

# RELIGION AND DIGITALISATION: A JOURNEY FROM TRADITION TO THE FUTURE

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## Abstract

This study, which looks at the relationship between religion and the digital world, a term used to describe today's rapidly developing communication and information technologies, offers a glimpse of the future from the present of digital religion. The rituals and practices in which digitalized religion differs from traditional religion are significant in terms of mindsets and habits in the daily lives of individuals. However, the fact that individuals change their religious identity and affiliation for periods that can be considered frequent and even choose to leave religion makes them religious nomads. Religious nomadism expresses the reflection of the individual's identity construction on digital platforms. Studies show that similar cases will become more frequent in the coming years. With the concern that this and similar situations will become more frequent in the future

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and against possible similar phenomena, individuals, groups, or organizations should participate in digital platforms and produce content. The study examines this shortcoming through various examples.

**Keywords:** Sociology Digitalised Religion, Cyber Religion, Belief Nomadism, Hybrid Religiosity, Digital Identity Construction.

### Din ve Dijitalleşme: Gelenekten Geleceğe Bir Yolculuk

#### Geniş Özet

Günümüz dünyası iletişim ve bilgi teknolojilerindeki hızlı gelişimlere tanıklık etmektedir. Teknolojik gelişmeler hayatın her alanına nüfuz etmekte hem bireylerin hem de toplumların başta düşünce ve inanç yapıları olmak üzere, sosyal, ekonomik, psikolojik ve hukuki kurum ve pratiklerin kendilerini değiştirmelerine de neden olmaktadır. Din-teknoloji etkileşimi içerisinde dönüşüm sadece ibadet formlarında veya dini ritüellerde gerçekleşmemektedir. Dini kurumların yapısal özellikleri, farklı seviyelerde bireysel ve toplumsal noktalarda dini söylemin rolü de yeni baştan düzenlenmektedir. Dijital dünyanın sunduğu anlık imkanların geleneksel değerlerle çatıştığı dijital gerçeklik, fırsatlarla birlikte tehditleri de içerisinde barındırmaktadır. Dinamik bir süreç ve alan olan dijital dünyanın bireyler ve toplumlarla kurduğu ilişki de aynı dinamikliği dönüşüm hızına yansıtılmaktadır. Böylece din-teknoloji özelinde gerçekleşen etkileşim, teknolojinin diğer kurumlarla kurduğu etkileşimlerde de benzer şekillerde görülmektedir.

Din ve Dijitalleşme: Gelenekten Geleceğe Bir Yolculuk başlığını taşıyan bu çalışma dinin geleneksel temelleri ile dijital dünyanın sunduğu yenilikler arasındaki etkileşimi ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu yolculuk sadece dijital dünyada dinin konumunu anlamakla sınırlı kalmayarak, bireyin dijitalleşme sürecinde yaşadığı manevi değişimi de ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Dijital dünyada kimlik ve anlam inşa etme amacı içerisinde bulunan birey, bunu yaparken birtakım savrulmalar yaşamaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu savrulmalar dijital dünyanın etki alanlarını da ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde siber dinin kimlik ve ibadetler üzerindeki dönüşüm etkisi ve örnekleri bu amaçla incelenmektedir. Birey, yaşadığı arayış içerisinde dijitalleşmenin sunduğu imkanlara kimi zaman boyun eğerken, dini cemaat ve kurumlar da dijital dünyada oluşturdukları içeriklerle yer alarak, tebliğ faaliyetlerine devam etmektedirler. Günümüz dünyasının popüler kavramlarından olan göçün dijitalleşen dünyada farklı varyasyonları ile de karşılaşılmaktadır. İnanç göçebeliği kavramıyla tanımlanan, bireyin farklı dini formlar arasındaki savrulmaları hatta dinden çıkma isteği ve tercihi, dijitalleşen dünyanın sıradanlaşan durumunu ifade etmektedir. Bu olgunun analizi ve çözümü de geleceğin din anlayışı ve etkileşiminde önemli bir noktada durmaktadır. Çalışma, literatürde yeni tartışılmaya başlanan bu kavrama da ilgi çekmeyi ve analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden betimsel analiz ve içerik analizine dayanmaktadır. Literatürde konuyla ilgili yapılan çalışmalar neden ve sonuçlarıyla incelenmiş, toplumsal sonuçları ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma, farklı alanların birbirine etkileri ve birbirlerini tamamladıkları multidisipliner özelliği ile literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaç edinmektedir.

Dijitalleşme ve din etkileşimi teknolojik gelişmelerin seyrile birlikte hiç bitmeyecekmiş gibi devam etmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu konudaki çözüm önerileri de uzun vadeli olarak planlanmalıdır. İbadet şekil ve düşünme biçimlerinin hızlı bir şekilde değiştiği günümüzde bu platformların yok sayılması asla çözüm olmayacaktır. Aksine düşünülmesi ve planlanması gereken bağlam bu platformların olumsuz özelliklerinin önüne set çekebilmek olacaktır. Dijital ibadetler başta olmak üzere dijital dindarlık bugünün olduğu gibi geleceğin de gündeminde bulu-

