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**FAITH NEWS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: NEW MUSLIM AND NON-
MUSLIM RESIDENTS SEEKING ISLAMIC INFORMATION IN DUBAI,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

Urwa Tariq

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FAITH NEWS IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
NEW MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM RESIDENTS SEEKING
ISLAMIC INFORMATION IN DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Urwa Tariq

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

Under the Supervision of Dr. Maha Bashri

June 2021

Declaration of Original Work

I, Urwa Tariq, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this dissertation entitled “*Faith News in the Digital Age: New Muslim and Non-Muslim Residents Seeking Islamic Information in Dubai, United Arab Emirates*” hereby, solemnly declare that this dissertation is my own original research work that has been done and prepared by me under the supervision of Dr. Maha Bashri, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at UAEU. This work has not previously been presented or published or formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my dissertation have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this thesis/dissertation.

Student’s Signature



Date: 15 July 2021

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Abstract

When non-Muslims become immersed in an Islamic way of life—a common occurrence in the UAE, a Muslim country where the overwhelmingly majority of the resident population is foreign-born—some become interested in learning more about the Islamic faith. This interest is also evident among new converts to Islam from other countries when they reside in the UAE. Little is known about how information about Islam is disseminated to non-Muslims and new Muslims in the UAE, how these expatriates search for the religious information they desire, and the challenges they encounter in their enquiries. This study applies the theory of the diffusion of innovations as a guiding framework to understand the target audience, explore the informational gaps in their knowledge, and propose an innovative media model. Survey responses were collected from 541 adult expatriates residing in the UAE and personal interviews conducted with 19 expatriate residents and seven staff members of Islamic (Da'wah) centers within Dubai. The survey results indicate that almost half of these residents rely on word-of-mouth as a key source of Islamic information, with new Muslims making greater use of the Da-wah centers than non-Muslims for religious information. The demographic profile of survey participants is discussed and analyzed, especially in relation to media use. The researcher identifies a lack of organization in the methods of dissemination of Islamic information and limited access among foreign-born residents to reliable and accurate information. The dissertation considers a proposal for use of a radio with digital media to disseminate information about Islam among specific expatriates in the UAE.

Keywords: Islamic centers, Dubai expatriates, non-Muslim, new Muslim, media representation, digital radio.

Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

أخبار الإيمان في العصر الرقم: البحث عن المعلومات الإسلامية من قبل المسلمين الجدد وغير المسلمين في إمارة دبي، دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

المخلص

عندما يصبح غير المسلمين منغمسين في طريقة الحياة الإسلامية—أمر شائع في الإمارات العربية المتحدة، وهي دولة مسلمة حيث الغالبية العظمى من السكان المقيمين فيها من مواليد أجنبية، يصبح البعض مهتمًا بمعرفة المزيد عن العقيدة الإسلامية. ويتجلى هذا الاهتمام أيضًا بين المسلمين الذين اعتنقوا الإسلام حديثًا والذين قدموا من دول أخرى عندما يقيمون في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. ولا يُعرف سوى القليل عن كيفية نشر المعلومات عن الإسلام لغير المسلمين والمسلمين الجدد في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. كيف يبحث هؤلاء المغتربون عن المعلومات الدينية التي يرغبون فيها، والتحديات التي يواجهونها في استفساراتهم؟

تستكشف هذه الدراسة القضايا المعلوماتية من خلال استبيان استقصائي لـ(541) من المغتربين البالغين المقيمين في الإمارات العربية المتحدة، والمقابلات الشخصية مع (19) من المقيمين المغتربين و(7) من موظفي المراكز الإسلامية (الدعوة) في دبي.

وتشير نتائج الاستطلاع إلى أن نصف هؤلاء المقيمين تقريبًا يعتمدون على الحوارات والمحاضرات بوصفها مصدرًا رئيسيًا لاستقاء المعلومات عن الإسلام، وأن المسلمين الجدد يستخدمون مراكز الدعوة بشكل أكبر من غير المسلمين؛ للحصول على المعلومات الدينية. تتم مناقشة الملف التحليلي للمشاركين في الاستطلاع خاصة فيما يتعلق باستخدام وسائل الإعلام.

أشار الباحث إلى عدم وجود تنظيم في أساليب نشر المعلومات الإسلامية، ومحدودية الوصول إلى معلومات موثقة ودقيقة من قبل المقيمين الأجانب من مواليد الدولة. تقدم الأطروحة اقتراحًا لاستخدام وسيلة إذاعية رقمية؛ لنشر المعلومات حول الإسلام بين المغتربين المهتمين في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية: معلومات إسلامية، مراكز الدعوة، مقيمي إمارة دبي، غير المسلمين، المسلمون الجدد، التمثيل الاعلامي، استخدام الاعلام، إذاعة رقمية.

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Dedication

To Mama and Baba

To my sisters, and my future life partner

To my mentors, friends and colleagues

And to chips and sugar, my true companions of many long nights of writing.

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List of Abbreviations

ADM	Abu Dhabi Media
AED	United Arab Emirates Dirham
AMG	Arab Media Group
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ARN	Arabian Radio Network
ASM	Al Sayegh Media
CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
Dh	Dirham
DIIC	Dubai Islamic Information Center
DoI	Diffusions of Innovations
DRN	Dubai Radio Network
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMI	Global Media Insight
IACAD	Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NM	New Muslim
NonM	Non-Muslim
USD	United States Dollar

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The term ‘mass media’ connotes the media designed to disseminate news and information to a large audience for a variety of reasons (Hall, 1982). Stories and images in the mass media provide resources (or symbols) for the organization of common beliefs; through the appropriation of these resources, we enter ourselves into these beliefs (Alsultany, 2012; Van Dijk, 1991). The media is a dominant source of explanations and imagery by which consumers of media resources connect and shape the society around them through their perceptions (Thomas & Callahan, 1982; Pandolfi, 2016). Hence, it is well accepted that the opinions and thoughts of people are strongly influenced and shaped by media tools when information is conveyed (Pandolfi, 2016). This study aims to examine how target audiences receive religious information through mass media.

In recent years, there has been a surge in interest related to media representation on issues such as ethnicity, race, religion, feminism, and multiculturalism (Elias et al., 2020; Montero, 2014; Nguyen, 2020; Triandafyllidou, 2011). Scholars argue that the media does not present objective reality—that it is a representation, depiction, likeness or constructed image of reality (Hall, 1995; Poole, 2002; Van Dijk, 1991). A representation can be of an individual, people, social groups, ideas, or events. In this study the focus is on the representation of a specific group, i.e., Muslims. Among the many minorities discussed in world affairs, Muslims and Islam have been the focus of much censure and debate internationally (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). The media plays a fundamental role in building perceptions of such groups (Pandolfi, 2016). There are 1.8 billion Muslim people worldwide and Islam is currently the second-largest religion

in the world (Lipka, 2017). Despite this, there is a lack of understanding among non-Muslims about Muslims and Islam (Mohamad, 1996; Abidin, 2007; Jones et al., 2019). In addition, the media's representation of Muslims has contributed to biased attitudes, discrimination, and *Islamophobia* (literally a fear, dislike, or dread of Islam, but also connoting hatred of and discrimination against Muslims) (Abidin, 2007; Anti-Defamation League, 2017; Saeed, 2007; Sutkutè, 2019). Western attitudes towards Muslims and Islam have been shaped throughout history from as early as the 12th century (Birnbaum, 2006; Ridouani, 2011). According to Said (1978), the Western media has always constructed a negative frame of reference for Muslims, which over time has increased prejudice towards them. Dunn (2001), Pandolfi (2016), and Richardson (2004) make similar claims, noting the recurring language of 'Islamic terrorism' and 'Muslim fanatics' has been used to represent all Muslims and Islam. Yet, for non-Muslim societies that have limited opportunities for interpersonal interaction with Muslim people, in the absence of direct first-hand experience of people, places, or events, the mass media generally becomes the primary source of information (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Zillmann & Bryant, 2002).

What is evident is that mass media representations are largely accountable for how non-Muslims see Islam and, even when it is involuntary or unconscious, it affects societal representations and constructions (Pandolfi, 2016). The media wields considerable power to influence the perceptions of the general public about certain news events and issues. Journalists, news presenters, filmmakers, and entertainers are also shaped by various social forces which contribute to their understanding of Muslims and Islam (Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005). Insofar as the media is able to discredit the public image of Islam, it also has the power to restore and inform the public about this religion. Hence, in addressing these issues, the current research study

focused on perceptions of audience about Islam based on its representation in Western media, examining how the target audiences currently receive information on Islam and suggesting how the media might more effectively disseminate accurate and balanced Islamic information from authoritative sources.

1.2 Problem Statement

UAE is located in a highly strategic and volatile region, on the southeastern coast of the Arabian (or Persian) Gulf, bordering Saudi Arabia and Oman (Ibish, 2017). Non-Muslim expatriates living in the UAE are frequently asked whether UAE is an unsafe country to live due to a lack of human rights (Tovey, 2015) and political instability in the neighboring region (Iyer, 2017). For instance, a study by New York University (2020) in Abu Dhabi showed that there was a cultural gap and lack of understanding among American travelers over their travel to Middle Eastern destinations. US residents newly resided in Dubai or Abu Dhabi shared a negative perception in some aspect about either city, derived from information they had from friends, relatives, or travel agencies before arriving to UAE (New York University, 2020).

Dubai is a metropolitan city which is popular within UAE and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region; it attracts many foreigners due to its growing economy and tourism (Martens & Reiser, 2019). However, according to Godinho (2020), Dubai seems to be caught in an identity crisis— aspiring, on the one hand, to be a top tourist destination with flexible laws for foreigners and tolerance of other religions, while at the same time maintaining its adherence to Islamic traditions which is embedded within the local culture, norms, and traditions. A study by Martens and Reiser (2019) showed that Dubai was perceived mostly as a luxurious and modern

destination, although visitors expressed an interest in learning about UAE culture and traditions. When non-Muslim residents take an interest in the Muslim way of life, the interest leads them often to explore the values, beliefs, and principles that Muslims follow (Ashry, 2014). Many Dubai residents who are non-Muslim or new Muslims (i.e., converted to Islam recently) are interested in knowing more about Islam (Crompton, 2016). However, limited initiatives have been implemented for disseminating information about Islam to these interested residents.

The current study focused on residents who did not have sufficient information about the Islamic faith and those who had been influenced by negative media representation but were attempting to gather Islamic knowledge to understand the faith better. It focused on the perceptions and opinions non-Muslim and new Muslim expatriates hold about Muslims and Islam, and whether these perceptions and opinions had been affected by negative western media representations. The study also attempted to ascertain the ways in which respondents navigate existing media outlets and venues (including various religious and cultural centers, libraries, museums, workplaces, schools, and parks), and determine whether it these outlets and venues played an effective role in disseminating information on Islam. Accordingly, three research objectives were developed:

- Objective 1 (Perceptions): To understand respondents' current perception of Islam and Muslims based on their exposure to Western media representations
- Objective 2 (Access to sources): To understand respondents' access to various sources where they may learn about Islam and Muslims and the challenges encountered

- Objective 3 (Media preference): To investigate the consumption patterns of radio among respondents and as a preference for them for receiving Islamic information.

1.3 Study Outline

After the introduction, Chapter 2 reviews past literature and DoI theory pertaining to this study. The chapter examines Western media representations of Islam and Muslims and considers initiatives to counter these representations. The chapter covers studies on United Arab Emirates, particularly new Muslims and non-Muslims immigrants living in Dubai. It also examines the non-Muslim and new Muslim expatriates and discusses Da'wah initiatives taken by the UAE government in disseminating information. Additionally, the chapter introduces some initiatives taken by the government and highlights the radio market and its presence within the UAE.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the research, explaining the data collection method, including the demographics and biodata of the study sample. The researcher explains the reasons for conducting a sequential exploratory study and how this approach supports the research objectives. It includes the procedures undertaken for data analysis.

Chapter 4 covers qualitative analysis, discussing the research questions and the results of the interviews conducted in selected Islamic centers. Personal interviews were conducted with non-Muslim and new Muslim respondents and staff within the centers; this facilitated a detailed description of respondents' views, experiences, and behaviors when they searched for information about Islam, and their approach to reaching out to various sources. The qualitative data findings were coded and sorted into research themes. During the analysis, a demographic aspect was identified which

played an important role in respondents' decision to seek information on Islamic faith. A quantitative analysis was conducted to supplement the qualitative results.

Chapter 5 discusses the detailed analysis of quantitative results through the research questions and hypothesis testing. This analysis generated outputs to support the qualitative analysis.

Chapter 6 covers the empirical findings of qualitative and quantitative results. The chapter includes a media model, discussion and recommendation relating to the results.

Chapter 7 is a summary of the research findings and discussion of their implications. A conclusion states the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the academic literature and studies relevant to the present study. The first section reviews the conceptual framework for research into western media representation about Islam and the spread of misinformation among the media's audiences. The chapter covers the initiatives taken by some countries to counteract negative media framing about Islam. It also covers the Da'wah initiatives taken to disseminate Islamic information. The second section focuses on United Arab Emirates, specifically the new Muslims and non-Muslim expatriates living in Dubai who are interested to learn about the Islamic faith. It also examines the initiatives taken by Da'wah centers and other media outlets in disseminating information for these immigrants. Additionally, the section examines its demography of the radio market within the UAE and theoretical framework. Due to the novelty of the topic, both sections highlight significant research in various disciplines regionally and globally.

2.2 The Western Media's Representation of Islam and Muslims

Media representations are the ways in which the mass media portrays particular groups, communities, cultural identities, experiences, ideas, or topics from a particular ideological or value perspective (Hall, 1982). Media representation of minorities is a growing research topic within academic community (Hall, 1995; Poole, 2002; Van Dijk, 1991). Among all the minorities in the world affairs, Muslims and Islam today are at the core of censure and critical discussion (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Saeed, 2007).

There has been a strong tendency for international media to frame Islam negatively (Espiritu, 2018; Gabriel, 2002; Osman, 2006). Many negative terms, including fundamentalism, global terrorism, fanatical Islamism, Islamic jihadism, authoritarianism, and fascism have been linked with the religion (Dunn, 2001; Ittefaq & Ahmad, 2018; Kepel, 2004). Western perceptions of Islam and Muslims further imply that Muslims are intolerant of other religions and cultures, as the media typically represents them as a symbol of ‘Different’ compared with the West. These negative depictions have created fear about Muslims around the world (AlSultany, 2012; Pandolfi, 2016).

Numerous observers point to a complexity of reasons for why the Western media promulgates such an unsympathetic view. They state that there is a systematic bias and pattern followed by individuals in the media in their representation of Muslims and Islam (Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005; Halliday, 1999; Poole, 2002; Saeed, 2007; Said, 1981; Sardar & Davis, 2002; Elahi & Khan, 2017). The Western media has many ‘experts’—including reporters, presenters, commentators, journalists, and broadcasters—who make biased statements about Islam. These media commentators are often wrongly assumed to be well-informed about religion (Golding, 1997; Poole & Richardson, 2006; Said, 1981). In fact, they display a tendency to present the views of any given layman, as if it were formally representative of the religion's tenets. Saeed and Drainville (2006) described the primary definers of news as ‘elites’—which include politicians, business leaders, and even big corporations. These elites have the power and control (political, economic, social, cultural) to become the decision makers in determining what is the important in the news. They mold information in a way to get it accepted by the majority (Horton, 1979; Traugott et al., 2002). When stories and news presented by such elites and experts are picked up from the West and repeated

in other international media, it has led to fear and anxiety among non-Muslims, engendering a culture of hate, resulting in frequent attacks and discrimination against Muslims (Alyedreessy, 2016; Rahman & Emadi, 2018).

Online media and social networking sites have also become important platforms for receiving and producing daily news. Recently, it has been noted that cyberbullying is having a detrimental impact on Muslims, increasing Islamophobia (Allen & Nielsen, 2002; Awan, 2016; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016). Koopmans and Olzak (2004) argue that online Islamophobia has contributed to the normalizing of abusive behavior and the creation of opportunities for promoting hatred. Islamophobia, which intentionally engenders negative attitudes, fear, or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims (Bleich, 2011), is on the rise (Pew Research Center, 2006; Rosentiel, 2007). This phenomenon is considered a major factor behind social exclusion and discrimination against Muslims (Dekker & Van Der Noll, 2013; Zaidi-Jivraj, 2015).

For instance, the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion (SFMSC) surveys estimate that, over the decade 2010–19, at least one in four Australians viewed Muslims negatively (Markus, 2021). In the same series of surveys, discrimination on the basis of skin color, ethnicity, or religion doubled from nine per cent in 2007 to 20 per cent in 2017 (Yosufzai, 2017), and in other surveys half of the Australian public supported a ban on Muslim immigration (Essential Media, 2016; O'Donnell et al., 2017). Similarly, a pro-Brexit activist, James Goddard in UK protested in support of efforts to 'ban Islam from the West,' claiming that it was a threat to non-Muslims (Walker, 2019). Ahmed and Matthes (2017) analyzed 345 published studies examining the media coverage of Muslims and Islam in 36 countries. Their meta-study concluded that Muslims tended to be negatively framed in the media, while Islam was 'dominantly portrayed as a violent religion' (p. 219). Additionally, the Super Survey

conducted in 2015 by Georgetown University, collecting two decades of data on the Americans view on Islam and Muslims, found that non-Muslim Americans saw Islam as more violent than other religions after the 9/11 attack (Bridge Initiative, 2015). The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) also stressed in 2018 that Islamophobia is rooted and spread widely through the Internet (ECRI, 2019). Collectif Contre l'islamophobie en Belgique (CCIB), which campaigns against Islamophobia, states that 29 per cent of Islamophobic incidents occurred through digital mediums (CCIB, 2018). Facebook and Twitter were seen as a popular arena for offenders due to its accessibility and anonymity to intimidate, harass, and bully others (Awan, 2014; Ittefaq & Ahmad, 2018).

Continual negative representations about Islam have created a trend in which violent actions are typically labelled as being Islamically motivated, even to the point where the violence is blamed on the religion rather than the individuals involved (Alyedreessy, 2016; Neiwert, 2017; Rahman & Emadi, 2018).

2.3 Initiatives to Counteract Negative Media Representation

Limited initiatives have been taken in response to negative Western media representations of Islam and Muslims (Anderson, 2015; Suleiman, 2013; Tivona, 2011). According to various studies, Argentina (Ahlin & Carler, 2011), Chile, (Melo-Carrasco, 2017; Sills & Baggett, 2011), Hong Kong (O'Connor, 2012), Japan (Osumi, 2015; Yamagata, 2019), San Francisco (Itaoui, 2020), Singapore (Gomez, 2010), and Taiwan (Shariff, 2014) have earned a reputation for tolerance and low scores for negative media representations of Muslims. The governments of some of these countries and cities have applied strategies and policies targeted towards combating stereotyped opinions and reducing the prevalence of 'closed' views of Islam in hard

news reporting (Taylor & Morrison, 2011). Strategies such as peace journalism, media control, multicultural tolerance, internet filtering, fair governmental policies, and disseminating information about Islam through religious bureaus were applied (Anderson, 2015; Lynch, 2011; Suleiman, 2013).

For instance, Gomez (2010) notes that Singapore's economic and political system recognized and allowed Muslims to progress in fields such as education, media, and entrepreneurship in spite of their religious beliefs. Singapore also enacted a law, promoting zero tolerance to racism and hate speech among its residents. O'Connor (2012) stresses that Hong Kong's Muslims rarely encountered victimization on the basis of their religion by locals. According to Itaoui (2019), San Francisco has a reputation for racial, cultural, and religious tolerance. The Bay Area in San Francisco is one of the most ethnically diverse area in the US, with a large Muslim population (Bazian & Senzai, 2013). Ahlin and Carler (2011) explored media framing and priming (written, spoken and images) in Argentina, and tested whether Muslims were framed according to homogenous standards (culture, religion, and political structure). The results show that the Argentine media lacked the media frames which categorized Muslims as 'others.' The media's framing was considered to be different from that in the West as it placed less emphasis on religious news and cultural affiliations. Similarly, there was minimal evidence in Japan to indicate negative attitudes towards Muslims among Japanese non-Muslims. Rather than inciting violence or hate speech, the Japanese government focused on increasing tourism through its media channels (Kutlugun & Kuczynska, 2015; Osumi, 2015). An Islamic bureau in Japan distributed pamphlets to Japanese locals to spread information about Islam. Hence, the overall aim was to help Japanese non-Muslims be more understanding and tolerant and have a positive perception of Muslims (Osumi, 2015; Yamagata, 2019).

The evidence in general indicates widespread negative framing of Islam and Muslims, although with some exceptions in which the society opposed the influence of negative media representations. These exceptions are important to note in that they offer examples of policies and initiatives that promote a more tolerant understanding of Muslims. Although these countries cannot avoid today's globalized media and its climate of negative representation of Islam, they have managed to escape some of the negative influence of the media representations by applying strategies which, to some extent, have helped their citizens decide not to join campaigns against Muslims.

2.4 The Growing Interest of Islam among Non-Muslims

Taylor and Morrison (2011) describe a strong positive relationship between the rate of conversion to Islam and the prominence Islam receives in the public domain, many people are interested in finding out what Islam is and, when they do, they research it through different mediums. Gaining information about Islam may be an eye-opener for some because it contradicts their perceived notions of the faith based on media coverage (Habib, 2016).

The Islamic scholar Asma Afsaruddin believes that a heightened interest in Islam in the last 15 years is precisely due to media publicity. In 2016 she told a radio program that, despite the rise of negative media representation, 'thoughtful people, curious about the real nature of Islam might go out of their way to discover the teachings of the religion from reliable sources' (Habib, 2016). Another reason for an increase in interest was the result of post-9/11 curiosity (Sacirbey, 2011). In analyzing non-Muslims who converted to Islam in the US after the 9/11 incident, Esseissah (2011), Sacirbey (2011), and Habib (2016) found that the main reason for conversion was curiosity about Islam. Many studies point to an important proposition:

media framing of Islam and Muslims, especially after 9/11, has made non-Muslims more curious about Islam. Arising from this curiosity, many decide to seek deeper understanding of Islam and, in a few cases, embrace the religion.

