

The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in preaching Islam at present context

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Abstract

Agenda-setting and representation are the media's most significant functions. The media, particularly from the West, seems to be constantly in the negative light of Islam. The fanning of Islamophobia, a type of concerted effort aimed at scaring the world of the animosity and enmity imposed by Islam, is a more recent Western media phenomenon against Islam. In response to such a striking negative portrayal of Islam, the Muslim world needs to respond. Contrary to what is commonly considered by the West, Islam means 'submission' and 'obedience' in its real nature, a religion that calls for resignation to Allah and encourages and protects the individual's peace. The primary purpose of this paper is therefore to discuss the use of a spectrum of media to disseminate information and news on the true teachings of Islam to Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The proper propagation and comprehension of Islam can be improved through the media by emphasizing the fundamental principles of Islam's teachings.

Keywords Media, Islam, Islamophobia, Extremism, Terrorism, Dissemination

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Mass media that connotes the means of a variety of media primarily intended for disseminating news and information to a wide audience. There is no question that mass media exercises tremendous control, so often referred to as the constructed capacity of the media to manipulate the views of others over such news or topics. Mass media, therefore, not only affect attitudes, but also impact foreign policy, processes and findings to a certain degree. It can also restore and further remind the public of the true picture of religion, just as the media can ignore the general Muslim community and Islam. The primary purpose of this paper is therefore to discuss the use of a spectrum of media to disseminate information and news on the true teachings of Islam to Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The proper propagation and comprehension of Islam can be improved through the media by emphasizing the fundamental principles of Islam's teachings



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2. Literature review

Ahmed Shan-A-Alahi, Muhammad Nazmul Huda in 2017 identified the positive position of IT with a discussion of weaknesses that can be defined in a comparative manner. This study thus describes the role of IT and its effectiveness in the descriptive preaching of Da'wah. Md. Shahidul Haque (2016) in his research emphasized the significance, difficulties, and potential of using information and communication technology and media for Islamic promotion operations. In 2014, Kamal-deen Olawale Sulaiman got a paper published in which he stated that understanding the skills and knowledge necessary in the information and communications technology (ICT) age is vital for instructors of Arabic and Islamic studies. Furthermore, goals for future growth and acquisition of ICT knowledge are required for teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies in order for them to be able to utilize ICT knowledge in their professional life as educators, educational analysts, and school administrators, as applicable. It came to the conclusion that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) serves a variety of tasks in the teaching and learning of Arabic and Islamic studies. In the year 2019, Muhammad Akram Hureri, Dr. Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, and Dr. Muhammad Tahir in their article tended to investigate the various modes and principles of communication which can help in Islamic dawah activities in a multicultural society and multiracial culture. Md. Tarequl Islam in 2019 in his study mentioned the positive and negative effects of social media in our Muslim culture are important from the Islamic viewpoint. Kamal-deen Olawale Sulaiman in 2020 in his paper revealed the use of ICT has had an overall transformative influence on how Muslims practice Islam, how the wider world is perceived by manifestations of Islam, and how Muslim communities view themselves and their peers. This may be in terms of the realistic execution of Islamic duties and rituals on one level, or in terms of the Quran's interpretation and comprehension. On another level, the world of cyber technology has opened Muslims to progressive and modern forces beyond conventional realms of expertise and authority, triggering long-standing pragmatic changes within communities at the grassroots level. Using a variety of media to communicate information and news to Muslims and non-Muslims alike about the real teachings of Islam, Ishak and Sohlin investigated the use of media in 2012 in their research titled *Islam and Media (Islam and the Media)*. They argue that the media is an extremely significant instrument for efficient communication and distribution of information about Islam and that the Muslim world should take advantage of this medium. In their study, Hosseini and Ramchahi (2014) argue that information technology not only makes Islamic literature globally accessible,

but it also plays an important role in spreading Islam throughout the world dispelling the misconceptions held by non-Muslims about Islam. Sahikh, Sultan, Baloach, and Khalid (2012) conducted a study where they presented novel approaches to educate people about Islamic principles via the use of media and technology in a creative and effective manner. Rusli's research in 2013 demonstrated that social media platforms such as Facebook, blogs, mailing lists, and YouTube have the potential to become a new potential communication instrument that Muslims and their scholars can adapt and use for da'wah purposes. In 2003 Muhd Rosydi Bin Muhammad and Dr. Marjan Muhammad's study tried to shed light on how to make use of the growth of information and communication technology (ICT) in order to promote awareness of Islamic jurisprudence (FIQH) and legal judgments (fatwa). From the above literature, it is clear that ICT has a great role in preaching ISLAM now-a-day. Most of the studies highlighted the regular use of ICT but this study will focus on some critical issues which can be addressed by ICT in preaching ISLAM.

