

## Mediatized spirituality as a new form of social consciousness

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### Abstract

This article examines mediatized spirituality as an emerging form of social consciousness shaped by digital communication technologies, networked media, and symbolic interaction in contemporary society. While spirituality was traditionally rooted in institutional religion, communal rituals, and localized moral frameworks, the digital age has transformed its modes of expression, transmission, and experience. Through social media, online communities, algorithmic recommendation systems, and virtual rituals, spirituality increasingly becomes mediated, individualized, and globally circulated. The article argues that mediatized spirituality should be understood not merely as a religious phenomenon, but as a broader socio-cultural transformation in which identity, values, meaning, and collective imagination are reconstructed through media environments. The study employs philosophical, sociological, and media-theoretical approaches to analyze the implications of this shift for modern social consciousness.

**Keywords:** mediatization, spirituality, social consciousness, digital culture, identity, media society

### 1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed a profound transformation in the relationship between human consciousness and communication technologies. Media are no longer neutral channels for transmitting information; they actively shape perceptions, values, and social realities. One of the most significant outcomes of this transformation is the emergence of new forms of spirituality mediated through digital platforms.

Practices once tied to temples, mosques, churches, sacred texts, and physical communities now circulate through YouTube sermons, Instagram mindfulness pages, TikTok spiritual influencers, online prayer groups, and virtual pilgrimages. ([Springer](#))

This phenomenon may be described as mediatized spirituality—a condition in which spiritual meanings, experiences, and identities are increasingly produced, distributed, and consumed through media systems. It reflects a new form of social consciousness because it influences how individuals understand themselves, others, morality, transcendence, and collective belonging. Stig Hjarvard, S. (2008).

### **Social Consciousness as a Philosophical Category**

Social consciousness refers to the sphere of collective ideas, values, beliefs, ideologies, and symbolic systems through which society interprets reality. Classical thinkers such as Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber emphasized that consciousness is historically conditioned and socially constructed. In every epoch, dominant institutions shape the dominant forms of consciousness.

In industrial modernity, schools, churches, states, and print culture played this role. In late modernity, digital media platforms increasingly occupy that position. Therefore, if institutions of meaning change, forms of consciousness also change.

### **2. Materials and Methods**

Mediatization theory explains how media become integrated into all social institutions and reshape them according to media logic. Rather than merely representing religion or spirituality, media transform how spirituality is practiced, experienced, and organized. Scholars note that religion online is not simply religion transferred to the internet; it becomes reconfigured by interactivity, speed, personalization, and visual culture. ([Springer](#))

The transition from traditional spirituality to mediatized spirituality reflects a broader transformation in the cultural, technological, and institutional foundations of

contemporary society. Spirituality, once primarily embedded in stable communal structures and transmitted through inherited traditions, is increasingly reconfigured by digital media environments, networked communication, and individualized patterns of meaning-making. This shift does not imply the disappearance of traditional spirituality; rather, it indicates the emergence of new modalities through which spiritual beliefs, practices, and identities are produced, experienced, and circulated. Meyer, B. (2012).

Traditional spirituality was historically grounded in enduring social institutions, territorially bounded communities, and collectively shared symbolic systems. Its legitimacy derived from continuity, ritual authority, and intergenerational transmission. Several defining characteristics may be identified. Campbell, H. A. (2012)

First, spirituality was closely associated with **physical sacred spaces**, such as temples, mosques, churches, monasteries, and shrines. These locations functioned not merely as places of worship, but as centers of communal memory, moral education, and symbolic belonging.

Second, spiritual life was sustained through **face-to-face rituals** and embodied participation. Ceremonies, collective prayer, pilgrimage, festivals, and rites of passage reinforced solidarity and reproduced shared values through direct interpersonal interaction. Panchenko, S., & Rizun, V. (2025).

Third, traditional spirituality relied upon **stable authority structures**. Religious scholars, clergy, elders, and institutional leaders served as interpreters of doctrine, custodians of tradition, and mediators of moral norms. Their authority was generally rooted in formal learning, lineage, or recognized communal legitimacy.

Fourth, spirituality operated through **collective moral discipline**. Ethical behavior was shaped by communal expectations, customary obligations, and normative frameworks that linked the individual to the wider social order.

Fifth, traditional spirituality was characterized by **continuity through tradition**. Beliefs and practices were transmitted across generations, preserving historical memory and maintaining a sense of temporal coherence between past, present, and future.

Taken together, these features demonstrate that traditional spirituality depended significantly on geographic proximity, institutional stability, and culturally embedded systems of legitimacy.

