SEMIOTICS OF MUSLIMAH AESTHETIC PIETY: "MUKENA MASJID" AND "WAJAH WARDAH" ON TIKTOK

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Abstract

This study examines how the nicknames "mukena masjid" for Nasywaa and "wajah Wardah" for Aisha, contestants in Clash of Champions Season 3, frame Muslim women's aesthetic piety on TikTok and what this implies for digital da'wah ethics. Using non-participant netnography, 18 video posts and 30 comment threads were coded through Peirce's triadic semiotics, with interpretants mapped onto Mernissi's hijab triad (visual, spatial, ethical); engagement was summarised with Python-computed concentration metrics. "Mukena masjid" frames calm spatial-ethical piety, whereas "wajah Wardah" frames visual piety tied to halal lifestyle. Together they form attributed spatial-visual piety, assigned by audiences, not performed by the women. The study proposes moving da'wah ethics from an ethics of the message to an ethics of attribution and framing.

Keywords: *Aesthetic piety, framing, attributed piety, digital da'wah, Peircean semiotics*

A. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a stage on which Muslim women's piety is displayed, assessed, and rewarded. Research shows that religious identity online is increasingly articulated through visual and aesthetic means. Indonesian hijabers use Instagram to perform middle-class modernity and to carry out *da'wah*, presenting an Islamic-themed bodily aesthetic as a form of religious knowledge (Baulch & Pramiyanti, 2018). Female Muslim youth have built a visual culture of da'wah in which religious messaging and commercial opportunity overlap (Nisa, 2018). Online preaching is likewise increasingly visual and aestheticised (Hew, 2018), even as online piety provokes its own anxieties and discontents (Husein & Slama, 2018). Beyond Indonesia, Muslim women in Germany use TikTok as a "third space" in which the meanings of the hijab are negotiated and stereotypes are contested (El Sayed & Hotait, 2024). In urban Indonesian Muslim society, religious expression is thus closely intertwined with visual aesthetics, fashion, and self-care (Abdullah, 2025; Rosyid, 2025; Shabdan, 2026).

The literature on this phenomenon follows two main currents. Digital religion scholarship observes that religious actors negotiate the relationships between their online and offline lives (Lövheim & Campbell, 2017) and draws on theories of mediatisation and mediation (Campbell, 2017). Within this field, the first current concerns the performance of piety by religious actors themselves. Studies of preachers and religious influencers show how authority is constructed and contested in digital spaces (Raya, 2025; Rohmatulloh et al., 2022; Zaid et al., 2022), how piety is staged on social media feeds (Abdullah, 2025; Kamila, 2026), and how niqabi women use humour and Instagram to claim political subjectivity (Dwifatma & Beta, 2024). The second current concerns the commodification of piety. Islamic fashion and cosmetics have been analysed as arenas in which faith, gender, and consumption are negotiated rather than simply opposed (Jones, 2007, 2010; Pribadi & Sila, 2023; Shin et al., 2025; Shirazi, 2016), and halal beauty is increasingly framed as an expression of Gen Z religious identity (Ardiya, 2025; Rosyid, 2025). Public displays of piety, moreover, invite suspicion about the sincerity of their motives (Jones, 2010), and psychological research has asked how the hijab

shapes perceptions of women's attractiveness and intelligence (Mahmud & Swami, 2010; Sheen et al., 2023).

Both currents share an assumption: piety is something actors do. Whether staged by a preacher, performed by an influencer, or sold by a brand, religiosity is traced back to the conduct or intention of an identifiable actor, that is, *actor-driven piety*. What remains under-examined is the reverse case, in which audiences themselves attach religious meaning to figures who have not claimed any religious role. This is not a marginal case on platforms where recommendation algorithms amplify whatever audiences label and share (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022; Bucher, 2017; Lim, 2017), and where collective practices create publics with shared moral vocabularies (Abidin et al., 2025). A nickname such as "mukena masjid" can travel to thousands of viewers and shape how they imagine an ideal Muslimah (pious Muslim woman) without the labelled woman ever having spoken as a religious authority.

The phenomenon examined here emerged around *Clash of Champions* (CoC) Season 3, a secular intelligence competition widely followed on Indonesian social media. Audiences attached the nicknames "ubin masjid" (mosque floor tile) and "mukena masjid" (mosque prayer garment) to Nasywaa Ramadhanti Fauzi (hereafter Nasywaa), a Statistics student at Universitas Indonesia (Ruangguru, n.d.), and "wajah Wardah" (Wardah face), after a halal cosmetics brand, to Aisha Nadine Sharikha (hereafter Aisha). Posts carrying these nicknames gathered tens of thousands of likes and circulated repeatedly. Seen through framing theory, such nicknames are not neutral descriptions. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient so as to promote a particular interpretation and moral evaluation, and the frames in the receiver's thinking may differ from those intended by the communicator (Entman, 1993). In digital environments, framing is increasingly distributed across networks of users and platforms rather than controlled by a single communicator (Entman & Usher, 2018).

From the standpoint of Islamic communication and broadcasting, the case raises a question that existing work has barely addressed. In the familiar model of da'wah communication, a communicator (*dā'ī*) composes a message for an audience. Here the relation is reversed: the audience frames a religious message, and the person framed is not a preacher and does not intend to preach. The message nevertheless circulates through algorithmic media and shapes how many viewers picture an exemplary Muslimah, while no ethical guidance regulates it. Research on digital da'wah has mostly examined preachers and religious actors as message producers (Abdullah, 2025; Mujadid & Castrawijaya, 2026; Raya, 2025; Zamzami et al., 2023), not the ethics of those who assign religious meaning to others.

