CHALLENGES & PROSPECTS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS DIGITECH CAMPAIGNS

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Abstract
Islamic propagation is a human effort of faith to influence and invite humankind in a wise way to follow the teachings of Islam. Since the dawn of the digital age, the practice of preaching religion has been altered. The potentials of these digital technologies have attracted interests of researchers, Muslim preachers and Islamic organisations on their use for Islamic propagation. However, an examination of existing literature reveals dearth of studies on issues in the use of digital platforms by Islamic organisations and Muslims for Islamic evangelism in Lagos, South West, Nigeria. Thus, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining issues in the use of digital platforms by Islamic organisations and Muslims for Islamic propagation. To advance this, the study examined factors that influence the use of digital media platforms for Islamic religious activities, and challenges and prospects of digital media platforms for Islamic religious activities. Uses and Gratification and Media Dependency theories were reviewed as the study's theoretical framework. The study employed qualitative research design with the use of in-depth interview with selected Islamic evangelists and members of Islamic organisations. These six individuals were purposively selected and interviewed due to their use of digital technologies for Islamic evangelism. Accordingly, the need to spread the messages and connect with Muslims served as some of the reasons for the use of digital technologies by Muslims and Islamic organisations. This was considered essential due to perceived strengths of the digital media platforms in facilitating connection and continuous conversations. In spite of its numerous benefits, there are certain issues with the use of digital technologies for Islamic evangelism. Some of the challenges include perceived credibility with online information, low adoption of digital technologies by Muslims and Islamic organisations, addictive tendencies of digital technologies. The study recommends that Islamic organisations should intensify efforts to train their Imams and missioners on the use of digital technologies for Da'wah activities.

Keywords: Digital Technology, Da'wah, Islamic Organisation, Online Media, Uses and Gratification Theory

Introduction

According to Abu Ammar (2010), Islamic propagation otherwise known as Da'wah in Arabic means "to invite". It is an integral part of Islam whereby it is obligatory for every Muslim to be involved in Islamic propagating activities. The meaning of propagation is to call people with the intentions of informing them about Islam and all forms of good deeds. Propagation is the process of disseminating a message via the use of appropriate and practical techniques.

Da'wah was considered the divine task of the Prophets sent by Allah (SWT) to propagate their missions to the people they were sent to. Varying modalities had been deployed in channeling the message of Allah to His servants over time. Methods such as public preaching, circulation of written materials in form of manuscripts and book authorship, ta'limat circles and one on one approach were used at one point in Islamic history or the other. The traditional way of Da'wah had been quite evident as Islamic scholars engage in activities aimed at inviting people to Islam and moving them closer to the teachings of Islam. However, since the digitization of life, the ways of preaching and other social ways changed dramatically (Anderson, 2003). Now new roles of Information and technology came into existence and it played a vital role in globalizing the effect. This has provided new state of the art opportunities and changes in the act of preaching. The traditional way of door-to-door preaching has been replaced by new ways of information technological roles in this century.

According to Muhammed & Binti Muhammed (2010), one of the major areas that is significantly affected by technological revolution is the way people gather, process and disseminate information, even religious information. Expectedly, Islamic propagation has been influenced by technological innovations. The new technologies offer Islamic propagation advanced and enhanced capacities in spreading the messages of Islam. According to Arifudin, (2016), social media of communication has played an important role in assisting Islamic evangelist to disseminate Islamic messages. He further stressed that social media is an important platform that can be utilized as contemporary media for the Da'wah endeavor as it has many advantages in terms of efficiency, accessibility, scoping, and openness

With the aid of these new technologies, Muslims have at their disposal today, valuable books written in the early period of Islam to date; for instance, the classical scholarly works such as *Muwatta* of Imam Malik, *Tafsir* al-Tabari, *Tafsir* of Qurtubi and others are now easily accessible. With the aid of these storage facilities, access has been established to many late *Shuyukhs*' recorded lectures, books, *tafasir* and *fatwas* on CDs, DVDs and mp3s stored on phones' Micro SD (Secure Digital) cards namely Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, Sheikh Ahmad Deedat, Sheikh Ja'far Mahmud Adam, Sheikh Muhammad Auwal Adam Albani Zaria and the rest of world-class scholars of note.

