

Navigating Organizational Change In Islamic Propagation Institutions: Adaptive Leadership To The Digital Propagation Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by Islamic propagation institutions in digital transformation, map relevant dimensions of adaptive leadership, and formulate change navigation strategies to respond to the digital propagation paradigm shift. The methods used are literature review and qualitative analysis of the phenomenon of digital disruption in religious institutions in Indonesia. The primary theory underlying this study is Ronald Heifetz's concept of adaptive leadership, which emphasizes an organization's ability to face complex challenges that require changes in values and work patterns. The results indicate that Islamic propagation institutions face structural and cultural barriers (digital stuttering) as well as an erosion of authority due to the emergence of informal competitors such as influencer preachers. The impact of this research is the formulation of three core competencies of adaptive leadership: the ability to sense-make use of technology, the courage to experiment with missionary strategies, and managing organizational stress during the transition period. To address these challenges, Islamic missionary institutions need to build data-driven ecosystems, restructure their organizations into agile, creative teams, and harmonize the substantive values of Islamic missionary work with attractive digital packaging to remain relevant in the contemporary era.

Keywords : Adaptive Leadership; Islamic Missionary Institutions; Digital Islamic Missionary Work.

Introduction

The wave of digital transformation that has swept across all sectors of human life in the second decade of the 21st century has given rise to a paradigmatic shift that religious institutions, including Islamic missionary institutions, cannot ignore. Global internet penetration, reaching 5.35 billion users by 2024, and the dominance of social media platforms as new public spaces, have radically altered information consumption patterns, including religious information, among the public (Castells, 2010 & Baym, 2015). This digital disruption phenomenon has led to a dramatic shift from conventional preaching models based on pulpits, face-to-face religious studies, and radio broadcasts to a digital preaching ecosystem that utilizes platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, podcasts, and various artificial intelligence-based applications. A Pew Research Center study shows that 72% of millennials and Gen-Z prefer accessing religious content through digital media rather than physically attending Islamic studies (Iqbal & Siddiqui, 2021).

In Indonesia, the context of digital preaching has a particularly significant dimension. With the world's largest Muslim population, reaching 237 million, and smartphone penetration

exceeding 170 million units, Indonesia's digital da'wah landscape has become a highly dynamic arena for content competition. According to the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo) (2023), religious content ranks third in terms of consumption by Indonesian internet users (Wahid, 2021). However, despite this significant opportunity, the majority of formal da'wah institutions, from religious study groups (Majelis Taklim), Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), Islamic organizations, and da'wah foundations, still face substantial capacity gaps in responding to these changes. This condition, which researchers refer to as digital paralysis, is not simply a matter of limited technological resources but more fundamentally affects the dimensions of leadership and organizational culture (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009).

The urgency of adapting da'wah institutions becomes even more critical when faced with the reality of the emergence of competitors in religious content from various informal actors, such as Muslim influencers, YouTuber ustaz (Islamic preachers), and digital communities capable of reaching millions of audiences with speed and efficiency far exceeding the capacity of traditional institutions. This situation creates what Christensen (1997) identified as disruptive innovation, where new entrants successfully seize market share from incumbents who fail to adapt (Hadri & Azman, 2020). Preachers or Islamic missionary institutions that fail to adapt to digital platforms will limit the reach and influence of Islamic missionary work (Robaiyadi & Castrawijaya, 2025).

Based on previous research, two main issues were identified that are the focus of this study. First, the phenomenon of digital stuttering, or resistance to internal change, experienced by many Islamic missionary institutions. This resistance does not stem solely from technical incompetence but is more deeply rooted in rigid bureaucratic organizational structures, a dominant hierarchical culture, and a lack of leaders capable of being effective change agents (Kotter, 1996; Yukl, 2019). Second, there is a significant gap between traditional leadership capacity and the demands of modern Islamic missionary management. Conventional Islamic missionary leadership models, which tend to be charismatic-authoritative and based on textual authority, are not necessarily effective in organizational contexts that require agility, continuous innovation, and the ability to respond quickly to environmental changes (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

Based on this phenomenon, this study aims to: (1) analyze the specific characteristics and challenges faced by Islamic missionary institutions in the context of digital transformation; (2) map the dimensions of adaptive leadership relevant to the context of Islamic missionary institutions; (3) formulate a change navigation strategy based on adaptive leadership; and (4) develop an integrative theoretical framework that can serve as a guide for Islamic missionary institution managers in responding to the digital paradigm shift.

