

Constructing Catholic Women's Religious Identity through Instagram: A Study of the @walmajelena Account

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore how the Instagram account @walmajelena functions as a digital space for expressing the religiosity of Catholic women and to examine how its content shapes the followers' perspectives, understanding, and spiritual experiences in the digital sphere. **Methodology:** This study uses a qualitative approach within a sociological and media studies framework with descriptive-analytical methods. Data were collected through digital observation and analysis of content and responses from followers of the account. **Findings:** The findings reveal that @walmajelena serves as a warm, reflective, and contextual medium of faith expression for Catholic women. Through four major themes—prayer, worship attire, Catholic identity, and faith education—the account constructs a dynamic and participatory spiritual space relevant to younger generations. Interaction between the account owner and her followers illustrates a collective process of religious identity construction, turning social media into a site for the negotiation, affirmation, and internalization of evolving faith values. **Research Implications:** These findings demonstrate that social media can act as an interactive and dialogical sacred space that empowers lay Catholic women to articulate faith beyond institutional boundaries. The study highlights the need for digital-theological literacy and pastoral accompaniment to ensure that digital evangelization remains both spiritually grounded and contextually relevant. **Originality/Value:** This research offers an original contribution by applying Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory to explain how religious identity is dynamically shaped through digital interaction. It also presents a new understanding of female digital religiosity, showing how personal faith narratives evolve into collective expressions of Catholic identity within Indonesia's plural digital culture.

Keywords: religiosity; Instagram; Catholic women; social construction.

Abstrak

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana akun Instagram @walmajelena berfungsi sebagai ruang digital bagi ekspresi religiositas perempuan Katolik serta menelaah bagaimana konten yang dibagikan membentuk perspektif, pemahaman, dan pengalaman spiritual para pengikutnya di ranah digital. **Metodologi:** Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dalam kerangka sosiologi dan kajian media dengan metode deskriptif-analitis. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi digital dan analisis konten dan respons dari para pengikut akun. **Temuan:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa @walmajelena berfungsi sebagai media ekspresi iman yang hangat, reflektif, dan kontekstual bagi perempuan Katolik. Melalui empat tema utama—doa, busana ibadah, identitas Katolik, dan edukasi iman—akun ini membangun ruang spiritual yang dinamis dan partisipatif, relevan dengan kehidupan generasi muda. Interaksi antara pemilik akun dan para pengikutnya mencerminkan proses kolektif pembentukan identitas religius, menjadikan media sosial sebagai arena negosiasi, afirmasi, dan internalisasi nilai-nilai iman yang terus berkembang. **Implikasi Penelitian:** Temuan ini memperlihatkan bahwa media sosial dapat berfungsi sebagai ruang sakral yang interaktif dan dialogis, yang memberdayakan perempuan Katolik awam untuk mengartikulasikan iman di luar batas institusional. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya literasi digital-teologis dan pendampingan pastoral agar evangelisasi digital tetap berakar secara spiritual sekaligus relevan dengan konteks budaya kontemporer. **Orisinalitas/Nilai:** Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi orisinal dengan menerapkan teori konstruksi sosial Berger dan Luckmann untuk menjelaskan bagaimana identitas religius dibentuk secara dinamis melalui interaksi digital. Selain itu, penelitian ini menghadirkan pemahaman baru tentang religiositas

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digital perempuan, yang memperlihatkan bagaimana narasi iman personal berkembang menjadi ekspresi kolektif identitas Katolik dalam budaya digital Indonesia yang plural.

Kata kunci: religiositas; Instagram; perempuan Katolik; konstruksi sosial.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has transformed human interaction patterns on a global scale, including in Indonesia, where social, economic, educational, and religious activities have increasingly migrated into digital spaces (Lukman, 2018; Setia & Dilawati, 2024). According to Hootsuite: We Are Social (2024), Indonesia records 212 million internet users—equivalent to a 74.6% penetration rate—and 143 million active social media users, or 50.2% of the total population. These figures illustrate that digital platforms have become integral to daily life, facilitating not only communication and commerce but also the practice and expression of faith. Platforms such as Instagram, with its interactive *feed* and *reels* features, enable users to share spiritual reflections, prayers, and testimonies with a broad and diverse audience. This phenomenon represents what Campbell (2012) describes as *digital religion*—a mode of religiosity that transcends physical space, where faith practices are reformulated through the logics of digital media and popular culture.

In Indonesia, this digital transformation is also visible in the growing presence of Catholic women who use Instagram as a platform to articulate their faith creatively. According to Datareportal (2024), in January 2024, Indonesia had an estimated 100.9 million Instagram users, representing 36.2% of the total population and 54.5% of the local internet user base, with 54.2% of users being women, particularly concentrated in the 18–34 age group, which constitutes the majority of digital religious participants. Within this demographic, Catholic women are increasingly transforming Instagram into a “mini chapel” for faith proclamation—expressing devotion through prayers, reflections, and narratives of spiritual experience (Marzal et al., 2024). Their content is not limited to visual aesthetics but embodies lived faith, enabling followers to encounter Catholic spirituality in ways that are accessible, relatable, and contextually relevant to modern life. Nevertheless, the emergence of this phenomenon also raises critical questions about how digital media shapes religious authority, gender representation, and the commodification of faith within algorithm-driven communication ecosystems. This intersection of faith, technology, and identity forms the social foundation of this research.

Research on religion and digital media has expanded significantly, yet it tends to concentrate on several dominant trajectories. First, many studies have focused on the use of social media as a medium for faith communication and evangelization. Scholars such as Rianto et al. (2024), Ristata et al. (2022), and Wisanggeni et al. (2024) highlight how Instagram accounts—such as @jenniferodelia, @bayuedvra, and @katolikmedia—successfully translate theological messages into appealing visual narratives that foster faith engagement among young Catholics. Social media, in this perspective, is understood as a strategic extension of pastoral communication capable of bridging religious teachings with contemporary cultural expressions.

Second, other studies emphasize the positive impact of social media on personal spirituality and youth religiosity. Gale et al. (2023) found that Catholic youth in Eastern Indonesia use social media to seek spiritual resources, expand peer relationships, and learn about Church teachings, while Widiana et al. (2024) demonstrated that religious content on social media increases students' faith awareness and moral adherence. These studies underline the transformative potential of digital platforms in promoting participatory forms of spirituality that complement traditional religious institutions.

Third, research informed by social construction theory—notably those inspired by Berger and Luckmann (1990)—has analyzed how religious values are shaped through dialectical processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. For instance, Na'im (2017) show how values of *wasathiyyah* (religious moderation) are constructed through education and media narratives, while Puji (2016) explains the role of mass media in reinforcing or reshaping existing religious meanings. These studies emphasize that the media does not merely transmit doctrine but also participates in constructing social realities of faith.

Despite these valuable contributions, a significant research gap remains. Previous studies have not sufficiently explored how Catholic women individually construct and perform religious identity through digital media. Existing research often examines social media as an evangelization tool or as a general space of digital religiosity, yet it rarely addresses how gender, faith, and media intersect to form new modes of Catholic identity within Indonesia's plural digital culture. Consequently, there is a need for a deeper, qualitative examination of how female Catholic users express, negotiate, and reshape their religiosity in online environments where aesthetic presentation, audience interaction, and algorithmic visibility simultaneously influence faith expression.

