

Social Media and Website Use by Muslim Organisations and Actors Across Diverse European Contexts

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Preliminary Results from the Digital Islam Across Europe
Research Project

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Abstract

This article presents preliminary findings from the Digital Islam Across Europe (DigitIslam) project, examining how Muslim organisations and actors utilise websites and social media across five European countries. Combining macro-level web archival analysis of approximately 1,000 websites with micro-level qualitative interviews and a quantitative survey of UK Muslim producers and users, the research investigates the distinct functions of digital platforms. At the European level, findings reveal that websites primarily serve formal, archival communication, while social media functions as the dominant tool for engagement and mobilisation, with notable national variations. In the UK, qualitative interviews demonstrate producers' strategic adaptation to platform-specific affordances, balancing curated websites with rapid social media interactions. Survey data indicates high daily social media consumption alongside continued trust in traditional offline authorities and structured online resources for authoritative religious knowledge. The study identifies a disconnect between institutional strategies and everyday user practices, contributing nuanced understanding of shifting religious authority in Online Islamic Environments.

Keywords: Digital Islam, social media, religious authority, Muslim organisations, Europe



Introduction: Contextualising Digital Islam Across Europe

This article examines the online activities and engagement of Muslim organisations and actors across different European contexts, drawing on preliminary findings from the Digital Islam Across Europe (DigitIslam) project. DigitIslam is a multi-country and multi-disciplinary research initiative exploring how Online Islamic Environments (OIEs)¹ shape Muslims' social and religious practices in diverse European contexts. Research teams worked in five countries: the United Kingdom, Poland, Sweden, Spain, and Lithuania. Funded by the Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe (CHANSE), the project ran from November 2022 to December 2025.² Its primary research themes included religious authority, gender, online–offline interactions, online behaviour, and transnational dynamics. The paper focuses on the everyday use of online tools (websites and social media) by Muslim organisations and actors (producers and users), situating these practices within broader transformations of religious authority in digital environments.

This approach builds on a substantial body of scholarship on digital religion and digital Islam. There has been a great deal of high-quality literature on the topic. Such research could not take place without the foundational work of Gary R. Bunt³ (2003 and 2009) and Heidi Campbell (2010 and 2012). Both have analysed the difference between website and social media use by religious organisations and actors. Bunt's early work showed that in the initial phase of internet adoption, Islamic websites were largely produced by and for relatively elite, web-literate audiences, though their influence could extend beyond these circles (2003, p. 206). He later distinguished between long-standing websites that cultivated stable online communities centred on religious dialogue and authority, and newer social-networking platforms that made it easier to create content, share multimedia, and build peer networks (2009, p. 45 & 48). In this earlier period, websites tended to be associated with established institutions, whereas social media platforms enabled alternative and sometimes contesting voices, contributing to the broader democratisation of religious knowledge (Campbell 2010, p. 34). Over time, however, this distinction has blurred, as official religious institutions have also adopted social media as part of their communication strategies (Campbell and Tsuria 2022, p.13).

Campbell's concept of the Religious–Social Shaping of Technology (RSST) offers a framework for understanding not only how religious communities use media, but also how they justify and integrate these technologies within their community boundaries (Campbell 2010, p. 15-16). Her later model of “networked religion” further explains how online

1 This is based around the term ‘cyber Islamic environments’ developed by Gary Bunt (2000, 2003, p.5) which he defines as “an umbrella term which can refer to a variety of contexts, perspectives and applications of the media by those who define themselves as Muslims”.

2 <https://chance.org/about-chance/>

3 Co-Investigator, DigitIslam UK team. Principal Investigator, Digital British Islam. <https://digitalbritishislam.com> (accessed 9 December 2025)

religion is shaped by the technological affordances of the internet, including the flattening of hierarchies, rapid communication, and expanded access to information that was once restricted or private (Campbell 2012, p. 67). A key element of this model is the idea of “shifting authority”: the fluidity of online religious communities has intensified tensions between established religious authorities and emerging digital figures who gain influence through online platforms (2012, p. 74).

More recently, social media has become a central focus within the study of digital Islam (Wahid 2024). Wahid notes how platforms such as Instagram have become important arenas for articulating and debating Islamic identity, highlighting the growing role of digital spaces in religious dialogue and community formation (2024, p. 9). Certain platforms are also associated with particular themes; for example, Instagram is frequently linked to discussions of gender and women’s issues and has been described as a gendered space (Baluch and Pramiyanti 2018; Blank and Lutz 2017, p. 5). At the same time, research has shown that social media can amplify anti-Muslim discourse (Awan 2016).

Recent scholarship has also examined how social media reshapes religious authority. Patel (2022), drawing on interviews with young American Muslims, found that participants used social media to maintain connections with religious authorities by following, liking, and sharing their content, while also independently researching religious questions online. This dual practice illustrates both continued engagement with established authority figures and more individualised forms of religious learning (2022, p. 38-39). Zaid et al. (2022, p. 2) explore how social media influencers contribute to redefining Islam and communicating spiritual beliefs among Global Urban Muslims, particularly in the Gulf region. Their findings suggest that influencers promote lifestyle-oriented expressions of Muslim identity that can challenge or bypass traditional religious institutions.

Other studies have examined how Muslim organisations and mosques used social media (Van Tubergen et al. 2021). Van Tubergen et al. analysed the online visibility of mosques in the Netherlands, using a quantitative approach to assess websites and social media consumption. Unlike many studies, they emphasised the importance in analysing how actors and organisations are active in different social media channels instead of focusing on a single platform (2021, p. 2). They observed how the majority of mosques had a Facebook account and a website whilst were much less active on other social media. Our study is also in part inspired by the recent paper published by Larsson and Willander⁴ (2024) who reviewed “*how Muslims make use of social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok or YouTube*”. They note how existing research often prioritises content analysis, with fewer studies using interviews, surveys, or mixed methods.

Building on this literature, the present study advances the field in several ways. The article adopts a deliberately integrated mixed-methods design. It combines macro-level European analysis of around 1,000 archived websites⁵ (using tools such as Archive-it and

4 Larsson and Willander also represent the Swedish DigitIslam team.

5 See our website: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/digitalislameurope/research-findings/archiving/collec->

ARCH) with micro-level qualitative interviews⁶ and quantitative survey⁷ data from the United Kingdom. By bringing together organisational and individual perspectives, and by comparing cross-European patterns with in-depth national data, the study highlights both alignment and “d calage” between institutional digital strategies and everyday religious practices. In doing so, it addresses a gap in the literature on Online Islamic Environments, which has often focused either on single platforms, single countries, or single methods. The novelty of this research therefore lies not only in its empirical scope but also in its transferable methodological framework for studying religion in digital spaces.

Archival Methodology and Findings at the European Scale

Online Responses of Muslim Organisations to Current Events – A Comparative Analysis of Website and Social Media Usage

This section presents the methodology employed in constructing a transnational digital archive of Muslim organisations in Europe and presents initial comparative findings regarding the differential use of organisational websites and social media platforms in reacting to contemporary events. The primary research question addressed is: What are the distinct functions of organisational websites versus social media in the online communications of Muslim organisations, as observed during specific current events?

