THE UMMAH AND ISLAMIC *DA'WAH* IN CONTEMPORARY ERA: SOCIAL MEDIA AS A VITAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT: *The Ummah as one community of Muslim have in recent times able to utilise the modern communication platforms for Da'wah purposes. Therefore, this paper examines the relationship between the Muslim Ummah and Islamic Da'wah in relation to social media. It also studied the application of the new media platforms for the propagation of the teachings of Islam and countering the wrong message about Islam and Muslims. It was found out FASTING A PROPHATIC TRADITION that the social media platforms are the most often used channels exploited by Muslim Ummah to do Da'wah or receive the message of Islam. Also observed, is that the Ummah preferred the social media due to its flexible nature and effectiveness to transmit message fast without boundary. This study was conducted using a survey method, and data were collected through in-depth interviews and also employed literature base methodology. It is concluded that right from its inception, it is built upon delivering the message of Islam as contained in the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith.*

Keywords: Ummah, Da'wah, Islam, Social Media, Contemporary Era

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a pure religion with a well-designed set of teachings, practices, belief system and an all-encompassing means of life including the politics, economy, society, culture and the spiritual aspects. The universal teachings of Islam penetrated the globe in a most rapid speed ever witnessed in the history of all religions in the world (Al-Mawdudi, 2000). The believers in Islam who are the Muslims are magnified and elevated to the exalted position of being the best of all mankind by the universe's Creator Allah (SWT) in the Holy Qur'an Chapter 3 Verse 110. Allah (SWT) also revealed in the Qur'an (Ch.2 v.103) that He showers His blessings upon the Muslim Ummah when He united them after a deep animosity that ensued among them.

The advancement of technology revelation encompasses the phenomena that alters how people live their lives, from the old, civilised method to a new one, emphasising an attitude of invention that causes human work to change radically and immediately (Richta, 2018). In line with the reason technology was developed, it must be able to bring about change. Technology will give rise to new ways of working, interacting with others, and living with an emphasis on methods that are based on productivity, efficiency, and practicability (Roos and Shroff, 2017).

Since the advent of technology, it is clear that both technology's developers and consumers have experienced the effects of quick changes brought on by the appearance of new systems and applications or increasingly complex equipment. A substantial advancement has also been made in business administration, human interaction, financial management, and even how people continue to connect, especially through Islamic Da'wah efforts (Ahmad, 2010).

If used correctly, social media can offer several advantages (Anderson and Jiang, 2018). Da'wah is an activity that calls on individuals to follow the principles of the Islamic moral code and to believe in and obey Allah. According to Hassan (2015), social media may also be employed to spread the Da'wah. Because social media may make everyone become a mass communicator (Bakti, 2003), studying the characteristics of media users and their interests (whether they are satisfied or not) can aid in the development of the principle of Da'wah via social media (Thaib, 2019). Everyone has the ability to preach and serve as a guest speaker without using the traditional media (such as print, radio, and television).

Social media platforms that allow for interactive communication and interaction have emerged as a result of the introduction of the Internet. Social media has also altered how people communicate and learn. People are greatly motivated to engage in social interaction online in order to continuously satisfy their communication demands. Humans, both as individuals and as organisations, interact through communication (Goris, 2007). Through social media, one can communicate with others virtually by sending them messages or thoughts. Building social ties within groups and in society requires internet communication. According to Hamrefors (2010), communication is the process by which a person (the communicator) delivers a stimulus (often in the form of words) with the goal of altering or forming the behaviour or opinions of others.

The *Ummah*

Since the very beginning of the Islamic tradition, the idea of ummah has captured the imagination of Muslims, especially Muslim intellectuals. The word "ummah" appears more than sixty times in the Qur'an, where it is used to describe a wide range of concepts, including religious groups, individuals within a wider community of believers, misguided people, and even an order of existence. In the early days of Islam, it had many different and occasionally ambiguous meanings. Over time, though, it evolved to represent and embody the very idea of

an Islamic community and gradually took on socio-legal and religious aspects. In term of society, ummah developed into a transformational idea in the sense that it was instrumental in transforming various Muslim communities into a community of believers as well as the Arab tribes into an Arab community as Islam spread to non-Arab regions.