This study seeks to fill this research gap by analyzing the @walmajelena Instagram account as a case study that represents the intersection of Catholic women's digital faith expression and identity construction. The research aims to: (1) examine the role of the @walmajelena account in articulating and voicing the religiosity of Catholic women on Instagram, and (2) analyze how the account influences the religious perspectives and practices of its followers.

By doing so, this research contributes to the academic discourse on digital religion and gendered religiosity by revealing how Catholic women utilize social media not only to communicate spiritual values but also to construct a collective identity that bridges personal devotion, digital culture, and community participation. The study also intends to demonstrate how media practices—through images, captions, and interactive communication—function as a form of contemporary *kerygma* (proclamation) that extends the boundaries of Catholic evangelization.

This study argues that digital media serves as both a space and an instrument of identity construction for Catholic women, where expressions of faith are continuously negotiated through interactive and participatory communication. Drawing from the social construction theory of Berger and Luckmann (1990), the researcher hypothesizes that the religious identity displayed on @walmajelena is formed through three interrelated processes: (1) externalization, when personal faith is consciously expressed in digital spaces through narrative and visual representation; (2) objectivation, when these expressions gain recognition and legitimacy through interaction and audience engagement; and (3) internalization, when shared meanings are absorbed into the personal and collective consciousness of followers. Accordingly, the study posits that the digital presence of Catholic women—as exemplified by the @walmajelena account—constitutes a new form of participatory Catholic spirituality, in which faith expression, digital creativity, and gender agency converge to create a living, dialogical, and contextually grounded religiosity within the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study focuses on the Instagram account @walmajelena as the primary unit of analysis in exploring the representation of Catholic women's religiosity in the digital space. The account was purposefully selected because it consistently presents narratives of faith, spiritual experiences, and

expressions of Catholic identity in visual, textual, and symbolic forms distributed through social media. The research subjects include both the account owner, who acts as the content creator, and the followers, who serve as active participants engaging in interaction and meaning-making processes. By examining this account, the study aims to understand how Catholic women construct, communicate, and negotiate their religious identity through digital platforms that blend personal spirituality and public expression.

This research adopts a qualitative design employing a descriptive-analytical approach within the interdisciplinary framework of sociology and media studies (Lune & Berg, 2017). The qualitative method was chosen because it allows an in-depth understanding of social meanings, symbolic representations, and interactive patterns that cannot be captured through quantitative measurement (Muhamad et al., 2024). The descriptive aspect is used to systematically outline the characteristics, forms, and themes of the content shared on the @walmajelena account, while the analytical aspect interprets the cultural and theological meanings embedded in those representations. This design is considered appropriate for uncovering how religious identity is constructed and performed by women in the contemporary Catholic digital context.

The data in this study are drawn from two main sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from digital sources related to the @walmajelena account, including visual posts, textual captions, and comment interactions, as well as public statements by the account owner in podcasts or interviews on other media platforms. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected followers to gain insights into their interpretations and experiences regarding the content. Secondary data consist of relevant literature such as books, journal articles, and official reports discussing social construction theory, digital media, and religiosity in the digital age. These sources provided the theoretical grounding needed to contextualize the findings within broader academic discussions.

The data collection process involved three main techniques: content analysis, interviews, and digital observation. Content analysis was conducted on the visual and textual materials posted on @walmajelena, focusing on thematic categorization related to Catholic women's religiosity. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with several followers to explore how they interpret the content and how it influences their understanding of faith and identity. Digital observation was used to monitor user interactions, including comments, likes, and responses over time. The researcher utilized digital tools and analytical software to systematically organize and store the collected data, ensuring validity and reliability throughout the process.

Data analysis in this study applies thematic analysis combined with the Miles and Huberman model (2013), which involves three sequential stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher identified and filtered essential information from the interviews, observations, and social media content, removing irrelevant or redundant data. The selected data were then organized into categories and displayed in descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to identify recurring patterns and relationships. In the final stage, the researcher drew conclusions by synthesizing the data into analytical insights, verifying consistency, and interpreting how digital interaction contributes to the externalization, objectivation, and internalization of Catholic women's religious identity in the online sphere.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Religious Expression of Catholic Women on the @walmajelena Account

The Instagram account @walmajelena serves as a space of religious expression managed by a Catholic woman named Walma Jelena. Since December 2023, she has consistently shared spiritual content as an act of faith proclamation in the digital era. In an interview on the Paroki Kalideres YouTube podcast, Walma explained that her initial motivation was to reintroduce Catholic traditions to the younger generation, who have become increasingly unfamiliar with the symbols of faith.

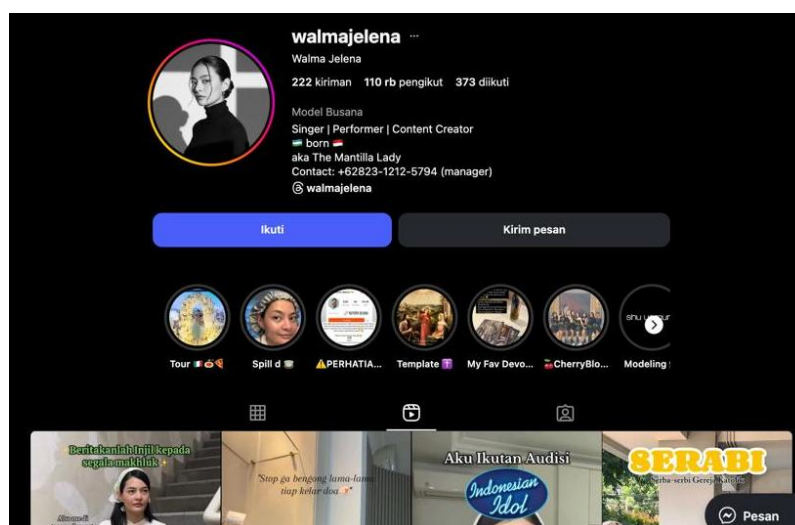


Figure 1. Instagram account @walmajelena

"I just wanted to create and at the same time reintroduce our traditions, you know. So that our younger generation doesn't grow up not knowing what a *mantila* is, what it's for, who wears it, and when it's worn." (Walma Jelena in Paroki Kalideres podcast, 2024b).

This motivation was also influenced by her personal experience of no longer being active in Orang Muda Katolik (OMK) or liturgical service. She expressed her longing to remain involved in the proclamation of the Gospel in a way that is relevant and contextual to her current life.

"I thought to myself, what should I do then? Well, finally, in mid-December, during Advent, I wanted to proclaim the Gospel. And yes, that was my intention—to proclaim the Gospel to all creation. Praise God, it truly reached all creation." (Walma Jelena in Paroki Kalideres podcast, 2024b).

These statements show that the presence of the @walmajelena account is not merely an ordinary digital content project but is born from an authentic spiritual impulse. Through social media, Walma seeks to actualize her faith while simultaneously creating a space for dialogue and faith education that is welcoming to young Catholics.

