

INSTAGRAMABLE PILGRIMAGE: SPIRITUALISM, CONSERVATISM AND COMMODIFIED RELIGION ON INDONESIAN CELEBGRAMS POSTS

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Abstract: *Economic development, technological advances, infrastructure improvements, and religious awakening have increased the practice of religious journey (pilgrimage), including among Muslims in Indonesia. Young celebrities have actively shared their religious journeys on social media as self-expression and religious testimony. These uploads are religion online' that provide religious information to the public, especially to their followers. This article is a qualitative study on the phenomenon of religious travel in contemporary Indonesia. This study takes the case of three Muslim female celebrities who are public figures in Indonesia. By analyzing their uploads related to religious travel (or what we call instagrammable pilgrimages) on Instagram during the pandemic and post-pandemic period (July 2021 to April 2023), we find that the phenomenon of religious travel can be examined in terms of its impact on human behavior and that an increase in Islamic religiosity can be observed and registered in the space of spiritualism and the use of religion for the economy, rather than simply an increase in conservatism.*

Keywords: *Commodification; Conservatism; Indonesia; Online Religion; Religious Travel; Social Media; Spirituality*

Introduction

Improved transportation infrastructure, the internet, and increased mobility have led to a rise in religious travel. In Indonesia, the middle class's growing wealth and desire for identity recognition have significantly contributed to the growth of Hajj and Umrah travel agencies offering Special Executive Programs. The Ministry of Religious Affairs reports a significant increase in registration for Executive Hajj programs in 2021-2022, with 419,061 registrants in 2022, of whom 414,250 had prior hajj experience. This contrasts with the significantly lower number of registrants in 2021, with only 81,259 registrants, 80,777 of whom had prior hajj experience. These numbers indicate a strong desire among middle-class Muslims to perform the pilgrimage. Indonesia had the highest number of Umrah pilgrims (317,200 persons)

from 30 July to 4 October 2022, according to data from the Ministry of Umrah and Hajj in Saudi Arabia. This is a testament to Indonesia's growing middle-class consumption, which has increased to more than 52 million people or around 20 percent of the population, with spending ranging from USD 7.75 to USD 38 per day. Furthermore, there is a growing public interest in learning more about Islam. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the Social Piety Index (IKS) has increased, indicating that Indonesian society's religious and social piety is classified as Good with a significance of 84.95%. This rise in societal piety corresponds to a global religious revival, with religion playing a more prominent role in the postcolonial and postcommunist eras. Modern society has undoubtedly undergone a process of re-sacralization, commonly referred to as religious revival. The growth of the middle class and increasing piety and religious fervor in Indonesia have unequivocally led to a significant rise in the number of religious journeys abroad.

Improved transportation infrastructure, the internet, and the ease of mobility from one place to another have increased the number of trips made for religious purposes. In Indonesia, the increase in religious trips has also been driven by the middle class and its increasing wealth.¹ The need for identity recognition and lifestyle of the Muslim middle class community in Indonesia has also significantly influenced the growth of Hajj and Umrah travel agencies that offer Special Executive Programs.² Data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs shows that there is an increase in registration for such Executive Hajj programs in 2021-2022. In 2022 there were 419,061 registrants, of whom 414,250 were people who already had hajj experience. One year earlier, in 2021 the number of registrants were significantly fewer, at 81,259 registrants, 80,777 of whom already had hajj experience. This means that there is a high desire among the middle-class Muslims to perform the pilgrimage. According to data from Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Umrah and Hajj, from 30 July to 4 October 2022, Indonesia was the country with the highest number of Umrah pilgrims (317,200 persons).³ This increase among other reasons, is due to Indonesia's middle-class consumption of between USD 7.75 to USD 38 per day, a figure that has

¹ Vaishali Rastogi et al., "Asia's Next Big Community: Indonesia's Rising Middle-Class and Affluent Consumers." (Boston: The Boston Consulting Group, 2013).

² Dony Arung Triantoro, Bifa Fanisa Basri, and Mansurni Abadi, "Upper Middle-Class Muslims and Market-Oriented Umroh Program Dissemination on Social Media," *Idarotuna* 5, no. 1 (April 30, 2023): 15-29, <https://doi.org/10.24014/idarotuna.v5i1.22298>.

³ "Indonesians Top among 1.2 Million Pilgrims Performed Umrah during Current Season," *Saudigazette*, October 5, 2022, <http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/625732>.

increased to more than 52 million people or around 20 percent of the population.⁴ Furthermore, there is a growing public interest in learning more about Islam. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the Social Piety Index (IKS) has risen. Indonesian society's religious and social piety is classed as Good, with a significance of 84.95%.⁵ This rise in societal piety corresponds to a religious revival around the world, with religion having taken on a more prominent role in the postcolonial and postcommunist eras. Modern society has experienced a re-sacralization⁶ and this phenomenon is referred to as religious revival. Drawing these elements together, the growth of a middle-class in the population and an increasing piety and religious fervor in Indonesia have increased the number of religious journeys abroad.

Young Indonesians have also taken advantage of this convenience to fill their vacations with religious journeys, such as Umrah and pilgrimage, to places that are considered holy sites. Furthermore, the advancement of the internet has changed the way people live in the world. If those changes begin with matters such as how to work, study, and communicate, it also includes worship and when traveling on religious journeys. The use of search engines, travel websites and social media means that young Indonesians can plan their trips well. These young people are also engaged in providing reviews on search engines, travel websites and social media to make it easier for other netizens who will make the pilgrimage. There are numerous pictures, videos and narratives posted on social media as young people's expressions and religious testimonies. Many religious figures utilize the internet as a channel or medium for preaching and conveying religious messages. There are also many people looking for information, knowledge, and religious experiences via the internet. In consequence, religious journeys are frequently uploaded, shared, testimonialized, and extensively spread.

This is understandable given that Indonesia has the third highest number of internet users in Asia. As of June 2021, there were 212,354,070 reported internet users

⁴“World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work” (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2019), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2019>.

⁵Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia. *Keberagamaan dan Kesalehan Sosial: Refleksi dan Indeks Kesalehan Sosial 2022*, (Jakarta: Balitbang Kemenag RI: 2022).

