Islam on the Internet: strategic ways for spreading actual Islamic thoughts to reach Muslims and Non-Muslims via Internet technology

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Since, Islam is the Fastest Growing Religion, but, why do People judge Islam so negatively in the Internet. Major Objective was to understand the use of the Internet to propagate Islam and Supportive Objectives were to find the new trends of propagating Islam and to find challenges facing by Islam. This study is based on qualitative and quantitative methodology which was carried out by employing primary and secondary data. The Primary data has been collected through questionnaire, interviews. Ten people have been interviewed as key informants. The Secondary data was collected from relevant books, websites, reports, journals and news paper articles and other relevant documents. Internet is an emerging trend to propagate Islam over the world. Ninety percent of all users go to the Internet for news or information; of that 90 percent, 80 percent use the Internet for research. One in four of these users surfs the Internet for religious and spiritual material, with 23 percent specifically searching for information about Islam.

Introduction

As the preceding table reveals, the Internet frees individuals from the physical boundaries of their hometowns, their campuses, their cities and their countries when they need to learn about Islam. Information on Muslims in the Maldives or Tanzania or the United States can be gleaned just as fast and easily as information across the hall. Because the Internet does not have opening or closing hours, its information on Islam is more accessible than the information in a library. A school library may be tiny; but with access to the Internet, people have more information on Islam at their fingertips. All individuals need to do to obtain information about Islam on the Internet is to learn how to find it.

In brief, while the Internet has become a pervasive and inexpensive way of learning about Islam, one must evaluate the usefulness of the available information in this medium. The user must bear in mind that unlike most books or journal articles which go through a number of checks to make sure that their contents are reliable, he/she must give some thought to where a posting on Islam is found and whether the author who put it on the Internet is a reliable authority on the subject.

A group of people try to spoil the Islamic Concepts by providing fake information about Islam on the Internet, Some rumors in the Internet say that Muslims are doing terrorist activities and Many Muslims use internet only for entertainment purposes etc. So, there is a need to analyze and develop the strategic ways to propagate Islam through internet in the correct manner.

The Internet is named after the Internet Protocol, the standard communications protocol used by every computer on the Internet. The Internet can powerfully leverage your ability to find, manage, and share information. Internet is a short form of the technical term internetwork, The terms Internet and World Wide Web are often used interchangeably in everyday speech. It is common to speak of going on the Internet when invoking a browser to view Web pages. However, the Internet is a particular global computer network connecting millions of computing devices. The World Wide Web is just one of many services running on the Internet. The Web is a collection of interconnected documents such as Audio, Video and other documents (Web pages) and resources, linked by hyperlinks.

The Internet workings include a technical design and a management structure. The management structure consists of a generally democratic collection of loosely-coupled organizations and working groups with mostly non-overlapping responsibilities. The technical design is founded on a complex, interlocking set of hierarchical tree-like structures, like Internet Protocol addresses and domain names, mixed with networked structures like packet switching and routing protocols, all tied together with millions of lines of sophisticated software that continues to get better all the time.

So far this combination of management and technical structures has worked well, providing the reliable, powerful communication platform on which the rest of the complexity of the Internet is built.

Islam

Most people know little or nothing about Islam, they have many misconceptions about Muslim beliefs and rituals. Regardless, Islam has gained a large following and is the second largest religion in the world. Hopefully some of the questions about Islam, Sunni Islam in particular, will be answered through research and a visit to the Islamic Center of the Inland Empire Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, is a monotheistic religion based on the belief in one God. There are two main divisions in the Islam religion, they are Sunni and Shi'a. The separation of the two major divisions of Islam were caused by the early question of leadership after Muhammad's death .The vast majority of Muslims, perhaps 90 percent are Sunni and the other

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10 percent are Shi'a (Mark Dickens). "Sunni" comes from the Arabic word Sunnah, meaning "customary practice." In Sunni Islam, the imam is the man who leads the Friday prayers in a mosque with scriptures from the Qur'an, the text of which is considered to be the direct word from God (Allah).

Islam on the Internet

This is the age of internet and everything that used to be tangible once has either shifted to World Wide Web or it has created its virtual copy over it. The preaching of different religions has also made its active place on internet.

The dawah work of Islam has also taken its place on internet and started their work online. There are many websites that has Islamic material but not all of them are right to follow. Some websites have been created by zion or by the non Muslim groups (qadiyanis and qauranists) who spread false information about Islam and Quran by promoting their own beliefs. Similarly, there are other websites being run by the anti-Islam groups who like to spread as much false information about Islam as they can. They misquote quranic verses, they misquote a hadith and to give weight to their nonsense and absurd comments, they use those books which contain fabricated lies on Quran and hadtih.