Observation of 91 posts shared through *Reels* and *Feed* formats shows a tendency to group them into four main themes: (1) attire in worship, (2) prayer, (3) community and Catholic identity, and (4) education on faith teachings and practices. These themes were identified through an analysis of visual and

textual narratives that demonstrate how religious practices are represented in an aesthetic, accessible, and reflective manner.

Table 1. Number of contents per theme

Content Theme	Number of Posts
Prayer	12
Community and Catholic Identity	11
Attire in Worship	16
Educational	10

Prayer-themed content reflects the practice of Catholic devotion presented in a humanistic and contextual manner. *Reels* about the Rosary, Novena, emotional experiences during prayer, and cross-religious audience participation reveal the complexity of digital religiosity that is affective and boundary-crossing.

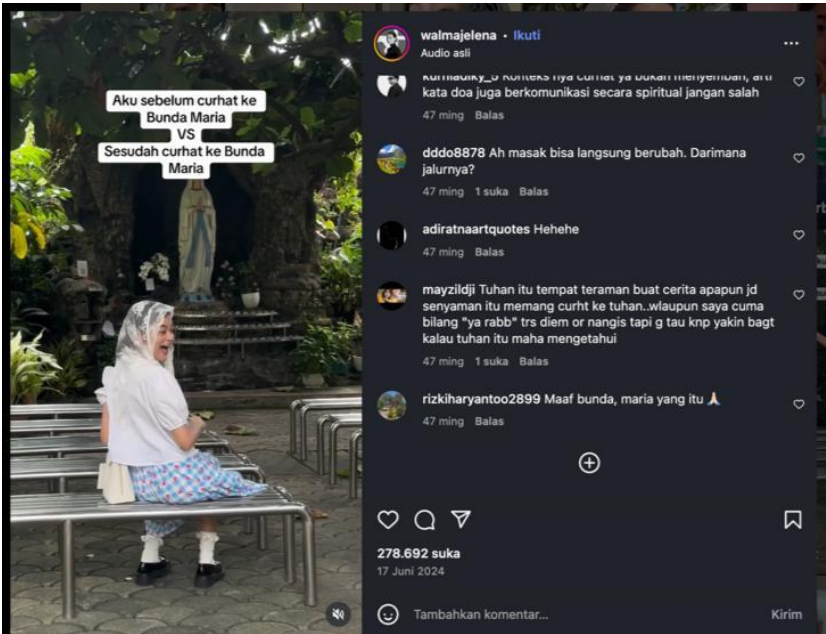


Figure 2. Prayer-themed content: *curhat kepada Bunda Maria* (confiding in the Virgin Mary) on @walmajelena

Posts such as “*Curhat kepada Bunda Maria*” (*Confiding in the Virgin Mary*, 6.2 million views) and “*Doa yang dijawab*” (*Answered Prayers*, 637 thousand views) illustrate that the digital realm can serve as a virtual sacred space, where emotional articulation and personal relationships with God occur (Jelena, 2024b, 2024c). The prayer content is presented with a friendly and reflective tone, making it easily accessible to interfaith audiences without sounding rigid or dogmatic. In fact, several non-Catholic followers admitted feeling connected after watching the content, for instance by comparing the Rosary to *tasbeih* (prayer beads) or sharing their spiritual experiences during *tahajud* prayer (Jelena, 2024b).

The theme of *Attire in Worship* is explored through colorful visuals and reflective narratives, as seen in a post featuring Walma after attending Mass, dressed in religious attire under warm lighting and

wearing a calm expression. The visual creates both a sacred and intimate atmosphere, evoking emotional responses from followers, as seen in comments praising her graceful appearance and sharing similar experiences of feeling peaceful when wearing special clothing for worship (Jelena, 2024e).



Figure 3. Worship Attire Content, Spanish Mantilla on @walmajelena

In a video with 2.7 million views, Walma presents various types of *mantila*, both local and imported—such as the *Spanish Mantilla*—packaged in a dynamic visual style with bright lighting and the popular background music “*Fancy Pants*.” This combination renders the religious symbol both modern and visually engaging. Through a light yet informative narrative, the video educates audiences about the diversity of *mantila* and opens a space for appreciation of the richness of Catholic tradition (Jelena, 2024g).

In contrast to the previous two posts, a video with 613 thousand views presents a more critical reflection on why the use of *mantila* has become increasingly rare among Catholic women. Delivered through a narrative monologue and more serious facial expression, Walma reflects on how reluctance often arises from feelings of being a minority or from fear of appearing different in the worship space (Jelena, 2024g).

In the theme of *Community and Catholic Identity*, the @walmajelena account utilizes popular trends such as “*Of Course We’re*” and “*Simple but not all Catholics can*” as communicative tools to showcase the uniqueness of Catholic life in the digital sphere. Through the “*Simple but not all Catholics can*” trend, the account shares devotional practices that are rarely carried out by some believers, such as praying the breviary seven times a day, attending daily Mass, abstaining from meat every Friday outside feast days, and the habit of praying the Angelus (Jelena, 2024i). This type of content serves a dual function: as both information and an invitation to reflect on the spiritual meaning of prayer in everyday life, so that it does not become a mere routine.



Figure 4. Community and Catholic Identity Content, *We're Catholic* on @walmajelena

Catholic identity itself is represented through visual symbols such as the cross and the rosary, distinctive habits such as attending Mass and retreats, and narratives delivered with light humor, making them easily accessible to the digital generation. In content following the *"Of Course We're"* trend, for example, the account features typical Catholic habits such as always carrying a rosary in a bag or pocket, taking photos in front of the altar after Mass, humorous expressions like *"permen Tubuh Kristus"* ("the Body of Christ candy"), and even the habit of guessing someone's religion based on their full name. More personal and amusing aspects—such as the tendency to take a nap after Mass—are also featured to present an image of Catholic life that is warm, relatable, and communal (Jelena, 2024i). Through this approach, the @walmajelena account portrays Catholic identity as a living tradition while inviting followers to celebrate and reinterpret the life of faith in a contextual, light-hearted, and digitally attuned manner.

Meanwhile, educational content also plays an important role in the narrative of this account, delivering religious information in a manner that is light yet substantive. Several posts address topics that are often misunderstood, such as the difference between devotion to the Virgin Mary and worship, as well as the process of becoming Catholic through the stages of the catechumenate to baptism. In one video themed *"Logging into the Catholic faith,"* Walma presents her explanation in a tutorial format, systematically outlining the stages of faith in a way that is easy to understand. She also discusses common myths related to Catholic practices, including clarifications on fasting, abstinence, and online Mass (Jelena, 2024f).



Figure 5. Educational Content: *devosi kepada Bunda Maria dan penyembahan* (Devotion to the Virgin Mary and Worship) on @walmajelena

This approach provides a basic understanding for Catholics while also opening access to information for non-Catholic audiences who wish to learn more (Jelena, 2024d). With a casual tone and engaging visuals, this educational content strengthens the role of @walmajelena as a medium for faith learning that remains relevant to everyday life (Jelena, 2024a).