Web archiving was conducted using the Archive-it tool, which allows for the preservation of websites as they appeared at the time of crawling. Effective use of this tool calls for initial training to ensure the technical competence of the research team. The archiving process requires time and effort in order to achieve optimal results.⁸ The resulting transna-

tions/ or Archive-it page: <https://archive-it.org/organizations/2677>

- 6 DigitIslam undertook qualitative interviews involving producers (defined as Muslim public figures who are active online) and sometimes users (which refers to the average Muslim person who follows religion online). This is for example the case of the UK team which interviewed a total of 15 Producers and 24 Users.
- 7 Each country team conducted a specific quantitative survey, with users sharing most of the questions for comparison purposes. The Swedish team created and shared the questionnaire. Teams could add questions, adapt them to their national context, and select the most effective data collection methods.
- 8 1. List Generation: Initial comprehensive lists of Muslim organisations and actors were compiled for our five countries. 2. Test Crawls: Preliminary crawls were executed to establish the depth and quality of crawls. 3. Validation and Assistance: Crawl effectiveness was checked, and technical assistance was sought from Archive-it staff. 4. Save and Metadata addition: Successful crawls were saved, and detailed metadata was added by the respective countries. Metadata was also translated in the different partner countries. 5. Recrawling: Active websites were recrawled at least two times to capture evolving content and maintain the archive’s relevance.

tional archive is divided into collections based on country, country and topic, and specific current events.

The archiving focused exclusively on websites, not social media, due to two main concerns: the large data volume of social media and ethical considerations, especially regarding personal data such as individual names. Although social media was not archived with Archive-it, the project’s public website supplemented the analysis by including presentations and blog posts that discuss and analyse social media posts related to current events.⁹

For this analysis, three distinct current events were selected to examine the pattern of online reaction: the Hamas-Israel crisis¹⁰, the Qur’an-burning episodes in Sweden¹¹, and the passing of Pope Francis¹². The comparison focuses on the timing and content of communication across organisational websites versus social media (Facebook, Instagram, and X/Twitter).

Organisation	Event Date	Website	Social Media	Results
Stockholm Mosque (Sweden) ¹³	June 28, 2023	Published a formal statement ¹⁴ .	Facebook: Statement reshared (same day). Instagram: Post on mobilisation (July 9, 2023). X/Twitter: Inactive (last post 2015).	Website for formal statements. Facebook for amplification and primary engagement. Instagram for visual mobilisation.

9 DigitIslam, <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/digitislameurope/>

10 See DigitIslam: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/digitislameurope/research-findings/archiving/archiving-contemporary-events/digital-muslim-responses-to-the-israel-hamas-crisis/>

11 See DigitIslam: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/digitislameurope/research-findings/archiving/archiving-contemporary-events/quran-burning-incidents-in-sweden/>

12 See DigitIslam: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/digitislameurope/research-findings/archiving/archiving-contemporary-events/reactions-to-pope-francis-passing/>

13 From our archive metadata: Member of the Umbrella association Islamic Association in Sweden which is part of the Union of Islamic Congregations in Sweden (FIFS). The Islamic Association of Stockholm’s mosque was founded in 1981. The mosque was opened in 2000. One of the founders of this project was Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (founder and leader of the United Arab Emirates) after who the mosque is named. The mosque houses other organisations such as Islamic Relief Sweden.

14 See our archive: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/21814/20240118085740/https://stockholmsmoske.se/pressmeddelande-besvikelse-over-tillatelse-av-polisen-att-branna-en-koran-utanfor-mosken/>

Organisation	Event Date	Website	Social Media	Results
Muslim Council of Britain-MCB (UK) ¹⁵	Jan 26, 2023	Published a formal letter to the Swedish ambassador ¹⁶ .	Facebook and X/ Twitter: Letter shared (Jan 27, 2023). Instagram: Not prolific at the time; letter not reposted.	Website for official, archival communication (coincided with website renewal). Social media for broad dissemination to different audiences.

Table 1: Qur'an-burning Episodes (Examples from Sweden and UK)

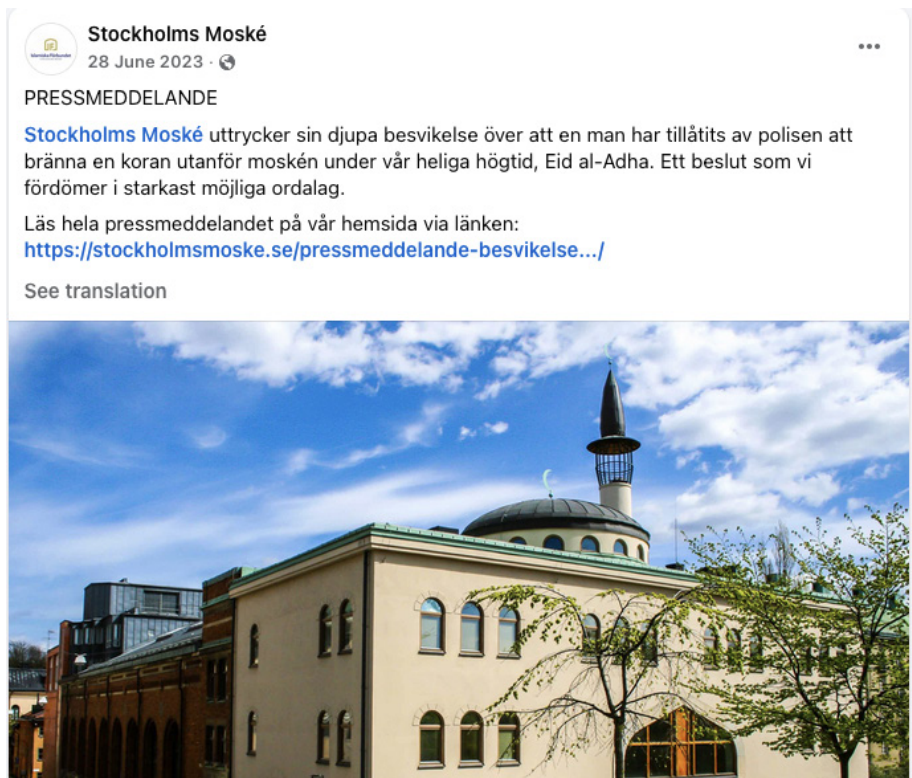


Figure 1: Screenshot of Facebook page of Stockholm mosque (Sweden)

¹⁵ From our archive metadata: UK's largest Muslim umbrella organisation, representing around 500 mosques and organisations, was formed in 1994.

¹⁶ See our archive: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/21814/20240306095708/https://mcb.org.uk/mcb-writes-to-swedish-ambassador-to-the-uk-h-e-ms-mikaela-kumlin-granit-following-quran-burning/>

 **The Muslim Council of Britain**
27 January 2023 · 🌐

MCB strongly condemns vile act of Quran burning by far-right Islamophobes in Sweden. ... [See more](#)

MCB
The Muslim Council of Britain

H.E. Ms Mikaela Kumlin Granit
Embassy of Sweden
11 Montagu Place
London W1H 2AL
United Kingdom

January 25th 2023

Dear Ambassador,

Deep concerns over recent Qur'an burning in Stockholm, Sweden

I write to you on behalf of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the largest and most diverse umbrella body for Muslim-led organisations in the UK, with over 500 affiliated local national, regional and local organisations, mosques, charities and schools.

I would like to relay the deep concern of many of our affiliate organisations over the recent public burning of the Quran in Stockholm, Sweden. We understand that freedom of expression is a fundamental right, however, the burning of any religious text remains extraordinarily offensive to those who hold that text sacred.

As Muslims, the Quran is not just a book to us, but the word of God, and burning it is considered a grave insult to our faith. This kind of behavior is rooted in Islamophobia. It only serves to incite hatred and division among different religious groups and further discord within societies. We believe that it is important to respect the beliefs and practices of all religions and that such deliberate acts of hate should not be tolerated.

I hope the Swedish Government will take appropriate action to address this issue, ensuring the rights and sentiments of minority religious groups are respected. I would greatly appreciate if you could bring our concerns to the attention of the appropriate authorities as a matter of priority, and would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss the matter in greater detail.