For all Muslims, membership in the Ummah as a community of believers was open to them equally and without any qualifications or restrictions other than those imposed by their shared faith. It represented Islam's universalism in this way. It evolved into a strategy for creating a religious and cultural identity separate from the Muslim state. By creating a religious and cultural identity, it was possible to separate the spiritual growth and sense of community from the transient territorial states.

The new ummah was characterised by a pervasive new moral tone that was generated from each person's relationship with Allah rather than from ancient primal attachments. This moral tone was upheld by the expectations that were shared by the entire community and gave shape to their corporate life. Ummah evolved through time into a state of mind, a type of social awareness, or an imagined community that brought together the pious in order to uphold and even extend the bounds of the autonomous ummah.

Ummah evolved into a structure for preserving religious harmony and allowing for the cultural variety of believers. This led to a strong sense of togetherness that spread throughout the Muslim world and played a crucial role in eradicating or supplanting the stark disparities in ethnicity and culture to the level of the ideal. As a result, it developed into a crucial foundation for growth that permitted a certain disdain for life's realities. According to a psychological perspective, the term "ummah" implied a dualistic way of life, one in which conflict persisted throughout existence and continues to play a vital role in the internal instability plaguing large portions of the Muslim world.

Ummah is a central concept in religious, political, and intellectual discussions on Islam in the contemporary Muslim world. Its foundation is built on the basis of the revelations found in the Qur'an and on the collective memory of the political majesty found in Islamic history. In the minds of Muslims, the ummah is governed by a divine law, which is guarded by the ummah itself. The temporal political power is neither the originator nor the guarantor of the law. As long as it ensures the continuation and growth of religion, its legitimacy is acknowledged.

The Ummah, or Muslim community, is made up of individuals with various ancestries, places, nations, and backgrounds. They are a community without boundaries but one that is genuinely unified. They are bonded despite being geographically distant and frequently confined by borders. They are a single country or society that follows Allah's leadership.

> And verily this Ummah of yours is one Ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher, therefore fear Me and no other. (Quran 23:52)

Muslim *Ummah* and Islamic *Da'wah*

Spreading Islamic teaching to encourage a peaceful lifestyle through preaching, or Da'wah, is a practised Islamic communication activity. The preaching is also seen as a religious activity that uses social media to encourage individuals to carry out good deeds and spread Islamic doctrine (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020). Since the spread of Islam as a religion depends on preaching and since preaching can be understood in an infinite number of ways, preaching is seen to be a requirement for all Muslims by Muslim communities. Due to the potential for presenting less reliable interpretations of Islamic teachings, the preaching's relatively wide interpretation is problematic in a number of ways (Ridho, 2019).

Da'wah or preaching has been carried out since the Prophet's time to convey religious messages to the ummah (Haron, 2005). However, the method of preaching in the time of the Prophet Muhammad was generally carried out by means of oral (da'wah billisan) due to various limitations at that time. However, after centuries the Prophet Muhammad died, and during the increasingly rapid development of knowledge, information technology, and the busyness of the ummah, would it still be helpful if the Da'wah was "only" delivered orally face to face by gathering several people in one place? What if a group of people does not have "time and space" to collect? What strategies can the Da'i (preachers) adopt so that the message conveyed is more "interesting" and "quick to arrive" to the ummah? The questions may be answered with the transformation of the Da'wah strategy and the preachers' transformation in preaching, especially by using social media applications on the Internet.

Muslims essentially hold that all people, regardless of gender, have a duty to spread the Islamic message. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Muslim Da'i (preachers) persisted in eschewing contemporary Da'wah tendencies (new media) in favour of its Western origins (Abdul Qadar, 2015). A society that is pluralistic is defined as "a society that is composed of diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious groups" (Abu Dawud, 2008). Social media are online platforms with interactive features that connect and unite individuals from all over the world (Akbar, 2014).