Overall, the @walmajelena account functions as a digital religious ecosystem that bridges personal expressions of faith with community engagement in online spaces. The account articulates Catholic religiosity through aesthetic, emotional, educational, and participatory approaches. Furthermore, Walma explained that in the future her account will seek to deepen spiritual resonance, strengthen critical theological literacy, and foster faith reflection in both online and offline contexts. This direction is important because, in one podcast episode, Walma stated that her content selection tends to focus on general themes to avoid potential misunderstandings among her audience (Jelena, 2024h).

This approach can be understood as a consequence of religious life mediated by the logic of digital media, in which the delivery of faith messages must consider accessibility, connectivity, and readability for a broad audience. The Instagram account @walmajelena thus becomes a platform through which a Catholic woman can creatively and openly express her faith in the social media environment. Since becoming active in producing spiritual content in December 2023, Walma has used this digital platform to voice the spiritual values she once conveyed through youth ministry activities (*Orang Muda Katolik* or OMK).

In a relatively short period, she has shared various types of content divided into four main themes: prayer, worship attire, community and Catholic identity, and faith education. All these contents are presented in a light, engaging, and visually appealing style that follows popular digital trends. The

messages are directed not only to Catholics but also reach audiences of different faiths and age groups, demonstrating that faith can be proclaimed in a fresh and inclusive way within the digital space.

From the observation of @walmajelena's content, several key tendencies were found in how the account conveys the message of Catholic faith in the digital realm. First, prayer appears as a personal and emotional spiritual expression, transforming prayer practices into intimate and cross-religious relationships. Second, worship attire—particularly the *mantila*—serves as a powerful medium to highlight Catholic religious symbolism as well as a means of education and appreciation for tradition. Third, Catholic identity is presented through distinctive habits and digital humor, making the life of faith feel warm and relevant to the younger generation. Fourth, educational content shows that the understanding of faith can be delivered in a light, popular, and contextual way (Jelena, 2024e).

All these patterns show that @walmajelena builds a digital faith ecosystem that is participatory, approachable, and contextual. This demonstrates that religious practices in the digital era are no longer confined to physical worship spaces or formal authorities such as priests and the Church. As an individual, Walma is able to become an important actor in voicing Catholic faith through social media. She demonstrates that faith expression can be carried out in ways that are relevant and touching to the younger generation—through formal teachings, personal experiences, visual approaches, and two-way communication.

The presence of this account can therefore be understood as the beginning of a process of externalization of faith, where spirituality that was once personal and internal is now expressed publicly in forms of content that can be widely accessed and shared. Consequently, these findings suggest that social media can serve as a strategic space to strengthen religious identity, build community, and broaden understanding of faith, provided that it is carried out with sensitivity, reflection, and clear intention. This account also indirectly responds to the challenge of youth participation in religious life by presenting a model of faith representation that is fresh, active, and yet remains faithful to Catholic values.

Audience Response and Experience toward the @walmajelena Content

The performance analysis of content across the four main themes—education, prayer, interaction and Catholic identity, and worship attire—shows an interaction pattern that reflects specific preferences among the followers of the @walmajelena account. The education theme ranks highest in terms of reach and discursive response, with an average of 1.26 million views and 574 comments per post. These numbers indicate that content presenting explanations about Church doctrine, history, or Catholic faith practices attracts broad attention while simultaneously encouraging dialogical participation. In other words, followers are motivated to respond actively through questions, reflections, or clarifications rather than consume the content passively—demonstrating a strong need for relevant religious literacy in the digital space.

Meanwhile, the interaction and Catholic identity theme shows a contrasting yet qualitatively significant performance. Although the number of *likes* for this theme is relatively low (averaging 18.8 thousand), the number of comments is quite high (562), nearly reaching that of the education theme. This phenomenon suggests that content related to identity—particularly those connected to the experience of being Catholic in a plural society—stimulates stronger discursive engagement than symbolic affection such as *likes*. Followers appear encouraged to negotiate their religious identity through more expressive verbal responses, which often intersect with socio-religious issues, intra-faith differences, and even interfaith debates. This indicates that such content functions both as a space for articulating collective identity and as a dynamic arena for symbolic interaction.

On the other hand, the prayer and worship attire themes tend to show two types of engagement that are primarily affective and visual. The prayer theme recorded the highest number of *likes* (49 thousand), although its comments (460) were lower than those for the education and identity themes. This pattern indicates that prayer-related content has strong emotional and spiritual resonance—followers feel an inner connection but are not always prompted to express it verbally. In contrast, the worship attire theme ranks lowest in the number of comments (149), even though its views and *likes* remain significant. This pattern suggests that content related to aesthetics and visual symbols tends to generate more immediate and passive responses. Overall, these data indicate that the level of interaction does not always correlate with content popularity; rather, the form of engagement largely depends on the type of symbolic stimulus offered by each theme.

Further analysis of interaction patterns between the @walmajelena account owner and her followers reveals that, based on a purposive examination of comments across the four main themes, most comments received active responses, either in the form of verbal replies or informative clarifications. This indicates that the account functions not only as a content provider but also as a relational actor that actively shapes the digital religious space. Positive interaction is the most dominant category, with many comments reflecting empathetic and appreciative responses. For example, when a follower wrote, "*Aku lagi katekumen*" ("I'm currently in the catechumen process"), the account replied briefly yet meaningfully, "*Puji Tuhan*" ("Praise God"). In another case, a response to an interfaith comment such as "*Aku muslim... makasih ilmunya...*" ("I'm Muslim... thank you for the knowledge...") was answered with "*Terima kasih juga...*" ("Thank you as well..."), a gesture of acceptance that signifies the inclusivity and openness of the Catholic identity being presented publicly.


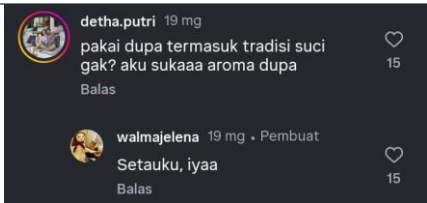


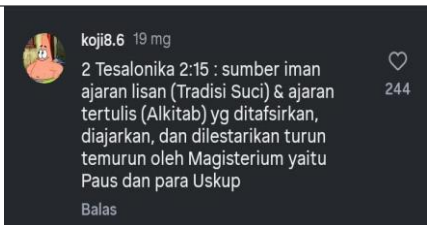
The second significant category is informative interaction, which generally consists of responses to questions related to Catholic religious practices. These responses are direct, concise, and functional. For instance, when a user asked, "*Mantila biasa dipakai kapan saja?*" ("When is the mantilla usually worn?"), the account replied, "*Biasanya dipake ketika misa dan katekumen...*" ("Usually worn during Mass and catechumenate sessions..."). Interestingly, this form of interaction demonstrates practical and contextual religious literacy, addressing followers' informational needs without neglecting politeness. Another category is critical interaction, which occurs when followers express disagreement with the information presented, such as in the comment "*Ini tidak betul ya, makan 1x kenyang...*" ("This isn't right, eating once until full..."), which was answered with "*Itu source saya udah approved dari romo...*" ("That source has already been approved by a priest..."); this shows an effort to provide clarification while maintaining informational authority by referring to legitimate Church sources.