nacaktır. Hibrit inançlar ve pratikler dijital dünyanın hegemonik altyapısından kurtarılmalıdır. Dijital dünyanın doğal sonucu olan hızlı değişim ve dönüşüm hibrit dindarlık üzerinde de kendisini göstermektedir. Birey, dijital olarak inşa ettiği profilini anlık olarak değiştiriyorken, dinden çıkma, aşırı uçlardaki inanışlara ilgi duyma bu dönemin gerçeğini oluşturmaktadır. İnsan, fıtratı üzere inanmaya ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Dijital dünya ise bireyin bu isteğini yerine getirmekte, birey anlık olarak farklı inanç sistemleri ve düşünceleri etrafında savrulmalar yaşamaktadır. Bu bağlamda kavramsallaştırılan inanç göçebeliği konunun anlaşılması için önemli argümanlar sunmaktadır. Kutsal olanın kapital değeri geçmişte olduğu gibi geleceğin de problematik alanı olacaktır. Dijital platformlar içerisinde sürekli olarak farklı noktalara savrulan birey inanç göçünü tamamlama ihtiyacını da duymaktadır. Birey dijital dünyada yaşadığı göçebelik halini başta kendisini ve ailesi olmak üzere, sosyal çevresi ve en nihayetinde de topluma karşı başkaldırmanın bir sonucu olarak kullanmaktadır. Modernleşme tartışmaları içerisinde sekülerleşmenin ele alınması, bu bağlamda önemli olmakla birlikte eksik de kalmaktadır. Çalışma hayatını dijital dünya üzerinden yeniden tasarlamaya çalışan günümüz küresel düşüncesi, sadece din alanına değil, başta eğitim olmak üzere bütün sosyal boyutlara etki etme gayreti içerisinde. Din kurumsal yapısı itibarıyla bireyin hayatının her noktasına müdahil olma işlevi üstlenmektedir. Bu işlev, dijital dünyanın sınırsızlığıyla çarpıştığı anda birey konfor alanına ve sınırsızlığa kendisini daha yakın hissedecek ve dijital dünyayı tercih edecektir. Bu nedenle dijitalleşen dünyada dinin hem ekonomik hem toplumsal hem de bireysel boyutları birlikte düşünülme zorundadır. Dijital dünyada dinin geleneksel bilgi ve pratiklerinin, dijital dünyanın işlevsel araçlarıyla sadece iletişim boyutuyla etkileşim içinde bulunması, içerik olarak dinin hak özelliğinin gölgenmemesi gerekmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyoloji, Dijitalleşen Din, Siber Din, İnanç Göçebeliği, Hibrit Dindarlık, Dijital Kimlik İnşası.

## Introduction

The contemporary world is experiencing swift advancements in communication and information technologies. Technological advancements are infiltrating many facets of life, prompting alterations in persons and civilizations, especially in their cognitive frameworks and belief systems, as well as in social, economic, psychological, and legal organizations and practices—the interplay between religion and technology results in transformation beyond only worship practices or religious rites. The structural attributes of religious institutions and the function of religious discourse at various individual and societal levels are undergoing reconfiguration. The digital realm, where immediate prospects presented by the digital landscape conflict with conventional ideals, comprises advantages and risks. The dynamic interaction between the digital realm, as a dynamic process and domain, and individuals and society mirror this dynamism in its rate of change. Technology's interac-

tions with other institutions mirror the link between religion and technology.

The interplay between religion and technology has persisted from the earliest to the present. This interaction involves the impact of technology on religious beliefs, practices, worship methods, and the individual's spiritual realm, which is defined as spirituality. The link is reciprocal, and the institution of religion can also influence technological advancements. We typically delineate the link between religion and technology through four stages. The technological advancements of the day constrained the rudimentary instruments employed in the early stages of human history. The interplay between technology and religion was manifest in creating edifices such as places of worship, sepulchers, or memorials. Göbeklitepe is a significant illustration of this relationship, inscribing its name in the annals of history to this day. Individuals utilized technology to articulate their religious convictions and engage in communal worship, constrained by the era's technological limitations. The instruments and symbols employed in religious rites exemplify the interplay between technology and religion.

The second stage arose under the impact of writing and printing. The creation of writing has been a key technological milestone in the dissemination and institutionalization of religion. Transcribing sacred writings and preserving religious teachings and precepts have facilitated their transmission throughout generations.

The influence of religious reforms on the development of contemporary society is indisputable. We must emphasize that the exchange of written literature among civilizations led to these reforms. The third stage transpired during the Industrial Revolution and is regarded as the cornerstone of contemporary technologies. The Revolution initiated a swift transformation in technology, wherein advancements in communication and transportation enhanced interactions among religious communities and their adherents, enabling missionary efforts to reach a broader audience and encompass more significant regions in reduced timeframes. However, we must not overlook the intensification of missionary endeavors. During this period, the distribution of series-produced works and the utilization of electric sound systems enhance the comprehension of the interplay between religion and technology.

The concluding phase signifies the modern era. The link between religion and technology has transitioned into the digital domain in the 20th and 21st centuries. The advancement of internet technology and providing access to religious content via digital platforms and tools allow individuals to disseminate their spiritual knowledge, insights, and experiences within online communities. Virtual places of worship, online sermons, chat opportunities, digital worship applications, and religious content in audio, video, or written formats on social media, alongside AI-supported applications functioning as simultaneous translation tools, exemplify the convergence of religion and technology. Consequently, the digitization of religion creates a digital spiritual realm.

Religion and Digitalization: A Transition from Tradition to the Future. This study examines the interplay between the conventional tenets of religion and the advancements presented by the digital realm. This exploration seeks to comprehend the role of religion in the digital sphere while also uncovering the spiritual transition individuals undergo amid digitalization. Individuals developing identity and meaning in the digital realm encounter specific disorientations during this process. Consequently, these variations also indicate the spheres of influence of the digital realm. The second section of the study analyses the transforming impact of cyber religion on identity and worship, accompanied by examples. In their pursuit, the individual occasionally yields to the prospects presented by digitalization, while religious communities and organizations persist in their outreach endeavors by generating content in the digital realm. The digital realm also witnesses various manifestations of migration, a prevalent idea in contemporary society. Faith nomadism illustrates an individual's fluctuation between various religious practices and the inclination to forsake religion altogether, reflecting a predominant trend in the digitalizing world. Examining and resolving this phenomenon is crucial in comprehending and engaging with future religions. The study seeks to highlight and explore this concept, which has emerged in the literature. The research employs descriptive analysis and content analysis, both of which are qualitative methodologies. Literature has explored studies linked to the topic, analyzing their sources, effects, and social ramifications. The study seeks to enhance the literature through its multidisciplinary approach, investigating the interrelations among many domains and their complementary

impacts. Human history encompasses the history of religion. The history of humanity commences with the narrative of the inaugural human and the first prophet, progressing with the impartation of names to facilitate human comprehension of the universe. Consequently, throughout history, humans have organized their lives to acquire knowledge and experience. Consequently, the impact of religion on an individual's existence will persist indefinitely, albeit in various forms and dimensions. Digitalization significantly influences religion today, while religion concurrently impacts the concept of digitalization and the individual.