Non-Muslims with limited or no contact with Muslim communities appear to rely on the Internet and digital media as a source of Islamic information. For instance, the number of Islamic and Qur'anic websites appearing online has shown to be steadily increasing (Bunt, 2003). Many Mexicans and Brazilians who were interested in Islam learnt via the Internet (Diaz, 2013a, & 2013b; Debusmann, 2013; McCloud et al., 2013; Tottoli, 2014). Some Mexicans who converted to Islam wrote books on the importance of digital media in gathering information about the religion (Lang, 2004; Naoual (2010), as cited in Islam.ru (2011); Van Nieuwkerk, 2006; Nye, 2011). Similarly, Neumueller's (2012) study discusses several German converts who mentioned using the Internet for gaining their knowledge of Islam. Russ (2019), in noting an increase of eight per cent among Hispanic Latinos converts in 2018, reported that many non-Muslim Hispanics and Jews gained favorable views of Muslims due to the videos and pamphlets circulated by Islamic centers in their native languages.

Online media is popular in this regard because it allows non-Muslims and converts to learn about Islam privately and at their own convenience (Hosseini et al., 2014; Saifee et al., 2012). A 2013 study at the University of Cambridge indicates that a majority of young people who prefer searching information about Islam, do so 'from the Internet and from friends, and not from the mosques' (Suleiman, 2013, p. 102). This suggests that the Internet is playing a primary role in delivering Islamic information. However, few studies have been conducted to date to understand the role modern media plays in disseminating Islamic information among interested non-Muslims and new Muslims. An aim of the present study is to bridge that gap by

providing more understanding on the role of modern media as information sources about Islam among new Muslims and non-Muslims.

2.5 Understanding the Notion of Da'wah

Da'wah is an Arabic word indicating an invitation or call to something (Al-Faruqi, 1976) which is performed systematically and strategically (Safei, 2007). Many scholars (Ammar, 2001; Bauer, 2006; Mowlana, 2007; Jamal, 1991; Khiabany, 2003) apply the term 'Islamic propagation' in English instead of Da'wah, although they mean much the same. Da'wah has two aims: (i) to convey the Islamic message; and (ii), remove misconceptions of Islam (Ashry, 2013). It seeks to introduce truth from an Islamic perspective and allow individuals to decide for themselves whether to believe the facts presented or not.

Da'wah has external and internal dimensions. External Islamic propagation is an invitation to non-Muslims to Islam, informing them about Islamic beliefs and practices. Internal Islamic propagation is to teach Muslims about aspects of Islam. The main objective of Da'wah is to inform, not to convert (Saad, 2019). This research study has a related objective, which is to disseminate information about Islam, explore the available sources, but not to convert non-Muslims or even remove their misconceptions. It applies a form of external Islamic propagation, utilizing the term *Da'wah* in disseminating information about Islam within this study.

Modern communication technologies have been instrumental in shaping individual lifestyle and molding worldviews. Although face-to-face encounter is an inevitable step within Da'wah for those seeking deeper knowledge of Islam, Da'wah is no longer sufficient on a one-on-one basis—instead the focus is now about mass appeal and an approach to public communications (Siddiqi, 1998, as cited in Račius,

2004). Mellor and Rinnawi (2016) supplement Siddiqi with the notion that ‘Da’wah is a communication between hearts and thus the global information technology is a door for individuals to introduce themselves to other individuals’ (Mellor & Rinnawi, 2016, p. 220).

2.6 Da’wah with New Media

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an umbrella term which covers a range of communication devices or applications, including radio, television, mobile phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems, and various services for disseminating information (Eye on Tech, 2017). ICT has broken down the physical, geographical, and political barriers that once stood in the way of getting things done efficiently and effectively. ‘New media’ is a narrow term which includes multimedia and digital forms of communication via desktop and laptop computers, as well as smartphones, tablets, and similar devices (Flew, 2007). New media has introduced the phenomenon of user interaction in the media, rather than mere consumption of media information. Media messages and information can be replicated many times over, and thereby mass-produce a genre (Shavit & Wiesenbach, 2009). For this reason, it continues to serve as a growing platform for the distribution of video and audio materials about Islam (Campbell, 2010).

While the Internet today is a huge reservoir of information and knowledge, there is also an increasing concern about the dangers of unverifiable and unreliable information about Islam that could mislead people searching for true knowledge (Engel, 2015; Klausen, 2015; Neumueller, 2012; Suleiman, 2013). New converts who rely heavily on the Internet without human guidance in seeking Islam could be exposed to non-mainstream and hardline materials (Baba, 2017). For instance, the

online presence of terror groups such as ISIS or Al Qaeda have created misconceptions, as they were seen to misrepresent Islam on several digital platforms (Engel, 2015; Klausen, 2015; Singer, 2015).

As digital media impacts individuals' thought processes, so spreading the right knowledge through online media has become vital for Da'wah experts (Briandana et al., 2020). For instance, researchers such as Campbell (2012), Hosseini (2014), Ibahrine (2014), and Hakim (2016) add the following criteria for Da'wah:

- Da'wah should consist of specialized groups and individuals who are educated and adequately trained to refute the myths the media tends to instill among its audience about Islam
- Da'wah should organize online and offline content in form of conferences, news sites, newsletters, seminars, and workshops in various institutions and religious centers
- Da'wah should not be limited to information on spiritual matters, but also include current social affairs and trending topics or issues
- Da'wah scholars should be able to adapt new media effectively and efficiently.

Da'wah scholars such as Abdel Rahman Murphy, Mufti Menk, Nouman Ali Khan, and others have adapted and applied new media tools effectively, thus reaching out to non-Muslims and Muslims on a regular basis. These intellectuals have been popular in implementing their own digital media channels, which has led to millions of followers around the world (Qayyum & Mahmood, 2015). They have been popular for their persuasiveness, linguistic abilities, leadership, steadfastness and persistence for knowledge, making them capable of opening communication channels with non-Muslims and Muslims in a way that encourages stimulating discussions (Siddiqi, 1998,

as cited in Račius, 2004; Ali et al., 2004). They have linked Islam with contemporary topics such as business, sociology, economics, politics, psychology, history, astronomy, and human equality (Siddiqi, 1989). Likewise, they are aware of current problems, events, and contemporary issues within the community and the world, making them more engaged with their audience.

An important aspect of Da'wah is that it has to be applied within Muslim countries where non-Muslims reside. The Islamic scholar Zakir Hussein has stated, 'Da'wah has to be two way, rather than one way. Muslims within the Islamic nations should emphasize on Da'wah, so that it is beneficial to themselves and the non-Muslims living with them' (Gardner et al., 2018, p. 357). Articulating this, leaders of Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia, with the support of the UN General Assembly, announced in 2019 the joint launch of an anti-Islamophobia television channel in English (Butt, 2019). The agenda included deploying communication channels such as documentaries, video news, call center hotlines, cinema films, social media campaigns, periodic reports, and book publications for widespread access. The initiative aimed to become a strategic communication channel between the Islamic and the Western worlds (Altun, 2019).

Following a similar strategy, many researchers and Muslim scholars were seen adopting various digital technologies and media models suited for specific Da'wah purposes for disseminating information in countries such as Bangladesh (Kalam, 2014), Egypt (Abdulla, 2007), Ghana (Pontzen, 2018a; Pontzen, 2018b), Indonesia (Nurdin & Rusli, 2013), Japan and Korea (Fathil & Fathil, 2011), Malaysia (Chuah, 2002), Nigeria (Yusuf, 1993; Bala, 2014; Ibrahim, 2015), Singapore (Lee, 1999), and Tanzania (Ng'atigwa, 2013). Limited studies on a similar theme have been conducted in the GCC countries, particularly UAE. Hence, the next section discusses the

application of Da'wah within UAE, specifically Dubai. It also aims to discover the existing media tools applied to disseminate information of Islam among non-Muslim and new Muslim expatriates and determine the existing challenges, if any.

2.7 Case Study of Dubai, UAE

The United Arab Emirates is one of the Middle East's top tourist destinations with a high expatriate ratio (Kumar, 2019a; Emirates 24|7, 2013). In spite of media representations suggesting Arab nations are close-minded, backward, and risky (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, 2006; Shaheen, 1985), the UAE is considered one of the safest and most liberal countries in the world (Kawach, 2002; Abbas, 2017). As shown in Table 1, UAE is ranked sixth in the world and second among Muslim nations as a migrant host country (The World Bank, 2021). However, it was reported that some non-Muslim expatriates were still asked whether UAE was a safe country to live due to the instability in neighboring countries, lack of human rights or whether the Emirati are tolerant of others' beliefs (Hammond, 2019; Iyer, 2017; Gulf Takeout, 2019).

Table 1: Ten countries with largest migrant populations, ranked by percentage. Derived by researcher from The World Bank (2021).

Country	Percentage (%) of population (2015)	Total number of migrants (2015)	Ranking by percentage (%)
United States	14.5	46 627 102	6
Germany	14.9	12 005 690	5
Russian Federation	8.1	11 643 276	10
Saudi Arabia	32.3	10 185 945	2
United Kingdom	13.2	8 543 120	7
United Arab Emirates	88.4	8 095 126	1
Canada	21.8	7 835 502	4
France	12.1	7 784 418	9
Australia	28.2	6 763 663	3
Spain	12.7	5 852 953	8

Dubai was selected for the present study as it is one of the most cosmopolitan cities within the GCC region, with the highest proportion of expatriates residing, compared with the other emirates in UAE. Dubai is located on the Arabian Gulf in the northeast of the UAE. It is the second-largest emirate with an urban area of 3885 sq. km; the city itself is roughly 35 sq. km in area (Pacione, 2005). Dubai enjoys a favorable strategic and central location between Europe and the Far East, making it a potential financial center for both regions (Jacobs & Hall, 2007; Balakrishnan, 2008). Recent archaeological findings indicate that UAE has long been an entrepôt, as well as historically a magnet for pirates. Trade from Iran, India, and China destined for Europe and Africa has transited through Dubai for hundreds of years. Recognizing its strategic position, Britain signed a series of treaties in the nineteenth century with several sheikdoms in the area to help protect its shipping from pirates. Eventually the so-called Trucial States began to desire freedom from Britain's influence in the 1960s. On 2 December 1971, the Trucial States signed an agreement for independence and became known as the United Arab Emirates (Al-Fahim, 1995; Fullard, 2015).

In the twenty-first century, Dubai became one of the fastest growing cities in the world, according to a survey of 300 cities (Everington, 2015). In 2018, Dubai ranked first in the Arab world and fourth worldwide in economic performance (Mohamed, 2018).

The UAE has a population of about 9.8 million people (The World Bank, 2018). The native Emirati population makes up only 15 per cent of the population; the other 85 per cent comprises expatriates who live and work as UAE residents (World Population Review, 2021). In 2019, Dubai had a population of over four million, of which 87 per cent were expatriates (The Media Lab, 2019). Although Arabic is the

official language of the emirates, English is widely used, which helps foreigners to adapt to life and work within the country (Lauria, 2018). Dubai is a popular tourist destination, although transport, trade, construction, and financial services are seen as the key drivers of its economy (Chen, 2021). Over 80 per cent of the nation's AED 510 billion (USD\$139 billion) merchandise trade is conducted through Dubai (Rahman, 2007), which seeks to attract foreigners with incentives such low taxation, free trade zones, and favorable property ownership laws.

Besides offering business, economic opportunities, and career prospects, Dubai claims to offer its residents a multicultural environment (Bashir, 2016). It is home to over 200 nationalities, aided by laws which allow residents to practice any faith and substantially more centers of worship than the other cities in the GCC region (Al Suwaidi, 2017; Todorova, 2010). Consequently, Dubai and UAE generally has experienced a surge in its non-Muslim expatriate population over the past 10 years. This trend is expected to continue, with predictions of further growth in the non-Muslim population from 24 per cent in 2010 to 29 per cent. by 2050. (Figure 1) (Pew Research Center, 2016; Al Shaykh, 2017).

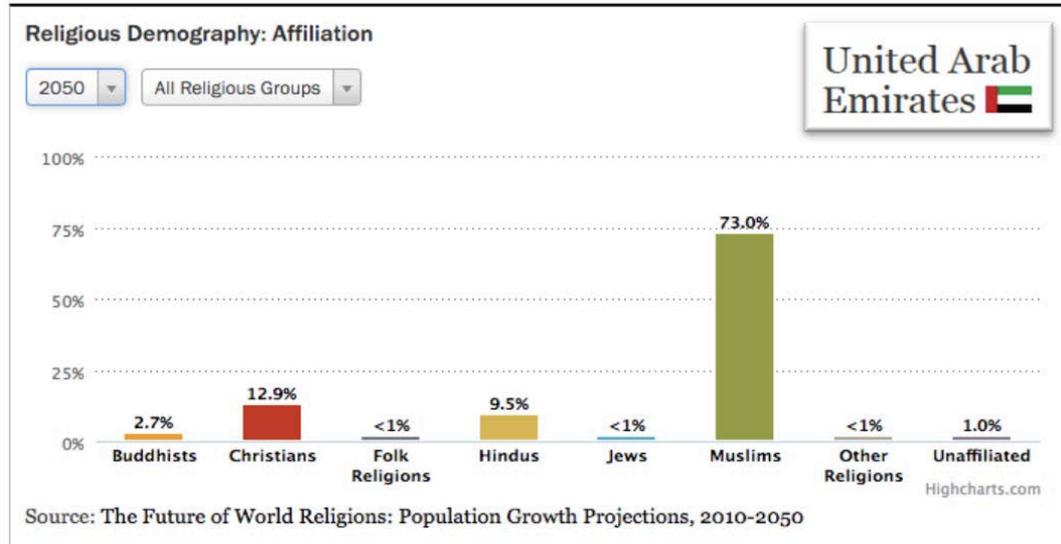


Figure 1: Population growth by religion in UAE by 2050. Pew Research Center (2016).

2.8 The Anti-Discrimination Law in Dubai

Although Dubai is known to be a progressive city economically and multiculturally (Kantaria, 2016), it does have some strict social policies. While the official religion of UAE is Islam and follows sharia law, it has a royal decree which strictly prohibits discrimination against Islam and other religions within Dubai and the other emirates (McDowall, 2015; Al Suwaidi, 2017). The anti-discrimination law not only prohibits religious discrimination but also criminalizes public acts of expression the government interprets as provoking religious hatred or insulting towards a religion (McDowall, 2015). Recent cases of blasphemy involving Islam (Al Amir, 2019; Sengendo, 2019; Khaleej Times, 2019; Za'za, 2016, 2018) resulted in the offenders receiving jail terms of five years or fines up to two million AED, and in some cases deportation for expatriates (Ahmad, 2020; Office of International Religious Freedom, 2018).

In 2016, the UAE Ministry of Tolerance was created to implement the anti-discrimination law, especially with a view to online platforms such as social media

where most blasphemy cases arise. It also launched the world's first formal *tolerance charter* to spread tolerance of each other and promote peace and coexistence throughout the country, while also encouraging cultural diversity (McFarlane, 2016). The Minister of Tolerance, Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, explained that the Ministry was dedicated to 'promoting the knowledge of Islam not only in the UAE, where 200 nationalities live side-by-side, but also around the world, where perceptions about Muslims is often distorted' (McFarlane, 2016). The National Tolerance Programme in the UAE was part of Sheikh Mohammed's vision for 2021 which aimed to follow five main edicts: international conventions, common human values, the UAE constitution, Sheikh Zayed's vision, and the teachings of Islam (Al Maktoum, 2016; Gouveia, 2016). The UAE government officially proclaimed 2019 as the Year of Tolerance (Bridge, 2018). The objective of the 2019 vision was to act as a global coordinator for a new Global Tolerance Alliance and increase the diversity of nationalities and religions within UAE by attracting foreigners (Webster, 2018).

The UAE's strategy for promoting tolerance included the formation and active involvement of the Hedayah Institute, which was founded in 2011 (Gulf News, 2016; Bashir, 2016). While many Islamic centers and institutes already exist, (including Awqaf and the Dubai Islamic Center, which is popular among non-Muslims), Hedayah focuses on key academic institutions and Islamic scholars. The institute organizes discussions on combating extremism and promoting interfaith dialogue at an international level (Moran, 2016).

Political leaders in UAE have recently become keen to promote tolerance and understanding of Islam within the society. The first International Muslim Minorities Congress was organized in 2018 and attended by over 400 prominent Islamic personalities from 130 countries. The two-day conference discussed the challenges

faced by Muslim minorities around the world. UAE was chosen as a meeting point as it provided a safe location for a dialogue between the different religious and cultural leaders of various societies. The forum discussed the issues of marginalization, disenfranchisement, and the prevalence of Islamophobia (Sebugwaawo, 2018). Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the UAE Minister of Tolerance, stated that ‘as Muslims, we should think of opening up active channels of communication with members of other religions to discuss issues affecting us all and come up with lasting solutions’ (Sebugwaawo, 2018). He urged Muslims to be active members of their communities, especially in the fight against radicalism through spreading knowledge about Islam (Voice of America, 2018).

However, the initiatives discussed by the Congress participants were broadly conceived. The forum’s objectives were to establish UAE as an example of a country of peace and tolerance and encourage foreigners to visit the country. The tolerance charter and forums do not specifically discuss how such objectives would be achieved. They do not specifically consider the issue of foreigners who arrive in UAE interested to learn about the Islamic faith, and how information could be disseminated to them. Nor do they explore the challenges faced by expatriates who are actively seeking information on Islam at present or discuss strategies for how local media or digital media could help educate non-Muslims about Islam. They also ignore any understanding of UAE expatriate demographics and their media preferences for receiving Islamic information.

2.9 Da’wah Initiatives in Dubai

Today, many non-Muslims within UAE are interested to know more about Islam and its way of life (Al Ghalib, 2008; Crompton, 2016; Khaleej Times, 2017).

Non-Muslim expatriates residing in Dubai are exposed to Muslims every day, making some of them curious to learn about the culture and about Islam (Kumar, 2019b). They observe Muslims' way of life, including their moral beliefs, characters, and day-to-day practices, especially during Ramadan (Ashry, 2014; Mojib, 2020). Some have reported becoming influenced by factors such as charity, assembly for prayer at designated times and the sociability of Muslims. In 2018, it was reported that 2,186 expatriates in UAE converted to Islam, of which 1,993 were from Dubai (Salman, 2018).

When it comes to seeking knowledge or reducing misconceptions (Salman, 2018), traditional channels such as Islamic centers, cultural and heritage centers, Islamic conferences, educational institutions, Dubai's Quranic Park, libraries, local television channels, and personal interactions with Muslims in Dubai act as the available sources. Of all channels, the most popular are the Islamic centers. The Dubai Islamic Information Center, Mohammed bin Rashid Center Islamic Culture of Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities, and the Abu Backer Al Sideeque Islamic Center are the three most visited centers where people in Dubai may learn about Islam. In 2019, 1,248 students from 49 nationalities, including new Muslims and non-Muslims, attended special classes about the basic tenets of Islam, organized by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Center (Mojib, 2020).

An Islamic summit held in Dubai in 2014 addressed the specific issues which new Muslims were encountering. The summit concluded that there was a problem in the current Da'wah system. The needs of new Muslims were not met effectively due to lack of access to accurate information on Islam (Ponce de Leon, 2014). Moreover, the summit highlighted the lack of a systematic education system for new Muslims due to limited use of digital media channels. Gurung and Shreeraman (2017)

highlighted similar issues among non-Muslim expatriates. They stated that many non-Muslims relied on word-of-mouth communication with Muslims, who themselves lacked a proper knowledge of Islam. This led to confusion and misconceptions among non-Muslims. Irshad (2003), Ruiz (2010), and Schoorel (2016) have reported that limited initiatives are taken in teaching and making people aware of Islam, and that the difficulties faced by non-Muslims in pursuing Islamic knowledge have yet to be properly investigated.

UAE, which is a nation considered tolerant of other cultures (Hilotin, 2018), may possess the potential to bring Muslims into a more positive light, nationally or internationally. However, current evidence suggests that the use of media channels for disseminating Islamic information has been patchy. There have been limited reports or research studies conducted which identify the reasons why the application of modern media is limited. Moreover, the limited use of modern media channels within Islamic centers and the qualifications of Da'wah experts used in the media have yet to be investigated. It is important to understand whether these Islamic experts have any formal training, especially in the use of digital media and in understanding the informational requirements of their visitors.

Scholars from Muslim countries such as Bangladesh (Kalam, 2014), Indonesia (Nurdin & Rusli, 2013), Malaysia (Chuah, 2002), and Nigeria (Yusuf, 1993) have examined the use of modern media in disseminating information about Islam. However, no such study has been conducted in UAE. Presence of Radio in the UAE

As identified by Egger et al. (1993), radio is an effective medium for extended exposure to people from diverse backgrounds, intellectual stimulation, discussion of local issues, and interaction between experts. It also acts as an effective back-up support for television, connecting with socially and physically specific groups (e.g.,

the elderly, children, housewives) and requiring only a medium-sized budget for a media campaigns. Radio is a preferred medium for many because it is cheap, affordable, mobile, and a reliable source for news, entertainment, and education (Ng'atigwa, 2013). Badruddin and Ishak (2018) explain that radio reaches many people simultaneously and has a significant bearing on politics, society, economy, culture, and education.

Radio has been in widespread use in UAE for more than 60 years (Dubai Press Club, 2012; Chaudhary, 2014). Despite its relatively small population, UAE remains the largest radio market in the GCC and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions with more than 50 terrestrial AM and FM radio stations (Schoenbach et al., 2016; Banco, 2021; Aliouat et al., 2016). Due to the large number of expatriates, there are multiple stations for every major ethnic group, broadcasting in more than 20 languages. Though most of the emirates have their own respective radio stations, Dubai has the highest number of radio stations in the UAE (Nielsen, 2018). UAE radio is also a sophisticated and mature radio market, reaching 80 per cent of the population and offering diverse content (Schoenbach et al., 2016). Radio enjoys a high market penetration due in part to the popularity of smartphone apps and listening while driving. Radio's positioning as a cost-effective advertising solution has helped its growth across the MENA region; this is expected to continue relatively unchanged with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.3 per cent. The radio market typically does well during economic downturns and provides consistency for listeners (Aliouat et al., 2016).

According to Arab Media Group (AMG), radio accounts for at least four per cent of the total advertising market in UAE, worth an estimated USD\$300 million (Dh1.1 billion AED) in the first half of 2011 (Flanagan, 2011). It was also reported

that UAE topped Gulf with \$410m in Q1 2017 in the advertising spend for at USD\$410 million (Dh1.5 billion AED) (Ahmad, 2017; Staff, 2017). In revenue terms, radio was third behind newspapers and outdoor advertising in the UAE advertising market in 2015 (Arjun, 2016; Schoenbach et al., 2016). Compared with other media, the listeners' relationship with radio is strong (Allison, 2020). When accessibility to wifi is usually limited, radio is available at no cost and programs are mostly broadcast live, so listeners feel they are up to date with any new information. Radio programming, when done properly, engages and connects listeners, enlivens imaginations, and compels listeners into action.