Conversely, patterns of passive or nonresponsive interaction reflect selectivity or limitations in managing engagement. Some comments receive only a *like* without a written reply, as seen in comments such as "*Hebat banget kakak buat konten kaya gini...*" ("You're amazing, sis, for creating content like this..."), which are responded to only with a heart emoji. Meanwhile, there are also comments that receive no reaction at all, even though some express deep spiritual experiences such as "*Aku punya kesaksian soal novena...*" ("I have a testimony about the novena...") or quote verses from Scripture ("*1 Korintus 11:6...*" / "*1 Corinthians 11:6*"). This lack of engagement can be interpreted as a result of meaning selection by the account owner, either due to limited capacity to respond to thousands of comments or because of a prioritization of responses deemed more relevant to the dominant narrative of the content.

Overall, these patterns illustrate that the interaction between the @walmajelena account and its followers represents a dynamic process of religious communication—where emotional, informational, and critical engagements coexist. Through such interactions, the account not only disseminates spiritual

messages but also cultivates a participatory and dialogical environment in which Catholic faith is lived, interpreted, and negotiated collectively in the digital sphere.

Table 2. Types of Interaction and Their Examples

Types of Interaction	Example
Positive Interaction	 <p>A screenshot of an Instagram post by user gal_evren (3 days ago) with 126 likes. The post text reads: "Tenang banget lihatnya. Buat semua perempuan Kristen yang mau berkerudung entah itu veil biasa, mantilla dan kerudung penuh sebagai devosi pribadimu, jangan takut. Lets glow with God. 🌸🌸". Below the post, a comment from walmajelena (3 days ago) says: "@gal_evren let's glow with God! 🌸🌸🌸".</p>
Informative Interaction	 <p>A screenshot of an Instagram post by user detha.putri (19 mg) with 15 likes. The post text reads: "pakai dupa termasuk tradisi suci gak? aku sukaaa aroma dupa". Below the post, a comment from walmajelena (19 mg) says: "Setauku, iyaa".</p>
Critical Interaction	 <p>A screenshot of an Instagram post by user andhikapradipta_51 (19 mg) with 46 likes. The post text reads: "Kak, nyebutnya 'Katolik' saja ya kak 🌸 karena Credo ini juga digunakan tidak hanya di Gereja Katolik ritus Romawi, tetapi juga gereja gereja timur seperti Orthodox dan juga Katolik Timur". Below the post, a comment from walmajelena (19 mg) says: "@andhikapradipta_51 thank you. Script saya full dari https://www.kaj.or.id/dokumen/pokok-pokok-iman/pengakuan-iman-syahadat . Ya, saya ikut KAJ 🌸".</p>
Passive Interaction	 <p>A screenshot of an Instagram post by user priscaputri23 (1 hari) with 15 likes. The post text reads: "1. Novema Yudas Tadeus , 2. Novena Hati Kudus Yesus , 3. Novena 3 salam Maria 🌸🌸 Loveee .. Berkah Dalam 🙏". There are no comments visible on this post.</p>
No Response	 <p>A screenshot of an Instagram post by user koji8.6 (19 mg) with 244 likes. The post text reads: "2 Tesalonika 2:15 : sumber iman ajaran lisan (Tradisi Suci) & ajaran tertulis (Alkitab) yg ditafsirkan, diajarkan, dan dilestarikan turun temurun oleh Magisterium yaitu Paus dan para Uskup". There are no comments visible on this post.</p>

The interaction between the @walmajelena account and its followers demonstrates that the shared Catholic spiritual content invites various forms of audience engagement. Educational content receives the most responses in the form of comments and discussions, while prayer-related content tends to elicit stronger emotional reactions such as *likes*. On the other hand, content related to Catholic identity encourages audiences to be more vocal in expressing their faith experiences. The account owner actively responds to comments—through empathy, clarification, or practical advice—although not all comments receive replies. This pattern shows that the account functions not only as an information channel but also as a space for dialogue and active participation.

From the recorded patterns of interaction, several interesting trends emerge that shape the dynamics between @walmajelena and its followers. First, educational content tends to trigger active discussion because audiences feel encouraged to ask questions or confirm information related to Catholic teachings. This indicates a growing need for faith literacy presented in a light yet substantive manner. Second, Catholic identity content attracts a large number of comments despite having relatively fewer *likes*, suggesting that this theme resonates on a personal level with audiences, particularly within the context of religious diversity in society. Third, prayer content generates high emotional engagement in the form of *likes* and empathy, although it is not always followed by verbal responses from audiences. Fourth, the account owner's interactions display a combination of empathetic, informative, and clarifying responses to criticism. However, there are also comments that are answered only with a *like* or are left unanswered, indicating both capacity limits and selectivity in managing digital engagement.

Overall, these patterns reveal that digital interaction on this account depends largely on the type of content and how audiences relate it to their own spiritual experiences. These findings suggest that social media can serve as an interactive space that brings together faith proclamation and the need for personal religious reflection. The active responses from followers—whether informative, empathetic, or critical—demonstrate that audiences do not merely act as passive consumers but also as contributors in collectively shaping religious meaning.

The @walmajelena account thus operates as both a content creator and a spiritual facilitator capable of bridging Catholic teachings with the dynamics of everyday digital life. The interactions that occur illustrate a process of objectification of faith, where personal spiritual experiences and values are publicly expressed through social media and subsequently recognized, interpreted, and responded to by others as something real and socially meaningful. This process opens a participatory space for audiences from diverse backgrounds, broadens understanding of faith, and demonstrates that religious practice in the digital era is no longer top-down but dialogical, adaptive, and open.

The Process of Constructing Religious Identity

Religious identity is born from social relations. It is formed through an individual's engagement with religious texts, authoritative figures, community, and lived experiences. In the digital era, as seen in the Instagram account @walmajelena, the process of forming religious identity is subject to media logic and takes place through patterns of interactive communication. Referring to the social construction theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1990), religious identity develops through three dialectical stages: externalisation, when faith is expressed in the social space; objectivation, when that expression is recognised and gains social acceptance; and internalisation, the absorption of meaning from that expression into personal consciousness. The interactions and testimonies of followers of the

@walmajelena account show that these three processes occur tangibly and structurally within digital religious practice.

The process of forming religious identity on the @walmajelena account begins with the stage of externalisation, when faith is consciously expressed into the digital social space. The Instagram account @walmajelena, with its reflective tone and poetic spiritual narratives, presents an alternative space in religious discourse through the contextual reinterpretation of religious teachings. Through posts that touch both emotional and intellectual aspects, @walmajelena invites the audience, especially young people, to experience religion in a more personal, existential, and inclusive way. Social media becomes a dynamic space where faith intersects with pop culture, evolves through interaction, and finds new forms that are more fluid yet still meaningful.