There are many active people on internet that spread false information and hatred about Islam and Muslim in disguise of being ex-Muslims for example, a man with name ali sina is now a day's spreading false beliefs about Islam that have nothing to do with Islam. These people are specially appointed and back up by those non Muslim lobbies which do not want Islam to be promoted anymore because they perceive Islam to be the biggest danger on the face of earth. Then there are another group of people who are non Muslims but they apparently have the knowledge about Islam. And with that "baseless" knowledge, they are spreading hatred about Islam and Muslims. The prominent groups are faithfreedom. Con and agniveer.com and there are many others of course.

The question is, how to avoid falling prey for such people and their absurd attempts to learn Islam online? It's a difficult thing for a lay man to find the correct information about Islam if he does not know much about Islam. The first thing is to read Quran with translation so that you are able to understand what Quran contains and what those websites contain.

To read Quran online there are some websites you can follow without any problem like;

Quranflash.com

Islam123.in

Answering-christanity.com

These websites contain relevant and authentic material about Islam. Then there are websites for more Islamic knowledge on different issues the prominent of them are

Call-to-monitheism.com

Answering-christainity.com

Systemoflife.com

And for the fiqah perspective of the issues that we do not know how to respond, there is a website Islamqa.com

So these are some of those websites that contain authentic material and they can be believed when it comes to Islamic knowledge.

The use of the Internet to propagate Islam

The number of people who connected to this initial network increased rapidly and developed at a very rapid rate, such that the number has reached more than billion people today, who are connected through millions of personal computers globally, and this, in the opinion of many, was the most important invention of the twentieth century. Allaah Says (what means): "[Allaah] Taught man that which he knew not." [Quran 68: 5]

Allaah has made mankind a successive authority upon the earth, wherein man lives and worships Allaah; He has granted man great ability of mind and has created for him upon the earth things which he can invest in and utilize in the obedience of Allaah; so glad tidings for the one who utilizes the earth's resources in the obedience of Allaah and woe to those who utilize them in His disobedience.

A recent survey states that the number of users on the internet are more than billion people, and the number is increasing extremely rapidly. 77% of the Americans say that they have benefited from it, 44% say they cannot live without it, and 87% use it to call and contact their relatives. The Internet has entered the Arab and Islamic world, but there are two obstacles which obstruct it from being used freely in these countries:

1. The lack of technical knowledge on an individual level.
2. The lack of knowledge of the English language.

On the other hand, the Internet is potentially very beneficial; I am not trying to market the use of the Internet here, but I am simply displaying its benefits as well as its dangers. There are many benefits such as:

❖It facilitates purchasing and brings within reach the display of any item one desires to buy or order, such as books etc.

❖It facilitates running a business.

❖It is inexpensive to make calls via it.

❖It makes contacting international research centres an easy task.

❖It enables the swift sending of mail.

❖It enables people to listen to the radio, watch medical programs and participate in discussions.

It contains many means that one can take advantage of in the propagation of Islam and calling people to Allaah.

A question arises: how can we benefit from the Internet in the field of propagating Islam? Our presence on the internet is very weak, which is a shame for a Nation that is supposed to be the best nation ever sent out to mankind. I am addressing here those people who have a real concern for spreading Islam, and not just anyone.

There is no doubt that there is a spiritual vacuum in the west as well as the east, and that people lack a system which can establish justice. The world is full of injustice and oppression; it is also filled with corruption and enmity. People live the law of the jungle where the strong eat the weak; this is a world whose evil knows no limit. This world is full of people who commit suicide, have nervous breakdowns and many other disorders which reflect the vacuum we mentioned earlier, and people will never live in justice and peace except through Islam.

Islam is a religion which is a mercy to mankind; it is the only religion which Allaah accepts from people as Allaah Says (what means):"Whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him." [Quran 3: 85]

If we acknowledge that Islam must become the international religion which all people should adopt, we must convey it to mankind using all available means and methods. We will not reign supreme if we fail to utilize all means to make this religion dominate, or else we will be forsaking Islam and not supporting it. We are commanded by Allaah to explain Islam to the masses

and we must have the sense of responsibility to spread this religion worldwide, to the best of our ability.

Spreading and propagating Islam via the Internet is something which cannot escape us. Even with simple planning and limited resources we can establish projects to propagate Islam and present them to people, which will have very beneficial results. Thus, we must have the eagerness to address the hearts of people and try to convey to them the light of Islam.

With regards to spreading Islamic knowledge:

First: We need a huge amount of resources and careful planning and entities to adopt mammoth projects and see their successful completion.

Second: We need to establish huge databases for the different Islamic sciences, in addition to advanced search engines in Arabic, because what is available on the Internet now is insufficient as well as substandard.

