Research on The Trend of Vietnamese Women's Participation in Online Religious Activities with The Rise of Social Media

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Abstract:

In the context of globalization and social media, religions in Vietnam are undergoing significant transformation; this research focuses on examining the trends of Vietnamese Women's Participation in Online religious activities. The collaboration between traditional religiosity and digital technologies has given rise to Online Religious Activities, enabling people to practice their beliefs in a new way. By applying desk research and sociological surveys, the aim is to examine the trend of Vietnamese Women's engagement with religious content on social media. Results show that Vietnamese women prefer Facebook as the main platform; popular activities include watching and listening to sermons with a frequency of 1 to 3 times a week. Their main purpose is to strengthen religious knowledge. Based on these findings, the research group suggests three ways to assist Vietnamese religious organizations in adapting to digital development, maintaining harmony, and enhancing their status within the community. These solutions include (i) Solutions for managing Online religious practices, (ii) Solutions for organizing Online religious practices, and (iii) Solutions for the content of Online religious practices.

Keyword: online religious activities; social media, Vietnamese women's participation

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and development of digital technologies, social media has become a requisite part of modern citizens. This movement not only transformed communication and social connections but heavily impacted religious behavioral patterns, especially the emergence of online religiosity (Hung., D.Q., 2006, Thuy. B.T., 2017). Digital platforms boost information dissemination, ensuring quicker and wider community outreach. (Thanh., P.V., 2024). In the past, Faith-based activities were often initiated by men. However, recent years have seen an increase in religious movements which are female-led: 60/70 of new religious phenomena are headed by women (Hung. D.Q., 2019).

Vietnamese women, as custodians and transmitters of cultural values, show diverse reactions to this change. Their participation in online religious activities reflects not only the development of religion in the digital age but also the shifts in the

status of women in modern society. Online religious activities include:

- Attending online ceremonies
- Sharing and discussing religious content
- Watching and listening to sermons and doctrines
- Other activities

Research on the participation of Vietnamese Women in Digital religiosity in recent years has shown a significant development. The shift from direct ceremonies to digital ones has offered a flexible and convenient alternative for many, especially women. This trend can be attributed to several factors, such as the elimination of physical barriers, flexible timing, easy access, and the availability of various religious resources. Social media provides women with easy access to religious activities that they might not have been able to partake in because of time, family responsibilities, or geographical constraints (Thanh, P.V., 2024). Additionally, social media platforms allow women to easily share and discuss their religious beliefs with like-minded individuals without face-to-face meetings.

Aside from being a community space, online religious practices help refine women's perceptions of religion. In these digital spaces, women can encounter different views, be able to voice their opinions and have critical and modern discussions about the role of religions. (Campbell, 2020, Hai., N.T., 2018). These practices help them gain a deeper spiritual understanding while also promoting self-development. Despite numerous benefits, this phenomenon poses some challenges regarding content moderation. It is one of the biggest obstacles due to the unverifiability of the sources and the quick dissemination of the Internet, leading to misunderstandings about the authentic doctrines Nam., B.Q., 2022). Moreover, the over-reliance on digital space for religious practices can reduce the sacristy and deep meanings of traditional rituals, when everything becomes too easy and convenient.

Therefore, the research on Vietnamese Women's participation in Digital religious activities is a topical theme that holds profound societal motives. It reflects a shift in Women's religious practices and is also part of a larger process of globalization and modern development: Technologies have become an important link in sustaining religious faith. In this context, understanding the trends of Women's participation in Internet-based Religiosity helps researchers and authoritative entities gain a comprehensive view of the roles of Women and Religion in Vietnamese Society.

2. Theoretical basis:

2.1. Online Religious activities:

(1) Concept of online activities:

The rise of technology and social networking sites have opened a new realm for online religiosity In recent years, these activities are gaining popularity in global religious communities, including Vietnam. While providing accessibility for believers, this shift also enhances religious organizations' community outreach through digital platforms such as social networking sites, live streaming, and mobile applications.

Online religious activities imply religious beliefs and practices carried out through digital platforms. These activities may include attending online religious ceremonies, participating in religious forums, sharing religious knowledge and information on social media, or joining online prayer groups (Barker, 2020). In modern society, social media and digital technology have become important tools for religious followers to maintain and practice their faith, especially in light of travel restrictions and social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Isetti G., 2022).

During these online practices, direct interactions are replaced with indirect ones, and traditional religious spaces or places of worship are substituted by online spaces. On many occasions, the content of rituals is abbreviated compared to in-person ceremonies. This transition from direct to indirect religious practices is currently considered a suitable way to meet the spiritual and religious

needs of the population. The quintessence of religious practices is the expression of faith and reverence by those who share the same religious beliefs. Therefore," internet-based" rituals still meet the religious demands of the mass.

The thriving of online religious teachings benefits both the religion and its community. Through attending these activities, followers are allowed to flexibly and conveniently practice their faith. According to a research by Cheong (2021), social media and digital platforms in general have given access to millions of people who used to face physical and time barriers. These practices strengthen the connection between individuals and religious communities worldwide through sharing, discussion, and easy accessibility. Campbell, 2020, Hai., N.T., 2018).

Furthermore, for people with disabilities, immobilities, or living in remote areas, online religiosity provides a crucial alternative (MacWilliams, M., & Young, K. (2022). Underprivileged women who lack access to traditional religions can find mental support and share their experiences on the Internet. This special connection which transcends physical and cultural barriers deepens their relationship with religion.

(2) Content of Online religious activities

To systematize the content of Digital Religiosity, this research examines the participation trend of Vietnamese women in four activities:

- Attending online ceremonies: this is one of the fundamental practices. These ceremonies are often live-streamed on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Zoom, and religion-specialized websites. Besides that, spiritual leaders often modify their delivery to be suitable for digital environments. For example: using multimedia tools to create a sacred atmosphere and attract interaction from followers (Campbell,2022).

- **Joining online communities:** these platforms connect like-minded souls and sustain religion through information sharing and discussion. They can appear in different forms, including Facebook and Zalo groups, religious forums, or specialized platforms like Pray.com (Cheong, 2021).