Please do accept my sincere thanks for your consideration in the matter. I very much look forward to the prospect of constructive dialogue on the issue.

Yours sincerely,



Zara Mohammed,
Secretary General
Muslim Council of Britain

 33  12 comments  7 shares

Figure 2: Screenshot of Facebook and X post by the Muslim Council of Britain (United Kingdom)(1)



MCB strongly condemns the vile act of [#Quran_burning](#) by far-right Islamophobes in [#Sweden](#).

MCB SG [@ZaraM01](#) has written to [@SweAmbUK](#), [@swedeninuk](#), relaying deep concerns raised w/in our affiliate network & requesting constructive dialogue.

[Read online: bit.ly/3WJUWjN](#)



Figure 3: Screenshot of Facebook and X post by the Muslim Council of Britain (United Kingdom) (2)

Organisation	Event Date	Website	Social Media	Results
Comision Islamica (Spain) ¹⁷	April 21, 2025	Published a formal statement ¹⁸ .	Facebook and Instagram: Statement reshared (same day).	Coordinated, simultaneous posting across website and social media, reflecting a unified outreach strategy.

Table 2: Pope Francis Passing (Example from Spain)



Figure 4: Screenshot of Instagram and Facebook post by Islamic commission of Spain (1)

17 From our archive metadata: Official representative body born with the purpose of holding the exclusive representation (in accordance with the provisions of the Cooperation Agreement between the State and the CIE, as stated in Law 26/1992) for the appropriate dialogue with the State Administrations regarding the development and exercise of religious freedom.

18 See our archive: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/30124/20250428101716/https://comision-islamica.org/2025/04/21/condolencias-por-el-fallecimiento-del-papa-francisco/>



Figure 5: Screenshot of Instagram and Facebook post by Islamic commission of Spain (2)

Organisation	Event Date	Website	Social Media	Results
Islamocentras (Lithuania) ¹⁹	Oct 30, 2023	Posted a detailed article ²⁰ .	Facebook: Article re-shared (Nov 2, 2023).	Website as the primary publication space. Facebook used later for amplification.

19 From our archive metadata: Led by Paulius Bergaudas, the Islamic Center was founded in 2021 by a group of Muslims of convert and immigrant background with the aim of creating “a platform, which will help Lithuanians to communicate with Muslims and learn Islam, and will encourage Muslims to become an active and motivated to work part of Lithuanian society.”

20 See our archive: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/22225/20240403074707/https://www.islamocentras.lt/pareiskimas-del-karo-palestinoje>

Organisation	Event Date	Website	Social Media	Results
Magazyn Muzułmański Al-Islam (Poland) ²¹	Oct 18, 2023	Published an article ²² .	Facebook: Article re-shared (same day).	Website and Facebook updates occurred nearly simultaneously.

Table 3: Israel-Hamas Crisis (Examples from Lithuania and Poland)



Figure 6: Screenshot of Facebook post by Islam Centre (Lithuania)

²¹ From our archive metadata: Informational and educational website of Twelver Shia Ahl ul-Bayt congregation

²² From our archive metadata: Informational and educational website of Twelver Shia Ahl ul-Bayt congregation



Figure 7: Screenshot of Facebook post by Al-Islam Magazine (Poland)

Analysing these results, we observe differences with regards to overall website and social media use as well as in relation to national specificities²³. Organisational Websites are primarily reserved for formal, archival, and detailed communication, such as official statements, letters to authorities, and longer analytical articles. Social Media Platforms (mainly Facebook) are used for amplification, mobilisation, and engagement, enabling organisations to achieve a broader and more immediate reach. Facebook is often the dominant platform for both institutional announcements (resharing from the website) and community mobilisation. Instagram plays a secondary, visual role. X/Twitter is only actively used by the MCB (UK), whilst Stockholm Mosque (Sweden), despite having a profile, has not used it since 2015.

Communication patterns exhibit notable variation across countries. In the United Kingdom, MCB's online communication strategy is more professional, balancing formal website publication with active dissemination via Facebook and X/Twitter to engage both policymakers and the public. In Spain, we observe simultaneous posting on the website and social media (Facebook, Instagram). In Sweden and Poland, Facebook dominates, with the website serving as a static archive for formal statements. Stockholm Mosque is

²³ Online dynamics are also shaped by both the size of the Muslim population in a given country and the duration of their residence.

active on more social media platforms than Polish Muslim platforms, perhaps indicating a more developed online communication approach.²⁴ Finally in Lithuania resources appear more limited, with the website acting as the primary publication space, followed by delayed amplification on social media.

This case study has certain limitations, primarily resulting from the small sample of organisations selected for detailed analysis and the restricted timeframe of the examined events. However, these preliminary findings offer insights into broader trends in website and social media usage by Muslim organisations across Europe, reflecting both the scale and historical depth of their presence.

Measuring Social Media Prominence Among Muslim Organisations' Websites Using Web Archiving Visualisation Tools

The data used for this analysis was primarily based on web archiving visualisation tool, ARCH. The generation of data visualisation of our web archives involved several sequential steps.²⁵ For this study, the focus was restricted to the General Country Collections, which comprise archived websites of major Muslim organisations within Poland, Spain, Lithuania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (UK).

Two primary visualisation tools were employed to quantify the prominence of social media usage. Palladio (Network Graph) was used to measure the number of direct links or connections between the Muslim organisation websites and various social media platforms. Voyant Tools (Trend Analysis) was used to measure the frequency of textual mentions of social media platforms²⁶ within the archived content of the websites.

The initial collection sizes varied, with Poland (22 URLs), Spain (37 URLs), Lithuania (16 URLs), Sweden (88 URLs), and the UK (63 URLs). For the Spanish collection, the data file size exceeded Voyant's processing limits, necessitating the creation of a custom collection in ARCH, which included 20 selected URLs.

Cross-National Patterns of Social Media Prominence: A Palladio-Based Network Visualisation Analysis

The network analysis conducted via Palladio measured the direct linkages from the Muslim organisation websites to external social media platforms.

24 Chudziak, Mateusz. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska. Joanna Krotofil, Iga Wermiska-Wińska. *Cyfrowy islam w Europie: Udział muzułmanów w religijnej przestrzeni internetowej (DIGITIS-LAM)*, Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, 2025

25 1. Selection of a specific collection; 2. Designation of the target dataset; 3. Data download; 4. Upload into specialised visualisation software; and 5. Analysis of the generated results. It is important to note that not all visualisations yielded meaningful findings.

26 Snapchat was never mentioned in Spain, Poland and Lithuania and was the last to be mentioned in Sweden (4) and the UK (76).

