

Developing a Digital Da'wah Ecology Model to Enhance the Effectiveness of Da'wah Communication

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed da'wah practices from conventional approaches into digital-based communication through various social media platforms. This study examines the utilization of digital communication channels in enhancing the effectiveness of da'wah communication at Masjid Jami Al Barokah through the lens of Media Ecology Theory. A qualitative approach with a single case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with mosque administrators, media team members, and congregants, supported by participant observation, social media content analysis, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model. The findings indicate that Masjid Jami Al Barokah utilizes Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok to disseminate religious messages and information, thereby expanding audience reach and increasing congregational engagement. However, challenges remain, including limited human resources, the predominance of one-way informational content, and insufficient audience interaction. The study concludes that effective digital da'wah requires the integration of media characteristics, message credibility, and audience participation. Furthermore, it proposes a Digital Da'wah Ecology model that emphasizes the interrelationship between medium, message, and human agency as a foundation for credible, participatory, and adaptive da'wah communication in the digital era.

Keywords

audience participation; communication effectiveness; digital da'wah; media ecology; social media



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies has transformed various aspects of social life, including the dissemination of religious messages. The widespread adoption of the internet and social media has created new communication environments that enable da'wah activities to transcend

geographical and temporal boundaries. Digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok have become important channels through which religious organizations and preachers disseminate Islamic teachings to broader audiences. This transformation reflects a shift from conventional face-to-face communication toward digitally mediated religious communication characterized by interactivity, accessibility, and networked participation.

The increasing integration of digital media into religious communication can be understood through Media Ecology Theory. McLuhan argued that media are not merely channels for transmitting messages but environments that shape human perception, interaction, and social organization. His well-known proposition, “the medium is the message,” emphasizes that the characteristics of media significantly influence communication processes and outcomes. Contemporary scholars have further demonstrated that digital media reshape patterns of information consumption, social engagement, and meaning-making within online communities (Agdal, Midtgård, & Meidell, 2019; Otto & Dunens, 2021). Consequently, the effectiveness of digital da’wah is determined not only by the content of religious messages but also by the interaction between media characteristics, communicators, and audiences.

Digital da’wah refers to the dissemination of Islamic teachings through internet-based communication technologies and social networking platforms. Previous studies have reported that social media can expand the reach of religious messages, facilitate knowledge sharing, and strengthen online religious communities (Nugroho & Hidayah, 2020; Wibowo & Darsono, 2022). Other studies have highlighted the role of digital platforms in increasing public access to religious information and promoting community engagement (Hanifah, Alawiyah, & Agustin, 2020; Hasanudin, Fitriainsih, Rosyida, & Noeruddin, 2021). However, despite these advantages, digital da’wah also faces several challenges, including information overload, declining audience attention, limited interaction, and varying levels of digital literacy among religious institutions and communicators.

From a normative perspective, digital media are expected to facilitate effective, participatory, and interactive communication while strengthening relationships between preachers, religious institutions, and communities. Nevertheless, empirical evidence indicates that many da’wah organizations continue to rely predominantly on one-way communication patterns, where audiences function mainly as message recipients rather than active participants. Furthermore, limitations in human resources, content management capabilities, and digital communication strategies

often reduce the effectiveness of online religious communication. This discrepancy between the ideal expectations of digital communication and its practical implementation highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding of digital da'wah effectiveness.

Although previous studies have examined social media utilization, digital religious communication strategies, and online audience engagement, most have treated media primarily as communication tools rather than as interconnected environments that influence communication behavior. Research integrating media, message characteristics, and audience participation within a unified ecological framework remains limited. Moreover, studies employing Media Ecology Theory to explain the effectiveness of digital da'wah are relatively scarce. This gap suggests the need for a conceptual framework capable of explaining how technological environments, religious messages, and audience engagement interact to shape communication outcomes.

Accordingly, this study seeks to analyze the effectiveness of digital da'wah communication through the perspective of Media Ecology Theory and to develop a Digital Da'wah Ecology Model. The proposed model conceptualizes the relationship among media platforms, message credibility, and audience participation as interdependent elements within a digital communication ecosystem. The study contributes to the literature on digital religious communication by extending Media Ecology Theory into the context of Islamic da'wah and by providing a conceptual framework that can guide religious organizations in designing more credible, participatory, and adaptive communication strategies in the era of new media.

METHODS

This study adopted a constructivist paradigm and employed a qualitative approach with a single case study design to examine the effectiveness of digital da'wah communication from the perspective of Media Ecology Theory and to develop a Digital Da'wah Ecology Model. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of communication phenomena within their natural context and facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the interactions among media, messages, and audiences. The research was conducted at Masjid Jami Al Barokah, South Tangerang City, Indonesia, which actively utilizes digital media platforms for religious communication and community engagement.