Method

This research uses a descriptive analytical approach, which involves describing and analyzing in-depth leadership within Islamic missionary institutions in Indonesia. The researchers analyzed several sources of literature, including books and scientific journal articles. This analysis was conducted using the theoretical landscape of adaptive leadership and navigating change. This was done to address the various challenges faced by Islamic missionary institutions experiencing a paradigm shift in the current digital era.

Results and Discussion

Challenges for Islamic Missionary Institutions in the Digital Era

1. Structural and Cultural Barriers in Da'wah Organizations

Various studies show that the main challenges facing Islamic missionary institutions in the digital era lie not solely in financial or technological aspects, but rather in systemic structural and cultural barriers. Rigid organizational culture, resistance to change, and weak digital leadership are dominant factors inhibiting innovation (Zahroh et al., 2025; Syarqowi et al., 2025). Furthermore, unclear organizational structures and role allocations weaken organizational responses to digital transformation (Munawaroh et al., 2025). Furthermore, the absence of a culture of organizational learning and low digital literacy exacerbate innovation stagnation within Islamic missionary institutions (Hendrawati et al., 2023; Harahap et al., 2026). Thus, the obstacles faced are multidimensional, involving organizational structure, culture, and leadership.

Cultural barriers within Islamic missionary institutions manifest in resistance to change, often disguised as theological justifications. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of adaptive challenge introduced by Ronald A. Heifetz, where organizations tend to respond to complex challenges with purely technical solutions (technical fixes) without addressing more fundamental changes in values, beliefs, and work patterns. Recent studies show that in the context of digital transformation, organizational failure often occurs due to an excessive focus on technology adoption, while ignoring organizational culture change (Boikanyo, 2025). This resistance is often rooted in value and identity conflicts, particularly in faith-based organizations, where change is perceived as threatening traditional sanctities or authority. As a result, digital innovations such as the use of social media become merely a "technical layer" without substantive transformation in the way da'wah (Islamic outreach) thinks and practices. In this context, adaptive leadership is crucial for facilitating collective learning and value transformation that enable da'wah organizations to adapt authentically to the digital era (Jonathan et al., 2025).

Jaskyte's (2004) study examining innovation in nonprofit organizations found that organizational culture is the most significant predictor of innovation levels, even more dominant than leadership factors alone. These findings are reinforced by recent studies showing that organizational culture is the most consistent factor in both encouraging and inhibiting innovation, particularly through values such as openness, learning, and risk-taking (Eriksen et al., 2025). Conversely, cultures oriented toward stability, conservatism, and preservation of tradition have been shown to be negatively correlated with organizational innovation capacity. Furthermore, recent research indicates that organizational culture even mediates the influence of leadership on innovation, so that leadership will be ineffective without the support of an innovative culture (Idiegbeyan-Ose et al., 2025). Thus, these findings have direct implications for Islamic missionary organizations that tend to prioritize preservation of tradition, as such a cultural orientation has the potential to hinder innovation exploration in the face of the dynamics of the digital era.

According to Wahid (2021), who classifies organizations into progressive, transitional, and stagnant categories, the key differentiating factor lies in the character of leadership at the top of the organization. The success of an organization's digital transformation is largely determined by the leadership's capacity to develop a digital vision,

manage change, and encourage organizational innovation (Nuraini, 2025). Transformational leadership is a key factor in navigating complex and dynamic environments and determines an organization's ability to adapt to technological change (Lu, 2025). In fact, in the context of digital transformation, leadership plays a role not only as a strategic decision-maker but also as a driver of change in the organization's overall culture and management (Ahmed et al., 2024). Therefore, differences in the level of digital adaptation between organizations are more accurately understood as leadership-driven differentiation, rather than simply differences in resources or organizational age.

