MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOR ISLAMIC OUTREACH: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The evolution of technology has significantly impacted modern life, shaping societal attitudes and practices. While media platforms have connected people globally, their influence is both positive and negative, depending on usage.This paper explores the role of technology, specifically media, as a transformative force in communication and knowledge dissemination. The focus is on how media can be utilized by Muslims to fulfill their religious duties, spreading the message of Islam and countering societal challenges. Highlighting the significance of media in Islamic preaching, the article discusses its power to enlighten, educate, and engage in a peaceful form of struggle. It emphasizes the equal responsibility of Muslim men and women in promoting righteousness, addressing societal issues, and defending Islamic values through modern technological tools.

Keywords: *Islam, Muslim Women, Technology, Media, Islamic Preaching, Societal Challenges.*

The ever changing times bring with it many changes and challenges big and small. Some of these changes are of extraordinary importance in their effectiveness and serve to shape individual and collective attitudes.[1] The same is the case with the change that has come into existence in the present times after rapid technological developments. The modern age is the age of technology and technology has become the need of the hour. It prevails upon all the aspects of life and life is impossible without it.

Although the development of tools and means has always occurred in tandem with the advancement of human civilization, the world saw a notable acceleration of both the discovery of hitherto unknown natural forces and the creation of new tools and means after the Industrial Revolution of the seventeenth century. Things

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that were previously unimaginable to humankind were made possible by this revolution. One of the fields that has seen remarkable scientific advancement is Information and Communication. Allah, the Creator, has bestowed different kinds of resources in different regions of the world, butit goes without saying that it is the means of communication by which humans gather knowledge from all over the world. This knowledge and consciousness sets the stage for him to share, receive, and exchange ideas. Current advanced means of communication have a special place in the contemporary world since they are utilized for conducting business agreements, exchanging knowledge, spreading ideas and ideologies, and doing research.[2]

Media is one of the fast growing and most advanced technology of the modern age that has taken over the entire world and is present in one way or another in the life of every individual.Technological platforms like the internet, social media, print media, and electronic media have made communication and dissemination of knowledge untroubled throughout the world. These technological platforms connect people with each other on a large scale all over the world to exchange perspectives, opinions, aspirations and knowledge. These platforms also provide space for their users to explore themselves to achieve different objectives. Simultaneously, some people have used it in a positive way which has benefited not only them but the entire humanity. But the majority of people use it in a negative manner, which not only is harmful for them but also for the entire humanity.

By the effective use of media, Muslims can bring up myriad issues and problems before the society and to look for the solutions thereof. Through media they can bring to fore the services of prominent women in the long period of Islamic history and the importance of their role in the society through their positive participation in economic and social activities. In the same way, the media can also present the examples of excesses and violence inflicted upon Muslim women contrary to the Islamic teachings. Similarly, the women can set up for themselves the responsibilities and highlight not only their specific issues but also the issues of general importance.[3]

Undoubtedly, the media is a gift of Allah, especially for Muslims, because a Muslim is a preacher of the religion of Allah and the media is a great blessing for the preachers of Islam. An Islamic preacher's greatest desire is to reach a vast audience and disseminate the message of Islam, striving for maximum outreach. They aim for countless individuals to benefit from their words, aspiring to touch as many lives as possible. The media has fulfilled this wish of a preacher and removed all barriers between him and the society. Similarly, the media has

multiplied the opportunities to carry the message of Allah and opened the doors to a wide world of possibilities. [4] At this point, it is pertinent to say that Islam is a universal religion which Allah revealed to His Messengers for the guidance, welfare, and salvation of Mankind in this world and the hereafter. It is for people of all periods and times and not restricted to any place, group, nation, or time. Moreover, it is a Light that all humanity needs. Due to its peaceful message, peace and harmony has been established in the world.

In the Holy Qur'an, the Muslim *Ummah* has been declared as the best *Ummah* for disposing the responsibility of Preaching, Welfare and Salvation of the entire humanity. A heavy responsibility has been given to them, in the form of "Amr-bil-Maʿrūf (ordering for good/right) and Nahi ʿanil Munkar (forbidding the wrong/bad)". In this regard, the words of Allah Taʿālā are as follows:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِّتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا[5]

"Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced that ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Apostle a witness over yourselves."

كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّـهِۗ وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمۚ مِّنْهُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ[6]

"Ye are the best of peoples evolved for mankind enjoining what is right forbidding what is wrong and believing in God. If only the People of the Book had faith it was best for them; among them are some who have faith but most of them are perverted transgressors."

Maʿrūf (good/right) and *Munkar* (wrong/bad) are very broad terms. In its ambit fall the entire religion. To order the world what is good and to forbid what is wrong, all the legitimate and preferred means can be adopted, besides preaching, admonishing, teaching, training and publishing.[7] The Qur'an addresses both genders, emphasizing that both men and women within the community share the responsibility placed upon the Muslim Ummah. Hence, it is incorrect to assume that this burden is solely for men to bear, absolving women of their part. Just as men are obligated not to neglect it, the same holds for women. It is the collective duty of the entire community to promote righteousness and deter wrongdoing. This obligation is shared between both men and women, and they should unite in fulfilling it together. This principle constitutes a defining trait of the Ummah, crucial for its identity and setting it apart from other groups and nations. [8]

Nowadays, the media guides the people, inspires the youth, controls public opinion, presents the facts as illusions, illusions as facts, falsehood as truth and truth as falsehood, so it is important for Muslims that they also comprehend the subject and use it positively. Similarly, media is a field of jihad, and when a

woman has participated in bloody jihad in the past, why should she not participate in peaceful jihad? Allama Dr. Yūsūf Al-Qarḍawi has called the media or the Internet the Jihad of Today, as the effectiveness of the words of the media today is unmatched. [9] Media, be it print media, electronic media, social media, or the internet, are the modern tools of communication through which a Muslim can interact with numerous people throughout the world and preach, teach, and train them the core values and teachings of Islam. The Muslim women can make more prominent contributions be she at home or elsewhere. A housewife can write such Islamic passages sitting at home that can attract vase audience. A school girl can make an Islamic video with the help of a tab that can illuminate the whole world with the light of Islam. An educated Muslim girl, whether she is poor or rich, by sharing an Islamic post on social media, can start a major Islamic change. Moreover, by using the media, a Muslim woman can provide a reasoned and reasonable response to the objections to Islam and provide solutions to the problems and sufferings that the entire humanity is going through. Let's now identify, one by one, the various media tools and their uses for preaching Islam, as well as for addressing and providing solutions to various human issues, including human rights, women's rights, climate change, terrorism, poverty, refugees, migration, unemployment, water contamination, health issues, child labor, education, political issues, and military conflicts.

Print Media

Print Media is one of the main source of knowledge and information about different people, countries, cultures, religions, civilizations, dynasties, languages, technologies, behaviors, economy, trade, international relations, and education. It is the mirror of a society. It also updates us about current situations and changes at local, national, and international level and boost our confidence by making us knowledgeable. Moreover, it is the most influential tool that shapes the behavior of people and society as a whole. Therefore, Muslim men and Muslim women-being preachers (*da'wah* workers) of Islam, must use the print media for the propagation of the teachings and values of Islam. They both can play a vital role in illuminating the people with the light of Islam via books, newspapers, magazines, and journals. If they want to do something for Islam and humanity as a whole, they have to take the help of print media because print media has been the main source of information, knowledge, research, and communication throughout the world.

Newspapers and magazines play a crucial role in spreading the divine message. All individuals engaged in da'wah can utilize these mediums to convey the divine message effectively to their audience. For the da'wah efforts to have an impact, it

is essential to create magazines and newspapers tailored to various demographics, including children, youths, and adults. Moreover, magazines should be designed for different segments of society, such as laymen, professionals, intellectuals, and scientists. To achieve this, da'wah workers must receive training to skillfully present their ideas through creative writing and publication. By addressing contemporary and trending topics, diverse issues can be shared to cater to the varying interests of readers. As *da'wah* work is intended for the public audience and reaches individuals across society, careful attention must be given to the artistic design, cover presentation, and content quality to ensure a professional approach that captivates the readers effectively. Moreover, Newspapers and magazines bear the responsibility of uncovering societal concerns and occurrences. Media professionals are tasked with not only producing publications to spread accurate information but also to provide the community with authentic news. It is essential to truthfully examine and report on social problems. Technical details regarding a particular product, for instance, ought to be disclosed to enlighten the public about its true nature. An independent and impartial approach should be taken by the newspaper. All topics should be thoroughly reviewed based on factual criteria, enabling individuals to form their own assessments. [10]Some of the prominent print media platforms run by Muslims are as; Kube Publishing (London), International Islamic Publishing House (Riyadh),Kazi Publications (Chicago), Darussalam Publishers (Riyadh), Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers (New Delhi), Islamic Publishing House (Kerala) etc.

