

## The Challenge of Preaching in The Digital Era: Between Hope and Reality

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**Abstract.** In an era where devices speak louder than words, the question is no longer "How do we reach people?" But rather: How do we listen to them amidst the digital cacophony? This statement encapsulates one of the most significant challenges facing contemporary religious discourse. In a world flooded with messages flowing from all directions, the task is no longer to convey a message, but to listen deeply to what people are saying – or not saying – among their posts, comments, and digital silences. The issue is no longer reaching audiences, but understanding them amidst this flood of information, where issues overlap, references intersect, and beliefs are formed in spaces no longer governed by the logic of sermons or traditional pulpits. We wrote this article by conducting a qualitative literature study of the phenomenon of da'wah in society, based on existing references and personal experiences in conducting digital da'wah. The digital preacher is no longer simply a text transmitter or a proverbial narrator; instead, he has become the living embodiment of a timeless message that adapts without compromise and renews itself without fading. In an era dominated by merciless intelligent systems, where speed devours all that is beautiful and profound, the call of faith remains in dire need of those who can restore its human warmth and awaken its meaning amidst the dominance of technology and the fading pulse of the heart.

**Keywords:** Digital Era, Preaching, Hope, Reality

### 1. Introduction

Dakwah dalam Islam merupakan kegiatan penyampaian pesan-pesan keagamaan kepada individu atau kelompok untuk meningkatkan pemahaman, penghayatan, dan pengamalan ajaran Islam. Dakwah melibatkan proses komunikasi yang efektif, di mana pesan disampaikan dengan cara yang dapat dipahami dan diterima oleh audiens. Untuk penelitian mengenai peran dakwah digital dalam menyebarkan pesan Islam di era modern, Menggunakan metode Studi Literatur, Menganalisis literatur mengenai dakwah digital, media sosial, dan komunikasi Islam. Meninjau penelitian sebelumnya tentang teknologi dalam dakwah. Penelitian ini Kualitatif, Wawancara Mendalam, Wawancara dengan tokoh agama, influencer Muslim di media sosial, dan pengelola platform dakwah digital. Diskusi Kelompok Terfokus (FGD) Diskusi dengan ulama. Analisis Data Sekunder, Menggunakan data statistik yang ada tentang penggunaan internet dan media sosial. Analisis Konten, Adapun kesimpulan Dakwah digital telah membuka banyak peluang baru untuk menyebarkan pesan Islam secara efektif di era modern. Dengan memanfaatkan teknologi dan platform media sosial, para tokoh Ulama dan influencer Muslim dapat menjangkau audiens yang lebih luas dan memberikan

bimbingan serta pengetahuan yang dibutuhkan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Namun, dakwah konvensional tetap memiliki nilai penting, terutama dalam membangun ikatan emosional dan spiritual yang kuat melalui interaksi langsung. Oleh karena itu, kombinasi dakwah digital dan konvensional dapat menciptakan pendekatan yang lebih holistik dan komprehensif dalam menyebarkan pesan Islam.

What compels us today to consider the future of research in Islamic sciences is a strong sense of the dead end facing those working in these fields. Anyone who carefully examines the output of research centres and academic institutions concerned with formulating methodologies for generating Islamic knowledge capable of developing society and empowering its members to represent the spirit of the age and ignite creativity, truly will find themselves confronted with a vast number of ideas and theories that are utterly unproductive, if anything at all. We have reviewed several books and journals related to Islamic da'wah in the digital era, such as the book "Asasu wa dakwah al-Fardiyah" by Ibrahim al-Dib, which provides an overview of da'wah talent that stems from long experience, whether due to the da'wah preacher's efforts to improve da'wah skills or innate talent. Another book that serves as a reference is "Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam" by Larry Poston. This book explains individual da'wah carried out with various testimonies that have succeeded in convincing the general public and intellectuals about Islamic teachings. The journal that also serves as a reference for this article is "The Role of Digital Da'wah in Spreading the Message of Islam in the Modern Era" by Ibnu Kasir and Syahrul Awali, which provides a new nuance in da'wah in the digital era by utilizing specialized da'wah websites on the Internet.

