

INFLUENCER CULT AND INFORMATION SYSTEM ECOSYSTEM: FROM CULTURAL CONSUMPTION TO DIGITAL IDOLATRY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEW CULTURE AND QUR'ANIC VALUES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the phenomenon of digital idolatry as a cultural manifestation within the algorithmic ecosystem of social media. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative analysis through Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) and qualitative interpretation based on thematic interviews. The quantitative results reveal that cultural consumption and information system quality significantly influence digital idolatry, while information quality has a weak impact. These findings indicate that technological reliability and cultural participation are more decisive in shaping excessive attachment to digital figures than informational clarity alone. The qualitative findings reinforce this pattern, highlighting emotional attachment, lifestyle imitation, ritualized online behavior, and financial sacrifice as expressions of collective worship in digital spaces. Interpreted through Qur'anic values, such as wasathiyah (moderation), tabayyun (verification), and anti-israf (avoidance of excess), the study argues that digital idolatry reflects a moral imbalance fostered by algorithmic design and social validation systems. The research contributes to the integration of socio-technical theory with ethical theology, offering a normative framework for promoting critical, balanced, and ethical digital engagement. This study emphasizes the urgency of developing spiritual digital literacy as a cultural counterweight in the age of algorithmic influence.

Keywords: digital idolatry, cultural consumption, system quality, Qur'anic ethics, socio-technical systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's digital ecosystem is growing rapidly, with internet penetration reaching over 212 million users, or 74.6 percent of the population, while the APJII survey recorded an even higher figure of 80.66 percent (Kemp, 2025). The identity of 143 million social media users, or 50.2 percent of the total population, makes the digital space a primary arena for social interaction. Dominant platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook,

and TikTok are used intensively by the younger generation, with an average duration exceeding three hours per day. This high figure indicates that the digital space has shifted from being merely a means of communication to becoming an integral part of people's daily lives (Migotti, 2023; Norgaard, 2022; Ortés, 2023).

This massive surge has fueled the growth of industries that thrive on attention, one of which is influencer marketing. The market value of this industry is expected to reach USD 0.75 billion in Indonesia by 2023 and is calculated as part of the Southeast Asian market, which has reached USD 2.59 billion (Cartwright et al., 2022; Mero et al., 2023). Surveys show that 94 percent of audiences admit to being influenced by influencer content in their purchasing decisions, signaling a shift from informational to symbolic consumption. From this perspective, it's easy to understand that the increasing penetration of social media is paving the way for digital figures to dominate both cultural and economic spaces.

The influencer cult phenomenon emerged from this trend, when digital figures were no longer viewed simply as communicators but as revered symbols (Annisa & Suwanto, 2023; Najiyah, 2022). The 2021 wedding of Atta Halilintar and Aurel Hermansyah, watched online by millions, demonstrated how a personal moment can transform into a national digital ritual (Ramadhan & Prabowo, 2021). Similar practices are also evident in TikTok live streaming, where donations and gifts worth billions of rupiah each month demonstrate the existence of a collective ritual mechanism resembling worship.

This phenomenon does not occur naturally, but is mediated by algorithmic logic that prioritizes virality over information quality. Emotional, hyperbolic, or sensational content often receives wider exposure than educational or informative content (Guitart & Stremersch, 2021; Ramadhan & Prabowo, 2021). Algorithms effectively create an attention ecosystem that strengthens the position of certain influencers, making them dominant figures not because of their substance but because of the emotional resonance they successfully trigger. This gives rise to an ecosystem where public perception is shaped by the pseudo-popularity generated by content curation machines.

The social reality created by this process demonstrates a shift in society's cultural orientation from mere entertainment consumption to the internalization of values manifested through digital idolatry. Influencers now serve as benchmarks for lifestyle, social aspirations, and even moral references for some of their followers (De Luca et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Within Durkheim's framework, this process resembles totemism, where collective symbols are treated as sacred entities and maintained through collective rituals. From simple cultural consumption, society shifts toward practices of symbolic worship.

This situation becomes even more complex when digital reality presents a simulation that is more realistic than reality itself. Baudrillard's concept of simulacra asserts that digital representations replace reality, producing hyperreality (Sprenger & Schwaninger, 2021; Tu et al., 2023). The influencer figure is constructed in such a way by visuals, narratives, and algorithms that it is perceived as more authentic than real life. This reality blurs the line between symbolic and real identity, making digital worship an authentic social experience for followers.

