From Ritual Authority to Algorithmic Visibility: The Transformation of Musical Authority in Traditional Music Practices

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Abstract

In recent decades, the rapid expansion of digital platforms has fundamentally reshaped the production, circulation, and valuation of cultural expressions, including traditional ritual music. Within this transformation, questions of authority, autheticity, and legitimacy become increasingly complex, particularly for music traditions rooted in sacred contexts and community based knowledge systems. Understandinghow ritual music navigates the pressures of digital visibility is therefore crucial for broader discussions on cultural sustainability and heritage governance in the digital age. This study explores the evolution of the authority of traditional Indonesian ritual music within the context of the digital age, emphasizing the interplay between community legitimacy grounded in local socio-cultural practices and the principles of algorithmic visibility fostered by digital platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. This study applies an interpretive qualitative methodology that integrates field ethnography with digital ethnography to examine ritual music practices in both offline community settings and their portrayals in online environments. The results show that ritual music's status has changed, with new algorithm-based legitimacy determined by quantitative metrics like views, likes, and shares having to contend with traditional legitimacy built through knowledge transmission, community recognition, and sacred contexts. Algorithms on platforms serve as influential agents that actively construct hierarchies of value and visibility, transferring the center of authority from conventional figures to technological systems. This establishes a dual framework of authenticity and converts cultural capital into a form that can be amassed through digital performance. Nevertheless, traditional communities should not be viewed as mere passive entities in this process. By employing strategies of selective curation, safeguarding sacred boundaries, and intentionally adapting content, they exhibit cultural agency in addressing the challenges posed by platformization. The resulting hybridization demonstrates a proactive approach to preserving the continuity of ritual significance while leveraging opportunities for documentation, education, and cultural acknowledgment within the digital age.   Consequently, the evolution of authority in ritual music within the digital age signifies an active interplay among established values, technological frameworks, and the agency of communities in safeguarding cultural heritage in the face of unavoidable social transformations.

Keywords: ritual music, traditional authority, digital platform, algorithm, hybridization

1. Introduction

Ritual music represents a significant aspect of Indonesia's cultural diversity, serving as an integral component of local social practices that embody value systems and cosmological beliefs. Across diverse ethnic and regional contexts, ritual music functions as a structured medium through which social norms are reinforced, collective identities are negotiated, and symbolic meaning, positioning muic as a central mechanism for maintanining social cohesion and cultural continuity rather than as an autonomous aesthetic object. The Gamelan, utilized in religious ceremonies in Bali, alongside Tuddukat music in Mentawai, serves as a social authority that embodies community legitimacy, the transmission of knowledge, and intergenerational relationships (Surianta et al., 2020; Tatubeket et al., 2019). Ritual music serves as more than mere sound; it acts as a conduit for communication among humans, the natural world, and spiritual entities within both ritualistic and social frameworks. This decentralization of authority challenges traditional custodians of ritual music, as processes of visibility and validation are increasingly mediated by digital systems rather than community based structures. As Tang and Wu observe, the decentralization of cultural heritage narratives disrupts established authoritative voices, replacing singular legitimacy with plural and technologically mediated forms of recognition (Tang & Wu, 2025). In recent years, the emergence of the digital era has established digitalization and platformization as pivotal influences on the production, distribution, and representation of musical culture, significantly impacting traditional and ritual music as well. Global sociological research indicates that digital systems are transforming our interactions with music, as production and consumption are increasingly influenced by engagement metrics, including views, likes, and the involvement of social media users across various platforms (cross-platform dynamics) ((Cross, 2023). Within this framework, music is often perceived as a digital product and a medium for virtual interaction, thereby overlooking the inherent participatory social engagement that music traditionally fosters (commodity, community, communion) (Cross, 2023).

Social media today functions not merely as a repository for documentation but also plays an active role in shaping cultural meanings, ritual practices, and patterns of participation. A study on social media analysis within the field of cultural anthropology revealed that traditional ritual practices are manifested in digital environments not merely as visual representations but also as technologically aligned ritual forms, frequently blurring the lines between the sacred and the secular (Tsaltsabilla et al., 2025).

Research regarding the digital transformation of traditional music in Indonesia has predominantly concentrated on the preservation and educational dimensions facilitated by technological media. This includes the implementation of augmented reality and applications designed for traditional music education, alongside initiatives aimed at revitalizing regional music through content creators on various digital platforms (Hervansyah et al., 2025; Vishal & Dilfa, 2025). These articles illustrate that the emergence of digital technology presents considerable prospects for bringing traditional music to a broader audience, particularly among younger individuals. Nevertheless, there has been limited exploration into the ways in which the social authority of ritual music transforms when faced with the prevailing digital paradigms characterized by visibility and algorithmic measurement.