Interestingly also with the advancement of technology, most of the religious literature in circulation today, are embedded in sophisticated software packages which make knowledge easily and readily accessible to many anywhere and anytime by just a click of a computer mouse. Islamic literature available on software includes *Tafsir* Ibn Kathir, *Sahih* al-Bukhari, Muslim and others of the six authentic collections as well as *Muwatta* of Imam Malik. Parts of this are some commentaries of the Qur'an like that of Abdullahi Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali, Muhammad Muhsin Khan etc. Whereas, some are in form of *Maktabat* such as *Maktaba*

Shamila, Maktaba al-Ilmiyya, Maktabat 'Abbad, *Maktabat* Muqbil, *Maktabat* Fauzan etc, all of which comprised of many books, some more than a thousand voluminous literature across Islamic disciplines.

The potentials of these digital technologies have attracted interests of researchers, Muslim preachers and Islamic organisations on the use of these new technologies for Islamic propagation. One of such interests was a study titled *Social Media and Proselytizing of Islam: A Study of Muslim Students in Selected Higher Institutions of Learning in Northern Nigeria (2019*) carried out by Muhhammed Maga Sule and Muhammed Maishanu Aliyu. The research centered on the use of social media platforms by Muslim students in proselytizing the religion of Islam in tertiary institutions of Learning in Northern Nigeria. The study found out that most of the Muslims students surveyed were aware of the social media sites that proselytize and extend the true teachings of Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims. The findings of the study showed encouraging efforts by Muslim students to form educative groups to proselytize the unaltered and authentic teachings and practices of Islam at the same avoid misusing the media at the expense of their religion.

Apart from the above study, similar studies had been done on how Muslims and Islamic organizations have deployed the use of social media for Islamic evangelism. However, an examination of existing literature reveals dearth of studies on the issues in the use of digital platforms by Islamic preachers and Muslims for Islamic evangelism in South West Nigeria. Thus, this study attempts to fill this gap by examining issues on the use of digital platforms by Muslims and Islamic organisations for Islamic propagation.

Research Questions

1. What factors influence the use of digital media platforms for Islamic religious activities?
2. What are the challenges in the use of digital media platforms for Islamic religious activities?
3. What are the prospects of digital media platforms for Islamic religious activities?

Concept of Dawah

Dawah is an Arabic term that has been introduced in Quran in *Surah Al Rum* chapter 30:25 which means to summon or to invite. This is the Quranic acceptable way of inviting anyone into Islam, disseminating the messages of Islam to Muslims and Non-Muslims. Da'wah is the Islamic way to preach which involves the dissemination of Islamic principles to reinstate the true meaning of Islam. The literal implication of Da'wah is defined by Al Ashry (2014) as when Dawah is used in combination with Islam, it means to invite mankind to submit to Allah willingly, meaning to worship Him alone, follow His Straight Path, and keep away from all sorts of disbeliefs and evil. According to Hamid (1996), *Da'wah* is also defined as inciting people to do good things and hold right guidance; to command the right thing and forbid the wrong one. This significant objective has provided Muslim *Ummah* high rank among the nations of the world.

Da'wah (دعوة) literally, is an Arabic word derived from the root *da'a* (whose triconsonantal root is د ع و) which signifies "to summon", "to call" or "to invite" someone to something great especially a religious belief (Philips, 2015). Technically therefore, *Da'wah* (invitation) exclusively refers to the act of proselytizing or preaching of Islam to non-Muslims. Conversely, by extension, it could also entail redirecting the affairs of Muslims to the right path and exerting efforts in teaching them the sound knowledge of the *Din*. Therefore, any person that works or volunteers in the ministry or institution of Da'wah is called a dā'ī. Da'wah is defined as communicating and informing the right path, guiding and showing the way to religion (of Islam) and its counsel in accordance with the statement of Allah: Invite (people) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner. Your Lord knows best who strays from His path and who are rightly guided.

Da'wah is synonymous with teaching or *khutbah* in the narrow sense. Etymologically, da'wah is derived from Arabic which means the invitation in accordance with Al Quran *Surah Yunus verse 25.* Widely, Islamic propaganda is a human effort of faith to influence and invite humankind in a wise way, to follow the teaching of Islam in all aspects of life for their benefit and happiness in the world and hereafter. In technical term, da'wah means invitation to understand, believe, and practice the teachings of Islam, also invites to goodness and prevent *munkar*.

