions that follow from the data. To the first question—through which recurring micro-performances the micro-identity is assembled—the answer is the triad documented above: micro-visual choreography, micro-auditory affect, and micro-narrative compression, bundled in 38 of 45 artefacts and engineered to the platform’s grain. *Proposition 1*: The denser the bundling of visual, vocal, and narrative micro-signals within a single short-form unit, the more rapidly and stably a religious persona is recognized, because platform distribution rewards multi-channel legibility within seconds. To the second question—how the micro-identity negotiates gendered constraint—the answer is the tactical shield: authority grounded in nurturance rather than doctrinal confrontation allows public preaching inside a conservative field, and the comment corpus shows audiences actively poli-

⁷⁸ Beta, “Commerce, Piety and Politics.”

⁷⁹ Nisa, “Creative and Lucrative Da’wa.”

⁸⁰ Sunesti, Hasan, and Azca, “Young Salafi-Niqabi and Hijrah.”

cing, but also actively protecting, that settlement. *Proposition 2:* Female religious authority on visual platforms is sustainable precisely to the extent that it is routed through maternal and domestic registers, which convert the modesty constraints that restrict women's public speech into the very signals that authenticate it. To the third question—how commerce and spiritual legitimacy reinforce one another—the answer is the commercial–spiritual nexus: branded modesty appears inside sermons as sanctioned piety, and the 31 per cent of comments devoted to commercial–aesthetic validation register no perceived contradiction. *Proposition 3:* When commercial products are framed as means of embodying modesty, monetization does not erode religious authority but extends it, because audiences read consumption of the sanctioned brand as participation in the piety the brand indexes. Together the three propositions describe a single mechanism: a performative micro-identity is the instrument by which gendered constraint, platform economics, and religious legitimacy are made to work for, rather than against, one another.

Conclusion

This article set out to explain how religious authority is made when the pulpit is a sixty-second video. Following Oki's Instagram presence (@okisetianadewi, 20.6 million followers) through six months of non-reactive observation—45 short-form artifacts and 1,500 audience comments—we have argued that digital *da'wah* by female preachers is not the transmission of doctrine through a new channel. It is the continuous assembly of authority inside an architecture that rewards brevity, beauty, and intimacy, and penalizes everything else.

Three contributions follow. First, we have proposed *performative micro-identity* as an analytical category for platform-era religion: a hyper-curated, modular identity built from synchronized micro-visual, micro-auditory, and micro-narrative performances, engineered for algorithmic legibility yet experienced by audiences as intimacy. Oki's account is the clearest case we know, but the concept is meant to travel. Second, we have shown how such a micro-identity functions as a tactical shield under patriarchal constraint. Through the choreography of aesthetic piety and the discipline of maternal softness, culturally sanctioned femininity becomes the

vehicle of public religious power; influence is maximized precisely by staying inside the boundaries of *haya'*. Third, we have documented a commercial-spiritual nexus in which credentials, celebrity, and proprietary business form one authority. Oki's fashion and skincare ventures do not dilute her legitimacy; they materialize it, and her audience completes the sanctification in the comments.

For theory, the study presses the literatures on *aesthetic piety* and *digital Islamic authority* toward a stronger claim: platform logics do not merely distribute religious expression, they constitute its form. Legitimacy in this environment is neither inherited nor institutional; it is co-constructed at the intersection of faith, gender, aesthetics, and capitalism. For practice, the findings speak to scholars, media workers, and religious institutions trying to understand how Muslim women turn visibility into leadership in contemporary Southeast Asia—what tools they use, what constraints they answer, and what it costs. The study's limits follow from its design. Observational netnography gave us the performance but not the intentions behind it; interviews with Oki and her production team would tell us how much of the choreography is deliberate editorial strategy and how much is habit. A single case, however paradigmatic, cannot stand for the diversity of Indonesian female preachers. The natural next step is comparative: celebrity preachers against *pesantren*-rooted female scholars such as the *Ning* figures of Java, whose authority runs on genealogy rather than aesthetics. Reception work offline—following how audiences carry aesthetic piety from the feed into daily practice—would test how far the co-construction we observed actually travels.

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