The ideal of an information systems ecosystem should lead to the creation of a healthy, credible digital space that supports critical literacy. Information systems are designed to provide reliable system quality, accurate information quality, and relevant content distribution (Paula Monteiro et al., 2022). This orientation is necessary for digital



technology to truly function as a socio-technical system that strengthens civilized society, not simply a machine that fosters addiction and fanaticism.

Another equally important ideal is the realization of the principle of balance in digital behavior. The Quran emphasizes the concept of *wasathiyyah* as a guide to moderate living, which in the digital context means avoiding excessive consumerism. The principle of *tabayyun* (religious moderation) in QS 49:6 also teaches verification before accepting information, relevant to dealing with the rapid flow of content, not all of which is accurate. The prohibition on *israf* (religious practice) in QS 7:31 warns against excess, including in the form of donations or digital gifts, which followers often make impulsively.

The fact that digital idolatry can erode critical societal values demands serious theoretical intervention (Liu, 2024). Bourdieu explains that *habitus* shapes consumption patterns, which then determine new social structures. The digital *habitus* formed through interactions with algorithms makes the younger generation more likely to use content consumption as a form of identity. From this framework, it can be understood that excessive behavior in digital spaces is not simply an individual choice, but rather the result of social structures produced and reproduced by information systems.

The information systems perspective confirms this through DeLone and McLean's model of system quality and information quality as determinants of success. In the context of social media, these two dimensions not only influence user satisfaction but also direct engagement patterns (Pramudito et al., 2023). Stable system quality and convincing information quality lead to longer user engagement, paving the way for intense and repeated cultural consumption. This process fosters emotional attachment, leading to digital idolatry.

The Socio-Technical Systems Theory, developed by Trist and Bamforth in 1951, provides a strong foundation for understanding this phenomenon. The theory emphasizes that work systems are only effective if the technological and social dimensions are mutually supportive (Ellis, 2023). The social media ecosystem demonstrates that algorithmic technology and users' social behavior interact to create new realities. Digital idolatry is the result of the synergy of technology that drives viral content and social habits that normalize excessive consumption. The researchers then compiled 500 previous studies indexed by Scopus to examine the research gap:

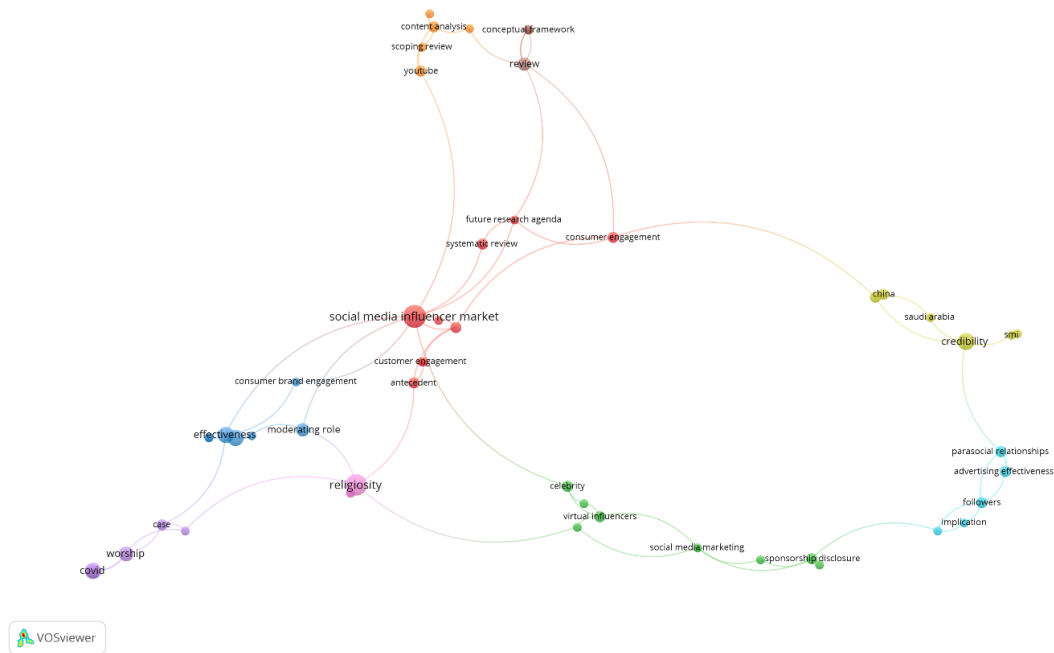


Figure 1. Previous Research Network Analysis (Source: VosViewer, 2025)