Abu Ammar (2010) states that Islamic propagation has two dimensions: external and internal. External Islamic propagation is to invite non-Muslims to Islam and teach them about Islamic beliefs and practices. Internal Islamic propagation is to teach Muslims about aspects of Islam. For instance, the necessity of patience; obedience to Allah; love for the Prophet; understanding the virtues of the Companions (Sahaba) and learn what is required from one by Islamic Law.

In principle, *da'wah* is an activity targeting individuals to follow and practice the teachings of Islam (Fakhruroji, 2017). This invitation is carried out by approaching targets according to their characteristics and their tendencies. The nature of the media to be used and the character of its user community need to be understood because differences in user culture affect the strength of the effects of the use of social media (DeNardis and Hackl, 2015).

Dawah as Islamic Promotional Communication Strategy

Dawah serves as a promotional tool for Islamic communication. The dawah effect is feedback from the dawah process. According to Bandura (2001) and Marlow, Lacerenza, and Salas (2017), effects occur at the cognitive level if there are changes in what is known, understood, and perceived by the public (based on the transmission of knowledge, skills, beliefs, or information). Affective effects arise if there is a change in what is felt, liked, or hated by the public, which includes everything related to emotions, attitudes and values. Finally, behavioral effects refer to real observable behaviors (e.g., patterns of actions, activities, or habits). Dawah communication is effective if the recipient adopts certain attitudes conveyed by the communicator. The process of receiving messages depends on experience, social culture, individual characteristics, and the psychological audience.

In mass communication literature, hypodermic needle theory assumes that conventional media are considered smarter than the audience. The audience, members of the community, is an active audience so that there is no interference between the message and the recipient; the message that has been distributed to the public is directly received and accepted by the target without an intermediary. This theory assumes that the audience can interpret the message conveyed by the media according to their social, economic, cultural and political background. If we look at the process of communication, there is essentially no difference between Islamic da'wah and non-Islamic communication in terms of models, processes, and effects, only the philosophical foundation. The philosophy of Islam uses the Qur'an, the Al-Hadith, and the opinions of scholars so that the essence of any information broadcast remains the same no matter the model.

Da'wah communication has long existed in the daily lives of those who practice it. Da'wah is also known as a communication process. At the individual (object) level, da'wah activities are communication activities to send messages from a communicator (*dai*) to the receiver (object of da'wah) through certain media. The purpose of communication is to influence the receiver of the message. The influence could be in form of understanding (knowledge), attitudes, and individual actions. In religious terminology, the changes will involve aspects of *aqidah* (faith), morals, worship, and *mu'amalah* (practice) (Rochman, 2015).

Da'wah communication is the process of delivering information or messages (from a person or group of people) sourced from the Qur'an and Al-Hadith using symbols (both verbal and nonverbal) with the aim of changing the attitudes, opinions, or behaviour of other people. *Da'wah* works according to Islamic teachings both directly and indirectly, orally and through the media, respectively (Majid and Noor, 2017). *Da'wah* communication has long existed in the daily lives of those who practice it. With rapid developments in technology and online media, it is very easy to reach any community. The public can access lectures from preachers and other missionary communication on whatever social media they prefer. Some of the most commonly used are YouTube, Whatsapp and Facebook, although YouTube differs from other social media because there is no time limit for videos, so the general public can listen to religious studies freely. Some of the *da'wah* videos that have been uploaded on YouTube include Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS), Ustadz Hanan Attaki, Ustadz Zakir, etc.

Almighty Allah has declared that the excellence of Muslim Ummah lies in propagating the true message of Islam to humanity. It may be concluded that to retain the title of excellence, Muslims have to carry and deliver the message of Islam. For this purpose, Muslims have to utilize possible means including modern media and communication. Nowadays, technological revolution has brought a glorious revolution in propagating Islamic messages. Therefore, digital technologies can be a great necessity to Islamic organizations and Muslims to engage in dawah. Hence, it is pertinent to adopt new media technologies sources to convey Islamic messages to human beings globally. Media play a pivotal role in the promotion of communication in the community. In Arabic, the term "*Iblāgh*" " ابلاغ بَہَکَ یَبہُکَ" is used for "media". In the Holy Qur"an, the term "*Ṣahīfah*" is used as the origin of Urdu term; both terms are used to deliver a message that is similar to modern media in the contemporary world.