About 80 per cent of radio listeners in UAE are car drivers or commuters (Flanagan, 2011; Nielsen Company, 2018). The lifestyle, ease of access, no cost to the consumer, and the number of hours an individual spends outside their home helps to strengthen radio's significance in the media. Radio works well with the day-to-day routines of a 9am to 5pm work culture. The majority of radio listeners use car radio or portable radio to access their radio stations. With the morning shows reaching 62 per cent of listeners, it is mainly consumed while driving to work. Radio usage peaks between 7am and 10am (during the morning commute), followed by the 2pm to 4pm and the 6pm to 10pm slots (end of workday commute) (Arjun, 2016). An Ipsos radio listeners' survey conducted in 2016 revealed that 5.1 million people in UAE tune into radio, listening on average for four hours and 22 minutes daily; among these listeners, locals and Arabs constituted 1.96 million and non-Arab expatriates 3.2 million (Arjun, 2016).

In 2019, research by Nielsen UAE, a global measurement and data analytics firm, compared and measured the listenerships of 53 radio stations across UAE. It conducted face-to-face interviews across seven emirates with 17,000 individuals from

age 10 and above. It also examined listening habits of listeners across all mediums (AM/FM, internet, mobile) (Nielsen, 2020). The research indicates that radio consumption had increased since 2016 and that radio was exceptionally strong among UAE residents and nationals. With a total reach of 93 per cent, listeners logged 61.5 million hours of radio listening across all seven emirates in an average week, with each listener tuning in on average for seven hours and 47 minutes a week (Figure 2) (Nielsen Company, 2019).

In Dubai, about 92 per cent of residents listen to radio in an average week. Although the listenership includes both Emirati and expatriate Arabs, the reach of radio was highest among Filipino, South Asian and Indian listeners (BroadcastPro Middle East, 2019). Media experts such as Arabian Radio Network, and the UAE Media Index interpret these results as strengthening the position of radio as a significant entertainment medium for UAE residents (Nielsen, 2019).

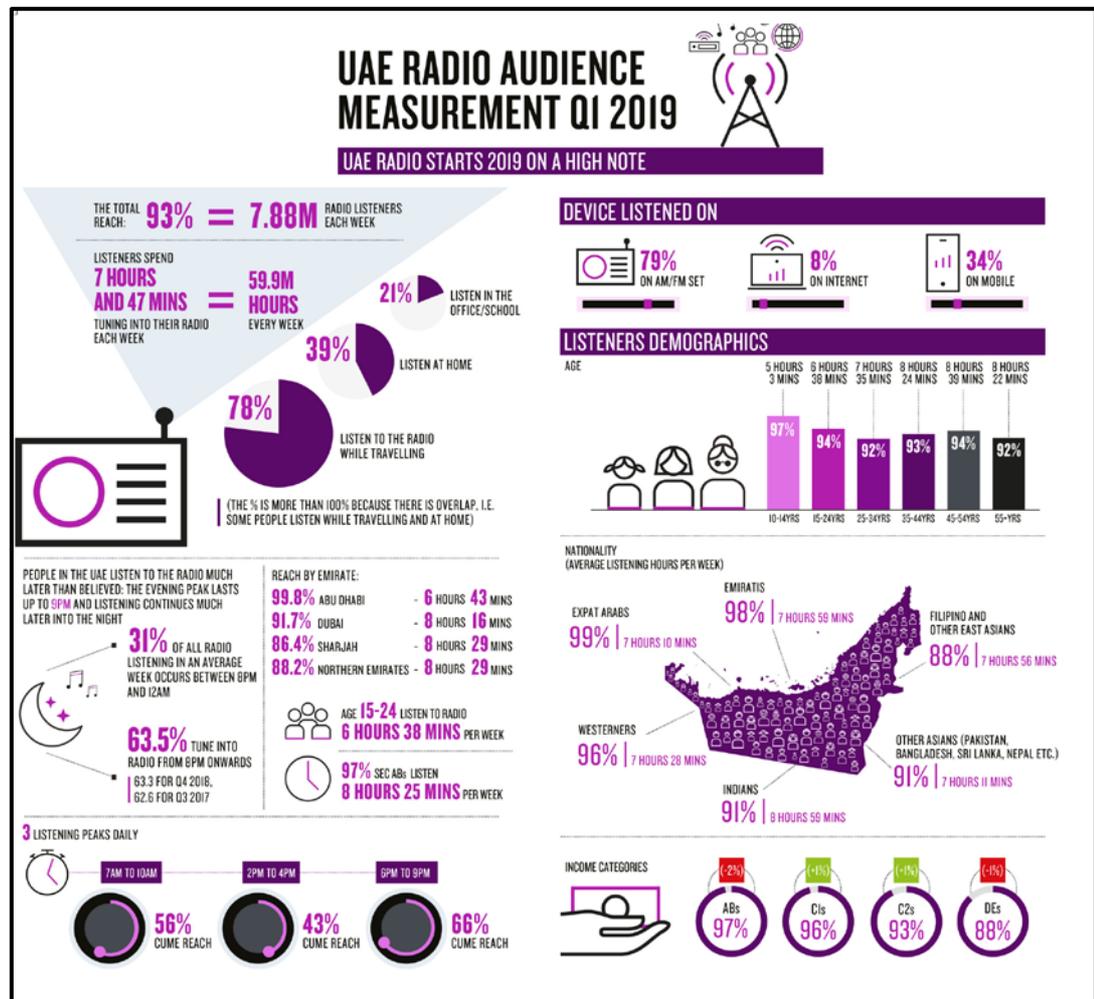


Figure 2: UAE radio audience measurement, first quarter 2019. Nielsen (2019)

2.10 Accessibility and Reliability of Radio

Steve Smith, the chief operating officer of Arabian Radio Network (ARN), has described Dubai as ‘a perfect radio market.’ This, he said, was because the majority of the public tend to be commuters and this lifestyle has helped the radio business to boom (Parnell, 2010). Consequently, radio has proven to be commercially sustainable (Flanagan, 2012), with a surge in the number of radio stations operating (Roy, 2017). Every year, ARN launches new frequencies and FM stations for specific segments, such as PearlFM, which is targeted at children aged six to 12 years (Webster, 2016),

or the English talk station Dubai Eye, which focuses on information, sports, business, and local events.

In measuring the public's reliance on radio, a public confidence survey released by the UAE's National Media Council in 2018 found that radio was in second place (at 72 per cent) to newspapers (at 98 per cent) when it came to reliance on local UAE media for news. (Figure 3) (National Media Council, 2018).



Figure 3: UAE Media Index Survey. National Media Council (2018)

UAE also has one of the highest mobile penetration rates in the world, i.e. 252 per cent (Townsend, 2015). This is largely due to the country's affluence and fluid population of expatriate workers (Wansink, 2017). Rapid advances in digital technology has dramatically changed radio listener habits. Listeners are multi-engaged with numerous social media platforms and prefer access to high-quality content (McKinsey & Company, 2015). ARN and Abu Dhabi Media (ADM) have recently invested in programmatic advertisements to diversify revenue by offering a range of digital services (Aliouat et al., 2016). This has resulted in giving radio owners more opportunity to expand their listener bases and deliver targeted advertising based on location, time, and content.

Digitization trends are becoming more prevalent in UAE, with many stations, such as Virgin Radio Dubai, offering their content online and via apps (Aliouat et al., 2016). Moreover, investment in mobile development through creating apps has helped to tap listeners and engage them with live content (Benni, 2016) in commonly spoken languages such as Arabic, English, Urdu, Malayalam, Farsi, and Tagalog (Dubai Press Club, 2012). Digital radio in UAE is expected to grow in coming years because of the low cost of receivers; however, the initial success of digitization among listeners is yet to be determined.

2.11 Religious Content on the Radio

UAE has the largest radio market in the MENA region. Among more than 50 stations (which is still expanding), 14 radio stations broadcast in Arabic, while the rest broadcast in English, Tagalog, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam, Russian, Persian, and other languages (Aliouat et al., 2016).

Abu Dhabi Media and ARN (part of Dubai Holding) are the key operators in the radio market. The primary reason for listening to radio in UAE is music, followed by news and then religious programs. Aliouat et al. (2016) lists the top five radio stations in UAE (Figure 4). The Holy Quran FM (Arabic), a religious radio station on Abu Dhabi radio, occupies fifth position in terms of listenership. Holy Quran FM plays Quran tilawat (recitation), nasheeds (Islamic enchanting and melody) and talk shows by Muslim scholars in Arabic.

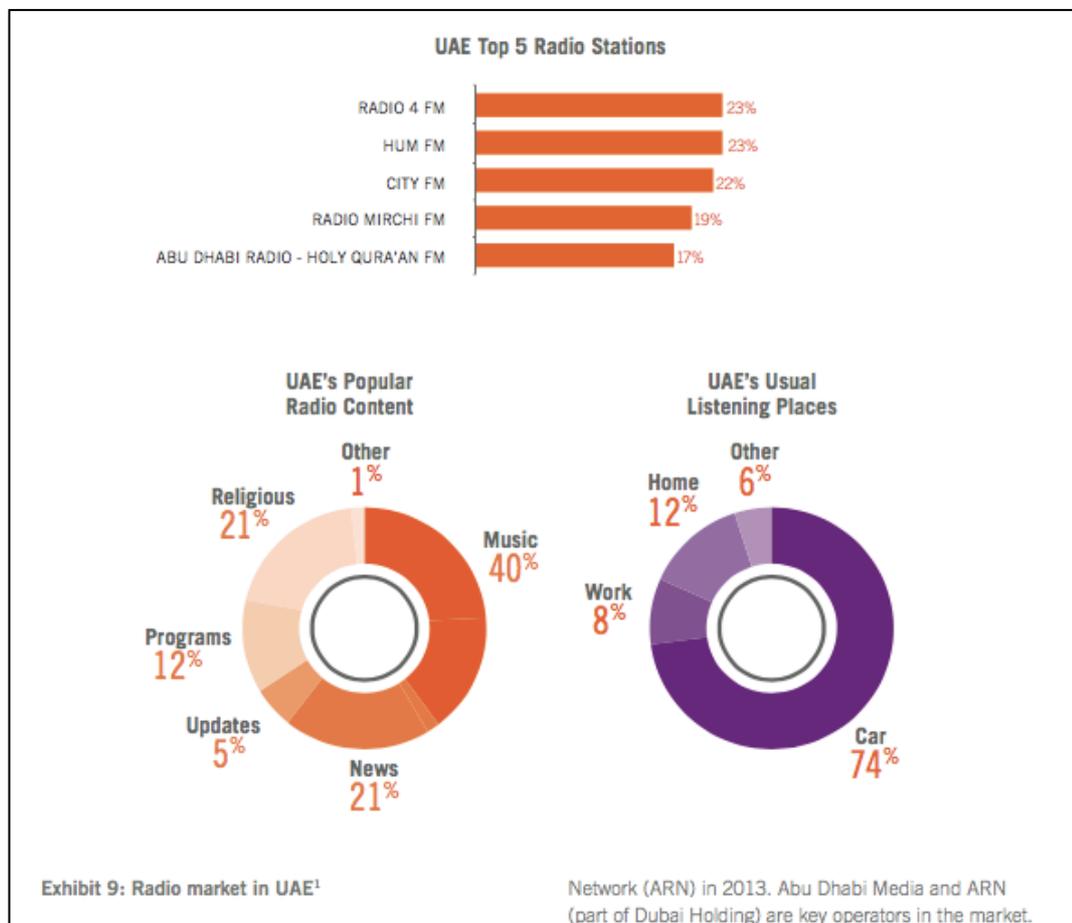


Figure 4: The UAE radio market. Aliouat et al. (2016)

Moreover, a study by Dennis et al. (2014) revealed that one in seven adults listened to religious music in UAE, a proportion consistent among most sub-groups in

the overall population. Listeners from UAE were most likely to listen to religious music, compared to other MENA countries. However, the study did not specify the media channels on which listeners accessed religious music (Figure 5).

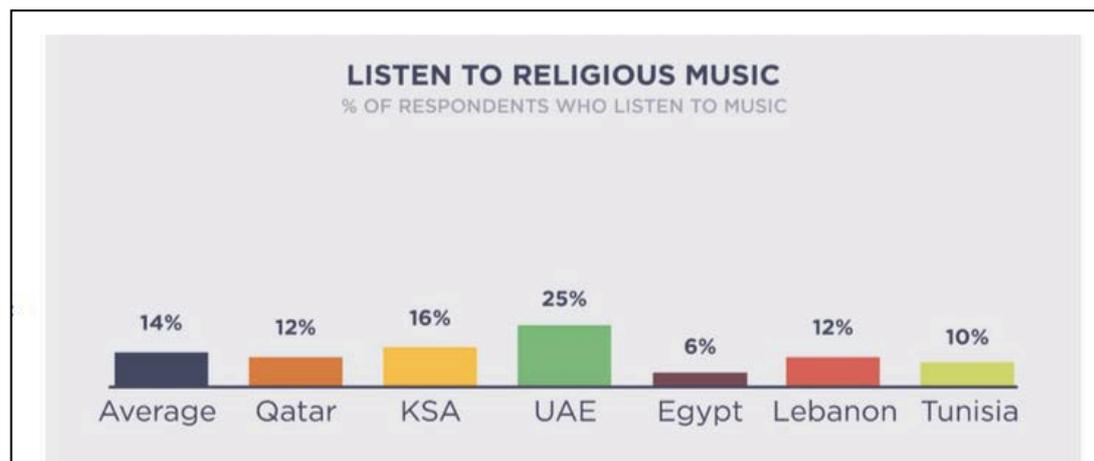


Figure 5: Religious music listeners, by country. Dennis et al. (2014)

In 2005, Dubai Radio Network (DRN) and Al Sayegh Media (ASM) conducted a pilot study which indicated a need for an Islamic radio in English, especially among non-Muslims (Za'za, 2005). In 2016, the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Center launched Dubai's first Quran radio station, broadcasting Quran recitations, Quran and hadith interpretations and programs to assist listeners understand fasting and other core principles of Islam (Zakaria, 2016). However, the programs are currently broadcast in Arabic only.

2.12 Rethinking the Radio Medium in the Digital Age

According to Hoover (2006), the emergence of religious radio broadcasts has changed the media landscape and put religion on the agenda as a topic for public discourse. Formerly, methods such as public rallies, social interaction, inter-marriages, and education and health services were used as the main tools for Muslim Da'wah

(Mamiya, 2001; Ndaluka, 2012; Tayob, 1992). Currently, radio is becoming an important media channel in Muslim Da'wah for informing listeners, growing the number of followers, strengthening followers' faith, and reinforcing the Da'wah message (Ng'atigwa, 2013).

Researchers such as Agbaje (2011) and Poole and Richardson (2006) believe that radio is a medium for mass preaching and dissemination of religious activities due to its ability to reach out to the grass roots of a religious community and contribute to social development at large. Its capability to reach a wide population, literate and illiterate, has special value compared to other media channels. For instance, a media consumption survey by English (2008) showed that radio was the most important medium for over half (59 per cent) of the population in 23 countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The emergence of religious radio broadcasting in Africa was consistent with the radio culture of the people in these countries (English, 2008). Current media technology and innovation are also changing radio usage in rural, urban, and suburban areas as people have shifted to more practical and sophisticated media, including digital (Akbarzadeh & Smith, 2005). Internet access is a valuable tool for creative program makers and acts as an opportunity for radio listeners to hear programs via 'listen-again' services (within websites, podcasts, and social media posts), keeping up to date with current events (through SMS and email) and being in contact with broadcasters through online chats and social media (Bowie, 2012).

Cordeiro (2012) states that radio today includes an environment where a combination of online and offline context result in a hybridization of practices. Researchers such as Berry (2014), Boaden (2013), and Shepherd (2008) add that the future of radio is the internet, although it cannot be completely replaced by it—instead radio and digital media appear destined to evolve hand-in-hand, not as substitutes for

each other. Some insist that the digitization of radio creates hybridity in programming which enhances the overall listening experience (Berry, 2014; Boaden, 2013). However, Starkey (2017) emphasizes the aspect of content, arguing that the relationship between listener and broadcaster is not limited to the online but is more about a convergence where radio stations produce quality program content, not just radio shows (Starkey, 2017).

What may be inferred from these studies is that the convergence of radio with digital media is becoming an important feature in the media landscape. (Chignell, 2009). Studies on radio with digital media in disseminating Islamic knowledge have been undertaken in Tanzania (Ng'atigwa, 2013), Malaysia (Badruddin & Ishak, 2018), Australia (Ahmad & Harrison, 2007), and several other countries. However, the use of digital media with radio in disseminating Islamic information compared to the other methods of Da'wah is still unexplored within UAE.

2.13 Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Considering the issues outlined above, the research study attempted to bring all the informational factors together within a theoretical framework suitable to inform an academic discourse on the research findings and their implications. The theory of Diffusion of Innovations (DoI) was chosen as suitable for this study.

DoI theory was developed in 1962 by an American communication theorist and sociologist, Everett Rogers. The theory sought to understand in Western society how new technology and ideas were created and propagated within the society. In Rogers's conception, diffusion is a social change or process by which an alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system (Rogers, 2003). In particular, in the promotion of an innovation or an idea, the theory emphasizes understanding the

characteristics of the target population that furthers the adoption of an idea or innovation.

According to Rogers, there are four principal elements that influence the spread of a new idea. First is the innovation, which is basically an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by members of a social system and considered for possible adoption. Second are the communication channels which explain how messages get from one individual to another. Third is time, which is the innovation-decision period required to complete the innovation-decision process, as well as the time required for members of the social system to adopt an innovation. Lastly is the social system, which is defined as a set of interrelated units engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal. Rogers (2003) also identifies two distinct classes of channels: mass media and interpersonal channels. While the mass media is initially important to spread awareness about an innovation, interpersonal networks become more important over time as people turn to their peers for opinions and evaluations of new ideas.

As per Rogers (2003), diffusion of an innovation occurs through a five-step process (Figure 6). First is knowledge, where the audience becomes aware of the innovation's existence. Then comes persuasion, where the audience develops an attitude towards an innovation. Third is decision-making, where awareness of the innovation is built, and an audience decides whether to adopt the innovation or not. This leads to implementation, where the audience starts using the innovation, and continues learning about it. Last comes the confirmation that the innovation has been adopted and implemented. Within each of the five steps of DoI, the decision process of an individual may be further split into five attributes: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 2003; Yusof, 1999).

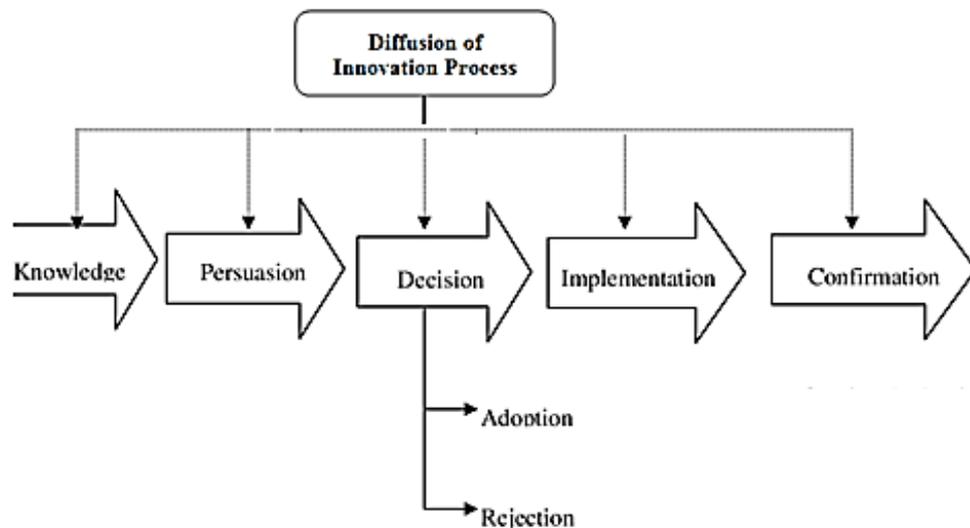


Figure 6: Five stages in the diffusion of innovation process

In applying DoI theory to this research study, it was important to understand the characteristics of the potential adopters and their decision-making process. According to Rogers (2003), five categories of adopters serve as a classification of individuals within a social system (Figure 7). They are:

- Innovators, individuals who are willing to adopt a new idea quickly. They are usually high-risk takers, youngest in age, from a high social class with plenty of financial liquidity, very social, and with the closest contact to other innovators
- Early adopters are individuals who are fast to adopt an innovation. They tend to be leaders of opinion among the other adopter categories as they realize that a judicious choice of adoptions will help them maintain a central communication position
- Early majority individuals who adopt an innovation after varying periods of time

- Late majority individuals who adopt an innovation when the average member of the social system does so. They approach an innovation with a high degree of skepticism
- Laggards, who are the last to adopt an innovation. They tend to be focused on traditions, living in a small group of social circles, with low social status and little financial liquidity.

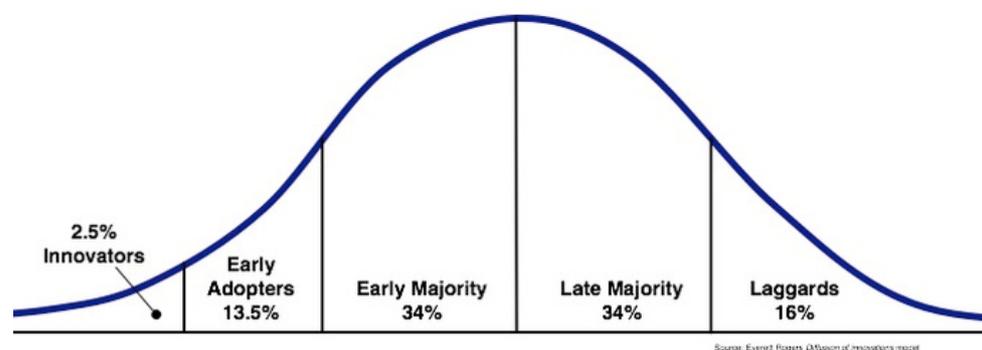


Figure 7: Categories of innovation adopters (*in blue*)

Previous research on DoI has consistently highlighted the importance of the mass media for exposing audiences to new ideas (Allen, 2017; Daghfous et al., 1999; Meyer, 2004; Watts & Dodds, 2007). While recognizing the media's important role in the diffusion of ideas, cultural studies have also enriched our understanding of the adopters' social setting, including demographic, social, economic, psychographic, and cultural factors. These factors help in comprehending the probability of the individual in adopting an innovation or idea (Allen, 2017; Daghfous et al., 1999).