LITHUANIA:

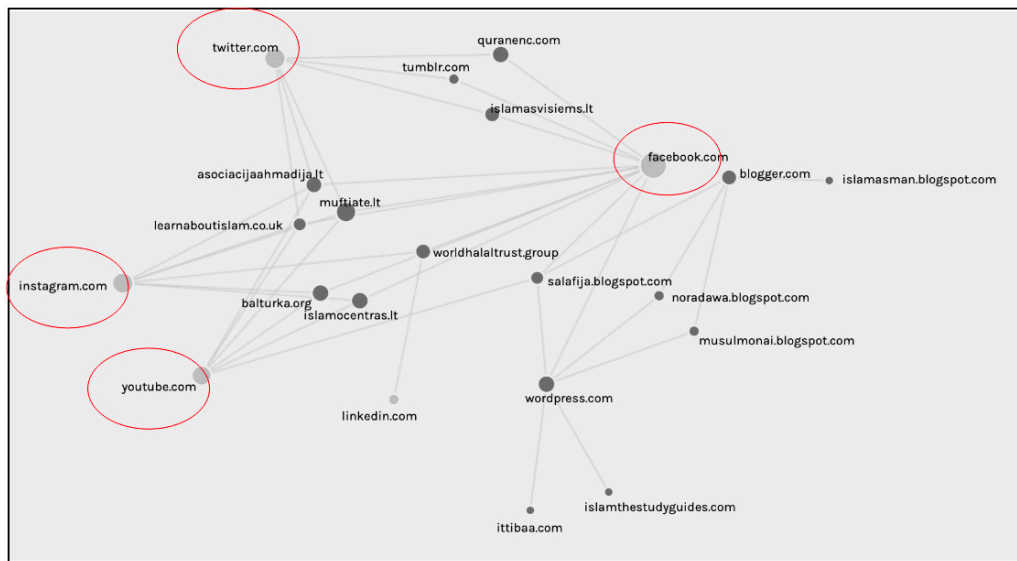


Figure 10: Network graph of the Lithuania collection using palladio

Lithuania collection : Facebook is the most used (25), Instagram and Twitter both 13 ; YouTube (11).

SWEDEN :

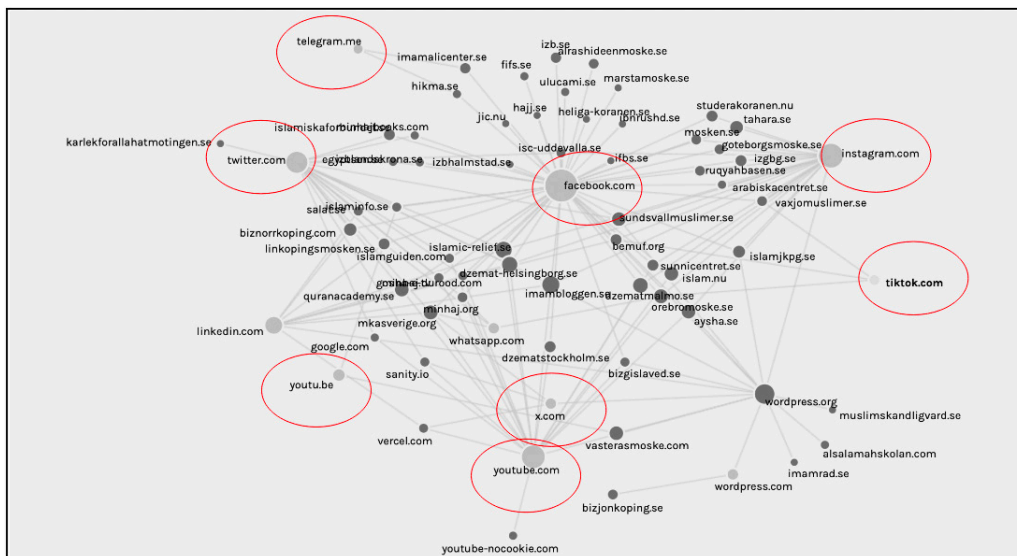


Figure 11: Network graph of the Sweden collection using palladio

Sweden collection : Facebook (111) ; Instagram (55) ; YouTube (49) ; Twitter (40) + X (5) = 45; Telegram (3) + t.me (3) = 6 ; TikTok (4).

UK GENERAL:

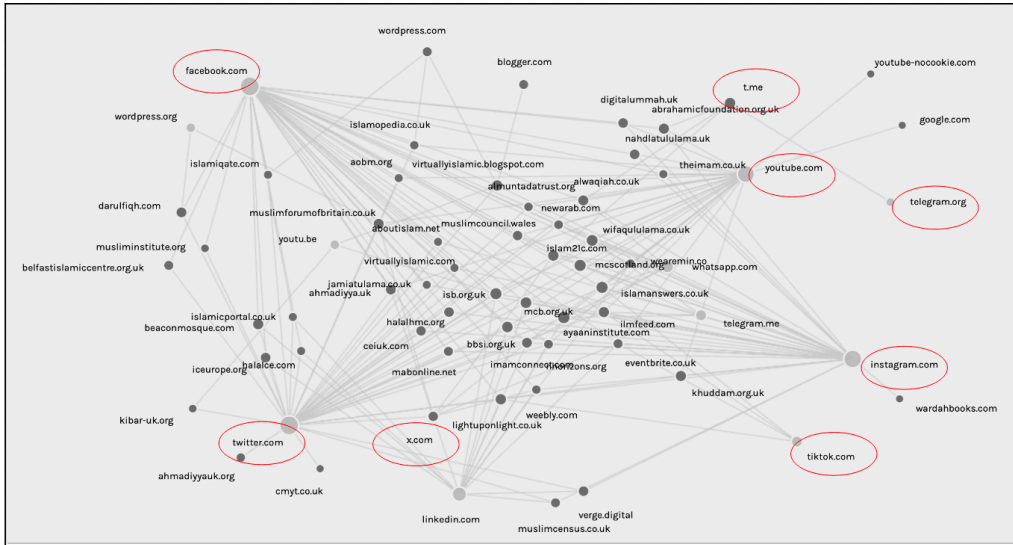


Figure 12: Network Graph of UK General Collection Using Palladio

UK collection: Twitter (89) + X (9) = 98; Facebook (90); Instagram (71), YouTube (62); Telegram (10) + t.me (9) = 19; Tik Tok (9).

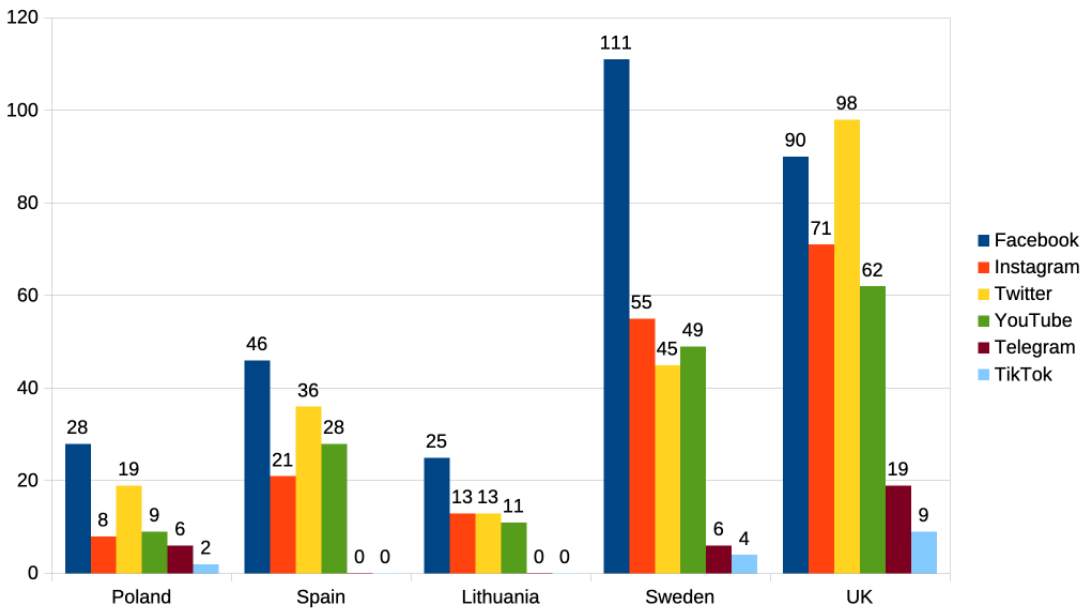


Figure 13: Summary Graph of Palladio Results

The statistics match the amount of content in each collection. Facebook is the social media with the highest number of connections in all countries except the UK where it comes second after Twitter/X. Twitter comes second in Poland, Spain, Lithuania (tied with Instagram) and only fourth in Sweden. Instagram comes second in Sweden (and Lithuania), third in the UK, fourth in Spain and Poland. YouTube comes third in Sweden, Spain and Poland and fourth in Lithuania and the UK. Telegram comes fourth and TikTok comes fifth in Poland, Sweden and the UK and both are not present in Spain and Lithuania.