### 1. Digitalisation and Religion Interaction

Digitalization is a phenomenon that has emerged within the social realm alongside advancements in communication and technology, prompting various discussions. The phenomenon's influence on the social realm also replicates social forms.<sup>1</sup> The swift advancement of communication technologies results in the incessant flow of information. This circumstance influences the individual's existence, and the worldwide dissemination and rapid impact of information allow digitalization to uncover potential across all domains. This facet of digitization, often perceived as an illusion, profoundly transforms individual daily routines and numerous conventional behaviors, particularly in communication, when coupled with its rapid and efficient communication. The main feature of digitalization, which transcends time and space, not only upholds the concept of bodily freedom but also enables the treatment of individuals as objects.<sup>2</sup> The primary cause of the individual's loss of standing as a subject is the endless communication possibilities characterized by digital culture.<sup>3</sup> Radios and televisions initially gave rise to digital culture, which evolved into communication tools that could instantaneously guide, control, and reshape life.<sup>4</sup> These tools included mobile phones, computers, and the internet, leading to their widespread usage today. We should not assume this does not impact religion, a

<sup>1</sup> Mehmet Haberli, "Dijital Çağda Din ve Dindarlığın Dönüşümü", *Medya ve Din Araştırmaları Dergisi (MEDİAD)*, 2(2), (2019), 307-315, 308.

<sup>2</sup> Ebru Güzel, "Dijital Kültür ve Çevrimiçi Sosyal Ağlarda Rekabetin Aktörü: Dijital Habitus", *e-Gifder*, 4, (2016), 82-102, 96.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Van Dijk, *Ağ Toplumu*, çev. Özlem Sakin, (İstanbul: Epsilon Yayıncılık, 2016), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Mehmet Akgül, "Medya ve Din: Radyo İletişimi ve Gözyaşı FM Örneği", *Türk İslam Medeniyeti Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 6, (2008), 39-86, 40.

significant institution for individuals and society. Religion perpetually engages in reciprocal interactions with knowledge and technology, with transformative processes influencing both domains. While novel lifestyles create boundless opportunities in a swiftly rationalizing world, traditional religions' resistance to change is detrimental despite religious forms and rituals beginning to diversify and evolve in specific contexts.<sup>5</sup> Technology is accelerating the transition in spiritual and economic contexts, particularly within the social domain.<sup>6</sup> Socio-economic transition signifies "new social movements"<sup>7</sup> distinctive to industrial societies, embodying novel forms of authority and relationships. The historical interplay between technology and religion, including the challenges technology presents and the transformative responses it elicits, is relevant in contemporary societal contexts. Digitisation and religion, which can be severe or temperate, have crossed paths throughout history. It is difficult to determine the degree to which religion—a significant factor for individuals and society—will embrace the "new." The literature on secularisation theories in the context of modernity is extensive.<sup>8</sup>

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Digitalization can transform not just objects but also the individual; it fully exploits this capacity. Consequently, in this context, the individual serves as both an agent and a subject of digitalization.<sup>9</sup> The individual, an actor undergoing digitalization, is active on digital platforms and thus perceives themselves as leading a social life. The conviction that an individual who abstains from digital platforms cannot assimilate into society engenders a dread

<sup>5</sup> Mustafa Arslan, "Değişim Sürecinde Yeni Dindarlık Formları: "Yeni Çağ" İnanışları Örneği", *Değerler Eğitimi Dergisi*, 4/11, (2006), 9-25, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Mehtap Demir, *Dijitalleşme ve Emeğin Dönüşümü*, ed. Yasin Çakırel, içinde, *Dijital Dönüşümün Sektörel Analizleri*, (Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık, 2021), 67-81, 78.

<sup>7</sup> Alain Touraine, "Beyond Social Movements?", *Theory, Culture, & Society*, 9(1), (1992), 125-145, 127.

<sup>8</sup> Volkan Ertit, *Sekülerleşme: Dinden Uzaklaşmanın Hikâyesi*, (İstanbul: Liberte Yayınları, 2014); Roberto Cipriani, *Sociology of Religion: An Historical Introduction*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2015); Knut Lundby, "Mediatization and Secularization: Transformations of Public Service Institutions - The Case of Norway", *Media, Culture, Society*, 38(1), (2016), 28-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715615414>; Rodney Stark, "Secularization: R. I. P.", *The Secularization Debate* içinde ed. William H. Swatos & Daniel V. Olson, s. 41-66, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Mahir Fatih Ünal, "Dijitalleşmenin Transhümanizme Etkisi" *ISOPHOS: Uluslararası Bilişim, Teknoloji ve Felsefe Dergisi*, 2/2 (2019), 19-38, 33.

of isolation. The term "network society"<sup>10</sup> denotes a scenario in which digital items supplant individuals' symbols and daily practices, even encroaching on religious beliefs and rituals and exerting influence over them. The three dynamic aspects<sup>11</sup> highlighted by anthropologists—sight, sound, and touch—are experiencing upheaval due to digitization. The digitalization of daily routines acts as a second skin, with digital devices operating as integral components of the individual.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the distinctions between private and public environments are diminishing, and within the digital realm, individuals can even regulate their cognitive processes during work, leisure, or sleep. This illustrates the uncertainty of time and space. This phenomenon, termed the "age of placelessness,"<sup>13</sup> denotes the vanishing of physical locations and their conversion into digital environments. Research indicates that the younger generation has established relationships with school and jobs independent of physical environments throughout the epidemic.<sup>14</sup> The future will examine placelessness from various perspectives, as this scenario suggests. Acknowledging placelessness due to digitalization introduces another metaphorical concept: cyber religion, which illustrates the interplay between digitalization and religion. This concept describes how the cultural dominance of digital media tools over humans shapes the belief system, enabling religious messages to take on a new digital identity through mass communication tools.<sup>15</sup> The current context pertains not to the content of religious messages but to the milieu in which they are conveyed. Digital worlds do not only persist as technological instruments. These environments create a significant context, primarily as a social net-

<sup>10</sup> Manuel Castells, *Enformasyon Çağı: Ekonomi, Toplum ve Kültür, Birinci Cilt: Ağ Toplumunun Yükselişi*, çev. Ebru Kılıç, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003), 499.