Beyond its relevance for Islamic communication, the case speaks to applied research on sustainable digital societies. A sock-puppet audit found that TikTok's For You feed strongly amplifies content aligned with inferred user interests, with reinforcement typically emerging within the first 200 videos watched (Baumann et al., 2026), and data-donation studies have begun to trace how engagement shapes the recommendations users receive (Zannettou et al., 2024). When such systems amplify gendered labels, they bear on gender equality and on inclusive, accountable public discourse, two goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). The study therefore pairs interpretive netnographic coding with descriptive engagement metrics, concentration diagnostics, and a sensitivity analysis, a procedure that can be replicated on other platforms and cases with the script in Appendix A.

This study therefore has three aims: to analyse how the nicknames "mukena masjid" and "wajah Wardah" are constructed as aesthetic piety using the sign structure of Peirce's semiotics; to map the meanings audiences form onto Mernissi's triad of hijab dimensions in the context of algorithmic media; and to draw out the implications of the resulting concept, *attributed spatial-visual piety*, for renewing digital da'wah ethics and Islamic communication. Accordingly, it asks three research questions:

RQ1. How does the sign structure of Peirce (*representamen*, *object*, *interpretant*) construct the nicknames "mukena masjid" and "wajah Wardah" as aesthetic piety on TikTok?
RQ2. How does Mernissi's triad of hijab dimensions (visual, spatial, ethical) map the meanings that audiences form around these nicknames within the logic of algorithmic media?
RQ3. What are the implications of attributed spatial-visual piety for renewing digital da'wah ethics and Islamic communication, and for the formation of Muslimah role models?

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Peirce's triadic semiotics explains how a sign produces meaning. A sign (*representamen*) stands for something (its *object*) to someone and generates a more developed sign, the *interpretant* (Peirce, 1932, par. 2.228; Hurley, 2025). The relation between sign and object may be iconic (resemblance), indexical (causal or contiguous connection), or symbolic (convention) (Peirce, 1932, par. 2.247–2.249). Because every interpretant can become a new representamen, semiosis is potentially unending, a feature that suits comment sections in which meanings keep evolving. Central to the theory is the idea of interpretation, with the interpretant understood as a response to the sign (Short, 2007). Because platform features such as feed algorithms also shape which meanings can be made and circulated, social media can itself be treated as a semiotic technology (Djonov & Van Leeuwen, 2018).

Mernissi's gender hermeneutics asks who interprets and who benefits from an interpretation. Mernissi locates inequality in the biased interpretation of religious sources rather than in Islam itself (Bouras, 2024; Mernissi, 1991; Pohan et al., 2025), and reads the hijab through three intertwined dimensions: visual (the covering of the body), spatial (the marking of boundaries between spaces), and ethical (limits on conduct and norms of honour) (Mernissi, 1991). Her sociology of gender relations likewise treats the organisation of space as central to the regulation of women (Mernissi, 1987). Hermeneutical approaches to gender are also developed by contemporary Indonesian Muslim women scholars (Fuad et al., 2025), although readings of the hijab verses remain debated (Iyawa, 2026). The triad is therefore used here as a heuristic tool for reading metaphorical nicknames, not as a jurisprudential claim about dress obligations.

The two frameworks meet at the interpretant. Peirce explains how audiences' meanings are formed; Mernissi asks, of the same meanings, whose interpretation they express and whom it constrains. Framing theory (Entman, 1993) supplies the communicative link: the interpretant that audiences form is the frame through which a figure is presented as pious. Because the case concerns da'wah communication, the implications are read through principles of Islamic communication ethics commonly invoked in da'wah studies: *tabayyun*, the verification of information (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 6); the prohibition of calling one another by bad nicknames (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11); and *qaulan karīman*, noble speech (QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 23).

C. METHOD

This study uses an interpretive qualitative design with non-participant netnography, which permits the observation of digital artefacts and discourse in their natural setting without intervening in the online community (Tsuria et al., 2017). The design fits a case in which the object of study is the circulation of meanings among audiences rather than the intentions of the labelled figures. The analysis focuses on sign structure, the process of semiosis, and the articulation of piety in the nicknames "mukena masjid" and "wajah Wardah".

The corpus was extracted from TikTok between July and October 2026 through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria were (1) user-generated posts tagged #nasywaa, #nasywaacoc, #aisha, #aishacoc, #ubinmasjid, #mukenamasjid, or #wajahwardah; (2) clips showing the expressions, demeanour, or hijab style of Nasywaa and Aisha; (3) a minimum of 1,000 likes, so that mid-reach posts remain represented; and (4) comment sections containing

attributions of piety. Reposts without interaction and spam or bot comments were excluded. The corpus comprises 18 main video posts and 30 filtered comment threads, and sampling stopped at data saturation, when coding no longer produced new themes beyond spatial and aesthetic attributions. All data come from public content without intervention, and commenters' account names are anonymised.

The analysis followed three stages, summarised in Figure 1. Stage 1 identified Peirce's sign structure in each nickname. Stage 2 mapped the resulting interpretants onto Mernissi's hijab triad. Stage 3 fed the mapping back to ask who closes the chain of semiosis, with the role of the *For You Page* (FYP) algorithm and the halal market added as an empirical layer. The data were processed through open, axial, and selective coding operationalised in these stages (Table 1). Trustworthiness was maintained through thick description, triangulation of visual and textual data, and an audit trail of coding decisions (Nowell et al., 2017). Engagement metrics were treated as an observational proxy for reach, not for sentiment or user satisfaction (Milli et al., 2025), and were summarised with descriptive and concentration statistics (mean, median, Gini coefficient, and Herfindahl–Hirschman index). These were computed from the unit-level likes in Table 4 using a Python script (pandas and NumPy) that regenerates Tables 5 and 6 and every statistic reported below (see Computational Coding and Reproducibility and Appendix A).