3. Research methodology

A qualitative approach has been used for conducting the research. Related articles, textbooks, magazines have been consulted to have idea about the theoretical concepts regarding the topic. The basic/fundamental sources like Quranic verses and reference from Hadith are quoted related to the topic. Bearing the directions of the sharia regarding the issue, implications of ICT in *Da'wah* has tried to be shown.

4. Da'wah and mass media

The important means of da'wah are mass media and communication (introducing Islam to others). The work of da'wah itself is to express to people the essence of the divine message. Depending on the stage of people's civilization, the communication system varies from one place to another. The work of da'wah was done through verbal contact in the days of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), for example. Today, we are witnessing the development of the communication system, where a sophisticated direct communication network is used for all kinds of purposes: advertisement, information, leisure and education. It is undeniable that these modes of communication may also be seen as an instrument of public opinion. The mission of da'wah should therefore take advantage of the system in the midst of this rapid growth of technical knowledge and use it entirely to disseminate the divine message (Wa'i, 1995). Information Technology means

the collection of technical devices used to produce information and knowledge, or to store and retrieve information and knowledge. Satellites, television stations, the Telephone, web sites, e-mail, computer disks, CDs and other similar technologies and developments are included. (Metin, 2010)

5. Lexical meaning of Da'wah

In the Holy Qur'an, the word 'dawah' has been used in different senses:

a. In the sense of appealing to Allah to meet human needs, as Allah Ta'ala says:

"There did Zakariya pray to his Lord; he said: My Lord! grant me from Thee good offspring; surely Thou art the Hearer of prayer." (Qur'an, 3:24)

b. In the sense of calling out from the ground, as Allah Ta'ala says:

"...Then when He calls you with a single call, you will come out from the earth (from your graves)." (Qur'an, 30:25)

c. In the sense of Ibadah, as Allah Ta'ala says:

"And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening... (Qur'an, 6:52)

d. In the sense of calling to Allah, Allah says:

"Who is better in speech than the one who calls people towards Allah, does good deeds and says: "I am a Muslim?" (Qur'an, 41: 33)

Thus, the word 'Da'wah' has been used 76 times in different ways in the Holy Qur'an, such as, asking or seeking, prayer for deliverance from danger, Ibadah, obedience, expecting welfare, assistance, etc.

6. Terminological meaning of Da'wah

In a terminological sense, the Arabic word 'Da'wah' means to call someone towards something. Terminologically (in Arabic) Da'wah is, Delivering Islam to the people, teaching Islam among them, and implementing Islam in real life is dawah.

7. The ways of conveying da'wah in the present age

Firstly, the means that had been used for da'wah in the time of Rasul (SAW) are still used today, however, besides that, all the existing media should be used to the maximum. Some of which are discussed below: The present age is called the age of technology i.e. the age of media which can be divided into two parts:

First: Print media

Second: Electronic media

Da'wah based work through print media

i. Newspaper: Publishing different essays through newspaper keeping the Islamic view in line with the present era which will be formed based on Islamic *Aqida*. It is a great weapon for propagating the *Deen*.

ii. Use of pictures in magazines: People can easily perceive the incident, if picture is used with any news in the newspaper and it makes the matter lasting in human feeling. A picture can influence people more than thousand words. Essays: Writing various essays about the Islamic point of view on recent issues in daily newspapers.

iii. Weekly and monthly magazines: Why the current Muslims are in plight and how it can be remedied can be written in weekly and monthly magazines with importance.

iv. Journal: Various essays regarding Islam can be written in journals.

v. Literature: Different aspects of Islam can be written through literature. Because the literary society is the source of knowledge of a country.

vi. Poetry: Islam can be propagated through poetry even today like in the time of the Rasul (SAW).

vii. Sticker: Important sayings of Islam can be propagated by printing stickers.

viii. Poster: Da'wati work can be done by printing posters on various days or aspects of Islam.