⁶Peter L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999); Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 2011).

in Indonesia or around 76.8 percent of the population.⁷ Social media users of Instagram reached 92,527,400 accounts in December 2021, with women accounting for around 53.1 percent of Instagram users.⁸ Given that high level of usage and the factors we have already referenced, it is not surprising that the internet, especially social media, is a medium for exploring religious information and knowledge conveyed by religious content creators as well as a place for knowledge seekers and believers to get religious information and express their religious expressions.

As evidence of the large number of posts related to religious journey we can point to hashtags such as #umrah, which was used in approximately 2 million posts, #haji, which was used in approximately 2.2 million posts, #haji, which was used in approximately 1.2 million posts, and #ziarah, which was used in approximately 241 thousand posts. The enormous number of posts on social media demonstrates and confirms that social media users also post about religious journeys. A point of interest here is in how and when hashtags can be used, and their absolute ease of use, since these uploads can be made before, during, and after a religious pilgrimage. The growth of social media has an impact on Umrah travel activities. Social media posts using existing hashtags have aided the rapid growth of Umrah as a tourism sector component in Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Advertising content promoted by travel agencies meets *user generated content* (USG) in the form of social media posts distributed by Umrah pilgrims.⁹

As a field of recent research, there have been very few studies conducted on online narratives regarding religious journeys. One valuable study of religious journey narratives uploaded on the internet has been conducted by Dzenita Karic.¹⁰ She writes about online narratives concerning young Bosnian diaspora pilgrimages in Western Europe and North America. Karic emphasized in her study that uploading travel notes (*travelog*) online somehow “democratizes” Hajj journey narratives that can also be written by lay pilgrims. If, previously, stories about

⁷ Internet World Stats, “Internet 2021 Usage in Asia Internet Users, Facebook Subscribers & Population Statistics for 35 countries and regions in Asia”, <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm>

⁸“Instagram Users in Indonesia December 2021,” accessed January 18, 2024, <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/instagram-users-in-indonesia/2021/12/>.

⁹Nuki Mayasari, “Recharging Faith: The Practice of Multiple Umrah Trips Among Middle Class in Yogyakarta” (Yogyakarta, Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2014), <https://etd.repository.ugm.ac.id/penelitian/detail/74747>.

¹⁰Dzenita Karic, “Online Bosniak Hajj Narratives,” in *Muslim Pilgrimage in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017).

religious journeys could only be written by clerics or religious authorities, online Hajj travel records allow lay persons who are not clerics or religious authorities to write, so the testimonies are not confined to the ulama. Online Hajj travel records are also used to convey experiences during the Hajj, although most of them contain Hajj travel information. In the case of Karic's study this includes showing the identity of Bosnian Muslims and how they see themselves (*self*) and how they see the other (*the others*). Another study about the "Holy Selfie" analyzed one hundred selfies taken by social media users during Umrah or Hajj. Selfies are records of pilgrims' presence and religious experiences in the Holy Land, whose uploads are highly conscious for the consumption of their followers on social media. Furthermore, the three contend that selfies in the holy place are an example of a counter-narrative that opposes narratives about Muslims and Islam created by those outside Islam.¹¹ In addition, Al-Ajarma and Buitelaar¹² also compared deep online narratives on *Facebook* and *Youtube* regarding the journey of Hajj pilgrims from two different countries, Morocco, and the Netherlands. It was found that the online narrative of the Hajj trip from Morocco contained more negative sentiment than the online narrative of the Hajj trip from the Netherlands. Both believe that the Moroccan government's inadequate administration of the Hajj has given the story of this Hajj a negative tone. In contrast, Hajj travels from Europe showed a more positive aspect, such as how the spirituality of the Hajj and the brotherhood of fellow Muslims are more emphasized.¹³ Unlike the previous research, which focused on website/blog uploads, YouTube, and Facebook, this article discusses narratives and photos of religious vacations posted on the social media platform Instagram. The upload not only shows the identity of Muslim women who remain fashionable in their religious journey but also the religious sentiments underlying the narrative and photos. According to Karic, this identity does not distinguish between self and other. However, it is more about a question of image and presentation, demonstrating that being a Muslim lady can

¹¹Nadia Caidi, Susan Beazley, and Laia Colomer Marquez, "Holy Selfies: Performing Pilgrimage in the Age of Social Media," *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion* 2, no. 1/2 (2018): 8-31, <https://doi.org/10.33137/ijidi.v2i1/2.322099>.

¹²Kholoud Al-Ajarma and Marjo Buitelaar, "Social Media Representations of the Pilgrimage to Mecca," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 10 (March 29, 2021): 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-BJA10027>.

¹³Kholoud Al-Ajarma and Marjo Buitelaar, "Social Media Representations of the Pilgrimage to Mecca: Challenging Moroccan and Dutch Mainstream Media Frames," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 10, no. 2 (2021): 146-67, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-BJA10027>.

still be fashionable and up to date. Meanwhile, the upload reasoning reflects the religious worldview that is currently prevalent among young Indonesians. This results in commodification in the form of an appeal to use halal products. They can stay fashionable while using halal and Sharia-compliant products.

Method

This article is a qualitative study of Islamic studies based on contemporary history and sociology and aligns with Nisa's¹⁴ research on the spread of Islam through Instagram among young women in Indonesia. According to the study, da'wah via Instagram gained many followers among young women because it is presented artistically and gently, such as by publishing photos and quotes from the Koran, Prophet Muhammad's hadith, or words of wisdom. Aside from that, preaching via Instagram is regarded as profitable (lucrative) because there are several things that can be promoted (endorsed) via Instagram posts.

This study takes primary sources from Instagram posts in line with studies on online religion and online religion. In contrast to Nisa's (2018) research, this article focuses on posts related to religious travel (pilgrimage), such as Hajj, Umrah, or pilgrimage to mosques or other holy sites using case studies. A large percentage of Indonesia's 92,527,400 Instagram users are young, aged 18-24 years (37.2 percent) and 25-34 years (32.4 percent). The case selection for this study is a group of young, female Instagram celebrities in the contemporary era. Apart from 53.1 percent of Instagram users being women, female celebrities also have quite many followers.

