



BETWEEN SACRED HERITAGE AND DIGITAL MODERNITY: AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION, YOUTH SPIRITUALITY, AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

The relationship between African Traditional Religions (ATRs) and young people is shifting in ways that neither scholarship on African religion nor the literature on digital religion has adequately tracked. A growing cohort of African and diaspora youth are engaging with ATR traditions through digital platforms including TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, and recent ethnographic evidence indicates that this engagement is neither superficial nor straightforwardly continuous with traditional practice. It is a complex negotiation involving disillusionment with inherited Abrahamic frameworks, political reclamation of African heritage, and the necessity of accessing traditions in diaspora contexts where physical communities are absent or inaccessible. This study adopts a qualitative, library-based research methodology employing critical literature review, content analysis, and hermeneutical interpretation of scholarly works on African Traditional Religion, digital religion, youth spirituality, and identity formation. The study further utilizes insights from the sociology of religion and religio-philosophical discourse to examine religious authority, identity negotiation, and knowledge transmission in digital ATR spaces. The paper examines three questions: What motivates young people to seek ATR identity and community through digital platforms? What forms of religious authority emerge and compete in digital ATR spaces, and how do they compare with traditional ones? And what does digital engagement mean for the intergenerational transmission of ATR knowledge? Drawing on empirical scholarship, including studies on African youth, religion, migration, and indigenous religion in the digital age, the paper argues that the binary between authentic tradition and digital simulation is philosophically unhelpful. The paper contributes to debates on religion and modernity, digital religion methodology, and the evolving sociology of ATR communities in Africa and the diaspora.

Keywords: African Traditional Religion, digital religion, youth spirituality, religious identity, digital modernity



Introduction

Something significant is happening to African Traditional Religions among young people, and it is happening online. On TikTok, content tagged with Ifa, Yoruba religion, and ancestral wisdom draws millions of views. On Instagram, herbalists, diviners, and spiritual coaches style ATR practices through the visual grammar of wellness culture. YouTube channels teach Ifa divination, explain Akan spiritual philosophy, and guide viewers through ancestral veneration rituals from cities as far apart as Lagos, London, and Los Angeles. These are not marginal phenomena. They are evidence of a structural shift in how ATRs are transmitted, interpreted, and claimed by the generation that will determine whether these traditions survive into the second half of the twenty-first century.

The scholarly problem is that existing frameworks are poorly equipped to analyze this shift. Studies of ATRs have largely focused on community-based practice and the oral transmission of esoteric knowledge, frameworks designed for bounded physical communities in which authority flows from initiation and elder recognition. Studies of digital religion have been dominated by Abrahamic traditions, particularly Christianity and Islam. The intersection of ATRs with digital culture remains substantially understudied, and this gap is consequential. The most recent empirical evidence has only just begun to fill it. Kazira and Pasura (2026), in a study funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and published in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, conducted twelve months of ethnographic research with Nigerian and Zimbabwean youth in the United Kingdom, combining in-depth interviews with observation on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Their findings demonstrate that digital engagement does not simply extend offline ATR practice. It transforms both the practice and the negotiation of belonging. Sipeyiye (2025) shows that Ndaun indigenous religion in Zimbabwe has responded to the digital revolution by finding ways of reimagining and revitalizing its communication repertoire to comply with the dictates of the digital era, rather than being passively displaced by it. These empirical findings demand theoretical frameworks adequate to what they reveal.

The theoretical gap matters. The binary between authentic tradition and digital simulation is unhelpful because it assumes that traditions have a fixed form that digital platforms either preserve or corrupt. Living religious traditions have never worked that way. They have always adapted their form to new conditions of transmission, from oral to written to print to broadcast and now to digital. What the digital age presents is a new set of conditions, one that is faster, more globally distributed, and more visible than anything previous. Understanding it requires frameworks built for that novelty, not frameworks inherited from contexts in which those conditions did not exist.