In contrast, mediatized spirituality emerges within digitally saturated societies where communication technologies increasingly structure social experience. Spiritual meanings are no longer confined to localized institutions or inherited communities; they are now shaped through platforms, algorithms, and transnational media flows. Evolvi, G. (2022).

First, mediatized spirituality is defined by **digital accessibility**. Spiritual content is available continuously through websites, livestreams, podcasts, mobile applications, and social media platforms, enabling users to engage with teachings and practices regardless of time or location.

Second, it is marked by **individualization**. Rather than receiving a fixed tradition, individuals actively select, combine, and reinterpret spiritual elements according to personal needs, emotional preferences, and life projects. Spirituality becomes a matter of personal curation rather than collective inheritance.

Third, mediatized spirituality often depends on **visual performance**. Images, short videos, aesthetic branding, and symbolic self-presentation become central modes of expressing spiritual identity. Visibility and emotional resonance may become as significant as doctrinal substance.

Fourth, it operates through **algorithmic visibility**. Digital platforms do not simply host spiritual content; they prioritize, recommend, and amplify particular messages

according to engagement metrics. Consequently, technological systems increasingly influence which spiritual narratives gain prominence.

Fifth, mediatized spirituality fosters **networked communities**. Belonging is no longer exclusively tied to locality or physical congregation but can emerge through online groups, digital forums, and transnational communities organized around shared values or practices.

Sixth, it is characterized by **hybridization**. Boundaries between religion, psychology, wellness culture, self-help discourse, and lifestyle practices become increasingly fluid. Individuals may combine meditation, motivational coaching, traditional teachings, therapeutic language, and popular culture into new spiritual syntheses.

### **3.Results**

The movement from traditional spirituality to mediatized spirituality signifies a deeper transformation in the nature of social consciousness. Spiritual identity shifts from being primarily inherited and institutionally regulated to being increasingly curated, personalized, and mediated through technological infrastructures. Authority moves from established institutions toward decentralized influencers and platform dynamics. Community becomes less territorially bounded and more network-based. Meaning itself becomes shaped not only by tradition and doctrine, but also by media logic, digital attention economies, and global cultural circulation.

Therefore, mediatized spirituality should be understood not as a marginal cultural trend, but as a significant reorganization of how contemporary individuals construct values, belonging, and transcendence in the digital age.

Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok function as contemporary spaces of symbolic guidance. Influencers, motivational speakers, religious educators, and mindfulness coaches compete for attention through emotionally

resonant content. Authority increasingly depends on visibility, engagement, and relatability rather than formal credentials.

Algorithms do not merely recommend content; they organize spiritual attention. Users repeatedly exposed to specific themes—gratitude, manifestation, asceticism, discipline, healing, prophecy—may internalize these narratives as meaningful frameworks. Thus, technological systems participate in shaping consciousness.

Online prayer sessions, livestream worship, digital pilgrimages, meditation apps, and remote communities became especially visible during the pandemic period, showing that sacred experience can be mediated beyond physical presence.

Mediatized spirituality may be interpreted as a new form of social consciousness insofar as it reshapes the symbolic frameworks through which individuals and communities understand identity, morality, belonging, and temporality in contemporary society. As media technologies increasingly mediate everyday life, spirituality is no longer confined to institutional religion or private belief. Instead, it becomes integrated into digital communication systems that influence how meaning is produced, circulated, and internalized. In this sense, mediatized spirituality represents not merely a transformation of religious practice, but a broader reconfiguration of consciousness under conditions of digital modernity.

One of the most significant dimensions of mediatized spirituality is its role in contemporary identity construction. Individuals increasingly define themselves through narratives of self-development, healing, discipline, authenticity, resilience, and life purpose that circulate through digital culture. Social media platforms provide spaces where users publicly perform and narrate their personal journeys, often linking spiritual growth to self-optimization and emotional fulfillment. Identity thus becomes an ongoing reflexive project shaped by mediated symbols, aspirational discourses, and interactive feedback mechanisms.

Mediatized spirituality also contributes to the emergence of new moral vocabularies. Traditional ethical systems grounded in religious doctrine, communal norms, or philosophical principles are increasingly supplemented—and in some contexts partially displaced—by concepts such as energy, boundaries, self-worth, alignment, mindfulness, trauma awareness, and emotional intelligence. These categories function as normative tools through which individuals interpret behavior, relationships, and well-being. Moral discourse therefore becomes more psychologized, therapeutic, and individualized, reflecting broader cultural shifts toward subjectivity and personal experience.