ix. General knowledge session: We can do the da'wa work by printing general knowledge questions on various aspects of Islam and distributing them free of cost and then distributing prizes through big events.

x. Essay competition: On different occasions, students can be asked to write essays. Extensive da'wah is possible in this way.

xi. Da'wah based work through electronic media: In the electronic media, there is no significant authority in the hands of today's Muslims, yet the way we can use it to do Islamic da'wah is mentioned below:

a. Telephone: In this age of modernity, Islam can be easily explained to others by exchanging pleasantries with them on the telephone sitting at home.

b. Mobile: It is easier to explain Islam to people from anywhere in any situation through the use of mobile than the telephone. The more beautiful thing is that the propagation of Islam can be done by sending a message on the mobile instead of the letter of the previous day.

c. Radio: Islam-related topics can be included in various radio programs.

d. Television: Television keeps people busy and attracts them more. Because both listening and watching is possible on it and any event of the

world is presented before people very fast which is not possible through radio or newspaper. The good and the bad sides of television depend on the director. Educational programs can be broadcast on TV, Hajj program broadcasted on it makes Muslims all over the world believe in one Aqidah and Deen. Women can wear hijab while presenting news on TV. There can be talk shows on various Islamic topics. In this way, people's daily activities can be presented in accordance with Islam.

e. Documentary Film on Islam: Pictures of the mysteries of Allah's creation, human hearts, planets and stars, corals under the sea can be shown on the movie screen. As a result, people's faith in the Oneness of Allah will be strengthened. Certain conditions for the movie to be permissible are:

- i) It must be free of obscenity.
- ii) Religion and material responsibilities should not be neglected.
- iii) The audience of the movie will avoid mixing with all kinds of non-mahram women.

8. Computer

The computer is one of the prominent elements in da'wah. Many Islamic aspects can be preserved through it. We can meet our needs very easily with the use of a computer.

Internet: Through the internet, we can convey Islam even to strangers. We can send messages to many people at the same time via email. It is notable that modern information technology has turned the world into a village.

9. Prospects of using ICT for Islamic propagation activities

9.1. Increasing awareness

Being aware of current events is essential for Muslims to be well-fortified to face the evil influences. In this case information and communication technology (ICT) plays a vital role through which workers of Islamic propagation may bring recent information to Muslim attention.

9.2. Usefulness in Islamic propagation

Information and communication technology (ICT) made every Muslim's compulsory task of preaching Islam easygoing and smooth. Using online platform or ICT It is quite possible to encourage all kinds of people to follow Islamic way of life.

9.3. Issues of new age to be faced

As this twenty-first century is challenging and distinct, Islamic workers need

to be proficient enough to counsel others based on current situation. They may utilize information and communications technology (ICT) in order to deal with the challenges of the new millennium.

9.4. Combating Anti-Islamic propaganda

Da'wah may achieve a milestone by resisting the misconceptions about Islam created by Anti-Islamic forces who want to diminish Islam. In this case, ICT is a great asset through which the true image of Islam can be showcased.

9.5. Bringing the Muslim Ummah together

ICT aids to eradicate Ummah's dilemma regarding various groups by bringing the whole Muslim Ummah under one umbrella. Using a common center or platform, Islamic workers may elevate the "Ummatic" philosophy by encouraging all Muslims to be unified regardless of all difference.

9.6. Communication that is simple, inexpensive, and saves you time

ICT tools are extremely efficient in disseminating news, exchanging messages and emails within a second that save both time and money. Muslims have to be accountable to Allah, if they do not take advantage of this facility.

9.7. Changing leadership

Dominance of the globe is in the hand of those countries that have flourished in ICT. So, it is estimated that if Muslims ensure the expansion of online-based Islamic propagation through investment and foster ICT-skilled people, they can be forefront nation in the world.

9.8. Creating Islamic online media

The media presents the contemporary issues to the common people. As Muslims do not have enough control over the media, they can make effective use of ICT to create online media and share videos of Islamic aspects on YouTube or Dailymotion.

9.9. De-Islamization

Islamophobia is a common phenomenon in ICT world that can be resolved by thoroughly investigating the issue and providing rational responses.

9.10. Increasing self-assurance

World Wide Web is a reliable source to get information about everything. Islamic propagation workers may use this portal to spread their message. The

use of information and communications technology (ICT) has the potential to boost self-reliance and confidence throughout the Muslim Ummah.