- **Sharing and discussing religious content:** Existing forums, Facebook groups, and religious platforms like Pray.com are open spaces for conversations and information exchange (Cheong,2021). These discussions reinforce religious faith and broaden one's horizons (Barker,2020). Originating from different sources and for different objectives, religious publications on the internet are rather diverse (Nam., B.Q., 2022).

- **Watching and listening to online teachings:** another popular activity; Religious institutions often share their teachings and doctrines via YouTube, podcasts, or on their official websites. This content is educational for devouts who want to delve deep into religious doctrines and develop a spiritual life (Campbell, 2020). Notably, these teachings are often short, concise and consumable, suitable for the "fast consumption" trends of nowadays users (Barker, 2020).

- **Other activities: Joining online support groups creates opportunities for users to get mental and emotional support, especially when one is experiencing personal struggles.** (Cheong, 2021) With the limitless accessibility of digital environments, religious content (whether in Vietnamese or in foreign languages) can be archived. In fact, recent years have witnessed the emergence and development of new religious sects (Nam., B.Q., 2022)**.**

2.2. Social media and its role in the development of online religious activities

(1) Social Media:

The Internet has become an indispensable part of people's lives around the globe, revolutionizing communication, information, and community building. Social networking sites facilitate personal profiles, status updates, relationships, and connections with communities of mutual interests,

therefore, allowing space for sharing and discussion.

Social media refers to online platforms that enable users to create content, share information, and interact with each other virtually. They have developed rapidly over the past decades, playing an important role in forming private and social relationships (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok are prime examples of major social networks, attracting millions of users worldwide.

One of the most noticeable impacts of Social media is its limitless ability to connect people regardless their geographical distance or time zones. Not only does it maintain existing relationships but create new ones that transcend regional and cultural barriers. (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). However, social media users are facing security concerns that can further lead to privacy invasion and identity theft. (Acquisti, Gross & Stutzman, 2014). Moreover, they are at risk of misinformation and misguided news (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

(2) The Role of social media in the development of online religious activities
In today's world, social media has become a crucial tool for developing and sustaining virtual religious practices. With easy accessibility, uploading capacity, and superior search tool, it has been utilized, exploited, and applied to religious aspects by individuals and organizations. (Nam., B.Q., 2022). Therefore, the participation of women in this field has been relatively expanded, directly affecting their beliefs and practices, creating a multifaceted religious landscape. Specifically:

- **Creating online communities:** social media brings together devotees around the world, allowing a community to share beliefs, learn from others, and maintain religious relationships. Community groups (private or public), websites, blogs, and seminars provide platforms for interaction among one religion or cross-religions.

- Providing religious content: digital platforms allow organizations and individuals to upload an unlimited amount of materials, which preach knowledge and practices to a wider community. Followers can attend live ceremonies and rituals without arriving at places of worship, this not only helps cutting costs for the organizers but also ensures a much larger community outreach.

- Encouraging religious practices: social media motivates people to practice religiosity through challenges, campaigns, and online events. Through articles, images, and videos of popular religious figures, people are motivated and given guidance for daily spiritual practices.

- Boosting interaction and participation: social media facilitates active interaction by tools like Likes, shares, and comments, maintaining a strong engagement while also enhancing participation and connection within the communities.

- Promotion and Events organization: social media proves efficient in advertising for religious events, seminars, and communal activities; therefore, boosting attendance and increasing brand visibility for the organization.

In general, social networking platforms have a pivotal role in expanding the range and influence of religious activities, making them accessible and integrative in the digital era.

2.3. Gender issues in online religious activities

Genders have become a notable topic in research on digital religiosity. The emergence of social media has posed new questions about the relationship between digital spaces and gender-related religious practices (Starkey, C., et al., 2022). Digital activities both promote and challenge gender inequality, reflecting overt stigmas appearing in the outside world. These issues continue to generate and modify women's actions related to online religiosity.

The most major problem is Women's freedom of religion, especially in a traditionally gender-classified field (Mia LÖVHEIM, 2022). Research conducted by (Mia LÖVHEIM Evelina LUNDMARK, 2019) showed that the way Women express themselves on Digital platforms is characterized by communicative intentions or

motivation regarding self-expression. Another important aspect of this process is how communication and interaction in online space are challenging women and their strategies to encounter them. Moreover, sociocultural norms associated with genders and online religiosity correspond to traditional religions.

Originating from conventional religions, with the help of social media and momentum of the COVID-19, Virtual religious activities are now hosted alongside traditional forms. Some of these practices are organized to raise public awareness about the gender-classified organization of the religious environment by using propaganda tools such as websites and social media. This phenomenon is primarily popular in countries or religions that show obvious gender discrimination, referring to men as the main subject while isolating women in a limited space (such as mosques in Turkey, research conducted by Nas, Alparslan., 2021). Aside from strengthening one's belief, the aforementioned organizations also encourage women to attend campaigns to share their experiences about gender discrimination in Mosques (Nas, Alparslan., 2021).

Social media allows the shift of officiality from religious bodies to individuals such as web administrators, bloggers, and influencers (Hoover, S. (Ed.). (2016). These shifts conform to a trend in which individuals can assemble and express their identities online in novel ways through digital resources on a much larger scale (Hutchings, T., 2014). These individuals might or might not represent any official organizations. At a higher level, digital means of communication might open new doors for seminars about religious conventions and genders (Vis, F., et al 2011). In digital spaces, Women often share personal experiences including religious content through speeches, images, and videos.

3. Research methodology:
Data collection method:

The research group utilized document analysis to systematize the theoretical bases of social media and online religiosity. This article gives an overview of the theories and research related to faith-based activities in general and digital religiosity in particular. Related research was selected thoroughly from sources such as Scopus, the Online Library of the Central Propaganda Department, and specialized journals such as Religion Research Journal.

The researchers analyzed the main topics thematically by narrative synthesis method. To examine the participation trend of Vietnamese Women in Virtual religiosity, the group focused on two points: (i) Overview of online religious activities; (ii) The current trend of online religious participation. The data used to assess the current trends were collected from books, scientific journals (domestic and international), and referenced materials via the group's Google form: https://forms.gle/NjBmoCqxzgL9rr2e8. This survey was sent to female respondents through social media and personal connections. It received 262 responses, in which 107 respondents who have participated in online religiosity continued to answer about their tendencies, and the other 155 people who have never participated in such activities were asked to give their reasons. From the collected statistics, the research group congregated, selected relevant information, and used descriptive statistical method to examine the trend.