This paper raises three questions that are both empirical and philosophical. What motivates young people to seek ATR knowledge and community through digital platforms? What forms of religious authority emerge, compete, and collapse in digital ATR spaces? And what does this digital engagement mean for the intergenerational transmission of ATR knowledge, a process that has historically depended on embodied community? These



questions matter not only for the sociology of African religion but for the philosophy of what it means for a tradition to remain itself across radically new conditions of transmission.

Conceptual Clarification

Three concepts require clarification before the analysis proceeds. The first is *digital religion*. Tsuria and Campbell (2021) draw a critical distinction between religion online, the simple translation of existing religious content to digital formats, and digital religion proper, the emergence of new forms of religious life that are shaped by digital affordances themselves. Digital religion is not a subset of offline religion that happens to appear on a screen. It is a distinct form of religious life whose practices, communities, authority structures, and modes of meaning-making are co-constituted by the platforms through which they operate. This distinction is essential for analyzing ATR in digital spaces, because much of what is happening there is not simply the digitization of existing traditions but the emergence of new forms of ATR practice whose logic is partly determined by algorithmic visibility, platform aesthetics, and the dynamics of online community formation.

The second is *bricolage spirituality*. The concept derives from Levi-Strauss's analysis of mythological thinking but was applied to contemporary religious identity by scholars including Vincett and Woodhead (2009) to describe the practice of assembling spiritual meaning from heterogeneous, available sources rather than inheriting a complete tradition intact. In digital ATR spaces, bricolage describes how young people combine ATR cosmologies with elements from New Age spirituality, Black radical politics, Afrofuturism, and popular psychology into personal frameworks that do not map neatly onto any traditional category. This is not necessarily a problem. The question is what kinds of religious life such frameworks sustain over time, and what kinds of community they can generate.

The third is *religious authority*. In ATR contexts, authority has traditionally been earned through embodied initiation, community recognition, lineage, and long apprenticeship to a senior practitioner. Guillory (2024) shows that digital platforms create new pathways to claim spiritual authority that bypass traditional gatekeeping mechanisms entirely. Follower counts, production quality, algorithmic visibility, and the capacity to generate community affect become substitute authority markers. These are different from traditional authority markers in important ways: they can be accumulated without the formation that traditional authority requires, and they can be lost or redistributed in ways that traditional authority cannot. Understanding the consequences of this shift is central to understanding what digital ATR engagement means for both the traditions and the young people who inhabit them.

The paper uses *youth* to refer to persons aged 15 to 35, following the African Union Youth Charter definition (African Union, 2006), while acknowledging that youth as a social category carries different meanings across African cultural contexts. The African Union



definition is adopted here as a practical boundary for a population that is both old enough to exercise independent religious agency and young enough to have grown up with digital platforms as a primary mode of social life.

Why Young People Seek ATRs Through Digital Platforms

The most comprehensive empirical evidence on this question comes from Kazira and Pasura (2026), whose ethnographic study of Nigerian and Zimbabwean youth in the United Kingdom provides the richest account yet published of the motivations driving digital ATR engagement in diaspora contexts. Their participants described a convergence of motivations that the paper's analysis groups into four categories: reactive disillusionment, aesthetic resonance, political urgency, and practical necessity.

Reactive disillusionment is the most commonly cited motivation. Many of Kazira and Pasura's participants described growing discomfort with the Christianity or Islam in which they were raised, particularly in contexts where those traditions were associated with prosperity gospel excess, moral authoritarianism, or, for diaspora youth in the United Kingdom, perceived complicity in anti-Black racism and the denial of African cultural heritage. Social media was described as the first place where African spirituality was demystified and reframed as legitimate and empowering. One participant reflected that online platforms allow people to hear about ancestral worship and understand it as "always associated with African culture," a claim to cultural authenticity that the participant's church had implicitly denied. Another described platforms as "helping us a lot, demystifying things, making things accessible, making us understand the history behind things." These accounts identify digital media as a vehicle for rediscovery, making ATRs visible and relatable in ways that offline social environments in both the United Kingdom and, for many participants, their countries of origin had not.

