

The Mediamorphosis of Aula Magazine: Islam Nusantara Media and Postcolonial Resistance in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This study analyzed the mediamorphosis of Aula Magazine from a postcolonial perspective to examine how an Islam Nusantara media outlet maintained its existence, cultural identity, and epistemic autonomy amid the hegemony of global digital media. Mediamorphosis was conceptualized as a process of negotiating the epistemic position of local Islamic media within a digital landscape dominated by Western media values and knowledge structures. A qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm was employed. Data were collected through interviews with key participants and documentation of Aula Magazine's transformation, and were analyzed inductively to identify the strategic dimensions of mediamorphosis. The findings indicated that Aula implemented three main strategies. First, co-evolution was achieved by expanding its presence across digital platforms and social media to create alternative spaces for Islamic discourse. Second, convergence was realized through the development of the majalahaula.id news portal, which integrated journalism, da'wah, and Islam Nusantara perspectives. Third, complexity was reflected in audience participation, contributor engagement, and content designed to attract younger readers. These strategies demonstrated that Aula's mediamorphosis not only sustained its institutional existence but also functioned as symbolic resistance to digital colonialism by preserving and disseminating Indonesian Islamic knowledge. The study's novelty lay in interpreting mediamorphosis as a strategy for both symbolic resistance and epistemic survival.

Keywords: *Postcolonialism, Epistemic Resistance, Nusantara Islam, Epistemic Survival*

Introduction

The trajectory of Islamic media in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation, particularly following the emergence of the "Islam Nusantara" narrative, which emphasizes local engagement, moderation, and resistance to the dominance of a globally Arab-centered Islamic discourse.¹ Within the landscape of Indonesian Islamic media, Orientalism operates subtly when

¹ Ubed Abdilah Syarif, "The Epistemic Discourse of Religious Moderation (Moderasi Beragama) in Indonesia," *Digital Press Social Sciences and Humanities* 11 (2024): 00014, <https://doi.org/10.29037/digitalpress.411466>; Theguh

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Islamic narratives originating from outside, whether from the West or the Middle East, position local Nusantara Islamic traditions as peripheral practices that need to be corrected or standardized.² It is here that the media plays a role that is not merely technical, but cultural and epistemological.

The transformation of digital media shows how technology reshapes religious practices and authority. In this context, religious actors actively negotiate the use of technology to preserve Islamic values, traditions, and identity.³ This process reflects the social formation of religious practices through technology while also emphasizing the importance of balancing print and digital media. Amid the dominance of global platforms, Islam Nusantara media such as Aula Magazine face both challenges and opportunities in disseminating religious knowledge, expanding the reach of *da'wah*, and maintaining the position of local discourse amid the hegemony of global digital media.⁴

The concept of digital religion is used to understand religious practices that occur in an interconnected way across online and offline spaces. Religion is no longer understood as an activity separate from the real and digital worlds, but rather as a religious practice shaped by reciprocal interactions between religious traditions and digital culture.⁵ The digitalization of religion is not only about adapting to technology, but also concerns the production and circulation of Islamic knowledge rooted in local traditions. Islamic media such as Aula Magazine, which was born out of the *pesantren* (Indonesian Islamic Boarding School) tradition and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), face both challenges and opportunities in a digital space dominated by the logic of global media. Through a process of mediamorphosis, Aula magazine does not simply transfer content to a digital platform but reappropriates modern media to expand the practice of moderate Islamic preaching and preserve the epistemology of Islam Nusantara amid the hegemony of global representations of Islam that are often orientalist and reductionist.

Several Islamic media outlets that consistently publish *da'wah* teachings and promote Islamic values are now expanding their digital presence; for example, Aula Magazine has begun adapting to developments in information technology. Aula Magazine is a media outlet that serves as a public reference for information on Islamic teachings. On December 19, 1978, Aula Magazine was officially published monthly in accordance with the Decree of the East Java Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Executive (SK PWNU Jatim) by PT. Aula Media Nahdlatul Ulama.⁶ Several social media platforms, like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, owned by Aula, facilitate communication between Aula's creative team and the public. Aula, with its distinctive slogan "Bacaan Santri, Kyai dan Pemerhati" (Reading for Santri, Kyai, and Observers), focuses solely on publishing information related to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Although Aula Magazine is not a general-interest publication and focuses

Saumantri, "The Dialectic of Islam Nusantara and Its Contribution To The Development of Religious Moderation In Indonesia," *FOKUS Jurnal Kajian Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 7, no. 1 (2022): 57, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jf.v7i1.4295>; Yearry Panji Setianto, "Mediatization of Indonesian Islam: A Historical Examination of Media and Religious Change," *Religions* 17, no. 2 (2026): 170, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel17020170>.

² Imam Hanafi and Maulana, "A Critique of the Epistemic Marginalization of Southeast Asian Islam," *Asia Pacific Journal on Religion and Society* 8, no. 1 (2024); Carool Kersten, "Islamic Post-Traditionalism: Postcolonial and Postmodern Religious Discourse in Indonesia," *Sophia* 54, no. 4 (2015): 473–89, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-014-0434-0>.

³ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Religious Authority, Sunnah and Sufi Networks in Indonesia," *Public Anthropologist*, 2021.

⁴ Natasha A. Constantin et al., *Religious Transformation In Digital Era: Mediatization Impact on Religious Practice*, 4, no. 10 (2024).

⁵ Heidi Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013).

⁶ Maulana Malik Syarifuddin, "Majalah Aula di Era Digital (Studi Tentang Strategi Majalah Aula Sebagai Media Dakwah)" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2017).

solely on NU, its subscribers are not limited to NU members. Instead, Aula Magazine is for the general public who also want to learn about NU teachings.