Use of Digital Technologies for Dawah

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) of the twenty-first century have fueled countless futuristic dreams of a just, democratic, people-powered world. The advent of personal computers and the Internet transformed global society from an industrial to information one, where information processing took center stage and ICTs became pervasive. Today, no dimension of human life remains untouched by ICTs. These technologies have resulted in a deeply connected world, where time and geographical boundaries are bypassed and people from all walks of life can connect and communicate (Adam, Anuar & Ali, 2014).

Information technology has connected the world in the form of global village and like globalization, online medium can act as a viable promotion technique. Many Islamic scholars like Mufti Ismael Menk, Noman Ali Khan, Bilal Philips and so many are using social media as a way to promote Da'wah. The role of information has adjoined the distance and users with one another as someone sitting in Bangladesh can listen to a *Bayyan* from Islamic scholar from America. Da'wah acquires currently modern, eclectic forms of expression and, even, iconoclasts.

The fundamental principle of Da'wah is to invite someone through any accessible medium and latest technologies have provided hallmark accessibility. Information technological development including the social and online media, have mostly impacted on improving the accessibility and transforming the new structures of accessible Da'wah videos, blogs and lectures. The processes of transformation of Islamic preaching have been important and continuous, and have been marked by generational changes, the relations with the influence of technological power and regional geopolitical contexts around the world. This created the abilities of accessibility of such Islamic preaching and latest technological development like E-Quran or mobile apps have provided such accessible tools.

However, recently with the booming rate of globalization and its agents of mass media, things begin to change with Da'wah activities inclusive. Therefore, this evolving changing trend necessitates striking a balance between the ever-metamorphic society and the techniques of propagating Islam to members. It should be noted that E-da'wah is another method for the implementation of da'wah with information technology. It is the use of information technology as an active-creative response that arises from the awareness of the positive side of the information technology developments.

E-da'wah became necessary because of the spread of da'wah is conventionally limited by space and time, while the digital da'wah or e-da'wah can be implemented over space and time. The geographic coverage of e-da'wah is wide so that all Internet users can be touched by this type of da'wah. For enthusiasts of cyberspace, da'wah through cyber is exciting. This is because the facilities provided by the owners of providers and servers are quite creative and innovative. Just a little extra knowledge about computers especially copy-paste you can already have a free blogger. It's just the creation of web design and updating that require seriousness in managing da'wah.

Since the digital age came into existence, the whole societal way of preaching religion has been altered in a better way. The internet became a resourceful source where most people can engage with people of their faith and other faiths to share their thoughts and disseminate

their teachings. The website development and social media preaching constitute some of the means through which religious organizations promote their beliefs. Da'wah or Islamic preaching has been on such online medium and information technology that had played a vital role in distributing it in various regions around the world. It is like a global preaching technique where one can invite anyone on Da'wah without caring for distance, cost or resource. With that, online Da'wah courses, websites and blogs are the tools of preaching Islam and act as an effective way to promote them. With the help of online media the whole world has become a global vilage. Now, education, news and other mediums can be transferred from one end to another in no time. This led to the development in Da'wah as many Islamic scholars adopted new trends. This trend includes online videos of Da'wah, website links, different blogs and social media platform (X formally Twitter, and Facebook majorly) in distributing the teachings of Islam (Hashim, Murphy & Hashim, 2007**).**

It is imperative to know that social media constitute one of the new trends used for Islamic Da'wah and besides being a medium of interaction and a vehicle for communication among individuals and organizations. It is also used as a vehicle for delivering Islamic Da'wah in several forms, namely religious lectures, photos, drawings, cartoons, Islamic memes, religious appeals, inspirational Islamic stories, video clips of religious songs, wisdom words, religious slogans, studies on Qur'an and Hadith and its interpretation. The phenomenon of the delivery of Islamic Da'wah through social media can also be referred to as Da'wah via *cyberspace.* It presents a massive opportunity for organizations to reach out to people who may not know more about their religion.