This research study aims to use DoI theory as a guiding framework. DoI is manifest in various cultures and fields and is highly dependent on the type of adopters and the nature of the innovation decision process. For this reason, the study aims to see whether a Western theory such as DoI could be applied in a non-Western setting,

viz. Dubai, UAE. The study focuses on a target audience, which is new Muslims and non-Muslims. It attempts to comprehend their demographics, informational needs, perceptions with personal experiences and challenges encountered while they are gathering religious information. Once these factors have been recognized, the study aims to apply the DoI framework and recognize a reliable medium that could help fill an existing knowledge gap in Dubai. Through the DoI model, the study aims to recognize which group of adopters would be more willing to accept or adapt to the proposed innovation, while also considering a potential innovation that can cater to the religious informational needs of the target audience.

2.14 Summary

This chapter provided an overview of negative media representation, focusing on Western media representations, the way information was presented, and how some societies chose to counteract negative media framing. The chapter further discussed Da'wah methods to curb the misconceptions caused by Western media. It examined non-Muslims who were interested to learn about Islam, assessed how religious information is disseminated via media channels, and stressed the importance of digital media among Da'wah scholars in non-Muslim and Muslim countries alike. What has also emerged from the literature review is that researchers have emphasized the importance of disseminating the right information about Islam through modern media channels and by well-trained Islamic experts.

In its second section the chapter focused on new Muslims and non-Muslim immigrants, specifically living in Dubai, which has a majority expatriate population. It examined why non-Muslim expatriates were interested to learn about Islam and discussed Da'wah initiatives by the UAE government to disseminate information,

including challenges within the approach taken. The section also covered the radio market, its demographic presence, and the gradual convergence of radio with digital media. Finally, the chapter introduced DoI theory as a guiding framework for the research study. It aimed to construct a link between the idea of disseminating Islamic information to the target audience and the development of a potential innovation to help disseminate the Islamic information within the requirements of the target audience.

Due to limited studies in UAE, the present study is the first research on this given theme. The study covers the perceptions of Islam among non-Muslims and new Muslims living in Dubai and aims to understand their opinions on the media representation of Islam. It also seeks to associate and link DoI theory with the dissemination of Islamic information among new Muslims and non-Muslims in Dubai, their current perceptions about Islam, and their experiences in acquiring Islamic knowledge. It is the first research study in UAE which uses the DoI framework to investigate the dissemination of Islamic information in the target audience. In addition, it explores a reliable media channel and proposes an innovative media model that could serve the purpose of disseminating information among non-Muslims and new Muslim expatriates interested to learn more about Islam.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Overview

For a researcher, it is essential to follow the correct methodology during the research process (Kothari, 2004). Considering the main objective of the study, the researcher settled on a mixed-methods approach to integrate the data collected and examine the research study from multiple angles (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017; Jick, 1979).

3.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Research objectives establish the specific intent of the research study and define the questions relevant to the research topic (Kothari, 2004). This research study had three overarching objectives:

- Objective 1 (Perceptions): To understand the respondents' current perception about Islam and Muslims based on their exposure to western media representations.
- Objective 2 (Access to sources): To understand the respondents' access to various sources for learning about Islam and Muslims and the challenges they encountered.
- Objective 3 (Media preference): To investigate the consumption patterns of radio among respondents and as a media preference for disseminating Islamic information.

3.3 Mixed Methods Research Design

There is a variety of mixed-method approaches, including the sequential, transformative, and concurrent approaches (Creswell, 2009). This study employed a sequential, exploratory mixed-method approach.

A sequential mixed-methods approach is where one kind of data informs the forthcoming data collection and analysis. Within this method, there are two research designs known as sequential explanatory research design and sequential exploratory research design. In a sequential explanatory research project, quantitative data are first acquired and analyzed, then a similar process is followed in respect of the qualitative data, and the results are then combined. In a sequential exploratory research project is the qualitative phase of data collection and analysis precedes the quantitative phase, and the two phases are followed by integration of the two strands of data (Cameron, 2009; Castro et al., 2010; Creswell, 2009).

Since limited data were available on the perceptions and opinions of new Muslims and non-Muslims, and on the sources they relied on, it was important to gather information through applying a sequential exploratory design. Creswell (2009) and Tashakkori et al. (1998) established that a sequential exploratory design is best employed for a relatively unexplored topic, using the results to design a subsequent quantitative phase of the study, or when the existing theories do not apply to the sample under study. They offer an example of having stories (qualitative) and numbers (quantitative) represent a detailed understanding of the problem. Following this principle, the present study utilized a sequential exploratory design due to the novelty of the research topic, (shown in Figure 8). Moreover, this approach aided in comprehending the implications of the media preferences of a broader range of non-

Muslim and new Muslim expatriates. From the results of the qualitative analysis, hypotheses were generated through which the second phase, the quantitative component, was undertaken.

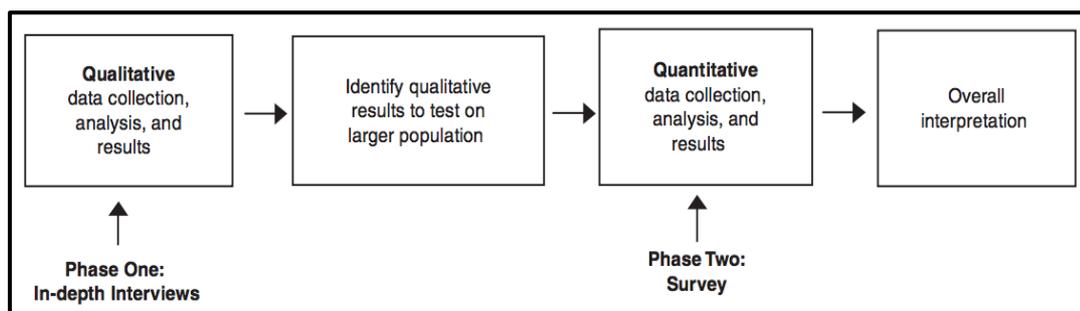


Figure 8: Sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. Fuentes (2008)

3.4 Pilot Study

The present research started with a pilot study. Personal interviews were used first for data collection. The interviews included questions related to respondents' perceptions of western media representation of Islam and Muslims, their information about Islam, and their radio listening habits.

In the pilot study, two interviews were conducted. Following feedback, questions that were difficult to understand or found to be repetitive were either modified or eliminated. During the pilot study, the interviews lasted from 30 to 50 minutes. The researcher made sure that the time did not exceed 50 minutes to help the interviewer stay focused on the research questions and obtain the required information within the time-frame.

For the quantitative analysis, a questionnaire survey was distributed to eight non-Muslims and new Muslims (four of each), and their responses recorded which, overall, were positive. However, some feedback highlighted a need to take account

respondents who are not radio listeners, improve the clarity of the terminology, and the order and phrasing of questions. These comments were noted and reviewed by the researcher's advisor, and changes were made to the survey.

The chief purpose of the pilot study was to obtain useful feedback to aid the final design of the survey, ease in completing the questions, logical flow, and overall experience. In line with the sequential exploratory research method, the researcher conducted the qualitative analysis, evaluated the results, and then conducted quantitative data collection. The results were merged and interpreted for overall findings and conclusion.

3.5 Personal Interviews

Under the qualitative analysis phase of the study, a personal interview method was employed. According to Patton (2002), interviews help in conveying the real social experience of participants by enquiring into the living experiences, perceptions, opinions, behaviors, and culture of the interviewees (Rahman, 2017). Personal interviews can be divided into three categories—structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Each has its unique advantages and disadvantages. The method chosen by the researcher was to ask open-ended questions in a semi-structured format to allow participants sufficient scope to express their thoughts and feelings fully while maintaining the objectives of the research study. A semi-structured format is suitable 'for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers' (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 330).

The interview questions were divided into three sections. The first sought to understand the perceptions of non-Muslims and new Muslims with the aim of

providing detailed explanation of the perceptions that respondents held about the Islamic faith based on their exposure to Western media representations of Islam. Second, it investigated the knowledge which respondents had about Islam and enquired about the accessibility and reliability of the information resources they used. It also aimed to cover the experiences non-Muslims and new Muslims encountered while gathering this information. The third section of questions sought to determine the respondents' radio listening habits and their opinions about radio in the dissemination of religious information. The detailed personal interview questions are shown in Appendix A and B.

3.6 Sample Selection

The participants chosen for this study were non-Muslim residents and new converts to Islam residing in Dubai for three or more years. The researcher chose three years as the minimum period of residence as it indicated that the participants had become embedded in UAE society and were relatively familiar with UAE laws and culture. It should be noted that expatriates in UAE are initially given a visa entitling them to three years of residence (Tabreez, 2020). The age range of participants was 18 and above. The age of 18 was chosen as the minimum as this is generally considered the age of majority, which is the threshold of adulthood, as recognized under UAE law (Bobker, 2017). Before the interview, participants were required to complete the consent form and demographic survey. Each respondent's proficiency in the English language was checked by the interviewer with an introductory conversation. This method helped the interviewer pursue an in-depth conversation on the related topic.

Guest et al. (2006) and Hennink et al. (2017) recommend 12 to 20 personal interviews with those who have relevant information of the research topic. However,

several researchers (Bertaux, 1981; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mason, 2010; Morse, 1991) state that the number of interviews depends on the researcher's judgment as to when a 'saturation point' has been reached. The saturation point here is that point where variability in knowledge of the research topic starts to show patterns or themes. It implies that participant responses are no longer unique in terms of themes and the replies received have become repetitive. Bearing this in mind, a total of 25 interviews were conducted, whereupon the researcher began to recognize similar patterns in the interviewees' experiences. Of these 25 respondents, 19 met the criteria of good linguistic skills, strong knowledge about the topic, and a willingness to share information in detail. Within the 19 interviews, a range of themes were identified, which helped in developing a nuanced understanding of the relevant issues.

3.7 Location

The researcher carried out interviews in Islamic centers and a Cultural and Heritage center in Dubai. After obtaining permission for the research study beforehand, the researcher contacted the directors of these centers. Of seven centers contacted, three agreed to participate. They were: the Dubai Islamic Information Center (DIIC); the Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department (IACAD); and the Dubai Cultural and Heritage Center. DIIC was highly preferred among respondents as it was the oldest and best-known among visitors. Seven personal interviews were also conducted with the center directors and employees to understand the functions and challenges faced by the centers. However, some directors refused to have their interviews recorded.

The non-Muslims and new Muslims were randomly selected by the administrators of the centers. The questionnaire and consent forms were reviewed by

the center administrators and permission was granted to conduct interviews with respondents. The interviews took a total of six months to complete, from March to August 2019, as the three centers were responsible for choosing, organizing, and scheduling the interviews, based on each respondent's availability. Due to the cultural sensitivity and nature of the topic, most participants requested to remain anonymous. Respondents were asked a set of 10 questions within semi-structured interviews. Each interview was conducted face-to-face by the researcher, within the chosen premises and in a private room after consent from the director of the center. All participants were informed about the confidentiality of their contributions.

Table 2 shows the demographic information of the interview participants. A total of 30 visitors were shortlisted by the center administrators, of which only 19 were deemed suitable. The majority of respondents who were frequent visitors to the centers were Filipinos by nationality. Filipinos met most of the interview criteria, such as proficiency in English language, knowledge of the topic, and the willingness to participate.

Table 2: Frequency table of interview participants

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	10	52.63
	Female	9	47.37
Education	High School	4	21.05
	Bachelor	14	73.68
	PhD	1	5.26
Age Range	Age 17-24	2	10.53
	Age 25-30	4	21.05
	Age 31-35	6	31.58
	36 and above	7	36.84
Residency	Years 1-4	5	26.32
	Years 5-9	6	31.58
	Years 10 and above	8	42.11
Nationality	Philippines	9	47.37
	India	2	10.53
	Nigeria	1	5.26
	Russia	2	10.53
	Norway	1	5.26
	USA	1	5.26
	Uzbekistan	1	5.26
	UK	2	10.53
Religion	Non-Muslim	9	47.37
	New Muslim	10	52.63
Work Hours	Hours 8-9	6	31.58
	Hours 10-12	9	47.37
	Hours 12 and above	3	15.79
	Unemployed	1	5.26
Occupation	Security guard/Lifeguard	5	26.3
	Student	2	10.5
	Manager	1	5.3
	Administrator	1	5.3
	Athlete	1	5.3
	Domestic helpers	6	31.6
	Instructor	1	5.3
	Entrepreneur	1	5.3
	Unemployed	1	5.3
	Total	19	100

3.8 Thematic Analysis

The data collected from personal interviews were recorded and transcribed manually using Transcribeme and Google Transcribe for transcription. Respondents were coded by number (01 to 19) to maintain anonymity. The researcher merged their responses to eliminate irrelevant information and, following a thematic analysis

approach, the researcher sought to identify themes within the texts and categorize them conceptually.

Thematic analysis was used for personal interviews because it helps to identify themes, interpret, and analyze patterns in the data that are important or interesting (Maguire, 2017). It facilitates the examination of texts and data to identify common themes within interview transcripts, such as ideas, topics, and patterns of meaning that appear repeatedly. It also allowed flexibility in interpreting the data and sort large datasets into broad themes.

3.9 Survey Method

The first phase of the research method consisted of the qualitative data collection. The personal interviews provided an adequate understanding of respondents' perceptions and opinions about negative Western media representation of Islam and Muslims, the information sources available to them, and the challenges they face in acquiring information when needed. A quantitative methodology was subsequently employed via survey because it helped the researcher to make inferences. Conducting a survey was ideal in order to know more opinions and attitudes of non-Muslims and new Muslims based on the research questions.

According to Babbie (1992), survey analysis is a good choice for social exploratory research that measures attitudes. Also, the use of a questionnaire was manageable within the time and resource constraints of an exploratory study. The survey questions for the present study were based on the data from the qualitative results and formatted using the SurveyHero (previously E-Survey Creator) website (<https://www.surveyhero.com>). This online service was chosen to host the survey as the website had several features which allow the researcher flexibility in designing the

questionnaire, question ordering, skipping logic, and tracking responses, as well as access to statistical information from the collected responses. Additionally, the researcher established a hyperlink to the questionnaire to facilitate the survey process. The questionnaire link was circulated through emails and WhatsApp messages among respondents (with so-called snowball or chain sampling), making data collection easy and hassle-free. An accompanying cover letter explained the terms of the study such as the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity of identities, and confidentiality of responses.

3.10 Survey Design and Distribution

Non-probability sampling, also known as purposive sampling, was utilized. Purposive sampling, is a method based on the subjective judgment of the researcher rather than randomized selection (Tongco, 2007). Approximately 1000 questionnaires were distributed (according to a sample size calculator specifying a 95% confidence level), out of which 541 responses were deemed suitable. The research questions were specifically targeted to non-Muslims and new Muslims who listened to radio. The survey applied a skip logic with question one and two to maximize efficiency and eliminate respondents which did not meet the research criteria. For instance, respondents who chose options such as ‘Muslim’ or ‘Never listen to radio’ were eliminated. Also, incomplete surveys were omitted. The survey took between seven and 10 minutes of the respondent’s time to complete. The timeframe for distribution of the questionnaire was 1 November 2019 to 29 February 2020.

The respondents selected were drawn from differing age groups, gender, levels of education, residential years, and ethnicities, as shown in Table 2. Invitations to participate in the survey was done face-to-face and distributed via email in Dubai. For

new Muslims, the survey was distributed within DIIC and AICAD who acted as referrals from the qualitative study conducted in the same centers. For non-Muslims, it was distributed online via Facebook, LinkedIn, the Al Ramsa Institute, and face-to-face in Al Quranic Park in Dubai. The survey was conducted in English. Overall, n= 541 surveys were considered usable for this study.

Table 3 shows the demographic profile of the survey respondents. The survey questionnaire, which was distributed by administrators within Islamic centers by SMS and WhatsApp, received the highest response from visitors whose country of origin was Philippines. Likewise, more women responded than men as they were more frequent visitors to the centers and shared the survey link more often among their networks.

Table 3: Frequency table of survey participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Are you a	Non-Muslim	208	38
	New Muslim	333	62
Gender	Male	186	34
	Female	355	66
Age Group	18-25	61	11
	26-35	250	46
	36-45	157	29
	46 and above	73	13
Income Range	AED 2000 or less	197	36
	2001-5000	136	25
	5001-8000	40	7
	8001-11000	37	7
	11001 and above	54	10
	Prefer not to say	77	14
Education Level	Less than high school	36	7
	High School	89	16
	College Diploma/ Certificate	151	28
	Undergraduate Degree	93	17
	Master Degree	140	26
	Doctorate Degree	15	3
	Prefer not to answer	17	3
Country of Origin	Armenia	1	0.2
	Austria	1	0.2
	Belgium	1	0.2
	Bolivia	1	0.2
	Brazil	1	0.2
	Cameroon	12	2.2
	Canada	1	0.2

Table 3: Frequency table of survey participants (Continued)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Country of Origin	China	1	0.2
	Colombia	2	0.4
	Côte d'Ivoire	2	0.4
	Egypt	3	0.6
	Ethiopia	2	0.4
	France	5	0.9
	Germany	7	1.3
	Ghana	5	0.9
	Greece	3	0.6
	India	82	15.2
	Indonesia	1	0.2
	Ireland	2	0.4
	Italy	2	0.4
	Japan	1	0.2
	Kenya	3	0.6
	Lebanon	5	0.9
	Malaysia	2	0.4
	Nepal	27	5
	Netherland	1	0.2
	Nigeria	15	2.8
	Pakistan	3	0.6
	Philippines	244	45.1
	Poland	1	0.2
	Portugal	1	0.2
	Romania	1	0.2
	Russia	6	1.1
	Serbia	1	0.2
	South Africa	2	0.4
	South Korea	1	0.2
	Spain	7	1.3
	Sri Lanka	1	0.2
	Sweden	1	0.2
Switzerland	1	0.2	
Uganda	58	10.7	
Ukraine	2	0.4	
United Kingdom	12	2.2	
USA	9	1.7	
Numbers of Years in UAE	Less than 2 years	110	20
	Between 2 to 5 years	188	35
	Between 6 to 9 years	103	19
	10 years and above	140	26

3.11 Survey Questions

The survey contained a total of 22 questions, which were grouped into four sections. The copy of survey is in Appendix C. The research questions were categorized as:

- Radio listening habits

- Sources of information about Islam
- Suggestion about English Islamic radio and their preference of digital media
- Demographic information.

Drop-down lists was mostly utilized for questions with a long list of single-word answers such as Yes/No. The choice of answers was derived from the previous thematic analysis, in which the participants' responses revealed common themes, ideas, topics, and recurring patterns. The topics and ideas so interpreted were many, hence the use of drop-down lists was deemed suitable. In cases where a respondent disagreed with the available choices, an 'other' option with a comment field was added. Additionally, the interpreted data from the thematic analysis was incorporated further with use of a Likert scale and matrix questions. This method helped to measure respondents' attitudes and behaviors, particularly when they related to sensitive subjects (Józsa & Morgan, 2017).

After completion of survey collection, the data were extracted from a SurveyHero spreadsheet and transferred to the statistical software package SPSS (version 26). Data analysis included the calculation of descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and correlation coefficients to measure the strength of respondents' attitudes and test for significance among the coefficients. Correlations of attitudes illustrate the relationship between attitudes and information (Harris-Ewing, 1999).

3.12 Ethics and Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Collection of qualitative and quantitative data for this research study was approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at United

Arab Emirates University. The ethical consideration and informed consent information is attached in Appendix F and G. Once the approval was given, the researcher visited seven Islamic centers, out of which only three agreed to participate. The questionnaire and the consent forms were reviewed by center authorities and slight modifications were recommended by them. The respondents for the research study were randomly selected by the center staff, based on the requirements of the researcher.

For personal interviews, participants were briefed beforehand about the purpose and nature of the research study and informed that their involvement was voluntary. The informed consent form states that the researcher would anonymize participants' identities and keep their responses confidential and, further, that their responses would not adversely affect them in any way. Male and female interviews were conducted separately as the center segregated men and women. Interviews with center staff were also conducted; however, they requested that the interviews not be recorded electronically; hence interview responses were noted manually. The personal interviews took six months to complete to accommodate the visitors' schedule and the center timings. At the conclusion, each interviewee was thanked for their participation.

Chapter 4: Qualitative Findings

4.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the findings of the qualitative analysis using personal interviews. The full list of personal interview questions is available in Appendix A and B. The qualitative data findings was coded and sorted into research themes. The qualitative research study aimed to cover three objectives which were:

Objective 1 (Perceptions): To understand the respondents' current perceptions about Islam and Muslims based on exposure to Western media representations.

Objective 2 (Access to sources): To understand the respondents' access to various informational sources about Islam and Muslims and the challenges involved.

Objective 3 (Media preference): To investigate the radio consumption patterns of among respondents and as a media preference for disseminating Islamic information.

Four research questions (RQs) were created to achieve the goals of the personal interview and the study objectives. They were:

- RQ1: What perceptions do non-Muslims and new Muslims have about Islam in respect of their exposure to Western media representations, and how do they compare with their personal experiences?
- RQ2: How do they gather information about Islam, and which sources and media outlets do they use?
- RQ3: What are the challenges they encounter while gathering information about Islam?
- RQ4: What are the opinion of non-Muslims and new Muslims about English Islamic radio as a source for disseminating information about Islam?

Nineteen participants, comprising nine non-Muslims and ten new Muslims were interviewed. Seven personal interviews were also conducted with three staff members from DIIC, and four staff members from the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Islamic Culture of the Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department (IACAD). The interviews were conducted to understand each center's functions, challenges faced within, and their visitors' requirements. Correspondingly, the collected interview datasets from different groups were compared through tabulation to explore any intersecting themes and variances within responses.