Manual semiotic coding (Table 1) is complemented by a deterministic computational step. It turns the coded units into the engagement statistics reported in the Results and tests whether the pattern expected from the theoretical framework, namely spatial and visual attribution of piety, survives when the most viral units are removed. Each of the 18 units is stored as a record (u, subject, xu, cu) holding its likes in thousands and the single attribution category assigned during selective coding. For a scenario S, which is either the full corpus or the corpus without N9, A7, or both, the share of category k is $100 \times \Sigma x\text{u}$ ($u \in$ S, cu = k) divided by $\Sigma x\text{u}$ ($u \in$ S). Inequality is summarised with the Gini coefficient, $G = 2\Sigma i \cdot x(\text{i}) / (n\Sigma x) - (n + 1) / n$, where likes are sorted in ascending order, and concentration with the Herfindahl–Hirschman index, $HHI = \Sigma s\text{i}^2$, where si is the share of unit i in total likes; 1/HHI gives the equivalent number of equally sized units. Algorithm 1 lists the procedure.

Procedure for reproducing the engagement metrics from coded units:

1. Input: the unit table (Table 4) with likes and one attribution category per unit, and the four scenarios (all units; without N9; without A7; without N9 and A7).
2. For each scenario, remove the listed units and count the remaining units n.
3. Compute the total, mean, and median of likes.
4. Sort likes in ascending order and compute the Gini coefficient, HHI, and 1/HHI.
5. Sum likes by attribution category, divide by the scenario total, multiply by 100, and round to one decimal place.
6. Output: category shares (Tables 5 and 6) and concentration statistics.

The script is written in Python 3 with pandas and NumPy, contains no random components, and returns identical output on every run, so any recoding of a unit can be tested by editing one record and rerunning. Its output matches Tables 5 and 6 and the statistics given in the Results. The full listing is provided in Appendix A.

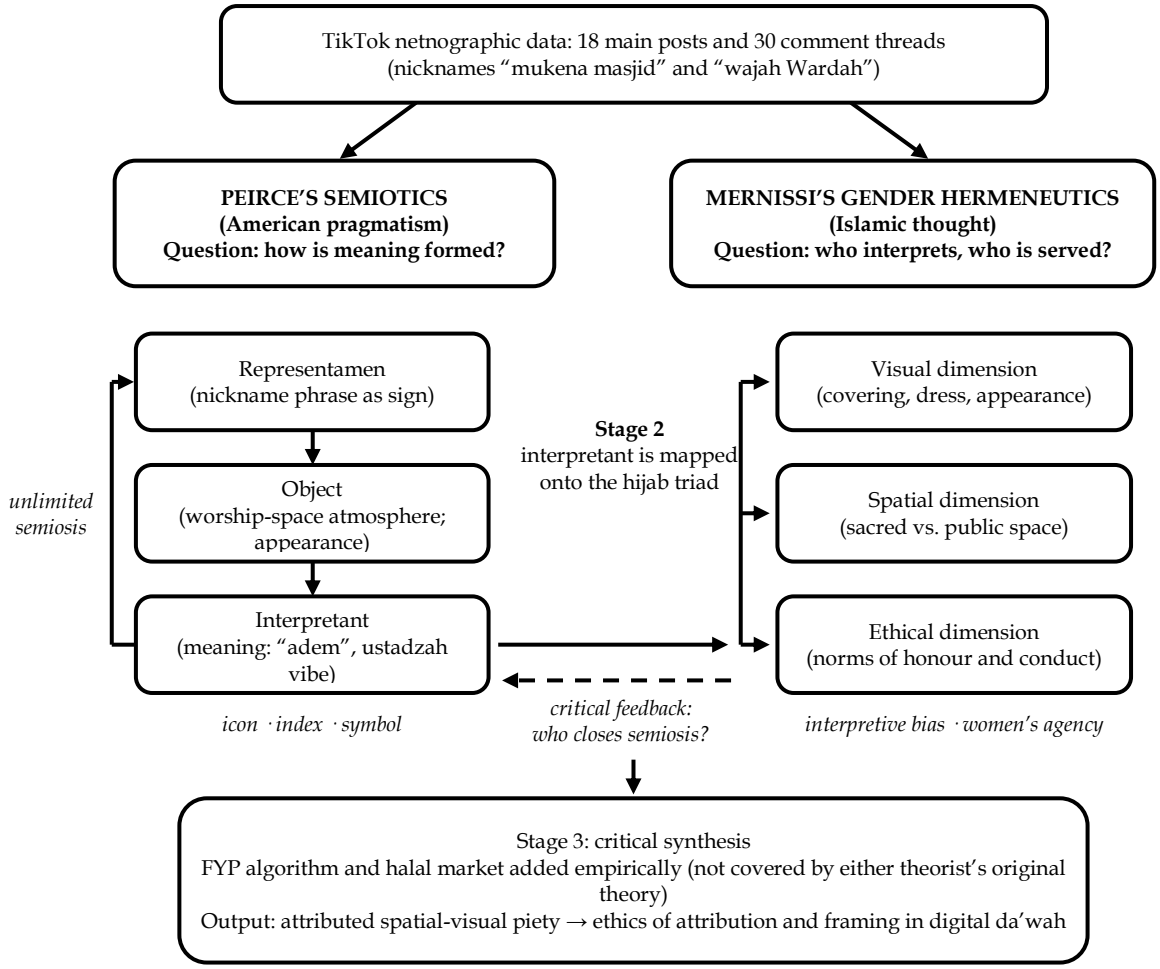

Figure 1 Integration of Peirce's Semiotics and Mernissi's Gender Hermeneutics
Source: authors' elaboration based on Peirce (1932) and Mernissi (1987, 1991).