The public widely uses Aula as a source of the latest information and knowledge about NU. In 2017, Aula magazine became available online at www.majalahaula.id. This was done to meet the needs of readers who wanted to access the latest information and enjoy Aula Magazine quickly. However, in the early stages of the online version of Aula, the *da'wah* information published in the e-magazine was not as complete as in the print version. The difference in content between the two magazines is intended to maintain public interest in subscribing to the print version of Aula, so that print magazine production can continue smoothly and not die out amid the rise of the online era.⁷ The transformation of Aula's print media to online media www.majalahaula.id shows that PT. Aula Media Nahdlatul Ulama is undergoing a mediamorphosis. Mediamorphosis is the involvement of communication and information technology in the processes of news gathering, processing, and dissemination methods⁸. Mediamorphosis develops an integrated mindset on the evolution of communication media technology, interconnected and continuous with previous and current media, and with emerging media aligned with the dynamics of the times, while offering greater practicality, efficiency, effectiveness, and modernity.⁹

Behind the changes in Islamic media in Indonesia lies a deeper issue regarding who is considered most entitled to determine the "true" face of Islam. Until now, Orientalist perspectives, whether stemming from Western traditions or from Arab-centric tendencies within the Islamic world itself, have often portrayed Nusantara Islam as a peripheral form of Islam that is deemed impure, overly localized, or in need of adjustment to certain standards. While Western Orientalism once operated through colonialism and media representations of the East, in the context of Indonesian Islam, a similar tendency has emerged through Arabization projects that link the authenticity of Islam to the culture and religious practices of the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia. Consequently, local expressions of Islam in Southeast Asia are often viewed as the result of syncretism that is not yet fully "perfect," thereby placing local religious traditions in a subordinate position relative to global centers of Islamic authority. This perspective creates a hierarchy of knowledge that reduces Indonesian Muslims to mere recipients of teachings, rather than producers of Islamic knowledge with their own authority. Yet, as Azyumardi Azra explains, the development of Islam is always intertwined with the social, cultural, and political contexts in which the religion flourishes. Therefore, Nusantara Islamic media serve not only as channels for *da'wah* but also as spaces to nurture, produce, and preserve local traditions.¹⁰

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, this study employs four interrelated concepts. First, Orientalism is understood not merely as the West's view of the East, but also as a pattern of power relations that emerges within the Islamic world itself, particularly between the centers of Arab Islamic authority and non-Arab Muslim regions such as Southeast Asia. In practice, Orientalism operates through a perspective that positions local cultures as less authentic, less pure, or in need of adaptation to certain standards. Such views frequently emerge in various

⁷ "No Title," Aula Online, accessed December 25, 2023, <https://majalahaula.id/#>.

⁸ Ratna Puspita, "Mediamorfosis Surat Kabar Ke Surat Kabar Online (Studi Kasus Republika Online)," *Jurnal Komunikasi, Masyarakat Dan Keamanan* 1, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.31599/komaskam.v1i1.3256>.

⁹ Indah Suryawati and Sukma Alam, "Transformasi Media Cetak Ke Platform Digital (Analisis Mediamorfosis Harian Solopos)," *Jurnal SIGNAL* 10, no. 2 (2022): 190–219.

¹⁰ Hanafi and Maulana, "A Critique of the Epistemic Marginalization of Southeast Asian Islam"; Edward Wadie Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978).

academic and religious discourses that position non-Western traditions as a second-class form of Islam. Second, this study examines the existence of symbolic resistance efforts to challenge the dominance of such discourse through language, symbols, narrative choices, and media framing. This resistance does not always manifest openly or confrontationally, but is present through alternative narratives embedded within everyday content production.¹¹ Third, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is used to examine how local Islamic identities and knowledge are continually negotiated amid the convergence of various cultural influences and global authorities.¹² It is within this space that new forms emerge forms that are not entirely Arab, yet remain rooted in the global Islamic tradition. Bhabha observes that power is never truly absolute; there is always room for marginalized groups to build their own agency. Fourth, this study employs the concept of epistemic survival to examine how local Islamic scholarly traditions persist and evolve amidst the pressures of cultural homogenization and transnational authority. This resilience is evident in the *pesantren* tradition, networks of ulama, Malay Islamic literature, and local Islamic media, which continue to produce knowledge and meaning from their own perspectives. Through these four concepts, AULA Magazine is understood not merely as a medium for religious information, but also as a cultural space where the negotiation of identity, the production of knowledge, and discursive resistance occur continuously.

Previous studies have laid an important foundation for understanding Islamic media and the dynamics of Islam in Indonesia, yet a number of significant gaps remain unaddressed. Research on how media technology shapes human encounters with information and influences the formation of the subject media configures the world order and constrains the conceptions of self that emerge from people's interactions with media technology, making media logic critical to discursive shifts within the Muslim public sphere, and cannot be understood solely through the lens of political economy or elite competition.¹³ However, these studies, along with research on Islamic consumerism and other digital media, remain predominantly focused on new media and the urban Muslim middle class, thus failing to explain how tradition-based Islamic media like Aula Magazine rooted in *pesantren* traditions, actually resist obsolescence and preserve local Islamic epistemology amidst the pressures of digitalization.

Furthermore, research on the transformation of Islamic da'wah to digital platforms has created serious challenges in broadcast regulation and content control, where Islamic revivalist groups utilize social media to promote an exclusive form of Islam, while the government has not yet been able to redefine broadcast regulations to encompass these new media activities.¹⁴

In this context, the question of how traditional Islamic media outlets such as Aula Magazine position themselves and survive becomes all the more analytically pressing. Furthermore, Ponce's¹⁵ global media research indicates that Orientalism, as conceptualized by Said¹⁶ describing a mode of thought originating from Europe based on ontological and epistemological assumptions regarding

¹¹ James Charles Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).

¹² Homi Khabura Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994).

¹³ Julian Millie and Emma Baulch, "Beyond the Middle Classes, Beyond New Media: The Politics of Islamic Consumerism in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 48, no. 1 (2024): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2023.2291103>.

¹⁴ M. Kholili et al., "Islamic Proselytizing in Digital Religion in Indonesia: The Challenges of Broadcasting Regulation," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2024): 2357460, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2357460>.

¹⁵ Aaron Ponce, "A Genealogy of Islamophobia in a Global Critical Race Framework: Religion, Whiteness, and Controlling Rationality," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 48, no. 1 (2025): 119–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2317953>.

