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**ISLAMIC DA'WA & THE
INTERNET (CASE STUDY
OF ISLAMONLINE)**

TAREK A. M. HASSAN MOSTAFA

2000

Thesis

2000/64

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The American University in Cairo
School of Business, Economics and Communication

**Islamic Da'wa and the Internet
(Case Study of Islamonline)**

A Thesis Submitted to:
Journalism and Mass Communication Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

by:
Tarek Ahmed Mokhtar Hassan Mostafa

under the supervision of
Dr. Hussein Amin

Spring Semester
May 2000

The American University In Cairo

Thesis
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DEDICATED

WITH LOVE AND RESPECT

TO

MY PARENTS

ABEER, MY WIFE
AHMED AND NOURAN, MY CHILDREN

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

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Abstract

Muslim du'a have circled the world to spread Islamic *da'wa*. ("the call"). With the emergence of different media forms starting from the printing press to the Internet, mass media have become vital as the major source of information for individuals. Therefore, in order to support Islamic *da'wa*., Muslim du'a use various print and electronic media, including the Internet as a new promising mass medium.

This study examines the major factors affecting Islamic *da'wa*.. It also investigates the role of Islamic websites on the Internet, and it focuses on the role that the Islamic websites play whether introducing Islam; explaining Qur'an, *hadith*, *fiqh*, *sharia*, *sunna*, *seerah*, or Islamic history, or defending Islam and Muslims, or any other purpose in supporting Islam. Furthermore, this study is an attempt to examine the crucial role that the Internet can play for Islamic *da'wa*..

To achieve this, a content analysis of the "Islamonline" website, as a case study, was conducted to determine the efficiency and the impact of putting the Islamic *da'wa*. Online. The researcher also conducted two survey studies addressed to users and webmasters of Islamonline to evaluate the role of this website. In addition, the study concludes with a suggested framework for improving the efficiency of the Islamonline website.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1

Introduction

to the first of the two main types of the world's population, the white race, and the second, the black race, which is the most numerous and the most rapidly increasing.

It is the purpose of this book to show that the white race is the most advanced and the most civilized, and that the black race is the most backward and the most uncivilized.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first of the two main types of the world's population, the white race, and the second, the black race, which is the most numerous and the most rapidly increasing.

It is the purpose of this book to show that the white race is the most advanced and the most civilized, and that the black race is the most backward and the most uncivilized.

The first of the two main types of the world's population, the white race, and the second, the black race, which is the most numerous and the most rapidly increasing.

Chapter I

Introduction

In today's world, among the many hot issues and one of the most important matters that provokes the interest of international public opinion is Islamic *da'wa*.

In his book entitled, *Islam exposed: the biased attempts to discredit it*, Zakzouk (1998) states that "Islam is the final and conclusive divine faith revealed by God Almighty; accordingly, the last link of divine communication from the heavens to the earth" (p. 7).

In his book entitled, *Al-i'laam wa-al-da'wa byna al-takaamul wa-al-tadaad* ("The media and the *da'wa* between agreements and disagreements"), Hammad (1994) states that in Islam the word *da'wa* means informing people about Islam and stimulating them to believe in it (p. 18).

In his book entitled, *Al-i'laam al-islami al-dawli bayn al-natharia wa-al-tatbiq* ("International Islamic media between theory and application"), al-Awaini (1987) states that there is a slight difference in the words "media," "propaganda," and "*da'wa*." First, as for *media*, they are the messages that are sent from one group of

people to another group through a certain medium. *Propaganda*, as some interpret it, means that there is an intended effect of certain situation to achieve a desired goal, that is, the information that is disseminated is slanted or biased to create a certain impression one way or the other. *Propaganda* also means that works produced are intended to alter others' manners and traditions through the use of certain symbols, words, sounds, and music so they will support the desired ideology. Moreover, *propaganda* involves an attempt to convince people to behave in a different way (pp. 142–143), and usually a way that is contrary to what they would choose if they had access to more varied sources of information.

However, in Islam “*da‘wa*,” or propagation, means the spreading of Islamic principles and beliefs that could result in a change in one’s life and beliefs and not just in the development of a friendship or some sort of support for Islam. In other words, it is an attempt to instill a deep appreciation of and belief in Islam among the senders of the message and those to whom it is directed (al-Awaini, 1987, p. 142).

This is exactly the goal of Islamic websites that attempt to introduce Islam and its peaceful principles around the globe.

In his book entitled *Nahow i'laam islami, i'laamona ila ayn?* ("Heading toward Islamic media: our media to where?"), Gerisha (1989) states that *da'wa* means the word calling one to God and the honesty of delivering it. He also emphasizes how vital honesty is in sending this message, in delivering a word or any message about Islam. He also focuses on the necessity and responsibility of appropriate wording to give the desired message, since every human is responsible before Allah for every word that comes out of his or her mouth (Gerisha, 1989, pp. 6–10).

Since Islamic websites have the ability to circle the entire globe with the ease of a click of a button, honesty in wording is vital for the promotion of *da'wa*; without it, both Muslims and non-Muslims could be misled and misinformed about Islam.

The Concept of Islamic *da'wa*

The word *da'wa* is used by Allah in several verses of the Qur'an. For example, Allah says, "I listen to the *prayer* of every *suppliant* when he or she *calls* on me" (Qur., 2:186; italics mine); here, the word translated as "prayer" is *da'wa* in the original Arabic, but it should be noted that

the other words in italics use the same Arabic root word. The variation in the translated terms only hints at the breadth of the term *da'wa* as used in Arabic.

In another place, Allah says, "To Him is the *da'wa* of truth, and [any others whom] they *call upon* apart from Him do not hear them any more than if they were to stretch their hands forth for water to take in their mouths but it reaches them not. (Qur., 13:14). Again, the word *da'wa* revolves around the ideas expressed in English as "prayer," or "call," as is expressed in another word in the verse with the same root, translated here as "call upon." Again, Allah reiterates the concept of *da'wa* as a relation between Allah and his servants, a relation that cannot be made to any other so-called god, when he says, "Without doubt do you call me to one who has no *da'wa* either in this life or the next!" (Qur., 40:43). In other words, only Allah has the true power over all the affairs of life and death.

The concept of *da'wa* as it relates in particular to Allah's total control over all creation and over life and death is best expressed in another verse of the Qur'an, "When he *calls* you, by a *single call* from the earth, then you will come forth" (Qur., 30:25); here, the word *da'wa* is translated as a "single call" to emphasize His total power

in commanding humans to come back from the dead on the Day of Judgment.

With Allah's use of the word *da'wa* as background, al-Rawi's (1969) definition of the concept of Islamic *da'wa*, used in his book entitled, *Al-da'wa al-islamiah da'wah 'alamiah* ("Islamic *da'wa*: a universal *da'wa*"), does not seem so hard to grasp. He defines it as the religion of Allah for which He sent all the prophets of the Old and New Testaments. Then, He sent Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as the last prophet with *da'wa* that is valid forever. He adds that Islamic *da'wa* is everlasting because of two aspects: First, it is from Allah, and secondly, it is designed to be valid for every time and place (pp. 29-30).

Moreover, Islamic *da'wa* calls Muslims to believe in the original principles of the previous religions of Judaism and Christianity, the previous prophets and their holy books, the Day of Judgment, the angels, and the five pillars of Islam (viz., declaration of faith, five daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadan, the giving of zakat, or charity, and the performance of *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's life). It also calls for tempered argument with non-Muslims, the brotherhood among human beings whatever their color, race, or language. Moreover, it calls for spreading

fairness and mercy and offering all good things to others when they are in need of them, and it promotes efficiency in all aspects of life (pp. 31–39).

In his book entitled, *Al-da'wa al-islamiah wa-aghezat al-'illam: nazrah mustaqbaliah* ("Islamic *da'wa* and media: a future vision"), Hatem (1996) states that *da'wa* to Allah is the *da'wa* to His religion that all the prophets were sent that obliged them inform people about the existence of Allah and how to worship Him.

Moreover, he argues that Islamic *da'wa* is an everlasting *da'wa*, for it emphasizes a good life and development in all aspects of life. Most importantly, it assures a good upbringing for Muslims so they will be good examples for people around the world. Furthermore, Hatem emphasizes that Islamic *da'wa* is a propagation to good examples of everything in life, e.g., love, equality, brotherhood among Muslims all over the world, and unity (pp.31-32).

The Universality of Islamic *da'wa*

As seen above, the word *da'wa* has at its root ideas of "prayer," "calling," "summoning," as well as the "religion of Allah," where *da'wa* expresses the very special bond

that exists between Him and His servants. But the word *da'wa* has come to encompass other ideas as well, including invitation, plea, propaganda, and missionary activity. Several, but not all, of these ideas are included in the sense of the modern term Islamic *da'wa* (for example, the word *propaganda* usually has negative connotations; see above). Nevertheless, Islamic *da'wa* today incorporates the above ideas to a large degree, but focuses in particular on spreading the message of Islam and Islamic principles to all peoples of the world. This "change" in the definition is not a true change, as it appears from the English terms used to specify the meaning of *da'wa*. The reason is that other verses of the Qur'an, as well as *hadith*, make it plain that even in the early period Muslims were expected to invite others to Islam, to plead on behalf of the religion, to spread information, and to help others join in the *umma* of Islam.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an "O mankind! We created you from a single male and female, and we made you as nations and tribes so you may know each other [not despise each other]. Indeed, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (one who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted [with all things]" (Qur., 49:13).

Allah also says in Qur'an: "Truly, We have sent you with truth, as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and never was there a people who did not have a warner who had lived among them" (Qur, 35:24).

Again, in another verse of the Qur'an Allah says: "Blessed is He Who sent down the criterion to His servant, that it may be an admonition to all the worlds" (Qur, 25:1). Similarly, "We did not send you except as a mercy for all the worlds" (Qur., 21:107).

In another verse of the Holy Qur'an concerning Islamic *da'wa* God says "Invite *all* to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and discuss with them in ways that are best and most gracious: For your Lord knows best who have strayed from His path and who receive guidance (Qur., 16:125; italics mine).

From the *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad, we learn: "I am the prophet of Allah to you especially and to all people." The prophet also said in one of his *hadith*: "Inform people on behalf of me, even a verse." Moreover, the Prophet said, "All the prophets were sent to their nations, but I was sent to all red and black in mankind," that is, to all human beings whatever their race or color.

Since the Qur'an and *hadith* emphasize the importance of Islamic *da'wa*, many Muslim *du'at* have taken the issue to heart and discussed it at length. For example, in his book entitled, *The media and da'wa*, Hammad (1994) states that the word *da'wa* has many meanings; it may be considered as (1) effort exerted to promote a certain ideology; (2) propaganda for something by which one encourages people to believe in it; and (3) an invitation to something, for example, an invitation to a party or a symposium. However, as used with respect to Islam today, the word *da'wa* means informing people about Islam and stimulating them to believe in it (pp. 17-18).

In his book entitled, *The universality of Islamic da'wa*, Mahmoud (1992) explains that the Islam has universal appeal, because it is directed to the mind and to reason—that is the universality of Islam. For whatever development or progress a human being makes, he or she needs a religion that enlightens the way to benefit from this life and the hereafter. Islam with its main source, the Holy Qur'an, encourages people to think deeply and to perceive all aspects of life. Islam teaches humans how to organize their lives according to the principles and manners defined in the Holy Qur'an, as the book serves as the first source of jurisprudence. It is the religion that could solve all human problems, be they political, economic, psychological, or of any other aspect

of life. Therefore, Islam is the universal religion; it could be applied in every time, place, and for human beings totally (Mahmoud, 1992, pp. 33-73).

Al-Rawi (1969) states that the Holy Qur'an with its verses, which give the best and the most comprehensive clarification of our world in all aspects of life and the perfect example of the Prophet Mohammed as a leader, provide the best evidence of the universality of Islam (pp. 70-80).