This study analyzes religiosity of modern, middle-class Muslims and their ways of *dakwah* within the context of contemporary global world with new technology through the posts of three female "celebgrams" who undertake religious journeys to places that are considered as holy sites or have religious overtones. These uploads are spreading Islam through social media. What is meant by "religious journey posts" in this article are posts about a place or a trip to a place related to religious purposes in the form of worship rituals or also for preaching. Da'wah through social media which is seen by millions of followers is considered more effective so there are also charges for endorsement for halal products. Da'wah (Islamic preaching, or the spreading of Islam) is carried out by reflecting on the meaning of religion and the journey for oneself in their posts. These posts are conscious and are made for millions of

¹⁴ Eva F. Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, no. 1-2 (February 14, 2018): 68-99, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-12340085>.

followers on Instagram, and the posts analyzed were those uploaded to each celebgram's Instagram account from July 1 2021 to April 21 2023. During this period, much of the world was still hit by the Covid-19 pandemic though some countries and locations were gradually entering the post-pandemic period. The three celebgrams are Dewi Sandra (@dewisandra) who has 9.8 million followers on Instagram, Shireen Sungkar (@shireensungkar) who has 27.9 million followers, and Oki Setiana Dewi (@okisetiaanadewi) who has around 20.3 million followers. These three celebgrams were taken because they have many followers and have uploaded travel photos, including ones with a religious significance. Apart from that, the three of them represent a range of life journeys: Dewi Sandra is a convert to Islam, whilst Shireen emigrated and then continues to actively study Islam, and Oki has a strong Islamic background, especially since studying at PhD program at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic university Jakarta and finished her PhD there. In the period from July 1 2021 to April 21 2023, Dewi Sandra uploaded 131 posts on Instagram, 21 (16%) of which being about travel. In the same period, Shireen uploaded 956 Instagram posts, 95 (10%) of which were travel posts and 36 (3.7%) of the uploads being related to religious travel. Oki, however, was the most active celebgram, uploading 1,171 posts with 288 (24.6%) about travel. All of Oki's travel uploads on Instagram can be categorized as religious journeys because apart from worshiping in Mecca or Medina, Oki is also active in preaching in various places in her homeland and abroad. She also visited local mosques or pilgrimage places when preaching within her own country and beyond.

From this analysis, we found that the third religious journey posts contained various religious expressions which included words such as identity and spirituality, and that they engaged in the promotion of products from the halal industry in the country. If posts related to identity and spirituality are 'preaching with words' (*dawah bil lisan*), then we can interpret that the *endorsement of the* halal products on the post are 'preaching with deeds' (*dawah bil hal*). Sakai saw that since the 1980s, young Muslim groups in Indonesia, especially Muslim student activists, have sought Islamic solutions to socio-economic disparities by carrying out good deeds for family members and the community. One of these good deeds is to engage in economic activity which is classified as *dawah bil hal*.¹⁵ In the future, the growth of the Islamic economy will stimulate the emergence of the halal industry in the country.

¹⁵ Minako Sakai, *Muslimah, Kewirausahaan Dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* (Ciputat: Dompot Dhuafa, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Pilgrimage, Religion Online, and Conservatism

There are many definitions of pilgrimage. This article used Greenia's¹⁶ essential elements in relation to the pilgrimage:

1. Celebrating a physical location as a site of symbolic or real access to powers beyond the human realm;
2. Displacement from one's customary locale, daily routines and social position to undertake a voyage into liminality where social roles and constraints are elided or transcended;
3. Undertaking ritualized, non-utilitarian behaviors in the course of one's travel or while savoring the goal of the trek; discomforts and ordeals are not just tolerated but may be welcomed, and embraced as essential components of the quest;
4. Being present at a site that others have designated as significant for non-material reasons: being there is transformative and enriching, and connects one to values beyond the normal reach of the individual;
5. Accepting that there is an imprecise but presumed 'transactional value' to the journey, that a major effort may have a major payoff in terms of a cure, expiation of guilt or sin, inducement of a special divine favor like fertility or a bountiful harvest, protection from danger, salvation, or simply enlightenment.'
6. The experience of pilgrimage is seen in advance as capable of creating an enduring memory to which one returns in later life.

Greenia also argues that the spiritual experience in pilgrimage is similar with most people. This experience is felt across a wide range of seemingly everyday activities, including sex with one's legitimate partner, caressing a newborn baby, enjoying a fine meal, listening to powerful music, stimulating exercise and other common (but not constant) experiences in the same category of the reliable "clean high." This must also include fulfilling a quest for authenticity, and a genuine experience of another age or belief system by replicating the lifestyles of those who sought it before us.¹⁷ Pilgrimage is a trip by an individual, group or community to a site that is perceived as important to strengthen one's spirituality. This finds expression in the Islamic tradition that perceives pilgrimage, such as hajj, umrah or *ziyarah*, as a struggle to strengthen spirituality, to follow one's ancestors' devotion, or

¹⁶ George Greenia, "What Is Pilgrimage?," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 6, no. 2 (June 25, 2018), <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol6/iss2/3>.

¹⁷ Greenia.

to burn sins.¹⁸ In the digital era the pilgrimage is still relevant and is performed by believers. As a result, there are many studies on the relationship between religion and the internet (cyberspace).

Studies regarding this relationship have increased since the beginning of the first decade of the 2000s. Hadden and Cowan's¹⁹ study regarding "Religion Online" and "Online Religion" is an initial study of the relationship between religion and the internet. Religion Online is information on religion on the internet, such as on websites that function "like brochures information." The nature and purpose of religious activities on the internet is only to spread religious information. Meanwhile, Online Religion is how religious rituals can be carried out and participated in by internet users to do online religious rituals. For example, online Christmas services or online Friday prayers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The two may be interrelated and may complement one another.

This study from Hedden and Cowan is strengthened by Farrell's²⁰ study which analyzes the relationship between Christian religious denominations, Religion Online and Online Religion. Farrell saw that believers of the Liberal Protestant denomination were more likely to use Online Religion while Evangelist believers were more likely to use Online Religion when they are using the internet. It can be understood that demographically, Evangelists are young people who are familiar with technological developments (ie, that they are "tech savvy"). But the presence and function of religion as "online religion" cannot be separated from "networked religion."²¹ Religion that is usually practiced offline must now be exported online. It shapes the religious identities of internet users, creates online religious communities, redefines the boundaries of religious authority, etc. This adjustment certainly requires adaptation from face-to-face meetings to online meetings. There are five important things that Campbell defines as elements of "networked religion": Networked

¹⁸ Mukhlis Latif and Muh Ilham Usman, "Fenomena Ziarah Makam Wali Dalam Masyarakat Mandar," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 19, no. 2 (December 29, 2021): 247-63, <https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v19i2.4975>.