¹⁶ Said, *Orientalism*.

the distinction between the “civilized” West and the backward “Orient”: a paradigm that constructs a series of binary oppositions positioning the West as rational, knowledgeable, and civilized, in contrast to the irrational, childish, and primitive Orient. Such a discursive structure operates not only in West–East relations but also, as argued in this study, functions internally within the Indonesian Islamic media sphere through the dominant Arab-centrism that shapes narratives of Islamic authenticity. Existing studies have not seriously explored long-standing *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* based Islamic media as sites of postcolonial resistance, both epistemic and cultural, by integrating frameworks of Orientalism, hybridity, symbolic resistance, and epistemic survival into a single diachronic analysis that encompasses the transition from the print era to the digital era.

The contribution of this research lies in its effort to interpret local Islamic media as a space for the production of knowledge and cultural resistance by integrating perspectives on Orientalism, hybridity, symbolic resistance, and epistemic survival within the context of the transformation of Islamic media in Indonesia. AULA magazine has become a significant phenomenon as a traditionalist Islamic media outlet rooted in Nahdlatul Ulama that has managed to survive and adapt from the print era to the digital era while maintaining the identity and intellectual traditions of Nusantara Islam.

Method

This study employs qualitative methods within a critical-constructivist paradigm to examine mediamorphosis as a socially constructed process shaped by meanings, values, and power relations.¹⁷ Rather than providing a general overview of qualitative research, this study focuses on concrete field procedures centered on the production, circulation, and interpretation of media discourse at PT. Aula Media Nahdlatul Ulama.

Primary data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Fieldwork was conducted over three months (e.g., June–August 2024) at the editorial office of Aula Magazine and related locations. A total of eight informants participated in this study, comprising: (1) two editors responsible for editorial policy and content direction, (2) three journalists involved in content production and digital adaptation, (3) one media manager overseeing digital strategy, and (4) two Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) activists who interact with Aula as part of its audience and ideological network. These informants were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in the production, management, and reception of Aula Magazine. Secondary data was obtained from institutional documents, published articles, archives, and related sources as well as academic literature.

Data analysis was conducted systematically using an interactive model. The first stage was data reduction, in which interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were collected. These were selectively organized with a focus on segments related to media transformation, digital strategies, and Islamic discourse. The second stage involves open coding, in which key concepts such as “digital adaptation,” “Nusantara Islamic identity,” “audience,” “engagement,” and “resistance to dominant narratives” are identified from the data. These codes were then grouped into broader categories through axial coding, which linked patterns between technological changes, institutional strategies, and ideological positions.

From this process, three main analytical themes emerged: (1) Mediamorphosis as a digital adaptation strategy, referring to how Aula transforms itself (1) content platforms and formats; (2)

¹⁷ John W. Cresswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Fourth (SAGE Publications, 2017); John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (SAGE Publications, 2014).

Mediamorphosis as a construction of Nusantara Islamic discourse, highlighting efforts to preserve and reproduce moderate Islamic knowledge; and (3) Mediamorphosis as cultural and epistemic resistance, emphasizing how Aula negotiates and challenges the dominance of global digital narratives about Islam. The final stage is interpretation, in which these themes are analyzed using a postcolonial lens to understand how media transformation functions not merely as a survival, but also as an effort to maintain discursive authority and cultural identity. To ensure data validity, this study employed prolonged engagement during fieldwork, consistent observation of editorial practices, and triangulation across sources (editors, journalists, activists) and methods (interviews, observation, documentation). This approach ensures that the findings cover not only the technical aspects of media transformation but also its ideological, cultural, and epistemological dimensions.

Result and Discussion

Result

1. The Transformation of Content Presentation as Alternative Discourse Production

To maintain its existence in the digital era, Aula Magazine continues to evolve across various social and digital media platforms. Aula Magazine is not only available in print format but also in various content formats presented across multiple platforms, including Instagram @aula.online, Facebook *Majalah Aula Nahdlatul Ulama* (Majalah Aula Official), YouTube Channel @aulatvnu, Twitter @aulaonline_, and the website *majalahaula.id*.

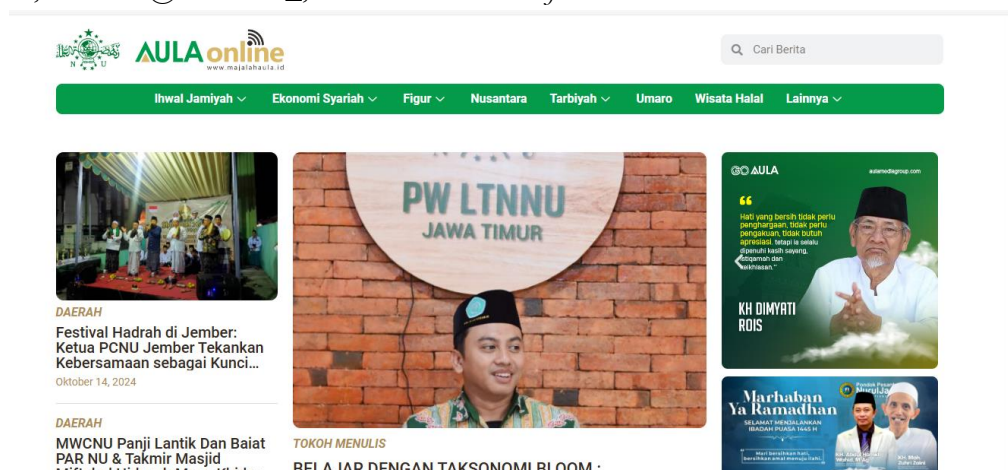


Figure 1. website *majalahaula.id*.

The AULA Online website represents a moderate, culturally rooted, and Nahdlatul Ulama-inspired vision of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. This is evident in its selection of sections, language, and the issues it covers, such as religion, Islamic boarding schools, local culture, Islamic economics, and NU community activities closely tied to people's daily lives. The visual presentation, which highlights NU figures, local Islamic traditions, and narratives of togetherness, demonstrates that this media platform functions not only as an information portal but also as a space for producing and disseminating the values of Nusantara Islam that prioritize tolerance, tradition, and a balance between Islamic teachings and Indonesia's local culture. In the context of digital media, AULA Online represents a transformation of traditionalist Islamic da'wah into the virtual realm without abandoning the epistemological and cultural identity characteristic of NU *pesantren*.