In his book entitled *The universal religion and the da'wa to it*, Saqr (1988) states that Allah's wisdom has kept Him from leaving His creatures to their minds and desires, and instead he sends messengers and prophets to inform them of His existence and the way they should worship him. This is obvious from several verses in the Qur'an, such as those cited above (e.g., Qur., 35:24; cf. Saqr, 1988, pp. 6-7).

There is also another verse in the Holy Qur'an that says "For We certainly raised among every people a messenger [with the command], 'Serve Allah and avoid idols' " (Qur., 16:36). Saqr remarks that since human beings always seek progress by thinking of new ideas and ways of applying them, there will always be different methods of promoting the *da'wa* (pp. 6-9).

Saqr (1988) identifies three proofs of the universality of Islam: (1) the Qur'an, (2) *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad, and (3) human reason itself. Several verses of the Qur'an (such as 25:1 and 21:107, cited above) and certain *hadith* of the Prophet Mohammed (such as those cited above) clarify that it is part of traditional doctrine that Islam is universal. Yet in addition, Islam is a religion that always counts always on what a mind can accept by logic; this proves Islam is a universal religion, because it always depends on letting non-Muslims decide to embrace Islam by giving the chance first to think deeply about all aspects of life. This in turn leads to belief in the existence of the great Creator of such life (Saqr, 1988, pp. 22-35).

Islam is universal in particular because of its principles. For instance, it recommends equality among human beings regardless of their race, color, language, or nationality (see above, where Qur. 49:13 is cited; cf. Saqr, 1988, p. 36).

Another principle in Islam that makes it universal is that it recommends fairness among people. As the Holy Qur'an states in Surat Al-Nahl ("Bees"), "Allah commands justice and the doing of good" (Qur., 16:90). Islam is also the religion of peace, for peace (*salaam*) is at the root of

the word *Islam* and it is a primary basis by which Muslims are expected to deal with each other. As for war, it is not something that a Muslim should pursue, except to defend oneself, one's religion, or one's freedom (Saqr, 1988, pp 36–38).

As shown above Islamic *da'wa* is not only for certain people, or a certain race, or a certain time. Rather, Islamic *da'wa* is universal and for all time till the Day of Judgment. Saqr (1988) explains that religion is Allah's choice for His creatures for their benefit in their life and the next. Therefore, Allah makes his religion—Islam—valid for every place, time, race, gender, and generation. (pp. 10–15).

The Importance of Islamic *da'wa*

In his paper entitled, *Al-dawabet al-diniyah alati tahkum akhlaqiat istekhdam wa-tadawol al-maa'lumat* ("The religious rules that control the manners of using and exchanging information"), Shehata (1999) discusses the importance of Islamic *da'wa* for all mankind throughout the world and he emphasizes the role that Muslims play in spreading its message. As proof of this, he reiterates what God says to his Prophet Muhammad in the Glorious Qur'an in "Surat Al-Anbia'i" to show Him that Islamic

da'wa is for all mankind "We did not send you except as a mercy for all the worlds" (Qur., 21:107).

Shehata also states that Muslims should follow Prophet Muhammad's *sunna* (traditional religious practices) in enhancing and supporting Islamic *da'wa* through the ages by using every possible tool. To emphasize that the Internet could be the greatest tool for supporting and enhancing Islamic *da'wa*, especially in today's world, Shehata states that its average number of daily users ranges from 60 to 100 million people in Muslim and non-Muslim parts of the world. Furthermore, he notes that the Internet is a medium through which one can exchange text, movable and fixed pictures, and information. (Shehata, 1999, pp. 2-4).

From Shehata's paper, it could be understood that it was not only Prophet Muhammad who was ordered to enhance Islamic *da'wa*, but all Muslims should follow his *sunnah*, his example, and do their best to support Islamic *da'wa*. The mutual communication among the different cultures and religions available by means of the Internet is one of its main assets in enhancing Islamic *da'wa*.

According to Hatem (1996), Islamic *da'wa* has become a vital requirement in today's world. He comments that Muslims face different ideas, cultures, and sometimes

even conspiracies through different media, differences that contradict Islam and its principles of conservation and peace. Therefore, Islamic *da'wa* has become a necessity. Islamic *da'wa* is also desperately needed to combat the negative behaviors that have been attributed to Muslim communities (Hatem, 1996, p. 32).

The existence of extreme thoughts among youth either religious or antireligious have become clear enough to Muslim *du'at* (persons who devote themselves to spreading the call of Islam) to take action to stop such extremism. For example, when it is attributed to Muslims, terrorism—which is entirely contrary to Islam—destroys the image of Islam around the globe. Another example of extreme ideology is the devil worship that appeared in the past few years among the youth. Here again, Islamic *da'wa* has become a necessity to combat such extreme ideologies. Islamic *da'wa* is of paramount importance also to defend the Islamic minorities in non-Muslim countries (Hatem, 1996, pp. 32–33).

The need to respond to such extreme ideologies emphasizes the vital role that Islamic websites on the Internet can play for the purpose of Islamic *da'wa* by clarifying its pure and peaceful principles and goals.

The Goals of Islamic *da'wa*

One of the goals of Islamic *da'wa* is the enlightenment of Muslims about their religion. For example, Islamic *da'wa* should inform Muslims of what they should and should not do according to Quran and *sunnah*. Also Islamic *da'wa* should clarify the differences among the different sects of Islam, and protect Muslims from dangerous and destructive ideas, which are disseminated by individuals and agencies in non-Muslims countries through different media.

Another goal is to spread Islamic *da'wa* among the non-Muslim countries so they will know about the reality of Islam as a religion that calls for peace. Directing people toward mutual cooperation so non-Muslim communities can live harmoniously beside Islamic communities and emphasizing the importance of work and production are among the targets of Islamic *da'wa* Hatem, 1996, pp. 34-35).

Another goal of Islamic *da'wa* is to give a true and comprehensive understanding about Islam for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Therefore, in an international conference held in Berlin in which 17 journalists from eight Islamic countries

participated, Dr. Feliam Hofmeister, Assistant Director of the Adenauaur Foundation, discussed the importance of mutual discussion among different cultures. Dr. Hofmeister also pointed out that in the era of the "global village," different cultures have come close enough to cause conflict, which means that establishing more communication channels among these different cultures is a must (Farouq, 1997, p. 6).

In addition, Dr. Hofmeister argued that the media play a crucial role in the cultural exchange process and contribute to the shaping of opinions about various nations. In his view, the portrayal of Muslims in the West is distorted, and likewise Westerners are portrayed negatively in Muslim countries. As a result, a lot of problems exist, and the only way to avoid such problems is the continuous mutual discussions among these cultures to improve the current state of affairs (Farouq, 1997, p. 6).

In his paper entitled, *Al-da'wa al-islamiah wa-tashih sourat al-islam fi-al-gharb* ("Islamic *da'wa* for correcting the image of Islam in the West"), Osman (1999) states that the image of Islam has become distorted because of the background of historical confrontation between Islam and Christianity in addition to natural cultural differences between the East and the West (p. 13).

He also contends that there is another reason at the root of the negative image of Islam in the West, namely, acts of terrorism committed in the name of Islam. The Western media, however, have also played a role in fostering this image of Islam by presenting all acts of terrorism as Islamic movements to the extent that the word *Islam* has become synonymous with terrorism and violence (Osman, 1999, pp. 14-18).

Abd el-Haleem (1990), in his book entitled *Media about Islam*, concurs with the above opinion that the portrayal of Islam in non-Muslim countries is affected by many factors, but especially by Western media. They have had a particularly strong power in disseminating and fostering a false image of Islam because of their wide use of modern communication technology (p.7).

Yet this critic also concedes that such sophisticated communication technology could play a crucial role in conveying a correct image of Islam instead of such distorted one given by the Western media. He adds that recent statistics emphasize the increasing number of Muslim converts throughout the world, especially in the West, to the extent that they have become a power even in countries with media that largely reinforce negative stereotypes. This phenomenon has become clear enough

to lead to the formation of a number of political groups who take action either against or for Islam and Muslims (Abd el-Haleem pp. 7-9).

The Spread of da'wa

In his paper entitled, *Al-dawah al-islamiah wa-gamaat al-daght fi-al-'alam al-gharbi* ("Islamic da'wa and the pressure groups in the West"), presented to the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Amin (1999) states that Islam started to be widely spread all over the world from the moment it first appeared. There are therefore many models and good examples for the use of media in spreading Islam all over the world. It has become vital, while we are at the dawn of the third millennium of the Christian era, to admit the crucial role of those who helped to spread Islam and to direct people in different fields, such as politics, economics, and social affairs (Amin, 1999, p.1).

As others have recognized, Amin notes that in the West, especially in the United States, pressure groups and terrorist groups have played an important role in creating a negative image of Islam. at the same time he takes note of the following facts: first, there are approximately six million Muslims in the U.S. who came

from very different parts of the world. Second, these six million Muslims are connected with 1.2 million other Muslims throughout the world. Third, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world today, and it has become the second most popular religion in the U.S., if Christian denominations are counted as one religion. Fourth, some researchers predict that in the year 2025 one of every four persons in the U.S. will be a Muslim. Fifth, there are 2,000 mosques, Islamic schools, and Islamic centers in the U.S. (Amin, 1999, pp.1-2).

On the other hand, Amin (1999) points out that there is much evidence and statistical proof of discrimination by some groups and organizations against Islam and Muslims. These groups and organizations contribute to the spoiling of the relationships among people in different countries because of their deceitful behavior, lies, and insults to Islam. It has become obvious that Islam and Muslims are in desperate need of a clear, well-prepared, and strong strategy to defend their faith—a strategy that depends on highly educated individuals as well as good facilities (p. 2).

Al-Halawany (1991) emphasizes that to establish the desired unity among Muslims for the purpose of Islamic *da'wa* there must be a good and quick communication

channels for use by Muslims wherever they exist. A prime candidate for this role is the Internet (p. 17).

The Essential Nature of the Internet

The Internet's linking people and providing nearly instantaneous transmission of information around the globe is considered one of the most significant technological revolutions of the 1990s. The Internet and the World Wide Web, without doubt, have captured the imagination and the attention of both the public and specialists in various fields (Cook, 1996, pp. 67-68).

The Internet, sometimes referred to as the information superhighway, is one of the most advanced communication technologies available. It is described as "the road to the information 'promised land,' for the general public will rapidly benefit from the widespread access to all information resources" (Cook, 1996, p. 67).

Despite the fact that the Islamic world is worried about the impact of the Internet on its customs and traditions as a new means for cultural imperialism, some Muslim have realized the crucial role that the Internet can play for Islam and Muslims. One of the vital roles that the Internet can play is a correction of the cultural image of Islam in the West. One reason is that the portrayal of

Islam in Western media is among the hot issues that affect both East and West.

Therefore, most Islamic pressure groups discovered that they can use this great invention, the Internet, to further Islamic *da'wa* among Muslims and non-Muslims all over the world.

Statistics about the Internet:

According to Walker (2000) in his article entitled, "Information rich, information poor: bridging the digital divide," the Internet exists in the age that is the most wealthy in terms of information and communication in history. In spite of this fact, only 20% of the world's population is aware of the Internet or with this online technology, a statistic that betrays the widening gap between information haves and have-nots (Walker, 2000, p. 1).

According to the latest UN Human Development Report, the industrialized countries, which represents only 15% of the world population, have almost 88% of the Internet users. By contrast, South Asia, which represents one-fifth of the world's population, has only 1% of the Internet users worldwide. In Africa, there are only 1 million Internet users of a population of 739 million,

which make the situation here even worse than in Asia (Walker, 2000, p. 2).

Another study by the Computer Industry Almanac, Inc., (1999) projects that by the year 2005 there will more than 717 million Internet users worldwide. The study estimates that in the year 2005 Internet users in North America will number about 230 million, while in Western Europe, the figure will be approach 202 million.