Limited sociological research exists that empirically examines the dynamics of traditional musical authority within digital environments. Research on cultural platformization predominantly emphasizes popular music or creative sectors within the Global North, often overlooking ritual music as a significant domain for intricate social negotiation. The study of mediatization reveals the transformative nature of ritual narratives when disseminated through social media platforms. This includes the initiatives undertaken by younger generations to challenge the prevailing dominance of digital rituals and to extract new significance from their ritual experiences within virtual environments (Handayani et al., 2020). Moreover, there is an increasing amount of research worldwide examining the impact of digital technology on traditional and ethnic music. However, a significant portion of this research remains rooted in aesthetic case studies or descriptive ethnography, rather than employing sociological frameworks that address evolving power dynamics, identities, or social legitimacy within digital environments. Sociological research in this domain typically examines digital music by focusing on genres and algorithms within a commercial framework. This perspective indicates that recommendation systems and streaming services may impact genre identities and social interactions in the realm of digital music (genre mediation) (Muchitsch & Werner, 2024). In various settings, such as Indonesia, new developments encompass not only the safeguarding of traditional music through digital media but also the ways in which digital platforms create fresh opportunities for negotiating ritual music. This includes the difficulties associated with upholding community authority and the wider significance of rituals. Research on the expression of identity through ritual music in Lampung illustrates that such music serves as a significant medium for cultural identity and provides a platform for social and spiritual interaction (Aryandari & Chaniago, 2024).

The literature on the sociology of music also emphasizes that music is a social practice that builds and keeps relationships, not just an aesthetic form. Music is an important part of building cultural identity, social unity, and purpose, especially when it comes to rituals and social movements (Hartanti, 2025). In the digital age, music has evolved into a conduit for social interaction inside virtual communities, where identity and social reality are constructed through symbolic interaction (Faqih et al., 2025). In this context, this study seeks to examine the evolution of Indonesian ritual music's status within digital platforms, concentrating on the interplay between communal ritual legitimacy and digital algorithmic logic. The primary inquiry examines how the authority of ritual music, traditionally established through the social practices of local communities, is redefined in a digital environment shaped by algorithmic visibility and quantification methods. This approach is pertinent and significant as it enhances the comprehension of the sociology of music in the contemporary digital age, while also facilitating the integration of literature concerning musical identity, ritual practices, and cultural digitalization, wherein ritual music serves as a domain of value conflict, social legitimacy, and symbolic power between traditional and digital areas.

2. Literature Review

Sociological studies of music have consistently highlighted its function as a social practice, reflecting the cultural frameworks, identities, and power dynamics inherent within a society. Music transcends its aesthetic dimensions, serving as a symbolic mode of communication that significantly contributes to social interaction and the formation of cultural identity (Hartanti, 2025). Extensive scholarly work highlights music's capacity to reinforce communal bonds, disseminate cultural values, and act as a catalyst for social mobilization, particularly within rituals and social movements (a systematic literature review by Hartanti also identifies music as a collective symbol within a community).

Studies on traditional music amid globalization and digitization have predominantly concentrated on cultural preservation and the evolution of musical practices. Local studies in Indonesia have emphasized the role of digital and social media in revitalizing traditional music, especially in engaging younger generations and recontextualizing traditional music within the contemporary pop culture framework (M. Aldhe Vishal & Alrizka Hairi Dilfa, 2025). This research highlights the changes in how traditional music is conveyed through digital video, content creators, and social media platforms, which in turn influence the perspectives of younger generations on local culture. Nonetheless, the central focus of this research is on the aspects of preservation and regeneration, rather than on the changes within the social power structures associated with traditional music. Certain local writings discuss the broader dissemination of traditional content through digital media, highlighting its accessibility and appeal to the current generation. However, they overlook the impact of digitalization on the perception of traditional music, particularly regarding its legitimacy, symbolic authority, and role in community rituals.