The presence of this multiplatform does not merely mark a technological adaptation but also expands the space for the production and distribution of Nahdlatul Ulama-style moderate Islamic discourse. Unlike the representation of Islam in many global media outlets, which is often reduced through the lens of terrorism, extremism, and exoticism, as criticized in the framework of Saidian Orientalism, Aula's content presents Islam as a social practice rooted in the values of moderation, local culture, and *pesantren* traditions. Thus, digitalization becomes a means of symbolic resistance against global hegemonic narratives, not merely a means of following technological trends.

2. Expanding the Audience and Production of Islam Nusantara Knowledge in the Digital Space

The readers and audience of Aula Magazine are mostly social media followers who are *santri* (students of *pesantren*) and *pesantren* administrators. The most popular sections in Aula Magazine are the Friday Sermon and Figures sections, which feature profiles of clerics and female clerics (*kyai* or *bu nyai*) from *pesantren*. To reach readers abroad, Aula Magazine collaborates with the International Branch of NU (PCI NU) and presents the Muhibbah section for readers outside Indonesia. Thus, readers abroad not only read Aula Magazine but also contribute to it.



Figure 2. Muhibbah Section

The “Muhibbah” column in Aula Magazine, as seen in the article “Celebrating Eid al-Adha in Hindustan,” represents a strategy to expand the reach of Islamic outreach and the production of knowledge on Nusantara Islam in digital and transnational spaces. This column not only presents accounts of the Islamic experiences of Nahdlatul Ulama members abroad but also builds symbolic connections between Indonesian Muslim communities and the international NU diaspora, such as PCI NU India. The presence of narratives and visuals in this section demonstrates how Aula Magazine constructs a moderate, inclusive, and globally networked identity of Nusantara Islam through the daily experiences of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora. On the other hand, the Muhibbah section serves as a participatory medium that enables overseas readers to be not merely media consumers but also producers of Islamic knowledge through their written contributions, documentation, and personal experiences. With a readership predominantly consisting of *santri* and *pesantren* administrators, this strategy expands the *pesantren*'s da'wah authority into the digital

public sphere while simultaneously strengthening Majalah Aula's position as an Islamic media outlet that connects local *pesantren* communities with the global Islamic network.

The growth of Aula Magazine's readership shows that mediamorphosis has expanded the reach of Islam Nusantara knowledge production. This practice demonstrates that Aula Magazine serves as a transnational medium for producing knowledge about Islam Nusantara, while also affirming the position of Indonesian Islam as a subject, not an object, in global discourse.

3. Business Model Transformation as a Sustainability Strategy for Ideological Media

Aula Magazine has developed a business model that integrates digital economic practices while maintaining its identity as an ideological Islamic media. On the one hand, Aula leverages the commercial potential of digital platforms through native advertising, sponsored content, and revenue from print and PDF sales. Advertisements are sourced from government agencies, hospitals, educational institutions, and private companies, indicating Aula's engagement with broader market actors. On the other hand, this engagement is not value-neutral; Aula applies an internal editorial selection process to ensure that all advertising content aligns with the ethical principles and religious values of Nahdlatul Ulama. In this way, Aula does not fully submit to the logic of digital capitalism, but rather filters and negotiates it through its ideological framework. This negotiation is also reflected in Aula's editorial practices, particularly in how it constructs counter-narratives to dominant global representations of Islam. For instance, in the *Khutbah Jumat* rubric, Aula frequently publishes sermon titles such as "Islam sebagai Rahmat bagi Semesta, Bukan Ancaman" and "Menjaga Moderasi Beragama di Tengah Polarisasi Global," which explicitly frame Islam as peaceful, inclusive, and socially grounded. In the *Tokoh* section, profiles of *pesantren* figures such as *kiai* and *bu nyai* are presented with emphasis on their roles in promoting tolerance, education, and community empowerment, contrasting sharply with global media tendencies to highlight conflict-based Islamic figures.

On its digital platforms, this resistance is further reinforced through editorial framing. Instagram posts often use captions that contextualize religious teachings within local traditions, such as "Tradisi Tahlilan sebagai Perikat Sosial Umat" or "Pesantren dan Islam Nusantara: Merawat Harmoni dalam Keberagaman." Similarly, video content on YouTube (@aulatvnu) features discussions like "Islam Nusantara dan Tantangan Radikalisme Global", where speakers explicitly challenge narratives that associate Islam with extremism. Even in the *Mubibbah* rubric, contributions from PCI NU communities abroad highlight how Indonesian Muslims practice a moderate and culturally adaptive Islam in diverse global contexts, thereby repositioning Islam Nusantara as a lived and exportable model of peaceful Islam.

These concrete examples show that Aula's mediamorphosis is not only technological or economic, but also discursive. Editorial choices ranging from headlines, rubrics, to framing strategies function as deliberate acts of resistance against the dominant global narrative that often reduces Islam to violence, extremism, or exoticism. Instead, Aula consistently produces an alternative discourse that emphasizes moderation (*wasatiyyah*), local wisdom, and *pesantren*-based authority.

At the same time, Aula's production and operational strategies demonstrate a careful balance between efficiency and ideological commitment. The shift toward digital formats, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the decline of print circulation by 15%, has encouraged cost and time efficiency. Aula limits print distribution while expanding digital PDF access, particularly for audiences outside East Java and abroad. However, this transition is not

purely profit-driven; the ratio of circulation (1,000 digital copies to 12,000 print copies) indicates a gradual adaptation that still accommodates traditional readers such as *santri* and *kiai*.

In the long term, Aula's sustainability lies in its ability to continuously negotiate between market pressures and ideological commitments. Its slogan, "*Baacaan Santri, Kiai dan Pemerhati*," reflects a clear audience positioning rooted in religious communities. Participation is also maintained by allowing contributors from NU networks and readers to write in sections such as opinions, activity reports, and biographies.