<sup>11</sup> Gemma Serrano ve Alessandro De Cesaris, "Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Digital Age: Some Introductory Remarks", *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society*, 7, (2021), 335-354, 340.

<sup>12</sup> İhsan Çapcıoğlu, "Dijitalleşen Dünya'da Din Antropolojisini Yeniden Düşünmek", *MANAS Journal of Religious Sciences*, 2(1), (2023), 1-40, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Ompact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 127.

<sup>14</sup> Melisa Unvan ve Özgü Özturan, "Z Kuşağı Çalışma Alanları: Değişen Ofis Kavramının Tasarımda Mekan Kurgusuna Etkisi", *Mimarlık ve Yaşam Dergisi* 5(2), (2020), 551-560, 559.

<sup>15</sup> İhsan Çapcıoğlu, "Yeni Kitle İletişim Araçları ve Medya Vazifesi", *Din ve Toplum*, 16, (2021), 68-77, 69.



work and arena for generating, circulating, and negotiating knowledge. Consequently, digital media and religion are establishing a more intimate connection. Research on digitalization and religion specifically examines religious groups' utilization of digital spaces. Cyber religion positively impacts by facilitating the rapid dissemination of novel religious expressions to a broader audience via the internet.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, its sustainability, characterized by the lack of requirement for physical presence during worship, renders it advantageous and facilitates the relatively more straightforward execution of religious ceremonies.<sup>17</sup> Currently, there are dozens of religious applications accessible in mobile phone app shops, exclusively designed for mobile devices. We must acknowledge that these programs can serve as reminders and motivators and, ultimately, partially assist in worship. Daily religious life can utilize these instruments, which serve supportive and facilitative roles in religious rituals. Nonetheless, the crucial distinction lies in their potential and aptitude to supplant all religious ideas.

The advancement of technology enhances its capabilities, facilitating its impact on religious life. Consequently, despite its significant influence, we do not categorize cyber religion as a traditional religion in its novel manifestation.<sup>18</sup> Cyber religion has emerged as a substantial phenomenon reflecting contemporary transformations. At the same time, digital apps function as instruments, enabling individuals to initially identify transient and adaptable forms and facilitate convenience in their daily lives. Consequently, technology broadens the scope of personal autonomy while diminishing the practical dimension of religion, which has a considerable impact. The digital domain allows for reconfiguring and adapting religious identity and rituals to various circumstances. Shifts in value judgments facilitate modifications in the comprehension of religiosity or religion. The adverse effects of cyber religion on religious identity and affinities reduce the effectiveness of religion and introduce the risks associated with its virtualization. The para-

<sup>16</sup> Haberli, "Dijital Çağda Din ve Dindarlığın Dönüşümü", 310.

<sup>17</sup> Heidi A. Campbell, vd. "There's a Religious App for That! A Framework for Studying Religious Mobile Applications", *Mobile Media & Communication*, 2(2), (2014), 154-172, 156.

<sup>18</sup> Ahmet Dağ, "Dijital ve Transhümanist Dünyada Din ve Dindarın Durumu", *Dijitalleşme Değerler ve Din Sempozyumu*, Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Yayınları No: 51, (2019), 49-72, 58.

mount aspect of cyber religion is the element of "interaction," which constitutes the principal characteristic of digitalization.<sup>19</sup> Recent research has regularly indicated that the contemporary digital landscape has eclipsed reality in pursuit of engagement.<sup>20</sup> Digital instruments propagate deception, which subsequently shapes enduring perceptions and beliefs.<sup>21</sup> Creating language or ideology inside the distinctive framework of digitizing religion modifies the vision of reality and simultaneously transforms individuals' approaches and habits in information acquisition. Digitalization is diminishing the human element in information distribution, leading individuals to obtain knowledge from unverified sources, thereby creating new belief systems based on truths of uncertain provenance.<sup>22</sup> Another significant question emerges in this setting: the legitimacy of the religious source.

Digital technologies possess the capacity to subvert the authority of religious institutions or persons, yet they also provide practical functionalities for maintaining and augmenting authority. Digital tools eradicate barriers to information, enabling individuals to assume the role of writer (authority) at any time and location. Therefore, while we allow information from unknown sources to spread, we also allow universally recognized values to hold a relative position.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, numerous religious institutions utilize these platforms, recognizing the significance of maintaining a digital presence and engaging in discourse with individuals seeking information through these channels. Research and studies on the challenges religious authorities face in digital environments,<sup>24</sup> the emergence of new religious authorities in the

<sup>19</sup> George Ritzer, *Sosyoloji Kuramları*, çev. Himmet Hülür, (Ankara: De Ki Yayınları, 2011), 201.

<sup>20</sup> Furkan Düzenli, "Dijital Yerliler ve Manipülasyonla Gelen Değişim", I. *Balkan Çalışmaları Kongresi Bildiriler Kitabı*, ed. Sevba Abdula, Semran Murtezani ve Bujamin Bela, (2021), 281-305.

<sup>21</sup> W. Lance Bennet, *Politik İllüzyon ve Medya*, çev. Seyfi Say, (İstanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 2000), 199.

<sup>22</sup> Fatma İkinci, "Sanallaş(tırıl)ma Sürecinde Dini Bilginin Hakikat Problemi", *Medya ve Din Tartışmaları Sempozyum Bildirileri*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Ticaret Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 289-299, 297.

<sup>23</sup> Mehmet Akgül, "Dijitalleşme ve Din", *Din ve Hayat TDV İstanbul Müftülüğü Dergisi*, 39, (2019), 52- 57, 55.