9.11. Language skills

Fostering language skills in English is essential as it is most commonly used language in the world. So, promulgating Islam through information and communications technology (ICT) makes the workers improve their language skills using various Linguistic applications.

9.12. Truth's expansion throughout the world

With the aim of consolidating their power and growing their business empires, powerful governments and organizations are employing the term "globalization." It is possible for Islamist propagandists to spread the message of Islam throughout the world because it is a message for everyone, not only Muslims.

10. Following issues should be considered carefully while utilizing ICT to spread Islam

An organization needs to tackle several issues like misinterpretation, inaccurate data, incorrect projection etc. while incorporating ICT in their business. These are described below:

10.1. Addiction: Overuse of information and communication technology (ICT) may result in a habit or addiction; hence, caution should be exercised. The material should not be addictive in any way, but it should be innovative and entertaining in order to be effective.

10.2. Misuse of time: This is another issue associated with the usage of information and communications technology. It can be intriguing that leads to the waste of time. Sites should be designed with constructive material so that they may be used as a helpful tool and provide a decent return on the effort invested in developing them.

10.3. Disrespect for Islamic contents: It is necessary to preserve certain 'adabs' while handling Islamic items, such as the touching of the Holy Quran, and these 'adabs' cannot be maintained when utilizing information and communication technology. As a result, it is important to remember that 'adabs' is preserved while making content.

10.4. Digital discrimination: Da'wah should reach every part of society, but not every segment of society is covered by the ICT, which creates the digital divide. Efforts should be made to bring disadvantaged Muslims into the realm of information and communications technology (ICT).

11. How can ICT be better used to propagate Islam

ICT manifests great potentiality in communication and cooperation areas. It is information and communication technology that transformed this world into a community through connecting people around the world in various ways. In the same way, calling people towards Islam became an effortless job.

Moreover, the digital era lessened the distance among people. This may facilitate the preach of Islam along with its positive aspects. In this case, the following aspects of information and technology can be noted:

Internationalization of Da'wah

Online media and the internet has brought the entire world in a single frame. Educative materials, news, and other media may easily be shared with all over the internet. In addition to this, many Islamic scholars started using this online platform to spread the message of Islam. Thus, Da'wah has been globalized.

Enormous promotion

Globalization, like information technology, shaped the globe like a global village, while internet media may act as a successful marketing tool. Many Islamic scholars utilize social media to spread the message of Islam. It is because of internet media that a Bayyan of an American Islamic scholar may reach people around the world. Da'wah gains contemporary, diverse modes of expression, and even iconoclasts along with traditional ways of expression.

Convenient in accessibility

A variety of technical breakthroughs provided accessibility that made this technique possible. As previously said, more than 1.6 billion Muslims live at different places across the world, and they expect access to Islamic teachings. The accessibility to Da'wah became possible by the most recent technological advancements. Both social media and online media enhanced the accessibility of Da'wah videos, blogs, and lectures, as well as altered the new structures of accessible Da'wah content.

Advanced technology

Muslim community saw the significant modifications over the previous quarter-century done by internal technical progress and globalization processes. One of the outcomes was that the Islamic Scholars got identities and new methods of Islamic teaching. To reach large number of people, Islamic scholars are using various sorts of technical tools. Thus, the digital revolution modernized Da'wah. On the flip side, a more contemporary and effective form of Islamic teachings also influenced by technological tools.

Better protrusion of Islam

To summarize, one convenience that information technology offers to Islamic preaching is to represent the most accurate images of Islam and its teachings. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Muslims all around the world faced the worst destiny, and many Islamic academics are attempting to demonstrate the genuine essence of Islam. Information technology can be a useful instrument to convey Islam in a positive manner which may eradicate the stereotypical representations of Islam. Thus, the misconceptions regarding Islam can be reduced as the research suggests.

12. Conclusion

The present paper demonstrates the importance of sources of media in Islamic *da'wah* in a plural society. Media is an important tool of communication between people without the restriction of time and space. Its different forms and types are key elements in preaching Islam in Muslim and non-Muslim community. Undoubtedly, Islamic *da'wah* can be carried out actively and effectively by adhering the Prophetic principles and media strategies in a multi-cultural and diverse plural society. Therefore, media in general and social media in particular offering effective roles in *da'wah* activities by projecting positive image of Islam in a diverse culture and plural society.

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