The content of the introduction consists of: (1) background, (2) a brief literature review of related studies, (3) the rationale for conducting this research, and (4) research questions or objectives. The state-of-the-art, gap analysis, and novelty should be clearly presented in this section. Avoid discussing general literature reviews or definitions.

## **2. Method**

In writing this article, we conducted a literature review by collecting various sources, including articles published in journals and books related to Islamic da'wah, both in classical and contemporary periods. We analyzed the sources and compared them with the da'wah carried out by Christian and Jewish groups, drawing conclusions based on the comparison. We employed a qualitative approach to analyze the development of da'wah carried out in the past and the problems of da'wah in the contemporary era in a descriptive manner.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

Technology in our world has drawn young people away from proper training for preachers and from learning how to address the problems facing modern societies. Communication technology has brought both advantages and disadvantages, and we are only a few years away from artificial intelligence becoming a reality in all aspects of modern society. The question remains: to what extent can preachers benefit from this technology?

In his speech, Dr Abdullah Al-Najjar stated that Islamic jurisprudence (Shari'a) emphasizes preaching so that people may know God correctly. He explained that Imam Muhammad Abduh defined preaching as simply presenting the religious perspective on

matters concerning people. He clarified that the role of the preacher is not to guide people but to inform them. Unfortunately, some preachers have confused the means and ends of preaching. The preacher's role is to remind people of their religious principles.

"We must distinguish between the methodology of preaching and its objective. He addressed preachers, urging them to fulfil their role without overstepping boundaries so that their message reaches hearts. He pointed out that some preachers fail to differentiate between what should and should not be said to people. There is a rich language that can be used and adapted without intimidation. Furthermore, some people mistakenly believe they are more devout. A preacher should present religion in a gentle, simple, and appealing manner and refrain from categorizing people.

Dr Abdul-Hay Azab stated that the issues of preaching are numerous, and the real problem lies in the channels through which the message is delivered to the public. It is essential to select preachers who are socially, economically, and culturally qualified and trained to provide the appropriate message at the proper time, taking into account people's circumstances in different times and places.

Unfortunately, there are many preachers, but in reality, the truly qualified are very few. A preacher must respect the intellect of their audience, who include engineers, doctors, and others, and their ability to engage with contemporary issues. A preacher must possess a cultural level that resonates with all perspectives, from the educated to the less fortunate. Dr Ahmed Al-Mansi stated that we must differentiate between the employed preacher and the educated preacher. He emphasized that the first step in preaching is drawing upon wisdom; the preacher possesses a remedy, and the challenges of preaching vary from one era to another and from one society to another (Al-Dib, 2004). He added that reading is an integral part of gaining experience and discerning right from wrong. He noted that our preaching discourse remains emotional rather than scientific, failing to suit the times in which we live, and that we must respect the demands of our era. Dr Hisham Abdel Aziz, for his part, stated that preaching is both a science and an art, and that preachers must possess the skill to convey information effectively. He explained that the Minister of Religious Endowments has assumed the responsibility of developing preachers and training imams. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Najjar, in collaboration with the committee, laid the foundations after 2013. The Ministry is committed to purging pulpits of extremist ideologies, which has enabled us to safeguard the integrity of these platforms. He continued: "Then came the training in sociology, psychology, and national security. For the first time, imams from Maspero attended training courses on how to present themselves on camera and address the public. Countries are now competing to obtain imams from the Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments, and they also request to train their students at our International Academy of Religious Endowments. The Ministry of Religious Endowments has embraced technology; the Ministry's website is now very active, and many imams have gained experience in using digital transformation (Karim, 2021)."