According to Al-Baynouni (2014), it has a variety of characteristics, communication styles, and sociability functions. The sharing and uploading of data via the internet in recent decades have completely altered how people communicate through posts and contents (Ali, 2006). Social media, by necessity, offers a channel for gathering and disseminating knowledge about various facets of life (Al-Nasai, 2007). Social media is used as a conduit for the proclamation of religious doctrine (Anne, 2008). Recent years have seen a growth of media, which has affected Da'wah efforts in both the Muslim and Western worlds. The missionaries of religion recognised the vital part played by media in preaching and teaching theology in a worldwide environment. Generally speaking, Muslim evangelists have been using social media platforms for Da'wah initiatives that aim to foster healthy interreligious discourse with other

faiths, interreligious communication between Muslims and others, and social cohesiveness among the people of a varied society.

In human history, the Prophets have spoken directly to their followers and other people to convey the message of Allah's Oneness (Islamic Monotheism) and the worship of the Lord. For instance, the Prophet Noah faithfully carried out his obligation to preach to his people for over 950 years, disseminating the message of Allah. Last but not least, the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) fulfilled the prophets' mission and message by promoting Islamic monotheism and teaching that there is only one deity who is deserving of worship. In accordance with the Prophet (peace be upon him), "the learned (scholars) are the heirs of the Prophets" (Asad, 1980). Additionally, he (peace be upon him) commanded Muslims to share his teachings with others, even if it was just one sentence (At-Tirmidhi, 2007).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) used a heart, mind, and soul strategy to spread monotheistic Da'wah throughout Arabia (Badahdah, 1996). However, Islam encourages optimistic thinking and behaviour in order to carry out Da'wah efforts that are grounded in the central idea and fundamental aspects of the Prophetic tradition in order to win over people's minds and hearts (Bastiansen, 2008). The Islamic worldview promotes positive attitudes towards Allah, the cosmos, and humanity while forbidding negative attitudes and behaviours that might worsen social disorders, divides, and conflicts (Buhari, 2014). In a nutshell the Muslim Ummah has been given the challenging work and sublime goal of spreading Da'wah among individuals for the benefit of Allah Almighty, which can be facilitated by utilising the beneficial strategies and encouraging methodology of social media in the modern era. As a result, in a pluralistic and diverse society, Islamic Da'wah can be carried out by adopting a good outlook and attitude towards other religions.

Social Media and Da'wah

Da'wah activities that aim to convey Islamic values and teachings must follow the progress of the times. In the past, Da'wah activities were only delivered through the pulpit media with face-to-face lecture methods, now, in the digital era, Da'wah needs to adapt to technological developments, namely by utilizing internet media to convey the values of Islamic teachings as a way to preach. This is what is then called E-Da'wah (Electronic Da'wah) as one of the Da'wah media in today's digital era.

The five methods of Islam propagation First, there is the individual way, which entails individually inviting each person if it is relevant to him. Second, public or mass Da'wah, such as lectures or exhortations aimed at a broad audience. Third, each student receives private sessions in his area of expertise. It is the responsibility of scholars who are experts in their fields. Fourth, Da'wah by writing, correspondence, and authorship, with direction and benefit for those who are called.

The easiest way to advance the cause of the true teachings of Islam, is Da'wah using modern means of communication (Sule & Shettima, 2019). Similarly, Islam's mission as the final and perfect religion is eternal and universal. The need of proselytizing and informing people about divine rule and knowledge, as well as conveying good news and warning them, is paramount. Allah the Almighty states in the Glorious Qur'an;

> This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion (Qur'an, Surah Al-Maaida 5:3).

Technological advances in the era of globalization and modernization are evident in the field of information and communication technology. Quick access to information is very important for the public. In the current era of online media, internet access to cyberspace is the consumption of netizens (internet users) so that the internet can be analogized as a sea of information that can be accessed by anyone who has access. Thus, Da'wah is expected to continue to grow rapidly and be able to target mad'u (Da'wah targets) without being limited by space and time.