The participants consisted of mosque board members, digital media management personnel, preachers, congregants, and followers of the mosque's social

media accounts. Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their level of involvement and relevance to the research objectives. The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and qualitative content analysis of da'wah content published on the mosque's digital platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. Secondary data were obtained from organizational documents, digital archives, social media analytics, and relevant scholarly literature.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Through an inductive analytical process, the study identified key dimensions influencing the effectiveness of digital da'wah communication and synthesized these findings into a conceptual Digital Da'wah Ecology Model. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation techniques were employed, including source triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trails. These procedures enhanced the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Utilization of Digital Communication Channels in Da'wah Activities

The findings indicate that Masjid Jami Al Barokah has utilized various digital communication channels to disseminate religious messages and strengthen communication with congregants. The primary platforms include Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, each serving different communication purposes and audience segments. The adoption of multiple platforms reflects the mosque's awareness of changing information consumption patterns in contemporary society, where digital media have become central sources of religious information. Instagram emerged as the most actively managed channel due to its ability to combine visual content, short videos, and interactive features. YouTube was primarily used for publishing complete religious lectures, while TikTok was utilized to reach younger audiences through concise and engaging content. Facebook remained relevant for maintaining communication with long-term congregants.

From the perspective of Media Ecology Theory, the findings demonstrate that media platforms are not merely communication tools but communication environments that influence how religious messages are produced, distributed, and consumed. The selection of specific platforms reflects the adaptation of da'wah practices to the characteristics of digital communication environments.

Adaptation of Da'wah Messages within Digital Media Environments

The study found that the production of digital da'wah content involved collaboration among mosque administrators, digital media teams, and religious speakers. Religious messages originally delivered through conventional sermons were transformed into digital formats suitable for social media audiences. Long lectures were often edited into short video clips containing key messages, while visual designs, captions, and supporting graphics were incorporated to enhance audience attention. These findings indicate that the characteristics of digital media significantly shape message construction. Consistent with McLuhan's proposition that "the medium is the message," digital platforms influence not only message dissemination but also message format and presentation. As a result, da'wah content has become more concise, visually appealing, and accessible without compromising its religious substance.

Audience Participation in Digital Da'wah Communication

Digital media have created new opportunities for interaction between mosque administrators and congregants. Unlike conventional da'wah, which is often characterized by one-way communication, social media platforms enable audiences to respond directly through comments, private messages, content sharing, and other interactive features. The findings reveal that audience participation primarily occurs through digital engagement indicators such as likes, comments, shares, and reposts. Congregants actively provide feedback regarding religious content and frequently engage in online discussions. Nevertheless, increased online engagement does not always translate into higher participation in offline religious activities. These findings suggest that while digital media facilitate audience interaction, the transition from virtual engagement to active religious participation remains a significant challenge.

Message Credibility and Communication Effectiveness

The findings indicate that message credibility is a crucial factor influencing communication effectiveness. Masjid Jami Al Barokah maintains credibility by ensuring that religious content is derived from trusted Islamic sources and delivered by qualified preachers. Before publication, content undergoes an internal review process involving coordination between the media team and the mosque's da'wah division. Interview data revealed that congregants tend to trust digital content produced by the mosque because of its consistency, transparency, and alignment with recognized Islamic teachings. This finding supports communication theories emphasizing that source credibility significantly influences message acceptance and

behavioral outcomes. Therefore, communication effectiveness is determined not only by media reach but also by audience trust in message sources.

Development of the Digital Da'wah Ecology Model

The findings reveal that the effectiveness of digital da'wah communication is shaped by the interaction among three interconnected dimensions: digital media environments, da'wah message characteristics, and audience participation. These dimensions collectively influence communication effectiveness and form the basis of the proposed Digital Da'wah Ecology Model. The model illustrates that communication effectiveness emerges from the dynamic relationship among media platforms, message credibility, and audience engagement. Digital media provide the communication environment, religious messages serve as the content dimension, and audience participation functions as the interaction dimension. When these elements operate in harmony, digital da'wah becomes more credible, participatory, and adaptive.

The proposed model extends Media Ecology Theory by applying its principles to the context of Islamic digital communication. Unlike previous studies that focused separately on media utilization, communication strategies, or audience responses, this study demonstrates that digital da'wah effectiveness should be understood as an ecological communication process involving continuous interactions among technology, messages, and human agency. This finding represents the primary theoretical contribution of the study and provides a conceptual framework for future research on digital religious communication.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the effectiveness of digital da'wah communication channels utilized by Masjid Jami Al Barokah through the perspective of Media Ecology Theory. The findings indicate that digital media have become an essential component of contemporary da'wah practices by enabling broader audience reach, faster dissemination of religious information, and more interactive communication between mosque administrators and congregants. The effectiveness of digital da'wah is influenced by the characteristics of each platform, requiring content adaptation to align with the preferences and communication habits of digital audiences.

The study further reveals that the effectiveness of digital da'wah emerges from the interconnected relationship among media platforms, message characteristics, and audience participation. Message credibility, supported by the involvement of religious leaders and mosque administrators, appropriate platform selection, and active audience engagement through likes, comments, shares, and direct interactions,

contribute significantly to communication effectiveness. These findings demonstrate that successful digital da'wah should be understood as an ecological communication process in which technology, messages, and human participation continuously interact.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends Media Ecology Theory by showing that digital media function not only as communication channels but also as environments that shape patterns of interaction, understanding, and religious engagement. Furthermore, the findings support the development of the Digital Da'wah Ecology Model, which conceptualizes communication effectiveness as the outcome of dynamic interactions among digital media environments, da'wah message characteristics, and audience participation. This model provides a conceptual framework for understanding digital religious communication in contemporary society..

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