Globally, the study of music digitalization has grown within media studies and digital sociology, especially with regard to how digital platforms affect the structures of music production and consumption. For example, research on the experiences of online music communities shows how the internet creates spaces of practice, where musicians and listeners come together to learn, collaborate, and develop new musical techniques, although this is often related to educational or entertainment contexts rather than traditional sacred ritual practices. Research focusing on global platforms like TikTok indicates that digital exposure has the potential to alter music demand, including for content outside the mainstream industry. This highlights the significant role of algorithms in shaping the consumption of music culture (Winkler et al., 2024). Other research examines the jurisprudence of how musicians perceive digital platforms and their impact on creativity and social relations in contemporary popular music communities (Drott, 2024). Nonetheless, although these studies hold conceptual significance, they primarily emphasize the dynamics of popular music and the creative industries, with a lesser focus on traditional or ritual music.

Studies into the connection between social media and cultural representation reveal that cultural content presented digitally frequently experiences alterations in its significance and societal role. Tsaltsabilla (2025) discusses the role of social media as a medium for ritual representation, highlighting its emergence as a new space for social reframing of rituals. This phenomenon blurs the lines between the sacred and the public, leading to the development of new ritual practices that prioritize digital engagement over traditional orientations. Similar research points to platforms such as TikTok as a means of bringing local customs to a larger audience, but they tend to focus more on the success of content preservation or promotion than on shifts in the social legitimacy of traditional music within the community and the structure of ritual authority (Husnil et al., 2025).

The sociology of music highlights that music is a social practice that reflects social relationships, cultural values, and identity formation, in addition to being only sound (Hartanti, 2025). In ritual practices, music frequently acts as a significant indicator of shared identity and a cohesive element for communities, as evidenced by numerous ethnographic research studies that emphasize the function of music within healing rituals and communal ceremonies (Tatubeket et al., 2019). Nonetheless, there exists a gap in the literature that explicitly

links this phenomenon to digital platforms and the transformations occurring within their social frameworks.

The comprehensive literature review indicates that the exploration of ritual music in the digital age reveals several notable theoretical and empirical gaps, particularly in relation to shifts in authority, legitimacy, and social dynamics within musical practices. The literature currently in publication has tended to concentrate on elements of digital consumption and preservation, but it has not sufficiently addressed how the digitalization of platforms impacts internal community mechanisms of ritual authority, such as the change in social legitimacy that formerly depended on customary structures. Moreover, the influence of algorithms and digital visibility metrics as sociological elements in the creation and dissemination of meaning in ritual music remains underexplored, particularly concerning the social and symbolic interactions among participants. There is a notable lack of comparative studies examining traditional legitimacy, exemplified by the role of ritual elders inherited through generations, alongside legitimacy derived from digital popularity. Consequently, the dynamics and potential conflicts between these two forms of legitimacy remain inadequately explored. Conversely, traditional theories regarding authority and cultural practices are viewed as insufficient for elucidating the occurrence of hybrid ritual music, which manifests concurrently in both offline communal environments and digital platforms. Therefore, it is essential to create or reinterpret a theoretical framework to more contextually comprehend the dynamics of this hybrid authority.

3. Methodology

This study applies an interpretive qualitative methodology designed to gain a profound understanding of the social significance, cultural practices, and negotiation processes surrounding the role of ritual music within the framework of digital transformation. This perspective posits that social reality is not objective or fixed, but is instead continually shaped through the interactions, symbols, and cultural practices of its participants (Pervin et al., 2022). In the exploration of the sociology of music and digital media studies, an interpretive qualitative approach is particularly pertinent, as the ritual music phenomena examined are inherently subjective, context-dependent, and imbued with symbolic significance, especially when these ritual practices are facilitated through digital platforms that introduce new logics to the construction of meaning and social legitimacy. As a result, this study is exploratory, descriptive, and interpretive, with an emphasis on documenting the dynamics of negotiations between new positions that arise through visible mechanisms and digital popularity measurements and traditional authority based on customary structures. The main approach used involves field ethnography, supplemented by digital ethnography, enabling researchers to examine ritual music practices within the community setting as well as in the representations and interactions occurring in virtual environments. Field ethnography involves participant observation, allowing researchers to immerse themselves in the social context of ritual music communities. This approach facilitates an understanding of musical practices, social relations among participants, and the mechanisms of legitimacy from the community's internal viewpoint. This aligns with the classical ethnographic tradition, which posits that cultural comprehension can only be attained through the researcher's direct and reflective engagement (Spradley, 1980).