Third: We need to connect the masses to the lectures of scholars via the Internet.

Fourth: We need specific channels for academic lectures, where the scholar delivers them and people can instantly see him from their home - worldwide, because despite the fact that some of us are blessed to be around scholars and be able to attend their lectures, there are many others who are deprived of this bounty as they do not have either scholars or students of knowledge living in their area.

Fifth: we need to make the Fataawa of the scholars reach the masses people and enable them to inquire about matters directly via the Internet by setting aside certain times for them.

Sixth: Islamic universities should teach students around the world via the Internet for a small fee to cover the expenses of such a project, as is already the case with universities in the United States and Europe that teach worldly subjects … we must join the caravan.

Seventh: Another idea is to publish on the Internet Masters and PhD degree theses in Islamic studies and organize them with efficient indices, which would facilitate searching by Muslims and even non-Muslims who may thereby benefit greatly; there is a yearning to learn about Islam nowadays among the non-believers worldwide. The era that we live in has seen a revolution in the field of data and communications, and we must take advantage of this to spread Islamic information which will benefit those who search the Internet. There are many out there who compare the world's religions. There are people who would like to read the Quran, or the translation of its meaning, as well as prophetic narrations in order to know the nature of Islam, its economic, political and religious system, as well as all other things related to this religion.

Conclusions

That the Internet is contributing to the spread of Islam, whether positively or negatively, is hardly a matter of dispute. Since the horrible attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC on September 11, 2001, many Americans have turned to the Internet to learn about global terrorism, Osama Bin Laden, and Islam – the world's fastest growing religion. They have turned to the Internet for answers or inspiration. What they have found is a diverse Muslim world. A search for the word Islam on the Internet yields links to thousands of websites featuring everything from shopping to sermons to Web-muftis – people who provide answers to moral and legal questions. The web allows almost anyone to offer a plethora of perspectives, and much of the

resulting discussion and debate can be found in the online discussion forums and chat rooms.

Some observers point out that the Internet has also altered consensus-building among the Ummah. What used to take decades, even centuries, to trace interpretations of the Qur'an, for example, has been accelerated by the Internet's ability to give instant access to the teachings and thoughts of distant Islamic scholars in their original words. Practices, laws and beliefs that were once bound by geography are now evolving into a mainstream Muslim identity on Internet.

Ninety percent of all users go to the Internet for news or information; of that 90 percent, 80 percent use the Internet for research. One in four of these users surfs the Internet for religious and spiritual material, with 23 percent specifically searching for information about Islam. Increasingly, students of all levels and disciplines are using the Internet as a primary source of information; 29 percent accept the information they find as a 'good source of information,' and only 34 percent consider additional verification of the information important[5].

The Internet has been largely marketed and pushed as a fast, easy way to find any information one desires. Through this emphasis on fast and easy, information consumers who look to the net for resources often turn to the most readily available sources for answers (top ten Web sites, most heard about sites, sites which do not require login or passwords). In focusing on fast and easy, users may overlook buried information (the higher numbered results), difficult to browse sites, and member-sensitive journals and archives. In this way, too much information is possible because multitude of outdated, inaccurate, unprofessional sites complicate the access to useful information.

However, sifting and sorting through this surplus to find useful information not only takes time and energy, but it also hampers the use of critical thought and analysis. Unfortunately, as more and more information is made available, the less time an individual will have to deliberate on it with thoroughness; thoroughness which often means checking the sources for reliability, quality and validation. Raw data itself is useless without rational thought and analysis, with which they become useful information, and useful information needs application to become knowledge.

The unwillingness and/or sheer inability to process the vast quantity of information the Internet provides often leads to incorrect and/or incomplete ideas about the topic in question. However, the successful employment of the tools made available by the Internet may lead to greater understanding and/or constructive application of the knowledge gained from researching a specific issue. Virtual investigation of religion may lead to virtually any point on the spectrum, spanning destructive/fraudulent information to enlightenment, depending on the individual and the information he/she comes across.

Optimists see the good in Internet based religious research in the following scenarios: networks tend to throw together people who otherwise would never have met and been able to share their perspectives. Healthy exchange of different beliefs can lead to self-exploration and understanding of others. Since the Internet is relatively anonymous, it can provide a friendly and face-saving way to discuss difficult topics. The Internet can provide access to and a platform from which to post a plethora of religious opinions.

However, harm is not difficult to find. The dissemination of misinformation may lead to confusion, apathy, or aversion.

Individuals are allowed to post hate-promoting messages freely, breeding more hate. The overload or poor quality of information may lead to discouragement and abandonment of research. Persuasive information could potentially distract uncritical users.

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