¹⁹ David G. Bromley, Douglas E. Cowan, and Jeffrey K. Hadden, *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises* (Bradford: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2001).

²⁰ Justin Farrell, "The Divine Online: Civic Organizing, Identity Building, and Internet Fluency Among Different Religious Groups," *Journal of Media and Religion* 10, no. 2 (April 29, 2011): 73-90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2011.572438>.

²¹ Heidi A. Campbell, "Understanding the Relationship between Religion Online and Offline in a Networked Society," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 64-93, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfr074>.

communities, storied identities, shifting religious authority, convergent religious practices, and many locations in carrying out religious rituals (a multisite reality).

The studies above provide a clear basis for interpreting that the relationship between religion and the internet has two approaches, namely that the internet is used as a medium for disseminating religious information (Online Religion) and as a medium for conducting rituals or worship online (Religion Online). Using this definition, the posts on social media in this study are more likely to be Online Religion which essentially provides information about religion and religious expressions of Instagram users. However, the posts can make their followers on Instagram interested in experiencing religious trips to sacred places.

In line with the arguments of Farrell and Campbell who saw the phenomenon of "online religion" as being close to religious denominations, this study also saw closeness to certain Islamic study groups (*pengajian*) of modernist but conservative understanding. For example, the celebgrams discussed in this study are members of the Islamic study group called Kajian Musawarah. The group can be categorized as being conservative. It is a group of hijrah artists led by Ustadz Adi Hidayat, whose lectures are easily found on YouTube, Instagram, and other social media platforms. Based on the teachings from its lectures that were found on the internet, Kajian Musawarah presents a conservative understanding, but of a non-Salafi typology.²² Conservatism referring to van Bruinessen's definition is a variety of religious thought that rejects modernist, liberal or progressive understandings of the reinterpretation of Islamic thought and tries to maintain existing doctrinal and social order. Conservative groups usually reject ideas of gender equality, including the use of hermeneutics in interpreting the Holy Book's texts. These conservative groups are present in both the traditionalist and modernist groups, just as there are liberal and progressive factions in both groups.²³

The phenomena of these celebgrams and the Islamic group discussion Kajian Musawarah, that rejects the use of hermeneutics in the interpretation of the Holy Book, is in line with the definitions of conservatism given by Bruinessen and Azra. Members of this group remain involved in the entertainment world but are starting to abandon certain occupations or roles that call for behavior they do not feel to accord with Islamic teachings, such as becoming a host of a gossip show on television,

²²Windy Triana, *Ringkasan Eksekutif Hasil Penelitian Tren Keberagamaan Hijrah Kontemporer*, (Ciputat: Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat UIN Jakarta, 2021).

²³ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

or acting in movies or serials in which men and women meet (*ikhtilat*) and traveling without a mahram. Apart from that, in terms of gender roles, lecturers and their circles believe that it is better for women to stay at home.

As an entertainers' Islamic study group, Kajian Musawarah does not require its members to leave the entertainment business where they have established a presence. These artists can continue to be presenters, advertising stars, and actors in serials with their own wives. As celebrities, young artists who are members of Kajian Musawarah are also active on social media. In fact, this community also has its own Instagram account and has been verified. This is in line with Campbell's study above, which saw that the presence of the preaching ideas of the Kajian Musawarah in the online realm is an extension of "networked religion" which already exists in the offline realm. Therefore, the three celebgrams in this study are open to conservative understandings. The Musawarah study group also accepts ideas about nationalism. In one of its Instagram posts, it shows a flag ceremony to commemorate Indonesia's Independence Day. Therefore, the conservatism of this study does not fall into the category of those who justify violent actions to create an Islamic state or fight the powers that are considered non-Muslims (those referred to as "jihadists"). Ustadz Adi Hidayat, who often gives lectures on Kajian Musawarah, stated that the democratic system and Pancasila are in accordance with Islam. The Islamic caliphate is no longer needed. This is in line with the development of conservatism in Indonesia driven by the emergence of a Muslim middle class who have a new attachment to Islam. The teachings from the group are that there is nothing to be concerned about because this conservatism is still compatible with the social culture and does not give rise to identity politics in Indonesia. This is in line with the findings of Sakai and Fauzia that there is a rise in conservatism including Islamism but that this is more sociocultural in nature than a concern over Islamic morality.²⁴ Apart from that, those who are considered conservative are divided into various groups according to their religious interpretation and understanding of the life of the Prophet, his companions, the *tabi'in*, and the *tabiut tabi'in*. There is no single group, and most are still in the moderate category (*wasathiyah*).

²⁴ Minako Sakai and Amelia Fauzia, "Islamic Orientations in Contemporary Indonesia: Islamism on The Rise?," *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 41-61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2013.784513>.

Studies from Boyle, Hansen, and Christensen²⁵ show the use of social media as "online religion" has made social media users easily connected with religious sources, such as holy places, religious leaders, or believers that have the same thoughts and tendencies (like-minded people). This connection is then continued with "uploading, sharing and providing religious testimonies." The key to being seen as an "online religion" is its interaction with its followers on social media. Through platforms, such as Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram and other applications, interactions between congregations and their religious institutions are becoming closer. This makes religion easier to access as a "personalized religion" which answers the personal religious needs of social media users. They also make posts during face-to-face rituals or worship and when going on religious trips. Social media posts, especially on Instagram, can show that someone can be stylish and fashionable and have faith at the same time.

These same elements were conveyed by Niu²⁶ who studied the "Virtual Hajj" or Manasik Hajj, which was triggered by the difficulty of performing the Hajj due to the limited number of Hajj visas issued by Saudi Arabia. Virtual Hajj is carried out by performing the Hajj Manasik by making models of the Kaaba and the Grand Mosque in various locations and the ritual participants practice the pillars of the Hajj pilgrimage, as if they were performing the Hajj. Apart from that, the Hajj rituals are also carried out using "virtual reality" in collaboration with Information Technology (IT) companies. The development of internet access and smartphones also encourages live broadcasts (live streaming) when someone is on the Hajj. During the Covid-19 pandemic, not many people were able to make the Hajj, and live broadcast uploads became one way to relieve the longing for the atmosphere of Baitullah during the Hajj season. These Virtual Hajj methods are carried out as training or warm-up for the congregation members when the opportunity to make the Hajj or visit the Holy Land is difficult.