This approach is further enhanced by digital ethnography, which regards digital platforms, online content, and virtual interactions as essential components of social phenomena that can be examined qualitatively (Rosaliza et al., 2023). This study utilizes digital ethnography to explore the production, representation, distribution, and meaning of ritual music on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. It also explores the ways in which digital audiences engage in the processes of assessment and legitimization through comments, likes, shares, and various other forms of interaction. According to the perspective of Cocq & Liliequist (2024), modern social phenomena "happen in, with, and through" digital media rather than being just represented in them. As a result, it would be impossible to analyze ritual music practices without taking this virtual component into account. This research drew upon a variety of data sources, including participatory observation of ritual music practices within specific communities. This encompassed the interactions among community members, the musical and ritual processes involved, and the roles played by individuals or groups in establishing and sustaining social legitimacy. Additionally, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with ritual musicians, traditional leaders, ritual practitioners, and individuals who actively upload or manage ritual music content on digital platforms. Furthermore, digital data was collected in the form of multimedia content, upload descriptions, audience comments, and traces of relevant social interactions. The informants and data were selected using purposive sampling, emphasizing their direct relevance to the research focus, which includes ritual music practices, the roles of participants within the framework of ritual legitimacy, and digital content that showcases a notable and culturally representative degree of audience engagement. The procedures for data collection encompassed field visits to communities engaged in ritual music, meticulous documentation via field notes and audio-visual recordings, the gathering of digital artifacts from various online platforms, and thorough transcription of all qualitative data.

The data analysis applied thematic and interpretive analytic methodologies, entailing the identification of

salient themes. These themes included the interplay of traditional and digital authority, mechanisms of symbolic legitimacy, ritualistic representations within digital media, and shifts in audience access and relations. Coding was performed systematically, utilizing both manual techniques and qualitative analysis software. In order to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, this research utilized source triangulation by examining observational data, interviews, and digital content across various contexts and participants (Denzin, 2010). The research was conducted with careful attention to ethical principles inherent in qualitative methodologies. This encompassed obtaining informed consent, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, and honoring cultural values and the sanctity of ritual practices. The focus of the study is closely tied to sensitive cultural expressions that hold significant symbolic importance for the community involved.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Reimagining the Position of Ritual Music in Digital Space

The emergence of platforms such as YouTube and various social media channels illustrates a notable transformation in the role of traditional ritual music within local communities as these practices transition into the world of digital media.   Within its specific context, music is typically shaped by traditional knowledge, intertwined with sacred rituals, and has received validation from the community over many generations. Conversely, the portrayal of ritual music within digital media ultimately introduces a new dimension, demonstrating that legitimacy can also be established through the mechanisms of digital visibility and interaction.

An empirical indicator that exemplifies this change is the findings from research regarding ritual content on the YouTube channel @AngkatWBaliChannel. An evaluative analysis of 62 ritual videos published on the channel revealed that each video received an average of approximately 2,545 views. The like rate was notably high at 20.19, while the average number of comments per video was comparatively low at 1.68. This finding indicates that digital audiences often exhibit passive consumption behaviors, engaging with ritual content primarily through observation rather than actively participating in discussions or fostering community connections through comments, likes, and views (Artadi & Suardana, 2025). This indicates that the presence of ritual content on digital platforms leads to engagement metrics favored by algorithms, such as views and likes, becoming key factors in establishing legitimacy. Consequently, these metrics are perceived as indicators of the content's validity by a broader audience. This contrasts with conventional legitimacy, which is acquired through societal acknowledgment, established seniority in rituals, and cultural standing. Within a digital framework, ritual content that receives significant engagement is frequently perceived as more representative or significant, often overlooking the true context of the ritual itself.