Sande, Kazira, and Pasura (2026) add a multi-scalar dimension to this picture, showing that ATR engagement among African youth in the United Kingdom is shaped simultaneously by family expectations, peer dynamics, diaspora community norms, and the global circuits of Black cultural politics that digital platforms amplify and accelerate. The scale at which these influences operate matters: a young Nigerian in London is not simply navigating between Nigerian tradition and British modernity. They are navigating a multi-scalar field in which Afrodiaspora culture, global Black consciousness movements, Nigerian homeland expectations, and British institutional environments are all simultaneously operative. Digital platforms do not simplify this navigation. They intensify it by making all of these scales simultaneously accessible and by creating new forms of peer community that can offer affirmation unavailable in any single offline context.

Sipeyiye (2025) documents the same dynamic from the African-continent perspective. Among the Ndau people of Zimbabwe, digital communication technologies have been adopted as an extension of the community's own historical creativity and adaptability rather than as an external imposition. The Ndau, Sipeyiye argues, have a "penchant for innovation and creativity in ways of thinking and doing things in order to survive in new



circumstances." This capacity for adaptation has been a feature of Ndau religio-culture through its historical encounters with other cultures and technologies, and the digital revolution is being met on those terms. The tradition's core structures of meaning are not being displaced. They are finding new media through which to express and transmit themselves, media that create new points of contact between traditional belief systems and contemporary publics, what Sipeyiye describes as a lifeline for indigenous faiths facing the pressures of globalization.

Pasura, Chitando, Williams, and Matolino (2026), in the introduction to the Ethnic and Racial Studies special issue, argue that religion and spirituality are constitutive rather than peripheral to African youth migration trajectories. Young Africans are not merely consumers of global religious forms. They are producers of theological meanings, spiritual aesthetics, and hybrid repertoires that circulate across the continent and its diasporas. Digital platforms are the infrastructure through which this production occurs. Understanding ATR in digital spaces therefore requires understanding the broader conditions of African youth mobility, and the religious and spiritual dimensions of those conditions that migration studies has until recently largely overlooked.

Guillory (2024) provides the most theoretically developed account of what drives African and African-American youth toward non-Christian ancestral traditions in digital space. Her analysis, focused on Africana religions in the United States context, documents a pattern she characterizes as playing on the margins: digital Black religious users intentionally stretching definitional boundaries of Black religion to construct new understandings of Black religiosity informed by liberation, spiritual citizenship, and world-building. Her chapters on digital mystics among Black podcasters and on witches of color who use social media to construct complex spiritual identities show that the turn to ancestral and esoteric traditions is not simply a rejection of Christianity. It is the construction of a richer and more complex religious identity than the dominant narrative of Black Christian identity has allowed.

Contested Authority and the Problem of Authenticity in Digital ATR Spaces

If digital platforms democratize access to ATR knowledge, they simultaneously destabilize the authority structures that have historically governed that knowledge. This tension is among the most significant analytical problems raised by digital ATR engagement, and it is one that the existing literature has only begun to address.

Traditional ATR authority is not textual. A babalawo earns authority through years of apprenticeship, initiation, and community recognition. A traditional healer's legitimacy derives from demonstrated efficacy, lineage, and the collective trust of their community. These mechanisms are not simply epistemological. They are also ethical: they ensure that the person transmitting esoteric knowledge has been formed in the responsibilities and restraints that govern its use. Digital platforms offer alternative authority markers that are structurally disconnected from this formative process. Follower counts, production values, and algorithmic visibility can be accumulated without initiation, lineage, or community



accountability. This does not mean that all digital ATR authority is illegitimate. It means that digital authority and traditional authority are different kinds of things, and treating them as equivalent is an analytical mistake with practical consequences.