Cross-National Variation in Platform Mentions: Insights from Voyant Trend Analysis

Analysis of content mention frequency using Voyant trend analysis revealed patterns that resembled the network link data.

POLAND:

Voyant data: <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=3c9dc3d38a26898b9c4815d88e067915>







	#	Term	Count	Relative	Trend
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	facebook*	5050	1,217	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	twitter*	2064	498	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	telegram*	1876	452	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	youtube*	178	43	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	instagram*	106	26	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	tiktok*	88	21	

Figure 14: Trend analysis of the Poland Collection with Voyant

SPAIN GENERAL:

Voyant data²⁷: <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=6e0b82ea2d5d6668aee24624c90f70c6>

	#	Term	Count	Relative	Trend
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	facebook*	616	1,219	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	twitter*	299	592	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	instagram*	278	550	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	youtube*	235	465	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	telegram*	1	2	

Figure 15: Trend Analysis of the Spain General Collection with Voyant

LITHUANIA:

Voyant data: <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=2d71a87d9f00d1b7655262af22593d49>

	#	Term	Count	Relative	Trend
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	facebook*	1762	474	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	twitter*	1499	403	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	youtube*	207	56	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	telegram*	78	21	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	instagram*	66	18	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	tiktok*	2	1	

Figure 16: Trend Analysis of the Lithuania Collection with Voyant

²⁷ As previously mentioned, the file was too large. We thus created a custom collection with ARCH to include less URLs. These results reflect a Spain General shortened collection of 20 URLs.

SWEDEN:

Voyant data: <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=2555f3cfdcebe8cb069601f1dee76f65>

	#	Term	Count	Relative	Trend
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	facebook*	3615	517	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	youtube*	2037	291	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	twitter*	1462	209	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	instagram*	1460	209	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	telegram*	189	27	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	tiktok*	43	6	

Figure 17: Trend Analysis of the Sweden Collection with Voyant

UK GENERAL:

Voyant data: <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=54335220b1b2613a03b7cb9b88601df2>

	#	Term	Count	Relative	Trend
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	facebook*	23945	2,376	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	twitter*	8150	809	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	instagram*	5099	506	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	youtube*	4770	473	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	telegram*	1156	115	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	tiktok*	772	77	

Figure 18: Trend Analysis of the UK Collection with Voyant

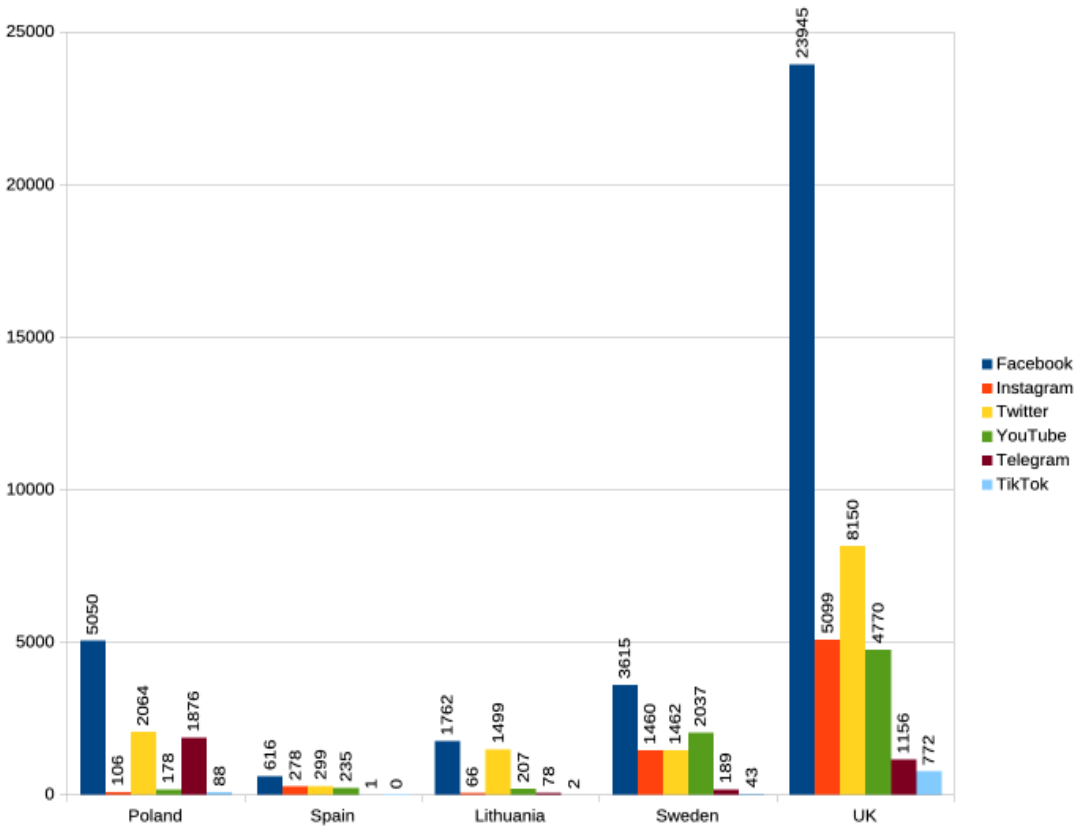


Figure 19: Summary Graph of Voyant (Trends) Results:

The volume of collected content varied significantly by country. Spain contained less content because its websites were divided into separate collections, which required further reduction to enable visualization in Voyant. For Sweden, Poland, and Lithuania, the collections included all identified URLs in each country. The United Kingdom exhibited a much higher content volume, with 63 URLs that were also data heavy. Despite these disparities, several overall trends emerged. Across all collections, Facebook was the most frequently mentioned social media platform in the text content of Muslim organisation websites. The rankings for other platforms varied by country. Twitter/X was the second most-mentioned platform in the collections for Poland, Spain, Lithuania, and the United Kingdom. In Sweden, YouTube was the second most-mentioned platform. Telegram ranked third in Poland, but its presence varied considerably in other countries. Instagram consistently ranked highly in the United Kingdom and Spain (third), but was notably lower in Poland and Lithuania (fifth). TikTok consistently ranked last in every country collection.

Combined analysis of network graphs (Palladio) and content mention frequency (Voyant) indicates that Facebook is the most prominent and widely utilised social media platform by Muslim organisations in the surveyed European countries. This finding is

consistent with established observations regarding online usage trends among Muslim communities (Van Tubergen et al.). Twitter/X occupies the position of the second most-utilised platform. YouTube and Instagram follow in prominence, typically ranking third or fourth. In contrast, platforms such as Telegram and TikTok currently play a marginal role in the official online presence of these organisations. These results indicate a strategic preference for established platforms over newer alternatives, although this trend may shift over time.

Qualitative and Quantitative Methodological Framework – Findings from the United Kingdom Case Study

Qualitative Methodology – Social Media and Website Practices among Muslim Organisational “Producers” in the United Kingdom

The qualitative component of the United Kingdom case study draws on interviews with Muslim digital content “Producers” (understood as Muslim public figures active online). Fifteen Producers were interviewed between September 2023 and February 2024. Sampling differences across countries reflected variations in national Muslim populations and the degree of “research fatigue” encountered among potential participants. UK interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Producers were recruited through email outreach and snowball sampling. Complementing the interviews, the research team conducted online observations of platforms used by these actors. The analysis examines Muslim Producers’ social media practices and the function of websites in professional, pedagogical, and personal religious communication.