<sup>24</sup> Eileen Barker, *Crossing The Boundary: New Challenges to Religious Authority and Control as a Consequence of Access to the Internet*, ed. Morten T. Hojsgaard, and Margit Warburg, *In: Religion and Cyberspace*. (London: Routledge, 2005), 67-85.

digital realm,<sup>25</sup> and the amplification of established authorities'<sup>26</sup> authority are constantly expanding.

## 2. The Adaptation Process of Religion to Digitalization

The intersection and conflict between digitization and religion are unavoidable in contemporary society. Media and religion, two prominent organizations that influence individuals and society, inherently participate in a power struggle during conflicts. This power conflict results in the formation of media religion when religion is utilized instrumentally and religious media<sup>27</sup> when media is employed instrumentally. Consequently, it is noted that the conventional attributes of both institutions are evolving within specific parameters. Users of digital tools disseminate religious content, both written and spoken, driven by a desire for worship. However, this situation has been subject to numerous criticisms.<sup>28</sup> Digitalization establishes a foundation for specific transformations inside religious institutions and compels religious reform. The shift of dedicated users to the digital realm is occurring more rapidly than in religious institutions, with face-to-face audio, visual, and virtual communication.<sup>29</sup> The transformation between religion and digitalization mainly transpires via beliefs and rituals, followed by religious ideology.

Currently, religion-oriented movements extensively use Internet media. The initiative that commenced with the faithful exhorting each other and disseminating their perceived truths has evolved into platforms designed to unite individuals with analogous religious inclinations.<sup>30</sup> As a result, users can efficiently participate in their religious rituals, which are customized for the digital world.

<sup>25</sup> Heidi A. Campbell and Oren Golan, "Creating Digital Enclaves: Negotiation of the Internet Among Bounded Religious Communities", *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(5), (2011), 709-724. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711404464>

<sup>26</sup> Heidi A. Campbell and Alessandra Vitullo, "Assessing Changes in the Study of Religious Communities In Digital Religion Studies", *Church, Communication and Culture*, 1(1), (2016), 73-89.

<sup>27</sup> Bilal Yorulmaz, "Dijitalleşme Kavşağında Din ve Değerler", *Dijitalleşme Değerler ve Din Sempozyumu*, Diyarbakır, (2019), 85-106, 89.

<sup>28</sup> Gamze Gezgin ve Şevki Işık, "Dindar Facebook Etkisi: Türk Kullanıcılar Üzerine Bir Analiz", *Medya ve Din Araştırmaları Dergisi (MEDİAD)*, 1 (1), (2018), 111-133, 129.

<sup>29</sup> Ömer Menekşe, *Dinin Dijitalleşmesi ve Mobil Uygulamalar*, edi. Mete Çamdereli, içinde, *Dijitalleşen Din*, (İstanbul: Köprü Yayınları, 2015), 175-222, 152.

<sup>30</sup> Adem Al, *Medyadaki Dini İçerikli Yayınlarla İlgili İzleyici Algısı Araştırması*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2019), 168.

Here are a few examples of how the religion has adapted to digitization:

Mobile security cameras monitor places of worship, projectors, and sound systems provide audible access, and tablets or computers track the recited texts, exemplifying the "technologisation of sacred spaces." Social media accounts for religious institutions and organizations, and their engagement in promotional and visibility efforts guarantees the "digitalization of institutions." Other forms of digitalization, such as anonymous accounts or personal accounts of religious authority, aim to unite people with similar interests and aspirations. Digital platforms classify the recitation of sacred texts or prayers, the facilitation of material worship activities like almsgiving, zakat, and sacrifice, and the digitization of essential religious texts as "digital worship." As religious practices evolve, devoted individuals are increasingly forsaking conventional learning approaches. Instead of learning by asking for the information they need, religious users are turning to digital resources, diminishing the role of religious leaders in the context of knowledge transmission.<sup>31</sup> Religious individuals prefer concise and outcome-focused texts over lengthy and intricate ones, adversely affecting religious and educational institutions.<sup>32</sup> While positive focus enhances specific cognitive abilities, hastily arriving at conclusions detrimentally impacts the potential for enduring learning and application.<sup>33</sup> Users may accept information that conforms to their preferences as accurate while disregarding the remainder. Lack of oversight and error correction makes online platforms flawed, especially for worship structure and content. The pervasive presence of user-centered religious knowledge on digital platforms may impede traditional reference materials and ideas. Ultimately, the generation of religious information without consideration for context and coherence may lead to erroneous beliefs among consumers while also influencing their religious sentiments and thoughts. Consequently, religious individuals' online identities may be at odds with their identities in real-life social interactions.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Stokel Walker, "Din, Akıllı Telefonlar ve Sosyal Medya ile Nasıl Değişiyor?" *Sophos Akademi*, 21.11.2024.

<sup>32</sup> Johann Hari, *Çalınan Dikkat*, çev. Barış Engin Aksoy, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2023), 43.

<sup>33</sup> Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (London: Psychology Press, 2014), 6.

Religious rites and rituals, whether in a digital context or otherwise, are significant mechanisms of social control that contribute to forming an individual's identity.<sup>34</sup> Identity development relies not just on the relationships an individual cultivates with others but also on the social groupings to which they belong and the constraints imposed by temporal and spatial factors. In contemporary circumstances, digitalization arises from a series of interactions dictated by the modern world, and the connections established through communication technologies profoundly influence identity development.<sup>35</sup> Recent studies have increasingly demonstrated that internet-based digital environments significantly contribute to forming individual identity, superseding familial and traditional institutions.<sup>36</sup> Research indicates that the distinct dynamics of the digital realm influence consumers.<sup>37</sup> Users exhibit behaviors based on the parameters of the digital framework and the world they inhabit while manifesting their religious identities. Consequently, as the individual exceeds temporal and spatial confines, they become detached from personal and social realities. Individuals' religious ideas and thoughts rapidly transform into immediate identities on these platforms, while the specific platform they use concurrently shapes them. Online games are a significant factor in identity building, particularly for adolescents. Digital games significantly influence young users.<sup>38</sup> The interplay between digitization and religion manifests in online gaming. The reinforcement of violent behaviors in digital games<sup>39</sup> and the depiction of violence through religious conflicts contribute to the exacerbation of Islamophobic views, especially in Western society.