Data processing method:

The secondary statistics of this article are collected from the Reports of General Statistics Department and specialized journals such as the Religion Research Journal. The statistics were then assembled, calculated, and visualized by Excel into charts and tables. Using those materials, the research group analyzed the data and indicated primary trends in Vietnamese Women's participation in Online Religious activities. Therefore, our group recommended suggestions to improve the efficiency of these phenomena.

4. The trend of Vietnamese women's participation in online religious activities in the context of social media development

Religion system in Vietnam are an instrumental part of culture and society, with a rich diversity ranging from Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Caodaism to Indigenous beliefs (Pew Research, 2010) and new religious movements.

4.1. Overview of religion in Vietnam in the context of social media development

(i) Group of established religious organizations

Viet nam is a multi-religious country, up to now, the state has recognized and registered activities for 43 organizations of 16 religions. According to GSO, (2018), 16 religions include Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao Buddhism, Islam, Baha'i Faith, Pure Land Buddhism, Vietnam Buddhist Association, the Four Gratitudes, the Bao Son Ky Huong, the Southern Buddhist Church, the Minh Ly Dao Church - Tam Tong Mieu, the Cham Balamon Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon), and the Buddhism of the Compassionate Mind (operational registration) and the Vietnam Restorationist Church. Furthermore, there are 60 religious training institutions representing Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Hoa Hao Buddhism in Vietnam (Thanh, P.V., 2024).

Vietnam has over 27 million devouts, accounting for 27% of the population; more than 54,000 dignitaries; 144,000 personnel; and about 30,000 places of worship. Compared to 2022, the number of devouts has increased by 56,000 individuals, 814 more dignitaries, and 142 additional places of worship. The religion with the largest number of followers is Buddhism with over 14 million people, next is 7 million Catholics, 1,5 million Hoa Hoa Buddhists, 1,21 million Protestants, and 1,1 million Caodaists. Furthermore, Vietnam also has other religions: Islam, Pure Land Buddhism, Four Gratitudes, Balamon, Bao Son Ky Huong, Minh Su Dao, Minh Ly Dao…The religious system is extremely rich with 50,703 places of worship, of which 3,000 heritages are related to religions and faiths, with some being recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage (MOHA, 2024).

(ii) Group of new religious movements

Besides existing religions, Vietnam in the past 30 years has witnessed the emergence of new religious movements with various characteristics and manifestations. Some of them express political overtones or contain superstitions, leading to conflicts with traditional culture and threatening political security.

Adherents of these new phenomena come from different classes, such as intellectuals, artists, small traders, office workers…But the most popular groups are farmers and labor workers, with some of them having extremely challenging economic or health conditions. Some of these people used to be followers of religions like Protestantism, Catholicism, or Buddhism…but they mostly converted from indigenous faiths. Specially, the trend of women leading these movements is increasing: 60/70 new religious movements are initiated by women (Hung. D.Q., 2019). The ratio of women's participation in these new religions tends to be higher than men (Minh., N.V., 2014).

According to Thanh., P.V., (2024), some typical cases are "Phap Luan Cong", and "The Church of God the Mother"; after being investigated and disbanded, some key figures of these cults continue to propagate in Online spaces such as Facebook and YouTube. Their targeted audiences are elderly people and students. The expansion of social media and difficulties in content monitoring have given rise to religious exploitation for ulterior motives. Misguided organizations and individuals make profits off deceptive teachings and charities.

The rapid growth of social media in recent decades has radically impacted many aspects of life in Vietnamese society, including religion. Regarding statistics from We Are Social (2023), Vietnam has around 72 million internet users, of which 70 million have social media accounts, accounting for more than 70% of the population. Social media

platforms such as Facebook, Youtube and Zalo have become major channels for communication, information exchange, and community connections. In this circumstance, religious activities have adapted to and utilized digital technologies to increase their visibility. Religions, organizations, cults, places of worship…have used platforms like Facebook, Zalo, and Telegram for marketing and social connectivity. Some examples are the Facebook Page of Tri Viet Publication (owned by Vietnam Episcopal Council) which has over 36,000 followers, that of Vietnam Convention Council with over 45,500 followers, Tay Thien Temple with over 1 million, Vietnam Buddhism Association with over 500,000 followers (Thanh., P.V., 2024).

With its superior advantages being the massive information transmission, various formats, and no limitations regarding time and space…social media has been widely used for Digital religiosity. In 2023, the General Religious Department had organized 12 conferences to enact laws regarding religions and faiths for 3,420 representatives who are dignitaries, personnel, monks, and religious managing departments…, and 3 seminars to train communication skills for 750 representatives of regional organizations.

Social media has opened a new realm for online religious activities, from teachings dissemination and hosting ceremonies to creating a forum for discussion and sharing. Online teachings in YouTube, faith-sharing groups in Facebook, and communicative channels on Zalo have enhanced people's religious participation. (Nam., B.Q., 2022). However, these content originates from both official and unofficial sources. Therefore, the publication and access to misguided religious content and superstitions are very hard to monitor and prevent. Moreover, the legal framework in Vietnam has not established specific policies for religious content in Online spaces. This poses a challenge for the authority which requires stringent prevention and measurements. (Government, 2023).

4.2. Descriptive statistics about the surveyed sample

The survey received 262 responses from Vietnamese women selected randomly by age group, occupation, and education level. The detailed results based on this information are displayed in the charts below:

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of survey participants

Occupation	Number of people	Percentage (%)
Total	262	
Students	76	29%
Workers	154	59%
Retirees	32	12%
Age group		
Under 18	23	9%
18 - 39	110	42%
40 - 49	92	35%
Over 50	37	14%
Education level		
Below Highschool	8	3,20%
Highschool	13	4,80%
Technical/Vocational degree	17	6,50%
University degree	203	77,40%
Post graduated	21	8,10%

Source: Survey's result

The majority of responders were between 18 and 49 (202 people, accounting for 77%). This age group mostly corresponded with workers (154 people, taking up to 59%) and students (76 people, or 29%). 203 of 262 survey takers are on University Degree (77/4%), and 21 (8,1%) are above University, indicating that the sample is highly educated and has easy access to digital activities.

