



Virtual Pulpit: Da'wah Innovation and Tips to Survive in the Digital Information Vortex

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed various aspects of human life, including religious communication and da'wah activities. Traditional da'wah, which was predominantly conducted through physical pulpits in mosques and religious institutions, has increasingly shifted to digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This transformation creates both opportunities and challenges, particularly in navigating the overwhelming flow of digital information and misinformation. Therefore, this study aims to examine the transition of da'wah from the physical pulpit to the virtual world, identify innovations in digital da'wah practices, and formulate strategies for sustaining da'wah in the digital information vortex. This research employs a qualitative observational approach by analyzing digital da'wah practices across various social media platforms. Data were collected through observations of content formats, audience engagement patterns, and challenges encountered in digital religious communication. The findings reveal that digital media have significantly expanded the reach of da'wah, enabled interactive communication between preachers and audiences, and encouraged the adoption of innovative content formats such as short videos, podcasts, and live streaming. However, challenges such as misinformation, credibility issues, content verification difficulties, and algorithmic barriers remain significant concerns. The study concludes that the sustainability of digital da'wah depends on digital literacy, information verification, ethical communication practices, and adaptation to platform-specific characteristics. The research implies that religious institutions, preachers, and digital content creators should strengthen collaborative efforts, improve digital literacy competencies, and develop credible standards for online religious content to ensure the effectiveness and integrity of da'wah in the contemporary digital era.

Keywords: digital da'wah; da'wah innovation; virtual pulpit

Introduction

As time progresses, the pace of technological development has accelerated rapidly, fundamentally altering how individuals access information and communicate. This technology evolves alongside a fast-moving era and is now widely recognized across various demographics and age groups. One factor contributing to the spread of technology is its widespread adoption and utilization by the public (Priyanto et al., 2022). In other words, digital technology has become an inseparable part of daily life for most people worldwide (Author, 2026; Haleem et al., 2022; Shiferaw & Birbirs, 2025; Timotheou et al., 2023).

Technology has given rise to various forms, one of which is digital technology. Digital technology refers to systems that operate automatically with minimal human intervention. Examples include computers, laptops, and mobile phones. Digital technology is highly accessible; a large number of people use it, especially mobile phones. Users are not only adults but also children introduced to these devices by their parents (Saleh et al., 2022). Consequently, the accessibility of digital devices has created new opportunities for disseminating various types of information, including religious content.

Through digital technology, users can access information, entertainment, visual content, and long-distance communication via telephones. The speed of digital

technology is remarkable; for instance, a message sent via the WhatsApp application is transmitted accurately and can be received within seconds. This convenience benefits users, such as senders of da'wah (Islamic invitations or religious messages) who utilize mobile phones and applications like WhatsApp to disseminate information. The digital transformation of da'wah has become inevitable for religious organizations amid technological disruption (Ediansa et al., 2025). Thus, digital platforms have transformed from mere communication tools into primary channels for religious messaging.

Information is disseminated for various purposes. Religious information, formerly delivered primarily through the pulpit, is now widely shared through digital platforms. This digital technology is also referred to as virtual space, defined as an online environment where individuals can interact and exchange information. Prior to the digital era, information was traditionally conveyed through the pulpit, used for speeches, Friday sermons, and delivering important announcements. In Islam, the pulpit is a medium for conveying religious messages, including sermons (Kango et al., 2024). This shift represents a fundamental change in the epistemology of religious communication, from face-to-face oral transmission to digitally mediated content.

Several previous studies have examined digital da'wah from various perspectives. Priyanto et al. (2022) documented the shift from offline to online da'wah methods in Indonesia. Kango et al. (2024) analyzed how religious authority has migrated from traditional scholars to digital platforms. Hasanah et al. (2024) explored how Islamic organizations reinforce their authority among millennials through digital media. Khusairi et al. (2025) investigated digital literacy and the reconfiguration of religious authority among state religious counselors. Ibrahim et al. (2025) proposed a Maqasid al-Shariah-based framework for addressing ethical challenges in digital da'wah. However, despite these contributions, no previous study has specifically focused on practical strategies for da'wah to survive in what this article terms the "digital information vortex"—the overwhelming flood of both authentic and false information. This gap in the literature forms the central problem that this article addresses.