<sup>34</sup> Lorne L. Dawson, "Researching Religion in Cyberspace: Issues and Strategies", *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises* ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden ve Douglas E. Cowan, (London: JAI Press/Elsevier Science, 2000), 25-54, 32.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>36</sup> Mia Lövhelm, "Young People, Religious Identity and the Internet", *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden ve Douglas E. Cowan, (London: Routledge, 2004), 59-70, 60.

<sup>37</sup> Rachel Wagner, *Godwired Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), 102.

<sup>38</sup> James Paul Gee, *What Video Games Have to Teach us About Learning and Literacy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Yayınları, 2003), 152.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas A. Gentile and Craig A. Anderson, "Violent video games: The newest media violence hazard", *Media Violence and Children: A Complete Guide for Parents and Professionals* (Westport: Praeger Publication, 2013), 135.

Given its importance in the literature, an illustrative case is the 2019 attack on a mosque in New Zealand, resulting in the martyrdom of numerous Muslims engaged in worship.<sup>40</sup> International media publications have highlighted witnesses' assertions that the digital games inspired the logic behind this killing. Consequently, it is indisputable that digital games induce significant alterations in everyday cognitive and behavioral habits. Accordingly, the adverse effects of the digital world on religion are also considered. The latest instance is the internationally experienced COVID-19 pandemic. The epidemic profoundly impacted individuals' daily lives, altering social institutions' operational and cognitive frameworks. It also extended its influence on the religious domain, affecting the modalities of worship.

An exemplary instance of this effect is complying with social distance regulations during communal prayers. During this epidemic, which has caused individual social and psychological issues, people have reported using prayer, charitable giving, and the recitation of prayers to overcome negative thoughts.<sup>41</sup> Comparable research has also identified an enhancement in the execution of religious rites during the pandemic.<sup>42</sup> In isolation, amidst unforeseen circumstances, religion acts as a sanctuary. A comparable scenario arises within the framework of digitization. The inability to engage in communal worship has resulted in considerable individual disconnection, prompting many seeking to fulfill their religious obligations to favor digital channels. The personal, detached from the physical realm, has chosen to create an emotional emptiness through digital platforms. Despite the variability of examples, all developments suggest a growing significance of digital religious practices. Amid the time restrictions of urban living, individuals organize, adhere to, and practice their beliefs and worship using digital channels alongside their everyday obligations. Consequently, it is reasonable to anticipate that the interplay between digitalization and religion will persist and intensify.

<sup>40</sup> Brett Cole, "In Brenton Harrison Tarrant's Australian Hometown, His Relatives Remember Violent Video Games, Trouble With Women", *Washington Post*, 20.11.2024.

<sup>41</sup> Hasan Kaplan, Kenan Sevinç ve Nihal İşbilen, "Doğal Afetleri Anlamlandırma ve Başa Çıkma: Covid-19 Salgını Üzerine Bir Araştırma" *Turkish Studies*, 15(4), (2020), 579-598, 590.

<sup>42</sup> Fatma Güngörer, "Covid-19'un Toplumsal Kurumlara Etkisi". *Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi Salgın Hastalıklar Özel Sayısı*, (2020), 393-428, 423.

Concentrating on cyber religion's repercussions is essential in adapting religion to digitization. Technological instruments possess beneficial and detrimental features applicable to religious life and all situations. Each technological advancement offers valuable contributions to individuals and society; however, it also leads to the obsolescence of some values. Digitization, or religious mechanization, changes and commercializes religious practices, leading to a virtual and detached worship experience. In the interplay between religion and religious media, technology, as an extension of human emotion, has produced individuals who become extensions of technology, catalyzing the development of both the individual and society. Nearly all religions have encountered ambivalence regarding accepting or rejecting modern communication methods.<sup>43</sup> Cyber religion users' tastes and desires may either differentiate established religious discourses or develop on a distinct foundation. This outcome is particularly relevant to media theorists' perspectives. Scholars<sup>44</sup> who argue that media is the primary driving force behind the complete transformation of religion assert that media platforms, by impersonating individuals or religious groups, interpreting religion, and claiming their authority to discuss religious issues, transform religion into a digital good. Currently, digital media significantly influences the definition of religion and establishes the acceptable aspects. Users naturally confer this authority upon digital media.<sup>45</sup> Digitalized religion does not ensure the delivery of a specific religious message to its consumers. Therefore, it does not necessarily need to be consistent. The final point regarding the compatibility of religion with digitalization pertains to the future opportunities it presents for individuals. Technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence, will facilitate individuals' lives in the forthcoming years while introducing specific religious and ethical dilemmas. Therefore, we must prepare the digital world for the future of religion.

### 3. Looking to the Future: Religion in a Digitalizing World

<sup>43</sup> Mehmet Akgül, "Dijitalleşme ve Din", *Marife*, 17/2, (2017), 191-207, 197.

<sup>44</sup> Stig Hjarvard. "The Mediatization of Religion: Theorising Religion, Media and Social Change", *Culture and Religion*, 12(2), (2011), 119-135, 124; Mia Lövheim ve Marta Axner, "Mediatized Religion and Public Spheres: Current Approaches and New Questions", ed. Kennet Granholm, Marcus Moberg and Sofia Sjö, *Religion, media and social change*, 38-53. (London: Routledge, 2014), 214.

<sup>45</sup> Mia Lövheim, "Mediatization and Religion", ed. Knut Lundby, *Mediatization of Communication*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 547-570, 551.