(Source: https://youtube.com/@angkatwbalichannel?si=fHQGWESc5iat5ysh)
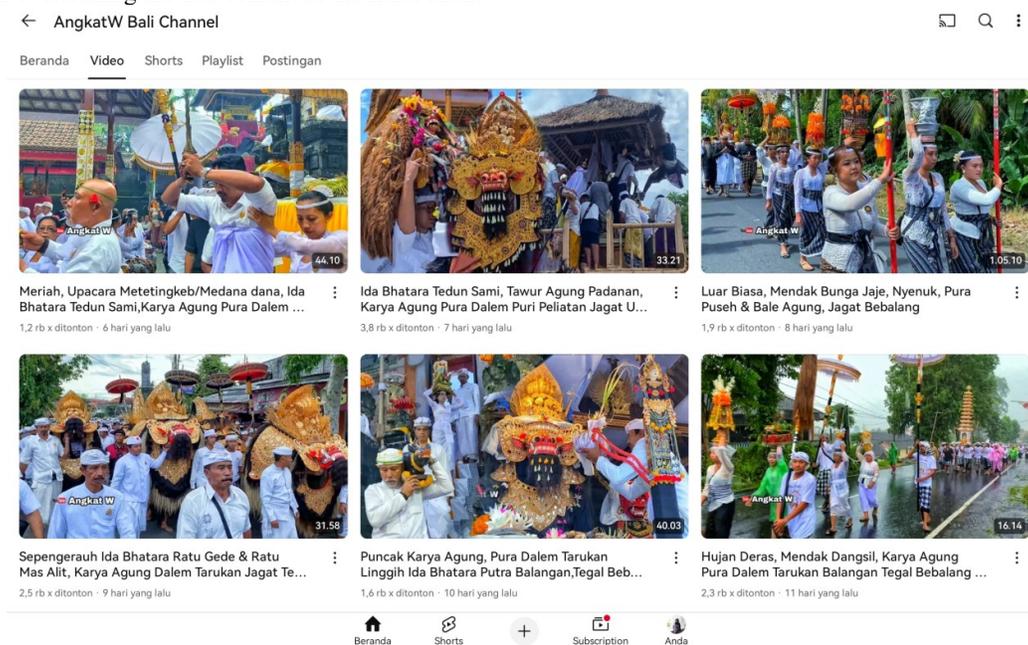
This is consistent with broader research trends concerning digital rituals and cultural representations within social media platforms. For instance, research on cultural rituals facilitated through social media demonstrates that these platforms are capable of producing novel ritualistic practices that integrate both digital and tangible components, thereby fostering participation across diverse age groups and international

communities, while simultaneously obfuscating the distinctions between the sacred and the profane.   The transformation of cultural symbols occurs as a result of visual simplification and reinterpretation by digital users (Tsaltsabilla et al., 2025). The analysis of digital campaign data indicates that the visibility of content within digital media can often be more significantly affected by technical elements, including thumbnails, production quality, and timing of publication, rather than by the inherent quality of the ritual content itself. For instance, the AngkatW Bali Channel demonstrates that although various types of rituals do not necessarily ensure high engagement, technical aspects such as content presentation and visualization frequently influence viewer engagement (Artadi & Suardana, 2025). The engagement indicators, mediated by YouTube algorithms, function as a proxy for legitimacy within the world of digital media. This suggests that while the authority of traditional rituals is not wholly diminished, it is often augmented or occasionally supplanted by digital authority derived from engagement metrics. This suggests a transition in the locus of legitimacy from localized ritual communities to the expansive domain of global algorithms, subsequently affecting how digital audiences perceive the significance and status of ritual music. This phenomenon also demonstrates a contestation of knowledge between two authority regimes. First, there is an acknowledgment of traditional rituals that emerge from ritual communities, which are deeply embedded in cultural values, social frameworks, and historical authenticity. Second, the acknowledgment facilitated by platform algorithms quantifies popularity via various metrics and visibility indicators. The interplay between the two fosters the development of novel adaptive strategies among ritual practitioners. This includes the simplification or modification of ritual displays to enhance algorithmic performance, as well as the integration of more platform-adaptive visual elements to boost platform recommendations.

The findings indicate that the present condition of ritual is characterized by a hybrid nature, drawing on both the legitimacy conferred by local communities and the digital legitimacy produced by platform algorithms. This highlights the significance of comprehending ritual music not merely as a cultural expression but also as an integral component of a digital social landscape profoundly shaped by the technological frameworks and dynamics of social media platforms.

Table 1. Comparative metrics of digital engagement with traditional ritual participation in ritual music practices

Aspect	Representation of Rituals in digital space (based on platform)	Ritual Practices (community based)	Interpretation of Analysis
Primary Source of Legitimacy	Visibility algorithms such as number of views, likes and shares	Traditional elders, ritual leaders and traditional institutions	The position shifts from social legitimacy inherent in the community to platform-mediated legitimacy.
Participation Scale	Wide reach but low engagement (e.g. 2,000 - 10,000 views, but 2% comments)	Limited but intense participation (30 - >300 participants per ritual)	The digital space emphasizes breadth of reach rather than depth of engagement.
Forms of Involvement	Passive consumption (watching and liking)	Active and tangible participation (singing, dancing, and even taking part in offerings)	The meaning of ritual is experienced directly in the context of ritual practice in society, but in the digital space it is symbolic.
Temporal Structure	Asynchronous, repeatable and fragmented	Fixed and periodic times according to the ritual calendar	Digital spaces release practices from the traditional temporal nature of rituals.
Legitimacy Criteria	Popularity metrics, recommendation algorithms	Inheritance of knowledge, lineage, mastery of ritual knowledge	The emergence of two position systems that run simultaneously
The Limits of Sacredness	Escape (ritual positioned as content)	Firm (there is a separation between sacred and profane space)	The mediation of digital space weakens control over ritual boundaries.
Audience Composition	Global and culturally heterogeneous	Local and culturally bound	Contextual meanings undergo dilution in digital circulation
Knowledge Transmission	Visuals and symbols that are separated from context	Oral, experience-based, contextual	The shift from implicit knowledge to representational knowledge