Today, information delivery no longer relies solely on the pulpit but increasingly employs digital media, which offers ease, speed, and flexibility regardless of situation or condition. This shift from conventional to digital da'wah, known as cyberdakwah, has become a global phenomenon (Kango et al., 2024). The circulation of da'wah information in virtual and digital media necessitates innovations to ensure its sustainability. Therefore, this article has three main objectives: (1) to examine the transition of da'wah from the physical pulpit to cyberspace, (2) to identify key innovations in digital da'wah practices, and (3) to formulate practical tips for surviving the digital information vortex. The significance of this research lies in providing a conceptual framework that helps both preachers (dai) and audiences navigate the challenges of misinformation, credibility, and information overload in contemporary digital da'wah. This article examines the transition from the pulpit to cyberspace, focusing on innovations in da'wah and strategies for surviving the vortex of digital information.

Method

This study employs an observational approach to analyze the shift of da'wah from physical to virtual platforms (Hsb et al., 2025; Kahfi et al., 2024; Sopiyan et al., 2025). Data were collected through observation of digital da'wah practices on various social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The analysis focuses on identifying patterns of innovation, audience engagement, and challenges faced by preachers (dai) in the digital space. No statistical or experimental methods were applied, as this is a qualitative conceptual article.

Results and Discussion

Da'wah Moves to the Virtual World

Da'wah, traditionally conducted in mosques and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), can now be accessed more intimately through digital media on mobile phones that individuals carry everywhere. Islamic boarding schools have started to recognize the digital world, and many preachers have adopted these digital platforms. This shift from physical places such as mosques to digital da'wah occurs due to the wide, borderless reach of digital media (Priyanto et al., 2022). Research by Hasanah et al. (2024) confirms that da'wah movements formerly centered around traditional populations have now expanded their influence to encompass millennial and digital-native demographics.

Second, digital media offers convenience for both the preachers (dai) and the congregation (Metzler & Garcia, 2024; Reyna et al., 2017). Preachers can record and upload content at any time, while audiences can access it at their convenience without being constrained by prayer times or mosque schedules. Third, digital platforms allow preachers to reach new listeners or viewers beyond their traditional audiences. Examples of digital media include applications on mobile phones such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These applications serve as da'wah channels through which senders or dai share religious content in written or message format. The emergence of "cyber religion" over the past three decades has significantly expanded the spread of religion to digital technology (Khusairi et al., 2025). Thus, the migration of da'wah to the virtual world is not merely a trend but a structural transformation in how Islamic messages are produced, distributed, and consumed.

New Ways of Da'wah in the Digital Era

Innovations in da'wah during this digital era are diverse. Common content formats include short videos containing da'wah messages, written messages, images, podcasts, and live streaming. Each format serves a different audience preference: short videos appeal to users with limited attention spans, podcasts suit those who prefer audio-based learning, and live streaming enables real-time interaction. With such diverse content, audiences can engage online with the dai. Forms of interaction include liking the content, commenting (positively or with alternative views), viewing the content, and asking questions that the dai can answer directly (Ediansa et al., 2025). This interactive feature

distinguishes digital da'wah from traditional pulpit preaching, where feedback is minimal or nonexistent.

Notable dai who utilize digital platforms include Ustaz Adi Hidayat, Ustaz Abdul Somad, Ustaz Felix Siaw, and Ustaz Abdullah Gymnastiar (AA Gym). These preachers disseminate da'wah through digital platforms such as YouTube, both via pre-recorded videos and live streaming. Their success demonstrates that digital literacy and content adaptation are key factors in effective contemporary da'wah. The paradigm shift in acquiring da'wah knowledge has moved from religious scholars and traditional institutions to digital platforms, fundamentally changing how Muslim audiences access religious information (Kango et al., 2024). Consequently, audiences today have greater agency in selecting which preachers to follow, based on content quality, presentation style, and perceived authenticity, rather than solely on traditional credentials.

Audience Engagement Patterns in Digital Da'wah

Digital platforms have fundamentally altered how audiences interact with da'wah content. Unlike traditional sermons where congregation members are passive listeners, digital da'wah enables bidirectional communication between preachers and followers. Audiences can express appreciation through likes, shares, and positive comments, which in turn motivates preachers to produce more content. Conversely, negative feedback or critical comments can serve as constructive input for improving content quality. This dynamic interaction creates a participatory religious culture where audiences feel more connected to preachers than in conventional settings (Ediansa et al., 2025). Furthermore, algorithmic recommendations on platforms like YouTube and TikTok expose users to da'wah content from preachers they may not have encountered otherwise, thereby expanding the reach of Islamic messages beyond existing social networks.