A network analysis of previous research using VOSviewer shows that the topic of the social media influencer market is a central node connected to various derivative themes. The red cluster dominates, focusing on consumer engagement, systematic reviews, and future research agendas, indicating that influencer research remains oriented toward consumer engagement and a continuing research agenda. The green cluster focuses on virtual influencers and social media marketing, highlighting the new trend of utilizing digital figures in marketing practices. The blue cluster highlights the effectiveness and moderating role of brand engagement, while the purple cluster links religiosity to worship amidst digital phenomena, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. The yellow cluster presents geographic contexts such as China and Saudi Arabia, which are related to issues of credibility and SMI, while the cyan cluster emphasizes parasocial relationships, followers, and advertising effectiveness. This map demonstrates that previous research remains dominant in marketing and consumer engagement, but has begun to explore issues of religiosity, credibility, and virtual representation, thus providing opportunities for more critical research related to digital idolatry and cultural and normative value frameworks.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of visual content in increasing engagement (Abell, 2023), the link between influencer credibility and parasocial relationships (Khan, 2022), the influence of influencer power on consumer attitudes (Nafees, 2021), and the emergence of digital cults based on public figures like Elon Musk (Taylor, 2023). However, most research still focuses on marketing aspects, consumer psychology, or the phenomenon of individual personality cults, and has not integrated the dimensions of information systems, cultural consumption, and Qur'anic value frameworks in explaining the phenomenon of digital idolatry. This gap is what this study aims to fill by using a mixed methods approach based on Socio-Technical Systems Theory and Habitus Theory, to



analyze how system quality, information quality, and cultural consumption contribute to the emergence of influencer cults as a new form of religiosity in the digital space.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand how the information systems ecosystem shapes the phenomenon of digital cults and how a Qur'anic value framework can offer a critical perspective to counteract it. The phenomenon of digital idolatry is not merely a communication issue, but also a cultural and value issue that directly impacts society. This research is expected to broaden understanding of cross-cultural communication in the digital era and enrich the discourse on information systems through integration with a Qur'anic ethical perspective

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research methodology uses a mixed methods approach with a pragmatism paradigm, which combines quantitative and qualitative analysis in a complementary manner to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influencer cult phenomenon on social media (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Weyant, 2022). The quantitative approach is used to examine the relationship between information system quality, information quality, cultural consumption, and digital idolatry through SEM-PLS statistical analysis, while the qualitative approach is used to explore the meaning and interpretation of the phenomenon within the framework of Qur'anic values. The pragmatic paradigm was chosen because it emphasizes the relevance of the method in answering the research questions and avoids a dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative, so that the research results are not only empirical but also interpretative and contextual.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through the distribution of a Likert questionnaire to 40 adolescent respondents who actively use social media (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube) who met purposive criteria, as well as in-depth interviews with 10 informants active in fan communities or digital influencer interactions. Secondary data came from national and international survey reports, academic literature, and relevant Quranic interpretations. The combination of these two types of data ensures the validity of the findings both theoretically, empirically, and normatively, so that the study is able to describe the phenomenon of digital idolatry holistically and contextually within the information system ecosystem. The operational definitions of the research variables can be seen as follows:

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables

Variables	Definition	Indicator	Scale
Information System Quality (X1)	User perceptions of the reliability, ease, and convenience of social media systems in facilitating digital interactions (Badr et al., 2024).	(1) Ease of navigation, (2) Speed of access, (3) Data security & privacy, (4) System reliability, (5) Cross-device compatibility.	Likert 1-5
Information Quality (X2)	User perceptions of the relevance, clarity, and credibility of information presented through digital content (Reda & Zellou, 2023).	(1) Clarity of content, (2) Relevance of content, (3) Consistency of information, (4) Credibility of source.	Likert 1-5

Cultural Consumption (X3)	The intensity of users in consuming and participating in digital cultural practices related to influencers (Chen et al., 2022; Du et al., 2025)	(1) Frequency of following influencer content, (2) Community participation, (3) Active involvement (likes, comments, shares), (4) Financial sacrifice (gifts/donations).	Likert 1–5
Digital Idolatry (Y)	Excessive idolization of influencers is demonstrated through emotional attachment, loyalty, and digital rituals (Rizzo et al., 2025; Yu et al., 2023).	(1) Excessive loyalty, (2) Blind defense, (3) Sacrifice of time, (4) Material sacrifice, (5) Internality of influencer identity.	Likert 1–5

Source: Elsevier Scopus (2025)