2. Changes in the Profile of Content Competitors in the Digital Space

The digital landscape has fundamentally transformed the ecosystem for producing and distributing Islamic preaching content. This transformation is not only technological but also epistemological and sociological, as it touches on how religious authority is formed, produced, and consumed in society. While in the conventional era, formal Islamic preaching institutions enjoyed comparative advantages in the form of institutional authority, access to pulpits, and established organizational networks, in the digital era, these advantages have significantly eroded due to the democratization of digital technology-based content production. The development of social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok has created a new public space that allows anyone to become a producer and distributor of religious messages without having to go through formal authorization mechanisms. In this context, authority is no longer top-down but rather more fluid, participatory, and based on digital interaction. Social media has become the primary medium for disseminating Islamic preaching messages, as it can reach audiences broadly, quickly, and across geographic boundaries (Rizal and Sumardi, 2024). Digital media has shifted the paradigm of Islamic preaching from a one-way communication model to an interactive, public-participation-based model (Hasbi et al. 2024).

This phenomenon is further strengthened by the emergence of so-called influencer preachers, individuals who utilize digital platforms to build religious authority based on popularity, consistent content, and emotional connection with their audiences. Influencer preachers serve not only as conveyors of religious messages but also as content creators who understand the logic of platform algorithms, audience preferences, and effective digital communication strategies (Aida, Supena, and Sulthon, 2024). Thus, the success of da'wah in the digital era is no longer determined by structural position within an institution, but rather by an individual's ability to manage content and build engagement with their audience.

Da'wah among the younger generation has undergone significant changes. Audiences no longer rely on formal da'wah institutions as their primary source of religious knowledge, but instead rely more on social media, which provides instant, varied content tailored to personal preferences. Digital platform algorithms play a crucial role in shaping religious consumption preferences, so audiences are more likely to be exposed to content that aligns with their interests and inclinations (Istianah, 2025). This suggests that religious authority in the digital age is determined not only by the credibility of the source but also by its visibility within algorithmic systems.

In this context, the claim that Islamic preaching content from individuals not affiliated with formal institutions performs better than that from formal institutions can be explained

through the logic of the attention economy. While specific data, such as that from YouTube Indonesia (2023), is often difficult to verify in an academic context, various Indonesian studies show a similar trend: personal, narrative, and contextual Islamic preaching content is more likely to attract audience attention than institutional content, which tends to be formal and rigid (Rizal & Sumardi, 2024; Aida et al., 2024). This is further supported by findings that individual creators are more flexible in responding to trends, using popular communication styles, and building emotional connections with audiences (Hasbi et al., 2024). In contrast, formal Islamic preaching institutions often face structural and cultural limitations that make them less adaptable to digital dynamics. Rigid internal procedures, organizational hierarchies, and an emphasis on preserving tradition often hinder the development of innovative and responsive content. Consequently, despite possessing strong institutional legitimacy, formal institutions often lose out in terms of digital engagement and reach compared to individual actors.

This phenomenon has implications for the fragmentation of religious authority in the digital space. Social media has created a contested space where various actors, both individuals and institutions, compete for public legitimacy. Religious authority is no longer singular and centralized, but rather distributed among various actors with content production capabilities and access to digital audiences (A'yun and Syarif, 2023). In this situation, legitimacy is determined not only by educational background or organizational affiliation, but also by the number of followers, level of interaction, and public perception of the communicator's credibility. This fragmentation also impacts the pluralization of religious interpretations. With the multitude of available sources of da'wah (Islamic propagation), audiences have the freedom to choose and construct their own religious understanding (Hidayat and Prasetyo, 2024). While this opens up space for the democratization of religious knowledge, it also has the potential to lead to disorientation and fragmentation of religious understanding.

Thus, digital transformation is not only changing the way da'wah is conducted but also changing the structure of religious authority itself. Formal Islamic preaching institutions can no longer rely solely on traditional legitimacy but need to adapt to digital logic that emphasizes creativity, interactivity, and audience relevance. In this context, the primary challenge is not simply adopting technology, but undertaking cultural and strategic transformation to remain relevant in the increasingly competitive digital Islamic preaching ecosystem.