The first section covered the interviews conducted with DIIC and AICAD staff members, which were coded to three interview themes, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Research themes of DIIC and AICAD staff members

Interviews	Themes
1. Islamic centers – background and functions	“DIIC was the first center to provide non-Muslims with the basic information of Islam”
2. Islamic centers – initiatives within Islamic centers	“We organized a competition among new converts about Quran recitation”
3. Challenges within Islamic centers and suggestions	“To meet visitor’s specific needs, logistical requirements and information sharing is a challenge”
4. Dissemination of Information on Islam	“Radio has to have a model and a plan to be successful”

4.2 DIIC Background and Functions

The first interview questions sought to understand each center’s background and functions. According to DIIC staff member 1, the center was launched in 1993 by the Dubai government, affiliated with Dar Al Ber Society (charity organization). It was the first center in the neighborhood of Satwa, Dubai, to provide information about

Islam specifically to new-Muslims. DIIC also coordinates some of its activities with the IACAD, which acts as a strategic partner. As the center expanded, it started to cater for three types of visitors: non-Muslims who wanted to seek information on Islam from a reliable source or learn the Arabic language; new Muslims who had recently converted to Islam; and Muslim visitors who wanted to revive their faith, volunteer, or help new converts.

DIIC staff members also mentioned that the majority of visitors were females, and that these women had a higher conversion rate compared to males (Figure 9). According to DIIC staff member 3, visitors who visited DIIC for the first time came to clarify their reservations about Islam. Many enquiries received through the DIIC telephone hotline were related to misconceptions of Islam and reservations about Muslims, possibly due to negative media exposure within their countries of origin.



Figure 9: Comparison of male and female converts for 2017–2018. Derived by researcher from DIIC staff interview

4.3 DIIC Initiatives

The second research questions focused on DIIC initiatives. DIIC staff members underlined some media tools which they implemented for visitors to learn about Islam. According to staff member 2, DIIC encourages visitors to visit the DIIC website, where they can obtain information about the center's location, functions, and upcoming events. This research question also explored the use of Facebook and Instagram accounts. It was highlighted that some DIIC mentors used their own Instagram page to promote Da'wah. They also mentioned how the center organized seminars, Islamic lectures, Quranic competitions, and annual events. Staff member 3 mentioned that a scholar named Ismail Bullock, a mentor within DIIC, promoted Dawah functions in English through a weekly TV program on Sharjah TV; however, it was unknown how many viewers watched it, and whether it was effective in terms of appeal. The staff also mentioned that during Ramadan and Dubai Shopping Festival, the center would hire volunteers to distribute DIIC pamphlets and brochures in public and in tourist areas within Dubai city to increase basic awareness about Islam. When asked about the most effective method for disseminating information on Islam, staff member 2 said:

“Face to face and word of mouth is the most effective medium, as many visitors have low income and don't have wifi all the time to have access to online services, so they visit DIIC.”

In addition to these initiatives, DIIC staff said they organized free transportation for visitors in low-income groups who came from emirates outside Dubai to attend lectures and seminars. While English was the common language used to spread awareness about the center, DIIC staff hired some mentors who were

bilingual and could speak languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Tagalog, Russian, and Hausa.

4.4 DIIC Challenges

Staff mentioned a number of challenges. For instance, it was stressed that, due to an increasing number of visitors of various nationalities and income groups, staff were overloaded with responsibilities. Few in number, staff were not able to cater to many respondents and their informational requirements. DIIC staff stressed their concerns regarding workspace and the size of the center. Located in the highly populated Satwa area, the DIIC classrooms, workplace, and car parking are tightly constrained. Also, only one receptionist was available as a point of contact for all visitors, who came from different emirates. The limited human resources, funds, logistics, and capacity to meet visitors' informational and linguistics needs were the most common challenges highlighted by staff. The department head acknowledged the limitations and hinted that solutions were under consideration, but due to lack of a business plan and delay in approvals, the proposal was on hold.

4.5 IACAD Background and Functions

The second set of personal interviews were conducted with four employees from AICAD. AICAD was founded in 1995 by Awqaf (a charity organization) in Dubai, primarily to conduct charity work, along with Da'wah. Due to an increasing number of visitors, the center was shifted to a bigger branch in the Al Mamzar area in 2014. According to the department head, IACAD is the headquarters of all Islamic centers within Dubai and affiliated with DIIC. IACAD monitors and audits the

functions of other private Islamic centers in Dubai, and the statistical reports of visitors are submitted to AICAD annually.

The department head also described three departments within AICAD—the new Muslim care department, the education department, and the cultural department. Employees of each department were interviewed separately to understand their roles in detail. Staff member 5, who was responsible for new Muslim care, explained that it was the first department which acted as a point of contact for first-time visitors. This department was responsible for providing information on Islam for both non-Muslims and new Muslims. They also issued certificates when Shahadah (acceptance of Islam) was taken by a non-Muslim. Table 5 represents the number of visitors who converted to Islam within AICAD, which was shared by the center officials. The staff said that the most frequent visitors were women from low-income groups, which was similar to DIIC. The other category of visitors were non-Muslims who intended to learn Arabic language or participate in cultural activities.

Table 5: Seven-year conversion record of visitors (by gender) from IACAD¹

Years	Male	Female	Total
2014	769	2047	2816
2015	638	1530	2168
2016	658	1453	2111
2017	1054	1719	2773
2018	1863	1314	3177
2019	1635	2136	3771
2020	1206	2074	3280

¹ The data were provided by IACAD. According to IACAD, female converts declined in the first three years (2014 to 2016) due to reasons like low numbers of marriages to Muslim men, hesitancy to declare their conversion, or incomplete document submission to IACAD after taking Shahadah.

Staff member 6, who was manager of the education department, was responsible for organizing and scheduling classes for non-Muslims and new Muslims. The manager explained the functions of the department, such as organizing classes for Quran recitation and interpretation, Arabic language, and teaching the basics of Islam. The department was also accountable for providing bus services for visitors, which included their weekend holidays. Additionally, they hired Islamic preachers, volunteers, or interns. The department consisted of 11 preachers who were converts. The process of being appointed as a preacher within AICAD was explained thus:

“To qualify as a preacher, the candidates are trained under Islamic affairs, required to do exams, pass an interview and attend certain lectures. Additional qualification like bachelor’s degree and bilingual skills is also considered. They are also trained on how they must approach different needs of visitors, or deal with their attitude and provide counselling if needed”

The third department of AICAD is responsible for organizing cultural events and marketing and promotional activities. Staff member 7 stated that they organized yearly events during Ramadan and cultural festivals in public places such as Al Mamzar Park, Festival city, Safa Park and cultural heritage sites. It was stated that cultural events were organized on a large scale where people from more than 55 nationalities participate and, due to heavy publicity, would attract more than 10 000 visitors.

4.6 IACAD Initiatives

According to the general manager of IACAD, several initiatives were implemented to reach out to people who wanted to learn about Islam. It was pointed out that IACAD had collaborated with the Cultural Heritage Center, the Dubai Museum, and Arabic language centers attended by non-Muslim tourists and residents.

These collaborations were initiated after receiving enquiries from visitors and tourists seeking basic information about Islam.

According to staff member 7, for those who preferred to stay anonymous, a toll-free number was created by AICAD to encourage people to call and share queries in privacy, as per statement by the. IACAD used social media tools such as Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook but posted content in Arabic only. Brochures and booklets in different languages were approved by Islamic scholars from the Islamic Department of Research in the Dubai government and distributed to public libraries and other locations. The preachers at AICAD had also created a WhatsApp group for visitors. It was stressed that WhatsApp was the most common communication tool used, as it was direct, and it helped non-Muslim and new Muslim students' network with each other and people of similar interests.

4.7 IACAD Challenges

IACAD representatives mentioned several challenges facing their departments, of which the most common was the promotional aspect. Staff number 7 stated:

“It took one to two weeks to get permission for organizing events, and another approval is required for promoting events within social media or traditional media. The rules are strict in terms of broadcasting and promotion.”

It was also noted that an event coverage was rarely covered in social media channels, and when it was, it was done in Arabic only. Moreover, there were no live broadcasts of religious seminars, events, or conferences.

Several staff mentioned that there was shortage of staff and funding. IACAD officials emphasized that the majority of visitors were from low-income groups. Some visitors were unable to speak English; consequently, the need to hire mentors with

specific language skills was another constraint. Other than religious queries, the visitors sought emotional or counselling support. This observation was similar to the study conducted by WIN-Gallup International (2012) which found that people from low-income groups were more interested in religion and considered themselves stronger in faith (Figure 10).

Income Bracket	Proportion describing themselves as religious
Bottom Quintile (Low Income)	66%
Medium-Low Quintile	65%
Medium Quintile	56%
Medium-High Quintile	51%
High Quintile (High Income)	49%

Figure 10: Income and self-description as 'religious'. WIN-Gallup International (2012).

Several staff members acknowledged facing difficulties in providing counselling service as it was not their specialty. Staff member 5 stated:

“Though our job is about Da’wah, we get visitors who are going through a transition phase after conversion, very few mentors are able to deal with visitors’ questions, emotions, attitude, and counselling. Some visitors also prefer staying in touch instructors after office hours, which can be hectic”

Another issue raised by staff members was about visitors who leave UAE and disconnect with IACAD instructors. Staff member 6 said that:

“It is getting difficult to follow up on visitors who are new Muslims and don’t come back after Shahadah, the ones who go back to their home country we try communicate with them through WhatsApp and see if they are able to practice Islam, however it’s difficult to follow up when they are away”

When asked about e-learning, staff said that this has not yet been implemented as face-to-face instruction was considered the main method for education.

Additional limitations were highlighted. For instance, in spite of providing on-demand classes and bus services, staff reported that they were unable to cater to the individual needs of all visitors, which were growing every year. Also, due to limited space within centers, many classes were held outside the premises, such as in school classrooms or corporate offices on weekends. This was a concern for some visitors who worked on weekends. Moreover, the location of classes constantly changed, which many found inconvenient. Many visitors complained to staff members that they were not able to attend classes or meet preachers regularly. According to staff member 5, such objections came from the visitors who worked six to seven days a week, more than 10 hours a day, or had few days off. Staff said that those who could not attend were typically laborers, nurses, security guards, domestic helpers, and drivers.

4.8 Dissemination of Information on Islam

The last research question aimed to offer a proposal for a new medium to IACAD and DIIC staff and ascertain their opinions about the proposal. When asked if English Islamic radio could be an effective media tool for disseminating information about Islam, both the IACAD and DIIC department heads showed some interest. During the interviews they acknowledged that there was a need for such a medium. One staff member from DIIC indicated that a similar idea was brought up, but due to lack of media know-how and proper modelling, it was not discussed further. However, both DIIC and IACAD staff acknowledged that, while radio as a sole medium might not be sufficient, linking it with a digital aspect (social media, website, podcast, mobile app) was worth consideration.

Staff respondents also shared some personal opinions and expressed their interest as to how such a proposal could be further developed. Four staff members gave

a detailed explanation in terms of radio content, programs, timings, subject themes, approach, target audience, and presenters. Staff member 4 stated:

“Radio has to have a model and a plan to be successful. Also, the topics we would be approaching to the normal public, would be about issues which they face in their daily lives, in fact same topics which we cover in our classes. However, I do believe radio could be better than face to face because it is more focused, it fills out the wasted time or gaps we face, it's more convenient and it's more personal (sic)”

4.9 Interviews with Non-Muslim and New Muslim Visitors

The research questions for visitors of Islamic centers was designed to understand their perceptions about Islam and Muslims, and their experiences in attaining information and access to resources. Their experiences yielded valuable insights for the research study. The interviews were grouped thematically into three (Table 6).

Table 6: Interview themes of non-Muslim and new Muslim respondents

Interviews	Themes
1. Perceptions and experience of visitors	They highlighted that the western news was “very misleading “and “biased towards Islam” “In regard to their experience, many had a positive interaction with Muslims”
2. Access to Islamic information and challenges within	“Yeah, when I have a controversial topic to inquire, I go to my Muslim friends” “The problem with online search is you don’t know which site is official and which isn’t”
3. Dissemination of Information on Islam	“Nowadays, people don’t have time to come to centers. Instead listen to it while travelling to work, who would have thought of that”

4.10 Perceptions and Experiences

The first set of questions sought to understand respondents’ perceptions about Islam and their experiences with Muslims. It also intended to comprehend the media's influence on their views on Muslims.

Fourteen respondents from non-Muslim countries shared their earlier experiences. They acknowledged that before arriving to UAE they had a negative view of Muslims, and that this was a common view in their native countries. They had an awareness of Western media representations of Islam and Muslims, especially in regard to the 9/11 incident. They admitted being exposed to Western news through social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook. They mentioned they were frequently exposed to local media channels in their native countries and that they paid attention to these. They said that negative media framing of Islam also happened in their own communities, mentioning media channels such as newspapers, television, and social media accounts which covered local news.

“In Philippines, it’s very difficult to get proper information or interact with Muslims, so media adds more fuel to that (sic)” NM 5 (new Muslim)

“In Nigeria, local media promoted a very bad image and I was brainwashed” NonM 1

They stressed that media falsification was common, due to limited first-hand experience with Muslims within their communities. Terms such as ‘misleading,’ ‘spread hatred,’ ‘biased,’ ‘to scare people,’ and ‘political benefit’ were used. The majority of respondents indicated that Western media does not influence their perception about Muslims since their decision to reside in UAE and meet Muslims. This had enabled them to have their own opinions and judgments about Islam. Ten new Muslim respondents claimed that were ‘open,’ ‘happy,’ ‘curious,’ or ‘interested to learn more’ when conversations about Islam and Muslim culture were initiated.

Non-Muslim respondents gave some varying responses. Although they admitted that they were familiar with negative media representations, the reasons which motivated them to seek information about Islam was to become familiar with

the 'local culture, or traditions among locals,' 'curiosity,' or to understand UAE laws. In regard to their experience with Muslims, both groups of respondents noted positive interactions and experiences. This was highlighted through common terms such as 'easy to communicate,' 'generous,' 'welcoming,' and 'helpful.' Non-Muslims specifically stated that they preferred to inquire about Islam via word of mouth through colleagues, friends, or sponsors. They revealed that they preferred to initiate the conversation by enquiring first about UAE culture, traditions, and Islamic practices which had triggered their interest.

This point was affirmed by a study conducted in 2012 by Dubai Police of 2000 UAE expatriates and their level of knowledge of UAE customs, traditions, and Islamic knowledge, which was mostly through word-of-mouth (Figure 11). The police had initiated the study due to the increasing number of incidents in which expatriates had failed to follow UAE laws, including blasphemy, insults, and indecency in public. Two concerns highlighted by Dubai Police were the large knowledge gaps among expatriates, especially among those who had been UAE residents for more than a year, and the high reliance on word of mouth; the study showed that most relied on other expatriates for information about UAE culture and traditions, which increased the risk of miscommunication or incorrect information being passed on (Remo-Listana & Procter, 2012).



Figure 11: UAE expatriates' level of knowledge. Remo-Listana and Procter (2012).

Non-Muslim respondents recalled encountering some Muslims who had limited information about a certain religious topic when asked. This experience led some non-Muslim respondents to limit their questioning or feel hesitant to discuss in detail. The commonly used words were ‘confused’ and ‘being careful’ or ‘being cautious.’

New Muslims had a different approach when making their enquiries. When they were curious about a certain topic or had questions, they preferred multiple interactions with many Muslims to understand the different opinions and perspectives. If there were a similarity in responses, it would convince them. However, if responses varied from each other, it led to a confusion and one of two outcomes: (i) to either discourage them to discuss the topic further; or (ii) cause them to investigate further through more reliable sources.

“I observe how confused some Muslims are while answering, they might teach me a wrong concept and I’m not ok with that” NM 4

4.11 Access to Islamic Information and Challenges

The second set of questions sought to comprehend the respondents' access to resources and identify obstacles they had encountered. It also aimed to identify respondents' awareness of the term *Da'wah* and the Islamic centers in Dubai.

The term *Da'wah* was more familiar among new Muslims compared to non-Muslims. Many new Muslims said that, while learning basics of Islam, they had encountered this word through research into Islam or by hearing it repeatedly in Islamic centers. Regarding the mediums used by respondents to gather information on Islam, the answers varied as respondents relied on more than one media source and multiple contacts. For instance, the majority of non-Muslim respondents said they preferred to acquire basic information of Islam (for instance, call to prayer, Ramadan, halal versus haram) through Muslim friends. They preferred not to seek 'profound' knowledge as they held that it better suited those who were interested in the philosophy of life. The challenge they faced in their interactions with Muslims was the varying information given.

“Yeah, when I have a controversial topic to inquire, I go to my Muslim friends, I notice the different belief. It would be nice to have one proper source (sic)” NonM 7

Four non-Muslims admitted visiting cultural heritage centers because they wanted to learn more about UAE culture and Muslim traditions than about the religion itself. They shared their visiting experience and said the center host/speaker provided the information they were seeking. They admired the host's public speaking style and information delivery. They believed such speakers helped clear up the variations in information and provide an accurate perspective or view.

For new Muslim respondents, Islamic centers were highlighted as a reliable medium to learn about Islam. Five respondents mentioned that they came to know about Islamic centers in Dubai by word of mouth as a Google search ‘confused’ some respondents. They did not rely on social media accounts as the content were chiefly in Arabic or provided limited information. They preferred coming to the center to meet like-minded individuals who had had a similar experience, thus creating an interactive atmosphere. Respondents had also created personal contacts with other visitors through WhatsApp and Facebook to stay connected. Respondents said such connections helped them learn more about Islam, as many would share YouTube videos with each other. In terms of challenges, four respondents recalled the difficulties they faced while reaching out to the Islamic centers. One stated:

“I was searching for Islamic centers in Dubai through google and I called the numbers which was on the website, no one would respond and if they did, they would transfer my calls. After a lot of struggle, I decided to make some personal visit to centers”

Furthermore, some new Muslims recalled the obstacles they faced after taking Shahadah. They indicated that although the center staff provided them with all the assistance before their conversion, after taking Shahadah they received minimal guidance or follow-ups from officials—respondents were left to depend on themselves. Due to this experience, a respondent said that one of her new Muslim friends had disassociated completely from the Islamic center.

Most respondents claimed that most classes were congested and that they had to wait long hours for their mentors to show up for lectures. Some respondents found their teachers to be ‘boring’ or ‘less empathetic.’ They found it difficult to find good preachers, with whom they could ‘connect.’ This was supported by an example given by two respondents who stated that finding the right teacher was important to them.

They had spent three years searching for a good Islamic center in Dubai which had good mentors/preachers to whom respondents could relate. They also visited libraries, bookstores, and Islamic centers in other emirates to find information. Others stated they had ‘Google searched’ for more information. Subsequently, other issues were brought by respondents. These included poor service in terms of phone attendance, lack of follow-up, and low empathy. Ultimately some were forced to make personal visits to Islamic centers on their off days or while on annual leave. Respondents mentioned the limited availability of wifi in centers and that some preachers had limited information on technical know-how and preferred to offer classes in person than online.

“It’s very difficult for me to come all the way to attend Arabic classes. I live a faraway distance, so I have transportation problem and time issue” NonM 9

A related issue revealed by participants was acceptance within their workplaces. Three new Muslims recalled bullying, and exposure to blasphemy from colleagues who had limited knowledge about Islam. They also shared some experiences where they were looked down upon due to their job rank, making them less confident to open up and enquire about Islamic faith.

“Since I converted, my workmates fail to understand me, they make fun of me by laughing and teasing. I’m looking for acceptance among them” NM 2

This statement was found similar to blasphemy incidents occurring in UAE where expatriates made derogatory remarks about religion (Al Amir, 2017; The Nation, 2017) and also confirmed a study by the Ministry of Interior in 2012, indicating that 72 per cent of UAE residents had little knowledge about UAE cultural and traditions (Remo-Listana & Procter, 2012). However, it was observed that several new Muslim respondents at the DIIC were volunteering to spread awareness by

helping other visitors and actively participating in events. Some volunteered in immigration departments, public parks, labor camps, and at Dubai airport, whereas others participated in cultural events organized by IACAD. However, many recalled that such initiatives had been stopped for more than a year (for unknown reasons) and currently they lacked volunteering opportunities.

4.12 Respondent/Visitor Preferences

This section aimed to probe participants about their preferences on receiving information about Islam. Respondents were asked to recommend ideas which could help reduce the aforementioned challenges.

Respondents suggested that DIIC and IACAD could be more engaged with its visitors and become more media active. They also wanted centers to be accessible through online services (phone calls, emails, chat groups) and stay connected with new Muslims after taking Shahadah. They also wanted the classes to be available according to their convenience, rather than the mentor's suitability.

When asked whether they would prefer an Islamic radio in English which could meet their information needs, respondents had mixed reactions to the proposal. These are categorized into three common responses shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Three common responses to media proposal

First response	"Yes, it's an interesting idea" or "absolutely"	10 respondents
Second response	"Could you elaborate more" or "how radio can provide me with Islamic information/ sort my queries"	3 respondents
Third response	"It could be, but radio is not enough"	6 respondents.

It was also noted that new Muslims differed in their attitude to radio from non-Muslim respondents. They emphasized that the radio programs should not focus on converting non-Muslims, as this would discourage them from tuning in. They preferred the notion that Islamic radio should be focused on providing information. Most respondents talked about content and what information they preferred to hear on the radio. Non-Muslim participants suggested learning about UAE culture, traditions, and Islamic laws, and they wanted topics about Islam playing a role in politics, business, society, history, science, medicine, and mathematics. They also suggested topics on women's rights. It was observed that their focus was more on factual knowledge than spiritual.

“Include a show that covers key concepts and basic pillars of Islam, the ancient civilization, tradition, its origin, the current situation and where its future is headed” NonM 5

In contrast, new Muslim participants were more interested in spiritual knowledge. They preferred topics which communicated the importance of prayers, the five pillars, hadiths, prophet stories, and dealt with misconceptions about Islam, as well as other basic reminders for Muslims that they felt were overlooked. Some responses were common to non-Muslims and converts. Both showed interest in understanding Quranic verses through English interpretation, or to put it simply, what the verses meant. Both groups opted for a question & answer session in which a listener could ask a question to the scholars and get an answer live. One non-Muslim participant stated, *“Other people's curiosity could be my curiosity, so if I'm able to hear the answer, I don't need to ask someone else.”* Another non-Muslim said:

“Music could be boring all the time, so yeah I could tune in to this radio station to learn some fundamentals.” NonM 4

The use of a digital medium was recommended by six respondents. One non-Muslim said:

“Radio is a good idea but definitely have to be through more than one medium like podcast, website, videos, as there are different number of people who would listen to the radio and for a particular period of time in a day and other might want to catch up through an app or podcast.”