In his article entitled "Internet in the Middle East," Jarrah (1999) states that "a DIT [digital information technology] survey shows that the number of surfers have increased to more than 920,000 by the end of April 1999. The growth rate—highest is in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon—is expected to spur the development of e-business and other on-line services in the region" (p. 1). He also predicts that the number of Internet users in the Arab world will reach one million soon. For instance, Internet subscribers in the Arab countries increased from 236,000 to 338,200 people in only four months (p.1).

In Lebanon, the increase in Internet access is measured 72% in the six months from May through October of 1999. By comparison, in Egypt there was an increase in Internet usage of 42% to 52,000 subscribers and 200,000

users over the same time period. Similarly, the growth of the Internet in the United Arab Emirates is about 34%; in addition, the Emirates has the highest number of Internet user accounts, at 82,000 (Jarrah, 1999, p.1).

In Kuwait, the number of account holders in October 1999 was 25,000, which represented a 14% growth over the past six months. In Jordan there were some 20,000 accounts for a 21% growth over the same period. In Qatar, growth was estimated at 29%, followed by Tunisia at 28%, Oman and Morocco at 26%, and finally, Yemen at about 14%. Such growth rate in Internet usage is of benefit to business, telecommunication companies, and governments as they develop their electronic business (Jarrah, 1999, p. 2).

Looking at the Asia-Pacific countries one finds about 171 million Internet users. The increase in Internet in Central and South America is expected to reach 43 million users by the year 2005. In the Middle East and Africa, there is an estimate of the increase in Internet users to 23.6 million (Jarrah, 1999, pp. 2).

According to estimates made by the Dabbagh Information Technology Group, the average time spent on Internet usage in Arab countries is about 2.5 hours per day, while in Egypt it reaches 4 hours. This resulted

in an increase in the number of users to 920,000 by the end of April 1999. The report also states that when Saudi Arabia first entered the information superhighway in 1998, for example, the number of subscribers was 26,000. After only four months, subscriptions topped out at 45,000, which is about a 140% increase in a very short period of time (Jarrah, 1999, p. 2).

Statement of the problem

It is obvious from the Qur'an, the main source of Islam, and *hadith*, the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, that Muslims have to carry on the mission of Islamic *da'wa* for both Muslims and non-Muslims around the world. Therefore, Muslim *du'at* have to carry on this mission to give Muslims more and better understanding of their religion. They should also continue the Prophet Muhammad's mission in the non-Muslim world to provide a better understanding of Islam, to answer all the remarks against Islam, and to spread the peaceful principles of Islamic *da'wa*.

To achieve such a target, Zakzouk (1998) states that "Islam, ever since its advent, has been facing a continuous and severe struggle against repeated endeavors to destroy the truth for which it stands, and to distort its image." He also argues that "the struggle

between truth and falsehood and between virtue and sin will continue until the end of the world; the struggle against Islam will continue as long as inhabitants of the earth exist" (p. 7).

In his book entitled, *Al-'illaam al-islami wa-khatar al-tadafuq al-'illami al-dawli* ("Islamic media and the dangers of the international media"), Madcour (1988) states that the Islamic world faces several serious assaults through different media, such as print (newspapers and magazines) and broadcast transmission (radio, television, cinema, and video) to distort the image of Islam and Muslims. Although it is a relatively new medium, the Internet has become one of the most dangerous forms of communication used to distort the image of Islam, because it is the most sophisticated communication technology, and it has virtually unlimited and uncontrollable space. Therefore, it has become imperative for Muslims to combat Internet campaigns that strike against Islam and Muslims (pp. 5-6).

Madcour also emphasizes that Muslims are asked to inform others, that is non-Muslims, whether they be Christians, Jews, or secular humanists of the Islamic *da'wa* principles, which call for peace, fairness, equality, and mercy. He clarifies that when Muslims have suitable media, they will definitely be able to launch Islamic

da'wa according to its peaceful rules. In addition, they will be able to correct the distorted image of Islam and Muslims (Madcour, 1988, pp. 6-7).

Significance of the study

This study is pioneering in examining the role of Islamic websites on the Internet. It seeks to investigate the major factors that affect the portrayal of Islam in the non-Muslim world. In addition, it focuses on the role that Islamic websites play for Islam, whether connecting Muslims with each other, defending the faith, explaining Quraan and *hadith*, or any other purpose that supports Islam.

Furthermore, this study is an attempt to examine the crucial role that a certain means of communication, specifically the Internet, can do for Islam. It attempts to present how this means can greatly serve to clarify many misunderstandings about Islam. The study will also try to show how the Internet can save time, cross distance and borders, for more efficient support for the Islamic cause.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Islamic websites on the Internet, in terms of *da'wa*. It also seeks to determine whether they have been effective in defending Islam and Muslims, in introducing Islam to the non-Muslims, in spreading Muslim news, in providing an explanation of Qur'an and *hadith*, in detailing Islamic history, in solving Muslims problems, and in answering Muslims' questions about Islam.

Definition of some operational terms used in this study

Adhan - the call to each of the five daily prayers. (Key to Islamic concepts. Islam Online; (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>))

Allah - the true name for the creator of the universe is called Allah. (Key to Islamic concepts. Islam Online; (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>))

Ayah - the Arabic meaning of *ayah* is a miracle and a sign. The Qur'an is considered to be an *ayah* in itself. Each verse or sentence of it is also called an *ayah*. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Bid'a - an innovation; something that has no basis in Islam and it is just invented. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Eid - a festivity, a celebration, or a recurring happy feast
(<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Fiqh - understanding, comprehension, knowledge, and jurisprudence in Islam. A jurist who is an expert in matters of Islamic religion is called a *fiqih*. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Fard - required; everything that a Muslim must do, such as the five daily prayers. Doing what is *fard* in Islam is counted as a good deed, and not doing it is counted as a sin. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Hadith - the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, which are taken as a model of behavior by Muslims. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Hajj - the Arabic word for the Muslims' pilgrimage to Mecca; it is one of the five pillars of Islam. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Halal - everything lawful for Muslims to do like marriage (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Haram - "prohibited"; haram also refers to a category of actions that is prohibited for a Muslim to do, such as stealing, killing, lying, and gambling. Doing what is *haram* is counted as a bad sin. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Ijtihad - the exerting oneself totally to the furthest extent of one's ability in attempting to uncover Allah's

rulings on issues (Qur'an, Sunnah, Ijma', etc.) (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Islam - "Islam means submission, that is, submission to the will of God, the characteristics attitude of members of our faith." (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/societies/Islamic/about/index.>)

Jihad - one's fighting defense of life, religion, or country. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Lunar calendar - This calendar is the one that Muslims use to reckon *fard*, or obligatory activities, such as fasting, *zakat*, and *hajj*. It is based on the monthly phases of the moon; by contrast, the solar calendar is the one the world is more familiar with. The lunar calendar consists of twelve months: Moharrem, Safar, Rabi' al-Awwal, Rabi' al-Thany, Jamada al-Awwal, Jamada al-Akhar, Rajab, Sha'ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhul-Qi'dah, and Dhul-Hijja. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Makruh - "hated"; *makruh* is everything that is hateful, such as divorcing. Not doing what is *makruh* is counted as a good deed, and doing it does not count as a sin. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Mala'ika - the Arabic word for angels. (Key to Islamic concepts. Islam Online)

Masjid - the place in which Muslims do their prayers or their worship. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Mubah - "allowed"; *mubah* is a category that is left for a person to decide what to do as long as he doesn't go behind the limits. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Muslim - the word "is based on the same Arabic root as *Islam* and means 'one who submits to God,' that is, a believer in Islam." (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/societies/Islamic/about/index>.)

Nafela - "recommended"; *nafela* refers to the nonobligatory recommended extra prayers or fasting according to Prophet Muhammed. Doing what is *nafela* in Islam is counted as a good deed, and not doing them does not count as a sin. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Qur'an - the holy book of Muslims that was revealed to the Prophet Muhamaad. A Muslim must be in a state of cleanliness whenever he or she touches or recites the Qur'an. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Ruku' - the state one adopts when bows down before Allah. (Key to Islamic concepts. Islam Online; (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>))

Salat - the Arabic word for prayer. It is the spiritual relationship between a human being and God. (Key to Islamic concepts. Islam Online; <http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Sawm - the Arabic word for fasting. For Muslims sawm is a must in the month of Ramadan since it is one of the five pillars of Islam.

(<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Shari'a - the canonical law of Islam; rules that Muslims follow in their day-to-day lives. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Sira - everything written by the companions of Prophet Muhammad concerning his personality, story, and the way he used to handle different matters he faced. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Sujud - the posture a Muslim takes when making a prostration and confession to Allah. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Sunna - the habits, practices, customary procedures, and actions of Prophet Muhammad, which every Muslim should follow in order to win paradise.

Sura - a chapter of the Qur'an. There are a total of 114 *suwar*, the plural of *sura*. (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

Zakat - "purification"; the giving of obligatory charity (Key to Islamic concepts. Islam Online) (<http://www.unn.ac.uk/Islamic/jargon/keycon1.htm>)

CHAPTER II

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter II

The Theoretical Framework

Nowadays, with 25 million people worldwide estimated as Internet users, the Internet has become a vital medium of mass communication. Recently, mass communication scholars have considered the Internet not only as a mass medium, but the entire field of computers as a mediated communication. Scholars have considered the Internet as a convenient medium for research topics (Morris and Ogan, 1999, p. 1).

Because of the importance of the Internet as a means of communication and as a research tool, this study attempts to evaluate the role of Islamic websites for both communication and research and to answer the questions, "Who says what?" In this case, Islamic websites are the source, or the "who," that play a crucial role in introducing Islam to non-Muslims, in defending it, in explaining Qur'an and *hadith*, and in publishing Islamic history.

The best theory that that can be applied in such a study on Islamic *da'wa* and the Internet is called the uses and gratification approach, because it involves finding

answers to questions relating to the reasons people use a particular medium..

Uses and gratification approach:

The uses and gratification approach attempts to find the correlation between people and the reasons why they use a certain medium, and thus seems to provide the best theory to be applied in his study.

According to Blumler (1979) the uses and gratification approach emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s in an attempt to measure the short-term effects of media from their exposure to mass media campaigns.

According to Severin and Tankard (1979), the uses and gratification approach seeks to emphasize the functions of mass communication, which are fulfilled for the audience according to their desires. This theoretical approach was first described in 1959 by Katz. In a 1959 article, Katz pointed out that mass communication research studies aim to examine the effect of persuasive campaigns on audiences. He also discussed two questions: (1) what do the media do to people? and (2) what do people do with the media? (p. 250).

As for the first question, research studies results show that the mass media have little effect on their audiences; therefore, researchers focus more on other variables, such as group influences (p. 250).

It seems from the first question, "what do the media do to people?" that it could be applied to this study of the Internet because it has been claimed that the Internet is most likely to be the best medium for the purpose of Islamic *da'wa* especially with the tremendous number of its users in this age of communications revolution.

In answering the second question, Katz (1959) cited a group of studies that demonstrate the importance of the uses and gratification approach in analyzing how people can use one message for different purposes (pp. 250–251).

Another study by Blumler and McQuail (1969) used the 1964 general elections in Britain to show the importance of the uses and gratification theory. The focus of their study was "to find out why people watch or avoid party broadcasts; what uses they wish to make of them; and what their preferences are between alternative ways of presenting politicians on television." The research results showed that the uses and gratification approach can be applied to up to 55% of the selected sample of people,

and such an approach is therefore considered very valuable (p. 251).

This finding of Blumler and McQuail is of paramount importance to this study. On the one hand, it clarifies why both Muslims and non-Muslims would use or avoid Islamic websites. For example, Muslims might use Islamic Website in order to get a better understanding of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) or Islamic *da'wa* or to obtain a better explanation of Quranic verses or *hadith*, or to know more about Islamic history. On the other hand, it also shows why non-Muslims might use or avoid using such Islamic sites to know more about Islam and to find the answers to disputed comments about Islam.