Guillory (2024) documents this complexity with great nuance. Her analysis of digital mystics, Black podcasters who use their platforms to explore mystical and esoteric frameworks derived from African and African-American spiritual traditions, shows that these figures are not simply disrupting authority. They are constructing new forms of it, forms that draw on traditional concepts while adapting them to the conditions of digital community formation. The digital mystic does not claim initiation. They claim authenticity of a different kind: the authenticity of personal transformation, of sustained engagement with difficult texts and practices, of building a community that holds them accountable in ways that differ from but are not necessarily inferior to traditional accountability structures. Whether this constitutes a genuinely new form of ATR authority or a category error is a question that requires philosophical as well as empirical analysis.

Kazira and Pasura (2026) find that when ATR content moves onto platforms like Instagram and TikTok, it is often framed through Western perspectives that diminish or misrepresent local meanings and practices. Young people searching for ATR content on these platforms must actively work to find material that reflects their own cultural frameworks rather than a global spirituality aesthetic that absorbs ATR elements into decontextualized wellness discourse. This finding has significant implications. It suggests that the democratization of access to ATR knowledge through digital platforms is partial and uneven: access is available, but the framing conditions under which that knowledge circulates often distort it in ways that practitioners from within the traditions would recognize but that newcomers may not be equipped to detect.

The gender dynamics of digital ATR authority also deserve analytical attention. Traditional ATR systems frequently restrict certain forms of esoteric knowledge and certain leadership roles to men. Digital platforms are disrupting these restrictions, particularly in diaspora contexts, with women emerging as prominent and influential voices in online ATR communities. Guillory's (2024) analysis of witches of color in digital space is particularly relevant here: she shows that these figures are not simply challenging tradition but actively reconstructing spiritual authority on different terms, terms that center women's spiritual agency and knowledge production. Whether this constitutes a legitimate evolution of ATR tradition or an external imposition on it is precisely the kind of question that a destigmatized, philosophically serious engagement with ATR enables rather than forecloses.

Sipeyiye (2025) offers the most optimistic account available of how traditional ATR communities can respond to digital disruption without losing their foundational commitments. The Ndau example suggests that traditions with strong enough cultural grounding and a historical orientation toward innovation can engage digital platforms on their own terms, using them to extend and revitalize rather than to replace or dilute traditional practice. The key variable, in Sipeyiye's analysis, is the community's



relationship to its own capacity for adaptation: traditions that have internalized innovation as a feature of their identity are better positioned to engage digital culture without losing themselves in it than traditions that have internalized rigidity as a mark of authenticity.

Intergenerational Transmission and the Question of Continuity

Among the most consequential questions raised by digital ATR engagement is what happens to intergenerational transmission. ATR knowledge has historically been transmitted through sustained apprenticeship, communal ritual participation, and the long-term relationship between elder and initiate. This model does more than convey information. It forms practitioners: developing judgment, embodied competence, ethical sensibility, and a sense of communal responsibility that extends across generations. The question is whether any of this formation can occur through digital platforms, and if not, what the consequences for ATR traditions are over the medium and long term.

What digital platforms transmit is necessarily partial. Ritual knowledge can be described but not fully enacted through a screen. Ancestral relationships require community grounding that virtual spaces cannot fully replicate. The felt sense of sacred presence that practitioners consistently describe as central to ATR experience is, at minimum, differently constituted in digital than in embodied contexts, and possibly unavailable in digital contexts at all. This does not make digital engagement worthless, but it does mean that the question of what is being transmitted is genuinely open and cannot be resolved by appeal to the enthusiasm of participants or the popularity of content.

Sande, Kazira, and Pasura (2026), in their multi-scalar analysis of religion and spirituality among African youth in the United Kingdom, find that digital engagement functions differently at different phases of a young person's relationship with ATR. For those who are discovering ATR for the first time, digital platforms provide access, orientation, and a sense of community that would otherwise be unavailable. For those who already have some connection to ATR through family or community, digital platforms supplement and extend offline relationships rather than replacing them. For those who seek deeper engagement, digital platforms often function as entry points that lead, over time, toward embodied community: seeking out practitioners, attending ceremonies, pursuing initiation. This developmental account is more nuanced than either optimistic or pessimistic assessments of digital transmission, and it suggests that the long-term effects of digital ATR engagement on intergenerational transmission will depend substantially on whether offline communities are available to receive the young people that digital platforms redirect toward them.