### **3.1. Utilization of Digital Technology in Islamic Preaching**

There is no doubt that Muslims have not yet succeeded in exploiting the Internet for advocacy as required, despite the importance of this medium that penetrates borders and barriers. Statistics say that the number of Islamic websites on the Internet that serve the Islamic religion and its call directly is still limited, and that Christian missionary websites on the Internet exceed Islamic websites by a rate of 1200%, and that the share of Muslims on the Internet is still meagre and does not reach the required level. A recent

study indicated that Christian organizations have the upper hand on the Internet, as they occupy 62% of the websites, followed by Jewish organizations. Meanwhile, Muslims and Hindus share a similar presence, with each group's share not exceeding 9%. Evidence confirms that destructive ideologies and false religions, including Buddhists, pagans, and Satanists, have hundreds of websites in both living and dead languages (Fabriar, 2020). The number of websites attacking Islam, whether directly or indirectly, exceeds ten thousand, and the budget allocated to attacking Islam through media worldwide exceeds one billion dollars annually.

Meanwhile, Muslim efforts to defend Islam through the media are meagre and individual, with a budget of only a few million. Undoubtedly, utilizing modern communication tools and technological innovations, foremost among them the Internet, is one of the most important means of spreading and defending the Islamic message in this era. This is due to the immense potential these tools offer for communication and influence. Through them, preachers can defend Islam against cheap trends and malicious campaigns that are sometimes powerful and effective, and at other times organized and influential.

There is no doubt that the Internet represents a significant revolution in the world of communications. It has become the most powerful global media outlet in terms of influence, with the number of internet users worldwide exceeding 500 million. It is incumbent upon us—as Muslims—to benefit from this media and communication revolution before others, given the universality of the message of Islam, which we carry and must convey to everyone living on this earth. This excellent international network has opened new horizons for Islamic outreach and activism, and utilizing it for this purpose has become an urgent necessity, alongside all the other media technologies that science has developed, such as printing, photography, computers, radio, and television, especially targeted radio and satellite channels. Recently, several distinguished websites have emerged, run by specialists in various fields and supported by Islamic institutions, companies, organizations, and ministries in different countries of the Muslim world. These websites are characterized by their excellent planning, resulting in well-designed content and improved material compared to previous sites. However, some shortcomings remain that should be addressed (Arnold et al., 1970). The field still needs more Islamic websites that learn from these experiences and continually offer new content, especially given the increasing interest of Muslims in the Internet. It is noticeable that many Islamic websites on the web remain limited in their impact, contain superficial information, and much of it is inaccurate. Let's consider the Internet as a tool for spreading Islam. We find that it possesses a set of characteristics that make it a more dynamic and influential medium than any other media outlet (الحزيرة, 2010).

Among these characteristics are:

1. Integration: The Internet has created a form of integration between the characteristics of other media, including radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. It combines the written word, sound, images, and video in one medium—the Internet—and also integrates education, learning, and entertainment.
2. Reach: The number of internet users worldwide has surpassed 500 million, and this figure continues to increase. According to the latest studies, internet users are among the most dynamic segments of society, as 75% of these users are between 16 and 44 years old, and 45% of them have completed their university studies. A British study indicates that it took radio 38 years to reach 50 million

people, television 6 years, and computers 13 years. In comparison, the Internet reached 50 million people in just five years.

3. **Interactivity:** The Internet has created a new level of interactivity between the viewer and the source of information. In contrast, on television, the viewer is merely a passive recipient, unable to participate. The same applies to radio. However, the Internet enables viewers and users to engage with this information through chat channels, polls, and by expressing their opinions on various issues.
4. **Ease of Communication:** Email has become one of the fastest and cheapest means of communication in the world. Through it, you can send text files containing dozens of pages in less than a minute to anyone in the world.
5. **Ease of Information Transfer and Storage:** The Internet enables the transfer of large quantities of images, information, and documents, and allows for easy storage and saving of these files on your computer in seconds. Anyone closely following this new information and communication revolution will find hundreds of Arabic and Islamic websites on the Internet, specializing in Islamic sciences and affairs, Quranic studies, Hadith, Islamic propagation, Islamic history, and Islamic civilization, as well as websites focusing on language and literature. These sites are numerous and prosperous in information, guidance, and jurisprudential and scientific services they offer. However, we reiterate that Islamic propagation needs many times more websites than currently exist to effectively confront all the hostile currents that work tirelessly and actively against Islam.