Data collection was conducted through two complementary approaches. Quantitatively, data were obtained from a 1–5 Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to 40 active adolescent social media users using a purposive sampling technique. The instrument was developed based on indicators of information system quality, information quality, cultural consumption, and digital idolatry, and then analyzed using the SEM-PLS method to test causal relationships between variables (Hair Jr et al., 2021; Richter et al., 2023; Sarstedt et al., 2021). Qualitatively, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 informants, observations of digital activities such as live streaming and gift giving, and documentation of content and literature sources. This approach enriches our understanding of the influencer cult phenomenon from both empirical and contextual perspectives, particularly within the framework of Qur'anic values.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted through the stages of outer model testing, inner model testing, and bootstrapping to assess the validity, reliability, and significance of relationships between variables. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, which includes data collection, condensation, presentation, and verification to interpret the social meaning of the phenomena under study (Miles et al., 2020). Data validity was tested using triangulation of sources, methods, and theories to ensure the consistency and credibility of the findings. The integration of these approaches resulted in an analysis that was statistically robust as well as theoretically and normatively reflective (Flick, 2022).

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Quantitative Results: The Influence of Information Systems, Information, and Cultural Consumption on Digital Idolatry

The quantitative analysis in this study aims to examine the extent to which information system quality, information quality, and cultural consumption influence the formation of digital idolatry among social media users. The test was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) approach to simultaneously assess causal relationships between variables. The data processing results display path coefficients, significance levels (t-statistics and p-values), and determination values (R-square), which indicate the extent of the exogenous variable's contribution to the endogenous variable. Through this approach, an empirical picture is obtained regarding the role of technological, informational, and cultural aspects in explaining the phenomenon of digital idolization of influencers.

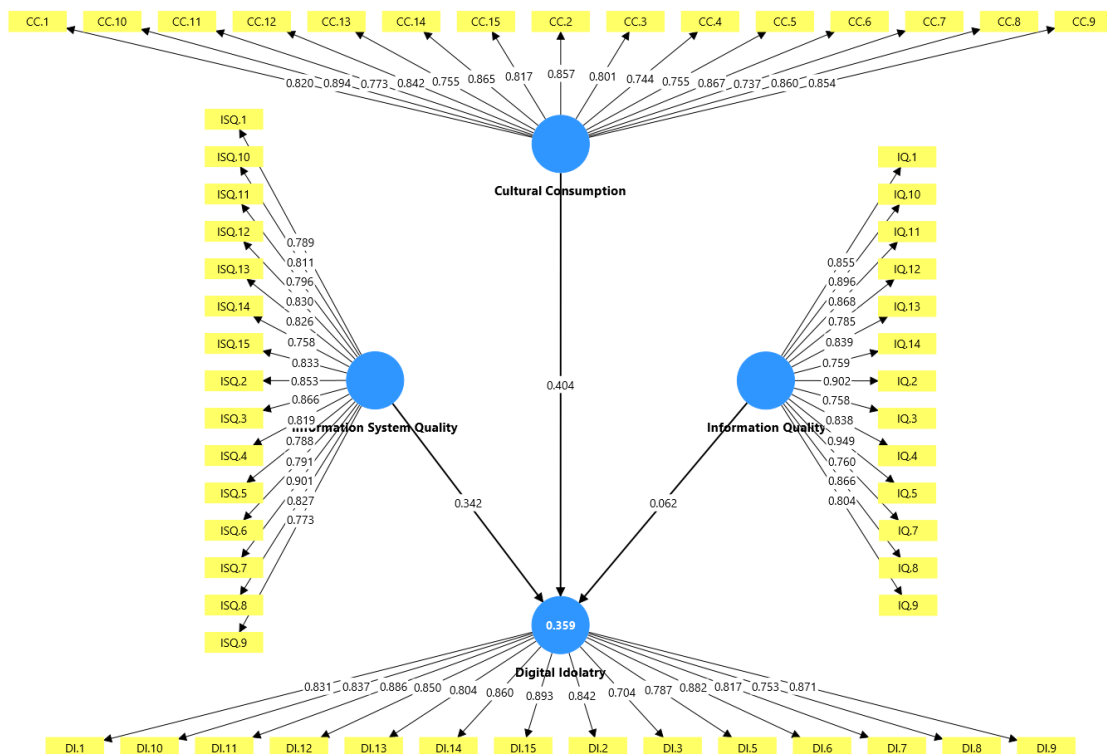


Figure 2. Loading Factor (Source: SmartPLS 4, 2025)

The structural model image above shows the results of the analysis of relationships between variables using the SEM-PLS approach. The outer loading values for all indicators of each construct are above 0.7, indicating that each measurement item has strong convergent validity. Structurally, the Information System Quality (ISQ) variable has a direct positive effect on Digital Idlatry of 0.342, while Cultural Consumption provides the largest contribution with a value of 0.404, and Information Quality shows a relatively small effect of 0.062. The R-square value of 0.359 indicates that the three exogenous variables are simultaneously able to explain 35.9% of the variation that occurs in the Digital Idlatry phenomenon. This finding indicates that system quality, information quality, and cultural consumption have a significant role but still leave room for other factors outside the model to explain the behavior of digital idolization towards influencers.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability Test