The individual exhibits specific religious ideals and beliefs in their conduct throughout their life.<sup>46</sup> The spiritual aspect of socialization is evident in the regulations and limitations imposed by religion on the individual, who internalizes these doctrines and practices and expresses them in social interactions, thereby fostering a sense of belonging to their community.<sup>47</sup> Religious institutions and practices have historically facilitated individual socialization, and we anticipate this process to continue. The essential components of socialization, including time, geography, and identity, which have endured from the past to the present, are commencing to undergo digital transformation.<sup>48</sup> In the digital era characterized by the growing impact of social media, individuals want to affirm their presence by enhancing their visibility on online platforms. This struggle for existence is likely to persist in the digital realm in the future.<sup>49</sup>

The impact of digital religion is increasing daily, while the influence of conventional religious institutions and activities is concurrently diminishing. The forecast that this tendency will persist indicates that many concepts and methodologies will gain significance in propagating religious ideas. In the context of religion in the increasingly digital era, the first concept to surface in the literature is "hybrid religiosity." The term hybrid denotes a novel entity arising from the amalgamation of two distinct elements,<sup>50</sup> encapsulating the fusion of traditional and digital facets of contemporary existence.<sup>51</sup> The printing press, regarded as one of the earliest communication instruments, along with modern digital technology, has significantly contributed to disseminating religious values and practices across many individuals and countries. Digital platforms now disseminate sources previously conveyed orally and in writing using memory techniques more rapidly and securely. Many source texts—numbering in the millions—are available to consumers on digital platforms.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, history records the

<sup>46</sup> Ünver Günay, *Din Sosyolojisi*, (İstanbul: İnsan, 2003), 382.

<sup>47</sup> Yakup Coştu, *Toplumsallaşma ve Dindarlık*, (London: LAP Lambert, 2017), 37.

<sup>48</sup> Saniye Vatandaş, "Sosyalleşme ve Sosyalleşmenin Sosyal Medya Mecralarındaki Anlamsal ve İşlevsel Dönüşümü" *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi*, 7(2), (2020), 813-832, 829.

<sup>49</sup> Alper Altunay, "Bir Sosyalleşme Aracı Olarak Yeni Medya". *Selçuk İletişim*, 9(1), (2015), 410-428, 425.

<sup>50</sup> Oxford Learners Dictionaries, *Hibrit Maddesi*, 20.11.2024.

<sup>51</sup> Mustafa Çuhadar, "Postmodernizm, Dijitalleşme ve Hibrit Dindarlık". *Tevilat* 2(1), (2021), 67-88, 71.

<sup>52</sup> Haberli, "Dijital Çağda Din ve Dindarlığın Dönüşümü", 309.



individual's transition to the digital realm as the first step toward hybrid religion, propelling them forward into the future—interaction between the local and global forms a composite identity beyond mere assimilation. Hybrid identity incorporates elements from the digital realm into the individual's transformative process,<sup>53</sup> evolving. Hybrid identity is inherently impure and indistinct, representing a fusion that embodies the interaction, conflict, and/or amalgamation of multiple cultural aspects.<sup>54</sup> Hybrid identity development categorizes various living forms, behaviors, and activities as manifestations of multiple identities.<sup>55</sup> The digital realm is the culmination of hybrid religiosity, where the formed religious identity may occasionally mirror the individual's sentiments while, at other times, conforming to the characteristics of its medium.

"Faith migration"<sup>56</sup> is the second concept in the prospective vision of digitalized religion. The digital era characterizes belief transformation as a surface alteration of religion and a transition towards a new belief system and behavioral paradigm.<sup>57</sup> Migration-derived belief: Nomadism refers to a state of unsettledness. A nomad is an individual who traverses both time and place without establishing residence in a specific geographical location.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, digital nomadism denotes the incapacity to develop permanence within the behavioral paradigms of the digital realm. In contemporary professional environments, digital nomadism, encompassing remote work methodologies, signifies the perpetuation of socio-economic activities outside geographical confines. The individual may reside in a foreign country, distant from their current location, while employed by any corporation within that nation. This scenario may also involve religious beliefs and practices. Digitalization has given people new skills that allow them to live in

<sup>53</sup> Keri E. Iyall Smith, *Hybrid Identities: Theoretical Examinations*, Studies ed. Keri E. Iyall Smith and Patricia Leavy in *Critical Social Sciences*, (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 3-11, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Ming-cheng Lo, *Doctors Within Borders: Profession, Ethnicity, and Modernity in Colonial Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 199.

<sup>55</sup> Anna Cieslik ve Maykel Verkuyten, "National, Ethnic and Religious Identities: Hybridity and the Case of the Polish Tatars", *National Identities* 8(2), (2006), 77-93., 78.

<sup>56</sup> Fikrullah Çakmak, "Dijital Çağın İnanç Problemi: İnanç Göçebeliği" *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 30 (2023), 6-31, 31.

<sup>57</sup> Çakmak, "Dijital Çağın İnanç Problemi: İnanç Göçebeliği", 13.

<sup>58</sup> Tuncer Baykara, *Türk Kültür Tarihine Bakışlar*, (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 2001), 63.

nomadic situations.<sup>59</sup> These skills enable constant communication regardless of location or time.

In contrast to the traditional nomad, the digital nomad of faith maintains an active lifestyle by utilizing the resources of the internet realm. Digital manifestations of these behavioral and cognitive tendencies lack mental continuity and are quickly discarded. Theological factors and the individual's psychological landscape influence the decision to abandon a religion or convert to another.<sup>60</sup> The mobility of the digital realm is once again evident at this juncture. Individuals can effortlessly shift between various religious ideologies and affiliations and frequently fluctuate between devoutness and renunciation of religion. Research classifies belief migration as issues about faith's cognitive and sensory aspects.<sup>61</sup> Individual rebellion against societal norms leads to observed nomadism in the digitalizing world. The novel paradigms of thought associated with modernization also influence the individual's inclination to renounce all forms of belief derived from their familial and social milieu.

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Digital nomadism, when examined in conjunction with secularism, manifests because of religion's compelled retreat and diminishment in both personal and societal domains. As an institution, religion permeates every facet of an individual's existence, yet in the digital realm, the individual's aspiration to present their complete self-fosters a neglect of limits. In pursuit of modernity, the digital world establishes a negative association with religion. Three key processes govern this negative correlation.<sup>62</sup> The first dynamic involves the diminishing authority of religion and its doctrines within economic and political frameworks, as well as the restriction of individual autonomy to a limited sphere in daily life. As a result, individuals establish their relationships based on practical considerations. In the second dynamic, religion is entirely relinquishing its function as a rule-maker in the contemporary world. The fourth dynamic, conversely, is the diminishing influence

<sup>59</sup> Mustafa Şeref Akın, "Dijital Göçebelik: Deneyim ve Özgürlük", *Sosyal Ekonomik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 21(1), (2021), 41-52, 42.