In the Instagram posts made by the celebs they consciously interact with their followers on social media through their posts. By analyzing the posts, several concepts are revealed, such as identity and spirituality, which is a part of religious testimonies. At the same time, it is also another part of the invitation to use halal and Islamic products to truly practice Islam.

²⁵ August E. Grant et al., *Religion Online: How Digital Technology Is Changing the Way We Worship and Pray* (California: Praeger, 2019).

²⁶ Song Niu, "Virtual Hajj as a Response to Demographic and Geopolitical Pressures," *Contemporary Islam* 17, no. 1 (April 1, 2023): 95-108, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-023-00512-1>.

Profiles of Three Muslim Female Celebgrams

Below are brief profiles showing the backgrounds and social activities of the three celebgrams in this study. As identified earlier they are Shireen Sungkar, Dewi Sandra and Oki Setiana Dewi.

Shireen Sungkar

Shireen Sungkar is an Indonesian model, host, actress, and singer. She is of Arab and Minangkabau descent and was born on January 28, 1992. Both of her parents, Mark Sungkar and Fanny Bauty, are also movie stars. As well as her younger sister, Zaskia Sungkar. Shireen Sungkar was previously known as a popular serial movie star. After choosing to wear *syar'i hijab* (long modest Muslim women headscarf), she is on the list of "hijaber" celebgrams who has more than 24.5 million *followers*. Apart from Instagram, Shireen Sungkar is also an active content creator on YouTube. With her sister, Zaskia, Shireen had a music group called The Sister. After graduating from Triguna Jakarta High School, Shireen continued her studies in Australia, studying abroad having been her desire for a long time.

Shireen became increasingly known to the public when she played the character Fitri in a series titled "Cinta Fitri," in 2007. The series was very popular and was produced until 2011. Shireen finally married Teuku Wisnu in 2013, one of the actors in the series. After that, they decided to learn more about Islam and leave the entertainment business. As a result of this learning (referred to here as a *hijrah*), the couple's life has changed, especially about their livelihood which no longer depends on the entertainment business. During this Teuku Wisnu was his wife's teacher, teaching her many things to get closer to Islam.

Dewi Sandra

Dewi Sandra Killick, or well-known as Dewi Sandra, is an Indonesian model, actress, presenter, and singer. She was born in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, on April 3, 1980. Dewi Sandra has gone through quite a long spiritual journey. She was raised by a Muslim mother, with her father who was a former agnostic before deciding to convert to Islam. Seven years after *hijrah*, her own spiritual journey began when she faced marriage problems with the late Glenn Fredly and began to search for a strong faith. Dewi admitted that she had time to contemplate the various trials she

experienced during that time. She felt disappointed and wanted to protest to God. In fact, she even had the urge to commit suicide. Fortunately, she failed to carry out any of these actions because she had guidance from a teacher. She also had a meaningful spiritual experience after visiting the Holy Land. Her prayers at Mecca had an influence on her life. Then she became increasingly determined to deepen her religious knowledge. After nine years of *hijrah*, Dewi Sandra is now actively preaching on her Instagram site, on which she posts a lot of advice, prayers and words of wisdom.

Oki Setiana Dewi

Oki Setiana Dewi is an Indonesian actress, writer, and preacher in Indonesia. She was born in Batam January 13, 1989, the eldest child of Sulyanto and Yunifah Lismawati. At the age of sixteen, she chose to leave her hometown, Batam, for Jakarta to pursue her dream of becoming a movie artist.

Oki's teenage life was not like the life of a normal teenager. She wanted to be a professional movie artist but as a teenager Oki had started wearing *hijab*. So, when she received a casting call to appear in a film that required her to take off her *hijab*, she rejected the call. Finally, she became known to the public after becoming the star in the film "Ketika Cinta Bertasbih" (When Love Praises). Oki is married to Ory Vitrio and has four children. Besides pursuing her career as an artist, presenter, and MC, Oki is also active in giving religious lectures in various places and communities.

Her busy life in the entertainment works and preaching has not dampened her efforts in studying. Oki completed her doctoral program from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta with a dissertation in analyzing the relationship between *hijrah* celebrities and two Islamic movements: Jama'ah Tabligh and Salafi. According to her study, the two groups were accepted by the *hijrah* celebrities because the way they delivered their message was felt to be something that could be more easily related to. Many musicians follow Jama'ah Tabligh because they do not forbid music. Meanwhile, many Salafi congregations are followed by movie/series actors and actresses.

Identity, Spirituality and Commodities in Posts About Religious Travel

This section analyzes Instagram posts by the three celebgrams regarding religious travel, including those that reflect identity, spirituality, conservatism, and the commodification of religion.

The Phenomenon of Online Religion as Identity and Spirituality

Currently, the phenomenon of Muslim women's clothing (*hijab*) in Indonesia shows the *hijab* is an expression of religiosity that can be divided into two groups: The first group represents those who want to return to Islamic teachings which are considered pure. This group identifies the *hijab* as a symbol of piety, modesty and conservativeness; something that can be recognized through the shape of the *hijab* which is large and covers almost the entire body, and with the wearing of dresses that are long and loose. The second group is those for whom it represents a symbol of freedom and modernity by dressing in a small *hijab* with eye-catching colors, sometimes tied or wrapped around the neck with shirt and tight trousers. The formation of the two different appearances of these groups was of course greatly influenced by cultural factors and their understanding of the meaning of Muslim women's clothing itself.²⁷

From the posts uploaded by the celebgrams, it was clear that they remained consistent in wearing Muslim clothing on all their religious trips. This shows that they are proud and remain true to their identity as Muslim women wherever they are. In fact, they combine fashionable Muslim clothing typical of Islam in Indonesia with the conditions of the places to which they travel. For example, they wear thick jackets (*winter coats*) while in Europe or America whilst still wearing fashionable Muslim clothing. This shows their Muslim identity as being compatible with the development of place and time. In fact, they are not against the development of science and technology. This can be seen, for example, in Oki's uploads when she visited the United States and Canada. Apart from visiting several Muslim communities in Indonesia and the United States, she also uploaded visits to well-known universities in the world and several historical monuments in the United States. One of the posts shows a photo of Oki with her husband and children in front of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), praising the greatness of the university and hoping that some of her descendants can study there.