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Cultural Consumption	0.964	0.974	0.968	0.668
Digital Idlatry	0.965	0.972	0.969	0.691
Information Quality	0.972	0.911	0.968	0.704
Information System Quality	0.965	0.975	0.968	0.670

The results of the reliability and construct validity tests indicate that all variables in the model have excellent internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability

values for all constructs were above 0.96, indicating a very high level of reliability and indicating that the indicators in each variable were able to measure the construct consistently. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value also exceeded the minimum limit of 0.5, with a range of 0.668–0.704, meaning that more than 66% of the indicator variance can be explained by the latent construct it represents. Overall, these results indicate that the measurement model has met the criteria for adequate reliability and convergent validity, making it suitable for further structural analysis.

Table 3. Path Coefficients

	Cultural Consumption	Digital Idolatry	Information Quality	Information System Quality
Cultural Consumption		0.404		
Digital Idolatry			0.062	
Information System Quality				0.342

(Source: SmartPLS, 2025)

The results of the path coefficient analysis indicate that of the three independent variables tested, Cultural Consumption and Information System Quality have a positive influence on Digital Idolatry, while Information Quality shows a very weak influence. A coefficient value of 0.404 for the Cultural Consumption variable indicates that the higher the intensity of user participation in digital cultural activities such as following content, interacting, and donating, the stronger their tendency to form idolizing behavior towards influencers. Meanwhile, Information System Quality with a value of 0.342 also makes a significant contribution in encouraging digital idolatry, which means that technical aspects such as ease of access, system reliability, and data security also strengthen users' emotional attachment to digital figures. Conversely, Information Quality with a value of 0.062 indicates that the clarity and credibility of information presented on social media does not have a significant influence on the formation of digital idolatry, so it can be concluded that system experience and cultural involvement are more determining factors than information quality.

Table 4 . Results of Path Coefficients Analysis between Latent Variables

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Cultural Consumption -> Digital Idolatry	0.404	0.408	0.114	3,550	0.000
Information Quality -> Digital Idolatry	0.062	0.030	0.199	0.312	0.755
Information System Quality -> Digital Idolatry	0.342	0.360	0.124	2,763	0.006

(Source: SmartPLS, 2025)

The results of the path coefficients test indicate that two variables, namely Cultural Consumption and Information System Quality, have a significant effect on Digital Idolatry, while Information Quality does not have a significant effect. The t-statistic value of 3.550



($p = 0.000$) for Cultural Consumption indicates that user involvement in digital cultural activities such as following, interacting with, and supporting influencers has a strong positive impact on the formation of digital idolization behavior. Similarly, Information System Quality with a coefficient value of 0.342 and a p-value of 0.006 indicates that an easy-to-use, reliable, and secure social media system also strengthens user attachment to influencers. Conversely, Information Quality with a p-value of 0.755 indicates that the clarity and credibility of information do not have a significant effect on the emergence of digital idolatry among social media users.

Table 5. R-Square and Adjusted R-Square Values of Endogenous Variables

Endogenous Variables	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Digital Idolatry	0.359	0.306

(Source: SmartPLS, 2025)

The R-square value of 0.359 indicates that the variables Cultural Consumption, Information Quality, and Information System Quality simultaneously explain 35.9% of the variation in Digital Idolatry, while the remaining 64.1% is influenced by factors outside the research model. After adjusting for the number of variables and sample size, the adjusted R-square value decreased to 0.306, indicating that the model still has moderate predictive power. These results indicate that digital culture and system quality play an important role in shaping idolatry behavior on social media, although other external variables also influence the phenomenon.

Qualitative Results: The Meaning of Influencer Cults and the Construction of Idolatry in Digital Cultural Spaces

This section presents the results of in-depth interviews conducted with eight informants to gain a firsthand understanding of how they interpret the presence of influencers on social media and to explain the process by which digital idolatry behavior develops in their daily lives. The findings from these interviews serve as the basis for formulating a map of the meanings and patterns of experience that emerge from the informants' interactions in the digital cultural space