Source (summarized from several studies): Artadi & Suardana (2025) ; Couldry & Hepp (2017); Striphas (2015); Tsaltsabilla et al. (2025)

The comparative data presented above indicates that digital engagement and offline ritual participation function according to fundamentally distinct social logics. Research of Artadi dan Suardana (2025) demonstrate that despite ritual videos getting thousands of views, the proportion of comments and symbolic interactions is notably low, reflecting a lack of intense engagement. This phenomenon is consistent with international research indicating that platform algorithms favor visibility rather than the depth of social connections (Bucher, 2018;

Prey, 2020). Conversely, in-person ritual activities exhibit a quantitatively restricted yet qualitatively profound level of engagement. Research in the field of ethnomusicology concerning rituals in Southeast Asia reveals that the number of participants often spans from several dozen to several hundred. These rituals demand significant investments of time, physical presence, emotional engagement, and symbolic understanding (Harnish & Rasmussen, 2011).

The observed distinctions suggest that the legitimacy of in-person rituals is established via symbolic presence and expertise, whereas the legitimacy in digital contexts is derived from algorithmic calculations. Within the digital space, the legitimacy of ritual music is established through mechanisms that are validated externally by the platform system, rather than through the community's own social structure (Striphas, 2015). Additionally, the table above illustrates that digitalization results in both temporal and symbolic decontextualization. Offline rituals are associated with particular cultural calendars and cosmological cycles, whereas digital rituals can be accessed at any moment and repeated without the constraints of cultural rhythms. This reinforces the notion that digital representations of rituals should not be conflated with the actual practice of rituals, despite their shared musical components (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

4.2 Platform Algorithm and Production of a New Symbolic Position System

Within the digital space, platform algorithms transcend their function as mere technical instruments. Instead, they operate as mediating agents, actively contributing to the generation, organization, and dissemination of the symbolic value of cultural practices, such as ritual music. Consistent with the perspectives presented by Bucher (2018) and Gillespie (2014), algorithms currently function as cultural instruments that influence preferences, hierarchies, and visibility standards, thus playing a crucial role in defining what is deemed valuable, relevant, and deserving of attention within the digital public sphere. Within the framework of ritual music, the significance of these algorithms is heightened as they present a novel evaluative logic that diverges fundamentally from the traditional mechanisms of ritual legitimacy, which are deeply embedded in the social and cosmological frameworks of communities. Algorithms tend to prioritize content that aligns with engagement parameters such as short duration, attractive visuals, easily captured emotional intensity, and narratives that can be understood cross-culturally, thus encouraging the emergence of what can be called algorithmic legitimacy, namely a form of legitimacy generated through calculations of visibility and audience response, and running parallel to the legitimacy of community-based rituals.

An analysis of live ritual practices alongside their portrayals in digital environments uncovers essential distinctions in the dynamics of engagement, evaluation, and the construction of meaning. Ritual practices conducted offline typically engage a small group of participants, yet they require profound and complex involvement. This engagement includes physical dedication, emotional investment, and the assimilation of symbolic knowledge, which is developed through a long-term process of socialization (Harnish & Rasmussen, 2011). This form of participation is performative and situational, associated with a particular space, time, and sacred setting that cannot be entirely reproduced through digital media. Conversely, engagement among audiences in digital environments tends to be extensive yet superficial, a phenomenon that certain scholars describe as low-intensity engagement. This pattern is marked by a significant volume of views and likes, yet it exhibits a lack of meaningful engagement or symbolic conversation, as indicated by the low ratio of comments on ritual content shared across digital platforms (Artadi & Suardana, 2025). In this context, visual consumption becomes the dominant form of participation, while the social relations and communitarian ties that underpin rituals are diminished.