**Tips for Creating Islamic Websites:** To create outstanding Islamic websites that serve Islam online, internet experts recommend that an Islamic webpage should possess the following characteristics (مشوّح, 2017):

1. High-quality content in terms of the quantity, comprehensiveness, and coverage of the website's areas of specialization and objectives, as well as the multilingual nature of the content to reach the broadest possible audience of internet users.
2. Ease of navigation and browsing between website sections. This ease depends on the quality of page organization and coherence, as well as the availability of search tools within the content.
3. Availability of interactive services, such as chat, a guestbook, and other features like job opportunities, marriage proposals, free email, a calendar, a diary, or greeting cards.
4. Integration with other Islamic websites to avoid duplication, with links to these sites.
5. Avoidance of sectarian and political disputes to achieve the greatest possible global reach and dissemination.
6. High-quality design and aesthetically pleasing graphics and frames.
7. The availability of institutional support for publishing Islamic pages and websites online, including financial, technical, and specialized support.
8. Each website needs a dedicated team, with members specializing in their respective fields, to ensure the website's success and integration. A successful Islamic network requires a Sharia team, a technical team, a media team, and an advisory team.

9. A group of Islamic websites should specialize in presenting the Islamic message to non-Muslims and new converts in a specialized manner to achieve wider reach and acceptance among non-Muslims.
10. Some Islamic websites should counter websites that use Islamic names but actually promote concepts, ideas, and beliefs contrary to Islam, such as Qadiani and Ahmadi websites.
11. Support and budgets are essential for achieving diversity and continuous development, retaining existing visitors, and attracting new ones. Stagnant pages gradually lose visitors and may eventually disappear altogether. Constant research, development, and innovation are necessary to maintain the presence of Islamic websites, networks, and pages (مشوح, 2017).

Spreading the Islamic Call: The question that arises now is: How can the Internet be utilized to spread the Islamic call? This requires, in addition to broadcasting the message of truth through Islamic websites, devising innovative ways to reach the most significant possible number of internet users, especially those who do not typically visit Islamic websites. The presence of numerous websites belonging to prominent scholars, such as Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Baz, Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen, Sheikh Al-Dosari, and Sheikh Al-Munajjid, is strong evidence of the importance of the Internet and the necessity of harnessing it to serve Islam and its propagation (Šaiḥ, 2005). The Fatwa Committee of the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society in Kuwait has permitted supporting companies that publish Islamic pages, as spending in the cause of manifesting and exalting the religion of God Almighty on earth, and making the word of God supreme, is among the most excellent and most virtuous forms of charity. The committee stated That Accessing the Internet and calling upon God Almighty and His religion through it is permissible. All who are able should participate, while adhering to the general Islamic guidelines for da'wah (calling to Islam). The committee also stated that qualified scholars should be responsible for responding to doubts raised for discussion by non-Muslims or deviant groups, and that online da'wah should be well-prepared and addressed to people according to their level of understanding and social standing, as da'wah is directed at diverse groups of people. The Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments (Awqaf) has developed a website to broadcast the interpretation of the Holy Quran, known as al-Muntakhab, in five languages: Arabic, French, Russian, German, and English. The Egyptian Minister of Religious Endowments, Dr Hamdi Zaqzouq, told the Islamic News Agency: "The broadcast has already begun in four languages, and the English version will be broadcast soon." He confirmed that the Centre for Islamic Studies and Encyclopedias at the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs has formed a high-level internet committee, comprising professors from Al-Azhar University and researchers in Islamic studies and foreign languages, to review the information broadcast online and correct any errors promptly. This committee also monitors all misinformation, doubts, and falsehoods about Islam disseminated online, categorizes them, and responds to them in a convincing and scholarly manner. These responses are then published on various websites owned by Al-Azhar and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs.