The content shared by the @walmajelena account is a form of faith expression actualised in the digital space. Through its distinctive narratives, visuals, and style of religiosity, the account documents personal spiritual experiences and makes them accessible and experienceable by the public. In this way, Catholic values are openly expressed, forming a digital footprint that reflects the creator's beliefs and religious identity. One of the most tangible forms of @walmajelena's religious expression is her consistency in wearing the mantilla, a traditional Catholic veil commonly worn during Mass. This act reflects her belief and serves as a form of faith actualisation in the digital space. This is one form of articulation of externalisation: beliefs that were once internal now appear in the form of texts, images, and captions that are publicly accessible.

This is reinforced by a Reels post uploaded on 27 June 2024, in which @walmajelena shared her personal testimony about the reason behind wearing the mantilla. She explained that she initially started wearing the mantilla in 2017 after seeing an inspiring catechesis account from abroad, as well as seeing the Virgin Mary depicted wearing a mantilla in religious shops. She also added that the use of the mantilla is mentioned in a Bible verse, which further strengthened her conviction to wear it during worship (Jelena, 2024e).

The next process is objectivation, in which meaning that was initially personal and subjective becomes crystallised as a social reality that is collectively recognised. In a religious context, objectivation occurs when an expression of faith is no longer seen merely as a personal experience but begins to be associated with values that are legitimate, appropriate, and shareable in a communal space. This process transforms belief into a social symbol something that can be understood, accepted, and referred to by others as part of a shared structure of meaning. When religious symbols, practices, or narratives receive responses that affirm and strengthen their validity within a community, that is the moment when personal meaning transcends individuality and becomes part of collective reality. Objectivation encompasses both recognition and reinforcement: it marks the point at which an expression has come to be lived collectively, discussed across individuals, and accepted as a discourse that holds a position in social space.

This is reinforced by the testimony of a follower who stated that she began wearing a mantilla to church after seeing Walma's consistency:

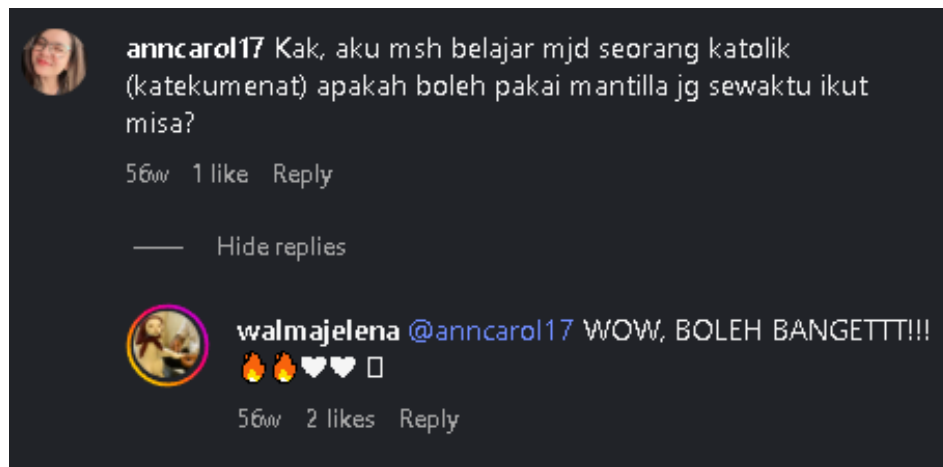


Figure 6. Audience Interaction with the @walmajelena Account

In Figure 6 above, it is shown that a religious symbol initially presented as a personal expression has gained recognition and social legitimacy in the digital space. A question from a catechumen indicates an initial acceptance of the symbolic meaning of the mantilla as part of a faith practice worthy of imitation. The affirmative response that follows reflects a personal answer while also affirming that the practice is rooted in the collective awareness of the community. This is evidence that the process of objectivation has taken place: a personal belief has expanded in meaning until it is accepted, referenced, and validated by other audiences as something legitimate within the shared context of religious life. When the meaning expressed no longer stops at the individual level but is confirmed and given space by the community, objectivation finds its social grounding.

The effect of objectivation can also transcend religious boundaries. The content shared by @walmajelena not only impacts the internal Catholic community but also shows the capacity to create interfaith resonance. One example is seen in a video that has been viewed more than 277 thousand times, depicting the inner struggle of an individual preparing to wear a mantilla for the first time. Using a point of view (POV) approach and the narration, "*Kamu mau pakai mantila, tapi iblis bikin kamu galau. Tapi kamu menang bersama Kristus,*" the video successfully frames the spiritual struggle in a reflective, emotional, and relatable format for a broader audience. Interestingly, one response came from a Muslim follower who experienced a strengthening of their own religiosity after watching the content. They said:

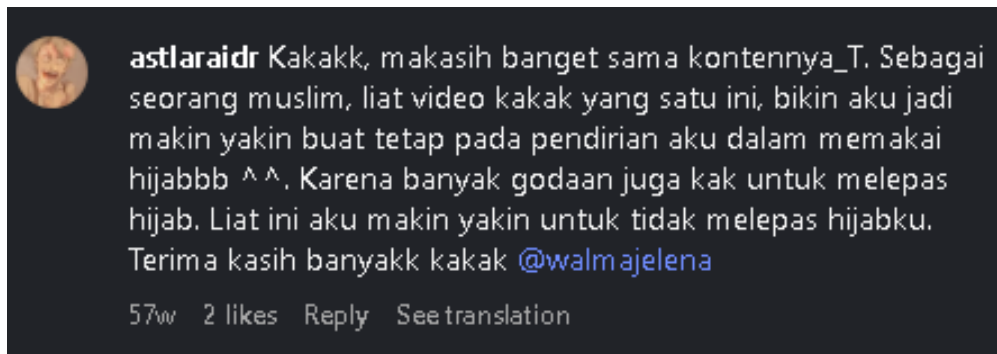


Figure 7. Comments from Muslim Instagram Users

Figure 7 above indicates that the religious representation conveyed by Catholic women on digital platforms represents an internal religious identity while also functioning as a symbolic mediation that enables religious resonance and cross-faith inspiration. In other words, an authentic performance of devotion in the digital space can serve as a catalyst for interfaith empathy, without obscuring theological differences, but rather affirming the complexity of human spirituality in the era of digital interconnectedness.

The final process, namely internalisation, is the stage when the social meanings that have been formed and objectified are fully absorbed and embedded in an individual's personal consciousness and identity. In this context, the @walmajelena account is not merely a channel for religious information or entertainment. It becomes a digital space capable of stirring awareness, touching the soul, and shaping a new perspective on faith. The content presented offers narratives of faith that are close, intimate, and emotional, allowing the audience to find reflections of their own spiritual experiences. When someone begins to internalise the messages received, the experience of faith is no longer temporary or consumptive, but transforms into a lasting part of personal identity. This process shows that the digital space can become fertile ground for the growth of faith, insofar as individuals experience an authentic encounter and connect emotionally with the values being presented.