Electronic Media

Electronic media has become the most influential medium of information nowadays. It attracts numerous people all over the world. But unfortunately, it is in the hands of the selfish people, who use it to spread lies, profanity, immorality, enmity, violence and impatience, in order to carter their objectives. Therefore, it is the duty of the believers of Islam (both male and the female) to utilize this essential and important medium of communication in a good way, so that truth, morality, universal brotherhood, peace, and tolerance can be established in the world. But it must be noted that the Islamic teachings in general and the teachings of morality, dress code and language in particular, should not be violated and compromised.

Television, radio, and the internet are essential for conveying the authentic teachings of Islam, covering cultural, social, historical, educational, scientific, textual, and political aspects. Utilizing technological advancements and creating engaging websites can help Islam provide solutions to contemporary challenges. Muslim organizations should create websites that attract readers to Islamic-

focused content, ensuring exposure to Islamic teachings alongside general news.Promoting the Islamic message through modern media platforms such as TV and radio stations dedicated to disseminating Islamic teachings is more effective than traditional newspapers and magazines due to their wider popularity and audience reach. Examples of this approach can be seen in predominantly Muslim regions with Quran radio broadcasting stations in the Arab world and TV stations operated by Muslim governments. These media channels not only convey the core message of Islam and address social issues but also offer diverse programs like dramas, films, and documentaries. Promoting Islam through modern media should involve engaging in discussions on contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective and showcasing a comprehensive approach to the practice of *da'wah.* This requires a substantial workforce and an effective organizational structure that accommodates the diverse cultural backgrounds and varying comprehension levels of the target audience. [11]One vital thing to consider and get it as a Muslim is that the work of Islamic instruction ought to not be limited to Islamic channels as it were. In truth, all other national (private and government) channels in all Muslim nation sought to play their part in this respect. Islamic programs, entertainment, plays, and discussions should be produced and aired on mainstream family and entertainment channels, as these attract more viewers compared to dedicated Islamic channels. Furthermore, entertainment and shows are effective and engaging ways to educate and influence people. A creative approach would be to develop animated films and series on Islamic themes to educate children from an early age.[12] Additionally, creating TV programs aimed at Islamic education for children can have a significant impact, as millions of people watch television, whereas articles in magazines, newspapers, or websites may reach only thousands. While direct invitations still have their place, video programs are generally more effective than lectures in reaching and influencing larger audiences.[13]Some prominent Islamic videos aimed at Islamic education for children are: Qur'an Stories for Kids, Animal Stories from Qur'an, Bilal, Meri Zaat Zara-e-Benishan etc.

To enhance the reach of *Da'wah* messages effectively, organizations should involve storytellers, actors, and scholars in creating audio-visual content. Collaboration is key in scriptwriting, film production, and cultural events. Incorporating Islamic elements in cartoons can engage younger audiences and serve as powerful *Da'wah* tools, leveraging people's extensive time spent on TV and the internet. Broadcasting stations should offer diverse programming, Islamic-focused conferences, seminars, and discussions with religious leaders on modern topics like globalization, human life, and political concerns to prevent monotony. The Islamic legal framework should be used to establish mainstream

TV and radio channels for broadcasting news, events, social issues, and cultural programming. Workers in *Da'wah* must develop content for state TV stations, avoiding pornographic content that could sway viewers, especially younger ones. [14]The internet serves as an incredible platform for accessing information on any subject. It plays a significant role in disseminating Islamic knowledge. Online platforms can be crafted to accommodate the diverse learning needs of individuals, offering Islamic teachings in various formats. Resources like the *Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abū Dāwūd,* and *Malik's Muwatta*, along with their translations, are accessible in numerous languages across the web. Additionally, there are collections of *Fiqh* books, solutions to problems concerning Islamic teachings, and articles available online. [15] Islamic madrassas and educational institutions need to have websites dedicated to Islamic studies and information, accessible not just to their students and staff, but to the general public as well. It's crucial these websites are regularly kept up to date. Moreover, our scholars ought to engage in activities such as blogging and join various social media platforms as these are contemporary ways of expressing views. They should foster Islamic communities that welcome individuals globally, and use these websites for this purpose as well. These sites can also serve a valuable function in Islamic schools. There is a wealth of Islamic-related websites in various languages, including Arabic, that can be incorporated into classroom learning to expand students' perspectives. Additionally, online practice exercises can add diversity and enhance classroom engagement. [16] Islamicity (www.islamicity.org), Sound Vision (www.soundvision.com), BBC Arabic (www.bbc.com), Al-Islam.org (www.al-islam.org)etc. are some of its examples.