Table 1 Coding Matrix Linking Peirce's Semiosis and Mernissi's Hijab Dimensions

Coding stage	Data parameters	Peirce category	Mernissi dimension	Audience reception indicator
Open coding	Caption text, video clip segments, frequency of nickname phrases	*Representamen*: textual or auditory marker of the phrase ("Ubin", "Mukena", "Wardah")	Visual: dress, neat makeup, facial expression	Spontaneous identification and assignment of nicknames by audiences
Axial coding	Links between the subject's character and associations of space and aesthetics	*Object*: calm of the worship space, ethical guardedness, elegant appearance	Spatial: coolness of the sacred space that inspires the public sphere	Public consensus through accumulated likes and complimentary comments
Selective coding	Abstraction of the theme of aesthetic piety and Muslimah	*Interpretant*: scholarly authority,	Ethical: balance between outward elegance and ethical nobility	Shift in response from admiration to articulation of

	identity formation	academic dignity, natural beauty		exemplary character

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *"Mukena Masjid"* as a Spatial-Ethical Frame

The nickname "ubin masjid" originated with Luthfi Bima Putra's appearance in *Clash of Champions* Season 2, when audiences answered his composure with a metaphor of a place of worship. Season 3 inherited the nickname and transformed it into "mukena masjid" for female contestants, especially Nasywaa. Both phrases became the main *representamen*, attached consistently to clips showing a calm demeanour and accurate answers, through repeated naming that audiences agreed on collectively as an expression of admiration.

The coolness, cleanliness, calm, and upkeep of worship facilities serve as the *object* to which both phrases refer (Peirce, 1932). In terms of sign type, the nickname works as a metaphorical icon, as an index of an impression of stillness, and as a symbol of a Muslim cultural convention that links the mosque prayer garment with purity and ethical guardedness. The semiosis continues: "mukena masjid" triggers *interpretant* 1 ("cewek adem", a cool-tempered girl), which becomes a new representamen for interpretant 2 ("ideal Muslimah type" and "ustadzah *vibe*") (Short, 2007). Comments such as "ustadzah mumpuni *vibe*" (a capable female-teacher vibe) and "aura dosen" (a lecturer's aura) indicate that the interpretant relates to courteous scholarly authority, with calmness of expression read as self-mastery rooted in religious values (Shabdan, 2026).

Comment threads show a similar vocabulary of calm even where the phrase "mukena masjid" does not appear. In an interview clip of Nasywaa, a comment with 49 likes described a balance between this world and the hereafter as the "shape" of someone like Nasywaa, another comment (76 likes) called her "cold" yet a good listener, and other posts used the words "adem" (cool) and "kalem" (calm). This thermal and atmospheric vocabulary shows that attributions of worldly-spiritual balance are attached to clips that contain no explicit religious act.

At Stage 2, these interpretants are mapped onto Mernissi's (1991) hijab triad, which treats the hijab as intertwined visual (physical covering), spatial (marker of spatial boundaries), and ethical (limits on conduct and norms of honour) dimensions. "Mukena masjid" extracts the spatial dimension of a sacred space sheltered from worldly noise, projects it onto the figure's personal character, and links the visual dimension (modest dress) with the ethical dimension (courtesy and calm conduct). Mernissi's (1987) attention to the organisation of space in regulating women makes this spatial reading plausible. At Stage 3, her framework shifts the question from "what does it mean" to "who interprets". Because inequality is rooted in biased interpretation (Pohan et al., 2025), the attribution is read as an act of interpretation by audiences that can honour and constrain at once, not as neutral praise. Interpretation is carried out by audiences, while Nasywaa remains in the position of the labelled, and the piety attached to her does not originate in any religious statement of her own. Table 2 summarises the triadic analysis.

Table 2. **Triadic Analysis of Peirce's Semiotics of the "Mukena Masjid" Nicknames and Their Derivatives**

Specific nickname	Representamen (sign)	Object (referent)	Interpretant (meaning/perception)
"Ubin Masjid"	Spatial metaphorical phrase	Calm, cleanliness, and coolness of the place of worship	A soothing and authoritative personality
"Mukena Masjid"	Symbol of women's worship dress	Moral guardedness and elegance of worship dress	Ideal and courteous Muslimah figure
"Mihrab/AC Masjid"	Metonymic chain of the worship space	Cool atmosphere sheltered from noise	Scholarly authority that calms the public

2. *"Wajah Wardah"* as a Visual Frame

The nickname "wajah Wardah" for Aisha spread by a different route. It emerged after the main broadcast, when a recorded interview between contestants circulated in which another contestant said that Aisha's appearance matched "wajah-wajah Wardah" (Wardah faces), and clips of the interview were then widely reproduced by various accounts. The phrase functions as a *representamen* referring to an *object* in the form of an aesthetic type: a clean, fresh face with natural makeup framed by a neat hijab (Ardiya, 2025). The relation is iconic, based on visual resemblance between the figure's appearance and a modern Islamic beauty standard. Its *interpretant* is the beautiful-and-pious Muslimah who deserves to represent public aesthetics (Abidin et al., 2025).