In his book entitled, *Mass media and American politics*, Graber (1993) remarked that some theories have tried to explain why Americans choose what they choose from among different broadcast programs. He found that they do not care about irrelevant or poorly prepared programs: Americans are interested in only those programs that deserve their time and effort (p. 212).

According to Bennett (1993), among the main categories why people watch broadcast programs is curiosity and to keep up-to-date on a particular interest, and for social and psychological reasons (pp. 212-214).

Accordingly, Islamic *da'wa* on the Internet could appeal to the curiosity of non-Muslims who might try to find out exactly what Islamic *da'wa* is, and what its aims and principles are.

In a 1974 article now available online, entitled "History," Blumler and Katz (1974) further try to answer the question addressing the history of the uses and gratification theory. They state that the uses and gratification theory was developed after 100 years of attempts by practitioners and academics to find out the rationale behind the use of media, and the resulting gratification of its users.

The uses and gratification approach was developed by a group of well-known sociologists, including Blumler and Katz. This group stated that the uses and gratification arose from the functionalist paradigms in psychology and sociology, which emphasis the media effects on people (Blumler and Katz , 2000).

In the same article, Blumler and Katz acknowledged that the uses and gratification theory was used by media analysts from the 1920s to the 1940s. Then mass media experts needed greater understanding of popular interaction with the new media of the time and so the

uses and gratification notion was further refined (Blumler and Katz, 2000).

In his article entitled "Uses and gratification: building a theory," Blumler (1979) states that "the distinctive mission of the uses and gratification research is to get to grips with the nature of audiences' experiences" (p. 1). In order to answer his question, Katz reviewed several previous studies that are beneficial in knowing "what do people do with the media?" For example, a study conducted in 1944 found that there were three different ways people used radio soap operas, i.e., as (1) an emotional release, (2) an escape from reality, and (3) a means of solving problems (p. 1).

Another study conducted by Katz in 1951 found that children had different uses for adventure stories. For instance, some children used such stories for games, other children used them for fantasies. As a result, Katz (1974) concluded that a communication message could be used for different purposes. Having used election campaigns as a focus for understanding uses and gratification, Katz and other sociologists used British general elections " to find out why people watch or avoid party broadcasts; what uses they wish to make of them; and what their preferences are between alternative

ways of presenting politicians on TV" (Severin and Tankard, 1997, p. 1).

In their article entitled "Uses and gratification: evolving," Severin and Tankard (1997) found that uses and gratification involve a shift from the purpose of the community to the purpose of the communicator to the purpose of the reader. The uses and gratification approach seeks to determine audience involvement in mass communication in terms of individual usage. The two researchers again noted that the uses and gratification was first applied to broadcast media by Katz in 1951 when he answered the question "what do media do to people?" (p.1).

In his book, *Public communication and behavior*, Comstock (1988) cited Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch's 1974 characterization of the uses and gratification perspective as its starting point for research on public response, that is, the uses and gratification approach focuses on the consumers of the media rather than on the media's message. In addition, it explores media consumers communication behavior in terms of their direct experiences with the media. The uses and gratification theory also views some individuals as active users of media contents, rather than being passively acted upon by the media. Thus, the uses and

gratification theory's main focus is that members of the audience put to use messages that act as intervening variables in the process of effect, rather than a direct relationship between messages and effects (p. 241).

Applying this to this study, one can see that the Internet could be a two-way communication tool for Muslims and non-Muslim audiences by giving both the opportunity to participate and discuss different issues relating to Islamic *da'wa*.

According to Comstock (1988), there are two aspects in the communication process: the active audience and active participants. Active audiences expose themselves to what they want from the communication flow, and they filter communication programs according to their experiences and needs. As for active participants, he argues that the effect of a given message in any medium will not necessarily be uniform across all audiences, so the participation level may be minimal to nonexistent or some individuals may be very involved.

Among the many classical studies to find out the correlation between uses and gratification and the media effect on people is the study that Herzog conducted in 1944. That study aimed to find out why people were listening to the radio. The results of her study showed

that some people listen to radio to escape from reality, to obtain emotional release, or simply for entertainment (p. 241).

In a 1949 study about a newspaper strike in New York City, Berlson sought to find out the impact of the habit of reading a newspaper on people and what this habit meant to them. In other words, why were people reading newspapers and what need did such reading gratify in them? He concluded that reading a newspaper meant to some people gaining information about world news, financial information, or general information. For some people, the habit conferred social prestige (Comstock, 1988, pp. 241-242).

In his article entitled "Why do people watch television," Chandler (1994) stated that the uses and gratification approach focuses on the one hand on why people use a certain media and, on the other hand, on media effects on people. There is a competition between mass media and other sources of gratification. The uses and gratification theorists argue that people's needs affect their usage and they respond to a given medium because individuals have different tastes, levels of maturity, backgrounds, and needs (p. 1).

In their article entitled "Uses and gratification's: elements," Katz, Gurevitch, and Blumler (1979) contended that most of the uses and gratification research studies had focused narrowly on certain aspects, such as the social or psychological origins and differential patterns of media exposure. Blumler (1979) discussed a number of interesting points to find out why the uses and gratification approach cannot measure an active audience; these include utility (i.e., mass communication has different uses to different people), intention (i.e., media consumption is directed by prior motivation), selectivity (i.e., media behavior reflects prior interests and preferences), and imperviousness (i.e., the declining ability of media to influence an obstinate or jaded audience) (p.1).

Blumler and Brown (1972) added four functions to Lasswell's four-function characterization of the media (the acquisition of up-to-date information, correlation, entertainment, and cultural transmission): diversion (escape from reality), personal relationships (social utility of information), personal identity (value reassurance), and surveillance (important factors that might affect one in doing something). Additionally, Weiss (1979) identified other uses and gratification that the media provide, including time filling, relaxation or

diversion, and the serving of social and personal needs
(Chandler,1994, pp.1-2).

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter III

Review of Literature

This chapter deals with the review of literature. It deals with the review of literature on the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Western and non-Western media. It also deals with the review of literature on the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Western and non-Western media. It also deals with the review of literature on the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Western and non-Western media.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE

REVIEW

Chapter III

Review of Literature :

This research study deals with three aspects. First, it sheds the light on the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Western or the non-Muslim media. Second, the researcher illustrates the mass media's forms of handling Islamic *da'wa*. Third, it evaluates the role of various media, such as the print (newspapers and magazines), and broadcast and electronic media (radio, television, and the Internet), and in particular Islamic websites, as their dealing with Islamic *da'wa*.

The portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the Western media

In his book entitled *Media about Islam*, Abd el-Haleem (1990) argues that the new and the most sophisticated means of mass communication have achieved wonderful success by enriching modern life with a tremendous amount of information. Moreover, such mass communication means can cross many boundaries, and give a complete coverage of what is going on around the world. As a result, governmental and nongovernmental organizations as well as private groups could get the maximum benefit of such communication means by

using them in shaping their audiences' opinions and ideas. He argues also that direct contact with audiences through some of these means have had a strong impact in convincing people who originally held very different thoughts (p.13).

Among those different thoughts is the portrayal of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs in the Western media.

According to Mousa (1999) in his paper entitled, "The Arab image in the American media: an overview," during the 20th century the image of Arabs has seen dramatic changes from one extreme to another. He argues that the image of Arab and Muslims had been exoticized, orientalized, and romanticized, for it was just deserts, camels, and harems, reflecting imagery that might seem more appropriate to *The Arabian Nights*. Before 1948, both Western press and film industries had contributed to this unrealistic image by stressing tales and themes of adventure, mystery, violence, kidnapping, and blackmailing. Mousa (1999) also observes that the image of Arabs after 1948 became even worse because they were associated with the communist camp. In addition, the Western media have dehumanized Arabs by utilizing every opportunity to associate them with terrorism and violence (pp. 1-4).

As for the Western electronic media and their role in portraying Arabs and Muslims, Said (1978) stated that they have contributed the most because they initiated the negative stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims. Mousa suggested that not only the electronic media, such as radio, television, and films have contributed to the reinforcement of the negative image of Arabs, but also there are other reasons that contributed to enhancing this image (Mousa, 1999, p. 4).

The first reason is that, historically, Islam has not been welcomed in the West. The second reason is the Israeli-Arab conflict, which had its own impact on Western culture. The third reason is the absence of any reaction from the Arabs themselves to defend their image or Islam (Mousa, 1999, p. 26).

In their paper entitled "Influence of changing U.S.-Middle East relations in American news media coverage of Arabs," Wilson and Coulson (1999) reaffirm that there has been a consistency in the portrayal of Muslims and Arabs: Arabs are routinely and regularly associated with terrorism, anti-American interests, or they are excessively wealthy, with perverse or insatiable sexual behaviors, and their attitudes are barbarian. In addition, Arab women are depicted as harem decorations who are

backward-thinking, because they insist on keeping hidden under their Islamic uniform (pp. 1-2).

In addition, Wilson and Coulson (1999) argue that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, terrorism has become the only threat to democracy. As a result, the U.S. decided that war (declared or undeclared) would be its reaction to terrorism. One of the war strategies is to promote what is called the basic Western model, which portrays, especially in the American media, events in the Middle East as acts of terrorism against Western interests. They also comment that in a content analysis of U.S. newsmagazines by Simon and Lowry (1990), there was a clear correlation between American victims and the term *terrorism*. There was also a significant correlation between the U.S. political agenda and the content of the news using the term *terrorism* (Wilson and Coulson, 1999, pp. 2-3).

Moreover, they say that Americans count on their domestic news reports to get their information about foreign places. Such news media most frequently attribute bombing, violent actions, and terrorist attacks to Arab groups, and they select reports that reinforce this image. For example, Israeli victims in Palestinian demonstrations may be interviewed by the Western media, while no one asks why the Palestinians are

outraged. Or Iranian demonstrators may be shown burning the American flag, though the same act may occur at a variety of places throughout the world at any time without any U.S. media coverage. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait provided yet another opportunity to reiterate the negative image, and Western media focus on Arabs as terrorists even when they live among themselves (pp. 4-11).

In his article in Al Ahram daily newspaper entitled *Safha gadida lel-hewar* ("A new page for an argument"), Abd al-Qader Tash (2000) states that despite the existence of anti-Islam campaigns in Western communities, there are also fair voices that call for good will and for establishing a dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim communities to establish a good base for harmony after a long time of conflict (p. 10).

Tash states also that Paul Pobar, an assistant to the Pope and chargé d'affaires for the Vatican Council for Cultural Affairs, recommends that people should differentiate between Islam as a religion and terrorism that has become the consistent negative symbol for Islam. Pobar confesses that Islam is a new challenge for the West, for it is not just a religion, but also a culture and a vast community of people throughout the world. Therefore, Pobar wishes for new and peaceful negotiations between

Western youth and the new Muslim generations living in the West. Tash (2000) remarks that he appreciates Pobar's talk and confirms the need of such positive negotiations to generate a new and a real image about Islam instead of such a maligned and destructive one (p. 10).

On the other hand, Tash (2000) welcomes the Iranian President's proposal of announcing the year 2001 as the UN year for positive dialogue among the different civilization and religions. He states also that the discussion that should take place between different religions does not mean that one group of people intend to convince another group to convert to their religion, nor does it mean that either side will badly criticize the other. On the contrary, Islam seeks better understanding to get the different point of views closer (Tash, 2000, p. 10).

Furthermore, Tash quotes the UN Secretary General Mr. Kofi Anan's speech at the Center of Islamic Studies in Oxford in which he stated that Islam is one of the greatest religions in the world. Anan also stated that Islam has contributed positively to many civilizations throughout the years. Finally, Anan confirmed the need for discussion between the different religions and

civilizations, especially among the contemporary communities (Tash, 2000, p.10).

