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The Nyai Endorsement Phenomenon and the Ethos of Simple Living in Pesantren: Navigating Religious Identity in the Age of Digital Consumerism

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Abstract

The emergence of influencers from Islamic boarding school nyai circles who are active in endorsement activities is a new phenomenon that is quite interesting to study. Nyai's character, which is usually used as a means of Islamic preaching, is now being used in economic battles. Nyai, as role models for students and society in general, should display attitudes and behaviors that are in accordance with the teachings in Islamic boarding schools. However, in practice, Nyai endorsements actually appear to display a hedonistic lifestyle that is contrary to the value of simplicity. Based on this anxiety, researchers conducted a study on the practice of endorsing nyai on social media, as well as its impact on the concept of simple living taught in Islamic boarding schools. To analyze and answer this question, researchers collaborated on Vincent Mosco's commodification theory and Pierre Bourdieu's capital theory. This research is included in a phenomenological study with a qualitative research type. Data was obtained by conducting interviews and collecting documents. The results of the research show that in endorsement activities there were efforts to commodify the symbolic capital of the nyai as the kiai's wife/daughter. Apart from that, efforts were also found to commodify the Nyai's cultural capital, which included the Nyai's knowledge, her honest personality, and her skills in styling fashion that was trendy but still in accordance with the Shari'a. From these endorsement activities, it was found that there was an impact on the concept of simple living taught in Islamic boarding schools. Nyai's endorsement has been proven to be able to influence the consumption decisions of students who follow her, although not significantly enough

Key Word:

Nyai Ngendorse,
Styish in Pesantren
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INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of internet usage has fundamentally transformed virtually every dimension of human life, shifting activities and interactions from physical to virtual spaces. This transition has generated numerous unprecedented opportunities,

including those of an economic nature. According to survey data published by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia/APJII), internet users in Indonesia reached 215.63 million individuals during the 2022–2023 period, representing 78.19% of the total national population. This figure rose further to 221,563,479 users by February 2024, accounting for 79.5% of Indonesia's population (APJII, 2024). These statistics are remarkably significant and help explain the accelerating migration of commercial activities from offline markets to digital platforms.

The volume of online business activity has grown consistently year on year. As of December 2020, the proportion of businesses utilizing e-commerce stood at 25.25% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020), rising to 32.23% in December 2021 and further to 34.10% in September 2022 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). This growth trajectory has been facilitated not only by the expanding internet user base but also by increasingly mature digital infrastructure and the growing ease and speed of online transactions.

Various platforms are available to support online business operations, ranging from marketplace applications such as Shopee, Lazada, and Tokopedia, to social media platforms including TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, as well as company-specific websites and mobile applications. Based on the researchers' observation, two primary modes of platform utilization can be identified: promotional use and transactional use. Transactional functions are typically served by marketplace platforms, official websites, or proprietary applications, whereas promotional activities are predominantly conducted through social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook.

Social media penetration data in Indonesia further underscore the commercial significance of these platforms. According to data published by Kompas.com in 2023, WhatsApp leads as the most widely used platform with 92.1% user penetration, followed by Instagram at 86.5%, Facebook at 83.8%, and TikTok at 70.8% (Saskia and Nistanto, 2023). Given this extensive reach, social media platforms represent a highly strategic arena for businesses seeking to expand product awareness and drive consumer engagement.

Beyond the availability of social media platforms, promotional strategies frequently involve the engagement of influential figures to introduce products to broader audiences — a practice widely known as endorsement. As reported by money.kompas.com, endorsement in the advertising context involves leveraging the social authority of prominent individuals to attract consumers, capitalizing on the tendency of followers to emulate the behaviors and lifestyles of their admired figures (Idris, 2021).

Initially, the endorsement landscape in Indonesia was dominated by celebrities and social media influencers (selebgram). However, since approximately 2019, a new

category of endorsers has emerged: Nyai from pesantren (Islamic boarding school) institutions. This development is closely linked to the heightened public visibility of pesantren communities following the official declaration of Hari Santri Nasional (National Islamic Boarding School Student Day) in 2015. The public profiles of Nyai, Kiai, Ning, and Gus — traditional authority figures within the pesantren ecosystem — have since gained considerable popularity, not only among santri (students of pesantren) but also among segments of the broader public. It is precisely this social prominence that constitutes the foundational capital for their involvement in endorsement practices.