Regarding religion adherence and religious practices of Vietnamese Women, the research group categorized adherents into 5 groups based on prevalent faiths: Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Caodaism, and no religion. Results show that among 262 participants, 48% of them are Buddhists, 13% are Catholics, 3% Protestants, 2% Caodaists, and 34% are non-religious.
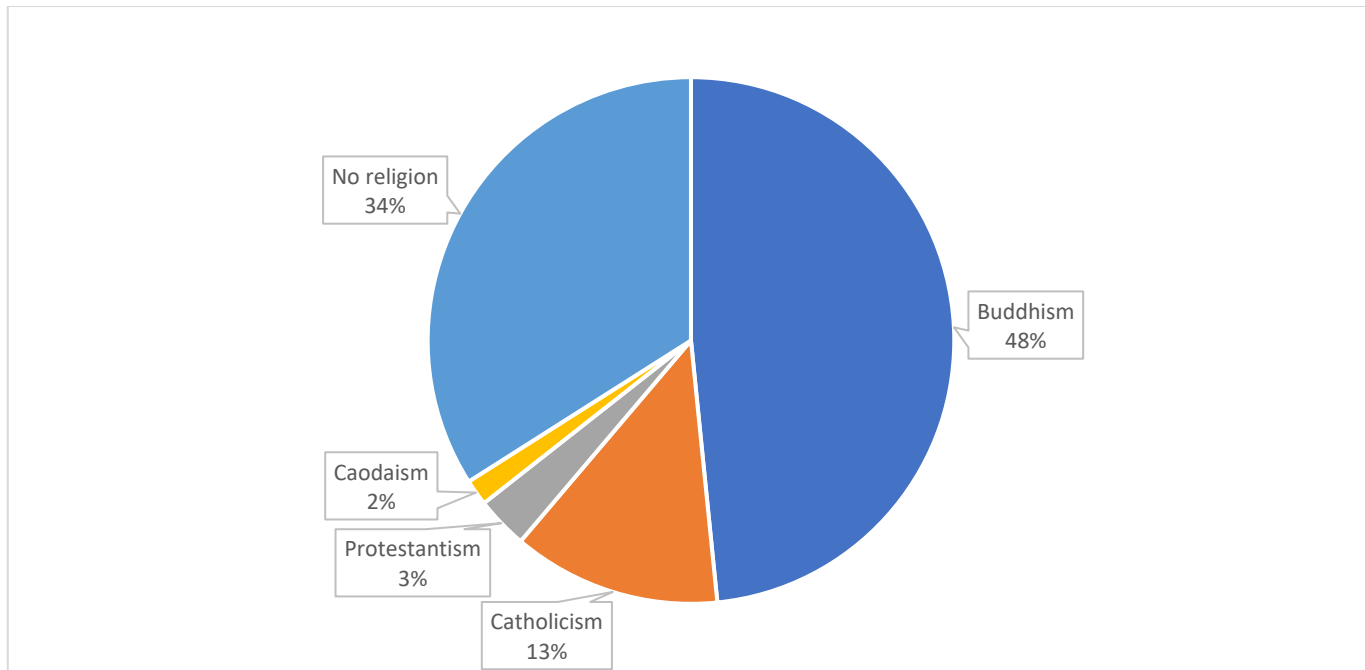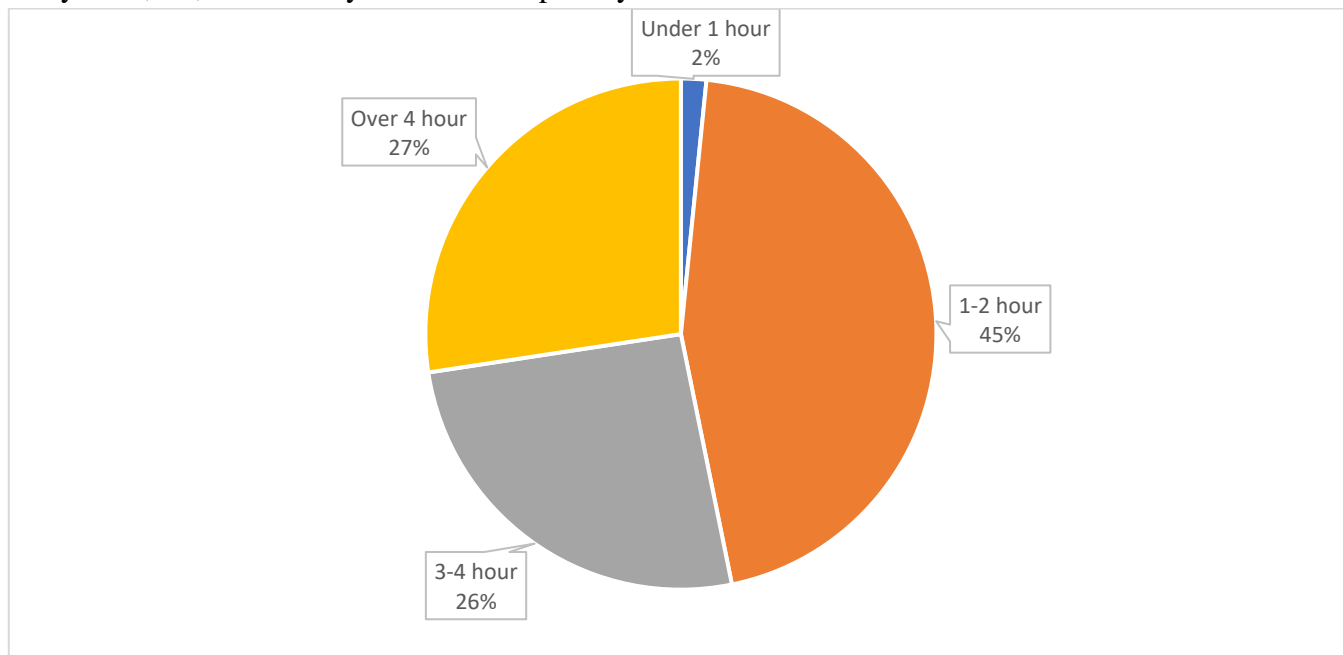

Figure 1. Religion or Religious trends of participants
Source: Survey's result

In terms of social media use frequency (unit: hour/day), the most common time was 1-2 hours per day at 42,5%, followed by Over 4 hours per day at 27,4%, 3-4 hours a day at 25,8%, and under 1 hour at only 1,6%.