A further feature of mediatized spirituality lies in its capacity to generate new forms of collective imagination. Through digital networks, geographically dispersed individuals participate in shared symbolic worlds structured by common narratives, rituals, and values. Online communities centered around meditation, ethical living, manifestation practices, mindfulness, or spiritual awakening create senses of belonging that transcend national, linguistic, and denominational boundaries. These communities do not necessarily replace traditional collective identities, but they expand the horizons of affiliation beyond territorial and institutional limits.

Mediatized spirituality also transforms the temporal organization of spiritual life. Traditional spiritual practices often emphasized cyclical rituals, sacred calendars, contemplation, and gradual ethical formation. By contrast, digital environments privilege immediacy, acceleration, and constant availability. Spiritual reflection is adapted to the rhythms of contemporary media culture through short-form videos, daily affirmations, livestream guidance, algorithmically timed recommendations, and continuous content updates. Consequently, spirituality becomes embedded within the fast-paced temporality of digital consumption. Hjarvard, S. (2011).

Taken together, these developments indicate that spirituality is increasingly woven into ordinary media practices rather than remaining separate from them. It becomes part of scrolling, sharing, watching, posting, and interacting—activities that define everyday life in networked societies. Mediatized spirituality therefore functions as an important dimension of contemporary social consciousness, shaping how individuals interpret themselves and the world around them.

#### 4. Discussions

Despite its emancipatory potential, mediatized spirituality is marked by significant contradictions and structural tensions. While it can democratize access to meaning, foster new communities, and encourage self-reflection, it is also shaped by the economic and technological logics of digital platforms.

**Commodification** One central contradiction is the commodification of spirituality. Practices and teachings that were historically embedded in communal or ethical traditions may be transformed into marketable goods and services. Online courses, subscription communities, branded lifestyles, coaching programs, and monetized advice illustrate how spiritual discourse can be incorporated into consumer markets. In such contexts, spiritual value risks being subordinated to profitability and audience growth. Meyer, B. (2012).

**Superficiality** Another concern is superficiality. Complex philosophical and ethical traditions may be reduced to motivational slogans, aesthetic imagery, or highly simplified narratives optimized for rapid digital consumption. The demand for brevity and virality can privilege emotional appeal over intellectual depth, thereby weakening the reflective and disciplinary dimensions of spiritual life.

**Fragmentation** Mediatized spirituality may also generate fragmentation. Because individuals selectively combine diverse beliefs, practices, and symbolic resources, spiritual worldviews can become internally inconsistent or unstable. In the absence of

coherent communities, sustained mentorship, or systematic study, spirituality may lose conceptual coherence and ethical continuity.

**Manipulation and Pseudo-Authority** Digital environments also create opportunities for manipulation. Charismatic influencers or self-proclaimed experts may exploit existential insecurity, emotional vulnerability, or the search for meaning through misinformation, psychological dependency, or pseudo-authoritative claims. Visibility on a platform can be mistaken for expertise, thereby blurring distinctions between genuine guidance and opportunistic persuasion. Nwankwo, A. O. (2017).

**Surveillance and datafication** A further structural issue concerns surveillance and datafication. Even intimate searches for purpose, healing, or transcendence increasingly occur within commercial platforms that collect, analyze, and monetize user behavior. Spiritual interests, emotional states, and personal vulnerabilities may become part of data economies governed by opaque technological systems.

**Critical assessment** These contradictions demonstrate that mediatized spirituality should not be understood as an inherently liberating development. Rather, it is a historically specific phenomenon shaped by the intersection of culture, technology, and power. Its emancipatory possibilities coexist with new forms of commodification, control, and symbolic inequality. For this reason, critical analysis of mediatized spirituality is essential for understanding the future of values and consciousness in digitally mediated societies.

**Relevance for contemporary Society** For societies undergoing rapid modernization—including post-Soviet, Muslim-majority, and developing contexts—the rise of mediatized spirituality has particular significance. It influences youth identity, civic ethics, cultural memory, and attitudes toward tradition. In places where historical institutions are being reinterpreted, media-based spirituality may either strengthen moral renewal or intensify confusion depending on how it is guided. Therefore, scholars, educators, and policymakers should treat mediatized spirituality as a serious component of cultural development rather than a marginal trend.

## 5. Conclusion

Mediatized spirituality represents more than the digitalization of religion. It is a structural transformation in how people seek meaning, construct identity, and participate in symbolic communities. As media become central environments of everyday life, spirituality increasingly takes mediated forms that shape modern social consciousness. The future of collective values may depend on whether societies can integrate technological innovation with ethical depth, cultural memory, and critical awareness.

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