Thus, Aula's engagement with digital capitalism can be understood as a form of selective appropriation. Commercial practices support, rather than replace, its mission of da'wah. Through concrete editorial strategies and content examples, Aula demonstrates that ideological media can survive in the digital era by not only adapting technologically but also consistently producing counterdiscourses that preserve cultural identity and challenge global hegemonic narratives about Islam.

4. The Mediamorphosis Strategy of Aula Magazine as Acts of Epistemic Survival

Aula Magazine's mediamorphosis strategy reflects a conscious effort to maintain the authority of the Islam Nusantara discourse amid the dominance of global platforms. The provision of various digital channels, human resource innovation, content differentiated by NU traditions, and cross-generational audience segmentation, including Gen Z through the Inspiration and Achievement sections, shows that Aula does not simply follow the algorithmic logic of social media but instead uses it to promote moderate Islamic values.

Active interaction with audiences through digital communities, discussion forums, and feedback mechanisms strengthens Aula's position as a participatory media outlet. In this context, Aula Magazine's digital strategy can be understood as a practice of epistemic survival, an effort to maintain and expand the production of Islamic knowledge rooted in the local context of Nusantara, while challenging the dominance of Islamic representation in global media discourse.

The "Hazanah" column, which highlights the struggles of NU leaders at the grassroots level, also serves as a form of resistance against the logic of global media, which tends to feature only prominent figures, religious elites, or issues of political Islam. Instead, the column provides a platform for local experiences, religious social work, and the daily practices of NU members in the regions. Thus, the authority of Islamic knowledge is not monopolized by global or Middle Eastern discourse centers, but is produced from the experiences of *pesantren*, village communities, and NU social networks. The same is evident in the column profiling *Kiai*, which is described as exclusive content of Aula. The profiles of ulama featured do not merely discuss the figures' popularity but also their struggles, exemplary conduct, scholarly lineage, and NU-style national values. This editorial strategy demonstrates that Aula constructs an alternative narrative of Islam rooted in the local *pesantren* tradition, moderation, and the social experiences of Indonesian society, thereby symbolically challenging the dominance of a homogeneous, conflict-oriented global representation of Islam.

Discussion

1. Mediamorphosis of Aula Magazine in the Postcolonial Era

Various innovations and breakthroughs are needed to sustain print media. In addition, expanding the network or territory is necessary to distribute various print media, including newspapers, magazines, and journals. Despite its shortcomings, print media has advantages that make it a reliable option for the public to continue relying on. Information published in print can

be stored for longer periods and reread as needed, which is one of the advantages of print media. Increasing productivity can be a way for the print media industry to keep up with the times and adapt to market demands.¹⁸

The digital age has both positive and negative impacts. In addition to making human work easier, developments in the digital age can also have adverse effects that pose unique challenges for individuals. With the ease of disseminating and receiving information, changes in the digital age may also make it easier for individuals to spread negativity and commit crimes online. This poses a challenge for the general public to be more cautious to avoid online crime, which can occur at any time. Examples of harmful activities resulting from internet access include the spread of pornography and fraud, which can be carried out freely in the digital space. Therefore, a high level of vigilance is necessary to avoid crime in the digital era.¹⁹

According to Fiddler, mediamorphosis is a transformation of communication, usually driven by perceived implications of reciprocal relationships, competitive pressures, politics, and social and technological innovation. There are three concepts: complexity, convergence, and coevolution. Coevolution is the transition from everyday spoken and written language to a new class of digital language. Convergence is a reaction to the slight similarities between broadcasting, printing, film, and the computer industry. In convergence itself, a crossover or combination can bring about a transformation in the centralization of technology. Complexity is the result of the convergence process.²⁰

The six principles of mediamorphosis include coevolution and coexistence, inheritance, survival, opportunity and necessity, delayed adoption, and metamorphosis. The principles of coevolution and coexistence explain how the overall form of media develops alongside new media, is shaped by it, and, in turn, shapes older media. The principle of inheritance describes how new media forms carry the dominant characteristics of older media. The principle of gradual survival means that media can adapt to developments to survive. The principle of opportunity and necessity means that new media are not only successful based on technology, but are also supported by economic, social, and political factors.²¹ The delayed adoption of new media technologies means it takes a long time for a business to succeed. These technologies take at least a generation, or 20 to 30 years, to move dynamically from concept to expansion.²²

Mediamorphosis is the transformation of communication media through the development of human creative processes in innovation. According to Roger Fidler, there are three concepts of mediamorphosis, namely Coevolution, Convergence, and Complexity. First, coevolution is a concept related to verbal, nonverbal, and digital language. Communication media are developing rapidly in the digital age. Aula Magazine has adapted to the transformation of digital media by providing an information platform that presents content on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and its website. The information conveyed through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and

¹⁸ Apriansyah et al., "Eksistensi Surat Kabar Media Indonesia di Era Digital," *Populis: Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora* 8, no. 1 (2023): 74–81.

¹⁹ Naila Mafayiziya Hayat and Zaenal Abidin Riam, "Peran Komunikasi Dakwah di Era Digital Upaya Maksimal Pembelajaran Agama Islam," *Ilmu Al-Qur'an (IQ) Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 02 (2022): 227–40, <https://doi.org/10.37542/iq.v5i02.791>.

²⁰ Puspita, "Mediamorfosis Surat Kabar Ke Surat Kabar Online (Studi Kasus Republika Online)."

²¹ Achmad Budiman Sudarsono and Helen Olivia, "Mediamorfosis Industri Media Televisi: Studi Lembaga Bisnis EMTEK pada Platform Digital vidio.com," *COMMENTATE: Journal of Communication Management* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.37535/103002120211>.

²² Helmi Azahari, "Mediamorfosis dari Majalah Cetak ke Media Online (Studi Kasus Praktik Mediamorfosis Pada Majalah Sunday)," *E* 1, no. 1 (2022).

the website uses digital language, which differs from the language used in the printed version of Aula Magazine. Digital language focuses more on conveying information messages quickly, effectively, and efficiently. As for YouTube, AULA TV presents content through audio-visual presentations.