This is reinforced by the growing number of accounts that have begun to follow in @walmajelena's footsteps, particularly in the practice of wearing the mantilla. This phenomenon shows that the content shared does not stop at visual or symbolic appreciation but successfully encourages concrete actions that reflect the process of internalising values. @walmajelena's act of reposting Instagram Stories from several other users demonstrates a tangible and ongoing influence. In these posts, users wrote captions such as "starting to get used to wearing a mantilla because I often see kak @walmajelena's content" or "kindly follow kak @walmajelena as they help me to learn too 6 month ago as I started mine." These statements affirm that exposure to the content has shaped new habits that stem from internal conviction, not merely from a fleeting impulse.

In addition to that, there are also those who expressed their use of the mantilla in several Instagram comments such as:

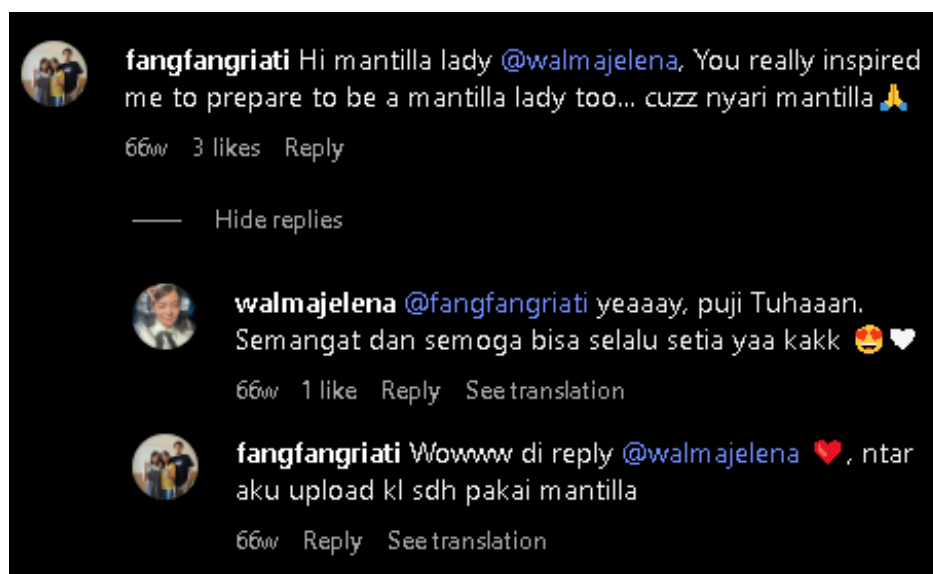


Figure 8. Conversation in the Comment Section between the Audience and @walmajelena

There is also a subtler yet still impactful form of internalisation. A follower interviewed by the researcher expressed a motivation to be more disciplined in practising their faith: *"My enthusiasm increased by one point something percent. Not significantly, but there was a bit of influence."* This statement shows that internalisation does not always appear in the form of noticeable change. It can emerge as a small, gradual, yet continuous impulse. Even an increase considered "not significant" still indicates that the content has touched an inner dimension and activated religious awareness, albeit in a subtle way. This kind of impact is important to note as it shows that the power of faith-based messages in digital spaces works gradually, entering through emotional nuances, and eventually shaping deeper and more lasting changes.

These findings show that the @walmajelena account serves as more than just a platform for sharing religious content. It becomes an active space for shaping a flexible religious identity that is open to dialogue and responsive to contemporary dynamics. Through the dialectical processes of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation, the values of the Catholic faith do not remain at the level of symbolic communication, but continue to be rearticulated in ways that are contextual, grounded, and in tune with digital realities.

The religious representation constructed by this account functions as a bridge that connects faith with digital culture, links symbols with practice, and reasserts the presence of women in the spiritual sphere and religious authority. It creates a more inclusive and reflective religious space, where the audience is not passive but empowered: they engage, interpret, and take part in shaping the meaning of faith in the present context. The presence of this account marks the growth of a form of digital religiosity that lives in the online sphere while also taking root in consciousness, inspiring practice, and reshaping the way modern humans experience faith.

Discussion

This research highlights how the Instagram account @walmajelena, managed by a Catholic woman, becomes a space for faith expression that differs from conventional representations by being neither rigid nor exclusive, but instead warm, aesthetic, and closely connected to the everyday lives of young people. Through content divided into four main themes—prayer, worship attire (such as the mantilla), Catholic identity, and faith education—this account shows that social media can function as a dynamic and inclusive spiritual space. The delivery of religious teachings is combined with encouragement for the audience to feel, reflect, and actively engage in their faith journey. As a result, many followers feel more confident in expressing their religious identity, and even some non-Catholic audience members feel inspired. Through its presence, this account offers a space for sharing content that also fosters dialogue and a spiritual community aligned with the current dynamics of the digital age.

The process of religious identity construction in the @walmajelena account can be explained through the social construction theory developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1990). According to them, social reality including religious identity is constructed through ongoing processes of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation. Religious identity is not automatically inherited, but formed within the context of social interaction, life experience, and the medium of communication used.

In this case, social media, particularly Instagram, becomes a new medium in which this social construction takes place. It provides a space where individuals can externalise their faith experiences visually and narratively, which are then objectivised through public responses, and finally internalised by the audience as part of their own spiritual experience. Berger and Luckmann state that internalisation occurs when individuals “make the objective world their own,” that is, when the socially constructed reality (1990, p. 149) becomes a frame of reference for understanding the self and the world.

The @walmajelena account conveys expressions of Catholic faith through a contextual, reflective, and non-dogmatic approach. A gentle tone, poetic narrative, and communicative aesthetic visuals make the religious narrative more accessible to the digital generation, which tends to avoid authoritative and institutional approaches. In this context, the process of objectivation occurs not only within the internal scope of the Catholic community but also reaches an interfaith audience, who likewise respond emotionally and reflectively to the content shared.

Positive responses from the audience occur because they find religious experiences that are relatable, personal, and non-judgemental. Educational content sparks discussion as it addresses the need for faith literacy that is not fulfilled by formal structures, while symbolic content such as the use of the mantilla opens new space for expressions of faith that may have been subordinated. In this process, social media functions as a ritual space, an alternative arena where religious symbols and practices are performed, negotiated, and collectively interpreted (Campbell, 2012).

Thus, this phenomenon shows how a change in medium (from institution to social media) also transforms the way religiosity is understood and experienced. Whereas religious institutions previously functioned as the sole producers of religious identity, in the digital context, that identity is instead co-constructed through interaction and active participation between the account owner and the audience. This process affirms that religious identity in the digital era is flexible, open, and dialogical, while also affirming Berger and Luckmann's idea that religious reality is the result of social action continuously reproduced through communication.

The findings of this study are also in line with previous research showing that social media is an effective space for spreading religious values and fostering spiritual engagement among Catholics. Studies

by Rianto et al. (2024), Ristata et al. (2022), and Wisanggeni et al. (2024) support these findings by showing that Instagram accounts such as @jenniferodelia, @bayuedvra, and @katolikmedia are able to convey messages of faith in creative, contextual, and engaging ways, particularly among younger generations. They argue that the power of visuals, the familiarity of language, and the relevance of themes make social media a new sacred space for faith communication (Rianto et al., 2024; Ristata et al., 2022; Wisanggeni et al., 2024).