Similarly, new Muslims stressed the importance of Islamic radio but said the radio content should attract non-Muslims first and then Muslims.

Respondents with long working hours and limited transportation were more inclined towards radio as a source of solution. They believed radio could help save time, help them gain information, and reach out to listeners who are hesitant to come forward with their religious queries. The majority were using older model mobile phones with a built-in radio FM, so they were able to access radio without wifi. Others mentioned that they had a radio app, which they frequently used to access their favourite radio stations. For these reasons, the idea of radio as the source of disseminating information was seen acceptable among a majority of respondents. It was emphasized that, to improve flexibility and convenience, the radio could be made available 24/7 with repeated programs, as most of them were occupied during the day.

“Once a month, I’m allowed to go out, which I spend in these Islamic centers, radio could be a good idea” NM 8

“Nowadays, people don’t have time to come to centers. Instead listen to it while travelling to work, who would have thought of that” NM 3

4.13 Correlation of Themes

The tables below represent the similarities and variations in the collected responses from interviews with two different groups (i.e. staff and visitors). Table 8

summarizes common response themes and Table 9 summarizes the variance in response themes.

Table 8: Similar themes in responses from staff and visitors

Themes	Staff	Visitors	Similarity in response themes
Islamic center demographics	“Lack of office space and small classrooms, minimal parking area, far away location”	“Most classes were congested.” “Faraway distance, transportation and time issue”	The challenge of space issues, location, distance, and time constraints was underlined by both groups.
Purpose of visit	“To clear misconception, they have about Islam”	“To get in touch with reliable Islamic mentors and get my queries answered”	A similarity in responses about the visitors’ purpose for visiting an Islamic center
Visitor requirements	Catering visitors’ needs was a challenge with existing funds and human resource	“There was only one receptionist.”	Staff and visitors agreed that lack of human resource and funds made it difficult to cater to visitors’ individual needs
Availability of Instructors	“Some visitors prefer to stay in touch with instructor after the office hours”	“They are not available 24/7” “We wait long hours”	Both groups confirmed that access to instructors was limited
Word of mouth and personal meeting	“Personal meeting and word of mouth was high”	“Personal meeting was preferred among visitors”	A reliance on word of mouth and personal meetings was highlighted by both groups
Social media tools	“WhatsApp and Facebook were high among respondents”	WhatsApp group helped visitors meet like-minded individuals who shared Islamic information with each other	Both groups confirmed that use of WhatsApp was high compared to Facebook or Instagram
Islamic radio in English	“Radio is a good idea but has to come with a model plan”	It’s a good idea as it sounds convenient”	Both groups viewed the idea of radio as a media tool to disseminate Islamic information as a possibility
Islamic radio with digital mediums	“Radio as a sole medium might not be sufficient but linking digital aspect could be considered”	Radio have to be through more than one medium like podcast, website, videos”	Staff and visitors emphasized the importance of digital media with the radio

Table 9: Variance in responses to themes among staff and visitors

Response themes	Staff	Visitors	Variance in response themes
Availability of digital mediums	“We have a website, social media accounts”	“Most content was in Arabic, such as their Instagram page, also there are hardly any updates.”	Participants rarely mentioned about using website for information search. They also indicated that social media pages were not up to date. Moreover, there was no wifi within centers.
Toll free number	“We provide toll free number for callers”	“Poor service in terms of phone attendance”	There was a difference in opinion about the toll-free service among visitors and staff
Logistics	“We provide bus services	The class and bus timings don’t fit our schedule”	The bus services provided by center staff was not able to meet visitors’ schedules
WhatsApp group	“Islamic teachers have created WhatsApp group to stay connected with their students”	WhatsApp group helped visitors meet like-minded individuals who shared Islamic information with each other”	Although the WhatsApp group was created by instructors, it was highlighted that the instructors hardly interacted with visitors, and instead the group shared information among themselves
Instructors' qualifications	“To qualify as preachers, they are trained under Islamic affairs...”	“I found it difficult to find preachers with whom I could connect”	A majority of visitors shared their concerns about instructors lacking teaching techniques and responsiveness with their students
Counselling services	“We also train teachers to provide counselling services”	“Teachers are boring, less empathetic”	Visitors looked for counselling support and the statements revealed that many teachers could not meet the criteria effectively
Volunteer activities	“We organize yearly events and provide volunteer opportunities for visitors”	“The events and volunteer activities has been stopped for more than a year”	At odds with the view of staff, visitors felt that the Islamic centers provide limited volunteering opportunities
Follow-up on new Muslims	“We find it difficult to follow up on new Muslims after taking Shahadah”	“After taking Shahadah, there is hardly any follow up or support from staff”	Staff members indicated a lack of follow-up from visitors, whereas the visitors claimed the same but from staff.

4.14 Summary

Based on the above results, the qualitative analysis sought to build a detailed background of the perceptions of Islam among non-Muslims and new Muslims. Personal interviews facilitated a detailed description of respondents' views, experiences, and behaviors when it came to the ways they would search information about Islam and their approach to reaching out to various sources.

The interview questions were framed in a way so as to understand the respondents' perceptions. Results showed that respondents had been exposed to negative media representation about Islam and Muslims in their native countries, which had affected them to some extent, and they felt that the media sought to give distorted information to their audiences. However, the respondents acknowledged that their perceptions of Islam were not dependent on what the media had to say, and it was their decision to believe the media or not, especially after arriving and residing within the UAE. Their decision to seek information about Islam was due to several factors which were highlighted within the study. The results also highlighted the effort made by non-Muslims and new Muslims in reaching out to a variety of mediums. However, during this process, challenges were brought up while they searched for Islamic information. It was emphasized by several non-Muslims that the purpose behind seeking information about Islam was not to convert, but to learn about the faith and have a better understanding of the culture and norms of UAE society.

Interviews conducted with the staff of Islamic centers further helped to understand respondents (as visitors) from a different approach. The data gathered from two different sources and perspectives supported the qualitative research in determining the similarities and discrepancies within the responses. The study also

covered the respondents' radio consumption habits and, by analyzing the results, showed that respondents had a positive view of the media proposal put to them. However, respondents underlined the digitization aspect of the radio media model. Hence, based on the overall results, the three objectives of the qualitative analysis were largely met.

However, the qualitative study also highlighted a new aspect, which was the influence of demographics. Throughout the analysis, it was observed that demographics seem to play an important role in the respondents' decision in seeking information on Islamic faith. Moreover, it was noted that respondents of a certain income, caste, group, education, age, and gender faced certain types of challenges. The non-Muslim and new Muslim respondents' approach to information search and sources varied. The suggestions regarding an Islamic radio were diverse among non-Muslims and new Muslims, as their perceived purpose for this proposal varied too.

While the qualitative analysis is the centerpiece of this research study, a quantitative analysis was performed in order to add support, validity, and depth to the qualitative results. A sample of 541 respondents, stimulated by the qualitative results, was distributed to validate or not the patterns found through the qualitative study. Even though the three research objectives were met through qualitative analysis, quantitative findings help to elaborate the objectives with a set of hypotheses which were developed to test in the large sample. The focus of the quantitative study was narrowed down to the respondents' demographics and tests were conducted to how these demographic parameters influenced their behavioral patterns namely, their experiences, preferences, and informational searches. It focused on: (i) comprehending the impact of demographic factors on the respondent's experiences in seeking knowledge; (ii) understanding their preferred programs for Islamic knowledge via

radio; and (iii) determining if demographic factors played any role in the respondents' preference for digital radio. So, based on the findings of qualitative analysis, the following hypotheses were devised:

H1: The demographic factors are associated with the number of sources used for obtaining Islamic information.

H1a: There is a difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in the number of sources they used for obtaining Islamic information.

H2: The demographic factors are associated with the effort made for pursuing Islamic information.

H2a: There is a difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in the challenges they faced when asking questions on Islam.

H2b: There is a difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in their efforts in pursuing Islamic information.

H3: The demographic factors are associated with the preferred radio programs for Islamic information.

H3a: There is a difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in their preferred radio programs for Islamic information.

H4: The demographic factors are associated with the preference for using digital channels for obtaining Islamic knowledge.

H4a: There is a group difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in their preference for using digital channels for obtaining Islamic information.

Chapter 5: Quantitative Analysis

This chapter discusses the quantitative analysis and is divided into three parts. The first covers the explanation of the hypotheses, the second discusses the results, and the third summarizes the quantitative analysis.

5.1 Sample Information Summary

The data collection was administered and n=541 responses were considered valid. The detailed demographic information of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

To summarize, the sample comprised 541 respondents, of whom 39 per cent were non-Muslims and 61 per cent were new Muslims. The sample contained more female respondents (65.6%) than males (35%). Most respondents (75%) were between 26 and 45 years of age. In terms of education, the majority had a college diploma or certificate (28%), an undergraduate degree (17%), or a high school qualification (16%). Over half of the respondents had a monthly income below 5000 AED (61%) and 80 per cent had spent more than two years living in the UAE. Although country of origin was not among the hypotheses, it was observed that 45.1 per cent were from the Philippines² and 15.2 per cent from India. Overall, the sample represented a relatively low-income stratum of the expatriate population in the UAE.

5.2 Hypothesis Testing

As noted, the hypotheses were built on those findings from qualitative study which focused on comprehending the demographic factors and their impact on the respondents' behavior and experiences. The purpose was to recognize and validate

² Details of the countries of origin of respondents are discussed in the methodology chapter.

patterns similar to those found in the qualitative results. To test the hypotheses, a total of six demographic (independent) variables were selected for analysis—gender, age, income, education, years of expatriation, and religious status. The dependent variables, i.e. the variables being measured and tested, were the survey questions which helped develop the hypothesis.

The key dependent variables comprised:

1. Respondents' experiences in seeking information about Islam
2. Respondents' preferred programs for Islamic knowledge via radio
3. Respondents' preference for digital radio on information on Islam.

5.3 Hypothesis on Seeking Information

To measure the respondents' experience in seeking information about Islam, the measurement items were categorized as information sources (Q7³) and information effort (Q9).

Definition: Information Sources—The number of key sources from where a respondent obtained Islamic information.

The two hypotheses were:

H1: The demographic factors are associated with the number of sources used for obtaining Islamic information.

H1a: There is a difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in the number of sources used for obtaining Islamic information.

³ Question 7, the question number within the survey questionnaire (see Appendix C).

Q7 asked respondents to indicate their main sources of information, choosing one or two options from six options provided. Since Q7 used a nominal measurement scale, the chosen options were summed to generate the data result.

Definition: Information Effort: The frequency of visiting the key venues for Islamic knowledge, and challenges faced while enquiring about Islam. The hypothesis created were:

H2: The demographic factors are associated with the effort used for pursuing Islamic information.

H2a: There is a group difference among respondents when it came to challenges while enquiring about Islam.

H2b: There is a group difference among respondents regarding the effort made for pursuing Islamic information.

Since key information sources were available, it was important to examine whether respondents made individual efforts in reaching out to the Islamic centers to obtain information. Q9 measured frequency of visiting five venues of Islamic sources (taken from the qualitative study) coded on a five-point Likert scale (continuous variable from 1=never to 5=always). As interval scale questions tend to encourage respondents to choose more than one response, multiple responses to Q9 were averaged to estimate effort.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to determine if the information effort scale was reliable. The five venue options showed a high coefficient (Cronbach's alpha=0.771). An alpha coefficient value of >0.7 is considered an acceptable level of reliability in social science research. If the coefficient were less than 0.7, then testing the hypothesis this way would not have been suitable. As the value was above 0.7, the responses to the five venues (sources and frequencies) were deemed reliable. In other

words, analysis of the information effort variable indicates that the effort respondents make in pursuing Islamic information, and their responses to visiting these sources, were consistent. This was similar to the qualitative results which showed that participants reached out to multiple sources to learn about Islam. Also, specific challenges were highlighted within the information effort (shortlisted from qualitative results), so the Q11 descriptive results were examined to understand the challenges that participants encountered while seeking Islamic information.

5.4 Hypothesis on Use of Radio

To test the proposal for using radio for communicating Islamic information, the survey focused on four questions. It aimed to understand the frequency of respondents listening habits (Q2 and Q3), explore the preferred variety of programs for Islamic information via radio (Q12), and discern the potential factors affecting the adoption of an Islamic radio station (Q13). The hypotheses were:

H3: The demographic factors are associated with the preferred programs for Islamic information.

H3a: There is a difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the preferred programs for Islamic information.

To measure the frequency (usage) of radio for information on Islam, the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their current radio listening habits (Q2) and the place for listening (Q3). Further, eight different variety of programs were identified within Q12 for Islamic information via radio. The variety of programs were shortlisted based on the common suggestions received by respondents through the qualitative results. The sum of all possible responses for the preferred programs (Q12) was calculated to indicate the most preferred programs for Islamic radio. The

responses collected from this specific question was used to demonstrate radio as a potential media channel for the respondents, hence partly addressing the potential factors which would lead to the adoption of Islamic radio (Q13).

5.5 Hypothesis on Use of Digital Radio

The survey aimed to investigate respondents' preferences for digital radio (Q4 and Q15) and its current digital accessibility (Q4). The hypotheses were:

H4: The demographic factors are associated with the preference for using digital channels for obtaining Islamic information.

H4a: There is a group difference among respondents when it came to their preference for digital channels for obtaining Islamic information.

5.6 Hypothesis Results

Table 10 shows the results for the dependent variables which were used to test the four hypotheses. Since the dependent variables are continuous variables and the independent variables are categorical, the descriptive information comprises the means, maximums, minimums, and standard deviations for the hypotheses, H1 to H4.

Table 10: Descriptive information of dependent variables

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
(H1) Information Sources (Q7)	1	3	1.64	0.51
(H2) Information Effort (Q9)	1	5	2.63	0.98
(H3): Program Variety (Q12)	0	3	1.79	1.21
(H4): Preference for Digital Radio (Q15)	0	3	1.83	1.12

To compare the demographic means with the dependent variables, an independent t-test was performed (Table 11). The independent sample t-test compares

the means between two unrelated groups on the same continuous, dependent variables. While conducting the test for demographic factors, it was found that only the group difference between non-Muslims and new Muslims that showed some association under the t-test were for H1 and H3 (for dependent variables). Hence, the other demographic factors were disregarded⁴. The comparative means and standard deviations were also calculated to further test the association between groups.

Table 11: Independent t-test (group difference with dependent variables)

Hypotheses	Religion Status	Mean	Std. Deviation
H1 - Information Sources** (t=-3.846, p<.01)	Non-Muslim	1.53	.51
	New Muslim	1.71	.50
H2 - Information Effort** (t=-18.106, p<.01)	Non-Muslim	1.89	.70
	New Muslim	3.09	.83
H3 - Program Variety ^(NS) (t=0.89, p=0.353)	Non-Muslim	1.85	1.07
	New Muslim	1.75	1.29
H4 - Preference for Digital Radio** (t=-4.567, p<.01)	Non-Muslim	1.56	1.08
	New Muslim	2.00	1.11

** signifies a statistically significant difference, with a p-value for the null hypothesis of less than 1 in 100.

5.7 Hypothesis on Seeking Information – Results

As mentioned, the hypothesis on the respondents' experiences in seeking information about Islam was categorized into two measurements—information sources (H1, H1a) and information effort (H2, H2a, H2b). Over three-quarters (76.2%) of respondents indicated that they had actively searched for information about the Islamic faith (Q8), indicating that a high commonality of interest. In respect of information sources, Table 10 shows that new Muslims had significantly higher mean value (mean=1.71) than non-Muslims (mean=1.53), suggesting that they relied more

⁴ Since independent t-test showed only one group difference, ANOVA and Chi-square were applied to test more demographic factors with the dependent variables.

on Islamic sources and reached out to sources more often than non-Muslims. In respect of information effort, new Muslims were again seen making more effort in pursuing information (mean=3.09) than non-Muslims (mean=1.89). A gender difference was also observed within the information sources ($t=-2.265$, $p<0.01$), where the independent T-test showed that female respondents (mean=1.68) pursued and obtained more sources of Islamic faith than did males (mean=1.57). No other significant association was observed for the other demographic factors using independent T-tests. These results correspond with the qualitative findings, where the majority of new Muslims, especially women, were more interested and made more effort than their male counterparts to gather information on Islam. Table 4 is also consistent with this finding, by highlighting that most visitors to Islamic centers were expatriate women.

In respect of sources for Islamic information (Q7), the top three mentioned sources were word-of-mouth (49%), Da'wah centers (42.3%), and local media sources (29%). However, a group difference was observed—non-Muslims appear to rely more on word-of-mouth as their main source of information, while new Muslims opted more often for the Da'wah centers. This is consistent with a report by Dubai police which indicated that UAE expatriates relied on word-of-mouth more than any other medium (Remo-Listana & Procter, 2012). Also, in the personal interviews for the present study, a majority of non-Muslim expatriates referred to word-of-mouth as a source for learning about culture, traditions, and Islamic faith.

For the information effort data (Q9), cross-tabulation was applied to the five venue categories in Dubai. The cross-tabulation method was used to identify connections between two or more questions asked in the survey. The results for Q9 showed that place of worship (37%) and Da'wah centers (33%) were highly visited by

new Muslims, compared to non-Muslims, who tended to opt for cultural and heritage centers (30%).

As Q9 comprised a Likert scale (which is a categorical scale), a one-way ANOVA test was applied to test for significant differences between the means of two or more groups. The one-way ANOVA showed that, for information effort, statistically significant differences were found for the education and income groups. For the education group, the calculated ANOVA value was $F=3.832$, $p=0.002$ (p value <0.01), which represents a statistically significant result. Respondents with high school qualifications (mean=2.917) and diploma (mean=2.75) made more effort to obtain Islamic information compared to the higher education level groups (mean <2.5). Further, a significant income group difference was found for information effort ($F=4.45$, $p=0.002$). In particular, respondents in a low-income group (\leq AED 2000) appear to make more effort (mean=2.82) in seeking Islamic information than those in a high-income group (\geq AED 8001, mean=2.325). This matched the responses given by IACAD staff during personal interviews that a majority of visitors were from low-income groups. However, education was an aspect not touched on during interviews, so the above results show a link between low education and low income.

In terms of challenges faced while enquiring about Islam, a chi-squared test was performed to compare groups in their facing of challenges (Q11) during the process of pursuing Islamic information. The test gave a significant result (Chi-square=44.391, $p<0.01$), indicating a significant association between the group in the challenges they encountered. The new Muslims reported more challenges (out of the five choices given in Q11) than did the non-Muslims. The top three challenges for both groups were:

1. Finding reliable people with proper information about Islam. (highest among non-Muslims)
2. Finding a reliable media platform to learn about Islam
3. To initiate (open up) and enquire about Islam.

The results indicate that both groups expressed different challenges, corresponding to the comments made during the personal interviews, especially that non-Muslims relied more on word-of-mouth, yet this still proved to be a challenge for this group. Respondents preferred to raise specific queries involving human interaction, but still had reservations about the authenticity of information they received (see qualitative results). For new Muslims, who mostly opted for 'all the above' in Q11, showed that reaching out to the right sources with specific queries was difficult and they preferred to have access to a variety of mediums to verify the information (indicated during interviews). Given that most respondents were from non-Muslim countries, it was observed that the provision and accessibility of Islamic information was a relevant issue for expatriates in the UAE. Overall, the hypothesis indicates that selective demographic factors, such as income, education, religion, and gender affected the respondents' experiences in seeking information about Islam. The results are as follows:

H1: The demographic factors are associated with the number of sources used for obtaining Islamic information. (Gender difference is supported)

H1a: There is a difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the number of sources used for obtaining Islamic information. (Supported)

H2: The demographic factors are associated with the effort used for pursuing Islamic information. (Education and Income difference supported)

H2a: There is a difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the effort used for pursuing Islamic information. (Supported)

5.8 Hypothesis on Use of Radio – Results

To consider the possibility of using radio for communicating Islamic information, the hypothesis focused on three survey questions—general usage of radio (Q2 and Q3), preferred variety of programs (Q12), and potential factors for adoption of radio (Q13).

The results indicated (Q2) that 81 per cent of respondents spent sometimes listening to the radio. In the context of accessibility, responses to Q3 revealed that the typical use of radio was while driving or commuting (64%), followed by listening at home (31%), and at work (5%). This finding was comparable to those in the Nielson Company (2019) survey which showed that radio in the UAE had penetration for both commuters and home listeners. On program variety for Islamic radio (Q12), eight choices were offered (taken from qualitative study); of these the most popular were understanding Islam and its Pillars (35%), followed by ‘All of the above’ (31%), and question/answer session (28%). This evidence indicated the relevance of radio as a useful potential medium for spreading Islamic information, a point which was addressed during the personal interviews with respondents and Islamic center staff.

Q13 sought to identify the potential factors for respondents to ‘tune in to an Islamic radio station.’ The respondents consider the most important factors to be:

1. Variety of programs (34.2%)
2. Presenters and their speaking styles (15.5%)

3. Station's involvement with the local community (8.5%)
4. Interaction with the speakers on-air (7%)
5. Timing of the program (2%).

Among the factors above, 'variety of programs' was mentioned most frequently in the qualitative results as well. In terms of demographics, an ANOVA was performed to identify any significant group differences. A statistically significant result was obtained for age and program variety ($F=2.894$, $p=0.035$). Young respondents (aged 18–25 years) showed a higher preference for a variety of radio programs (mean=2.15) than did older groups (≥ 46) (mean=1.55). However, no other significant difference was reported for a demographic variable by ANOVA. Hence, the results for this hypothesis indicate that radio could be considered a viable dissemination channel for information on Islam.

H3: The demographic factors are associated with the preferred programs for Islamic information. (Age difference supported)

H3a: There is a difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the preferred programs for Islamic information (Not supported)

5.9 Hypothesis on Use of Digital Radio – Results

The hypothesis aimed to investigate respondents' preference for digital radio (Q15) and its accessibility (Q4).

Q4 explored radio accessibility. The survey showed the car radio (40.1%) was the most popular among respondents, followed by mobile phone (37%). Online website (10.3%) and podcast app (4%) were also cited by the respondents. The proportion of respondents who used mobile phones to access the radio (37%), suggest

that digital radio may have a relevant role to play. In regard to Q15, which focused on the preference of digital medium for radio (a continuous variable), the mobile app ranked highest (52%), followed by website (49%), and Facebook (38%).