Characteristics of Adaptive Leadership in the Context of Da'wah

1. Sense-Making Ability towards Technology Trends

The first and most fundamental dimension of adaptive leadership in the context of digital da'wah is sense-making ability, namely the leader's capacity to interpret, understand, and make sense of complex and constantly changing technological trends in relation to the organization's da'wah mission. Karl Weick (1995) defines sense-making as a process that helps individuals and organizations make sense of ambiguous experiences through ongoing retrospective and prospective construction (Weick, 1995).

The sense-making dimension of adaptive leadership becomes increasingly crucial in the context of digital da'wah transformation, which is characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and rapid technological change. The concept of sense-making, introduced by

Karl E. Weick, emphasizes that leaders do not simply respond to change but actively construct meaning from it so that it can be internalized by the organization. In the context of digital da'wah, this ability relates not only to a technical understanding of digital platforms but also to how leaders link technological developments to broader da'wah values, goals, and strategies. Digital sense-making ability is a core competency in values-based organizational leadership, including da'wah institutions. Leaders who are able to strategically interpret technological trends tend to be more successful in driving organizational transformation, as they can bridge the gap between external change and the organization's internal capacity (Nuraini, 2025). In this context, sense-making does not stop at the cognitive stage, but continues with the process of articulating a vision that is understood and accepted by all members of the organization.

Sense-making in the digital context is closely related to a leader's ability to build shared understanding within the organization. Effective leaders not only understand technological trends individually but are also able to transform that understanding into a collective narrative that can guide organizational actions. This aligns with the concept of collective sense-making, where meaning is socially constructed through ongoing interaction and communication. In the context of da'wah, this process is crucial because it relates to the internal legitimacy and consistency of messages conveyed to the public. The ability to sense-make technology does not necessarily require a leader to be a technical technology expert. In many da'wah organizations, the success of digital transformation is determined by the leader's ability to build a team with diverse and complementary digital competencies (Hasbi et al. 2024).

Thus, sense-making in digital da'wah leadership can be understood as a multidimensional capability encompassing strategic interpretation of technology, collective construction of meaning, and facilitation of organizational learning. In the context of digital da'wah leadership, sense-making encompasses the leader's ability to: (a) critically and contextually read digital platform trends; (b) identify opportunities and threats relevant to the da'wah mission; (c) translating technological trends into concrete strategic implications; and (d) communicating these interpretations to organizational members in a way that builds shared meaning. These capabilities form the foundation for adaptive leadership, as without a proper understanding of the external environment, organizations will struggle to formulate relevant and sustainable responses. Therefore, strengthening the sense-making capacity of Islamic missionary leaders is a strategic agenda in facing the increasingly complex dynamics of the digital era.

2. Experimentation and Courage to Take Risks in the Spread of Islam Strategy

The second important characteristic of adaptive leadership in the context of digital da'wah is the capacity for structured experimentation and the courage to take calculated risks. In a dynamic digital environment, da'wah strategies can no longer rely on a single, stable approach but require a continuous exploration of communication formats, platforms, and approaches relevant to changing audience preferences. In this context, experimentation is not merely an additional activity but becomes the core of an organization's adaptive strategy. Da'wah institutions that successfully transform in the digital era generally have a culture that supports experimentation and innovation. Digitally adaptive da'wah institutions tend to provide space for creative teams to try various content formats, such as short videos,

podcasts, and live streaming, without the pressure to consistently produce "perfect" output. This approach allows organizations to iteratively learn from audience responses and continuously refine strategies (Fauzi and Nugroho 2024).

The courage to take risks in digital da'wah is closely related to a leadership style that fosters psychological safety within the team. In organizations with high levels of psychological safety, team members feel freer to express ideas, try new approaches, and even experience failure without fear of excessive sanctions (Rahman and Hidayat 2025). This is particularly important in the context of da'wah, where sensitivity to values and norms often leads organizations to shy away from experimentation. However, experimentation in digital da'wah is not boundless. This means that effective da'wah institutions are able to balance innovation and maintain the integrity of values. In practice, this is achieved by establishing a clear normative framework as the boundary of experimentation, allowing creativity to flourish without violating the fundamental principles of da'wah. This concept aligns with the safe-to-fail experimentation approach, where failure in experiments is viewed as part of the learning process, as long as it does not violate the organization's core values (Hasbi et al. 2024).