The Challenge of Da'wah in the Midst of Widespread Information

Despite the ease of da'wah through digital platforms, significant challenges exist, particularly the spread of unverified or false information. Da'wah must constantly contend with hoaxes. A systematic literature review by researchers (2026) identified four categories of obstacles in digital da'wah: misinformation proliferation, content verification challenges, commercialization of religious messages, and algorithmic barriers. The first step to address hoax information is to critically assess whether the received information is reasonable. The second step is to report suspicious content to platforms that provide hoax verification services, such as the official Komdigi website, where users can file complaints regarding unverified content. Furthermore, comparing the information with similar content can help determine its consistency and authenticity.

Another challenge concerns the credibility of the dai themselves. Audiences need to filter information by thoroughly examining the dai's track record and background before accepting their messages. Research by Khusairi et al. (2025) highlights how digital literacy and the reconfiguration of religious authority among religious counselors are essential for maintaining da'wah integrity in the digital age. To ensure that da'wah

messages have lasting value beyond virality, recipients should evaluate whether the topic or message is beneficial. Ibrahim et al. (2025) propose that using Maqasid al-Shariah as a guiding framework can help address ethical challenges, including content authenticity and digital literacy gaps in digital da'wah . Most importantly, recipients are encouraged to practice the messages and, where possible, convey them to others in their own capacity.

Strategies for Surviving the Digital Information Vortex

To ensure that da'wah messages have lasting value beyond virality, recipients should evaluate whether the topic or message is beneficial. Ibrahim et al. (2025) propose that using Maqasid al-Shariah as a guiding framework can help address ethical challenges, including content authenticity and digital literacy gaps in digital da'wah. This framework emphasizes five core objectives of Islamic law: protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Applying this framework to digital da'wah means that audiences should prioritize content that genuinely supports these five objectives over content that merely seeks attention or commercial gain.

Most importantly, recipients are encouraged to practice the messages and, where possible, convey them to others in their own capacity. This practice-based approach transforms passive content consumers into active agents of da'wah dissemination, thereby increasing the sustainability of Islamic messaging in the digital public sphere. Additionally, preachers themselves must adopt best practices for digital da'wah, including citing reliable sources, acknowledging differing scholarly opinions, avoiding sensationalism, and engaging respectfully with critical audiences. Collaboration between traditional religious institutions and digital content creators can also establish quality standards and certification mechanisms for digital da'wah content, similar to how Islamic boarding schools credential traditional preachers.

Future Directions for Digital Da'wah Research and Practice

Looking ahead, several emerging trends will shape the future of digital da'wah. Artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms are increasingly determining what content users see, including religious content. Preachers must understand how these algorithms work to optimize content visibility without compromising message integrity. Furthermore, the rise of short-form video platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels demands that da'wah be condensed into highly engaging, visually appealing formats without losing substantive depth. Another promising direction is the development of dedicated Islamic digital platforms that curate verified da'wah content, similar to how streaming services curate entertainment content. Such platforms could integrate features like source verification, scholar credentials, and community discussion forums to enhance both accessibility and accountability. Finally, future research should empirically investigate the effectiveness of different digital da'wah formats on audience knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, using quantitative methods such as surveys and experiments rather than solely observational approaches.

Conclusion

This article discusses the transition of da'wah from the physical pulpit to the virtual or digital world, highlighting the innovations required for sustainability and the challenges faced in digital da'wah. The key findings include the movement of da'wah into cyberspace, the emergence of new da'wah methods in the digital era, and strategies for addressing the proliferation of unverified information. The primary contribution of this study is a conceptual framework for understanding how da'wah can survive and remain relevant in the digital information vortex. By applying critical verification steps and embracing digital innovations, da'wah can continue to thrive as long as both senders and recipients correctly comprehend the intended messages. The implication is that ongoing adaptation to digital literacy and platform-specific strategies is essential for the continuity of da'wah in the contemporary era.

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