The participation of pesantren Nyai in commercial endorsement activities represents a novel and analytically significant phenomenon for several reasons. First, individuals who hold the title of Nyai are traditionally recognized for their role in Islamic proselytization (*dakwah islamiyah*), and this title has not historically been deployed for economic ends. Second, as role models for santri and the wider Muslim community, Nyai are expected to embody conduct consistent with pesantren teachings. In this regard, the endorsement practices of certain Nyai figures in Java and Madura appear to project a lifestyle that is, at least ostensibly, incongruent with one of the core values of pesantren education: the ethos of simple living (*hidup sederhana*).

Motivated by this tension, the present study investigates the endorsement practices among Nyai, with particular focus on: (1) the forms of capital that underpin their success in this domain, and (2) the implications of such practices for the concept of simple living as a foundational value within pesantren culture.

Previous scholarship on endorsement among Nyai figures includes a study by Suaibatul Alamiah titled "Endorsement Para 'Ning' di Instagram: Perempuan Dalam Kapitalisme Media dan Komodifikasi Agama" (Endorsement Among 'Ning' on Instagram: Women in Media Capitalism and the Commodification of Religion), which documented the process of religious commodification within Nyai endorsement practices. The present study extends this inquiry by examining the specific modalities of capital that are commodified in the endorsement process, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital.

Bourdieu conceptualizes capital as accumulated labor, manifested either in material or embodied form, internalized within an individual (Ginting, 2017). Capital constitutes a highly valued resource that agents compete to possess within a given field, offering advantages commensurate with the degree to which it is held (Aslamiyah, 2020). In Bourdieu's framework, capital is the primary determinant of an agent's capacity to dominate a particular field (Ginting, 2019). In the context of Nyai endorsement, the relevant field is the economic domain — specifically, the marketplace.

Bourdieu identifies three principal forms of capital. Economic capital refers to material and financial resources, including income and inherited wealth. Cultural capital encompasses individual competencies independent of direct social interaction, such as knowledge, skills, cultural values, religious authority, normative dispositions, and hereditary talents. Symbolic capital pertains to an individual's standing within a social group, including social networks and reputational authority.

Drawing on this theoretical framework, the present study examines the endorsement practices of Nyai by identifying the forms of capital they possess and deploy, and by analyzing the process through which these capitals are commodified to gain market influence. To analyze this commodification process, the study employs the commodification theory advanced by Vincent Mosco.

Mosco defines commodification as the process of transforming goods and services valued for their use-value into commodities valued for their exchange-value within the market (Ibrahim and Akhmad, 2014). In essence, commodification refers to the process by which entities lacking market value are converted into sources of material gain.

While Mosco's commodification theory was originally developed in relation to media commodification rather than capital commodification per se, the researchers identify a significant point of theoretical convergence, given that Nyai endorsement activities are primarily conducted through Instagram. The subsequent sections of this article will elucidate how the social capitals possessed by Nyai are strategically processed and presented through social media within endorsement activities to generate economic returns.

To adequately assess the impact of Nyai endorsement on the concept of simple living as taught in pesantren, it is first necessary to establish a scholarly and indigenous understanding of simplicity. In the classical Islamic ethics text *Durusul Akhlaq*, simplicity is rendered by the term *al-iqtishad*, defined as the middle path between extravagance and miserliness in financial expenditure (Al-Mas'udi, n.d.).

The Indonesian Islamic scholar Hamka conceptualizes simple living as behavior calibrated to one's actual circumstances. Simple living is frequently equated with a minimalist lifestyle — one that prioritizes the fulfillment of essential needs such as nutritious food, shelter, education, and healthcare.

An additional perspective is offered by Gus Mus in his call to the public to embrace simple living in the tradition of revered scholars such as Kiai Ali Maksum. In this exhortation, Gus Mus urges the avoidance of extravagant lifestyles and advocates for proportionate engagement with material resources (Musyarrofah and Fathoni, 2015).

Furthermore, Kiai Marzuki Mustamar, in a lecture on the theme of simple living, cited the following passage from an unspecified classical Islamic text (kitab kuning): "Spending all one's wealth is commendable as an act in the path of God (fi sabilillah), with the exception of construction." He clarified that the exception pertains to structures that are seldom utilized and exceed the legitimate needs of the owner, thereby lacking any meaningful benefit (manfaat) (Mustamar, 2020).