Second, convergence is the integration of various media to facilitate human communication. For example, Aula Magazine launched the online news portal *majalahaula.id*, which had previously been a print publication. The emergence of convergence has changed the pattern of Aula Magazine's reporting, which was originally available only in print and was published once a month. With digital platforms such as websites and social media, news can now be presented daily. To optimize convergence, Aula Magazine's human resources continue to strive and innovate in news production across various media platforms.

Third, complexity is a concept derived from the implications of transforming Aula Magazine and ideas to revitalize the mass media system. Aula Magazine has distinctive characteristics not found in other Islamic mass media. It presents *da'wah* through various forms of content, such as profiles of religious leaders, an NU-style attitude, and all forms of struggle and history related to NU. Historically, the content of Aula Magazine has been influenced by the government and the NU organization. During the New Order era, Aula Magazine published limited coverage of NU organizational news because of the New Order government's repressive policies. At the 27th NU Congress in Situbondo, a decision was made for NU to return to the 1926 Khittah and not to be affiliated with any political party, resulting in Aula Magazine's content during the New Order era being largely devoted to organizational news. Currently, in the reform era, Aula Magazine can be more open because the government's policies are no longer repressive.

Aula Magazine's content and audience strategy represent all NU audiences from various lines and regions. For example, there is the Muhibbah section, which reports on NU news abroad, and the Hazanah section, which reports on the struggles of NU administrators at the grassroots level. Aula Magazine uses technology to innovate in how it delivers content on digital platforms. Aula Magazine has featured live broadcasts from scholars in a dedicated section. To reach Gen Z audiences, Aula Magazine presents the Inspiration and Achievement section. The Inspiration and Achievement section features the latest developments, presented in writing, to attract Gen Z readers.

Aula Magazine fosters reader interaction in the digital age through a different approach than in the print era. Aula provides a digital forum and community where readers can contribute more actively to content and discussions. Audience feedback plays an important role in guiding Aula Magazine's digital strategy by providing opportunities for audiences to offer criticism and input through a call center listed on social media and print media, with contact numbers and email addresses.

The existence of Aula Magazine in the digital era is reflected in its transformation into various forms across social and digital media. Social media is an alternative medium for delivering news concisely and accurately. Social media serves as a platform for news and other media content, such as videos and memes, that cannot be presented in print. The content formats presented across multiple platforms include Instagram *@aula.online_*, Facebook *Majalah Aula Nahdlatul Ulama* (Majalah Aula Official), YouTube Channel *@aulatvnu*, Twitter *@aulaonline_*, and the website *majalahaula.id*.

Internet Advertising is advertising delivered online through social networking sites.²³ Online and social media help advertisers in the creative process; compared to print media, online and social media advertisements are more varied.²⁴ Aula Magazine utilizes the commercial potential of digital platforms, such as native advertising or sponsored content. In addition, Aula Magazine's revenue comes from print and PDF digital sales. The advertisements that Aula Magazine receives come from government agencies, hospitals, educational institutions, and private companies.

The operational and production efficiency of Aula Magazine was reflected in changes to production time and costs after the magazine switched to a digital format. In managing Aula Magazine, the focus is on developing digital content rather than print production, as the emergence of COVID-19 and the rapid development of information technology have led to a 15% decline in print circulation. The company limited printing to overcome the excessively high returns. Meanwhile, for customers far outside East Java and abroad, the company sells digital (PDF) versions. The ratio of digital PDF circulation to print circulation is 1:12, with 1,000 digital PDF copies and 12,000 print copies. In the production process, both print and digital, there is no specific division of labor within the Aula Magazine editorial team, as all team members are required to learn and multitask continuously.

Media transformation cannot be understood solely as linear, neutral technological progress, but rather as a process always linked to global power relations, colonial history, and the negotiation of local identities. The main criticism of postcolonial media theory is that Western assumptions about modernity and media innovation often cast media practices in the Global South as backward or merely imitating global media developments. Instead, media in postcolonial societies develop through adaptive, hybrid, and contextual practices rooted in local social, political, and cultural conditions. The mediamorphosis of Aula Magazine is a process of combining modern digital media formats and infrastructure with the ethos of *da'wah*, *pesantren* traditions, and the epistemology of Islam Nusantara.

The transformation of Aula Magazine to a digital platform through social media, YouTube channels, and online news portals is not merely a demonstration of the adoption of new technology, but rather a practice of re-appropriating modern media to produce a moderate representation of Islam in the style of Nahdlatul Ulama that differs from the dominant narrative of Islam in global media. Aula Magazine's presence in the digital space offers a counter-narrative that emphasizes Islam as a tradition of scholarship, culture, and social practice rooted in local history. In line with the views of Llamas-Rodriguez & Saglier, postcolonial media not only function as a tool of domination, but also as a space for symbolic resistance and the production of alternative knowledge. In this context, the digitization of Aula Magazine expands the space for producing knowledge on Islam Nusantara, which was previously limited to print media. Digital platforms enable cross-regional audience engagement, including with the NU diaspora and *pesantren* communities abroad, thereby strengthening Aula Magazine's position as an epistemic actor in the global Islamic media landscape.

This approach is also in line with Ponzanesi's criticism of the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives in media studies. Media is understood not only as text or representation, but also as a

²³ Harliantara Harliantara et al., "The Impact of Elements and Advertising Broadcasting Intensity Exposure in Terrestrial Radio," *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi (Indonesian Journal of Communications Studies)* 7, no. 1 (2023): 065–084, <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v7i1.6144>.

²⁴ Sílvia Majó-Vázquez et al., "Media Roles in the Online News Domain: Authorities and Emergent Audience Brokers," *Media and Communication* 8, no. 2 (2020): 98–111, <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i2.2741>.

social practice involving the production, distribution, and consumption of content within unequal power relations.²⁵ Mediamorphosis of Aula Magazine, which combines print, online, and social media, shows how Islamic media in Indonesia actively negotiates with the logic of digital capitalism and global algorithms without relinquishing its ideological and cultural identity as Nahdlatul Ulama media.