Dressing as Muslim women does not prevent them from carrying out various challenging activities. This can be seen from one of Shireen's uploads. One of her hobbies is horse riding and she often uploads horse riding activities but on this

²⁷ Yulia Hafizah, "Fenomena Jilbab Dalam Masyarakat Kosmopolitan: Interpretasi Teks Dan Konteks Atas Ayat Jilbab," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 16, no. 2 (2018): 203-26, <https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v16i2.2336>.

occasion the upload showed her riding whilst wearing an *abaya*. This post was welcomed by her followers who saw the heroic side and Muslim women's clothing as not being a barrier to carrying out various adventurous activities. This hobby is in accordance with the hadith of the Prophet which encouraged Muslim parents to teach their children horse riding, swimming and archery. This hadith has been taken literally to mean that horse riding, swimming and archery are highly recommended, even though horses are no longer common vehicles and arrows are no longer weapons.



Figure 1. Shireen riding a horse whilst wearing an *abaya*.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CoeuxWuPjCl/?igshid=YmM0MjE2YWMzOA>

Apart from the Muslim clothing that is always worn wherever they are, the Islamic identity of the three celebgrams is also clearly visible from the language they use. The Muslim expressions were used in their Instagram captions. These expressions show their identity as Muslim women. Expressions and praises to Allah, such as Bismillah, Alhamdulillah, MasyaAllah, Barakallah, Tabarakallah, Insyallah, and other Islamic expressions, are found in almost every post. In their religious travel posts, these Islamic expressions are also written in the captions. Especially when looking at sacred places, such as the Kaaba or mosque, and the natural beauty in various places.



Figure 2. Post with the recitation of Hamdallah. Oki with family in Mecca.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CpNc5uatEe8/?igshid=YmM0MjE2YWZOA>

Aside from reflecting their identities as Muslim women, the uploads of the three celebgrams' religious journeys also show their spirituality. The depth of their sense of religion and closeness to Allah is shown in various posts, including the posts that related to pilgrimage. In fact, the pilgrimages they take have increased their reflection and spirituality. Dewi Sandra's contemplation and spirituality are clearly reflected in her posts. One example is a fairly long post of reflection that she wrote on July 15 2022 with the *ribath* building in the background. Below are her reflections:

Not all days are happy
But that day there must be a lesson...
Just like not all days bad
Because there must be convenience...
God promised...
a promise that never breaks
Every human being is tested
It is impossible for Adam's children and grandchildren to escape
But sometimes it's hard to fight
Loud voices, even whispers...
"GIVE IT UP!!!"
"Hey, you...give up..."
At my lowest point I was tempted
Ready to let go of everything...
But first I have to face it

The biggest enemy is yourself
Look in the mirror... then ask...
"Why did you start (this choice of yours) and why are you here?"
Life is such a mystery...
Every day, at least for me, is never predictable...
But there is one thing that is certain...

QS Al Baqarah: 186 And when My servants ask you (Muhammad) about Me, then indeed I am near. I accept the request of the person who prays when he prays to Me. Let them fulfill my (orders) and believe in me, so that they may obtain the truth.

May God grant His knowledge and guidance to this weak servant 🙏

A similar sentiment is also shown in Shireen's uploads related to pilgrimage. For example, in a post during her Umrah trip, she wrote "In the end, Allah's destiny is always good, even though sometimes it takes tears to accept it (Umar bin Khattab)." Interestingly, Shireen's reflections are not only seen on religious trips, such as the Umrah, but also on trips to European countries. For example, she used a photo from her trip to Switzerland as the background for a narrative that humans should not be arrogant because even small mosquitoes can make people sick. Compared to the other two celebgrams, Dewi Sandra's posts contain more reflections and motivation to practice Islam and worship better. Almost all Dewi Sandra's Instagram posts contain reflective content that talks about her spirituality.

Pilgrimages in Islam, whether in the form of Umrah or Hajj, always have quite a deep impression. Apart from that, the process of traveling to carry out the Umrah or Hajj contains quite a lot of wisdom. This is in line with the reference from Greenia²⁸ stated earlier that a religious journey will have a spiritual experience. The religious experience that can be gained from carrying out the Umrah or Hajj is directly witnessing the Grand Mosque, the Kaaba, and other historical places. Umrah or Hajj pilgrims have so far only been able to narrate verbally and/or in writing to share their travel experiences. Currently, social media users who are performing Umrah or Hajj can directly (*real time*) upload posts when they are performing the Umrah or Hajj, as is recorded in several *captions* written by the celebgrams.

In one of her posts, Shireen said that she was still prevented from going on the pilgrimage to Baitullah. By uploading a photo of her and her husband in front of the Kaaba, she reflected on herself that perhaps she was not worthy of being called by Allah to make Hajj to Mecca. She missed the opportunity to go on the Hajj several

²⁸ Greenia, "What Is Pilgrimage?"

times because she was pregnant. And, when there was another opportunity, the pandemic prevented that too. This reveals that the longing to perform the Hajj or other religious journey is the main motivation for celebgrams. In the post, Shireen, and her husband, Teuku Wisnu, are seen holding hands looking at the Kaaba. The pious clothes they wear look contemporary. Not wearing an *ibram* like those who are making tawaf. This shows that these celebgrams are still fashionable and trendy while on a pilgrimage.



Figure 3. Shireen Sungkar and Teuku Wisnu in front of the Kaaba. Source

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CRdBXg4MyUt/?igshid=YmM0MjE2YWZOA>

Strong and consistent Islamic identity and spirituality in the pilgrimage of these three celebgrams are also *da'wah*. The posts of the three, both directly and indirectly, taking pictures of their pilgrimage are personal reflections and at the same time invite their followers to get closer to Allah and the Islamic religion. This means that these uploads are categorized as *religion online* which spreads Islamic values and lifestyle through social media. The trio's interactions with their followers on social media further strengthen the followers' religious spirit. They were able to show that young Indonesian Muslim women can become whatever they aspire to and go anywhere, but still obey their religion and look after their families.