Synthesizing the above perspectives, simplicity may be understood as a proportionate and balanced mode of living – neither wasteful nor miserly, but guided by genuine need and sufficiency.

This study aims to contribute to the scholarly field of pesantren sociology by examining the evolving role of Nyai figures in the contemporary era, a role no longer confined to religious education and proselytization as in earlier periods. Additionally, the study offers critical insights into the implications of the Nyai endorsement phenomenon for the distinctive value of simplicity that has long defined pesantren culture.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative field research design. This methodological approach was selected to enable a broad and in-depth examination of the *Nyai* endorsement phenomenon as it naturally occurs, unencumbered by the rigid structural constraints characteristic of quantitative research designs. With respect to the second research question, the study seeks not only to assess the extent to which the *Nyai* endorsement phenomenon affects the *pesantren* teaching of simple living, but also to examine the specific forms that this impact takes. A qualitative approach is therefore deemed most appropriate for addressing the complexity and contextual nuance inherent in this inquiry.

Research data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected directly from *Nyai* who engage in endorsement activities, with the aim of understanding the process by which they receive endorsement offers, their motivations for participating, and related dimensions of their practice. Primary data were also derived from endorsement posts published by *Nyai* on Instagram, including follower comments, in order to gauge the degree of audience engagement with the endorsed products.

In addition to primary data, secondary data were gathered from documents and existing literature relevant to the research themes, including books, theses, journal articles, and other scholarly sources.

Regarding sampling strategy, this study employs non-probability sampling — a technique in which not all members of the population have an equal probability of being selected as research participants (Sugiyono, 2018). This approach is appropriate given that not all *Nyai* who are active on Instagram engage in endorsement activities. Furthermore, as the scope of this study is specifically delimited to the endorsement of products that are visibly incongruent with the value of simple living, not all endorsing *Nyai* necessarily promote products associated with a hedonistic lifestyle.

Data were collected through a combination of two techniques: interviews and documentation. With regard to interviews, the primary objective of this study is to identify how the identity capital of a *Nyai* is leveraged in endorsement activities and to examine the implications of such activities for the *pesantren* ethos of simple living — particularly given that the continuous promotion of consumer goods appears, at least superficially, to be at odds with this foundational value. The interview technique was considered most suitable for probing the utilization of identity capital and its relationship to the teaching of simplicity.

Unstructured interviews were employed as the primary interview format. The researchers prepared only broad guiding questions, allowing the conversation to develop organically in response to the information and insights offered by participants. This approach was intended to maximize flexibility, enabling deeper and more nuanced data elicitation. Care was nonetheless taken to maintain the boundaries of the research scope, ensuring that the interview process remained aligned with the study's objectives. Research participants consisted of endorsing *Nyai* and their respective followers.

With regard to documentation, given that the primary data for this study are located on Instagram, the documentation technique assumed considerable importance. The majority of relevant data are embedded within the Instagram accounts of endorsing *Nyai*, encompassing the categories of endorsed products, their prices, patterns of follower engagement, and related content.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984), which stipulates that qualitative data analysis should commence during the data collection phase itself, through continuous and iterative engagement with interview data until saturation is achieved. Following data collection, three analytical stages were undertaken. The first stage involves *data reduction*, which entails summarizing and systematically selecting data relevant to the research questions while discarding extraneous material. The second stage involves *data display*, in which the reduced data are presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation; at this stage, the researchers simultaneously analyze and interrogate the data in relation to the theoretical frameworks outlined earlier in this article. The third stage involves *conclusion drawing*,

in which the researchers present their final interpretations and conclusions based on the preceding stages of data presentation and analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Typology and Motivations of Nyai Endorsement

Based on field observations conducted on Instagram, the Nyai endorsement phenomenon began to emerge around 2019, encompassing a diverse range of product categories including clothing, hijab, skincare, cosmetics, books, perfume, and food and beverages. Among these categories, fashion products — particularly garments and hijab — constitute the dominant segment of Nyai endorsement activity.

