

How online Ramadan content has brought Muslim ideas around faith, worship and community into the mainstream

April 5 2024, by Khadijah Elshayyal and Laura Jones



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For Muslims around the world, Ramadan is a time of increased personal spirituality and introspection. The hope is to draw closer to God.

The sacred month is also a time when Muslims in non-majority Muslim spaces become more visible to the wider public through collective activity such as fasting, communal prayer and breaking the fast together.

For a long time, discussions about these Ramadan practices in the UK were largely confined to mosques and community gatherings in person. They were also confined to Muslim online spaces, such as what people [refer to](#) as "[Muslim Twitter](#)".

Increasingly though, Ramadan content online has shifted towards the mainstream. This increased visibility allows Muslim ideas around faith, worship and community to be heard and more widely engaged with.

Everyday interactions

Research [suggests](#) that [during Ramadan](#), Muslims are more frequently questioned about their religion and practices. Non-Muslims asking those who are fasting if it means "not even water" is such a common trope that the phrase has been satirized into a [meme](#).

But the question speaks profoundly to the curiosity that Ramadan practices often elicit in everyday interactions that people who are not Muslim have with those who are. For the past three years, the BBC has run [an eponymous podcast](#), Not Even Water, which explores experiences of Ramadan and debunks misconceptions. The 2024 season has covered people's first time fasting and their journey to faith as well as the many ways in which Eid festivities can vary.

Increased focus on equality and diversity in UK [public institutions](#) suggests this curiosity is to be expected. It is also spurred by [local residents noting](#) the heightened buzz of activity in mosques on Ramadan evenings and on [social media](#).

Individual Muslims and organizations alike might welcome Ramadan by posting duas (words of prayer). The Welsh organization, Now in a Minute Media, devises a short video each year. Its 2024 offering, titled ["The Son and the Moon"](#), tells a story of intergenerational values through the theme of moonsighting and the Welsh countryside.

Mainstream venues and [retail outlets](#) are also, increasingly, developing sophisticated social media campaigns. They are eager to tap into the business potential Ramadan provides.

In 2024, the [It's Not Ramadan Without campaign](#), led by Muslim media outlet Amaliah in partnership with Sainsbury's, has centered Muslim women foodies and content-creators. The fact that the retailer has chosen to financially support such a campaign suggests it sees value in the content Amaliah is producing and indeed value in promoting Ramadan to its customer base.

Many non-Muslim public figures, particularly politicians, now routinely share Ramadan greetings. This is often taken as an opportunity to showcase good relations with Muslim communities or to acknowledge their "contributions."

Digital tools

In some cases, as the evolution of the [Ramadan Tent Project](#) shows, online activity has been instrumental in bringing a project into the mainstream. Founded in 2013, this grassroots campaign has [grown](#) from a student-organized evening meal in central London to a nationwide bridge-building community project with an international presence.

During COVID lockdowns, social media users introduced the hashtag #myopeniftar to connect people breaking fast in isolation. This hashtag has continued to be used, even as the Ramadan Tent Project has shifted

towards high-profile iftar events at landmark locations across the UK. Digital advertising, documentation and online streaming have allowed it to maintain its momentum and reach wider audiences. This, in turn, has fueled attendance and engagement with in-person activities.

The Ramadan Lights display in central London, which was introduced in 2023, is another salient example of how digital tools have been central to a project's growth, despite the tension and contestation it has also triggered.

Several right-wing commentators have expressed disquiet. Some have seen the lights as representing formal recognition of Islam from the London Mayor. Tim Dieppe, the head of public policy at the non-profit organization, Christian Concern, has said they [disrespect Christianity](#). As such, the project has been subjected to [populist scaremongering](#) and [Islamophobic sentiment](#).

Ramadan prioritizes personal spirituality and connection with God. It also inspires outreach to the wider community. Muslim-led platforms—such as Amaliah, Now in a Minute Media and the Ramadan Tent Project—function as what feminist sociologist Nancy Fraser calls "[subaltern counterpublics](#)". These are spaces in which marginalized groups organize in order to increase their voice in the wider public sphere.

Digital tools and social media in particular have allowed these counterpublics to promote their Ramadan messages to a broader audience including non-Muslims. They have granted Muslim voices greater visibility and greater agency, enabling believers to speak for themselves and on their own terms.

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