Thus, the media transformation of Aula Magazine cannot be reduced to a mere technological adaptation strategy, but rather a form of epistemic survival, namely an effort to maintain, reproduce, and expand knowledge of Islam Nusantara amid the hegemony of global digital media.^{26,27} This practice confirms that local Islamic media are not passive in the flow of digital globalization, but rather have the agency to shape alternative public spaces, challenge Western hegemonic representations of Islam, and negotiate media modernity in accordance with the historical and cultural experiences of postcolonial societies.

2. Re-appropriation of Aula Magazine to Expand Moderate Islamic Da'wah Practices

The mass media serve as an intermediary through which people can obtain the latest information or news quickly and simultaneously. The mass media have become a necessity for the public to obtain the information they need, regardless of distance and time. With the development of information technology, mass media have given rise to a new medium, namely online media, which allows users to access news and information quickly. Previously, the mass media that were widely known and used by the general public to obtain news were print media, such as magazines, newspapers, and electronic media, such as radio and television.²⁸

In addition to serving as a bridge for conveying general information, the mass media are also widely used to preach Islamic teachings (*da'wah*). The media used in *da'wah* activities has its own advantages, such as electronic media like television, which displays audiovisual content in conveying its message, so that the message being preached can be easily understood by the public²⁹. However, *da'wah* through print media is no less interesting, because the values of Islamic teachings disseminated through magazines, books, or newspapers can be reread when an individual does not have much time to follow *da'wah* on television. *Da'wah* disseminated through print media is not only in the form of writing or text, but some images or photos also support and facilitate readers' understanding of the material presented.³⁰

Da'wah published in print media, such as magazines, is a type of *da'wah bil qalam* or *da'wah* through writing. *Da'wah bil qalam* is still quite effective because it reaches a wide audience that is not limited by time and can be read by anyone, anytime, anywhere. Additionally, the message of *da'wah* published in print media, such as magazines, can be retained longer than *da'wah* delivered

²⁵ Sandra Ponzanesi, *The Sage Handbook of Media and Migration* (SAGE Publications, 2020).

²⁶ Muhammad Rahmadani Lubis, *Transformasi Media Islam di Era Digital Studi Perkembangan Media online Islam Indonesia pasca reformasi*, 5, no. 1 (2025).

²⁷ Nafik Muthohirin, "Faith In The Digital Age: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and The Plurality of Young Muslims' Piety on Social Media," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 19, no. 2 (2025).

²⁸ Qudratullah, "Media Massa Sebagai Sarana Dakwah Kontemporer," *Jurnal AL-Hikmah: Jurnal Dakwah* 13, no. 02 (2019): 217–30.

²⁹ Asriyanti Rosmalina and Nasrudin Abdul Matin, "Orientasi Pengembangan Dakwah Melalui Sistem Komunikasi (Media Massa)," *Orasi: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 11, no. 1 (2020): 1–14.

³⁰ Irpan Jurayz et al., "Media Cetak Dan Dakwah Bil Qalam: Opini Pembaca Terhadap Kolom Mimbar Jum' at Di KaltengPos," *Jurnal Bimbingan Penyuluhan Islam* 04, no. 02 (2022): 159–73.

face-to-face, so readers can recall the teachings conveyed by the *da'i* (preacher) by rereading the magazine.³¹

For religious content to be conveyed and well received by the *mad'u* (audience), a medium of religious communication (*wasilah*) is needed. *Da'wah* media have been used since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. According to KH Luthfi Basori, in the Monthly Islamic Study at the Arif Nurul Huda Mosque, the East Java Regional Police Headquarters in Surabaya, the dissemination of religious teachings and information was already conducted in writing, having previously been conveyed orally, as in the Prophet's letters to non-Muslim leaders. The message of *da'wah* continued into the era of the Prophet's companions' caliphate. During the caliphate of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, several legal rulings derived from the Qur'an were deliberately put into writing. During the caliphate of Umar bin Khatab, the model of *da'wah* through written media became even more powerful. Once, when the Nile River flooded Egypt, Caliph Umar wrote a *da'wah* message, then sent a courier to deliver it and throw the letter into the Nile River. A miracle occurred, the river suddenly receded, and the flood disaster was resolved.

In addition to speech and writing, *da'wah* in the contemporary era of the Prophet Muhammad also used behavior (*da'wah fi'liyah bi al uswah*). A century after the Prophet's passing, *da'wah* began to utilize media such as *qashash* (storytelling) and *muallafat* (written compositions). The media used for *da'wah* continued to evolve with the times to ensure its survival. In the modern era, *da'wah* media has taken various forms in line with technological developments, including print, radio, audio (cassettes), television, audio-visual, and the internet, which can carry text, audio, and video. The internet is a medium that has changed how ideas spread, including religious ones. The spread of religion has undergone renewal over time with the emergence of new technologies.

As a medium for *da'wah*, Aula Magazine's readers and social media audience are mostly *pesantren* students and operators. The sections in Aula Magazine that are popular with readers are the Friday Sermon section and the Figures section, which contains profiles of *pesantren* leaders. To reach readers abroad, Aula Magazine collaborates with PCI and presents the Muhibbah section for readers outside Indonesia.

In the long term, Aula Magazine will remain a medium for *da'wah* amid competition from digital media. Aula Magazine remains optimistic that it will continue to be read by *santri* and *kiai*, as reflected in its slogan, "Baacaan Santri, Kiai dan Pemerhati". Aula Magazine continues to uphold the Nahdlatul Ulama brand identity. It provides opportunities for distributors and readers to contribute their thoughts to sections such as activity reports, opinions, biographies of prominent figures, and more.

A study of Islamic religious authority in the digital space shows that the presence of online media does not necessarily replace traditional authority structures. The legitimacy of religious actors remains rooted in their mastery of religious knowledge, Islamic educational background, moral integrity, and recognition from their religious communities. However, digital media present a new configuration of authority, in which accessibility, communication capacity, and the intensity of audience interaction are important factors in expanding religious influence.³²³³ In this context,

³¹ Saidaturrahmah, "Analisis Isi Pesan Dakwah Melalui Media Cetak (Kajian Terhadap Tema Rubrik Tafakkur Harian Serambi Indonesia)," *SHIBGHAH: Journal of Muslim Societies* 2, no. 2 (2020): 201–15.