Social Media Use

	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Instagram	TikTok	Telegram	
P1 Female	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	
P2 Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
P3 Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (does not mention it)	No	No	
P4 Male	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	
P5 Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
P6 Male	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	
P7 Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
P8 Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (does not mention it)	Yes (does not mention it)	No	
P9 Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
P10 Male	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes (does not mention it)	Yes	
P11 Male	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	
P12 Male	Yes (no longer uses)	Yes (no longer uses)	No	No	No	Yes	
P13 Female	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
P14 Male	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (no longer uses)	
P15 Female	Yes (no longer uses)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Total		12	14	12	8	7	6

Table 4: Table Summarising Social Media Use by Our Interviewees

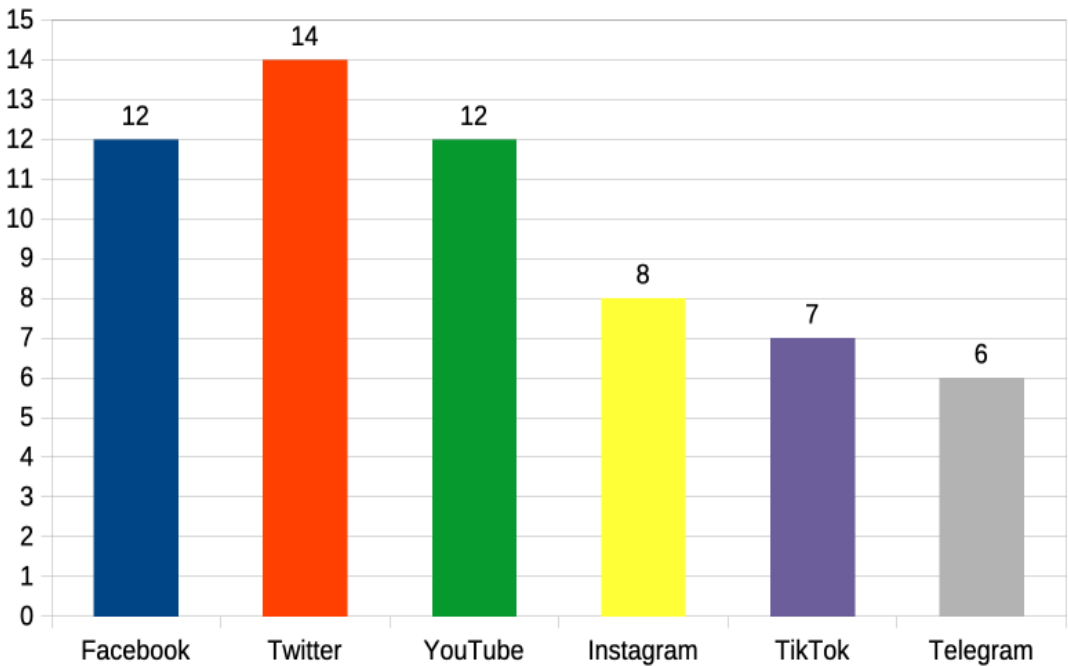


Figure 20: Graph Representing Social Media Used by Our Interviewees

Across interviews, Twitter/X was repeatedly characterised as a site of more intellectually oriented religious discourse. One Producer described her platform differentiation explicitly: “I use Instagram. I use TikTok. (...) Twitter is a little more when I want a slightly more intellectual stimulation, I think” (Producer 15 - Female). Another stated that “I use Twitter as my preferred place to post my ideas” (Producer 10 - Male). Others reinforced this orientation: “The one I use the most is Twitter. (...) Facebook less” (Producer 3 - Male); “I’m also very active on Twitter or X as it’s now called” (Producer 8 - Male).

While men appear more heavily represented on the platform, women also described sustained engagement. As one female Producer noted, “And then kind of recently, because of all the changes that Elon Musk has made with X, I’ve kind of.. I haven’t abandoned Twitter yet. I think I’m emotionally too attached to it. I think at some point I’ll need to have a strong look at whether I should.” (Producer 1 - Female).

Attitudes toward X shifted significantly following Elon Musk’s takeover. Several Producers expressed dissatisfaction with falling engagement rates, declining trust, and an increase in misinformation or extremist content. “Since Elon Musk has bought over Twitter (...) my engagement rate has dropped quite significantly,” explained one participant, adding, “I have no intention (...) to subscribe to (...) X Premium (...) because I think it defeats my purpose” (Producer 11 - Male).

Another commented: “if there’s a story that is breaking (...) one of the first places I do go is Twitter. (...) less so now since it became like X and Musk takeover. (...) I think there’s a lot more of fake news, extremist views.” (Producer 7 - Female).

Instagram was perceived differently, often presented as a feminised and aesthetic-oriented space.²⁸ Male interviewees noted that “women have other platforms that they prefer maybe Instagram” (Producer 10 - Male) and that “overall (...) probably a lot more women [are] on Instagram” (Producer 11 - Male). Women producers described the platform as central to their online activities: “I tend to post the most on Instagram, followed by Twitter” (Producer 7 - Female); “Instagram is where I’ll go to (...) Facebook I don’t use at all” (Producer 9 - Female). At the same time, some women sought to resist Instagram’s aesthetic pressures. One producer emphasised that “I deliberately try to cultivate a very non-aesthetic Instagram (...) I try to never appear like wearing makeup (...) I don’t want [younger women who might perceive me as a role model] to feel any sense of curation” (Producer 9 - Female). Notably, platform observations revealed discrepancies between self-reported and actual use. As it is perceived as a more “feminine” space, some male producers might not want to admit using this platform. For instance, we noticed how two of the male producers we interviewed did not mention having a profile on Instagram.

Facebook, though widely regarded as outdated, continues to serve certain producers as

28 Frissen, T., Ichau, E., Boghe, K., & d’Haenens, L. (2017) #Muslims? Instagram, Visual Culture and the Mediatization of Muslim religiosity. Explorative analysis of visual and semantic content on Instagram. In: Kayıkcı, M. & d’Haenens, L. (Eds.), *European Muslims and New Media*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

a site for long-form posts, community/personal discussions, and archival content. As it is the social media that has been around the longest, many either chose to keep it in a more private mode or for reaching out to older less tech-savvy audiences. As one interviewee explained, “I’m on Twitter and Facebook (...) Facebook is more family and friends” (Producer 6 - Male). Another highlighted using it in the past for its long-form possibilities: “I was also active on Facebook... due to Facebook’s long-form format” (Producer 12 - Male). Producers consistently noted, however, that “young people don’t use Facebook” (Producer 14 - Male), positioning the platform as a remnant of earlier phases of digital religious engagement.

Youth-oriented platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat occupied a distinct communicative space, often requiring concise, visually engaging pedagogical forms. Some organisations designated younger team members to manage these environments: “one of our young Imams that’s just joined our team (...) he now has taken over producing content for Snap and TikTok.” (Producer 14 - male). One female Producer reflected on its utility for journalistic outreach especially regarding subjects that involve younger generations²⁹: after receiving “nothing” in response to a Twitter call-out, she posted a TikTok video and “had hundreds of Muslim women across the UK say, ‘I’ll speak to you’” (Producer 1 - Female). TikTok’s audience, however, was not always described as exclusively youthful. One interviewee noted that “a lot of people take a lot of their Islamic content from TikTok, which is good and bad” (Producer 13 - Female).