Kazira and Pasura (2026) note a second, more troubling pattern alongside this developmental trajectory. A significant cohort of their participants described digital engagement as the entirety of their ATR practice, without initiation, without sustained relationship with a practitioner, and without embodied community. For this group, ATR identity is constructed from digital content, peer discussion, and personal spiritual practice developed largely through online resources. Whether this constitutes a new form of ATR



practice or a simulacrum of it is a question that neither the researchers nor the practitioners themselves can yet answer definitively. It may be that, as Sipeyiye (2025) suggests for the Ndau context, the tradition's core structures of meaning are being transmitted through new media in ways that are not yet fully legible because the media themselves are still new. Or it may be that something essential to the tradition is being lost through a process of digital mediation that has not yet made itself visible as loss.

Pasura (2026), in his contribution to the special issue, argues for reframing the lens through which youth religious engagement is analyzed: away from static assimilation models that treat tradition as a fixed reference point and youth religiosity as a deviation from it, and toward an account of lived religion in flux that takes seriously the agency of young people in constructing religious meanings from the conditions of their own lives. This reframing is philosophically important. It does not abandon the question of what makes ATR practice authentic or continuous with tradition. It insists that the answer to that question cannot be determined in advance by criteria derived from pre-digital contexts. The criteria themselves are part of what is being renegotiated in digital ATR spaces.

Afrofuturism, Spiritual Aesthetics, and the Politics of Representation

One of the most striking features of digital ATR spaces is their entanglement with Afrofuturism, the cultural and political aesthetic that imagines African and African-descended people as agents of technological futurity rather than objects of colonial backwardness. In digital ATR communities, ancestral spirituality is frequently styled through Afrofuturist visual aesthetics: synthetic fabrics that echo traditional textiles, rituals performed against urban backdrops, divination systems presented alongside data visualization aesthetics, and practitioners who combine traditional spiritual regalia with contemporary fashion in ways that assert the coexistence of past and future.

Guillory (2024) documents this entanglement in the United States context, showing that Africana religious practitioners use digital platforms to construct what she calls new worlds of Black being, visions of spiritual and cultural identity in which ancestral practice and technological futurity are not in tension but are mutually constitutive. The gesture is politically significant: it challenges the developmentalist assumption that African spirituality belongs to the past and that modernity requires its abandonment. By positioning ATR practices within a futurist aesthetic frame, digital creators insist that these traditions are not survivals to be preserved in museums but living resources for navigating contemporary reality.

Pasura, Chitando, Williams, and Matolino (2026) note that this dynamic extends well beyond the United States. African youth in the diaspora are not merely receiving Afrofuturist aesthetics from African-American cultural production. They are co-producing them, contributing spiritual aesthetics, cosmological frameworks, and cultural references drawn from their own diverse ATR heritages to a global Afrodiaspora cultural conversation that digital platforms make possible. This co-production complicates the question of where



ATR traditions end and where Afrofuturist bricolage begins. The boundaries are genuinely unclear, and treating them as clear would be analytically misleading.

Whether Afrofuturist styling of ATR practice enhances or distorts the traditions it invokes is a question on which practitioners and scholars are genuinely divided. Critics argue that Afrofuturist aestheticization commodifies what should be approached with disciplined reverence, and that the fusion of ancestral practice with digital glamour serves individual brand-building more than communal spiritual life. Defenders argue that all religious traditions adopt the aesthetic resources of their time and that refusing to engage with contemporary visual culture consigns ATRs to museum status. Both positions contain philosophical insight. The critic is right that commodification is a genuine risk in digital religious spaces, that the logic of the platform can gradually subordinate spiritual formation to content performance. The defender is right that aesthetic adaptation is not inherently a form of corruption, and that ATR traditions have always been capable of expressing their core commitments through new aesthetic forms. The resolution of this tension is not yet available, and that is appropriate: it is the kind of debate that living traditions conduct about themselves, and its availability as a debate is itself a sign of the vitality of the traditions in question.

Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy

The analysis offered here carries implications across three domains that deserve explicit identification before the paper concludes.

For religious studies scholarship, the digital turn in ATR communities demands methodological innovation. Ethnographic research confined to bounded physical communities will increasingly miss significant dimensions of contemporary ATR life. Digital ethnography must be integrated as a primary research method rather than a supplementary one. Kazira and Pasura (2026) provide a model: twelve months of sustained observation on multiple platforms, combined with in-depth interviews that situate digital practice within the broader contexts of participants' lives, including their family relationships, community ties, employment situations, and experiences of racism and migration. This is methodologically demanding, but it is what the subject matter requires. Single-method studies that engage only the digital or only the offline dimension of ATR practice will produce partial accounts that misrepresent both.

The integration of digital ethnography with traditional community-based ethnography also raises questions about the relationship between ATR studies and African philosophy of religion. Igboin (2025) argues that the study of religions in Africa remains shaped by theoretical frameworks defined from outside Africa, and that this shapes not only what is studied but how it is evaluated. Digital ATR communities, precisely because they develop outside the institutional contexts in which such frameworks are reproduced, may be particularly productive sites for the kind of indigenous theoretical innovation that the field needs. Scholars of digital ATR should be attentive to the theoretical resources that



practitioners themselves are developing, not only as empirical data but as potential contributions to the field's conceptual vocabulary.

For ATR communities themselves, the challenge is to develop frameworks for evaluating digital practice that neither dismiss it wholesale nor uncritically validate every online claim to authority. Guillory (2024) documents that digital Africana religious communities have already begun developing internal norms of legitimacy and community accountability that operate differently from traditional initiation-based systems but are not simply chaotic or individualistic. These norms deserve careful documentation and critical analysis, not because they are equivalent to traditional authority structures but because understanding how they work, where they succeed and where they fail, is essential for communities navigating the conditions of the digital age.

For public policy in African states grappling with questions of religious pluralism and cultural heritage, the digital ATR movement presents both an opportunity and a challenge. It demonstrates that ATRs retain significant appeal among educated young people and are not fading into irrelevance before the advance of Christianity and Islam. But digital ATR communities often develop in tension with national religious establishments and are difficult to engage through existing policy frameworks designed for territorially bounded religious communities. Sande, Kazira, and Pasura (2026) call for policy approaches that attend to the multi-scalar nature of African youth religious life, recognizing that national, diaspora, and digital dimensions are simultaneously operative and that policies addressing only one scale will be inadequate to the reality they are trying to engage.

Conclusion

The shrine and the screen are not opposites. They are, for a growing number of young Africans and members of the African diaspora, deeply entangled sites of spiritual seeking, identity construction, and community formation. The evidence emerging from the most recent empirical research confirms that digital engagement with ATRs is neither straightforward preservation nor straightforward distortion of tradition. It is negotiation: complex, contested, and ongoing, in which young people construct religious identities through the tools available to them in a digitally saturated world, tools that are simultaneously enabling and constraining in ways that require careful and sustained analysis.

This paper has argued that the binary between authentic tradition and digital simulation is philosophically unhelpful. The concept of bricolage spirituality better captures what is actually happening: active construction of religious identity from available sources, rather than passive reception of a fixed tradition or wholesale invention of a new one. Living religious traditions have always operated through bricolage. They have always assembled new forms from available materials while maintaining continuities of meaning that practitioners recognize as constitutive of the tradition's identity. The digital age accelerates and makes visible a process that was never simply conservative, and this visibility makes the process newly available for conscious reflection and collective deliberation.