Two analytical criteria were applied to construct a typology of Nyai endorsement practices: the origin of the endorsed product and the Nyai's willingness to accept material compensation. Based on these criteria, three types of Nyai endorser were identified. The first type promotes exclusively UMKM products and declines all forms of compensation, motivated purely by the desire to support others' livelihoods. The second type similarly promotes UMKM products but accepts financial remuneration or product samples in return. The third type extends endorsement activities beyond UMKM products to include established commercial brands, accepting compensation in both cases. Regarding product selection criteria, some Nyai apply no specific filter, while others restrict endorsements to products aligned with their account theme and ensure all endorsed items are religiously permissible. The altruistic character of Type 1 endorsement is captured in the following statement:

"I do not open myself for endorsements. It is merely promotion for relatives — some are friends, some are family. But it is purely to help them, because I never take a fee." (Nyai SH)

Interview data further revealed three motivational patterns underlying endorsement participation. The most widely shared motivation is altruistic support for others' businesses, acknowledged by all three Nyai informants. A second motivation is the pursuit of personal creative interests, while financial compensation constitutes a third factor, acknowledged selectively by informants who accept payment though not uniformly across all endorsement engagements.

Effectiveness of Nyai Endorsement in Driving Sales

Field investigation revealed a particularly notable pattern within the Nawaning Nusantara community, whereby Nyai routinely engage in mutual endorsement of each other's products. Several Nyai informants are simultaneously product owners whose merchandise is actively promoted by fellow Nyai. Nyai RI, for instance, owns the Aldeya Hijab brand, whose products have been endorsed by Nyai FA.



Figure 1.

Nyai FA's Instagram post endorsing Aldeya Hijab products owned by Nyai RI.

Nyai US, proprietor of Akaihana Butik, has similarly had her hijab and perfume products endorsed across multiple Nyai accounts, including those of Nyai VNN, Nyai DF, and Nyai NA.



Figure 2.

Multiple Instagram endorsement posts of Akaihana Butik products by Nyai endorsers.

Nyai VNN herself operates a business in the accessories sector and typically distributes her products to fellow Nyai as gifts, who subsequently post about the products on their own accounts.



Figure 3.

Documentation of mutual endorsement activity among Nyai within the Nawaning Nusantara community on Instagram.

Independent evidence of endorsement effectiveness was obtained from the administrator of a beauty product store, whose products have been endorsed by both Nyai and mainstream selebgram. The administrator confirmed that Nyai endorsements produced sales increases comparable to — and in certain instances exceeding — those generated by non-religious influencers. Nyai NN similarly reported receiving direct feedback from a product owner confirming that an abaya she endorsed sold more than 80 units, to the point that the owner was overwhelmed by the volume of orders. The effectiveness of the mutual endorsement network is succinctly confirmed by the following: "*We usually endorse each other. It can increase sales.*" (Nyai VNN)

These findings collectively indicate that Nyai endorsement constitutes an effective sales-driving mechanism, which accounts for the appointment of several Nyai — including Nyai UF, Nyai NA, and Nyai CN — as brand ambassadors for specific products.

Santri Consumer Responses to Nyai Endorsement

To assess the influence of Nyai endorsement on pesantren values, the study examined how santri engage with endorsed content and make subsequent purchasing decisions. Field data from six santri informants produced three distinct engagement

patterns. The first pattern involves low social media engagement with no purchasing activity, characteristic of informants who follow Nyai accounts selectively for religious content and moral guidance, with no attention directed toward endorsed products. The second pattern involves low engagement alongside occasional purchasing, where buying decisions are driven more by direct offline interaction with Nyai than by Instagram content exposure. The third pattern involves high engagement with occasional purchasing, whereby Nyai endorsement posts primarily influence fashion styling choices rather than direct purchasing decisions, as reflected in the following account:

"It is very helpful as a reference for OOTD. From the Nawaning, the style works and the modesty standards are met. A tunic does not have to be paired with trousers — it turns out it also looks beautiful with a pleated skirt or denim skirt." (SK)

A comprehensive overview of santri purchasing behavior and consumption motivations is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Summary of Santri Consumer Behavior and Motivations in Response to Nyai Endorsement

Initials	Purchase Frequency			Consumption Motivation		
	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Need-based	Interest-based	Style imitation
SK		✓			✓	✓
HS		✓			✓	
FN	✓			—	—	—
FIN	✓			—	—	—
MS		✓			✓	✓
FA		✓		✓		

Table 1 shows that of six santri informants, four reported making occasional purchases of endorsed products while two had never done so. Among those who purchased, only one informant cited need as the primary motivation; the remaining three attributed their decisions to personal attraction to the product or the desire to emulate Nyai styling. No informant reported frequent purchasing behavior. These findings provide the empirical foundation for the theoretical analysis presented in the Discussion section.