The nickname is tied to the halal cosmetics industry and to the halal lifestyle of urban Muslims (Pribadi & Sila, 2023; Rosyid, 2025; Shirazi, 2016). Wardah is no longer merely a beauty product but a cultural marker of "groomed piety": for urban middle-class and Gen Z Muslim women, outward beauty and inner piety are seen as mutually reinforcing (Pribadi & Sila, 2023; Rosyid, 2025). This confirms Jones's (2007) argument that the commodification of Islamic dress is not a straightforward process but an arena in which Indonesian Muslims think through the relationships among faith, gender, and materiality. Attributing the nickname to Aisha's appearance shows how the commodification of Islamic values has built the idea that being pious also means being beautiful, clean, and modern (Shirazi, 2016).

Comment threads display a vocabulary of freshness and cleanliness. A comment with 17.1 thousand likes highlighted a face that is "always *fresh*", another (136 likes) said her white headscarf made her "glow", and a comment with 3.3 thousand likes ranked the beauty of the female contestants, so that aesthetics is not only praised but turned into a hierarchy within an intelligence competition. Attribution to Aisha does not stop at the visual: a comment with 700 likes said she makes viewers feel "adem", so the atmospheric vocabulary attached to Nasywaa is also attached to Aisha. In post A11, an event banner shows Aisha's name next to the Wardah brand in a live-selling broadcast, giving the nickname an indexical anchor at the institutional stage.

At Stage 2, the interpretant "beautiful-and-pious Muslimah" is mapped onto the visual dimension of the hijab. Mernissi (1987) emphasises that educated women who appear confident in public space reconstruct the narrative of Muslim women's presence. Veiled and groomed appearance has long been a site where identity is reconstructed rather than merely inherited (Brenner, 1996), and experimental work has asked how the hijab influences perceptions of women's attractiveness and intelligence (Mahmud & Swami, 2010; Sheen et al., 2023). The "wajah Wardah" frame joins these questions in a single phrase: beauty and intellect are presented as compatible, even mutually confirming. Through this frame the visual dimension

no longer means passive concealment but an active, clean, and fresh aesthetic marker, and audiences read a neat appearance as an ethical awareness of caring for oneself (*tazkiyat an-nafs*). The Stage 3 question nevertheless stands: those who interpret and set the standard of elegance are audiences and the market, not Aisha herself. Table 3 summarises how the nickname developed.

Table 3. **Stages in the Spread of the "Wardah" Nickname and the Development of the Sign**

Stage of development	Trigger of digital discourse	Dominant sign type	Main audience response pattern
Stage 1 (early broadcast)	Appearance of the figure in early episodes	Iconic and spatial-symbolic	Praise for calm and "mosque aura"
Stage 2 (post-competition)	Circulation of clips on facial impression	Iconic (appearance)	Assigning the nickname "wajah Wardah" as praise
Stage 3 (public appreciation)	Presence at publicly broadcast events	Indexical (appreciation)	Expressions of admiration and the urge to emulate

In answer to RQ1, Peirce's sign structure builds both nicknames through a chain of *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant*. For "mukena masjid", metaphorical phrases of worship space act as representamen, their object is the calm and ethical guardedness of a sacred space, and their interpretant is an ideal Muslimah who soothes. For "wajah Wardah", the phrase itself acts as representamen, its object is a groomed aesthetic appearance, and its interpretant is the beautiful-and-pious Muslimah. Both chains develop through unlimited semiosis.

In answer to RQ2, the hijab triad shifts from a function of limitation to a marker of appreciation in digital space: "mukena masjid" strengthens the spatial and ethical dimensions, while "wajah Wardah" turns the visual dimension into an active aesthetic marker. The logic of the FYP algorithm, which favours emotionally and visually resonant content (Bucher, 2017; Bhandari & Bimo, 2022), amplifies this shift, so the three dimensions do not work separately but are negotiated by audiences as one form of aesthetic piety attached to figures outside formal religious spaces.

3. Engagement Distribution and Concentration Diagnostics

The nicknames also show a positive side of audience participation: audiences act as active agents who organically (*bottom-up*) coin and spread religiously inflected nicknames, reflecting appreciation for young figures who are intelligent and courteous (Abidin et al., 2025). Table 4 summarises the main posts and their interaction metrics, Table 5 and Figure 2 show the distribution of interaction by attribution category, and Table 6 presents a sensitivity analysis without N9, without A7, and without both.

Table 4. Summary of Main Posts and Digital Interaction Metrics on TikTok

Unit code	Subject	Upload date	Likes	Key phrase or nickname category
N1	Nasywaa	2 Jul 2026	21.3k	"ubin masjid atau mukena masjid" (mosque tile or mosque prayer garment)
N2	Nasywaa and Luthfi	1 Jul 2026	13.1k	"Ubin Masjid x Mukena Masjid"
N4	Nasywaa	6 Jul 2026	1.4k	"pembawaan yang tenang, disegani itu high level" (a calm, respected demeanour is high level)
N5	Nasywaa	17 Aug 2026	19.6k	"koko-koko ketempelan ukhti" (a koko-clad guy "possessed" by a pious sister)
N6	Nasywaa and Evan	17 Aug 2026	6.1k	"Duo kalem yg melaju sampai jauh di coc" (the calm duo going far in CoC)
N9	Nasywaa and Kemal	21 Jul 2026	72.3k	"para penghafal Al-Qur'an" (the Qur'an memorisers)
N10	Nasywaa	16 Aug 2026	3.6k	"Kalem tapi mematikan" (calm but deadly)
A1	Aisha	7 Sep 2026	15.7k	"wajah-wajah Wardah" (Wardah faces)
A2	Aisha	30 Aug 2026	6.6k	"wajahnya Aisha se-Wardah..." (Aisha's face is so Wardah)
A3	Aisha	18 Jul 2026	34.1k	"the calming i deserved"
A4	Aisha	10 Oct 2026	1.2k	"Aisha 'Wardah' sekali" (so very Wardah)
A5	Aisha	11 Oct 2026	5.0k	"terima kasih sudah mengundang Aisha" (thank you for inviting Aisha)
A6	Aisha	5 Aug 2026	9.2k	"Masyallah cantiknyaaa" (masyaAllah, so beautiful)
A7	Aisha (via hashtag)	6 Aug 2026	94.0k	"such a pure angel energy, love her vibe"
A8	Aisha	22 Aug 2026	2.4k	"Cantiknya aishaaa" (so beautiful, Aisha)
A9	Aisha	7 Sep 2026	28.3k	"gak sanggup melihat ke masyaAllah an yang secantik ini" (cannot bear such masyaAllah-level beauty)
A10	Aisha	3 Oct 2026	8.6k	"if warmth was a person"
A11	Aisha	10 Oct 2026	3.2k	"MasyaAllah sekali mba lemon" (so masyaAllah, sis Lemon)