Encrypted platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram emerged as essential tools for Producers seeking private communication and specialised teaching environments. Several described heavy reliance on these spaces. “I’m using WhatsApp and Telegram a lot for personal and for work” (Producer 6 - Male); “there’s (...) a Telegram group (...) where you could just ask [my Sheikh] a question” (Producer 9 - Female). Others emphasised Telegram’s capacity for closer interaction with audiences in complement to their official public social media space: “We also have a Telegram channel (...) to communicate with (...) our listeners in a far more direct way” (Producer 10 - Male). One producer detailed the extensive infrastructure he manages on the platform, explaining that he had moved “solely” to Telegram, where his broadcast channel has “over 1000 subscribers” and a linked discussion community of approximately 450 participants, praising Telegram’s new topic-based organisational features (Producer 12 - Male).

Some interviewees referenced efforts to develop or participate in alternative, “ethical” social media platforms oriented toward privacy and data protection. One producer described his student’s pilot project, Momentpin, as “a very closed social media platform” designed to “steer away from the kind of problems of harvesting data (...) and lack of privacy” (Producer 4 - Male).

29 In her case she was preparing a piece on a recent musical phenomenon attracting Muslim and global youth audiences.

From Personal Blogs to Professional Portals: The Institutionalisation of Online Presence among UK Muslim Producers

Websites played a parallel but distinct role, functioning primarily as professional portfolios, teaching portals, or inactive personal blogs. For some Producers, a website serves as a curated hub of credibility. One noted: “I have a Squarespace website (...) displaying the work that I do and kind of letting people know how they can get in touch. I don’t update it very regularly” (Producer 9 - Female). Another emphasised organisational control: “I wanted somewhere to house all of my work over the years (...) And just a place where people if they Googled me that they can look at it, and they know that I’m credible. And a place where people can contact me because I couldn’t stand people messaging me on Facebook messenger and Instagram. (...) I have more control over it” (Producer 13 - Female).

For educators, websites became central after the COVID-19 pandemic, when courses were moved online. Producer 4 (Male) explained that his organisation “created a bespoke portal (...) which now includes on-demand evergreen courses,” following years of in-person multi-site teaching. Another Producer (8 - male) transformed his personal blog into an online teaching academy after having gained enough popularity and credibility also thanks to social media outreach.

Personal blogs, once common, have largely fallen into disuse. Some producers reflected on the absorption of their work into larger platforms: “I had a blog (...) people benefited from it (...) it gained a fair bit of recognition (...) some of the larger Facebook pages at the time, Muslim ones, they used to upload my articles (...) from 2017 (...) other friends began other projects that (...) incorporated mine” (Producer 11 - Male). Others described the shift toward social media as a replacement for blog-style writing: “I used to have a blog (...) didn’t have a massive platform (...) was more just for myself. (...) I would probably now post on Instagram instead” (Producer 9 - Female). Having gained recognition as a writer, Producer 9 also mentions pitching longer stories to renowned newspapers.

Overall, the findings reveal differences in how UK Muslim Producers use social media versus websites, impacting the type of audience, authority, and self-presentation. Social media has become the primary arena for contemporary religious communication, characterised by speed and visibility. Producers adapt their styles and methods to the specific cultures and constraints of each social media platform. On the other hand, websites function as slower, curated, and more controlled spaces used to establish credibility, archive work, or host structured learning environments. The evolution of website and social media use also reflects a broader transformation in the trajectory of our interviewees: from early, modest online activity to becoming increasingly public and recognisable producers. This shift is visible in their movement away from private or semi-private publications (such as personal blogs) toward more public-facing roles through social media presence or the setting up of official websites.

Given the significant size of the Muslim population within the United Kingdom, the choice was made to engage the polling company Savanta to conduct a targeted survey.³⁰ The survey was executed in August 2023, resulting in 504 completed responses. While the resulting sample was balanced in terms of gender and ethnically diverse, methodological scrutiny did identify some biases, notably an overrepresentation of highly educated individuals (41% possessing a university degree and 20% currently enrolled as university students). Despite these observations the overall results were deemed satisfactory for the intended analysis.

To explore patterns of digital engagement among Muslims in the United Kingdom, the analysis focuses on three survey questions: frequency of social media use (Q1), specific platform use (Q3), and sources of “correct” Islamic knowledge (Q13). The three corresponding graphs illustrate key behavioural trends and inform a comparative discussion of social media versus websites and apps use amongst Muslims in the UK.

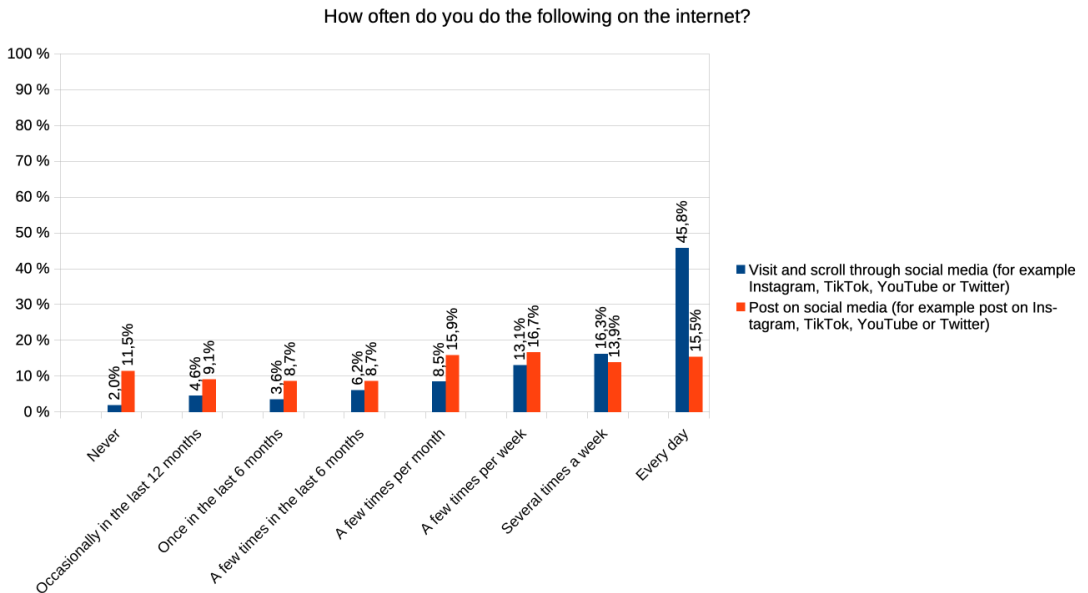


Figure 21: Frequency of Social Media Use

Graph 1 clearly demonstrates the high degree of social media use among respondents. Nearly half of the sample (45.8%) scrolls through social media daily, with an additional 29.4% using it several times or a few times per week. Posting on social media, however, is substantially lower: only 15.5% post content daily, and most post only occasionally. This

³⁰ Savanta, <https://savanta.com/>, accessed 9 December 2025

reveals a significant gap between consumption and production, aligning with broader digital patterns in which passive engagement dominates.