Discussion

Commodification of Nyai Capital in the Social Media Endorsement Market

The emergence of *Nyai* as endorsers on Instagram constitutes a theoretically significant development that merits examination beyond the surface level of commercial activity. Situated at the intersection of religious authority and digital economy, this phenomenon reflects a broader pattern of reconfiguration that Islamic religious authority has undergone in the age of social media. Raya (2025) documents how digital platforms have created new spaces for religious commodification among Indonesian Islamic preachers, wherein traditional authority becomes intertwined with algorithmic visibility and market logic. The *Nyai* endorsement phenomenon is best understood as a local instantiation of this wider dynamic, distinguished by the specific character of *pesantren*-based religious authority and the social architecture of the *Nawaning* community network.

Applying Bourdieu's capital theory to this phenomenon, it is evident that the competitive advantage *Nyai* possess in the endorsement market is not reducible to a single form of capital, but emerges from a layered configuration in which symbolic and cultural capitals operate through distinct mechanisms. Bourdieu's fundamental proposition — that an agent's capacity to dominate a given field is determined by the volume and composition of capital they possess (Ginting, 2019) — finds clear empirical support in the *Nyai* case, though with an important qualification: not all capitals contribute equally to the commodification process, and their effects operate at different stages of the consumer engagement chain. This aligns with Ignatow and Robinson's (2017) extension of Bourdieusian sociology to the digital sphere, which holds that capital compositions must be reread in relation to the specific logics of digital platforms.

Symbolic capital — derived from the *Nyai*'s privileged social position as the wife or daughter of a *kiai* — functions primarily as an initial audience attractor. Hidayah and Arifi (2017) note that within the *pesantren* tradition, the role of *Nyai* as co-leaders of Islamic educational institutions commands a level of social esteem equivalent to that accorded to the *kiai* himself, making *Nyai* figures natural objects of public admiration. Yet this study's findings suggest that symbolic capital alone generates insufficient market leverage, a conclusion consistent with Mears' (2023) analysis of social media content production fields, which demonstrates that the value of attention is not uniform but differentiated according to its conversion potential into economic and symbolic gain. Symbolic prestige attracts followers, but does not by itself convert attention into purchasing behavior.

Cultural capital, by contrast, operates more deeply and with more direct commercial consequences. Religious scholarship — understood here as institutionalized cultural

capital in Bourdieu's sense — endows *Nyai* with a distinctive credibility that distinguishes them from mainstream social media influencers. Azhari (2024) argues that in the context of Madurese *pesantren* leadership, *Nyai* are perceived as bearers of knowledge authority precisely because of their immersive formation within the *pesantren* educational tradition. This perception of trustworthiness is directly consequential for endorsement effectiveness. Multiple studies in influencer marketing literature confirm that source credibility — comprising trustworthiness and expertise — is among the strongest predictors of purchase intention and brand trust (Lucassen and Faseur, 2024; Vrontis et al., 2021). Critically, *Nyai* trustworthiness is not constructed through the deliberate personal branding strategies typical of mainstream influencers, but is rather an attribute transferred from the religious domain. This makes it, paradoxically, more credible: it is perceived as intrinsic rather than performed, a distinction that Dinh et al. (2023) identify as central to the persuasive advantage of authentic influencers over celebrity endorsers.

The cultural capital of modest fashion competence adds a further, distinct dimension. Karakavak and Özbölük (2023) demonstrate that social media influencers have become central agents in redefining the cultural meaning of *hijab*, transforming it from a purely religious marker into a fashion identity resource. *Nyai* endorsers occupy a unique position within this dynamic: they combine religious legitimacy with fashion relevance, offering *santriwati* a framework for navigating the intersection of modesty and contemporary aesthetics that neither purely secular fashion influencers nor purely religious figures can provide.