In an article entitled "Surat al-Islam fi-al-manaheg al-derasiah fi-al-gharb ("The portrayal of Islam in educational texts in the West"), Fawzya al-Ashmawy (2000) states that the matter of the portrayal of Islam has become of paramount importance, and deserves more attention from those who are in charge of the ministries of education in the Islamic countries. She states also that the Islamic history of the Western history textbooks does not exceed 3%. Yet in that 3%, Islam and Muslims are always portrayed as a second-class religion and people who are violent (p. 10).

Moreover, she asserts that the textbooks attempt to instill in students' minds the idea that Islam was launched quickly and by the force of the sword. There is an emphasis on Western champions, such as Charles Martel who ended the "misery" of Islamic control over Spain, an emphasis that underscores for naive students that Islam and Muslims are unfair and cruel. Furthermore, they also show Muslims as savage people who treated Christians in Jerusalem very badly, behavior that led the European heroes to start their Crusades to save the Levant countries and their Christian people from the barbarian Muslims (al-Ashmawy, 2000, p.10).

However, in rejecting what the West teaches its students she notes certain omissions in standard Western history texts,, such as how the Crusaders killed nearly 70,000 Muslims in Jerusalem, including children, women, and men. She also defends Saladin who set Jerusalem and its people free from the abusive treatment of the Crusaders. Likewise, she notes how the Eastern philosophers, thinkers, and the *ulamas* (scholars) have contributed to the Western renaissance. Finally, she argues for the importance of the positive and for constructive dialogue between the West and the East. (*Al-Ahram*, Jan, 14, 2000, p.10).

The negative image of Islam and Muslims is clear and obvious enough to be seen in many of the Western media forms, and the need for correcting this image and for communication should be equally apparent. In this context, Islamic websites are of paramount importance.

Islamic *da'wa* and the media

In discussing the role of the media in Islam, it seems appropriate to begin with what God says in the Holy Qur'an: "Read in the name of the Lord and Cherisher who created, created man, out of a leechlike clot: Read! and the Lord is most bountiful—He who taught [the use of] the pen, taught man that which he knew not" (Qur., 69:1-6). Thus, Muslims are required to learn about their religion and about the bounties that Allah has provided for His servants (Omar, 1984, p.17).

Moreover, certain *hadith* emphasize the importance of *da'wa* in Islam. For example, it is reported that Prophet Muhammad said, "Inform people on the behalf of me, even a verse" (Bukhary, the Prophet's Book, p. 496). Another *hadith* reports that Muhammad said, "Whoever attends here must tell those who are absent whatever I tell you" (Bukhary, the Science Book, p. 37). These two accounts stress the importance of both disseminating and receiving *da'wa* (Omar, 1984, pp.17-18).

In his book entitled, *Al-'illam fi-al-Quran* ("The media in Qur'an"), Ghalwash (1986) states that informing people about Islam (that is, *da'wa*) is vital in Islam—in fact, it is the core of the religion itself. He emphasizes the importance of suitable preparation of *du'at*, or people

who specialize in informing others about Islam and its peaceful rules (p.9). As the Qur'an says, "Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and discuss with them in ways that are best" (Qur., 16:125), and again, "O Messenger! proclaim the [Message] that has been sent to you from your Lord. If you do not, you will not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And Allah will defend you from men [who intend you harm]. For Allah does not guide those who reject faith" (Qur., 5:67).

Gerisha (1989) identified certain goals that Islamic media have, such as promoting Islamic law, since it is God's law, and it guarantees fairness and mercy. Another goal of Islamic media is to guarantee that the three stages of *da'wa* are performed; these are: informing, building the Islamic basics, and ascertaining that the right understanding of Islamic *da'wa* has been received. The third goal of Islamic media is to counter the corruption of foreign (non-Muslim) media (Gerisha, 1989, pp. 80-84).

In addition, Gerisha mentioned that there are distinctive characteristics of Islamic media. First, they are like a pyramid whose base is freedom and its top is responsibility. Second, Islamic media are characterized by an adherence to Islamic principles of what should and

should not be presented to people (Gerisha, 1989, pp. 80–84).

The sources of Islamic media are the Holy Qur'an, the *sunna* and *sira*, the experience and expertise of imams, and the good leadership of the early Muslims, such as the Prophet's companions and their successors (Gerisha, 1989, pp. 85–90).

According to Gerisha (1989), the functions of Islamic media are to prove the reality of Islam and the credibility of the Prophet Muhammad's message; to make Islamic *da'wa* reaches every possible place; to achieve familiarity, rapport, and cooperation among people all over the world; and to encourage people to live the ideal life, with development of themselves and their communities, the best use of their time, and entertainment (pp. 90–92).

Others have likewise noted that Islamic media have defined objectives and characteristics; for example, Islamic media have to inform people about the Islamic pillars and the rules to help in developing a better and more wise Islamic society. In addition, Islamic media are designed to target Muslim and non-Muslim societies (Ghalwash, 1986, pp. 111–113).

Madcour (1988) states that Islamic media have certain characteristics that never change since the prophet's time till the end of the world, regardless of place, time, political purpose, economic interests, or any ruler's desires. Islamic *da'wa* is also directed to all mankind no matter their race, color, or ideology (p. 21).

Moreover, as we have seen above, Islamic *da'wa* is derived from the Glorious Qur'an and *sunna*, which accounts for its consistency and the credibility throughout the ages. Madcour, however, argues that Islamic *da'wa* may take different forms to suit the different logical frameworks and ideologies of its target audiences without harm to its universality (pp. 21-22).

In his article entitled, "Al-ussos al 'illamia li-al-*da'wa* al-islamia" ("Media basics for the Islamic *da'wa*"), Sharaf (1987) states that Islamic media principles are as follows: first, they encourage people to live to the maximum of their self-development. Second, there is a call for balance between soul and body. In other words, one should not pay maximum attention to one's desires while neglecting spiritual matters, nor should one pay attention to the spirit without giving the body its due. Another principle is that Islam does not differentiate among different nations, colors, or gender. On the contrary, it always emphasizes equality among human

beings around the globe. Moreover, because the media are controlled by human beings, another principle of Islamic media is to operate using human logic as well as credibility, honesty, and fairness (pp. 15-25).

In another article entitled, "Islamic *da'wa* and the development of Islamic media," Sharaf (1989) stated that Islamic media strategy is never to coerce someone to believe in Islam, since this was prohibited by the Qur'an. The role of Islamic media is rather only to inform both Muslims and non-Muslims of Islamic *da'wa* whether anyone will follow its guidance or not. Nevertheless, Islamic media follow the best and the most convincing methods to convince people about Islam (Sharaf, 1989, pp. 16-29).

In other words, Islamic *da'wa* exists primarily to remind people of Islam and not to oblige them to follow it. Another strategy of the Islamic media is to defend Islam against the misconception that Islam was spread by the power of the sword. On the contrary, the good examples of Muslims at the beginning of Islam helped the quick spread of Islam (pp. 16-29).

Among the main targets of Islamic *da'wa* is to correct the image of Islam and Muslims, because from the Prophet's time until today Islam has faced continuous serious

attempts to destroy it and to distort its teachings (Madcour, 1988, pp. 22-24).

Islam has used new (and some old) methods for informing people about its valuable aims and its rules. Among these methods is the recitation and teaching of the Glorious Qur'an in mosques as media centers for Islam, the teaching of *hadith*, the work of *du'at*, the public call to prayer, called the *adhan*, and the travel of pilgrims each year to Mecca (hajj). The newness is not in the information but in the media outlets; traditionally face to face communication was the primary means of spreading the word about Islam. Today new options in print and electronic media have broadened the number of people who can be reached (Omar, 1984, p.33; Ghalwash, 1986, pp. 41-47).

The beginning of *da'wa* and interpersonal communication

One of the most important forms of communication is face to face communication. Prophet Mohammed practiced this form of communication at the very beginning of Islamic *da'wa*, when he first told his family, such as his wife (Khadijah at this time), his cousin Ali Ben Abi Taleb, and Zeid Ben Haretha, of his wonderful experiences. Then, his friend Abu Bakr, who in turn

started to tell his closest and the most confident friends, such as Osman Ben Affan, al-Zubair Ben al-Awam, Abd al-Rahman Ben Auff, and Saad Ben al-Waqass. Moreover, Secretly, the Prophet started to inform secretly other trusted individual of Mecca until Allah ordered him to direct his *da'wa* to the public (Saqr, 1988, p. 44).

Hashem (1982) states that Prophet Muhammad achieved great success in Islamic *da'wa* through face to face communication despite the lack of mass communication that time. Among the most important forms of face to face communication is speech, or "khutba," in which the speaker addresses a massed audience. The last speech of the Prophet, the "Kutbat al-wadaa," was one of the strongest forms of face to face communication. Still, the *khutba* given by imams every Friday is vital for Islamic *da'wa* (pp 3-8).

Another form of the face to face communication involved the prophet's sending expert companions with messages on Islamic *da'wa* to the rulers of other countries to inform them about Islam (Saqr, 1988, p.57).

Sharaf (1988) noted that Prophet Muhammad did not tell massed audiences about Islam at first. First, the prophet used to tell his family, his relatives, and those whom he trusted. Then the second step of informing

people about Islam started. One example of mass communication in this second phase is the messages of Prophet Muhammad to the troops leaders in which he asked them to join Islam. Another form of the prophet's mass communication about Islam is speeches such as those delivered in connection with the Friday *jumu'a* ("congregation") prayer. Furthermore, feast prayers and the *hajj* (pilgrimage) offered other opportunities for effective mass communication on Islamic *da'wa*, because a large number of Muslims gather for such events, especially for the *hajj* (Sharaf, 1988, pp. 3-21).

The prophet Mohammed ordered his expert companions to enter into the *da'wa* business by going to different towns and countries to meet people and inform them about the Islam and its rules and peaceful principles. The Friday *khutba*, the *adhan*, public debates, lessons given in mosques, and conferences are other examples of face to face communication. Among the advantages of the face to face communication is that it allows two-way communication, with immediate interaction. That is, it allows the sender of the message to see the verbal and the nonverbal signals of the receiver, which gives the sender the chance to deal successfully with the situation (Hammad, 1994, pp. 21-24).

Abd al-Halim (1990) commented that face to face communication is distinguished from other means of communication because it has the advantage of instantaneous debating and convincing. In the case of Islamic *da'wa*, face to face communication is essential because it gives *du'at* the chance to answer any question or claim and to defend the distorted image of Islam. In addition, he stated that face to face communication is uniquely personal even if compared to other ways of communication (pp. 15-16).

Al-Awaini (1987) stated that Prophet Mohammed used interpersonal communication as an efficient way to spread the message of Islam because of what it offers in terms of debate and discussion. He also employed a different kind of face to face communication technique when he delegated to his most understanding companions in Islam for the sake of Islamic *da'wa* (pp. 219-224).

Islamic da'wa and the mass media

There are different forms of modern media by which people get informed about different aspects of their lives. As for Islamic media, they take different forms, such as print (newspapers, magazines) or electronic (radio, television, cinema, and the Internet).

Islamic da'wa and the print media

As for the press, it has the advantage of offering people in-depth reading. Therefore, the religious press could be an efficient modern medium in enriching people's religious understanding. In addition, the press is also an efficient medium, since it is one of the cheapest means of communicating with others. Moreover, many people prefer reading to any other medium (Omar, 1984, pp. 109-110).

In his article published in *The Oxford encyclopedia of the modern Islamic world* entitled, "Newspapers and magazines," Amin (1995) stated that there are two forms of Islamic journalism: First, there are certain sections of general newspapers and magazines that deal with Islam.