This situation underscores the notion that the significance of ritual music within digital environments is now shaped not by internal community acknowledgment, but by algorithmic calculations endorsed by external platform mechanisms (Prey, 2020; Striphas, 2015). Algorithms serve as external validators that influence the visibility and dissemination of content, thereby indirectly shaping audience perceptions regarding which ritual practices are deemed representative, popular, or worthy of consumption. This reflects a transition in the locus of symbolic significance, moving from ritualistic figures and institutions to technological systems that function according to data-driven logic and anticipated user actions.

Within the context of deep mediatization, this phenomenon signifies that social practices, including rituals, are no longer merely mediated by media; instead, they transpire with and through digital media as an integral component of the social environment itself (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Within this framework, digital media function not merely as a medium for representation, but also play a significant role in influencing the structure of experience, patterns of interaction, and the perception of ritual practices. The role of rituals thus evolves to be more performative and perceptual, influenced by their visual presentation, narrative simplification, and dissemination across a global, asynchronous, and standardized platform system. This performativity does not inherently diminish the sacred significance of rituals; rather, it generates additional layers of meaning that tend to be more accessible to a broader audience, albeit at the risk of symbolic oversimplification.

Further analysis indicates that the production of symbolic positions through algorithms highlights a

differentiation between contextual ritual knowledge and quantitative platform knowledge. Ritual knowledge is formed through experience, direct participation, and cosmological comprehension that resist reduction to numerical forms, whereas algorithmic knowledge functions through metrics and statistical patterns that translate cultural practices into data. This distinction does not always lead to open conflict, but rather presents as an implicit negotiation in how communities and audiences understand the value and legitimacy of ritual music in the digital age.

4.3 Transformation of Cultural and Symbolic Capital in Ritual Music

The reconstruction of ritual legitimacy within digital space significantly influences the evolution of cultural and symbolic capital in ritual music. Within Pierre Bourdieu's foundational framework, cultural capital is conceptualized as a form of knowledge, competence, and dispositions acknowledged within a specific social field (Bourdieu, 1984 [25]). In the field of ritual music, the accumulation of cultural capital typically occurs through sustained practice, the passing down of knowledge across generations, and active participation in ritual settings. This form of capital is embedded into the social dynamics of a community and resists easy transference beyond its initial setting. This study, however, demonstrates how the existence of digital platforms generates a new area of assessment in which online visibility serves as a new kind of cultural capital. Research across various contexts indicates that ritual content characterized by brevity and high visual quality often generates markedly higher engagement levels compared to comprehensive ritual documentation, despite the latter being regarded as more authentic by the originating community (Artadi & Suardana, 2025). This situation enables individuals with restricted ritual legitimacy to amass what may be referred to as platform-based cultural capital.

This transformation significantly influences the understanding of authenticity. Gillespie (2014) describes this phenomenon as the dual authenticity regime, wherein community-based and algorithm-based authenticity coexist, though not always in alignment. In the second system, authenticity is established not by internal social mechanisms, but instead through consistent exposure and validation of popularity metrics. Couldry & Hepp (2017) demonstrate that a significant segment of global audiences links authentic traditional music with content that often populates their homepages, rather than with institutional sources or indigenous communities.

Empirical evidence indicates that practitioners of ritual music exhibit reflexive responses to the demands of algorithmic visibility. Gillespie (2014) examines the non-neutral nature of algorithms on digital platforms, highlighting their role in regulating content visibility and influencing the social and cultural practices that are shaped to align with the platform's logic. This adaptation enhances digital outreach while concurrently presenting symbolic challenges concerning the limits of authenticity and the commodification of ritual. Consequently, the cultural significance of ritual music in the contemporary digital landscape is characterized by its dynamic nature, relational aspects, and ongoing negotiation within the context of community values and the principles of digital media (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).

4.4 Hybridization of Ritual Practices from the Aspects of Continuity, Negotiation and Cultural Agency

Hybrid ritual practices should not be regarded simply as compromises to digitalization, but rather as adaptive strategies deliberately devised by local communities to preserve the integrity of meaning, structure, and symbolic significance within an evolving media environment. In this context, hybridization denotes the differentiation and segmentation of roles between authentic ritual practices and the intentional, curated portrayals of these rituals within digital spaces. The separation of roles enables communities to regulate the public visibility of certain elements of the ritual, while concurrently safeguarding sacred aspects considered unsuitable or not intended for broad exposure. Research conducted in diverse Southeast Asian settings reveals that digital representations of rituals typically capture only specific segments, like the introductory part, musical interludes, or peak sonic moments, whereas the complete framework of the ritual, encompassing its sacred phases and cosmological connections, remains actively performed within the communal environment (Harnish & Rasmussen, 2011).