With rapid developments in technology and online media, it is very easy to reach any community. It is well known that Islam is a religion which is a mercy to mankind; it is the only religion which Allah accepts from people as Allah says (what it means): "Whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him." [Quran 3: 85]. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world. It is an Arabic word which denotes submission, surrender, and obedience. As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah that is why it is called Islam. The other literal meaning of the word "Islam" is "peace." This signifies that one can achieve real peace only through submission and obedience to Allah. Also the Internet is the new mass media, with influences far more pervasive than any mass medium in the history of human expression.

It is important to note that Islam is becoming popular among young people who are linked to the social media. The presence of Islam on the internet is truly impressive, and reflects one area where Muslims are keen to adopt a new technology in order to spread the message of their religion. The Internet has been regularly used by people to find information about Islam. According to Bunt (2003), although Islam does not need the internet, however, without it, Islamic organizations and some Muslims would be deprived of their tool of propagation and networking. Many would be unable to share their messages to their followers and observers, which would limit their social position in the global scale of the religion (Bunt, 2003).

The controversial roles that the internet plays in the Islamic context are elaborated in El-Tahawy (2008). Here, the internet is adopted for missionary work, otherwise known as da'wah. The second use is the global provision of forums for like-minded individuals, and these individuals may use the forums for activism (El-Tahawy, 2008). The sites may also support the

jihad, while others perpetuate the electronic jihad in Israel (El-Tahawy, 2008). Finally, the proliferation of online fatwas becomes the fifth use to which exclusive Islamic platforms may be implemented religiously (Illar, 2010). Notably, however, this view does not preclude the participation of Muslims in more open forums, especially in their use of social media. Similar functions may be carried out on alternative platforms, but these will often be more susceptible to critics and observers (Al-Jenaibi, 2016).

It is clear that individuals and groups that emphasized their Muslimness were among the earliest users of the new media. Internet provides new opportunities to explore alternative interpretations of Islam or to ask questions about Islam (for example, to ask for a fatwa). It should also be noted that a growing number of Muslim preachers (for example, the popular Egyptian lay preacher Amr Khaled) are using the Internet to promote their specific interpretations of Islam. The public can access lectures from preachers and other missionary communication on whatever social media they prefer. However, the modern technology has offered chances for the teaching and propagation of Islam over the online media which include Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and X formerly called Twitter. More often, these apps propagate various educative and enlightening Islamic programmes. Such programmes cover lectures on varying topics, Fatwas, Islamic quiz, and Fiqh circles.

It is clear that online medium like internet, social media and now mobile app have granted a huge market of accessibility. More than 1.6 billion Muslims reside around the world and this huge audience can access Islamic messages anywhere, anytime. Muslim societies around the globe are experiencing transformations during the last quarter of a century as a result of technological evolution and globalization processes. One of such transformations is the new dawah trends by Islamic scholars. Their Da'wah objective was to attract followers and to achieve Islamic promotion, in such a way that they made this as a promotional project on global level (Rahman, 1982). The new Islamic scholars are acquiring various forms of technological tool in their preaching technique, coping up with the technological evolution around the world.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification Theory is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. It was propunded in 1970 as a response to traditional mass communication studies that placed a strong emphasis on the sender and the message. Uses and Gratifications theory by Blumler and Katz is an audience centered approach to understanding mass communication. Diverging from other media theories that question what do media do to people? The theory focuses on what people do with media? It covers how people purposefully select media to meet their requirements such as social engagements and education entertainment.

This Blumler and Katz approach to study of media effects introduced fresh perspectives into the media environment dominated only by research on the persuasive power of the media. This theory which takes a more humanistic approach in looking at media use, suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Blumler and Katz believe that there is not merely one way that the audience uses the media, but there are so many reasons for using the media as there are many media users. Users take an active part in the communication process and are goal oriented in their media use. According to this theory, media consumers have a free will to decide how they will use the media and how it will affect them. Blumler and Katz values are

clearly seen by the fact that they believe that media consumers can choose the influence media has on them. Based on this theory, it can be deduced that organizations and individuals can make use of media to meet up with their diverse requirements.