The commodification process through which these capitals acquire exchange-value is mediated by Instagram's platform logic and best analyzed through Mosco's three-dimensional model of media commodification (Ibrahim and Akhmad, 2014). Within the endorsement ecosystem, *Nyai* operate simultaneously as workers and as content — their accumulated cultural and symbolic capitals are translated into digital content that generates follower networks. These followers constitute the audience commodity that product owners seek to access, a mechanism structurally identical to what Schwarz (2021, as cited in Mears, 2023) theorizes as "follower capital" — a form of heteronomous capital in the digital field that can be converted into economic value. The study's findings further reveal that this conversion process is not exclusively market-initiated: mutual endorsement practices within the *Nawaning Nusantara* community demonstrate that *pesantren* social networks themselves function as a form of what Dhofier (2019) identified as *kiai* kinship networks, now digitally extended and commercially activated. This observation extends Aslamiyah's (2020) earlier findings on religious commodification in

Nyai endorsement by demonstrating that the commodification dynamic is not merely individual but structurally embedded in *pesantren* community architecture.

***Nyai* Endorsement and the *Pesantren* Ethos of Simple Living: Between Tension and Equilibrium**

The normative question of whether *Nyai* endorsement activity is compatible with the *pesantren* value of simple living requires, as a precondition, conceptual precision about what simplicity means within the Islamic ethical tradition. Across classical and contemporary Islamic scholarship, the concept is consistently articulated not as material minimalism or aesthetic austerity, but as proportionate, need-calibrated consumption — what Furqani (2017) characterizes as Islam's foundational principle of moderation in consumption, steering the believer away from both *israf* (extravagance) and excessive restriction. This is consistent with the classical formulation in *Durusul Akhlaq al-iqtishad* (Al-Mas'udi, n.d.), Hamka's concept of behavior aligned with one's genuine conditions (Saputro, 2023), and Kiai Marzuki Mustamar's teaching that expenditure must not exceed genuine necessity (Mustamar, 2020). Hanapi et al. (2019) further articulate this through the Qur'anic concept of *wasatiyyah* — the principle of balanced, moderate conduct — as the overarching ethical framework governing Muslim consumer behavior.

Operationalizing this framework, this study identifies the decisive criterion for evaluating *Nyai* endorsement's impact not as product price or purchase volume, but as the motivational basis of purchasing decisions. This methodological choice is theoretically grounded: studies on Islamic consumption ethics consistently argue that the ethical significance of a consumption act cannot be assessed from its observable outcome alone, but must account for the agent's intention and the degree to which the consumption addresses genuine need (Furqani, 2017; Pusparini et al., 2024). The finding that three of four purchasing *santri* informants cited attraction rather than need as their primary motivation is analytically significant against this backdrop. Consumer behavior literature extensively documents that social media influencers stimulate desire-based consumption by creating aspirational identification between followers and endorsers (Vrontis et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2024). This mechanism does not disappear when the endorser is a religious figure; rather, it is complicated by the additional layer of moral authority the endorser carries — an authority that may, in certain respects, lower the follower's critical evaluation of the purchase decision, given the trust asymmetry between *Nyai* and *santri*.

Nevertheless, a nuanced assessment of the study's overall findings resists a straightforwardly negative verdict. The volume and frequency of desire-motivated purchases remain modest across all informants, suggesting that while the endorsement

environment creates conditions structurally conducive to consumptive behavior, its actual behavioral impact is constrained by a range of countervailing factors: budget limitations, general distrust of online transactions, and the continued operation of need-based reasoning in purchasing decisions. This finding partially challenges the assumed linearity between influencer exposure and consumer behavior change, aligning instead with Islam and Lim's (2023) argument that the relationship between modesty, social media, and consumption is mediated by complex identity negotiations that cannot be reduced to straightforward influence. The *santri* audience is not passive; *pesantren* value formation creates forms of consumer self-regulation that attenuate — though do not neutralize — the consumptive pull of endorsement exposure.