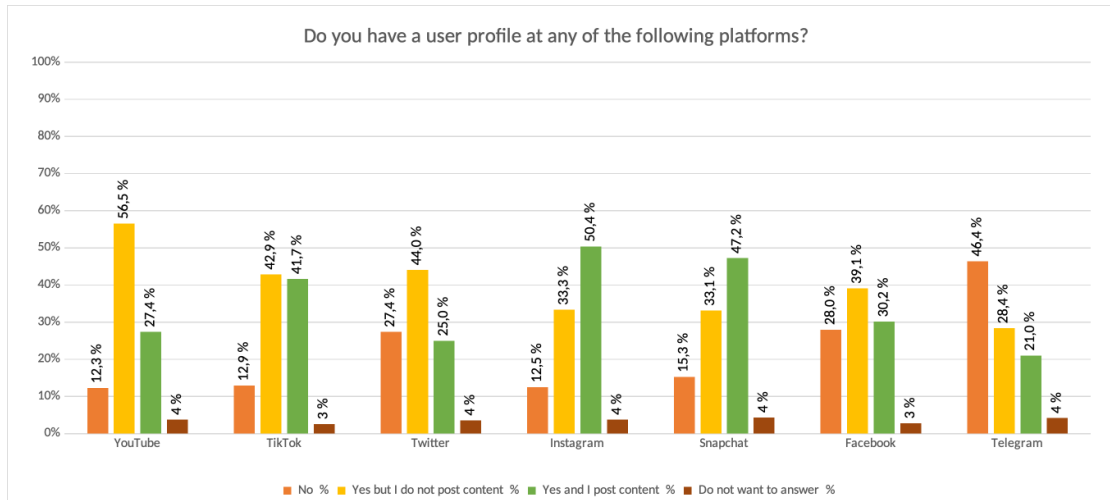


Figure 22: Specific Platform Use

Graph 2 provides a more detailed overview by showing whether respondents hold user profiles and whether they tend to post content. Platforms such as YouTube, X/Twitter, and Facebook are the ones where users have profiles for consuming content. These platforms are spaces where users encounter religious lectures, commentaries, and news. By contrast, Instagram and Snapchat show significantly higher levels of content posting (over 50% and 47%, respectively). These platforms foster more interactive communication, often centred on personal networks. Meanwhile, TikTok posting and non-posting users are almost equal in proportion. This reflects TikTok’s participatory algorithmic culture and its growing relevance for short-form Islamic content. Telegram emerges as the least used of the major platforms and is employed primarily for consumption within closed groups or channels. Its usage pattern suggests a more niche and community-focused engagement rather than mainstream public participation.

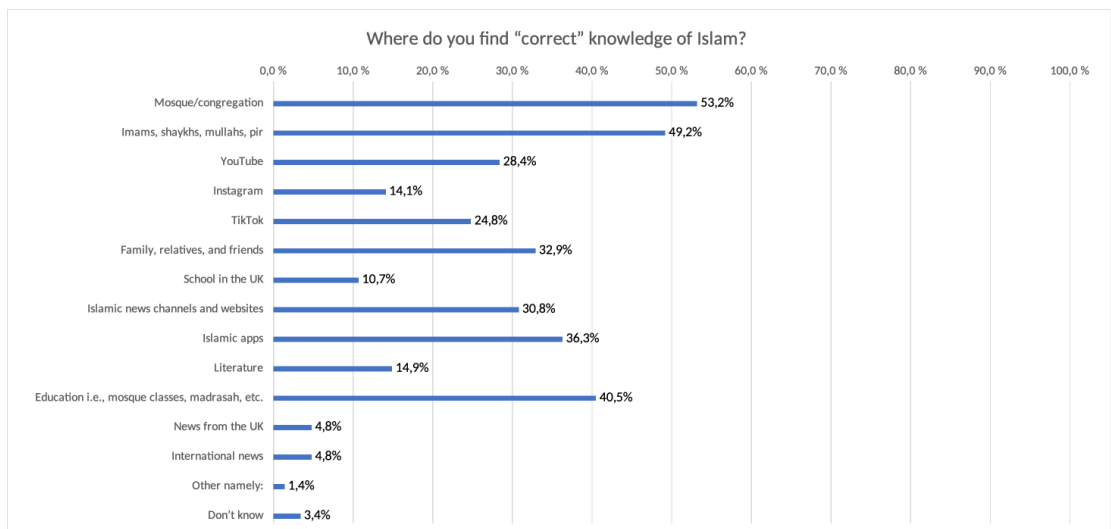


Figure 23 - Sources of “Correct” Islamic knowledge

Graph 3 shows that offline and traditional authorities remain the most trusted sources of Islamic knowledge among respondents. A majority cite mosques/congregations (53.2%) and imams or religious scholars (49.2%) as their primary sources. This demonstrates the continuing centrality of embodied religious authority and institutional religious spaces. Among online sources, Islamic apps (36.3%) and Islamic news and educational websites (30.8%) outrank individual social media platforms such as YouTube (28.4%), TikTok (24.8%), and Instagram (14.1%). Apps and websites typically offer structured, long-form, or institutionally verified material which may be perceived as more reliable than the personality-driven and algorithmically curated nature of social media. However, when the three social media platforms (YouTube, TikTok, Instagram) are considered collectively, they reach 67.3%, making social media as a whole the most widely accessed category for Islamic knowledge. This does not necessarily indicate trust in social media as an authoritative source. Yet it could reflect the rapid and easily accessible exposure to religious content via users’ everyday browsing experiences.

Overall, these findings show that UK Muslims primarily rely on traditional offline authorities and structured online resources such as Islamic apps and websites for trustworthy religious knowledge. High levels of daily social media use combined with largely passive, consumption-oriented behaviour mean that the main social media platforms shape everyday religious exposure, even if they are not viewed as the most authoritative sources. Consequently, UK Muslims navigate a hybrid religious information landscape, in which established forms of authority coexist with algorithmically driven, highly accessible digital environments.

DigitIslam Discussion and Conclusions

This article demonstrates that Muslim organisations and actors strategically navigate digital spaces, employing websites and social media in ways that reflect both historical patterns of religious authority and emerging dynamics in networked religion. At the macro-European level, the analysis shows that websites remain central to formal, archival, and structured communication, whereas social media, particularly Facebook, functions as the primary tool for engagement, mobilisation, and amplification. National variations in platform use, such as the United Kingdom's more professionalised multi-platform approach versus Lithuania's limited social media activity, highlight how resources, local context, and organisational capacity shape digital strategies. These findings confirm and extend earlier observations by Bunt (2003, 2009) and Campbell (2010, 2012) regarding the distinct roles of websites and social media. The evidence presented here indicates that official institutions have now incorporated social media alongside traditional websites, reflecting the ongoing democratisation of online spaces and shifts in authority online.

At the micro-UK level, mixed-methods findings reveal that individual producers adapt their online presence to the affordances of each platform, balancing curated, credibility-focused websites with rapid, visible social media interactions. Users, meanwhile, engage with a hybrid digital-religious landscape, in which social media exposure coexists with traditional offline authority and official online resources. These patterns resonate with Patel (2022) and Zaid et al. (2022), demonstrating that social media both facilitates connection with established religious figures and enables independent exploration of faith, thereby reshaping authority in contemporary Muslim communities.

When comparing Muslim organisations (Part 1) and Muslim actors' (Part 2) use of website and social media in the specific case of the United Kingdom, we can observe how the platforms most actively used by Muslim organisations do not always align with those preferred by producers and users. While organisations maintain a strong presence on Facebook and structured websites, producers and users frequently create and consume content on a wider array of platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, and others, often prioritising spaces where formal institutions are less active. This "déalage" suggests that organisational communication strategies may not fully correspond to actual producer and user practices, highlighting a complex negotiation between institutional authority and everyday digital engagement.

By combining macro-archival analyses with micro-level interviews and surveys, this article addresses gaps identified by Larsson and Willander (2024) and Van Tubergen et al. (2021), providing a more nuanced understanding of how Muslim organisations and actors utilise different digital spaces. This research establishes a foundation for further study of Online Islamic Environments in European and other contexts and identifies methodological approaches that are transferable to other digital research settings.

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