Media Dependency theory was first introduced in 1974 by Ball-Rokeach with the basic premise that the media's power is derived from the audience dependency on the media. That is, the more audience depends on having needs gratified by media use, the more important media's role will be in the person's life and, therefore the more influence those media will have (Baran & Davies, 2015). The theory has been deemed an extension of Blumler and Katz's uses and gratification theory (Ruggiero 2000). The main concept of media dependency theory is that the more someone is dependent on a certain type of media, the more important the media will be in their lives. So, the more frequently we use certain media, the more likely we are to become dependent on them. The main focus of the theory is the relationship between media and the audiences. In industrialized and information-based societies, individuals tend to develop a dependency on the media to satisfy a variety of needs.

The Uses and Gratification and Media Dependency theories provide insights into how religious Islamic organisations and groups depend and utilise technology for their evangelism. The theories also provide explanation on gratifications sought by users of new technologies and how the use of new technologies has revolutionised evangelism.

Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative research design with the use of in-depth interview with selected Islamic evangelists and members of Islamic Organisations. Six individuals were purposively selected and interviewed due to their use of digital technologies for Islamic evangelism. The researchers adopted interview guide to solicit responses from the study's respondents. They are Imam Muhammad Alfa Nla (Chief Imam, Jama-at-ul Islamiyya of Nigeria); Dr. Idris Oni (Digital Islamic Evangelist and Lecturer, Crescent University); Mrs. Hikmat AbdulSalam (Digital Islamic Evangelist); Miss Shanu Hikmah (Public Relations, the Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria MSSN- LASU), Mr. Sulaiman Animashaun (Public Relations Officer, Ansar-ud-deen Society of Nigeria,) and Mr. Orilowo (Public Relations Officer, Ahmadiyya Islamic Movement).

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question: What factors influenced the use of digital technologies for Islamic religious activities?

The study inquired from the respondents factors that influenced the use of digital media platforms for Islamic evangelism. According to Shanu, the first factor that influenced the use of digital media by the MSSN was that the digital media serve as potent platform for dissemination of Islamic messages. This helped in ensuring that the Association's d'awah reaches length beyond the avenue in which they are propagating. That is, people have access to their programmes that were done offline and can get to listen or watch it at their convenient time. And at the same time to ensure that Islamic propagation is well grounded and established in the minds of people especially the youths. The second factor was to enlighten Muslims especially the

Muslim students on Campus about their religion. Digital media (particularly social media) were adopted because most youth of nowadays get themselves acquainted with social media, that is why it was deemed fit to use social media in as much as it doesn't contradict what Islam preaches.

According to Mr. Orilowo, the major factor that influenced the use of digital media was the need to propagate the religion of Islam and to checkmate members from being influenced with other doctrines and thereby deserting the Jama'at. He stated that human beings are very forgetful and according to the Holy Prophet Muhammed {S.A.W}, the reasons for our daily Solat, Weekly Jumaat Service and other pillars of Islam is for constant reminder to Muslims what our primary purpose as human being is which is to worship Allah. Hence, the use of digital media for Islamic propagation by the Ahmadiyya Movement was to enhance spiritual consciousness of Muslims.

Mr. Orilowo stated further that the second reason for the use of digital technologies was to connect with teeming members of the Islamic orgnaisation. He commented that "the organization realized that a lot of their members are on online media platforms and they are constantly being fed with lots of information online whether true or false. It was later realized that for the organization to be able to control the narratives, it is important that they have a strong presence online in order for them to propagate the words of Islam and likewise disseminate their information to their members likewise non-members because the platform also serves as a platform for *Tabligh* and educational activities."

Furthermore, other factors that influenced the use of digital technologies are:

- Direct access of information from Head of Ahmadiyya Jama'at Worldwide
- Availability of question and answer sessions to members for more knowledge of the Deen
- Been able to preach or propagate the message of Islam to all and sundry
- Foster Amicable and cordial relationship among members irrespective of their locations.
- To create a platform to quickly have conversation and receive immediate response
- Constant access to members irrespective of their locations and differences
- Easy access to members

According to Alfa Nla, the main reason for adopting the digital media platform for Islamic propagation is that it was realized that online media is a potential gateway to millions of people all over the world (both Muslims and non-Muslims). Hence, the need to spread the words of Islam as enjoined by Almighty Allah requires that modern Islamic evangelists utilize means that will empower them to achieve their objective. He commented that as the spiritual head of Jama-at-ul Islamiyya of Nigeria, the use of digital technologies has enhanced his evangelism both within and outside the Islamic organization.