However, this study also reveals a different aspect, as it specifically highlights how a Catholic woman shapes and expresses her religious identity in the digital space. This focus has not been found in previous research, which generally does not explicitly address the role of female subjects. This study shows that social media functions not only as a tool for proclamation but also as a space for participatory and emotional dialogue and faith reflection, in which active two-way interaction occurs between the account owner and the audience, as well as a collective process in shaping a more contextual and inclusive religious perspective.

The findings of this study indicate that social media has become an essential space for Catholic women to shape and express their religious identity, both personally and collectively. This phenomenon reinforces Campbell's (2012) thesis that digital media can function as a *new sacred space* in which religious practices are reformulated in accordance with technological and popular cultural contexts. In this context, the @walmajelena account demonstrates how faith narratives rooted in individual experience can be digitally mediated and received by audiences as part of a collective religious construction.

Historically, these findings mark a shift in the form of Catholic evangelization, which has moved from traditional liturgical spaces to participatory and open digital practices (T. Berger, 2013; Ingalls, 2019; Kołodziejska et al., 2024). Catholic women who once served primarily within ecclesiastical settings now emerge as active subjects who hold both symbolic and theological authority in the digital public sphere (Márquez, 2020; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2022).

Socially, these findings reveal that digital media can foster virtual faith communities—as explained by Nasrullah (2015)—that operate as social networks based on shared beliefs and interests, promoting communication, reflection, and spiritual affiliation. The @walmajelena account exemplifies how spirituality can be lived communicatively, where religious experiences are exchanged and collectively interpreted by audiences across generations and faiths.

Ideologically, the presence of this account challenges traditional structures of authority within the Church by expanding women's access to spaces of religious representation (Björnsdóttir, 2016; Haar, 2021; Turner, 2007). It demonstrates that religious authority does not belong exclusively to institutions or clergy, but can also be mediated by laypersons who are creative and reflective (Cheong et al., 2011). Thus, religious practice in the digital realm is not merely an adaptation to technology but also a redefinition of gender roles and a new form of popular Catholic catechesis—one that is dialogical and contextual (Blank, 2017).

This study highlights two complementary dimensions: the positive functions and the potential dysfunctions of using digital media in shaping the religious identity of Catholic women. The @walmajelena account functions as a fresh, contextual, and inclusive medium of faith proclamation. Through engaging visuals and reflective narratives, social media has proven effective in reaching wider audiences—including young people and followers of other religions. This aligns with Rianto et al. (2024), who found that Instagram serves as an effective tool for communicating faith through visual and reflective approaches that resonate with digital culture. Furthermore, the account fosters confidence among Catholic women to express their faith and build spiritual communities online.

However, the findings also highlight several dysfunctions of digital religiosity. First, social media can produce *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles* (Cinelli et al., 2021; Sindermann et al., 2020), where algorithms reinforce similar viewpoints and filter out differing ones. This can narrow perspectives and strengthen biases, leading to a shallow and aesthetic understanding of faith lacking theological depth. Second, there is a risk of simplifying Church teachings, as not all viral content is theologically verified (Campbell, 2020). This may result in misinterpretation or spiritual banalization, where faith is perceived merely as a digital lifestyle. Third, from a psychosocial perspective, this study reveals emotional and cognitive pressures faced by religious content creators (Campbell, 2010; Mack, 2013; Turner, 2008). Walma spends three to four hours per day searching for ideas and trends, which leads to mental fatigue and creative block. The constant demand to maintain high engagement creates a dilemma between the need for digital detox for mental well-being and concerns over algorithmic penalties that may reduce audience reach. Fourth, challenges also arise in interfaith interactions. Although digital spaces are open, symbolic intolerance often emerges through cynical comments from users of different faiths. Nonetheless, Walma's calm and non-reactive response demonstrates emotional resilience and spiritual maturity in facing public resistance. Thus, while social media opens new opportunities for religious inclusivity, it also poses serious challenges to maintaining balance between spirituality, authenticity, and the algorithmic pressures of digital culture.

Based on these findings and reflections, several strategic actions should be undertaken to strengthen the positive functions and mitigate the dysfunctions of digital religiosity. First, it is essential to strengthen digital-theological literacy. The Catholic Church, educational institutions, and spiritual communities should formulate digital communication guidelines that are sensitive to cultural, gender, and doctrinal contexts. This initiative ensures that online faith narratives remain faithful to Catholic theological values while remaining adaptable to the communicative styles and expressive modes of younger digital generations. Second, there is an urgent need for training and mentorship programs for religious content creators. Psychospiritual formation should be provided to Catholic digital creators, including laywomen, to help them sustain mental well-being, spiritual authenticity, and emotional resilience. The Church can collaborate with pastoral institutions, psychologists, and communication experts to accompany digital evangelists as they navigate algorithmic demands and public scrutiny. Third, collaboration between the Church and Catholic influencers must be intentionally fostered. This collaboration can take the form of content curation, workshops, and reflective dialogue designed to ensure that online evangelization maintains theological depth while also appealing to broader and even interfaith audiences. Such partnerships will also promote coherence between ecclesiastical teachings and the dynamic creativity of digital practitioners.

Finally, it is necessary to empower grassroots communities. Categorical groups such as youth ministries (*Orang Muda Katolik* or OMK) and Catholic women's associations should be encouraged and trained to develop digital competencies as a means of active participation in the proclamation of faith. This empowerment will expand the foundation of digital evangelization and sustain a vibrant, participatory religious ecosystem. This study not only illustrates the dynamic expressions of Catholic women's religiosity in digital spaces but also offers concrete directions for the Church and its communities to cultivate a reflective, dialogical, and sustainable digital spirituality—a form of religiosity that flourishes in the virtual realm without losing its spiritual depth or its rootedness in Catholic tradition.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the Instagram account @walmajelena serves as a medium of faith expression that represents the religiosity of Catholic women in a warm, reflective, and contextual manner within the digital space. Through four main themes—prayer, worship attire, Catholic identity, and faith education—this account creates a spiritual space that is dynamic, participatory, and relevant to the lives of the younger generation. The interaction between the account owner and followers also demonstrates a process of religious identity construction that takes place collectively, making social media a space where faith values can be lived together. These findings affirm that digital media holds great potential in embracing personal religious experiences while also strengthening community engagement beyond formal religious institutions.

The main contribution of this study lies in revealing the active role of Catholic women, as represented by the Instagram account @walmajelena, in shaping religious narratives on social media, an aspect that is still rarely discussed in the study of digital religiosity. This research also enhances the understanding of how faith identity can be formed through media practices that are personal, emotional, and interactive. In this context, the social construction theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann becomes relevant, as it shows that social reality, including religious identity, is not fixed but is continuously formed and negotiated through interaction and social communication. Social media, as a new space of interaction, enables Catholic women to externalise their experiences of faith, to objectify them through digital content, and to re-internalise their religious identity through responses and engagement within online communities.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations as it focuses only on a single account using a descriptive-analytical approach, and therefore cannot comprehensively reflect the diversity of digital religious practices. For future research, it is recommended to expand the object of study by comparing several similar accounts or by using a quantitative approach to examine the influence of digital content on the understanding and practice of followers' religiosity more broadly.

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