A further dimension that complicates any categorical negative judgment is the positive cultural function performed by *Nyai* endorsers within the contemporary fashion landscape. Karakavak and Özbölük (2023) document the growing significance of *hijab*-wearing influencers as cultural mediators between Islamic modesty norms and contemporary fashion trends; *Nyai* endorsers occupy an especially authoritative position within this mediating role, given the institutional legitimacy that distinguishes them from ordinary Muslim fashion influencers. As sustainable consumer behavior literature notes, fashion choices among Muslim consumers are deeply intertwined with religious identity expression and are subject to considerable external influence from digital platforms (Abdullah et al., 2024; Karakavak and Özbölük, 2023). In this context, the presence of *Nyai* as fashion reference points serves a normative anchoring function, providing *santriwati* with guidance that integrates *shari'a* compliance with aesthetic contemporaneity — a resource that is particularly valuable as *pesantren* communities navigate the competing influences of digital modernity. Additionally, the endorsement activities of *Nyai* contribute to the commercial development of *UMKM* enterprises within the *pesantren* economic ecosystem, a contribution that carries social and economic significance beyond the immediate commercial transaction.

Taken together, the findings of this study suggest that *Nyai* endorsement occupies a genuinely ambiguous position relative to the *pesantren* ethos of simple living: it introduces structural conditions that may predispose some *santri* to desire-based consumption — a tendency that stands in measurable tension with the *al-iqtishad* principle — yet does so without producing systematic or sustained departure from that ethos in observable behavior. The theoretical significance of this ambiguity lies in what it reveals about the contested relationship between religious authority and commercial culture in the Indonesian digital public sphere: religious capital is genuinely commodifiable, yet the commodification process does not straightforwardly erode the normative frameworks that originally generated that capital's social value.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine two interrelated questions: the forms of capital that underpin *Nyai* endorsement practices on Instagram, and the implications of those practices for the *pesantren* concept of simple living. The findings yield conclusions on both fronts.

With respect to the first question, *Nyai* endorsement activity is sustained by a multi-layered configuration of symbolic and cultural capitals that are deeply rooted in the *pesantren* tradition. Symbolic capital — derived from the *Nyai*'s privileged social standing as the wife or daughter of a *kiai* — functions primarily as an initial audience attractor, generating follower networks that product owners subsequently seek to access. Cultural capital, comprising religious scholarly credibility, personal trustworthiness, and modest fashion competence, operates more consequentially: it drives sustained audience accumulation and, critically, directly influences consumer purchasing decisions. The commodification of these capitals is mediated by Instagram's platform architecture, through which capitals originally endowed with purely social and religious use-value are transformed into exchange-value through the mechanisms of worker, content, and audience commodification as theorized by Mosco. A distinctive feature of this commodification process is its partly structural character — *Nyai* who produce religious content without commercial intent nonetheless accumulate the follower assets that external market actors seek to mobilize, positioning them as largely passive repositories of capital rather than active market agents.

With respect to the second question, the influence of *Nyai* endorsement on the *pesantren* ethos of simple living is assessed as moderate and not systematically disruptive. While the iterative nature of endorsement activity creates structural conditions conducive to desire-based consumption — a tendency measurably at odds with the *al-iqtishad* principle of need-calibrated expenditure — the practical manifestation of this tendency among *santri* informants remains limited in both frequency and volume. Equally significant is the positive cultural function performed by *Nyai* endorsers, who provide *santriwati* with a reliable reference point for *shari'a*-compliant fashion navigation amid intensifying digital modernization, while simultaneously contributing to the commercial development of *pesantren*-affiliated *UMKM* enterprises.

Several implications follow from these findings for both scholarship and practice. Theoretically, this study demonstrates the productive applicability of Bourdieu's capital theory and Mosco's commodification framework to the analysis of religious authority in digital media contexts, while extending existing literature on *Nyai* leadership beyond the domains of education and *dakwah* into the emerging field of *pesantren* digital economy. Practically, the findings suggest that *pesantren* institutions would benefit from developing structured guidelines governing *Nyai* endorsement practices — not to prohibit commercial participation, but to ensure that such participation remains consciously aligned with the *pesantren* values it implicitly represents. Future research is encouraged to expand the scope of this inquiry through larger and more geographically

diverse samples, to examine *Nyai* endorsement practices across different social media platforms beyond Instagram, and to explore the longer-term effects of sustained endorsement exposure on *santri* consumer identity and *pesantren* cultural transmission.

The conclusion constitutes approximately 10% of the entire article. This section provides the answer to the hypothesis and the results or findings of the research. The conclusion summarizes the research findings as related to the objectives or hypothesis. Implications are presented on issues that are urgent to be followed up as recommendations for further research.

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