Further t-test analysis revealed a significant group difference for the preference of digital radio (Q15). Digital radio enjoyed a significantly ($p < 0.01$) higher preference among new Muslims (mean=2) than it did among non-Muslims (mean=1.56). The hypothesis was tested through the frequency distribution of Q15 (a nominal scale). The sum of all possible variables under Q15 demonstrated reasonable variance, allowing for the subsequent hypothesis testing. One-way ANOVA ($F=2.657$, $p=0.032$) established an association between income level and are preference for Islamic digital radio. The high-income group (\geq AED 11001, mean=1.463) had a significantly lower preference for Islamic digital radio than did the low-income groups (\leq AED 5000, mean=1.931). The other demographic variables did not reveal any significant group differences. Hence, the hypothesis results are as follows:

H4: The demographic factors are associated with the preference for using digital channels for obtaining Islamic information. (Income difference supported)

H4a: There is a difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in the preference for using digital channels for obtaining Islamic information.

(Supported)

5.10 Summary of Quantitative Results

A summary of the results of the hypothesis testing (H1–H4) is shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Summary of hypothesis test results

<p>Information Source: the number of sources where individuals obtain Islamic information.</p> <p>H1: The demographic factors are associated with the number of sources used for obtaining Islamic information. (Gender difference supported)</p> <p>H1a: There is group difference between new Muslims and non-Muslims in the number of sources used for obtaining Islamic information (Supported)</p>	<p>Measurement items</p> <p>Q7, Q9 and Q11</p>
<p>Information Effort: frequency of visiting the key venues for Islamic knowledge and challenges when seeking info on Islam</p> <p>H2: The demographic factors are associated with the effort made for pursuing Islamic information. (Education and income differences supported)</p> <p>H2a: There is group difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the challenges faced when asking questions on Islam. (Supported)</p> <p>H2b: There is group difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the effort made for pursuing Islamic information (Supported).</p>	
<p>Frequency of listening to radio</p>	<p>Measurement items: Q2 and Q3 (Accessibility)</p> <p>Hypothesis - N/A</p>
<p>Preferred programs for Islamic information via radio</p> <p>H3: The demographic factors are associated with the preferred programs for Islamic information. (Age difference supported)</p> <p>H3a: There is <u>no</u> group difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the preferred programs for Islamic information. (Not supported)</p>	<p>Measurement items: Q12 (Radio Programs)</p>
<p>Potential reasons for adoption of Islamic radio station.</p>	<p>Measurement items: Q13 (Factors to tune to radio)</p> <p>Hypothesis - N/A</p>
<p>Preference for digital radio</p> <p>H4: The demographic factors are associated with the preference for using digital channels for obtaining Islamic information. (Income difference supported)</p> <p>H4a: There is group difference between new-Muslims and non-Muslims in the preference for using digital channels for obtaining Islamic information (Supported)</p>	<p>Measurement items: Q4 (Radio accessibility) and Q15 (Digital preference)</p>

The results for the above hypotheses show that the qualitative and quantitative findings are consistent with one another.

When asked about the level of information they currently have about Islam (Q6), a third of non-Muslims (33%) choose the option of 'little information,' while a majority of new Muslims (60%) chose 'basic information.' With this as the current state of affairs, it would seem that making an effort to obtain information and reaching out to information sources by themselves is the most available course of action for respondents to learn about Islamic faith, especially when residing in UAE. The behavioral patterns show a connection with the detailed experiences respondents shared in their comments in the qualitative study, indicating that there is a significant interest to learn and enquire about Islamic faith, especially among women.

The challenges encountered by interviewees was explained in detail in the qualitative study, but the quantitative survey also showed that the majority of new and non-Muslims encountered similar experiences (unreliable word-of-mouth sources, lack of reliable media channels, and needing to initiating queries on faith themselves). The focus of the qualitative analysis was towards the challenges respondents faced within the Da'wah centers, so the combination of the quantitative and qualitative results in terms of the challenges faced gives a wider perspective to the problem of addressing the challenges to obtaining the desired religious information.

The data analysis further provides insight into the relevant use of radio as a media channel. The number of hours and accessibility to radio indicate that this medium was currently accessible by respondents. So Islamic radio could be considered a viable platform, as similar statements supporting this idea were made by respondents in the qualitative study. However, they also stressed that radio as a sole platform (only as a radio station on a specific AM or FM radio frequency) was insufficient, and that

it should be available digitally, so it would be more widely available and more convenient.

The factors which would lead to respondents tuning in to Islamic radio were emphasized. Moreover, both groups of respondents, i.e., new and non-Muslims, were seen to be in support of digital Islamic radio. This was confirmed when respondents specified the kind of social media platforms (website, Facebook, radio mobile app, etc.) which would make Islamic radio more convenient and accessible for them.

The quantitative survey shows that respondents with less education and low income had had a higher demand for information on the Islamic faith and a stronger preference for digital Islamic radio than those with more education and higher incomes. New Muslims' preference for Islamic information was stronger than that of non-Muslims. This aspect was similar to the findings of the qualitative study where respondents highlighted their use of WhatsApp Facebook, and sometimes YouTube to learn about Islam themselves. Further, they indicated that they accessed all these platforms through their mobile phones, demonstrating that online accessibility was a common practice, regardless of income. Some mentioned accessing an FM radio receiver (radio app) installed within their mobile phones. Digital Islamic radio was seen more as a preference among the young compared to older respondents. This is likely as young people generally are more tech savvy and accept digital platforms more readily than older people. Hence it is reasonable to conclude the acceptance rate of digital Islamic radio would be higher among the young than in older cohorts.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Recommendation

6.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was three-fold: first, to study the perceptions of non-Muslim and new Muslim expatriates about Islam, formed through their exposure to western media representations; and second, to understand how they receive Islamic information and through which sources available, and lastly how information could be disseminated via radio in Dubai, UAE. Hence three objectives were developed:

- Objective 1 (Perceptions): To understand the respondents' current perceptions about Islam and Muslims based on their exposure to Western media representations.
- Objective 2 (Access to Sources): To understand the respondents' access to various sources for learning about Islam and Muslims and the challenges they faced in gaining access.
- Objective 3 (Media Preference): To investigate the consumption patterns of radio among respondents and as a media preference for disseminating Islamic information.

A quantitative analysis was conducted to generalize the findings of the interviews through hypothesis testing. The focus was on behavioral patterns and experiences of respondents in acquiring Islamic information and ascertaining their preferences for Islamic radio. Three associated patterns were discerned from both the quantitative and the qualitative methods—these were: (i) accessibility to key sources; (ii) the challenges encountered; and (iii) adding radio as a viable dissemination channel.

6.2 Respondents' Access to Key Sources and Venues

The interview results demonstrate that the most common visitors to Islamic centers were females from low-income groups and with low education (lower than bachelor's degree). The quantitative survey determined, similarly, that the majority of female new Muslims showed interest in seeking information about Islam. Studies by Spoliar and Van Den Brandt (2020) and Van Nieuwkerk (2006) show that conversion to Islam was common among women, and it happened due to several factors, including marriage to Muslim men and working as housemaids in Muslim households. However, the present study was not intended to understand the reasons for conversion among respondents, but on comparing women and men in their levels of interest in acquiring information about Islamic faith.

The results also show that non-Muslims and new Muslims shared different concerns when it came to gathering information about Islam. New Muslims stressed the accessibility, which involved their time effort, and cost to physically reach out to the information sources to get answers. The majority of new Muslims found this inconvenient, especially among women who lacked time due to long working hours, logistical issues, and limited days off from work. For non-Muslims, word-of-mouth and the cultural and heritage centers were the only available sources. They preferred not to visit Da'wah centers due to limited information about the centers, and a misconception that they were only suitable for Muslims or only for learning Arabic. Lack of proper facilities within the Islamic centers was the main concern for new Muslim visitors, as the majority felt that existing methods of disseminating information were outdated and the progress of digitization of services was slow.

6.3 Challenges Encountered by Respondents

On the issue of challenges, the most common challenges identified in the qualitative and quantitative studies were: (i) reaching out to the right people; (ii) enquiring openly about Islam; and (iii) lack of proper media channels. Word-of-mouth was the most common method for enquiring (especially among non-Muslims), yet placing trust in this source was seen as being uncertain. During the personal interviews, it was observed that a majority of non-Muslims had a tendency to approach multiple people (friends, colleagues, acquaintances) with certain queries, and they acknowledged that diverse responses and variation in the answers caused them some confusion. It was noted that they would only reach out to other sources if they were determined to obtain the correct information.

Respondents who reached out to other sources preferred to get access to reliable sources which could give them privacy (online, libraries, hotline) and could be obtained at their own convenience. Privacy seemed to play an important role for some respondents—which is why many new Muslims were seen reaching out to Islamic centers initially through hotlines, online chat or WhatsApp group. Conversely, they felt making a personal visit to a center as the online services provided limited information. Although Islamic centers in Dubai are currently considered the main hub for Islamic information, several respondents were not satisfied with the services offered, as indicated in the qualitative results. The staff within the centers acknowledged certain challenges within the centers in addressing the needs of visitors. Furthermore, the contradictory responses noted in the qualitative study (Table 8) reinforced the view that center staff were unaware of visitors' perceptions about the services and the challenges they faced. There was a gap between respondent need and

the services offered. Visitors were seen solving their informational need by sharing a WhatsApp contact and Facebook account with their peers, who were facing similar issues. In this they were observed building a nucleus network among themselves. Overall, in examining the challenges, accessibility, convenience, reliability, privacy, and accuracy in respect of Islamic information were highly significant for both groups.

The study revealed that respondents with low levels of education and income had a high interest level in seeking information on Islam. Similar studies by WIN-Gallup International (2012) and Glaeser and Sacerdote (2008) indicate that people with low levels of education and income tend to be more spiritual (Figures 12–13). (Pew Research Center, 2017; Crabtree, 2010). These categories of people are more likely to possess fewer resources and had limited choices for personal growth, so this may explain their greater interest in religious information. In areas with little or no social support, local religious authorities provide people’s basic needs, charity, or monetary support, and this may interest them more often in approaching a religious institution (Miller, 2014).

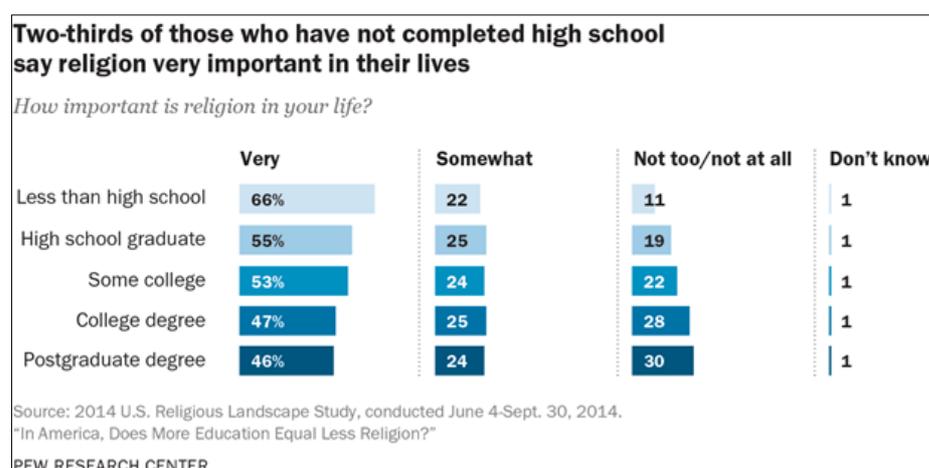


Figure 12: Comparison of education with religion. Pew Research Center (2017).

<i>Is religion an important part of your daily life?</i>		
Median responses among countries at each per-capita income level		
Per-capita income	Yes	No
\$0-\$2,000	95%	5%
\$2,001-\$5,000	92%	7%
\$5,001-\$12,500	82%	17%
\$12,501-\$25,000	70%	28%
\$25,001+	47%	52%

GALLUP

Figure 13: Comparison of income range with religion. Crabtree (2010).

However, respondents in the qualitative study also mentioned ‘curiosity’ as an additional reason for their interested in acquiring information about Islam.

Comments from the qualitative study revealed that ‘what they had been exposed to’ (in their home countries) versus ‘how it was in UAE,’ made them eager to learn more about the local traditions, customs, language, culture, and faith. Hence, arriving in Dubai and being exposed to a Muslim society evoked an interest in them to ask questions about Islam. The interviews also revealed that, for some, ‘contradicting’ factors (i.e. what religion said versus how it was implemented and followed) made them want to seek and learn about the Islamic faith.

The quantitative survey showed that 71 per cent of low-income respondents (≤ 5000 AED) encountered more challenges while seeking information about Islam, compared to middle and high-income group. A similar phenomenon was seen with educational level, where 55 per cent of respondents who had less than a bachelor’s degree faced more challenges than respondents with higher qualifications. This could be because they felt less confident raising religious topics compared to the more educated cohort. Likewise, as noted in the qualitative study, they typically had a

limited network of contacts, lower logistic accessibility, and they faced a more stereotypical attitude at work compared to white-collar workers.

Similarly, a study showed that most blue-collar workers in Gulf Arab states came from developing countries as a means to escape poverty (Plant, 2008; Menon, 2013). As shown in Table 1, UAE is ranked sixth in the world and second among Muslim nations as a migrant host country (The World Bank, 2021). Blue-collar expatriates in the present study indicated that the media representation of Islam in their home countries had been negative or they had had limited contact with Muslims. This limited their desire to enquire about Islam or mingle with Muslims, due to 'fear' or a 'taboo' in their home countries. Collectively these factors elucidate the reasons why this group searches for spiritual information.

Regarding information source and effort, the issue of digital accessibility showed little correlation with the respondents' education and income levels. This is because accessibility to digital mediums and radio in UAE is mostly low in cost and widely available. With a total population of over nine million, income varies widely because most of the Emirate's inhabitants comprise both low-skilled and more highly skilled workers, mostly from other countries (The Media Lab, 2019; Qadri, 2020). This makes the communications market particularly dynamic, with a mobile penetration rate of 187 per cent for the entire UAE population in 2020.

The heavy adoption of mobile phones is due to the easy availability of internet access (Wansink, 2017) and, in many places, free public wifi. The quantitative survey shows that about two-thirds (65%) of respondents commuted daily due to the nature of their workforce (laborers, maids, guards, helpers, office assistants, drivers). Nearly half of their radio listening was while driving (48%), with most of the rest (47%) on other means of transport (public transport, walking, cycling, bike), and it was indicated

that they often used their mobile phones during their journey. In the qualitative study, many respondents were seen to own older-model mobile phones with a built-in radio FM receiver which could be used without wifi access. Others had a radio app on their phones. Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents on low incomes (<5000 AED) and half of those aged 26 to 35 (49%) recommended digital access to Islamic radio.

When we were asked about their digital Islamic radio preferences, respondents ranked mobile apps (52%), website (49%), and Facebook (31%) the highest. Non-Muslims opted most for websites while new Muslims preferred a mobile app, followed by Facebook. It was interesting to learn that Facebook was considered as an additional platform and could be considered for radio content and programs. According to the digital marketer GMI, Facebook is ranked number 1 in terms of social media users in UAE. UAE's Facebook user base in 2020 stood at 9.09 million, meaning 92 per cent of the population used Facebook (GMI_blogger, 2020).

The qualitative and quantitative studies show that respondents have actively sought information about Islam and made several initiatives to reach out to various sources. In spite of certain challenges, they were still determined to reach out (people, Islamic centers, libraries, heritage centers) but few of the available venues were able to cater fully to the respondents' individual needs.

However, a holistic view of the mixed-method approach has raised some interesting points which were not anticipated at the commencement of the research study. For instance, the results showed that females were more interested in seeking Islamic information, hence made more effort in pursuing knowledge than their male counterparts. Moreover, the data showed that the low-income, low-education group opted for digital radio more than the high-education, high-income group. Additionally, the young were more interested in radio content and programs than the middle-aged

or older. Non-Muslims were aware that word-of-mouth was not a reliable medium, yet the majority of them relied on it, as seen in survey results. Although this research study does not aim to answer these questions or understand why this phenomenon was occurring, it raises possible lines of enquiry for further studies.

Hence, the overall results indicate that, while Islamic information is available, it is scattered and disorganized. Consequently, the respondents in general expressed a preference to receive this information through a reliable source that was convenient for them. Therefore, an English-language Islamic radio proposal was seen as a possible communications solution. It was also suggested that radio messaging and digital access should be customized according to the informational requirements of listeners, an issue which is discussed in the next section.

6.4 Recommendation

As noted in the literature review, the UAE radio market is massive (Nielsen, 2019). Hence it is unsurprising that the general usage of radio was found to be common among the respondents. Radio was seen as a major channel for the respondents to obtain information or entertainment. Further, and more specifically, when respondents were asked whether radio could be a convenient medium for them to receive information about Islam, the majority said ‘yes,’ and some offered further advice. For instance, in Q23 of the questionnaire respondents were asked to ‘provide suggestions which could make the English Islamic radio more appealing.’ Out of a total of 541 responses collected, 271 were further coded and categorized into three common themes, dealing with “content that would appeal to listeners, initiatives to reduce misconceptions, and placing an emphasis on spreading information, not conversion”.

It was noted that when the survey asked respondents about radio content and variety (Q12 and Q13), they contributed more ideas. Of these, variety of topics, question/answer with Islamic scholars, discussion of social issues, and radio presentation skills, were highlighted the most. Many stated that if the radio proposal was launched, it could disseminate the right information about Islam and Muslims and clarify any misconceptions, which still affect some expatriates in UAE, but who were too cautious to acknowledge.⁵ Likewise, respondents emphasized that it should be done in a way which did not create conflicts but promoted tolerance. An emphasis on privacy was again highlighted, for which the digital aspect was brought up as a possible solution. In addition, the information aspect was highly stressed with a reminder that the Islamic radio programs should be presented in ways that suits both new Muslims and non-Muslims in the audience, with the main objective to learn or gain information, not to change.

Overall, the research results support the concept of radio as a possible medium for spreading Islamic information in the UAE. Although this research demarcated non-Muslims and new Muslims for the intention of understanding their demographic differences, habits, and especially beliefs, the results show a degree of similarity between the two groups in regard to identifying the problems, challenges faced, accessibility to sources, and views about the radio proposal. Hence, the implication of this research study is to offer a new media model for low-income workers from the developing world who are utilizing the Islamic centers for the purpose of seeking reliable religious information.

⁵ During personal interviews, respondents recalled some blasphemy experiences which they or their close friends and family had encountered.

6.5 Applying DoI to Media Model for English Islamic Radio

The development and advancement of the technology has enabled radio as a communication medium to slowly shift towards digitization as audiences today move to more practical and sophisticated audio and visual media. Therefore, in order to keep the radio popular, it is important that it follows the trends of digital media.

Even though Dubai is a multicultural city, respondents were still hesitant to enquire about certain topics including religion, so it is likely radio would help in closing the gap and lower any inhibitions about obtaining information.

Figure 14 represents a new media model developed from this research study. It denotes radio broadcast as an independent variable connected to three highly preferred digital mediums among respondents (website, mobile app, and Facebook). Since traditional media is associated with digitization, the application of DoI theory as a guiding framework was deemed suitable. The model showed that the radio would be interlinked with Da'wah preachers and scholars at three key venues to achieve uniformity. This media framework was aimed to create a strong network for a flow of information which would be organized, controlled, easily accessed, and could help disseminate information more effectively.

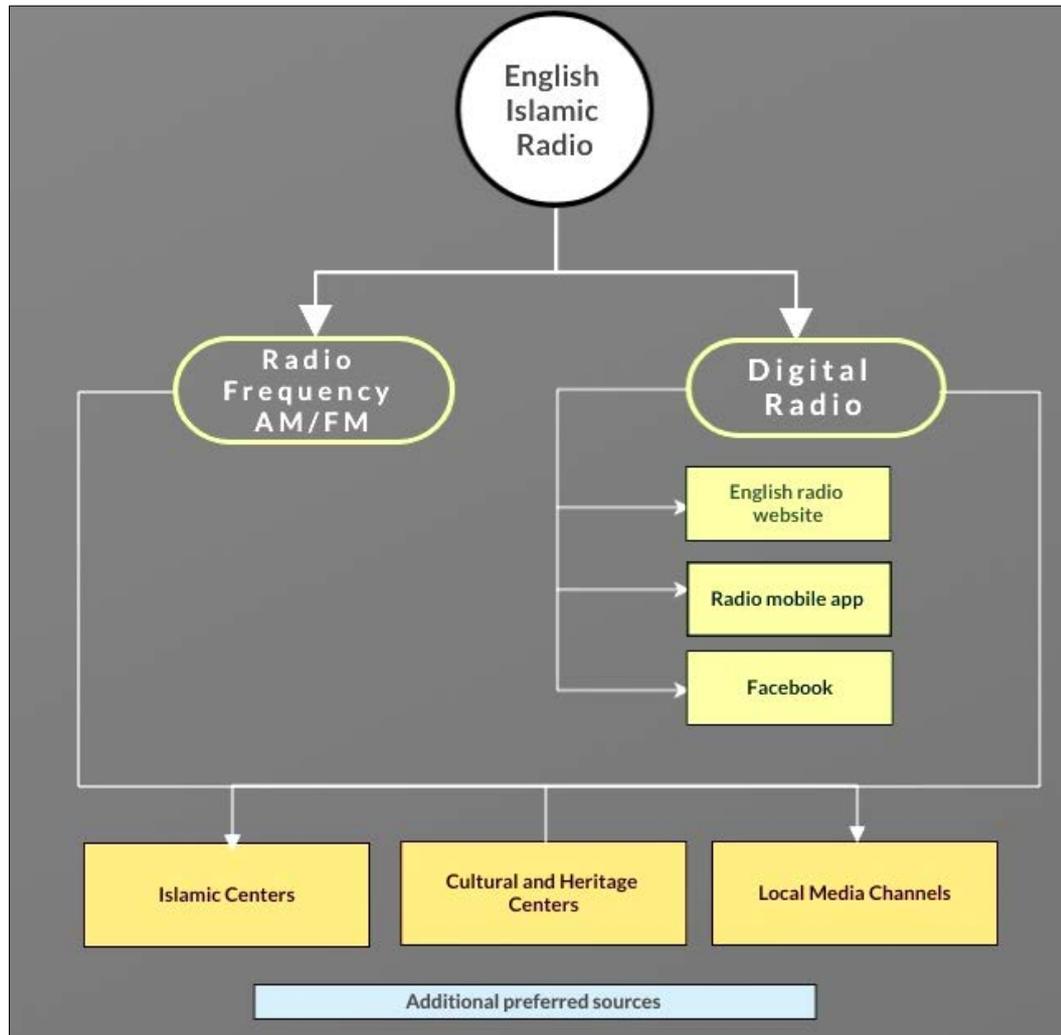


Figure 14: Media model of English Islamic radio in Dubai with key venues

The media model allows for two-way engagement where content is created based on audience demand. The digital presence of radio would also allow for information and insights that would spark reflection, awareness, and discovery to get listeners intellectually and emotionally engaged without compromising their privacy. Interactive sessions were preferred to theoretical lectures, which further supports radio as a suitable platform. By introducing this media model, Islamic scholars would need digital know-how, strong speaking skills, and the ability to interact well with listeners.