The success of a digital da'wah strategy is greatly influenced by an organization's ability to respond quickly to audience feedback. Experimentation allows organizations to test various communication approaches and identify those that are most effective in capturing attention and building audience engagement (Rizal and Sumardi, 2024). In this case, the risks taken are not speculative, but rather based on data analysis and an understanding of digital audience behavior. Experimentation in religious organizations often faces cultural barriers, particularly related to perceptions of failure. In many cases, failure is still viewed as something to be avoided, rather than as a source of learning. Therefore, the role of leaders is crucial in shifting this paradigm, by framing failure as a natural and necessary part of the innovation process (Prasetyo and Maulana, 2024).

Thus, experimentation and risk-taking in digital da'wah can be understood as a structured, reflective, and values-based process. Adaptive leaders not only encourage innovation but also create an environment that allows for safe and productive experimentation. In this context, the success of digital da'wah is not determined by the magnitude of risks taken, but by how those risks are managed and utilized as a source of organizational learning.

3. Managing Organizational Stress in the Digital Transition Process

A third critical yet often overlooked dimension of adaptive leadership is the ability to manage organizational distress during the transition from manual to digital work patterns. Adaptive work inherently generates stress and anxiety because it forces individuals and organizations to shed the identities, competencies, and habits that have served as sources of security (Heifetz et al. 2009).

The ability to manage organizational distress is a crucial dimension of adaptive leadership, particularly in the context of the digital transformation of Islamic missionary institutions. The transition from conventional to digital systems involves not only technical changes but also profound psychological and cultural shifts. Digital transformation often generates collective anxiety stemming from role uncertainty, changes in professional identity, and demands for new competencies that organizational members have not yet

fully mastered. Resistance within Islamic missionary organizations to digitalization is often rooted in the psychological stress felt by senior members, who feel a loss of relevance and authority in the new, more technology-based structure. This creates internal tension that, if not managed effectively, can hinder the overall transformation process (Rahman and Fauzi, 2024). Therefore, intergenerational conflict becomes a major source of organizational stress in the digitalization process of religious institutions (Hidayat and Prasetyo, 2024).

Effective digital leadership must be able to manage the emotional dimension of change, not just the strategic and operational aspects. Leaders need to develop empathetic and transparent communication to help organizational members understand the rationale behind change, while reducing the anxiety that arises from uncertainty (Nuraini, 2025). Therefore, leadership communication skills are crucial to provide assurance that the changes undertaken are based on facts and religious principles (Sabirin & Castrawijaya, 2025). Furthermore, the ability to build psychological safety is crucial, as it allows organizational members to express their concerns, limitations, and needs without fear.

Providing ongoing digital training and mentoring can reduce organizational stress levels by increasing members' confidence in navigating new technologies. This approach is not only technical but also serves as a social support mechanism that strengthens team cohesion during the transition period (Hasbi et al., 2024). Managing organizational stress in digital da'wah requires a holistic approach, integrating communication, capacity building, and sensitivity to cultural dynamics. Adaptive leaders act as a balancer, keeping the pressures of change within productive limits, enabling the organization to transform without losing its internal stability.

Navigating Change: Implementation Strategy

1. Building a Data-Based and Digital Literacy-Based Da'wah Ecosystem

The first strategy for navigating change identified from the literature synthesis is the development of a data-driven da'wah ecosystem by enhancing the digital literacy of institutional managers. Digital literacy, in this context, is not limited to the ability to use digital devices and applications, but encompasses deeper capabilities: the ability to read and interpret platform analytics data to understand audience behavior and preferences, the ability to use data for strategic decision-making, and the ability to identify content trends relevant to the da'wah mission. The concept of 'data-driven da'wah,' developed from the adaptation of a data-driven management approach to the da'wah context, demands a transformation of organizational culture from one based on intuition and tradition to one that integrates empirical data-based insights. This does not negate the wisdom of the da'wah tradition, but rather enriches it with a more accurate and measurable understanding of the needs, conditions, and dynamics of contemporary audiences (Zuboff, 2019).