Note: dates are taken from the month and day markers on the platform; the year is assumed to be 2026. Uploader account names are not shown.

Table 5. **Distribution of Interaction Volume (Likes) and Percentage by Nickname Attribution Category on TikTok**

Attribution Category	Total Interaction (Thousand Likes)	Share of Volume	Main Indicator of Audience Reception
Religious identity/ hafiz	72.3	20.9%	Admiration for Qur'an memorisation and a reputation for piety
Spatial piety (mukena, tile, sacred space)	128.4	37.1%	Consensus on a calm aura, the quiet atmosphere of the mosque, and the image of sacred space
Aesthetic appearance (Wardah face)	63.4	18.3%	Appreciation of natural beauty, neat hijab, and elegance
Intellectual character/ demeanour	73.4	21.2%	Admiration for intelligence, calm, and warmth of demeanour
Institutional appreciation	8.2	2.4%	Appreciation of the subject's presence at events and brand live broadcasts
Total Corpus Interaction	**345.7**	**100.0%**	**Accumulated retention and interaction of TikTok audiences**

Note: percentages are rounded to one decimal place, so totals may differ by 0.1 point. The institutional appreciation category contains units A5 and A11.

Spatial piety (mukena, tile, sacred space) accounts for 37.1% of the 345.7 thousand likes, followed by intellectual character or demeanour (21.2%), religious identity or hafiz (20.9%), aesthetic appearance (18.3%), and institutional appreciation (2.4%). Two units contribute almost half of all likes, A7 (94.0 thousand; 27.2%) and N9 (72.3 thousand; 20.9%), although likes measure reach, not the proportion of discourse. N9 contains an explicit religious identity, the memorisation of the Qur'an, so it works indexically and rests on real credentials (Peirce, 1932); it is treated as a deviant case. A7 pairs the hashtag #aishacoc with a clip of another veiled figure at a holy site in the Holy Land, not Aisha, so the link between sign and sacred space is built by the editor's montage and becomes the clearest example of audience sacralisation of space. The sensitivity analysis shows that without both units, character or demeanour (40.9%) and aesthetic appearance (35.3%) still form the largest share of the distribution (Table 6), so the findings on spatial and visual attribution do not depend on two viral units.

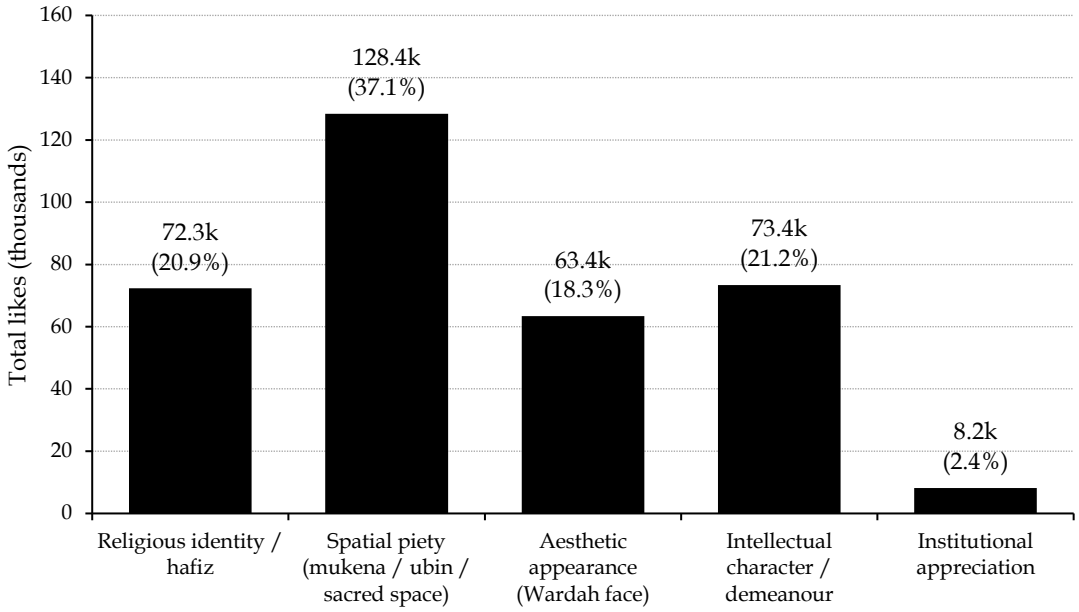

Figure 2. **Distribution of Interaction Volume by Nickname Attribution Category on TikTok**

Source: authors' elaboration based on Table 5.