Social Media

Social media is one of the best and influential tools so far as the interaction, communication, and dissemination of information is concerned. It is a great gift of Allah to humanity in general and the Muslims, both men and women, in particular, because it has multiplied the opportunities of *da'wah* and turned off all obstacles between preachers of Islam and the Mankind. Now, it is the duty of all Muslims, both men and women, to use this gift in a better way and by doing this they actually pay gratitude to Allah, who gave them such a gift. It is also the best medium for propagation. [17]Thousands of people have converted to Islam worldwide without ever having laid eyes on a Muslim. Only the extensive use of social media for da'wah and the abundance of free Islamic literature available online made this possible. There are websites devoted solely to Islamic literary dissemination and websites devoted solely to da'wah like WhyIslam (www.whyislam.org), Mission Da'wah,(www.missiondawah.com) Call to Islam (www.calltoislam.com) etc. Information about Islam would always be available to

anyone who is interested in learning more. The majority of *da'wah* work on social media is conducted on widely used sites like Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, and others. Despite their differences, all of these social media sites serve as online gathering places for people. Social media networks like Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp, microblogging sites like Twitter, photo-sharing apps like Snapchat, Pinterest, and Instagram, video-sharing websites like YouTube, and knowledge-sharing websites like Quora are a few examples of these. A *dā'i* can use any or all of these, depending on his interest, to spread the word about Islam in a variety of ways. [18] Moreover, these platforms provide equal opportunities to both of its male and female users. So, like Muslim men, Muslim women can also play a vital role in preaching the divine message of Islam through them. let us talk separately on some widely used and well-known social media platforms and their role in spreading the message of Islam to a large number of audience throughout the world.

Facebook

One of the greatest social media platforms for *da'wah* is Facebook. It is the biggest and most well-known in the world, and its audience is the most diverse. Although users of various ages utilize it, the majority of its users are in the 25–34 age range, according to recent statistics. Saying that everyone on social media is also on Facebook would not be incorrect. There are numerous ways to share *da'wah* messages on Facebook like; text messages, photos, videos, Facebook live videos etc. [19] Now, it depends upon its Muslim consumers both men and women to not only channelize it in a proper way but for the propagation of Islamic teachings. Because people have become addicts to social media platforms and to call, address, and interact with them, Muslim men and Muslim women, have to operate and utilize these platforms for their and the welfare of people in this world and in the hereafter. Dr. Raziy al-Islam Nadwi has rightly said that "Social media has greatly expanded the scope of working from home. Useful religious texts can be made public by creating groups of close people and relatives and friends on WhatsApp. Facebook can be used as a medium to publish your ideas. Useful lessons of Quran and Hadith and speeches can be uploaded on YouTube. Online education and training classes can be conducted." [20] Some influential Islamic scholars who plays an active role regarding Islam and vase societal issues on Facebook are as: Mufti Menk, Yasir Qadhi, Nouman Ali Khan, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf etc.

Twitter (x)

Twitter is without a doubt the most popular social media network available today, second only to Facebook. The microblogging site was created in 2006. Twitter

can also be used for da'wah, just like Facebook. A tweet is a message that is posted on Twitter. Following other people's Twitter accounts helps people connect with one other. By using the @ symbol before a person's username, you can send them a direct tweet. individuals can follow other individuals who pique their interest and view their updates on the main page. Similar to Facebook, there are numerous ways for a *dā'i* to tweet his *da'wah* messages on Twitter for example; text messages, graphics, videos, recorded videos, live-streaming, and videos from other platforms like videos from YouTube etc. [21] Like Facebook, Muslim men and Muslim women can play a vital role on this social media platform as well. Because it provides a lot of opportunities to its users to connect large audiences and to share and transmit their thoughts and ideas to them. Moreover, they can also remove and rebuttal the misconceptions and misunderstandings about Islam and its Prophet(SAW) on it, besides critical analysis of the content and information available on it in the shape of videos, text, graphics etc.Twitter is now called 'X' after being taken over by Elon Musk.Examples of some Muslim Tweeps are as: The Islamic Ummah, Tariq Ramadan, Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri etc.