<sup>60</sup> M. Ali Kirman, "Din Değişirme Olgusuna Sosyolojik Bir Yaklaşım". *Din Araştırmalar*, 6(18), (2004), 75-88, 76.

<sup>61</sup> Çakmak, "Dijital Çağın İnanç Problemi: İnanç Göçebeliği", 18-22.

<sup>62</sup> Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*, (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2002).

of religious ideologies and practices in an individual's life, yielding to the emergent thought and belief systems of the digital realm. Focusing exclusively on the spiritual dimension of belief migration would neglect its social and economic facets. This scenario could result in only a partial understanding of the phenomenon. Nonetheless, the topic requires comprehensive analysis.

The advent of digitalization is continuously transforming individual identity and cognition through the evolution of socialization into a virtual format. The individual's ideals, joys, and desires are markedly divergent from those of the past. The essence of this transformation is the digitalizing world, which compels numerous institutions, including religion, to conform to contemporary expectations. In modern society, individuals who construct their identities via digital platforms and applications are distancing themselves from conventional beliefs and cognitive frameworks, gravitating towards novel ideologies and modes of thought, consequently impacting societal transformation. In an increasingly digital society, the future of religion will endure insofar as it affects individual lives. The future implications of digital transformation for individuals remain uncertain. Religion is a significant institution that imparts significance to an individual's identity and worldview in the face of uncertainties. In the future, religion will persist in its societal role and, through its advice, will facilitate an individual's integration into a community from an individualistic standpoint. However, today, artificial intelligence and digital technologies must provide long-lasting solutions to individuals' challenges. Research<sup>63</sup> indicates that individuals cannot persist in isolation in an increasingly digital society, contrary to their inherent nature.

### Conclusion

In contemporary society, technological advancement is rapidly intensifying while digitalization is concurrently broadening its impact. Individuals experience the uniform velocity of information dissemination, and digital users instantaneously sustain their social interactions on digital platforms. People who cannot abandon the digital realm's instantaneous sharing and sociability features are transforming their society's sociological institutions and daily lives.

<sup>63</sup> Çakmak, "Dijital Çağın İnanç Problemi: İnanç Göçebeliği"; Bağcı, "Türkiye'de Sosyal Alanda Yaşanan Kültürel Mücadelelerde Dindarlaşma, Deizm ve Ateizm Süreçleri"; Akgül, "Dijitalleşme ve Din".

Currently, the volume of information generated in a single day surpasses the total information produced throughout human history. Digital tools are supplanting conventional values that underpin an individual's beliefs and behaviors, leading to the emergence of novel ideas and lifestyles that are beginning to influence the individual's existence. Like every sociological institution, religion is likewise experiencing its portion of this new order of change. For numerous years, digital platform tools have served as vehicles of secularisation, not only supplanting conventional religion but also transposing individual religious views and activities into virtual platforms.

In contemporary society, characterized by increasing individualism and declining religious values, individuals are crafting identities based on personal preferences facilitated by digitalization, thereby organizing their truths. In contrast, diverse forms of belief, value, and happiness emerge. The person grows reliant on digital behaviors while shaping their identity. Nevertheless, religious communities or authorities are active on these digital platforms, seeking to disseminate their beliefs to broad audiences and foster beneficial impacts on users. These institutions, which aim to influence individual identity formation, occasionally succeed and sometimes fail. In this perspective, it is essential to recognize that the disconnection of digital platforms from temporal and spatial constraints amplifies their power. Research indicates that tailoring religious information for users lacking a specific degree of understanding while aligning it with the interests of digital audiences enhances the probability of mitigating the adverse effects of digitalization.

Furthermore, organizations will attain favorable outcomes by engaging specialists to generate religious material within their social media divisions, enhancing the volume and caliber of digital content. The survey reveals that young players' keen interest in digital games is considered a testament to the success of these platforms. This requires collaboration from religious leaders and all sectors of society. Games and digital media always exploit extremists, particularly Islamophobia, against youth, thereby shaping digital identities.

The interplay between digitalization and religion persists indefinitely, aligned with the trajectory of technical advancements.

Therefore, devising suggested solutions to this problem requires a long-term perspective. In the contemporary landscape, where modes of worship and ideologies are evolving swiftly, disregarding these venues would not constitute a viable option. Conversely, we must consider and plan to mitigate the negative aspects of these platforms. Digital worship, mainly digital piety, will be a focal point in the future as it is presently. We must liberate hybrid ideas and behaviors from the dominant framework of the digital realm. Hybrid religiosity also undergoes the swift alterations and metamorphoses inherent in the digital realm. The person rapidly alters their digitally produced profile, while apostasy and fascination with extreme views define the realities of this era.

An individual must adhere to beliefs that align with their inherent disposition. The digital realm, conversely, satisfies this individual's yearning, enabling instantaneous fluctuations across various belief systems and ideologies. The concept of belief nomadism offers crucial insights into understanding the current situation. Spiritual capital will remain a contentious issue in the future. The individual, frequently shifting across various digital platforms, also perceives the necessity to finalize their ideological relocation. The individual engages in digital nomadism as a form of rebellion against themselves, their family, their social circle, and society. The discourse on secularisation in the context of modernization is significant yet needs to be improved. Current global ideologies, aiming to transform work life through digital means, seek to impact religion and all social spheres, particularly education. Through its institutional framework, religion intervenes in all facets of an individual's existence. When this function encounters the vastness of the digital realm, it enhances the individual's sense of familiarity and expansiveness, prompting a preference for the digital environment. Therefore, we must collectively evaluate religion's economic, social, and individual aspects in the increasingly digital landscape. In the digital world, religious knowledge and practices should only interact with digital tools in a way that facilitates communication without changing the fundamental nature of spiritual content.

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