Figure 2. Social media using frequency of participants
Source: Survey's result

Among 262 respondents, 107 people (41%) answered "Yes" to the question "Have you ever participated in at least one of the five virtual religious activities: (1) Attending online ceremonies, (2) Discussing and sharing religious content, (3) Watching and Listening to teachings and sermons, (4) Joining Online religious communities, and (5) Other activities." The other 155 people (59%) answering "No" to the questions were later asked to give their reasons, which were "Simply not interested" (42,9%), "Do not know about" (36,7%), "No activities of interest" (18,4%), and "Lack of trust" (12,2%).
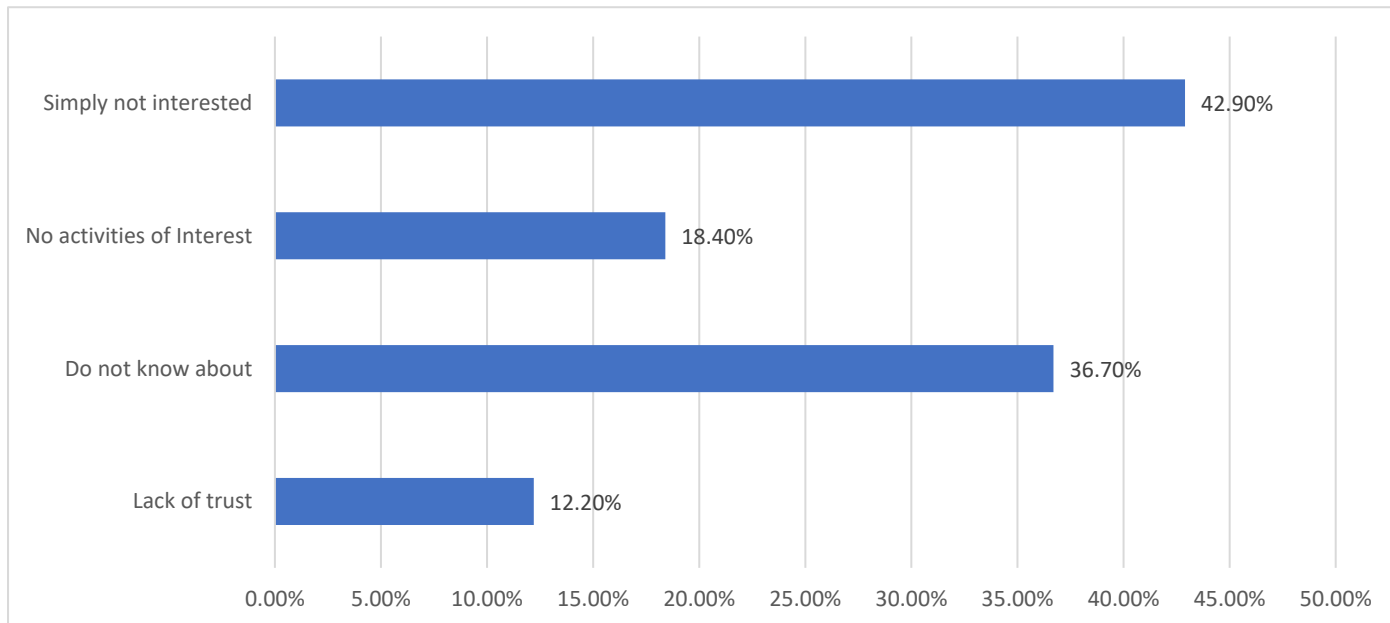

Figure 3. Reasons for non-participation in Online religious activities
Source: Survey's result

4.3 Survey results of Vietnamese Women's participation trends in Online religious activities.

Of the 107 people who have participated in said activities, their preferred platforms are Facebook (60,7%), Youtube 52,3%), Zalo (37,4%), and TikTok (30,8%). Other platforms that are not social media (Zoom, Google Meet…) account for 22,4%, specialized websites cnstitute 14% and others at 7,5%.
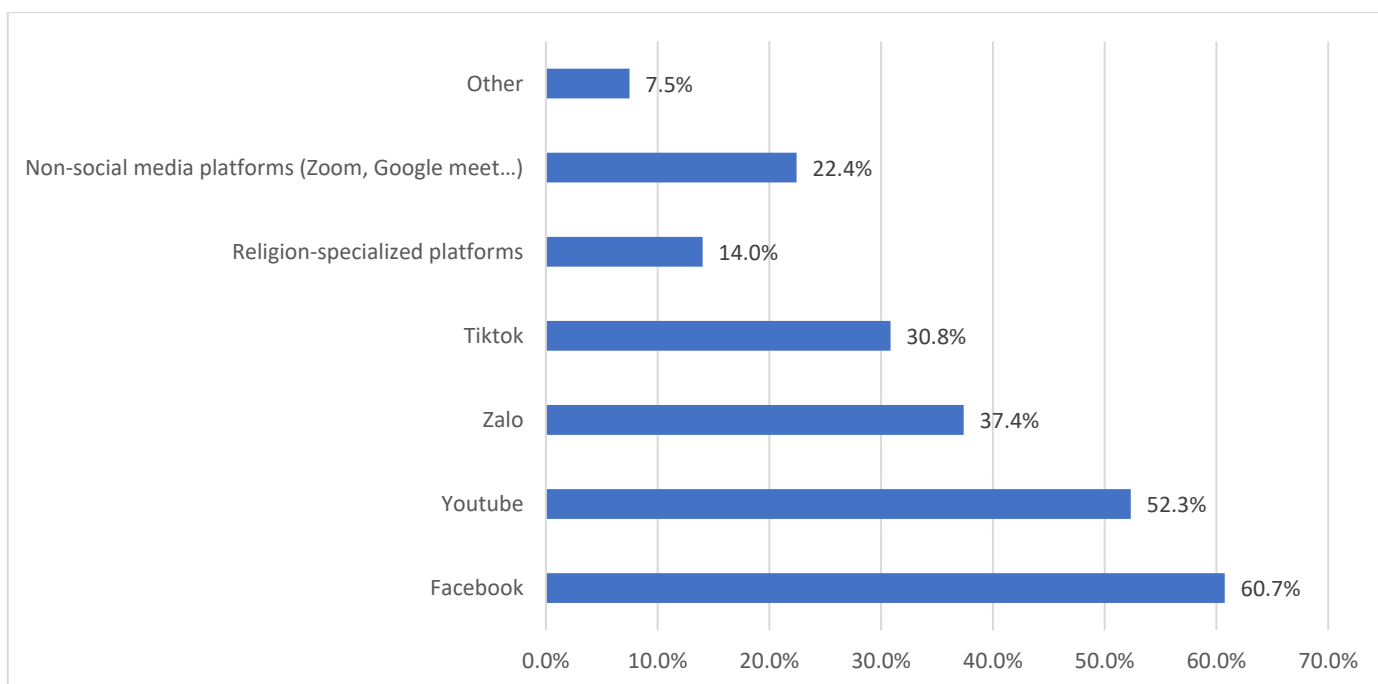