YouTube

In addition to being the second-biggest search engine behind Google, YouTube is one of the most widely used sites for sharing videos. Users can watch, share, like, comment on, and publish their own videos for public viewing on this video sharing platform. On YouTube, millions of people have registered accounts and posted videos that are accessible to everyone. It is very possible to use this massive flow of viewers of videos for *da'wah* purposes. While some individuals merely browse the YouTube collection in search of something interesting to watch, others do targeted searches for videos. Videos of *da'wah* that are visually appealing and posted on YouTube have an enormous audience and limitless reach. Millions of videos have been uploaded by *dā'i's* from all over the world for *da'wah* purposes out of the billions of videos that are available on YouTube. These have been quite successful in disseminating the Islamic message. Several times, people have converted to Islam simply by watching YouTube videos. A lot of reverts utilize YouTube to learn more about Islam, how to pray, and how to recite the Quran. This demonstrates the enormous potential of YouTube videos for *da'wah*. [22] A small number of these YouTube channels for *da'wah* are created by Muslim women scholars to teach, preach and reach many audiences all over the world. But the number of these channels are small and are not as per the need of the hour. Thus, it is the need of the hour that educated and skilled Muslim women must utilize this platform for the Allah's will and the welfare of whole humanity. They can upload different kinds of informative attractive and

influential videos on it about Islamic beliefs, commandment, and morals, contemporary women issues and their solutions based on Islamic teachings, different civilizations and cultures, current affairs and so on.Yasir Qadhi, Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza, Mufti Tariq Masood, Mohammed Hijab are some prominent Muslim You Tubers etc.

While as the opponents of Islam have opened a front in the media against Islam and its rituals and have created many doubts among the people on issues like Hijab, Women, Jihad, Human Rights etc. [23]The first requirement for an effective countering of this invasion of Media is that there must be a general awareness of it. Let us know how the media is attacking us. If this awareness is widespread, then we will be able to formulate our defense strategy. The situation today is that most Muslim mothers don't even know how to use the internet. Muslim women have to understand that it is not possible to be completely detached from this media, nor is it possible to create an alternative in the near future. We must try to minimize our and our children's exposure to relatively more destructive and harmful elements of the media. We must monitor their internet and computer usage, join their friends list and followers and create necessary rules and regulations regarding TV, Internet, Mobile, Social Media etc. and implement them. Likewise, efforts should be made to create alternative media as much as possible. Good video programs, cartoons etc. should be created for children. All these efforts must be made, but it is unlikely that even these small efforts will be able to withstand this flood. We have to find some other ways to counter this poison. [24]

Conclusion

To conclude, media plays a pivotal role in shaping society's understanding of various aspects of life, including culture, religion, and international relations. Both print and electronic media have become essential tools for spreading knowledge and information globally. For Muslim men and women engaged in *da'wah,* it is crucial to utilize these media platforms to propagate the teachings of Islam effectively. Print media, such as newspapers, magazines, and journals, offer an opportunity to reach diverse audiences with well-crafted content, while electronic media, including television, radio, and the internet, allow for a wider and more instantaneous dissemination of Islamic teachings. With the growing influence of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, Muslims are presented with unprecedented opportunities to reach global audiences and correct misconceptions about Islam. By engaging with these platforms thoughtfully and creatively, Muslim men and women can fulfill their duty of *da'wah* in a modern context, ensuring that Islamic values are

communicated accurately and effectively. As media continues to evolve, it becomes imperative for Muslims to develop content that is both informative and visually engaging, catering to various audiences while adhering to Islamic principles. By doing so, they can counter negative portrayals of Islam in mainstream media and present a true and comprehensive picture of the faith to the world. In this age of information, using media wisely is not only an opportunity but a responsibility for those seeking to spread the message of Islam.

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