As for the possible online methods for spreading the Islamic message, they can be summarised as follows (Šaiḥ, 2005):

- 1- Creating Islamic websites that present a clear, attractive, and engaging image of faithful Islam.
- 2- Publishing Islamic newspapers online.

- 3- Providing access to various Islamic books through Islamic and Arabic websites, especially foundational texts of Islamic heritage, such as Quranic commentaries and translations of its meanings into different languages, books of Hadith, and encyclopedias of Islamic jurisprudence.
- 4- Utilizing chat rooms and discussion forums on various websites and search engines to present the message of Islam to others. This is a fruitful method, and some preachers have employed it, leading many people from different nationalities to embrace Islam through their efforts.
- 5- Using email for calling on God. This is a suitable method for spreading the message and complements other methods. By using email, the message of Islam can be directed to millions of email addresses, allowing a specific demographic to be targeted for invitations. This can be done either through individual correspondence or by contracting with internet companies that provide mailing services for a fee. These companies have mailing lists that sometimes exceed fifty million addresses, and by contracting with them, the message of Islam can be delivered to fifty million internet subscribers. This is a good method if used correctly and undertaken by scholars who are zealous for Islam and its propagation.

Utilizing the Internet for Da'wah: There are several ideas for activating the Internet for da'wah, including (Rozehnal, 2022):

1. Holding da'wah meetings and seminars on da'wah topics and concerns via the Internet, exchanging viewpoints on da'wah work. This is now available in audio and video formats through online discussion forums.
2. Utilizing statistical research available online to strengthen our da'wah programs and arguments. This gives our perceptions and positions greater persuasive power and influence, enhances our ability to engage in dialogue with others, and helps them reach a point of psychological balance where they can determine their correct stance: are they for or against Islam?
3. Overcoming the negativity of individualistic and ijihad-oriented work on Islamic websites by fostering a collaborative and cooperative spirit. This involves employing the latest methods of promoting Islamic websites and the sincere da'wah ideas and services they offer, such as email marketing, animated advertisements, and premium links (Haşhâş, 2021).
4. Transmitting and making available online as many educational lessons and live lectures as possible. This is extremely important. Many websites – though disproportionate to the nation's resources and population – receive these efforts, prepare them electronically, and then publish them on their pages, whether in written, audio, or video format.
5. Publicizing da'wah activities, including lessons, lectures, talks, courses, and sermons. This includes announcing the location and time so that people can attend in person, as well as publishing and promoting the content.
6. Increasing the number of specialized websites to foster competition and innovation, and to ensure easy access at any time. We need websites that specialize in youth, social, and economic issues, as well as Islamic figures, the tolerance of Islam, and Islamic civilization, among other relevant topics. This

increase should be quantitative and qualitative. Because we will not benefit from websites merely by their number, but by the quality of their content and its usefulness to others, we do not want them to be worthless and ineffective; instead, we want them to be purposeful and targeted. Some should be directed towards Muslim youth, others towards Muslim young women, and still others towards non-Muslim youth, young women, and elders, both men and women (العلاقة بين التجديد والحداثة في الحركات الإسلامية: تحليل آراء المثقفين المسلمين المعاصرين. – مركز المجدد للبحوث والدراسات, n.d.).