Figure 4. Platforms for participation of surveyed Women
Source: Survey's result

The majority of respondents (73,8%) have partaken in "watching and listening to teachings and sermons", 12,1% of them have done "Discussing and sharing religious content", 7.5% "Attending online ceremonies", only 4,7% are members of online religious communities and 1,9% attended "others activities".
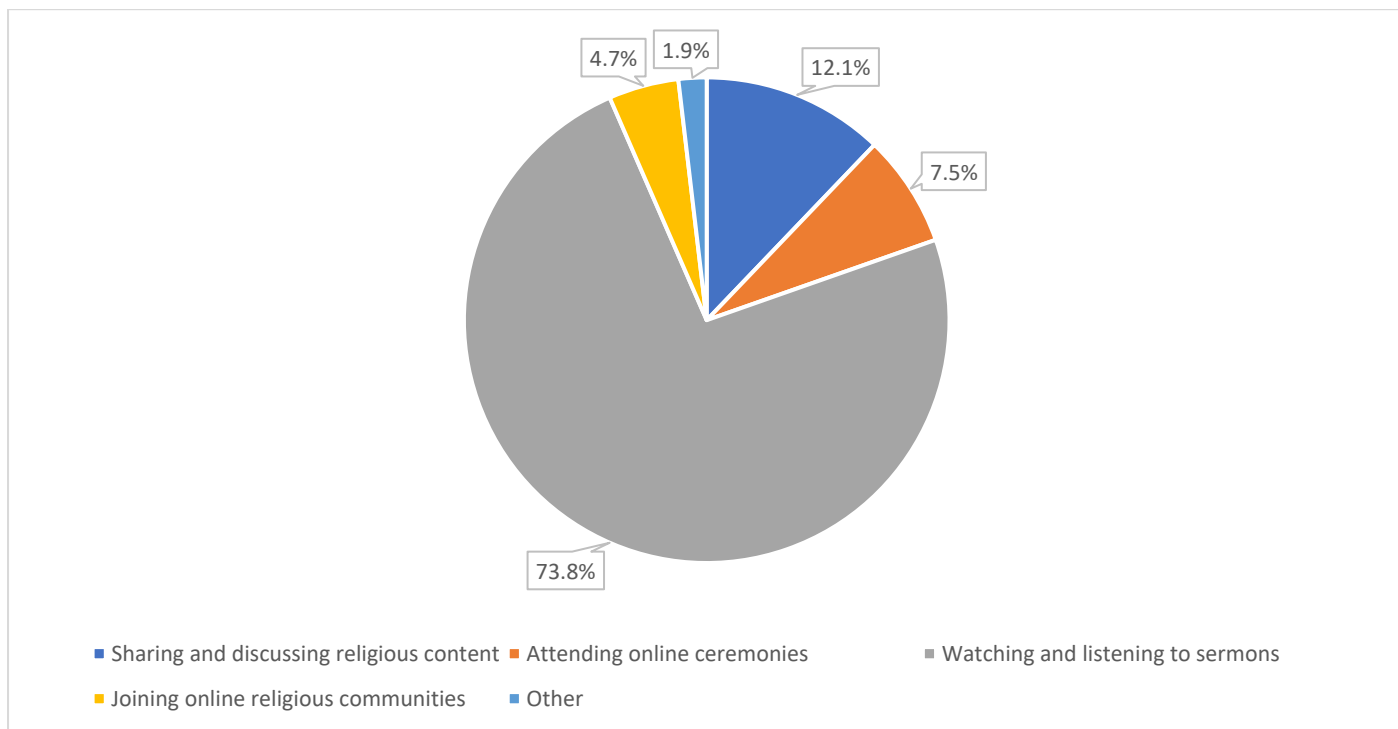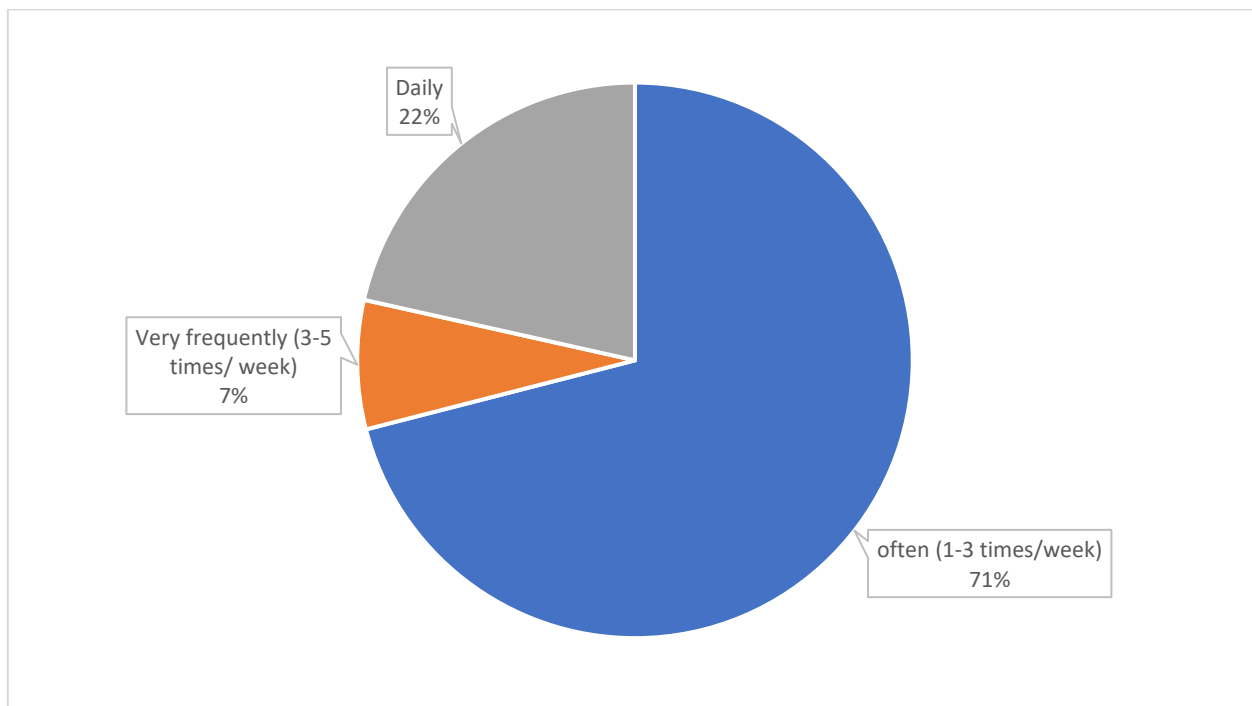