Conservatism in Religious Journey Posts

Instagram posts that reflect conservatism can be found implicitly and explicitly on these three celebgrams. As in a previous statement, the conservatism referred to in this article refers to posts that abide by existing religious teachings or

traditions. This also means rejecting new interpretations or understandings that are considered to change the existing religious understanding. This understanding is reflected implicitly and explicitly in the posts of the three celebgrams. These posts show a desire to return to an expression of Islam which is considered more authentic, as practiced by the early generations of Muslims, specifically life during the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, with his companions, the *tabi'in*, and the *tabi'ut tabi'in*. The three celebgrams see no conflict between this established religious understanding and how it can be applied to the current lifestyle of the Indonesian Muslim middle class. For example, an understanding of the *aurat* that has been established and agreed upon by the majority of ulama can be combined with the current fashion style of Muslim women.

The underlying conservatism may be seen in the uploads of Shireen and Oki who are always traveling with their husbands and even their children. This is supported by the hadith that a lady cannot travel for a day and a night without the company of her *mabram*. "From Abi Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, 'A woman should not travel as far as a day's journey except with her *mabram*' (HR Tirmidhi)."

For Dewi Sandra herself, even though she almost never uploads traveling with her husband or family, she writes various things that are explicitly tied to a conservative worldview, such as "...I want to marry God's way, or I can "marry" whatever I like. If you want to accept the *qodrat* of our creation, or if you want to add any alphabet to explain your identity, that's OK. Whether you want to follow the commands of God or try 1000% to make your own rules is OK..."

Of these posts, nothing leads to political conservatism or promotes identity politics. This at least shows several things. First, these three celebgrams understand their limits in using social media so they don't get caught up in practical politics that support or reject certain political groups. Secondly, posts related to identity and spirituality as a Muslim woman are more intended as personal expressions to become a Muslim woman who is *kaffah* (whole). They also want to invite their families and followers on social media to practice Islam *kaffah* as well. You can see the posts of Shireen who is involved in the Kajian Musawah, where she takes a photo with the Musawah members who are all wearing long and loose clothes.

In their posts, the celebgrams show how and from whom they studied religion. Dewi Sandra often uploads the lecture videos from Ustadz Muhammad Nurul Dzikri. Shireen also uploaded videos from the same Ustadz several times. However, looking at Shireen and Teuku Wisnu's religious study activities, it appears

that both are active in the Islamic study group *Kajian Musawarah*. From the *Kajian Musawarah* Instagram account, many excerpts were found from the lectures of Ustadz Adi Hidayat, Ustadz Abdul Somad, and other Islamic scholars. Meanwhile, Oki learned from various famous preachers, such as Ustadz Bachtiar Nashir, KH. Cholil Nafis, Ustadz Maulana, and so on. This can be seen from the Maskanul Huffadz Islamic Boarding School's Instagram, where Oki is one of the founders. What is quite different from the other two celebgrams is Oki, who has an excellent foundation in Islamic studies due to her doctorate at UIN Jakarta. In several of her posts, she is seen gaining knowledge from figures such as Nouman Ali Khan and Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, and in visits abroad she shows her capacity as someone close to the academic world.

Commodification of Religion in Encouraging Halal Products

The transformation of Islamic awareness in the public sphere occurred rapidly from the end of the New Order's rule until the Reformation Era. Islam, which was originally suppressed during the New Order regime, suddenly became extensively mainstream in the consumer culture. This is marked by the spread of institutions of Islamic philanthropy, sharia financial institutions, and the growth of halal industries trying to reach Muslim consumers.²⁹ This is in line with the commodification of Islam in that the development of Islamic or halal products plays a major role in Islamization itself.³⁰ For example, "shar'i hijab" products which are sold widely in the community also influence people to wear the *hijab* longer because they feel it is more "shar'i" or more "Islamic". This also helps shape religious identity and spirituality. What's more, these products are promoted by public figures, like celebgrams. It's not surprising that celebgrams promote certain products (*product endorsement*) with the aim of increasing sales of these products and developing the halal industry in the country.

²⁹ Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Agency, and Commodification on the Landscape of the Indonesian Public Sphere," *Contemporary Islam* 3, no. 3 (October 1, 2009): 229-50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-009-0096-9>.

³⁰ Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia," in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Greg Fealy and Sally White, Books and Monographs (ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2008), 15-39, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/expressing-islam/consuming-islam-commodified-religion-and-aspirational-pietism-in-contemporary-indonesia/C816FFBF005DBB5805EA850148B9CD2A>.

The three celebgrams above also do the same in terms of endorsing products. There are products that are produced by themselves or other people's products. For the product itself, one example is the DOA Indonesia Muslimah fashion product from Dewi Sandra. In every post uploaded by Dewi Sandra regarding a particular masjid, there is always a promotion regarding mukenas or prayer mats which are products from DOA Indonesia. Additionally, as Wardah brand ambassador, posts related to traveling are advertisements from Wardah. Selection of Dewi Sandra as Wardah brand ambassador also seems to be based on his face which is a mix of white and Asian races. This carries a strong message that Wardah cosmetic products are also suitable for use not only in Indonesia.

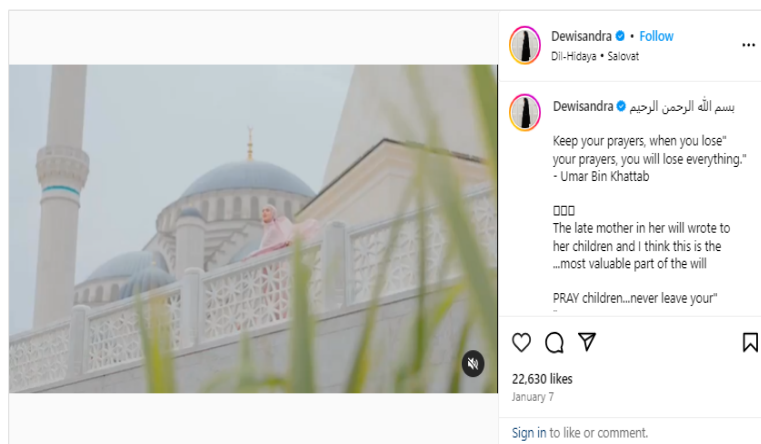


Figure 4. Dewi Sandra's upload which is an endorsement of prayer equipment products from DOA Indonesia.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CnG5BGzO6Fg/?igshid=YmM0MjE2YWZmOA>

Meanwhile, Shireen endorses some of the products she uses while traveling, both on regular trips and pilgrimage trips. The products displayed are several brands, such as Zashi and Zaskia Sungkar for Muslim women's clothing, Nobby for headscarves, Sasha for toothpaste, Biolage Scalp Refresher for hair and scalp care, and several other products. Interestingly, when uploading images or videos related to travel to, or about, the Holy Land, Shireen does not promote any products. Instead, the posts are more towards contemplation and spirituality.