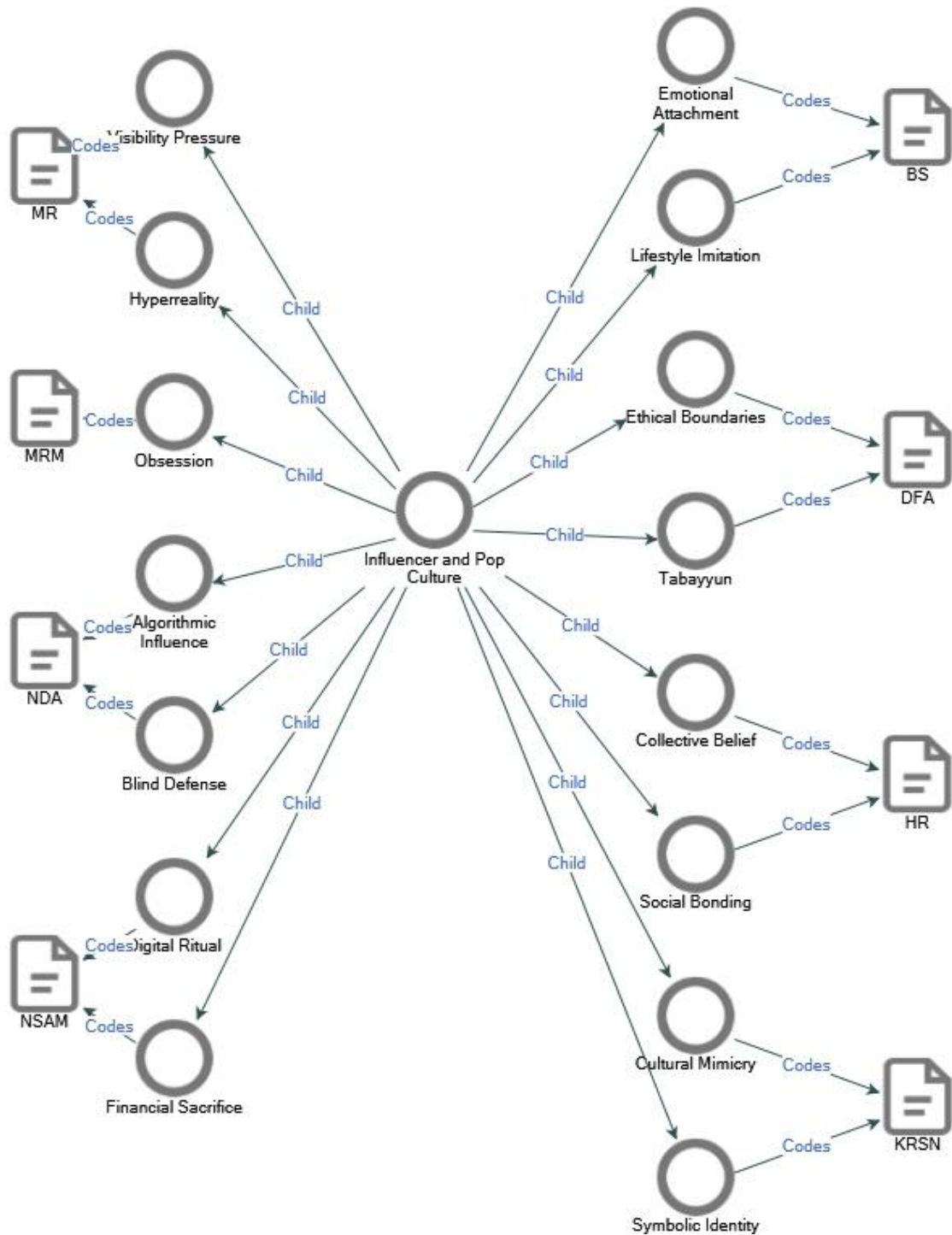


Figure 3. Interview Results Map (Source: NVivo, 2025)

The phenomenon of influencers and popular culture in the digital space demonstrates the complex dynamics between the need for existence, algorithmic mechanisms, and the reproduction of new social values. Interviews with informants revealed that social media is not merely a space for expression, but also an arena for symbolic competition where recognition and visibility are key commodities. The drive to be visible fosters high visibility pressure, while algorithmic structures reinforce this pattern by rewarding viral



content over meaningful content. In this context, popularity becomes a new social currency that determines one's position in the digital space.

The impact of this pressure has given rise to the phenomenon of hyperreality, where digital representations are perceived as more real and authentic than real life. Influencers construct personas curated with aesthetic and emotional precision, creating a distance between reality and representation. Informants admit that the figures they follow appear "more alive" online than in the real world, indicating that digital existence has shifted the boundaries of authenticity. This situation reinforces the illusion of closeness and triggers a form of emotional attachment that is difficult to separate from everyday life.