³² Mohd. Shuhaimi Bin Haji Ishak and Sohirin Mohammad Solihin, "Islam and Media," *Asian Social Science* 8, no. 7 (2012), <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v8n7p263>.

³³ Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069>.

authority is no longer entirely hierarchical, but increasingly relational and continuously negotiated through communication practices in online spaces.

Through the reappropriation of digital media, Aula Magazine operates as a new space for the restructuring of moderate Islamic religious authority in the style of Nahdlatul Ulama. Digitalization does not eliminate the role of *kiai*, *ulama*, and *pesantren* traditions as the main sources of legitimacy. However, it changes how authority is produced, exercised, and perceived by a wider, more diverse audience. By combining the Islam Nusantara scholarly traditions with the logic of digital media interaction, Aula demonstrates that *da'wah* practices in the digital age are dynamic, contextual, and shaped by the dialectic between religious traditions and global media structures. This confirms that Aula's mediamorphosis is not merely a strategy of technological adaptation, but part of an effort to maintain and expand moderate religious authority in an ever-changing digital landscape.

3. Mediamorphosis and Postcolonial Re-appropriation of Aula Magazine

The transformation of Aula Magazine in the digital era cannot be understood merely as a linear shift from print to digital media, but rather as a form of postcolonial media re-appropriation. In this context, Aula does not simply adopt global digital formats but actively reshapes them to articulate a localized, moderate Islamic discourse rooted in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) traditions.

One concrete way Aula resists dominant global narratives about Islam often framed through lenses of extremism or political conflict is through its editorial framing and rubric structure. Through the “Lentera” column in Aula Magazine, which leverages technology to innovate in the delivery of content on digital platforms, Aula Magazine has incorporated live broadcasts by religious scholars, which are then transcribed into written articles for a special column.



Figure 3. Gus Baha's “Lentera” Column

The claim that Aula Magazine constructs an alternative narrative of Islam that differs from the dominant global Islamic media can be seen directly in its editorial strategy and the content it produces. In a research interview, Rofi' explained that Aula's uniqueness lies in its exclusive sections that resonate with the experiences of NU members, such as profiles of religious leaders, the Muhibbah section, and the Hazanah section. He stated, “For Aula, it's those profiles. Profiles of religious leaders. Those are still exclusive... The Muhibbah section tells stories about NU abroad. Then there's the Hazanah section. Hazanah tells the story of how NU leaders at the grassroots level struggle.” This statement indicates that Aula does not follow the pattern of global

media, which tends to portray Islam within the framework of political conflict or extremism, but rather presents Islam through social experiences, *pesantren* traditions, and the struggles of grassroots communities.

This can be seen in the “Gus Baha’s Notes” column, titled “How to Eliminate the Desire for Sin When Lust Takes Root in the Heart.” This content does not employ a provocative or political approach to da’wah, but rather presents scripturally based religious explanations, moral counsel, and Sufi reflections characteristic of the NU *pesantren* tradition. The inclusion of Arabic verse quotations, simple explanations, and the narrative style of *pesantren* scholars demonstrates how Aula maintains local scholarly authority within the modern media space. Theoretically, this practice can be understood as a form of resistance against the hegemony of global Islamic representation, as Aula produces a narrative of Nusantara Islam that is moderate, grounded in scholarly chains of transmission, and closely aligned with the daily lives of Indonesian Muslims.

This strategy reflects what postcolonial scholars identify as symbolic resistance, where media in the Global South produce alternative epistemologies. Rather than imitating Western media logic, Aula constructs what can be understood as a hybrid media space, combining digital affordances with *pesantren* epistemology. As seen in its Muhibbah rubric, Aula highlights NU diaspora activities abroad, presenting Islam as adaptable and culturally embedded across different global contexts, challenging the assumption that Islamic identity is monolithic.

The process of mediamorphosis in Aula aligns closely with Roger Fidler’s framework, particularly the concepts of coevolution, convergence, and complexity, but requires reinterpretation through a postcolonial lens. Aula’s convergence is not merely technological integration (print, website, and social media), but also discursive convergence, where traditional religious authority intersects with digital participatory culture.

In sum, Aula Magazine’s mediamorphosis represents a form of epistemic survival and expansion. It is not merely adapting to technological change but actively producing an alternative Islamic media discourse that challenges dominant global representations. Through specific editorial strategies, rubric design, and digital engagement practices, Aula exemplifies how local media in postcolonial contexts can reshape media modernity on their own terms, rather than passively following global trends.

Conclusion

The mediamorphosis of Aula Magazine extends beyond a linear process of technological adaptation and is better understood as a postcolonial media practice embedded within asymmetrical structures of representation and symbolic power. Aula’s digital transformation reflects an active negotiation of visibility within the uneven terrain of global media flows, while simultaneously sustaining and expanding the epistemic production of Islam Nusantara grounded in the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition. This process exemplifies postcolonial hybridity, whereby global digital media logics are reappropriated to articulate localized religious knowledge and culturally embedded modes of da’wah. Rather than occupying a passive position, Aula Magazine demonstrates agency in shaping the religious public sphere by circulating moderate Islamic narratives and reinforcing linkages between digital platforms and community-based religious practices. Its mediamorphosis thus constitutes a form of symbolic intervention, enabling local Islamic media to reconfigure dominant representations of Islam within a global media ecosystem structured by unequal power relations. Notwithstanding these contributions, this study is limited by its single-case design and its reliance on selective content analysis and interview data, which may not fully capture audience

reception or platform specific dynamics. Future research should adopt comparative approaches by examining Aula alongside other Islamic media both within Indonesia and across postcolonial contexts to identify divergent strategies of digital adaptation and ideological positioning. Further inquiry into audience engagement, algorithmic mediation, and platform governance would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary Islamic media transformations.

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