Three questions raised at the outset can now be answered, provisionally. What motivates young people to seek ATRs online is a convergence of disillusionment, aesthetic resonance, political urgency, and practical necessity, motivations that are contextually variable but structurally consistent across the diverse populations documented in the recent literature. The forms of authority that emerge in digital ATR spaces are different from traditional ones, shaped by platform dynamics rather than initiation, and they require their own critical frameworks rather than evaluation solely against traditional standards. The implications for intergenerational transmission are bifurcated and genuinely uncertain: some digital engagement leads toward embodied community integration; other forms remain disembodied in ways that may not sustain tradition over time; and the long-term trajectory of both patterns remains to be determined by research that has only recently become possible.

What is most important is to resist the temptation to evaluate digital ATR engagement against a standard of tradition that is itself partly mythologized. ATRs have never been static. They have always adapted their form to new political realities, new technologies, and new forms of cultural contact. The digital age presents new conditions for that adaptation, conditions that are faster, more globally distributed, and more visible than anything previous. Understanding those conditions rigorously, without nostalgia for a fixity that never existed, and without enthusiasm for novelty that is insufficiently critical, is the task that this paper has tried to advance. It is a task that has barely begun.

Recommendations

1. Scholars of African religion, digital media, and youth studies should prioritize the development of methodological frameworks specifically designed for digital ATR research, rather than adapting methods from either traditional ethnography or secular digital media studies without modification. Such frameworks must account for the simultaneous operation of physical, diasporic, and virtual community dimensions; the distinctive authority structures that emerge in platform-mediated religious spaces; and the emic evaluative criteria that practitioners themselves apply to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate digital engagement with their traditions. Collaborative methodological development involving scholars, practitioners, and platform-literate young people from within ATR communities is essential to this task.

2. ATR communities and their representative bodies should proactively develop digital literacy initiatives that equip young practitioners and seekers with the critical tools necessary to evaluate online claims to religious authority, to distinguish community-accountable knowledge transmission from individual content creation, and to navigate the tension between the accessibility of digital ATR resources and the relational depth that traditional initiation and mentorship structures provide. These initiatives should be developed from within communities and should treat digital engagement as a legitimate arena of religious practice requiring its own forms of discernment rather than as a deviation from authentic tradition to be corrected.



3. Platform companies operating in African and diaspora markets should be required, through regulatory mandate and civil society advocacy, to develop content moderation and algorithmic recommendation policies that do not systematically disadvantage ATR-related content relative to content from dominant religious traditions. Current recommendation architectures tend to amplify content that performs well within engagement metrics shaped by majority-religion norms, which structurally marginalizes ATR creators and communities. Platform accountability should include transparent reporting on religious content distribution, accessible appeals mechanisms for ATR creators subject to discriminatory moderation decisions, and meaningful consultation with ATR communities in the design of relevant policies.

4. Longitudinal research programmes should be established to track cohorts of young people who engage with ATRs primarily through digital platforms over periods of five to fifteen years, with the aim of generating the empirical evidence base needed to resolve the currently open question of whether digital-first ATR engagement leads toward, away from, or into new forms of embodied community participation. The absence of such longitudinal data is a significant constraint on the field's ability to offer guidance to communities and policymakers, and addressing it requires sustained institutional commitment from universities, research councils, and ATR communities willing to participate in long-term collaborative inquiry.

5. African diasporic organizations, cultural ministries, and educational institutions should develop programmes that facilitate meaningful intergenerational dialogue between elder practitioners and digitally engaged youth within ATR communities. The evidence suggests that the most promising trajectories of digital ATR engagement are those in which online seeking leads to relationship with experienced practitioners and embodied community participation. Creating the institutional conditions under which such relationships can form, including mentorship networks that operate across digital and physical spaces, intergenerational community events that do not position digital engagement as threatening to tradition, and educational materials developed collaboratively by elders and youth, is a practical priority that follows directly from the analysis this paper has developed.

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