Figure 5. Digital faith-based activities of participants

Source: Survey's result

In regard to participation frequency, 1-3 times/week (often) accounted for 71%, regular basis made up for 22% and very frequently (3-5 times/day) took up for 7%.

Figure 6. Participation Frequency of Virtual Religiosity
Source: Survey's result

In assessing users' feedback on the benefits of Digital religiosity, the researchers utilized checkbox format questions. Results in Table 2 indicate that the three most notable benefits are "strengthening religious knowledge with 50 votes (74,8%), "helping users overcome personal struggles" (51,4%), and "solidifying religious faith" (46,7%).

Table 2. Participants' feedback about the benefits of digital religiosity

Benefit	Number of votes	Percentage	Ranking
Solidifying religious faith	50	46,7%	3
Strengthening religious knowledge	80	74,8%	1
Receiving emotional and mental support from other community members	34	31,8%	5
Helping users overcoming personal struggles	55	51,4%	2
Convenient, flexible, unlimited space and time	23	21,5%	6
Expanding connections with other devouts	14	13,1%	7
Dễ dàng chia sẻ, thảo luận các nội dung tôn giáo Easily sharing and discussing religious content	42	39,3%	4
Other	9	8,4%	8

Source: Survey's result

Additionally, respondents believed that Online religious practices helped them "Gain a deeper understanding and motivated to do good deeds" (Le Thi Thu Thuy- Workers- Religion: Buddhism); "Broaden my knowledge and strengthen belief" (Nguyen Hai Duong- Worker - Religion: Catholicism); "Save time and can be done anywhere" (Do Que - Workers- Religion: Buddhism); "Very convenient and educational" (Nguyen Thanh Nam- Worker – Religion: Buddhism).

Compared to conventional practices, Internet-based activities have a positive impact on participants, with 30,8% selecting 'very positive", 61,5% "positive", and 7,7% "neutral". None of the survey takers selected "negative" or "very negative". This can be explained by active participation/non-participation, which means that people tend to attend what will likely benefit them.

Aside from the advantages, an open-ended question about whether users face any challenges when joining these activities was posed. While the majority faced no challenges, it is noted that there are two emerging problems:

- Problems related to Social media: unstable connection; not used to using social media (only watching suggested videos instead of active selection), concerns about privacy and security.

- Problems related to the activities: not having time for scheduled ceremonies, lack of sacristy due to the absence of community, and distraction from other activities on social media.

Encountering these struggles, some people choose to "primarily attend direct ceremonies, indirect ones cannot fulfill all the needs", (Nguyen Thi Viet Hong-Worker, religion: Protestantism) or "Passively consuming content instead of actively using Internet search tool*"* (Mai Thi Quynh, Worker, religion: Catholicism).

5. Discussion:

Viet Nam is a pluralistic nation, in which Buddhism has a pivotal role in the cultural and spiritual life of the people. (GSO,2018). In respect of the research, 48% of attendants identified as Buddhists. In Vietnam, Buddhism still maintains the supreme faith due to its amalgamation with local culture. Numerous studies indicated that it has transcended its role and become an impactful ideology regarding morality and lifestyle (Ngoc., N.T.M., 2021).

Aside from Buddhism, Catholicism with 13%, Protestantism with 3%, and Caodaism with 2% demonstrated that despite their smaller networks, they still have notable visibility within the community.

A large proportion of the people is non-religious (34% of the responders), This number indicated the growth of irreligious value systems. According to research of Nam., B.Q., (2022), the process of modernization and urbanization is causing people to disengage in religious affiliations, instead, they pursue personal ideology and humane value systems. This phenomenon reflects the diversification of faiths and beliefs in Vietnam, where quality of life has improved and people have more options for spiritual pursuits.

The rise of technology and social networking sites has transformed people's approach to information and ways of life. The survey showed that the vast majority used social media for 1-2 hours per day (42,5%) and over 3 hours per day (53,2%), demonstrating an undue reliance on digital platforms on a daily basis. These statistics aligned with research from We Are Social & Meltwater, (2024), *"Vietnamese people spend 2 hours 32 minutes a day for social media and texting applications. This statistic is one minute greater than an average user around the globe".*

Social media is not only a tool for communication but also an endless supplier of information, entertainment, and even Digital religious practices. Video-based platforms like YouTube and Facebook have provided easy accessibility to disseminate religious content to the mass. This trend shows a collective effort of religious institutions in adapting to digitalization. These platforms ensure community outreach even when followers cannot attend direct ceremonies (Thanh., P.V., 2020). Moreover, they serve as a tool to expand the influence of religious leaders. Another notable point is that, creating and broadcasting live content have become so easy and affordable that faith-based organizations can now reach a much larger audience with much lower costs.

Research conducted by Pew Research (2022) highlighted that the surge of online religiosity during the COVID-19 Pandemic has promoted this growth. In times of pandemic, congregation in places of worship was limited, forcing worshippers to find alternatives. Even though social distancing policies were abolished after the pandemic, this phenomenon continued to soar, reflecting the adaptability of modern faith-based institutions. According to an article by Nam., B.Q., (2022), these shifts have facilitated the accessibility of such practices.