Figure 5. Shireen and Teuku Wisnu promote the toothpaste that accompanies them every day. Included in the trip.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cm0hFkWhrea/?igshid=YmM0MjE2YWZOA>

Oki is the one who uploads more pilgrimage trips as well as promoting halal products in the country. Among these products are Persada Indonesia for Umrah and Hajj travels, Merajut Stories for Muslim women's clothing, Batrisiya Herbal for beauty products, and Lakeya Prayer Set for prayer equipment. Beside that, Oki also actively promotes Maskanul Huffadz as the Islamic boarding school she founded.



Figure 6. Oki endorses Muslim women's fashion and bag products while in Medina.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CpBAodsPygS/?igshid=YmM0MjE2YWZOA>

Fashionable and trendy appearances were also shown by Dewi Sandra when she visited Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In this city, Dewi uploads advertising content for the halal cosmetics brand Wardah. She wrote, "Learned a lot from this trip, about countries, culture, people and *Rabb* who is Almighty over everything." This post on her pilgrimage journey closed with several hashtags promoting Wardah products which have now begun to reach the international market.

Oki Setiana Dewi does more to endorse Muslimah and halal products. While visiting several mosques and historical locations in Istanbul, she promoted prayer mats for traveling. She uploaded her photo in front of the Aya Sofia mosque while writing, "Istanbul 2021, I am still fascinated by this beautiful city even though I have visited it several times... Sajadah Travel... this is very useful, especially for a pandemic like now..." In fact, when uploading several photos and videos from her religious trip to the Holy Land, she also promoted a travel agency located in Surabaya.

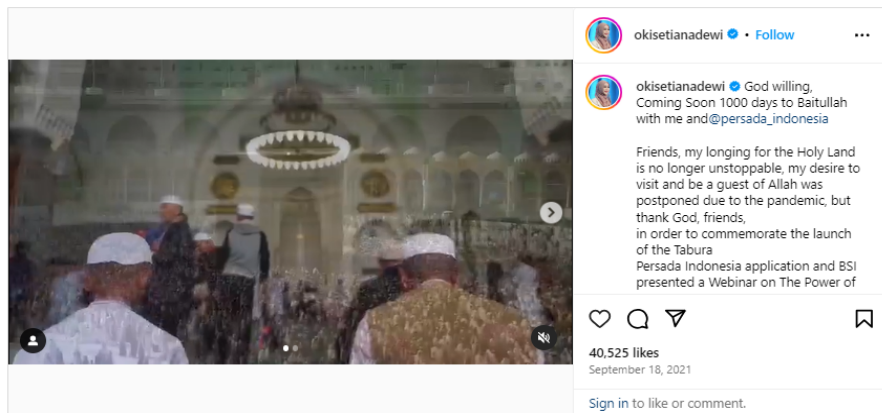


Figure 9. Oki Setiana Dewi's upload containing longing for Baitullah as well as promoting a Hajj and Umrah travel agency.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CT84h3pvlHR/?igshid=YmM0MjE2YWZOA>

From several examples of religious journey posts made by these celebrities, it can be clearly seen how they express their identity, spirituality, and religious understanding as well as an invitation to use the products they endorse. All of this shows their strong and consistent desire to return to Islam and invites their followers

on social media to become true Muslims by following an Islamic lifestyle and by using halal products. Based on the large number of their followers on social media, their role as *trendsetter* Halal lifestyle plays a big role in changing society. As trendsetters, they are the ideal image for middle-class Muslim youth.

Conclusion

This article shows that the religious journey provides an irreplaceable religious experience. The advancement of technology and transportation has facilitated this journey to become easier. In addition, the Muslim middle class in Indonesia is growing. This encourages young Indonesian groups to go on religious pilgrimages, especially with regard to going on Hajj and Umrah. This includes female celebgrams who have many followers on the Instagram platform, which is a major social media platform in Indonesia. On Instagram they upload photos and videos of their religious journeys. It should be added that this article has focused on Instagram because previous research has been primarily focused on websites/blogs, YouTube and Facebook.

Through these selebrams' posts, we can find a reflection of identity and spirituality, and of the religious understanding of many contemporary Muslims. As in previous studies, these three elements are religious testimonies. This study, however, differs from earlier study findings, which focused on the issue of distinguishing one's identity as a Muslim from others. Indeed, these posts show that being a devout Muslim woman does not mean being "out of date" or anachronistic according to modern perspectives. Like other groups who remain fashionable and trendy, Muslim women can also do the same. In this case, the celebgrams prove that conservatism still has a strong place alongside current trends. This understanding is then translated into a halal and *syar'i* lifestyle which was finally implemented with an invitation to use halal products. This is included in the commodification of religion.

These celebs have close ties to groups that are considered Islamist, such as the Islamic Study Group Kajian Musawarah, but the posts that exist are more likely to be religious expressions of a-political contemplation. Apart from that, almost all of the posts promote halal products ranging from Muslim clothing, prayer equipment, health and beauty products, to tours and travel. This religious journey post shows aspects of ritual and spirituality combined with elements of modernity, such as fashion and modern lifestyle. This phenomenon shows that conservatism does not always lead to Islamism with political subtleties, or even radicalism. Instead, it can lead to the commodification of religion to suit middle-class or even upper-class

lifestyles. The religious journey of these celebgrams is a portrait of Indonesia's Muslim middle class, reflecting devotion to religion, family harmony, economic stability, preaching and popularity.

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