Corroborating Alfa Nla's views, Abdul Salam stated that the use of digital platforms for Islamic evangelism was influenced by the need to spread the messages of Al-Islam as enjoined on all Muslims by Almighty Allah. She noted that she decided to engage in online Da'wah due to the

huge potentials of digital technologies particularly social media in disseminating messages to people across the globe.

Commenting on reasons for his use of online media, Oni noted that the viral strength of online media platforms serves as source of attraction for most campaigners including evangelists to utilize these platforms in spreading their messages to people. He stated further, that the use of online media has given desired boost to his Islamic evangelism.

Having examined factors that influenced the use of online media for Islamic evangelism, the study assessed the extent to which these individuals and their organization have utilized digital media for Da'wah and the digital platform mostly utilized for their activities. According to Animashaun, Ansar-ud Deen utilises social media to a great length and disseminate most of its activities through social media platforms. Information about the Organisation's programmes are sent on daily basis to members and non-members of the organization which include the Fasting Reminder Flyer, The Weekly Usrah Programme, The Weekly Sisters Circle Programme, Jummah Reminder and lots more are being sent to their various social media platforms. This was corroborated by Shanu, who stated that the 2022 annual Jihad Week Programmes were streamlined due to the fact that some people were not able to attend and they were be able to witness it except through virtual purposes which has generated series of positive comments from members and non-members.

According to Mr. Orilowo, the utilization of social media for Islamic propagation by Ahamadiyya Movement is to a very large extent (i.e. from the local level Jama'at, Region, State, Federal and International levels) because it serves as one of the major channels of interactions among members and which has proven to be very useful and resourceful.

Regarding her use of social media for her digital evangelism, AbdulSalam stated that she posts Islamic messages on her different online platforms at least once a day. She identified X as her favourite online platform for Islamic evangelism.

This was corroborated by Alfa Nla who noted that he sends and shares Islamic contents (lectures, Quranic verses, hadiths and other materials) numerous times on a daily basis. He stated that he shares his messages mostly through his Whatsapp status, Whatsapp groups of his Association and his Facebook page. Oni equally stated that he utilizes his social media platform (X) to share most of his Islamic contents (lectures, Quranic verses and hadiths).

Research Question Two: What are the challenges in the use of digital media platforms for Islamic religious activities?

The study examined issues in the use of online media for Islamic evangelism. According to Alfa Nla, digital media possess huge potentials, but there are certain issues associated with its use for Islamic evangelism. One of the issues is perceived credibility of messages disseminated online. The increase in instances of fake information has affected peoples' trust for messages on social media. As evangelist, he stated he double-checked information he received from online sources before he shares through his media platforms.

Apart from perceived credibility associated with online messages, another issue is rate of adoption of digital technologies by Islamic organisations and Islamic preachers for evangelism. He observed that in spite of the huge potentials associated with the use of digital technologies for Islamic propagation, most prominent Islamic organization don't have functional website with

updated contents, responsive social media platforms to share their messages. He noted that most online Islamic activities are self-driven by few Muslims who are technologically literate. This, according to him, serves as a barrier to full utilization of digital technologies for Islamic propagation.

Related to this was problem of inadequate Muslim professionals such as content developer, graphic Designers, web administrators and other relevant experts to effectively manage the social media platforms of Islamic organisations. Alfa Nla stated that most times, non-Muslims were consulted to help build and manage Islamic orgnaisation's social media platforms. This practice results into lack of required knowledge about Islamic contents to be hosted online.

Commenting on issues concerning the use of digital media for Islamic evangelism, Abdul Salam noted that the high rate of false information about Islam. This she attributed to under utilization of online media for effective education of people about Islam by Islamic organisations. This has enabled false information about Islam.

In his opinion, Orilowo identified addictive nature of online platforms as a major issue with the use of online media for Islamic evangelism. According to him, the high level of attention attached to surfing the net and sharing information constitute a source of concern to many Muslim clerics who believe that in spite of the huge potentials of online media in disseminating Islamic messages, engaging in this act constitute an addiction which can result to loss of precious time, becoming emotionally attached to unethical online practices among others.