Descriptive diagnostics confirm that the distribution of likes is highly skewed. Across the 18 units, mean likes (19.2 thousand) are more than twice the median (8.9 thousand), the Gini coefficient is 0.59, and the Herfindahl–Hirschman index is 0.147, equivalent to roughly 6.8 equally sized units. The top two units hold 48.1% of all likes and the top five hold 72.3%. Removing A7 and N9 lowers the Gini coefficient to 0.47 and the mean to 11.2 thousand, so the skew weakens but does not disappear. By subject, the seven Nasywaa units total 137.4 thousand likes (median 13.1 thousand) and the eleven Aisha units total 208.3 thousand (median 8.6 thousand); the difference in totals mainly reflects the number of units, since mean likes per unit are similar (19.6 thousand versus 18.9 thousand). With 18 purposively sampled units, these statistics are descriptive and not intended for inference. The winner-take-most pattern is consistent with the strong amplification that recommendation systems can produce (Baumann et al., 2026), which is why the study reads likes as a measure of reach rather than the proportion of discourse (Milli et al., 2025).

Table 6. Sensitivity Analysis of Interaction Percentages without the Dominant Units

Attribution category	All units	Without N9	Without A7	Without N9 and A7
Religious identity / hafiz	20.9%	—	28.7%	—
Spatial piety (mukena, tile, sacred space)	37.1%	47.0%	13.7%	19.2%
Aesthetic appearance (Wardah face)	18.3%	23.2%	25.2%	35.3%
Intellectual character / demeanour	21.2%	26.8%	29.2%	40.9%
Institutional appreciation	2.4%	3.0%	3.3%	4.6%
Total interaction	**345.7k**	**273.4k**	**251.7k**	**179.4k**

Note: percentages are rounded to one decimal place, so totals may differ by 0.1 point.

The findings on spatial and visual attribution support the concept of *attributed spatial-visual piety* as proposed here. Unlike studies that treat media piety as a projection of the actor's consciousness (*performative piety*), piety here is produced autonomously by audiences without

being triggered by the actor's explicit religious performance, because Nasywaa and Aisha appear in a secular competition without formal da'wah attributes. The computational step shows that this pattern does not depend on two viral units: without N9 and A7, intellectual character (40.9%) and aesthetic appearance (35.3%) lead the distribution, spatial piety still accounts for 19.2%, and the Gini coefficient falls from 0.59 to 0.47 without disappearing. Unlimited semiosis (Peirce, 1932; Short, 2007; Hurley, 2025) leads audiences to extract visual markers and intellectual calm into an interpretant of spatial-ethical piety. Mernissi's (1991) triad, in turn, shows how this meaning is reconstructed: "mukena masjid" reinforces the spatial and ethical dimensions, and "wajah Wardah" gives the visual dimension the meaning of clean beauty believed to be compatible with academic intelligence.

In contrast to studies in which Muslim women stage piety or claim agency through their own content (Baulch & Pramiyanti, 2018; Dwifatma & Beta, 2024; El Sayed & Hotait, 2024), no one in the frame performs da'wah here, and the labelled women appear only as objects of audience discourse. The frame is therefore closer to what Entman (1993) describes as a frame in the receiver's thinking than to one designed by the figure herself. The same holds for commodification: the literature locates commercial logic in the strategies of actors and brands (Jones, 2007; Nisa, 2018; Shirazi, 2016), whereas here the audience links a halal cosmetics brand to a woman's face and extends the brand's reach. Because the corpus contains audience talk alone, the study cannot show how Nasywaa and Aisha receive, resist, or reframe these nicknames, which remains an empirical question for future research.

Attributing piety in a secular event such as CoC also exposes a mechanism of domesticating women's intellect. Local patriarchal and religious cultures may place highly intelligent young women in a socially awkward position (*cognitive dissonance*) unless they are placed within a familiar religious frame, and the nicknames can be read as an audience strategy for "taming" contestants' critical capacity so that it fits norms of Muslimah elegance and courtesy. This is the Stage 3 answer to Mernissi's question: audiences, not the labelled women, close the chain of semiosis. The algorithmic setting also shows the limits of Mernissi's lens. Mernissi (1991) tied women's emancipation to their active presence in the public sphere, but TikTok's public stage is arranged by an FYP algorithm that prioritises emotional and visual engagement (Bucher, 2017; Lim, 2017), so content themed "ukhti adem" or "cewek masjid" is promoted extensively (Mujadid & Castrawijaya, 2026). The nickname "wajah Wardah" ties piety to a commercial halal brand and to urban class boundaries (Jones, 2010; Pribadi & Sila, 2023; Rosyid, 2025; Shin et al., 2025; Shirazi, 2016), and can be read as a *hyperreality of piety* in which images (*simulacra*) obscure the substance of religiosity (Kamila, 2026; Mujadid & Castrawijaya, 2026). A standard that equates piety with a clean face, groomed makeup, and an upper-middle-class urban lifestyle (*exclusionary piety*) may marginalise Muslim women without access to beauty consumption. The winner-take-most distribution of likes is consistent with the strong amplification found in computational audits (Baumann et al., 2026), although the corpus contains no platform-side data and cannot show how the FYP treated these nicknames.

These findings shift how da'wah communication can be understood. In the usual model, a communicator (*dā'ī*) composes a message and delivers it to an audience. In both nicknames, the religious message, an image of the pious Muslimah, is composed by the audience, spread through algorithmic media, and directed at figures who had no intention of preaching. Audiences become communicator and receiver at once, so da'wah takes place as an unplanned participatory process (*unintentional da'wah*). This extends digital da'wah research, which has centred on preachers and religious actors (Abdullah, 2025; Mujadid & Castrawijaya, 2026; Raya, 2025; Rohmatulloh et al., 2022), towards those who assign religious meaning to others.