Social media tools that are frequently used include Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Flickr, WeChat, Bebo, Badoo, and Google+, Political blogs, wikis, YouTube, Flickr, mobile sites (2go, etc.), social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), and virtual platforms are examples of social media. These platforms can help with connection, conversation, textual and audio-visual participation, and sharing. Information, education, and entertainment can all be shared with an audience via social media.

Through the use of technology, social contact, collaboration, and stakeholder deliberation are all made feasible.98 Online resources such as websites, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, email, and e-books, such as Tafsir, Hadith, Seerah, History, Fiqh, and other literature, can be used effectively for Da'wah operations. E-Da'wah is a helpful tool for preachers that their congregations can use without restriction in terms of time or location. The internet can help preachers with their Islamic Da'wah because its users are growing every day.

It can aid in geographically expanding the reach of the Islamic message while demonstrating the true nature of Islam, enhancing public perceptions of Islam, and effectively carrying out Da'wah. Typically, preachers utilise Facebook to spread Da'wah messages, such as encouragement for living, praying, being thankful, and showing respect for others. Facebook is being utilised to spread the teachings of Islam in western culture.

Similarly, Twitter is a popular, reliable, steady, and influential source to touch its followers' hearts. The mobile phone is also used as a Da'wah medium using different Islamic software and sending messages containing normative Islamic values. With e-mails, the

preachers can deliver messages directly and efficiently to develop Islamic Da'wah.101 Islamic websites have played vital roles in epistemological bridges and connections between Muslim minorities and the world.

Muslim *Ummah* Social Media *Da'wah* in Modern Time

Modern technology has resulted in rapid communication over unlimited space. This technology is now in existence nearly all over the world. The potential for worldwide rapid communication has been translated into actual practice. We now live in a globalizing social reality in which previous effective barriers to communication no longer exist. The world is fast becoming a global village and 'a single place'. Therefore, in order to understand the major features of social life and emerging religious and political trends in contemporary Muslim societies, we need to go beyond local and national factors and situate the analysis in the global context. In the pre-globalized world, 'knowing' of all Islamized people was seriously constrained or even rendered impossible by the limitations of technology. At best, only a small number of people were able to travel to other cultures and societies. The legendary travels of Ibn Batutta and Vasco de Gama are now a reality experienced by thousands of business and recreational travellers every year.

The contemporary digital era is both a problem and prospects for the Ummah and Islamic Da'wah. In this era, Islamic Da'wah is not only carried out through television or radio but also needs to utilise the modern communication with its various platforms and online media. So that to face the opportunities and challenges of Da'wah, Muslims should be able to take advantage of all kinds of digital devices to carry out Da'wah. Not only that, this is nothing but to make Muslims keep up with the modern technological advances as well as simplify proselytization and propagate the true Islamic teachings and values as widely as possible.

Mahrazu Ibrahim asserted that Muslims today have resorted to the use of modern communication tools to spread the message of Islam to people around the world. This they do because modern communication channels are effective and efficient in the spread of information around the globe within a short period and also help many Muslims to understand and defend the religion of Islam. He further states that the attack on Islam and Muslims across the world have forced Muslims to defend and protect the image of their religion by countering such propaganda via social media platforms either on audio or written messages.

According to Yusuf Musa Danbaba on part stated that Muslim Ummah has to utilise social media channels to do Da'wah as one can sit in the comfort of his/her home and educate people on the beauty and teachings of Islam. Making good use of these platforms by the Ummah for Da'wah purposes would further give Islam and Muslims an edge in the contemporary era.

It has been observed by the researcher that Muslims in the contemporary age have made a habit of disseminating the message of Islam on social media platforms because, as Muslims we must follow the wind of change as the modern communication platforms make it easy to spread the message of Allah at a low cost. Not only that, the majority of youths today are glued to their smartphones and the better option to get them on track is through modern channels.

In a similar view Sulaiman Hussaini avers that in the contemporary world today, a lot of Muslims gain social media platforms in terms of the true teachings of Islam, through the many resources on these platforms. These educative resources are available in many formats, ranging from audio, videos, pamphlets, pictures, infographics, and pdf file.