In terms of content, the proposal for Islamic radio would not only cover Islam as a religion, but also as a cultural and social practice, its history and heritage, and as a way of life so to permit audiences (especially non-Muslims) to become familiar with Emirati social rules and norms. Additionally, it would allow Islamic organizations, local media channels, and cultural centers in Dubai to get involved in a single uniform network and utilize the platform for passing Islamic information onto non-Muslims and Muslims alike. Radio has the advantage of being able to reach out to a mass audience and contribute to the social development of society at large. The capability of radio to reach a large population, both literate and illiterate, has more value than other media channels.

Radio, along with its digital presence, is predicted to play an important role in raising awareness and disseminating knowledge. Moreover, the Islamic centers, cultural centers, and other media outlets, could play an important role in influencing the target audience (early adopters) to accept the adoption of this technology. There is a possibility that the Islamic scholars within the centers could facilitate a diffusion of innovation as they have an influential role in persuading followers to adopt new ideas because they are respected, have extended social connections, and are more aware of the visitors' informational needs and other issues. These scholars represent a credible source of Islamic teachings and knowledge, for which non-Muslims and new Muslim were seen to make personal visits to Islamic centers to acquire information. However, the technology adaption considered is dynamic in UAE, so these religious scholars need to be more open to and practical about new media technologies, so to gain accessibility to a wider audience.

Current media technology and innovation have shifted to more practical and sophisticated media that are not limited to audio or visual but are digital. The digital aspect of radio would prove a valuable tool for creative program makers and act as an opportunity for radio listeners to hear programs at their own convenience (using 'listen-again' services), staying up to date with events and in contact with broadcasters through online chats and social media.

What may be inferred from the DoI framework is that this media model is more suitable for low-income, low education groups comprising mostly women with long working hours and who are unable to commute to Islamic centers on a regular basis. These people are seeking Islamic information through a reliable medium that is widely available and convenient. Hence, there is a high probability that this target audience could be early adopters within the proposed media model, as they would also help promote this model through word-of-mouth in their social circles.

However, the traits of the early adopters in this research study diverge from the characteristics of a DoI early adopter, which posits that early adopters have high social status and a high degree of opinion leadership, or are young, high-risk takers who adopt an innovation. In this study, this target audience had a markedly different demographic. The difference suggests that DoI theory, as formulated by Rogers in a Western social setting, may not necessarily be applicable in non-Western settings. The audience in Dubai, UAE, is different from that envisaged by DoI theory insofar as they comprise potential early adopters of an innovative idea. Moreover, the media model of radio and its digital presence, outlined above, is at its initial stage, but the topic is expandable; hence, there is a potential for applying a new theory built through further research.

6.6 Limitations of the Media Model

The model has shortcomings, as there is a possibility due to several factors that DoI may not manifest in real life. For instance, for an idea to work, DoI emphasizes knowing the target audience. This research study focuses on a specific audience, which is new Muslims and non-Muslims who have different levels of interest when it comes to seeking Islamic information. Some might seek general knowledge, others might want to convert or clear up a misconception, while other want to familiarize themselves with UAE culture, traditions, and laws related to the Islamic faith. So it is difficult to predict as to who this media model can cater to and how. Also, approvals from government institutions, how it would be launched, the number of listeners whom it would be able to cater, and with what content, is yet to be investigated.

Although English is the most widely spoken language in UAE after Arabic, expatriates hail from many different parts of the world and do not all speak English, especially among the low-income and low-education residents. So, there is a possibility that the English language could slow down the adoption of the radio medium. Moreover, if the UAE government and the religious institutors see the dissemination of information within the radio as a public domain, it may lead to either censorship of information content or modifications that would weaken its appeal to the audience. Additionally, there is a possibility that the Islamic radio might attract an audience from certain demographics such as Muslims or middle-income residents, with higher internet accessibility than the intended target audience, who are the focus of this study. Another challenge is accessibility, as not all have access to the internet, and even when they do, access through mobile phones may be limited, or users might prefer not to download a radio app. Moreover, this model aims to recruit Islamic

scholars who possess more of the above-mentioned abilities than those who are currently employed in an informational role within the Islamic centers. They would be required to understand audience needs, be trained to deliver quality content, adapt to the digital aspect of media effectively, and understand the network process for conveying information.

These limitations need to be studied further. Nonetheless, English Islamic radio with digital accessibility is proposed as an attempt to better disseminate information about Islam. Of all available mediums, radio has the power to reach to a wide audience in their own privacy and at their own convenience.

Overall, an English Islamic radio with digital media would aim to be a popular choice for listeners, an open source of information, and a part of UAE culture that conforms with Muslim traditions. By promoting learning about Islam, it intends to create a better understanding of Muslim society.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Further Research

7.1 Concluding Remarks

This research study aimed to understand the perceptions and experiences of non-Muslim and new Muslim residents of Dubai, UAE, in their attempt to gather Islamic information locally. Based on their perceptions, experiences, and how they gathered information, a media model was proposed for the dissemination of Islamic information in accordance with audience demand.

Through a sequential, exploratory mixed-method approach using interviews and a questionnaire survey, the study found that residents who sought information on Islam, or who visited the Islamic centers, were mostly low-income women. The study found a lack of association between their exposure to Western media representations of Islam and their decision to seek information on Islamic faith. Respondents were aware of the media's negative representations, but their interest to learn about Islam had little or nothing to do with the influence of Western media—their interest to learn was their own choice. The main factors behind this interest in information about Islam was mostly curiosity, to clarify misconceptions, and to understand UAE's laws, culture and norms, and the Muslim way of life. They also sought Islamic information to help them gain a clearer understanding of the religion. The findings revealed the current status quo of expatriates in the UAE—a new disclosure with this study. Accordingly, to address shortcomings in the status quo, a communications medium was proposed which could help residents improve their access to information about the Islamic faith in ways that met their individual requirements.

Throughout the research study, it has been evident that many UAE residents are interested to learn about faith; however, a lack of proper media channels and other

key sources leads them to seek undependable mediums. This study attempted to further identify the reasons for occasional use of modern media channels for disseminating Islamic information, and within Islamic centers. It has been emphasized that access to the religious information being sought depends on a range of factors, including the capabilities of distributors of the information, the credibility of the scholars, the sources of the desired resources, and the methods for how content is conveyed and presented, and where. For instance, respondents shared instances in which preachers lacked know-how of digital communication and had limited experience in social media. They emphasized the need for scholars who are interactive, have strong communication and language skills, who could create informative sessions, use persuasive arguments, and possess creative teaching skills with digital know-how.

So, what may be inferred from this discussion is that the combination of radio with digital media along with modern Islamic scholars seems to be a preferred medium with non-Muslim and new Muslim residents seeking religious information. From a 'digital religion' perspective, Islamic radio with digital mediums may be able to create, not only new trends in Islamic learning practice, but also construct broader sociocultural practices and help promote tolerance.

While tolerance is not a novel concept, it is of utmost importance at present in the face of the proliferation of intolerant and extremist viewpoints globally. Dubai is home to many expatriates who hail from different ethnicities, religious traditions, and cultural practices, and the UAE itself is composed of such a multiplicity of cultures, ethnicities, and religions, so the promotion of tolerance as a societal value is essential for social cohesion and coexistence. Although many initiatives have been taken in the UAE to promote cultural understanding, which have been recognized in the international media, in reality not much has been done to promote Islamic information

within the country itself. Moreover, in the evidence of the present study indicating how this cohort is treated by their fellow residents, it is clear that prejudice does exist, which helps to explain why such people are often hesitant to seek information, including making queries about faith.

UAE is known as a land of tolerance. Certainly, Dubai, which is considered a melting pot of cultures, holds the potential to bring Muslims and Islam into a positive light, nationally and internationally, if it is done the right way. They have the influence to represent the Islamic faith into positive light by undertaking some initiatives. The concept of tolerance includes the teaching of multiplicity acceptance, justice and equity, civic engagement, critical thinking, compassion for others, and protection from extremism. These could be implemented in Dubai and in doing so set a benchmark for the other emirates, and the GCC region. Teaching tolerance from a radio and digital platform may provide effective practices and disseminate Islamic knowledge and thereby help bring UAE into a more positive light.

From the evidence offered here, it could be concluded that radio with digital media would be an effective medium in effectively delivering information to UAE residents, not only about religion but also UAE culture, which a majority of respondents were interested to learn more about. The scope would be to inform, not to reinforce religion. Thus, the researcher has strived to meet the research objectives of the study.

7.2 Study Limitations

Since it is a first exploratory research study, the study had some limitations. The numbers of participants were small. Also, a majority of respondents were females with low incomes, which created a disparity in gender and income representation. The

study covered two Islamic centers which were government-affiliated, whereas the involvement of private Islamic centers, the Dubai Museum, worshipping places, language centers, and education institutions would have provided a more diverse set of responses from non-Muslims and new Muslims. Moreover, the research study was conducted only in Dubai, hence limiting its scope to one emirate. Respondents who were active listeners of radio were not part of this research. Finally, residents from low-income groups who spoke their mother tongue and had limited command of English were not covered in this study.

7.3 Further Research

Based on the above limitations, further research studies could be conducted by involving other Islamic centers, both government and private. The researcher would seek to conduct further study on content production of the proposed media model that appeals to different audiences. Studies might also be conducted specifically on UAE radio listeners and understanding the appeal factors in terms of radio programming and content. Such a study could help examine the effectiveness of Islamic radio among listeners and get an idea of how religious information could be presented in an innovative way. Likewise, further research could be done on the ways which could help Muslim scholars to gain technological and communication skills to serve the ever-growing expatriate population in UAE. Finally, a comparative study could also be conducted in other GCC/Muslim countries to evaluate and compare the suitable mediums that could help disseminate Islamic information.

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List of Publications

- Tariq, U. (2021). Say hello to the digital Hallyu wave in the UAE: The rising digital South Korean wave among Emirati Women and its impact on their cultural identity. *The Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 6(3), 1–14
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- Tariq, U. (in press). Japanese anime fandoms in the UAE: An exploratory study on media accessibility, habits and cultural perceptions. *Journal of Anime and Manga Studies*.
- Tariq, U. (in press). Emirati women illustrators on Instagram: An exploratory study. *Participations*.

Appendices

Appendix A

PERSONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (RESPONDENTS WITHIN THE ISLAMIC CENTERS)

The research study aims to understand four important areas: -

1. **PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES:** The interview aimed to provide a summary of the current perceptions' individuals hold about Islam and Muslims, through media and real-life experience. The interview utilized open-ended questions.
2. **ACCESS TO information AND CHALLENGES WITHIN:** To understand their accessibility to different sources and challenges encountered (if any) in gathering information about Islam.
3. **DISSEMINATION OF IDEAS:** These questions were designed to probe respondents about their preference to receive information in the future. This was done by proposing an idea and receiving their input on it.

RQ1. Non-Muslims/ New Muslims current perceptions about Islam and experiences.

This research question 1 aimed to provide a detailed explanation of the current perceptions Non-Muslim held about Islam and Muslims. It also aimed to encourage

Interview Questions related RQ1

1. How do you currently perceive Islam as per the recent western media coverage? Prompt: what western media channels do have access to? Do you listen through social media apps or tv/radio?
2. How has your experience with Muslims been? Prompt: After being approached by or speaking with them about their faith, how did it affect your perception?

RQ2. The access to Islamic information and challenges encountered by Non-Muslims or New Muslims in gathering information.

The research questions aimed to understand the level of information the respondents have about Islam and how they reach out to different information sources along with their experiences.

Interview Questions related RQ2

1. How easy or difficult it is for you to get answers to your Islam related queries? Prompt: How accessible are you to Da'wah materials or centers? (define Da'wah to respondents)
2. What is your opinion on the initiatives taken by Da'wah organizations/ Cultural centers in spreading awareness about Islam?
3. How has your experience been about online search?
4. Through what medium, do you personally prefer to learn about Islam? (what sources do you reach out to)

RQ3. If an Islamic radio station, was introduced, could it help respondents learn more about Islam?

These questions under this category were aimed to give a proposal to respondents and receive their opinion about it.

Table 3: Interview Questions related RQ3

1. In your opinion, if an Islamic radio station in English was introduced, do you think it would be a convenient tool for you to learn about Islam?
2. What kind of programs would you like to listen to, within the radio?
3. Do you prefer any other medium along with the radio? **Prompt:** Is radio enough/ / If digital medium, which ones and why (ask for specifications with reasons)
4. What kind of other initiatives would you suggest to the government of Dubai to disseminate Islamic information?

Appendix B

PERSONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (EMPLOYEES WITHIN THE ISLAMIC CENTERS)

1. Background of the Islamic Center? Prompt: Mission, Vision, Objectives, and number of branches they have?
2. What are the services you provide to public in your Centers?
3. Details about the visitors. Prompt: How many visitors? Who are your visitors? Which is the highest nationality? Any graphs? The peak period? Conversion rate?
4. Are you in touch with the other Islamic Centers in Dubai and aware of their functions?
5. Who monitors your functions? Any restrictions by the inspectors/auditors?
6. Did your center win any awards in recent years?
7. How do you reach out to public regarding disseminating Islamic Information?
8. What's the common issue or queries you hear from your visitors?
9. What are the current challenges faced by the management within the Center?
10. What are the criteria's applied in selecting Islamic mentors within the Center?
11. Describe the application of Digital Media tools within the Center, if any?
12. The no of radio listeners especially within expats in Dubai is particularly high, did u ever think of implementing radio to disseminate Islamic information? Prompt: what do you think of implementing radio to disseminate info about Islam? Kind of programs you would suggest and overall objective of such a radio?

Appendix C

Survey for Data Collection

1. Are you

1. A Muslim (if you select this option, kindly do not proceed with the survey)
2. A Non-Muslim
3. A New Muslim (converted)

2. How often do you listen to the radio?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
1	2	3	4

3. Where do you listen to the radio mostly? (SELECT ONE ONLY)

1. While driving
2. Commuting (walking, travelling)
3. At home
4. At work
5. If others, please specify

4. How do you access to the radio mostly? (SELECT ONE ONLY)

1. Through a portable radio receiver
2. Through a podcast app
3. Through online website/s
4. Through mobile phone (FM receiver).
5. Through car radio
6. If others, please specify.....

5. How many hours a week, do you spend listening to the Radio? (SELECT ONE ONLY)

1. 5 hours or less
2. 6 to 10 hours
3. 11 to 15 hours
4. 16 hours or more

6. How much knowledge do you think you currently have about Islam? (TICK ONE)

No Knowledge	Little Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Knowledgeable	High knowledge
1	2	3	4	5

7. Where does your main source of Islamic knowledge come from? (SELECT 1 to 2 ONLY)

1. Through word of mouth (For e.g., family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues)
2. Place of worship (Mosques)
3. Education institutions (For e.g., schools, universities)
4. Da'wah centers (For e.g., Cultural centers, Islamic centers, Islamic charity organizations)
5. Workplace (For e.g., company, organization, corporations)
6. Media outlets (For e.g., TV, social media, newspapers, radio, magazines)
7. If others, please specify.....

8. Have you actively searched information on the Islamic faith?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I prefer not to answer

9. How frequently do you visit the below places to learn about Islamic faith (for general information)?

	Venues	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1	Place of worship (For E.g., Mosques)				
2	Education institutions (E.g., schools, universities, libraries)				
3	Da'wah centers (For e.g., Islamic centers, Islamic charity organizations)				
4	Cultural and Heritage Centers				
5	Islam related events (For e.g., conferences, seminars, gatherings)				

10. Do you feel comfortable asking questions on Islam?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I prefer not to answer

11. What is the most common challenge you have faced, when asking questions on Islam?

1. I find it challenging to **reach out to the right people** who have knowledge about Islam
2. I find it challenging to **open up** and inquire about Islam
3. I find it challenging to **find reliable information centers** to inquire about Islam
4. I find it challenging to **find a reliable website or social media** to learn about Islam

5. All of the above
6. If others, please specify _____)

12. If an Islamic Radio station in English was to be introduced in Dubai, what kind of programs would you like to listen? (SELECT 1 to 3 option only)

1. Understanding Islam and its Pillars
2. Culture and Islam
3. Nasheed (Islamic Enchanting music or Melody)
4. Prophet stories
5. Talk with Islamic Scholars on variety of topics (science, societal, spiritual, sharia laws, human rights, ethics)
6. Question and Answer sessions with Islamic experts
7. Quran Translation
8. Islam and other religions
9. All of the above
10. If others, please specify

13. What is the most important factor for you while tuning in to an Islamic radio station? (SELECT 1)

1. The variety/content of the programs
2. The presenters and their speaking style
3. The interaction with speakers On-Air
4. The stations involvement with the local community
5. The timing of the programs
6. All the above
7. If others, please specify

14. Would you like the English Islamic radio station to be available through digital mediums (online media)?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I prefer not to answer

15. What digital mediums would you like the English Islamic radio station to be available through? (Select 1 to 3)

1. Website
2. Podcast
3. Instagram
4. Snapchat
5. Twitter
6. SMS notifications
7. Facebook
8. Email Subscriptions

9. Mobile App
10. All the above
11. None of the above

Any more suggestions on how to make English Islamic radio more appealing from your end?

.....

16. Gender:

1. Male
2. Female

17. Age Group

1. 18 - 25
2. 26 - 35
3. 36 - 45
4. 46 and above

18. Your Income range (monthly)

1. AED 2000 or less
2. AED 2001 -5000
3. AED 5001 - AED 8000
4. AED 8001- AED 11000
5. AED 11000 and above
6. I prefer not to answer

19. Your Education level? (select one)

1. Less than High School
2. High School
3. College Diploma / Certificate
4. Undergraduate Degree
5. Masters / Graduate Degree
6. Doctorate Degree
7. I prefer not to answer

20. Your Country of origin

21. How many years have you been in UAE? (select one):

- < 2 years
- Between 2 to 5 years
- Between 6 to 9 years
- 10 years or more

Appendix D

APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT THE SURVEY (ENGLISH)

UAEU College of Humanities
and Social Sciences
Mass Communication Department

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

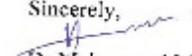
Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to introduce Ms Urwa Tariq who is a full-time PhD student in Mass Communication in our university.

Urwa is conducting research into "Spiritualizing Media – Understanding Islamic Da'wah' among Non-Muslims and Muslim reverts" in Dubai. Her findings are for academic purposes only and any information she generates will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

I will appreciate it hugely if you can give Urwa your fullest cooperation in this research.

Sincerely,


Dr Muhammed Musa

Chair of Mass Communication Dept.

CHSS-UAEU



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Appendix E

APPROVAL LETTER TO CONDUCT THE SURVEY (ARABIC)

UAEU College of Humanities
and Social Sciences
Mass Communication Department

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

21 أبريل 2019

إلى من يهمة الأمر

المسيد المعترم \ السيدة المحترمة،

أود أن أقدم لكم الأتسة / أروي طارق وهي طالبة دكتوراه بدوام كامل في قسم الأتصال

الجماهيري في جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

وتجري الباحثة أروي بحثً في " روحانية وسائل الإعلام -فيم الدعوى الإسلامية بين غير

المسلمين والمقبلين على الاسلام في دبي".

النتائج التي توصلت إليها هي لأغراض أكاديمية فقط وأي معلومات تقوم بإنتاجها سوف تعامل

بأقصى قدر من السرية.

سأكون ممتناً إذا استطعت أن تتعاون مع الباحثة أروي محمد في هذا البحث.

ونفضلوا بقبول وافر الاحترام والتقدير...


دكتور / محمد موسى

رئيس قسم اتصال الجماهيري

كلية علوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية - جامعة الامارات العربية المتحدة



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Appendix F

LETTER OF ETHICS (APPROVAL 1)

UAEU

Letter of Ethics Approval for Mr Urwa
Tariq Research Application
ERS_2018_5840



جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
United Arab Emirates University

This is to certify that the Research Application ERS_2018_5840 by Mr Urwa Tariq for the project on "Spiritualizing Media," has been approved by the UAEU sub-committee for research ethics in social sciences.

Sincerely,

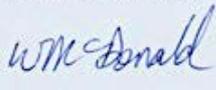
Associate Professor William McDonald
Chair of UAEU Research Ethics Sub-Committee for Social Sciences
United Arab Emirates University
UAE
Email: wmdonal@uaeu.ac.ae
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Appendix G

LETTER OF ETHICS (APPROVAL 2)

	<p>Letter of Ethics Approval for Ms Urwa Tariq Research Application ERS_2019_5963</p>	 <p>جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة United Arab Emirates University</p>
<p>This is to certify that the Research Application ERS_2019_5963 by Ms Urwa Tariq for the project on "Spiritualizing Media – Quantitative Survey," has been approved by the UAEU sub-committee for research ethics in social sciences.</p>		
<p>Sincerely, </p>		
<p>Associate Professor William McDonald Chair of UAEU Research Ethics Sub-Committee for Social Sciences United Arab Emirates University UAE Email: wmcdonal@uaeu.ac.ae Phone: +971 3 713 6494</p>		
<p>Human Resources PO BOX 15551, Al Ain, UAE T +971 3 713 1173 F +971 3 755 5775</p>	<p>الموارد البشرية ص.ب 15551، العين، الإمارات العربية المتحدة ت +971 3 713 1173 ف +971 3 755 5775 Hr_dept@uaeu.ac.ae, www.uaeu.ac.ae/hr</p>	