Secondly, there are Islamic newspapers and magazines that are specialized in writing about Islam. He also noted

that the first newspaper in Egypt appeared during the French invasion of Egypt by Napoleon Bonapart in 1798. It was called *Le courier de l'Égypte*. Next came the Turkish-Arabic publication of *Al-waqai al-misriya* in 1828 (Amin, 1995, p. 244).

With regard to Islamic publications, Amin (1995) stated that there are many in Europe, such as *Al-ghuraba* ("strangers"), which is a monthly magazine that began in London in 1972. It was established by the Muslim Students' Association. Another newspaper was called *Al-nadhir* ("The warning signal"), which was established by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1979.

Moreover, there are other Islamic publications, such as *Al-tali 'ah* ("The Front") that was published by the Islamic Center in London beginning in 1983. In Germany, *'Alam al-islam* or ("The Islamic world") was an Islamic magazine first published in 1913, while in Geneva, *Al-urwa al wuthqa* ("The Firm Tie") first appeared in 1921.

Furthermore, there were other magazines and newspapers in Europe, such as *Sawt al-'uruba* ("The Arab voice") in Brussels, *Al-kalima al-tayyiba* ("The Good Word") in Vienna, and *Al-usra* ("The family"), which was published in France. In addition, other Islamic publications were issued in Malta, for example, *Risalat*

al-jihad ("The message of religious struggle"), *Mustaqbal al-'alam al-islami* ("Future of the Islamic world") (Amin, p.245).

In Turkey, the first official newspaper called *Le moniteur ottoman*, was published beginning in 1831. Then came *Milliyet* and *Huriyet* as the most serious and influential papers in Turkey. In the Soviet Union, there are *Turjuman* ("Tataric review"), *Irshad* ("Guidance"), *Al-din wa-al-adab* ("Religion and manners"). In Iran, there are *Al-majalis* and *Sur-i-Israfil*, which are the newspapers with the highest circulation. There are also *Al-autan* and *Al-bashir* in India; *Fang*, *Hurriyat*, *Imroz*, and *Mashriq* in Pakistan (which are published in the Urdu language) as well as *Akhbar i-fahan* and *Takbir*, which were published in English.

In Singapore, there were two Arabic weekly journals, *Al-imam* and *Al-islah*. There is also *ChuKontu-Gibo* in Japan, despite the low number of Muslims there. In North America, there are bilingual newspapers, such as *Sada-al watan* ("Arab-American News") and *Al-rayah* ("The Banner"). According to Amin (1995), all Islamic publications support Islam from a certain point of view, that is, each publication has its own editorial perspective (pp. 245-247).

Hammad (1994) stated that the Islamic print media in Egypt plays an important role in supporting Islamic *da'wa*, since there are a lot of magazines and newspapers concerning the Islamic *da'wa*, such as *Al-Azhar* magazine, *Minbar al-islam*, *Nour al-islam*, *Al-tawheed*, *Makarem al-Akhlaq*, *The Muslim youth*, *The Islamic message*, *Al-muslim*, *Al-Ikhlass*, *al-E'atesam*, *the Islamic Post*, and many others. In addition, there are some Islamic pages in the daily newspapers, such as *Al-Ahram*, *Al-Akhbar*, *Al-Jumhoryya*, *Al-Wafd*, *Al-Sha'ab*, and *Al-Ahrrar*. It is useful to mention that *Minbar al-islam* magazine is published in different languages, e.g., Arabic, English, French, and Spanish (pp. 26–27).

Omar (1984) stated that Islamic print media is a power for assessing Islamic *da'wa*. Among such print media in Egypt, for example, are *Al-Ahram*, *Al-Akhbar*, and *Al-Jumhoryya*, which have space for religious articles, especially on Friday, which is a formal holiday for the majority of Egyptians. In addition, she states that such religious pages attempt to keep to Islamic *da'wa* principles, to combat non-Islamic manners and thoughts, to explain natural phenomena according to Qur'an and science, and to live up to the cultural and the spiritual level of their audiences (pp. 110–111).

Islamic *da'wa* and the electronic media

In his article entitled, "Dour al-izaah wa-al-television fi-nashr al-waai al-dini" ("The role of radio and television in spreading the religious awareness"), Elwan (1991) states that radio and television could play an essential role in religious awareness, since they can address very large audiences. They could present Islamic *da'wa* through such works as films, historical dramas, or any other form of drama. He argues also that radio and television as mass media could contribute to countering negative customs and replacing them with sound Islamic manners (pp. 38-39).

In her book entitled *Islamic Media*, al-Halawany (1991) stated that since unity is basic in Islam as it was mentioned in many Quranic verses and *hadith*, Islamic conferences, as a form of such unity, now exist to discuss Muslims' problems and needs. Among such Islamic conferences' recommendations are what came in the one held in Jaddah in 1972. It recommended that Islam should be defined correctly as a religion that calls for valuable beliefs. Islam should be promoted in trustworthy channels, such as radio, television, and the press to provide the right understanding of it. (pp.17-35).

The radio and the Islamic *da'wa*.

Radio is a medium that has a very influential impact on people, especially those whose cultural and economic status are low. Radio's religious programs have positive effects on such people. Hammad (1994) states that radio is an Islamic form of communication that can support Islamic *da'wa*. (p.26). One of the best examples of Islamic radio stations is the Glorious Qur'an (Omar, 1984, pp. 95-102; Ghalwash, 1986, pp 48-52) stations in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Call radio station in Saudi Arabia. These channels present recitations and explanations of parts of the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh, sira, sunna, and other Islamic topics. These stations help Muslims learn the Qur'an by heart, and to spread the Quranic culture as a basic for straight and good manners (Omar, 1984, pp.102-103).

One of the most important roles that radio plays in support of Islamic *da'wa* is its religious programs, for they help the spreading of Islamic principles that give the real image of Islam and show Islam to be the solution to all human beings' contemporary problems. The Friday *khutba* can be especially useful, since it reaches even housebound males and females of different ages and different levels of cultures (Omar, 1984, pp. 99-101).

Omar (1984) also contended that Islamic religious programs need to have commitment to Qur'an and *sunna* as the basic sources of Islam, their information must be credible, and there must be skill in presenting knowledge to reach different audience segments (pp. 101-102).

Muawad (1989) explains that radio channels in different Muslim and Arab countries have different coverage, areas that receive their broadcasts. For instance, some radio channels are transmitted to cover domestic areas only, while others cover an entire country, and still others may cross international boundaries.

In Egypt, for example, there are six networks, such as the main network, "Al-Bernameg al-'aam" ("The general program"). The domestic network includes stations known as al-Shaab, Alexandria, North and South Upper Egypt, Youth and Sports, mid-Delta, Cairo, and Al-Areish). Moreover, there is a cultural network, a religious network (The Glorious Qur'an, mentioned above), and a commercial network as well as an Arab network, e.g., the Arab Voice (Muawad, 1989, pp. 26-31).

Muawad also states that short-wave radio has supported spreading broad band width radio transmissions by

carrying some of the same programming across the international boundaries to make the world a global village. As far as languages are concerned, English is the most popular in short wave, followed by French, and Arabic (pp.26-31).

In his book entitled *Islamic da'wa and the religious media*, Shehata (1978) stated that among the radio programs on Islamic *da'wa* is *Ahadith al-Sabah* ("Morning Talks"), which is broadcasted by Cairo Channel though the General Program network. Most importantly is the directed programs, which are broadcasted in foreign languages for Islamic *da'wa* (pp.35-36).

The Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO) Role in Islamic *da'wa*

A vital role in electronic media has been played by the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO), which was first called for by Saudi Arabia.

According to the report from the first conference for ISBO, which was held in Jeddeh in Saudi Arabia from July 13-15, 1975, it was decided that the ISBO's goals would be to promote Islamic *da'wa*, to emphasize the importance of Islamic heritage, to find out what problems Islam now faces, to help Islamic countries get

close to each other and have better cooperation. Other goals included: introducing the social, political, economic, and educational aims and ideas of Islamic *da'wa* to both Muslims and non-Muslims.; exchanging programming among the members Islamic countries; emphasizing cooperation among all members in defending and assuring ISBO's rights in wireless dissemination; and assisting in solving problems among its members with good Islamic spirit (p.3).

One of the most important roles that ISBO plays is in its exchange of radio and television programs among the member countries (there is a total of about 32 countries participating in this project). In 1987 the number of exchanged programs reached 1,235 hours for 244 programs.

Examples of these radio and television programs include: "Al-Khalil, the city of prophets" which treats *aqeeda* and Islamic history; "Peace and crocodile tears," which gives political information; "Pillars of Islam," which introduces Islam in French; "The Muslim family" in English, which gives *fiqh* on how a Muslim family should be, the "Childhood of Muhammad," which relays Islamic history and *sira*, "Of Islamic manners," which provides an image of true Islam, the full explanation of selections from the Qur'an, and interviews about Muslims' situations in

Africa. There are other programs for Islamic *da'wa* by ISBO too numerous to mention here.

However, the project of exchanging programming among member countries has resulted in the exchange of about 17,744 episodes for almost 4,093 hours of broadcasting of 803 radio and television programs from 1983–1987 among the country members.

A particularly crucial role for ISBO to play for Islamic *da'wa* is teaching Arabic through the radio to about one billion Muslims around the world. This program was the idea of Ahmed Farrag the first General Secretary of ISBO. The program aims to teach Arabic to Muslims whose first language is not Arabic to enable them to read the Qur'an with understanding and to have a better understanding of its glorious meanings, and to benefit from their Islamic heritage. ISBO also designed this and similar programs to combat the broadcasting of non-Muslims broadcasting that attempts to destroy the image of Islam (Farrag, 1987, pp. 1–3).

According to the annual report of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (1998/1999), the total hours transmitted through the main eight radio broadcasting networks from July 1, 1998, to June 30, 1999, is 157,313, or about 431 hours of programming daily. The

religious programs that seek to enhance principles of Islamic *da'wa* account for about 19,174 hours, or 14.52%, of the total hours of radio broadcasting in Egypt (pp. 56-57).

The number of hours and the percentage of total broadcasting hours for Islamic religious programs on radio compared to general broadcasting by the main radio networks are as follow: the General Program network broadcasted 1,626 hours (8.48% of total hours); Glorious Qur'an broadcasted 7,762 hours (40.48%); Middle East Network contributed 617 hours (3.22%); Youth and Sporting presented 726 hours (3.79%) Domestic Broadcasting Network transmitted about 6,646 hours (34.66%); Voice of Arabs presented about 1,696 hours (8.84%); Cultural Network presented about 101 hours (00.53%) (pp.58-59). It is useful to note that the Glorious Qur'an network is the specialist in spreading the concept and the principles of Islamic *da'wa* in the Muslim world. It presents explanations and applications of Qur'an and *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad, emphasizes proper Islamic behavior, and it combats destructive ideologies to better protect Muslims (p. 65).

The second important media means to emerge in the modern period is the cinema. It is not exclusive to one segment of the population (i.e., literate people); it is an

economic means that is affordable by most people and films can be produced without a lot of expense. It is also an interesting medium in that it can provide sound religious material in an interesting and memorable way (Omar, 1984, pp. 103-104).

Television and Islamic *da'wa*.

In his article entitled "Teletext in Egypt: democratization of dissemination of information in the era of multiple choice," Amin (1990) stated that transmission systems in broadcasting have been studied, developed, and implemented in different parts of the globe. Such studies recommended the use of television channels for the public benefit. For example, Teletext could be used in market development, commercial utilization, and informing individuals about personal and social affairs (p.82).

Moreover, Amin emphasized the essential role that Teletext communication could play as both an educational tool and an informative service. This could be applied for the sake of Islamic *da'wa*. Since Islamic *da'wa* is universal, Teletext could be a wonderful tool for this purpose. For through Teletext mankind can benefit from the speed of information dissemination and the

possibility of individual and independent learning (Amin, 1990, p. 83).