Amina Shehu Bala opined that the most used means of carrying out Da'wah in contemporary era are the social media platforms. Many Muslims were move by the so-called Islamophobia which is against Muslims and Islam therefore, the need for the utilization of the modern platforms to engage the public and extend the message of Islam and correct the wrong message about Islam and Muslims due to the war against Islam and its followers. Muslims today, need to resort to social media spread the teachings of Islam as contain in the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad.

It has been observed by the researcher that carrying out Da'wah in the modern age must move together with the advancement in modern digital technology. Not only that, Islamic Da'wah must likewise be able to anticipate the challenges that exist in today's society. For Da'wah to be more effective and efficient, information and communication technology expertise is required for Muslim Ummah and other Da'wah actors. When the internet has entered human life, Da'i must be able to use various media on the internet such as websites, community blogs, social media, and other internet-based electronic platforms for the benefit of Islamic Da'wah. Da'wah to convey Islamic teachings and values must be able to adapt to various internet-based electronic media so that Islam will continue to develop in the digital era.

Lukman Badmus avers that one of the major advances in the Islamic world in the age of globalization is in the area of the propagation of the teachings of Islam to the wider world. He states that with the presence of the new media technology and its facilities made Da'wah activities easier, convenient and fast for Muslim scholars to reach out to the Ummah. That social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, Instagram, Zoom, Telegram, Salamworld, Tutlub and other social media sites play significant role in disseminating Da'wah message in the contemporary age.

In support of the above, Muzaffar stated that the Muslim world cannot ignore the fact that internet and its components have become a convenient conduit for the transmission of Islamic values and teachings (Muzaffar, 2008). He further noted that Islamic Da'wah in the era of globalization with facilities of the social media is development to Muslims and it needs

to be embraced in order to achieve progresses in the dissemination of the message of the Glorious Qur'an and Ahadith of the Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

According to Nassar, the use of social media continues to grow every year in the Islamic world. Almost all Muslims use the social media to help them take or get information about Islam and use the same to carry out Islamic Da'wah and serve Islam (Nassar, et-al, 2013). Adam also states that social network such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have played an essential role in helping the world in spreading Islam (Adam, Anuar, & Ali, 2014). The role becomes more extensive and vital with the advent of many types of electronic media nowadays. Media also become the heart of information for any people. The sign of success depends on how much effort people have given to take control or manage the Medium during their own time.

Today, social media has become one tool that can be used as an effective medium for Da'wah. Social media Da'wah is more readily accepted by the public because there are no elements of coercion (Ridwan, 2015). The principal utilisation of social media nowadays is proselytisation which Islamic preachers admire. Social media is not only utilised by preachers, but it is also used by ordinary Muslims who want to communicate with each other. It also helps to increase the learning opportunities in the Muslim world. For example, preachers can teach the Glorious Qur'an and Sunnah through social media video calling or voice, and it can help extend Da'wah to Muslims and non-Muslims.

CONCLUSION

One broad conclusion which can be drawn from this evidence of scientific and technological advancements which give Islam and Muslim a lead in the globe today is the modern medium of communication (social media). The social media platforms are part of the finest ways to spread the message of Islam through the utilisation of the best means at the disposal of the Ummah. The Muslim Ummah have in recent times be able to make judicious use of the various social media platforms to present Islam and its beautiful teachings to World. The way and manner in which the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him can't be separated from one another the same way it can be disconnected from Da'wah

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List of Informants

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Lukman Badmus, (47 Years), Principal Lecturer, interviewed at Ilorin, Kwara State, on 23rd March 2022.

Mahrazu Ibrahim, (37 Years), Businessman, interviewed at Jabi District, Abuja, Nigeria on 16/07/2022.

Sulaiman Hussaini, (52 Years), Teacher, interviewed at Rikkos, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria on 09/08/2022.

Yusuf Musa Danbaba, (40 Years), Civil Servant/Islamic Cleric, interviewed at Akwanga, Nasarawa State, Nigeria on 25/07/2022.