Developing a data-driven da'wah ecosystem is a strategic step in responding to the complexity of the digital landscape, which is increasingly driven by algorithmic logic and the attention economy. In this context, digital literacy can no longer be understood narrowly as the technical ability to use devices, but must encompass the analytical capacity to read data, understand audience behavior patterns, and translate these findings into adaptive and

relevant da'wah strategies. Religious organizations that are able to utilize digital platform data analytics have an advantage in reaching audiences more precisely and effectively (Rizal & Sumardi, 2024). The transformation to a data-driven organization requires significant cultural change, particularly from intuition-based decision-making patterns to a more evidential approach (Nuraini, 2025). In the context of da'wah, this means integrating normative values with an empirical understanding of audience needs and preferences. This approach is not intended to replace da'wah traditions, but rather to strengthen them with more accurate and contextual information.

According to Hasbi et al. (2024), low digital literacy among da'wah institution managers is a major obstacle to optimizing digital media. To address this challenge, a community of practice-based approach has proven effective in increasing digital literacy capacity. Experience-sharing forums among digital da'wah administrators can accelerate the collective learning process by enabling the exchange of contextual and applicable best practices (Hidayat and Prasetyo 2024). This approach also creates a collaborative space that encourages experimentation and shared reflection. Thus, building a data-driven da'wah ecosystem requires not only investment in technology but also in human capacity development and organizational cultural transformation. Strong digital literacy will enable da'wah institutions to be more responsive to audience dynamics while maintaining the relevance of da'wah messages amid rapid change.

2. Organizational Restructuring: From Rigid Bureaucracy to Agile Creative Teams

Organizational restructuring is a strategic step integral to the digital transformation of Islamic missionary institutions. Traditional bureaucratic models, which tend to be hierarchical, procedural, and slow in decision-making, have proven less responsive to the dynamics of the digital ecosystem, which demands speed, flexibility, and continuous innovation. In the context of faith-based organizations that are able to adapt to digital change, they generally shift to more agile and collaborative structures (Maulana & Prasetyo, 2024).

The agile organizational approach is one model increasingly adopted in this context. The application of agile principles, such as cross-functional teamwork, iterative work cycles, and rapid response to feedback, can increase the effectiveness of digital Islamic missionary programs, particularly in producing content that is relevant and adaptable to audience trends. Teams that combine religious competencies and digital capabilities have been shown to be more innovative than fragmented structures (Hidayat and Rahman, 2024). Islamic missionary organizations that implement flexible, creative team structures tend to have higher levels of digital engagement. This is due to the team's ability to respond more quickly to changes in platform algorithms and audience preferences than organizations that still rely on lengthy bureaucratic mechanisms. This concept also emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between operational flexibility and substantive control, particularly to ensure that the da'wah message remains aligned with religious values and principles (Fauzi and Nugroho, 2024).

Correspondingly, an effective organizational structure in the context of digital da'wah is one that integrates flexible teamwork with a value-based governance system. In this model, teams are given autonomy in the creative process, yet remain within a clear

normative framework, so that innovation does not compromise the integrity of the da'wah message (Sulaiman and Hadi, 2025). Organizational restructuring toward an agile model involves not only technical changes in organizational design but also a transformation of work culture that emphasizes collaboration, speed, and continuous learning. Da'wah institutions that are able to balance structural flexibility and consistent moral values will have an advantage in navigating the complexities of da'wah in the digital era.