If the radio and the cinema are two modern mass media that could affect people positively, television has become of paramount importance as an influential mass medium since it is present in almost every home. In addition, television is the most influential medium on people. Therefore, it could play a magnificent role in supporting the Islamic *da'wa*. (Omar, 1984, pp. 104-108; Hammad, 1994, p. 26).

According to the annual report (1999) of the Radio and Television Union in Egypt, television first appeared in Egypt in 1960 with only one channel. At that time broadcasting averaged about four hours. Nowadays the average rate on the Egyptian T.V. has reached 143 hours daily in eight channels. However, the average of Islamic religious programs broadcasted for the year 1998-1999 was almost 2,884.42 hours which is only 5.51% of the total broadcasting time (p. 92).

the report also stated that Islamic religious programs aim to explain Quranic verses, *hadith* of the Prophet and *qudsi hadith* (words of God apart from those in the Qur'an). It also presents *sira* (life of the Prophet), *fiqh* of Islamic practices, and Islam's opinion in all aspects of

life. Examples of these programs include: "Hadith al-Sheikh al-Sha'rawy" ("Sheikh Sha'rawy's talk"), "Al-Din wa-al-Shabab" ("The Religion and Youth"), "Hadith al-Ruh" ("The talk of the soul"), "Qadaya mu'aserah" ("Contemporary issues"), Nur ala nur ("Light above light"), "Al-ja'iza al-kubrah" ("The biggest gift") (Radio and Television Union, annual report, 1999, p. 93).

Other religious programs include "Fi-nur al-Qur'an al-kareem" ("In the light of the glorious Qur'an"), "Min hadei al-sunnah al-nabawiah" ("From the benefits of the Prophet's *sunna*"), "Rawdat al-Islam" ("The Islamic Paradise"), "Hadith al-jumah" ("The Friday speech"), Al-i'jaz al 'ilmi" in Qur'an and *sunna* ("The scientific inimitability" of the Qur'an), "Nur al-huda" ("The light of guidance") (Radio and Television Union, annual report, 1999, p. 93).

Moreover, there are other religious programs, such as al-"Musabaqa al-diniyya" ("Religious competition"), "Salaman anbiaa Allah" ("Peace on you, the God's Prophet") , "Ayyat Muhkamat" ("The wise verses"), "Asrar wa-Ayyat" ("Secrets and verses"), "Samahet al-Islam" (Islamic Peace), "Dunia wa-din" ("Life and religion"), "Min nur al-nubua" ("From the Prophet's light"), and Al-nabi al-khatem ("The last Prophet") (Radio and Television Union, annual report, 1999, p. 94).

The distribution of these programs on the eight channels is 636.12 hours on channel 1, 361.17 on 2, 256.17 on 3, 361.21 on 4, 257.55 on 5, 248.56 on 6, 366.48 on 7, and 395.29 on the channel 8 (Radio and Television Union, annual report, 1999, p. 94).

According to Omar (1984), there are different religious programs on television, some of which present Qur'an or explanation of its meaning, *hadith*, *fiqh*, and religious dramas. One of the most important religious programs on T.V. is the Friday *khutba*, for it reaches mass audiences. Also, among the crucial roles of religious programs broadcasted by T.V. is hosting important imams and sheiks to speak about various religious issues or to answer Muslims questions (pp. 106-108).

Shehata (1978) stated that television is an important medium for people, because it is present in almost every home and it has its own special impact on people. Therefore, television plays an essential role for Islamic *da'wa* because it can reach directly into people's homes and is a major link to the outside world for housebound individuals.

He also discussed the existence of certain programs current at the time of his writing, including two

programs ("Aqwal al-rasul," "Hadith of the Prophet"; and "Hadi al-nubua," "Beneficial lessons of the Prophet") that give *hadith* and *sira*, another ("Nadwet al-'ulamaa," "The scholars' symposium") that debates different Islamic issues), and another ("Al-deen wa-al-hayyah," "Religion and life") that discusses the interface of Islamic religion in all life aspects (Shehata, 1978, pp. 36-38).

As for the ISBO's contribution to television programs for Islamic *da'wa*, it should be borne in mind that the ISBO presents many varieties of programs, such as seminars ("Al-nadawat al-fikria") for discussing different Islamic issues, informational shows on the fairness of Islam by well-known judges ("Allam al-quda fi-al-Islam") as well as history shows, such as "The history of Islam in Spain," which presents and clarifies a very important period of the Islamic history, and "Stories of the glorious Qur'an" for children, which relates to children stories of the prophets mentioned in the Quran so they can learn the wisdom behind these stories and apply them to their lives when they are grown up.

Another T.V. program of ISBO is "Fourteen centuries of Islamic civilization" presented in 14 episodes each covering a different century of Islamic civilization. In addition, ISBO presented 26 episodes about Muslim children, which was designed for the benefit of Muslim

children so they could learn about their religion. There is another series in 19 episodes about heroes of Islam called "Be'aset al Shuhadaa," which presents Muslim heroes who paid their lives for spreading Islam and its *da'wa*. Moreover, there is a program called "Shariat Allah" ("God's law"), which presents and clarifies the rules of Islam.

Among the most important programs of ISBO is one called "The misery of Muslims under communist rule," which was designed to defend Islam by presenting the tragic situation of Muslims in the Soviet Union (Farrag, 1987, pp. 2-4).

In their article entitled "Digital communication in the Arab world entering the 21st century," Amin and Gher (2000) elaborate the tremendous development of digital communication that has recently taken place in the Arab world. They state that the first commercial satellite the Arab world was launched into orbit in 1965, and by 1999 there were many new personal communications satellites that use low earth orbit (LEOs) (pp. 109-111).

Furthermore, they clarify the status of radio and television industries in the Arab world by stating that the past seven years the Arab world have witnessed some noticeable developments in national and regional

Arab telecommunication services, such as the launching of the Egyptian Space Channel (ESC), the Saudi Middle East Broadcasting Center (MBC), the Kuwaiti Space Channel (KSC), the Jordanian Arab Space Channel (JASC), the Space Network of Dubai, the Tunisian TV7, and many other satellite networks in the rest of the Arab world (Amin and Gher, 2000, pp. 111–112).

Telecommunications in the Arab world has also seen some development, which is estimated at 10% annually over the past decade. As for satellite communication in the Arab world, Amin and Gher state that in 1969 the Arab State Broadcasting Union (ASBU) emerged as a specialized agency of the Arab League to coordinate radio and television activities for 22 countries of the Arab world. In the 1990s, many satellite projects emerged in the Arab world. Among such satellite projects is the Arab Sat launched in 1998 (Amin and Gher, 2000, pp. 112–114).

Each of these communication forms has contributed to Islamic *da'wa* in Islamic countries, especially those of the Arab world, by presenting Qur'an, *hadith*, *adhan*, *jumu'a* prayers, *hajj* proceedings, and any other religious programs. Furthermore, the Islamic T.V. channel *Iqra'a* ("Read!" channel) was established as the first channel specialized in Islamic *da'wa* programs.

In spite of the role that the media play in enhancing the Islamic *da'wa*, still there are many problems that badly affect the media's role in the Islamic world.

According to al-Effendi (1991), the present media in the Muslim world is facing a severe crisis. In the Islamic world, there are many factors that control the media, such as the authoritarian regimes and lack of democracy, especially after the major struggle to face problems of modernity. As for this point, he explains that after the arrival of independence in the Arab countries, presidents in those countries, such as Abd el-Nasser in Egypt, Kamal Ataturk in Turkey, and Habib Bourgaiba in Tunisia controlled the mosques and religious institutions (pp. 2-4).

He also states that there are some reasons for the media crisis in the Arab world. For example, the restrictions of not permitting any opposition to governmental decisions, especially in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Also, there was severe punishment to popular opposition to the extent that people forgot what freedom of expression means for a long time. Another example of the reasons for the media crisis in the Islamic world is that most of Arab broadcasting in Western countries, such as England, France, and the United States, is controlled by the

wealthy Arabs, so they are free to say and broadcast what they want, while some Arab journalists may lose their jobs if they criticize the Gulf masters, and many publications in fact have been closed down for such reasons (p. 7).

The situation in Indonesia, Senegal, Nigeria, Sudan, Tunisia, and Algeria is not better than the previously mentioned countries, for their governments control the media by manipulating the media itself (pp. 4-7). There are also strict limitations on the freedom of expression in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco.

Al-Effendi also states that the main problem in the Arab media is that they tell only what they want to tell. In addition, they darken over certain news and prevent them to reach their audiences (p.8).

Among the other reasons that affect the media in the Islamic world especially in the past two decades is oil money that has enabled the Gulf countries to influence the media in the Arab world and even to expand their influence over the Arab publications in European countries (pp. 8-12).

In order to achieve such goal, different governments in the Islamic world used different ways. For example, they

used to bribe some journalists to write only what they want them to publish. Hence, such journalists stop their campaigns against the wealthy people (Al Effendi, 1991, media failure in the Muslim world, p12).

Therefore, the Internet is considered of paramount importance as a medium through which one can launch a certain ideology for debates without facing such depressing censorship.

Islamic *da'wa* and the Internet

In her book entitled *Al-'illam al-islami* ("The Islamic Media"), al-Halawany (1991) argued that satellites communication is of crucial importance for Islamic affairs or Islamic *da'wa*. She states that satellite media are vital as they can be used by Muslims to correct the distorted image of Islam and spread its peaceful rules. They can cross boundaries no matter how far they are; and messages can be directed to a target audience easily with an incredible speed (pp. 40-41).

Al-Halawany (1991) emphasized the importance of the *da'wa* in Islam and the role of *du'at* for Islam. She also discusses the idea of Islamic unity and mutual cooperation whenever needed among Muslims in the

world as an immediate necessity. She adds that to establish such unity there must be good and quick communication among Muslims wherever they exist, such as the Internet (p. 17).

In his article entitled "The initial effects of the Internet on a Muslim society," Hamada (1999) identifies the positive aspects of the Internet from an Islamic point of view, such as that it gives better chances for distance education and gaining new ideas; it gives better, faster, and easier communication than ever; it gives better opportunities for both Muslims and non-Muslims to get to know each other, to bridge the gaps, and to exchange information. The Internet also ensures better democracy, for it gives more freedom for expression. In addition, it gives a better chance for Islamic countries to improve education in different fields such as science and business (pp. 55-56).

Hamada also argues that the Internet expands Western culture. However, this does not mean that it represents a form of cultural imperialism over the rest of the globe. That is, the Internet is not a tool to expand the Western culture at the expense of the Islamic one. He concedes that Muslim users of the Internet often are not yet aware of the extent to which the Internet is representative of Western culture, but he notes that the

Internet could be of paramount importance as a medium for mutual beneficial dialogue between the West and Muslims in different parts of the world (Hamada, 1999, p. 64).

According to Angell and Heslop (1995), "the Internet is the communication and data movement medium that is rapidly defining how business will be done in the future and the future has arrived." In addition, they stated that the Internet is the result of a marriage between computers and global communication, which has become the new medium of the information economy. They also defined the Internet as a vast digital highway system, which links thousands of computers around the world to millions of computers (p. 1). Furthermore, it is the largest network on earth, which connects all kinds of computers (p. 3).

Al Zaidy (2000) states that the desire to know and to learn about other cultures is available everywhere. Internet sites can be the best for such a purpose, especially Islamic sites that allow both Muslims and non-Muslims to discuss the different issues concerning their beliefs. He also mentions that among the advantages of the Internet is its speed in disseminating messages over the boundaries of the globe. Security and confidentiality are also other privileges of the Internet, for there is no

need for mentioning the names or the nationalities of senders (pp. 21-22).