This pseudo-attachment develops into emotional attachment and lifestyle imitation, where followers not only consume content but also imitate the influencer's lifestyle, tastes, and expression patterns. For some informants, following influencers is no longer just entertainment, but rather a form of participation in the symbolic identity they admire. This imitation process creates new social standards for how one should appear, speak, and interact online. In many cases, the digital identity formed is no longer based on self-worth, but rather on reflections of admired public figures (Miller, 2023; Wei, 2024).

From a system perspective, this phenomenon is reinforced by algorithmic influence, where the platform's logic of recommendations and feedback subtly regulates user behavior. Informants revealed that emotional and sensational content tends to appear more frequently on homepages, thus reinforcing the cycle of attention to certain figures. This algorithmic mechanism operates like a hidden social structure that normalizes consumer and affective behavior in the digital space. Thus, the tendency toward digital idolatry is not simply the result of individual choice but also a product of technological design that prioritizes emotional engagement.

At a certain point, intense involvement gives rise to obsession and blind defense. Informants described some fans willingly defending their influencers from public criticism, even when their mistakes are obvious. This phenomenon demonstrates a shift from appreciation to ritualistic, irrational loyalty. When a digital figure is attacked, followers respond with collective emotion, creating a shared moral defense that reinforces the community's identity.

Rituals and financial sacrifices emerge as the most concrete expressions of digital idolatry. Several informants admitted to regularly giving gifts or donations during live streams as a form of emotional support. These actions are no longer simply economic transactions, but rather symbols of loyalty and spiritual involvement within the fan community. Such digital rituals reinforce feelings of belonging, making every act of consumption a form of participation in a larger system of meaning.

However, amidst this intense attachment, some informants began to develop a reflective awareness through ethical values and the principle of *tabayyun* (reflection). They assessed that the behavior of deifying public figures is inconsistent with moral and spiritual values that demand balance and rationality. The principle of caution and information verification serves as a crucial filter to avoid falling into the trap of digital worship culture. This awareness creates space to critique excessive practices that often ignore the moral responsibility of social media users (Grgurić Čop et al., 2024).

Ultimately, this process gives rise to a new collective meaning, emphasizing that the relationship between followers and influencers is no longer a one-way communication

relationship, but rather a social construct maintained through solidarity and cultural imitation. Forms of social bonding, cultural mimicry, and symbolic identity form the foundation for the formation of communities that unite individuals through emotions and digital symbols. Interviews reveal that digital idolatry is a phenomenon that thrives in the gap between technology, affection, and the human need for recognition making it the most recent reflection of popular culture in the algorithmic era.

Discussion: Integrating Qur'anic Values in Facing Digital Idolatry

The findings of this study indicate that the phenomenon of digital idolatry is not only a form of emotional attachment between users and influencers, but also a representation of shifting values in digital culture. In the context of the Qur'an, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the principles of *wasathiyah*, *tabayyun*, and *anti-israf*. The principle of *wasathiyah* (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah, 143) emphasizes balance and moderation in behavior, including in digital consumption. This means that users are expected to avoid being trapped in emotional extremism and excessive consumer behavior towards public figures. In line with Hamka's interpretation in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (2012), moderation does not mean passivity, but rather the ability to restrain oneself from excessive behavior in responding to something attractive. In the digital space, this value serves as a moral guideline so that engagement with influencers remains within rational limits.

Furthermore, the principle of *tabayyun* as stated in QS. Al-Hujurat: 6 emphasizes the importance of verifying information before spreading or believing it. *Tafsir M. Quraish Shihab* in *Tafsir Al-Mishbah* (2015) explains that *tabayyun* is a form of intellectual responsibility to ensure the truth, not simply following the flow of popularity. The phenomenon of the spread of emotional and hyperbolic content on social media shows the weak implementation of this value. Informants in the study also revealed that they often ignore verification because they fully trust the figures they admire. This condition is in line with Al-Zamakhsyari's view in *Al-Kasysyaf* (1995) that humans are easily influenced by something that arouses admiration (*i'jab*), so a balance between emotion and rationality is needed in assessing public figures.

Furthermore, the prohibition of *israf* in QS. Al-A'raf: 31 warns humans against excess in all forms of expenditure and self-expression. In the interpretation of Fakhri al-Din al-Razi (2012), *israf* is not only interpreted as material waste, but also a waste of emotions and attention on things that have no essential value. This context becomes very relevant in the phenomenon of digital gifting or impulsive donations on live streaming platforms that are carried out for symbolic loyalty to influencers. Informants describe this behavior as a form of "spiritual support," when in substance it is an excessive expression that blurs the line between entertainment and symbolic worship. The integration of these Qur'anic values shows that digital idolatry is not simply a behavioral deviation, but a moral crisis due to weak ethical controls in the consumption of digital culture.