Within this framework, ritual music functions across two concurrent yet distinct domains of significance. Within the communal sphere, ritual persists as a sacred experience that embodies both performative and cosmological elements, wherein the significance of sound is inextricably linked to the contextual dimensions of space, time, and the social and spiritual relationships that surround it. This function underscores the ongoing nature of ritual as a vibrant and significant cultural practice for the community that upholds it. In contrast, within the digital landscape, ritual music is viewed as a reflection of cultural identity, an educational tool, or a source of aesthetic inspiration for a diverse and expansive audience, frequently lacking a direct link to the ritual's cosmological framework (Cocq & Liliequist, 2024). The difference in meaning domains does not signify a reduction of ritual importance; instead, it illustrates the evolution of ritual music's role within a media-saturated social environment.

The presence of various meanings indicates that ritual communities perceive digitalization not merely as a singular threat to the preservation of tradition, but instead as a platform for negotiation that can be strategically utilized.   Communities engage actively with the potential for visibility, documentation, and cultural acknowledgment provided by digital platforms, all the while setting symbolic boundaries concerning what is permissible to display. This negotiation frequently appears in the practices of content curation, the selection of visual perspectives, the simplification of narratives, and the exclusion of ritual elements considered too sacred for public exhibition. Consequently, ritual hybridization emerges as an active and deliberate process, shaped by thoughtful and contextually informed cultural choices.

Moreover, the hybridization of ritual practices illustrates a manifestation of community cultural agency in response to the cultural platformization that often leads to the standardization and homogenization of representation. Through the careful management of sacred meanings within their internal contexts and the strategic use of digital platforms for cultural preservation and visibility, ritual communities exhibit a capacity to navigate through the challenges posed by media globalization while retaining their symbolic independence. This agency illustrates that the process of digital transformation does not inherently result in the decline of traditional practices; rather, it can foster innovative forms of sustainability that are both dynamic and subject to negotiation. Within this framework, ritual hybridization emerges as a cultural practice that connects continuity with transformation, while also reinforcing the community's proactive role in redefining the interplay among ritual, media, and audience in the contemporary digital landscape.

5. Conclusion

The transformation of traditional ritual music in Indonesia during the digital age has led to complex and multifaceted dynamics. The status that was once rooted in community legitimacy, inherited knowledge, and sacred ritual contexts must now contend with the principles of algorithmic visibility fostered by digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. The measurement of popular ritual music content has evolved to include quantitative metrics like views, likes, and shares. This shift has led to the emergence of new forms of legitimacy rooted in digital popularity, which frequently diverge from or intersect with traditional notions of legitimacy.

The analysis indicate that ritual music currently functions within a hybrid space, where sacred and contextual practices endure in communities. However, their representations in digital environments are often decontextualized, visually simplified, and broadly consumed, resulting in a reduction of meaningful depth for global audiences. Algorithms on platforms serve as influential intermediaries, significantly influencing the structures of value and visibility, thereby transferring the locus of authority from conventional entities to technological systems. This establishes a dual framework of positioning that juxtaposes community-oriented authenticity with algorithm-driven authenticity, thereby converting cultural capital into a commodity that can be accumulated through digital performance. Nevertheless, traditional communities are not simply passive participants in this process. By implementing targeted curation methods, maintaining sacred boundaries, and intentionally adapting content, they illustrate their cultural agency in addressing the challenges posed by platformization. The resulting hybridization is not merely a compromise, but a deliberate endeavor to preserve the integrity of ritual significance while leveraging the potential for documentation, education, and cultural acknowledgment afforded by digital platforms. Consequently, the evolution of ritual music's role in the digital age illustrates the continuous negotiation among traditional values, technological frameworks, and community involvement in preserving cultural heritage in the face of unavoidable social transformations. Future research could examine how variations in algorithmic logics across digital platforms generate distinct regimes of visibility and legitimacy for ritual music practices. Comparative and cross regional studies would further illuminate how different cultural communities negotiate authority, authetcity and sacred boundaries under platform specific conditions. Longitudinal approaches are also needed to assess how sustained digital mediation reshapes intergenerational transmission and the cultural meanings of ritual music over time.

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