Research Question Three: What are the prospects of digital media platforms for Islamic religious activities?

According to Oni, there are numerous benefits in the use of digital media for Islamic propagation such as viral dissemination of information, participatory mode of communication, access to interact with content of the messages. Furthermore, the use of digital media has brought about propagation of true teachings of Islam, maintenance of social bond between Islamic organizations and their members, enhancement of work efficiency and also serves as source of information. Corroborating Oni, Shanu noted that digital technologies have proven to be potent in boosting Islamic evangelism by connecting Islamic organisations with their members and disseminating the messages of Islam to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Hence, Islamic organisations and evangelists should intensify the use of digital technologies for Islamic propagation.

Commenting on the benefits of digital technologies, Alfa Nla observed that the use of these new technologies and platforms has conferred strengths to Da'wah efforts. He noted that due to the potency of these technologies, propagation of Islamic messages has received great boost and more Muslims and non-Muslims are beginning to appreciate Islam and its values.

Discussion of Findings

According to the analyses of the data, it was found that the need to spread the messages and connect with Muslims served as some of the reasons for the use of digital technologies by Muslims and Islamic organisations. This was considered essential due to perceived strengths of the digital media platforms in facilitating connection and continuous conversations. Over the years, the adoption of digital technologies has helped to enhance the growth and significantly, the spread of Islam as a whole.

Through the use of digital media, members of Islamic organizations have been able to ask, learn, network and teach, in one way or the other it has enhanced understanding of Islamic doctrines. The use of digital media has helped Muslims and non-Muslims to get Islamic knowledge which can be used to deepen their knowledge on Islamic teachings. Accordingly, it is found that Islamic organizations utilize digital media for social purpose, such as serving as media for interaction and communication with their members.

In spite of its numerous benefits, there are certain issues with the use of digital technologies for Islamic evangelism. Some of the issues include perceived credibility of online information, low adoption of digital technologies by Muslims and Islamic organisations, and addictive tendencies of digital technologies. This aligns with the view of Shahidul Haque (2016) who stated that using ICT for a longer period of time may cause addiction. People may use it for good purposes, but when they depend on it, they become addicted. Sometimes they use it for nothing. Islamic propagation workers are not free from this risk.

Shahidul Haque (2016) further notes that in digital Islamic propagation activities there is a great possibility of spreading messages by unauthentic sources. Islamic propagation workers may face difficulty in conveying messages because of hacking. Enemies of Islam can easily mix false data with truth. Hackers can spread immoral contents in the name of Islam. Sometimes, sources may be authentic, but receivers may be confused because of physical absence of Islamic propagation workers. Cyber criminals may create an account in the name of great Islamic scholars and send misleading information.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of digital technologies for Islamic propagation. To advance this aim, the study assessed factors that influenced the use of social media for Islamic propagation, issues and benefits in the use of digital technologies.

The study's findings reveal that the need to provide adequate Islamic information to Muslims, correct wrong narratives about Islam, provide diverse opportunities for members of the Islamic organization to know more about their religion and connect with their organisations were some of the reasons that influenced the use of social media for Islamic propagation.

Information technology revolution has led to a shift in Islamic preaching from conventional to a more contemporary method leading to concept such as digital Da'wah. Significantly, digital media serve as potent tools for Da'wah activities and projection of Islamic teachings. Hence, Islamic propagation can be carried out effectively and actively through digital media platforms by adhering to Islamic principles of Da'wah.

In line with the findings, the study suggests the following:

1. Islamic organisations should intensify efforts to train their Imams and missioners on the use of digital technologies for Da'wah activities.
2. The development of social media is solely built for social harmony, so therefore, Islamic organizations and Muslims members making use of social media must use it judiciously to promote Islam
3. Muslim scholars and Muslim organizations should ensure that they don't relent on their usage of social media platforms because it would provide an avenue for virtual teachings and

the sharing and posting of video and audio lectures that would improve the understanding of Muslims on the various tenets of Islam.

4. Islamic organizations should know the importance of creating Da'wah groups on social media platforms for effective propagation.

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