From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through Socio-Technical Systems Theory and Habitus Theory. Socio-Technical Systems Theory asserts that human social behavior is shaped by the interaction between technological systems and social systems. In the context of social media, algorithms operate as a structural force that influences how users behave, interact, and consume content. Meanwhile, Bourdieu's Habitus Theory explains that digital behavior and preferences are formed through internalized social habits, which in this case are the consumption patterns of influencer



culture. Digital habitus encourages individuals to repeat the same actions—watching, supporting, and even defending thus forming a new social structure centered on digital figures. The interaction between the two explains that the cult of influencers is not merely a psychological phenomenon, but the result of a mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between technology and social habitus.

DeLone and McLean's theory of information system success also provides an important framework for interpreting the results of this study. Reliable and accessible system quality has been shown to increase user satisfaction and engagement, as reflected in the PLS-SEM results with a significant coefficient value for the Information System Quality variable. However, when this engagement is not balanced by ethical literacy and awareness, an effective system can become a medium that reinforces addictive behavior and digital fanaticism. Therefore, the success of an information system cannot be measured solely by technical stability or user satisfaction; it also requires attention to the moral and cultural dimensions in shaping healthy digital interactions.

Comparatively, the results of this study expand on the findings of previous studies that focused on marketing and consumer psychology. Nafees' (2021) research highlighted the influence of influencer credibility on consumer attitudes, while Khan (2022) emphasized parasocial relationships as a form of emotional engagement. Studies by De Luca et al. (2023) and Wang et al. (2023) also discussed how digital figures become models of modern lifestyles. However, this research shows that this attachment does not stop at the consumer dimension, but rather transforms into a form of digital worship that is symbolic and ritualistic. This means that digital space now functions not only as an arena for communication and economics, but also as a space for the reproduction of new cultural values and meanings.

Furthermore, this research enriches the studies of Annisa & Suwanto (2023) and Najiyah (2022), which examine the cult of personality phenomenon in the digital media realm. Both highlighted changes in symbolic power structures in cyberspace, but did not yet link them to the framework of information systems and Quranic values. This research addresses this gap by demonstrating that the quality of systems and information plays a role in strengthening cult practices, while the principles of *wasathiyyah* and *tabayyun* can serve as ethical control mechanisms to balance the excessive influence of digital culture. Thus, this integrative approach presents a synthesis between communication science, information systems, and religious values that has not been explored in depth in previous research.

Conceptually, the novelty of this research lies in its attempt to combine the dimensions of information systems, popular culture, and Quranic values within a holistic analytical framework. This research not only proves the empirical relationship between system quality and cultural consumption in relation to digital idolatry but also interprets this phenomenon within the context of spiritual ethics and religious wisdom. Thus, this study offers a new paradigm on how technology, culture, and values can synergize in creating a humane digital ecosystem. This integration of scientific and spiritual approaches is an original contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic communication studies and digital literacy based on Quranic ethics.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that digital idolatry is formed through the interaction between information system quality, information quality, and cultural consumption within the algorithmic ecosystem of social media. Quantitative results confirm that Cultural Consumption and Information System Quality significantly influence Digital Idolatry, while Information Quality does not show a strong influence. This means that technological and cultural factors play a dominant role in creating emotional attachment and worship behavior towards digital figures. Qualitative results deepen these findings by revealing that emotional attachment, lifestyle imitation, and digital rituals become social mechanisms that strengthen the symbolic relationship between users and influencers. When viewed from Qur'anic values, this behavior reflects an imbalance between spirituality and digital consumption, which contradicts the principles of *wasathiyah*, *tabayyun*, and the prohibition of *israf*. Thus, digital idolatry is not only a communication phenomenon, but also a social phenomenon that demands ethical and spiritual awareness in managing human relations with technology.

Efforts to address the phenomenon of digital idolatry need to be directed at strengthening digital literacy based on Qur'anic values so that social media users can adopt a critical and balanced approach to interacting in the digital space. The value of *tabayyun* can be the basis for selecting and verifying information, while the principle of *wasathiyah* guides users to avoid excessive consumption and attachment to digital figures. Furthermore, social media platforms need to develop algorithms that not only pursue engagement but also support users' psychological and moral well-being. Influencers, as cultural actors, should instill ethical responsibility by building healthy and educational relationships with their followers, rather than exploitative transactional relationships. From an academic and policy perspective, the results of this research can form the basis for developing algorithmic ethics regulations and a digital spiritual literacy curriculum that balances the technological, social, and moral dimensions of communication practices in the algorithmic era.

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