7. Every Muslim internet user concerned with spreading the message of Islam should contribute to spreading good and not remain passive, giving nothing back to their religion, even if only by sharing ideas for spreading the message and sending them to users through communication tools.
8. Contributing by writing a focused monthly article on any topic and sending it to various forums and websites.
9. Muslim internet specialists should amplify the influence of scholars and preachers by creating websites for them, making it easier for them to reach and engage with their audience, so that people can benefit from their knowledge. They should also teach them how to use the Internet and computers to fulfil their primary role, which is to defend the religion, correct misconceptions about it, and counter ideas with ideas, methods with methods, and technology with technology.
10. Flooding the Internet with websites that present Islam accurately—its creed, jurisprudence, methodology, and call to Islam—to restrict the space for deviant websites, especially those in English, which is the language of 80% of internet users.
11. Linking the websites of official Islamic bodies with charitable organizations and institutions to enhance communication and counter extremist ideologies.
12. Flooding suspicious websites hostile to Islam with protest messages simultaneously, as they will be unable to receive and read them all at once, let alone engage with them. This will force them to reconsider the websites they promote against Islam and Muslims.
13. The necessity of disseminating information about false and deviant beliefs to warn people against them and to demonstrate disavowal of them, which is one of the greatest requirements of the declaration of faith, "There is no god but God." Those searching for information about Judaism will not only find Jewish websites but will also be surprised to find Islamic websites discussing Judaism from their perspective. The same applies to other religions, sects, and schools of thought (اعداد طلبية العلم للدعوة في العصر الحديث, 2025).
14. Accurate media monitoring of all hostile and non-hostile activities on the site, indexing them, publishing their names, utilizing them, and facilitating access to the ideas used and clarifying them for the general public.
15. Establishing a website to coordinate between charitable organizations and public institutions in charitable and missionary work to utilize all resources and avoid duplication. It may be necessary to develop a clear service map to facilitate the evaluation and renewal of these efforts.

16. Utilizing the Internet to promote the idea of spreading and learning Arabic among non-Arab Muslims, and launching websites to serve this legitimate and religious purpose. The pagan Chinese—who forced computer companies to encode computer programming in Chinese—should not be more proud of their language than we are of our language, which is the language of the Quran, the word of God, the Most Gracious.
17. Creating websites dedicated to following new foreign ideas and information and translating them into Arabic, especially ideas and methods that serve the call to God Almighty.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The challenges facing Islamic outreach in the digital age include the spread of misinformation, the misuse of digital platforms, ethical challenges, and unchecked cultural openness. The hope lies in the ability to widely disseminate moderate religious awareness, effectively engage with youth, and revive Islamic values and ethics in the digital environment. To achieve this, preachers and Islamic institutions must adopt an approach that combines digital proficiency with the Prophetic methodology, focusing on credibility and positive impact, while providing engaging and high-quality content.

#### **Challenges**

**Spreading Misinformation:** The proliferation of fake news and the distortion of facts, along with security challenges. **Unchecked Cultural Openness:** Easy access to cultural content that may conflict with Islamic values.

**Digital Preachers' Conduct:** Some preachers fail to adhere to Islamic ethical guidelines in their online outreach, resulting in ethical issues similar to those encountered in the real world. **Security Challenges:** Fear of the deliberate distortion of Islam and the image of preachers.

#### **Hopes**

**Spreading Religious Awareness:** Digital channels play a crucial role in disseminating awareness of the faithful, moderate Islam, thereby fostering balance in society. **Connecting with Youth:** Reaching the youth demographic, which represents the present and future of society. **Effective Communication:** The digital world provides a platform for direct communication, facilitating the dissemination of Islamic concepts and values in an engaging manner.

#### **Direct Communication: Utilizing social media tools for reminders, learning, and enjoying good.**

**How to Face Challenges and Capitalise on Opportunities**

**Mastery and Quality:** Preachers and institutions must master the art of digital outreach, prioritize the quality of digital content, and provide interactive services to meet the audience's needs. **Commitment to Ethics:** Emphasizing the necessity of adhering to Islamic ethical principles in the digital environment. **Strategic Planning:** Developing targeted strategies to enhance the quality of digital content and address various aspects to deliver a comprehensive Islamic message. **Family Awareness:**

Training and empowering families to educate their children on navigating digital challenges.

Cooperation and Integration: Advancing digital outreach requires collaborative efforts from scholars and institutions to develop and refine outreach methods.

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