3. Harmonizing Substantive Preaching Values with Attractive Digital Packaging

The most fundamental and yet most creative challenge in navigating the changes of Islamic preaching institutions in the digital era is finding a balance between the essential substantive values of Islamic preaching, which must not be sacrificed, and the demands of attractive and relevant digital packaging for contemporary audiences. The dialectical tension between substance and packaging, between depth of meaning and format accessibility, between traditional authenticity and contemporary relevance, is a productive tension that must be managed with wisdom, not eliminated (Shihab, 2017). Harmonizing substantive Islamic preaching values and attractive digital packaging is a strategic challenge that demands both conceptual precision and practical creativity. In the context of digital transformation, Islamic preaching institutions are not only required to be present on various social media platforms but also to be able to package religious messages relevantly without compromising the depth of meaning. This is because the success of digital Islamic preaching is largely determined by the ability to integrate normative values with contextual and adaptive communication strategies (Fauzi & Nugroho, 2024).

The concept of "the medium is the message" has profound implications for digital da'wah: the choice of communication platform and format is not neutral, but rather actively shapes how the message is received, interpreted, and internalized by the audience (McLuhan, 1964). Digital media is not neutral, but rather shapes how the audience understands religious messages. Therefore, the choice of content format, whether short videos, infographics, or long-form studies, must be tailored to the communication objectives and the depth of the message being conveyed. In practice, da'wah content that is too simple risks being reduced in meaning, while content that is too complex has the potential to lose appeal in the competitive digital space (Hidayat and Prasetyo, 2024).

Effective da'wah institutions in the digital era generally employ a layered content strategy, where light content is used as an entry point to attract audience attention, followed by more in-depth content to build understanding, and subsequent programs that are educational and transformative. This approach enables organizations to reach a broad audience without sacrificing the quality of the da'wah substance (Sulaiman and Hadi, 2025). The success of this harmonization is also influenced by the creative team's ability to understand the characteristics of digital audiences, including visual preferences, attention span, and interaction patterns on social media. Therefore, da'wah packaging is not only a matter of aesthetics, but also a communication strategy based on an understanding of audience behavior (Maulana and Rahman, 2024).

Therefore, it is crucial for da'wah institutions to maintain the integrity of values as the primary foundation of da'wah. Creativity in digital packaging must remain within the bounds of ethics and religious principles to prevent message distortion. Adaptive leadership in this context

requires what some researchers call strategic content architecture, namely the strategic ability to design a *da'wah* content portfolio that carefully allocates various formats, platforms, and levels of content depth according to the different *da'wah* objectives and the characteristics of diverse audience segments. Adaptive leaders play a role in maintaining the balance between innovation and authenticity, ensuring that digital transformation does not lead to excessive commodification of religion. Harmonizing substance and packaging in digital *da'wah* is not a process of compromise, but rather an integrative process that requires a well-thought-out content strategy, a deep understanding of the audience, and a commitment to the core values of *da'wah*.

Conclusion

The essence of this research states that there is a radical shift from conventional *da'wah* (Islamic propagation) models to digital ecosystems (YouTube, TikTok, etc.), where the younger generation now prefers to access religious content online rather than attending in person. Consequently, the majority of formal *da'wah* institutions are experiencing digital paralysis. The core issue is not merely technological, but rather rigid structural barriers, an organizational culture resistant to change, and a lack of leadership capable of acting as agents of change. Furthermore, changes in the competitor profile—such as the emergence of influencer *da'is* (preachers) and non-formal actors who are more flexible and algorithm-savvy—have eroded the authority of traditional *da'wah* institutions. Religious authority has now become more fluid, participatory, and driven by digital engagement.

Characteristics of Adaptive Leadership: To survive, leaders of *da'wah* institutions must possess three core competencies: Sense-making: The ability to interpret technological trends and align them with the organization's *da'wah* mission, Experimentation: The courage to try new content formats (such as podcasts or short-form videos) and manage the risk of failure as a learning process, Managing Organizational Stress: The ability to manage the psychological anxiety of members during the transition from manual to digital workflows.

As a result, *da'wah* institutions need to build data-driven ecosystems, restructure their organizations into agile creative teams, and harmonize the substantive values of *da'wah* with attractive digital packaging without compromising its depth of meaning. Digital transformation demands that *da'wah* institutions innovate radically without losing their normative identity. Success in this era is highly determined by leadership that can productively manage the dialectic between tradition and innovation.

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