The data reveal three ethical problems that a renewal of digital da'wah ethics must answer. The first is verification: unit A7, which contributes 27.2% of interactions, pairs

#aishacoc with a clip of another figure at a holy site, so an attribution of piety circulated widely on the basis of a mistaken context, which underlines the relevance of *tabayyun* (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 6). The second is caution in assigning nicknames. The Qur'an forbids calling one another by bad nicknames (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11), and even a laudatory nickname places the figure in a frame she did not choose, as in the beauty ranking of female contestants in the comments. The third is honesty and transparency: in post A11, Aisha's name is placed beside the Wardah brand in a live-selling broadcast, blurring appreciation and promotion, which a da'wah ethic of honesty and *qaulan karīman* (QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 23) requires creators to distinguish and disclose. Table 7 summarises these problems, the principles that answer them, and the resulting guidelines.

Table 7. **Digital Da'wah Ethics Derived from the Corpus: Problems, Principles, and Guidelines**

Ethical problem	Evidence in the corpus	Guiding principle	Practical guideline
Verification	Unit A7: #aishacoc paired with a clip of another figure at a holy site (27.2% of likes)	*Tabayyun* (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 6)	Check source and context before sharing or editing clips that carry religious judgement
Nicknaming	Beauty ranking of female contestants in comments; labels the figures did not choose	Prohibition of bad nicknames (QS. al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 11)	Avoid appearance rankings; protect the dignity of the labelled person
Honesty and transparency	Unit A11: Aisha's name beside the Wardah brand in live-selling	*Qaulan karīman* (QS. al-Isrā' [17]: 23) and honesty	Distinguish appreciation from promotion; disclose commercial relations
Reach of labels	A7 and N9 account for almost half of all likes	Proposed ethics of attribution	Treat re-sharing, editing, and monetising as acts that carry ethical responsibility

In answer to RQ3, the implications of attributed spatial-visual piety are both ethical and communicative. Ethically, the corpus raises three problems (verification, caution in assigning nicknames, and honesty in appreciation and promotion) that a classical ethics of the message does not cover. Communicatively, da'wah becomes an unplanned participatory process in which audiences, rather than preachers, compose the religious message. For the formation of Muslimah role models, the same process risks domesticating intelligent figures into visual icons and excluding women who lack access to beauty consumption.

On this basis, the study proposes renewing digital da'wah ethics and Islamic communication from an *ethics of the message* to an *ethics of attribution and framing*. A classical ethics of the message evaluates the honesty, courtesy, and benefit of a communicator's speech. An ethics of attribution extends it to the collective action of audiences: who has the right to attach a label of piety, on what evidence, with whose consent, and with what consequences for the labelled person. Because algorithms multiply the reach of emotionally charged labels, responsibility extends to those who re-share, edit, and commercialise the label.

Practically, three parties are addressed. Creators and digital preachers can treat a viral nickname as an entry point, redirecting attention from atmosphere and appearance to the figure's knowledge, hard work, and character, in line with da'wah *bil-ḥikmah* (QS. an-Naḥl [16]: 125). Da'wah and Islamic broadcasting institutions need guidelines that include verification of context, source attribution, avoidance of appearance rankings, and disclosure of commercial relations. Islamic communication and broadcasting education should include semiotic and framing analysis of digital labels in digital da'wah literacy curricula. In this frame,

Muslimah role models require a balance between outward appearance and depth of thought and character, so that intelligent figures are not domesticated into visual icons but remain valued for their intellectual capacity.

E. CONCLUSION

In answer to RQ1, the nicknames "mukena masjid" and "wajah Wardah" on TikTok are constructed through Peirce's chain of representamen, object, and interpretant as *attributed spatial-visual piety*: "mukena masjid" grounds piety in the perceived calm of a sacred space, while "wajah Wardah" grounds it in an appearance of elegance and cleanliness. In answer to RQ2, mapping these interpretants onto Mernissi's hijab triad shows that "mukena masjid" reinforces the spatial and ethical dimensions and "wajah Wardah" turns the visual dimension into an active aesthetic marker, with the FYP algorithm amplifying the shift. Audiences act as producers of meaning outside formal religious stages, which suggests that piety in the platform era is shaped by collective attribution negotiated among visual aesthetics, algorithms, and cultural domestication.

In answer to RQ3, these findings call for a renewal of digital da'wah ethics, from an *ethics of the message* to an *ethics of attribution and framing* that combines *tabayyun* regarding the context of clips, caution in assigning nicknames, and honesty and *qaulan karīman* in appreciation and promotion, together with Muslimah role models who balance outward appearance with depth of thought and character. Theoretically, the study extends digital da'wah research from preachers as message makers to audiences as framers of piety. Practically, creators and digital preachers should use viral nicknames as an entry point to substance in knowledge and character, da'wah institutions should draft guidelines for producing and distributing content, and Islamic communication and broadcasting education should include framing literacy in its curricula.

The study is limited by its netnographic focus on TikTok and by likes, which measure reach rather than the proportion of discourse, with two viral units (A7 and N9) influencing the distribution. Future research should extend the analysis across platforms (*Instagram Reels*, *YouTube Shorts*), combine it with audience reception analysis, and test the proposed ethics of attribution through interviews with creators, digital preachers, and the labelled figures. Platform-side evidence would also test the algorithmic claims made here: sock-puppet audits (Baumann et al., 2026) and data-donation designs (Zannettou et al., 2024) could show whether and how the FYP amplifies piety-themed labels. The Python pipeline in Appendix A could also be extended with automated lexical or topic coding of comment text, which would complement the manual coding used here and allow larger corpora to be analysed.

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