The visibility of religions on digital platforms is becoming more prominent, with 41% of respondents having attended at least one of these listed activities. Online religion activities are not limited to just passively attending ceremonies or consuming content, but include discussion and opinions sharing. Facebook-based communities (public or private) are advancing and attracting public recognition, allowing a space for sharing religious values and perceptions.

Watching and listening to sermons have become an indispensable part of the life of modern devouts. According to the survey, up to 73,8% of attendants often watch or listen to online teachings, while

other activities, such as sharing and discussing religious content (12,1%), are much less popular. An explanation for this favoritism is how convenient and personalized these experiences are: people can attend whenever and wherever they want without constraints about schedule and specific requirements from sects.

Among existing sites, Facebook is the most favored place for religiosity participation. Viet Nam has one of the most rapid growth in the number of social media users in the East-Asia religion, with Facebook, Zalo and YouTube being the most popular sites. Statistics shown on Meta's Advertising Resource revealed that there were 72,7 million Facebook users in Vietnam at the start of 2024 (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2024). The research group's results also indicated that these sites are the predominant for religious activities, with Facebook being the most popular (60,7%), followed by YouTube at 52,3% and Zalo at 37,4%.

Aside from high interactivity and global recognition, one of the key reasons why Facebook is favorable is because of its live-streaming feature. Devotees can join in ceremonies, and even discuss religious issues through posts, comments or private messages. A study by Campbell and Tsuria (2021) about the development of religions in the online environment shows that Facebook offers a platform for gaining information and sharing personal experiences while also discussing moral and spiritual issues. This factor promotes unity in the devotees' community, therefore creating a safe space for sharing and learning from others who share the same religion. "*Sharing faith on Facebook helps believers remind themselves to stay true to the religious spirit, while also conveying the message of hope and confidence in one's personal love for the religion.*" (Dang Thi Ha, retired, religion: Buddhism)

Online religious activities offer crucial benefits for users. In the survey, the majority of respondents (74,8%) claimed that these practices helped them 'strengthen religious knowledge", and 51,4% of them said they helped "overcome personal struggles". Especially under the strain of modern life, accessibility to religious content can help people find comfort, mental guidance, and humane values. Additionally, "solidifying religious belief" (46,7%) is another notable benefit. In summary, online religious affiliation has a positive impact on the emotional and mental well-being of individuals (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Keeping themselves updated with teachings, ceremonies, and discussions not only enhances devotees' spiritual relationships but also creates an expansive network that provides them with affirmations and companionship. Due to its easy and convenient accessibility, these practices have gained popularity, especially during modern decades when technologies dominate many aspects of life. This is proved by the 30,8% of survey participants selecting "Very positive" and 61,5% of them selecting "positive".

Despite bringing numerous benefits, online religious activities also face daunting challenges. One of which is the lack of direct interaction and sacred emotions when participating in religious rituals through a digital device. According to Hoover. S. (2021), many devouts feel that these online ceremonies can not fully replace the spiritual experience in religious spaces.

The lack of control and supervision from official institutions might lead to misunderstandings about religious doctrines and practices (Lövheim, 2019), Other challenges might involve unstable Internet transmission and security concerns. Issues related to the legal framework and censorship pose difficulties for religious leaders and the community when they have to address false information, superstitions, and misguiding religions while utilizing social networking sites. (Nam., B.Q., 2022)

The aforementioned trends have paved the way for religious development, thus forcing the government to better manage religious activities on social media platforms to ensure religious values and the people's freedom of religion. Some of the recommended regulations are:

(i) About online activities management:

-Religious organizations have to collaborate with the authorities to establish an effective content

moderating system. This includes detecting and preventing misinformation regarding religions.

-Strengthen the role of official religious organizations through educational activities or through media channels. (Facebook/YouTube)

- Develop official channels of institutions: this helps maintain verifiability and mitigate misinformation. Additionally, live ceremonies can be broadcast under official supervision and guidance.

(ii) About the ways to organize religious events:

Host the ceremonies face-to-face and online: this solves the problem of lacking interaction and sacred feelings when participating in online ceremonies and inaccessibility due to geographical boundaries.

- Build digital communities on platforms such as Facebook or Zalo to create space for sharing, discussing, and supporting each other regarding spiritual well-being. These groups can help deepen users' experiences in their spiritual journeys.

(iii) About the content of online religious activities:

- The prevalence of digital content consumption indicates an increasing demand for video-typed teachings, especially Facebook's short videos (most popular) and YouTube. Religious organizations can invest in producing high-quality videos: from short, concise videos for TikTok and Facebook to longer videos suitable for the community's demands. In the long term, they can develop their applications to enhance verifiability.

- With the non-religious group (34% of the sample), religious leaders can expand their activities to educational programs that do not focus exclusively on religious teachings but also on humane values and morality. These programs can attract attention and create a space for non-believers who are interested in these values.

6. Conclusion:

Online religious activities are remarkable phenomena in the epoch of social media and Digital technology. Our research has shown the active involvement of Women in popular trends of these practices. In detail, the most popular site is Facebook, most common activity is watching and listening to sermons and teachings. Despite some challenges regarding maintaining sacristy in digital spaces and censorship, the societal benefits are undeniable. Virtual religiosity holds promises for better development: when religious organizations and followers fully utilize technology for religious dissemination. However, these tendencies pose challenges for authorities regarding content moderation: they have to ensure people's freedom of religion but also conserve traditional religious values. Several solutions for sustainable growth were suggested, including (i) Solutions for managing online religious activities, (ii) Solutions for organizing online religious ceremonies, and (iii) Solutions for the content of online religious activities. However, due to the limited surveying scale, this article did not fully reflect the trends of each religion and social networking site. Moreover, it did not exhibit the disparity in educational levels, faiths, and attendance of the sample. Another factor that needs to be further researched is the difference between regions, especially the gap among the urban, countryside, and other marginalized areas. Therefore, later researchers can apply behavioral method, utilize quantitative research, or limit the range to a specific religion to have a comprehensive assessment of Women's participation in Online Religiosity.

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