Zakzuk (1998) states that Islam has been always in favor of development. It has always called for using every possible means, and this would include the Internet, to help Islam and Muslims in achieving their role in life. The Quran is the divine book of Islam and God's revelation to his Prophet Mohammad and to the whole world. It also contains the tenets and religious laws on which the faith of Islam is founded. Quran is also the source of Islamic morals and ethics. It assures the vitality of development and the use of every possible method to help and support human beings in their different life goals (p. 9).

Here are some verses from the Quran that encourage development. "God bears witness that there is no God but He. The angels, together with those who possess knowledge, also bear witness that there is no god but God, the just. There is no God but He, the Almighty, the Wise" (Qur., 3:18).

"And whenever you asked to get up from his side, get up, so that God will elevate the believers among you to the ranks of those who have received knowledge and wisdom" (Qur., 58:11).

“And of God’s bondsmen, only those with knowledge [of Him] fear the last day” (Qur., 35:11).

“We give these examples and parables so that people may understand, but only those with knowledge will apprehend the deeper meaning of Our words.” (Qur., 29:43).

“He creates man. And teaches him how to speak.” (Qur., 55:3, 4).

“If you are in doubt, ask others to whom the message has been revealed” (Qur., 16:43).

There are numerous websites that are devoted to Islam. Examples of these Islamic websites are Jihad, Al-Qaradawi, Understanding Islam, Islamia, About Al-Islam, Muslims, Islaam, Jamiatul Ulama (Kwazulu-Natal) website, and Al Azhar. There are many other Islamic websites that could not all be listed here.

Unlike many other Islamic websites, **The Jihad** has a different mission. Contrary to many people’s misunderstanding of the “jihad” concept in Islam (i.e., they take it as a declaration of war against other religions), the Jihad Islamic website clarifies its meaning

as used in Qur'an and *hadith*. In addition, it defends Muslims caught in various crises, such as those in Lebanon, Palestine, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq. It also posts poems and answers questions about Islam.

Al Qaradawi is one of the Islamic websites that covers a variety of Islamic topics including *shari'a*, *da'wa*, Islamic economy, Qur'an, *sunna*, beliefs, *aqida*, education, Islamic awakening, poetry, and literature. The url is <http://www.qaradawi.net/english/books/treeview/main/htm,p.1>.

In his article entitled "The contemporary struggle through the Internet," Hewadi (2000) argues that, on the one hand, the word struggle (i.e., *jihad*) in Islam causes fear for some of non-Muslim people, but on the other hand, the word *Internet* means a source of illegal and immoral material to some Muslims.

He also explains that the Internet is a mean of communication that could be used either positively or negatively. Moreover, Hewedi (2000) states that there are some good people who could direct their efforts and dedicate their time to Islam and correcting its distorted image in non-Muslims' eyes. He adds that this project, the contemporary "jihad" through the Internet, started in Qatar in October 1999 in a conference of some 160

ulamas (learned scholars) and others who care for Islam from different parts of the world (Hewadi, 2000).

He explains that according to Hamed El-Ansary, the project manager, the project started in Qatar when Mareim El Hagry, a student at Qatar University, suggested the use of the Internet in promoting Islam, defending it, and in giving the real image of it instead of the distorted one. He also notes that the idea of the project was sparked by the vital role of the Internet, especially after scholars learned some statistics relating to it. According to Hewedi, Internet users numbered in 1999 about 60 million, and that number is expected to grow to 142 millions in the year 2000. Of perhaps more significance is that Christian organizations occupy about 62% of religious websites, Jewish organizations about 14%, the Muslims and the Hindus organizations about 9%, then comes the Buddhism organizations use about 6% (Hewadi, 2000).

Furthermore, Hewidi (2000) explains the role that the Qaradawi webpage plays, a topic that will be covered later in this research, since one of the chapters will be examining the role of each website selected for special study. He also argues that this website plays a crucial role, because Islam, in its Holy book, the Quran, has

ordered its believers to promote constructive behavior and principles of forgiveness (pp 1-5).

Understanding Islam is another example of Islamic websites on the Net. It started in 1997 for the sake of Allah and to contribute to a better understanding of various Islamic topics, as well as to defend Islam. The Understanding Islam website has defined its objectives as: to present the real image of Islam, to answer questions about Islam, and to defend Islam, especially the Qur'an ([http://www. UnderstandingIslam. com](http://www.UnderstandingIslam.com), p.1-2).

Islamia is another Islamic website devoted to offering information about Islam for Muslims to enhance and deepen their faith, such as the basic Islamic principles, the Holy Qur'an (its importance, stories, and essence), the Prophet Muhammad, men and women, marriage, home and family, parent's role in teaching their children Islam, death and beyond. In addition, it provides reviews and previews of some Islamic books of Muslims benefit. It also claims to provide a better understanding of Islam for non-Muslims (<http://www.islamia.com>. p.1-5).

About Al-Islam and Muslims website is another example. Its main task is to provide accurate information about Islam, its beliefs, history, and the civilization of

both Muslim and non-Muslims. It is also one of the Islamic websites that gives details on a wide variety of topics about Islam. For example, it offers information about charity in Islam, birth, Christmas and its alternative in Islam, *shirk* (polytheism), pilgrimage, marriage, politics, and economy in Islam. Moreover, The About Al-Islam and Muslims website clarifies what Islam is, and tackles sociological problems, such as circumcision, homosexuality, and other current issues. Furthermore, it tries to defend Islam by refuting those who criticize Islam. (<http://www.ummah.org.uk/what-is-islam/about/index.htm>).

Among the websites that deal with Islam is **Islaam**. Like many other Islamic websites, Islaam deals with different Islamic topics, such as the Holy Qur'an (its virtues, miracles, and the names of its attributes). It also offers a long list of trusted and well-known imams, who can give sufficient answers to different questions about Islam, or teach its sciences; it gives deep knowledge about different Islamic ideas, especially *tawheed* (The unity and oneness of God—there is no god but the One God). It deals with other topics concerning Islam, such as *fiqh*, *iman* ("faith, belief"), *da'wa*, *sunna*, *jihad*, *shahada* (bearing witness in Islam), the pillars of Islam, and miscellaneous aspects of Islam (<http://www.islaam.com.misc/>). The site was launched based on the saying of

Allah in the holy Qur'an, "You are the best of nations sent to man. You command good and forbid evil and you believe in Allah'" (Qur., 3:110).

Jamiatul Ulama (Kwazulu-Natal) website was established according to its mission statement as encapsulated in the Holy Qur'an verses that say "For he commands them what is just and forbids them from what is evil, he allows them lawful what is good (and Pure). He releases them from their burdens and from the yokes that are upon them" (Qur., 7:157). Jamiatul Ulama (Kwazulu-Natal) website's mission also is to give an explanation of the recorded life of Prophet Muhammad. The site was launched on January 15, 1995 in Pietermaritzburg. Another main goal is the protection and the propagation of true Islam (<http://www.jamiat.org.za/activities.html>).

The **Islamic Society of North America** (ISNA) has a website based on the concept that the information superhighway supports practical and easy applications of digital, electronic data, such as e-mail, discussion (chat rooms), news groups, file transfer protocol, gopher and other searching mechanisms, and hypertext (linking one site to another). In recognition of the concept that this medium, the Internet, has been increasingly used for presenting knowledge on Islam and sharing information

among Muslims, ISNA's website brings Muslim scholars, information technology professionals, WWW developers, and users to share ideas and to bring about the benefits of the information superhighway for effective use on Islam (CIS_AHMED@ONLINE>EMICH>EDU, PP. 1-2).

MSANEWS, another Islamic website, provides news about Muslim countries. It discusses Muslim countries' problems, politics, and informs Muslims of analytical news to provide them with a true picture of what is going on around the world. Another vital role that MSANEWS plays is defending Islam. For instance, they published an article entitled, "Fake Quranic Surahs on America Online," that warned Muslims to be careful of America Online because of what it published of false verses alleged to be from the Qur'an, and the other very rude words against Islam and the Prophet that they disseminate. MSANEWS also is a leader in new Islamic projects. For example, they are promoting a World Islamic Network, by which they ask every imam and every Muslim to link to the Internet, since it is the best and the fastest medium for Muslims, to gather, Islamic newspapers and magazines for Islamic *da'wa*. (msanews-ed@msanews.mynet.net).

Among Islamic websites is **CAIRNET**, which is playing a crucial role in defending Islam and Muslims and solving

their problems. CAIRNET also is on top of every problem that Muslims face in the U.S., whether they are political, economic, religious, or sociological.

Al Azhar website is the official site of Egypt's Al Azhar religious institution. That institution is a very influential Islamic authority that spreads Islamic teachings and knowledge to all parts of the world. It also calls people to the way of Allah through the Qur'an and *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad. Al Azhar's website was launched to provide explanations and interpretations of various topics, such as non-Muslims in Qur'an, fiqh, Muslims' problems, and political problems in Islam, such as that surrounding al-Quds (Jerusalem) (<http://www.alazhar.org/index.htm>).

Moreover, this site deals with other topics, such as studying the other holy books for comparative religious studies, the woman in Islam, *da'wa*, family and child care in Islam, and famous Islamic figures. Another vital task for Al Azhar's website is to publish any *fatwa* (religious opinion given by an expert in answer to Muslims questions concerning their religion); other topics include Muslims' problems in Europe, the Prophet Muhammed (his life and message), environment, art, artists, and addiction (<http://www.alazhar.org/index.htm>).

However, there are a tremendous number of websites about Islam that are not produced by Muslims, such as the **answering-Islam.org** site. It is a Christian website that debates certain aspects of Islam by attempting to find a way of debating Islamic ideology instead of fighting Muslims the way the old church used to do. Its producers believe in the role of debate for better results. For example, in an article entitled, "The challenge of Islam," this site talks about certain issues or questions people might have, such as "What is Islam?"

They answer this question by stating that Islam is not just another religion besides Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Judaism. Islam claims to be a way of life. It is a system that controls the lives of more than 1.2 billion Muslims around the globe. The other point that this article makes involves the "challenge" of Islam. In this regard, the article discusses Muslims' claim that Africa is the first Islamic continent, and the main target of Islam is to make all people to convert to Islam. They use certain verses from the Qur'an and a number of *hadith* to prove their claim.

In this article, they also bring up certain other issues, such as the idea that Islam is on the move to expand its influence, events in the Islamic world, and the response to the "challenge" of Islam. The conclusion touches on

how important it is to gain a realistic assessment of Islam, as it really is. Among the other debate articles of the answering-Islam site is one that has to do with the history of Islam. In this article Islamic history is explained by stating the story of the Khalifs, the different dynasties in Islamic history (e.g., the Ummayyad dynasty, the Abbassid dynasty), the story of Ottoman empire, the Crusades, colonialism, and Islam in the modern age. The site debates the notion that Islam has been always a religion of violence and conquest to gain lands either from non-Muslims or from each other like when the Turks conquered the Shi'ite in the Fatimid dynasty. In the main, they defend the Crusades as having the same aim that Islam had in all its wars, to expand its land and influences. Furthermore, the site identifies and severely criticizes the different sects of Islam. It details slaughters in Islamic history among the Sunnis and Shi'ites, and other sects such as the Ahmadayyas, Bahais, the Babists, the Mutazailites, and the Sufis (<http://www.answering-islam.org/>).

Another site to look for is **Belfast Islamic Center**, whose pages include one on "Mosque Details," which presents details about different mosques in the world, another by Shaykh Dr. Ad-Darsh, which answers questions on what Muslims ought to know about Islam, another that gives the Ireland prayer timetable, and

another on 'Ilm al-Islam, which presents recommended institutions for study of Islamic sciences and Arabic language. Furthermore, there is a page of BICNews global news with helpful links. It also offers Muslims good service in its Muslim survival guide for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Belfast Islamic Center also presents a page with links to articles written by several Islamic writers or sheikhs who provide an Islamic point of view concerning different topics. In addition, there is the Women's Group page, which offers the calendar of upcoming events, past events, and a list of possible programs. (<http://www.iol.ie/~afifi>).

Among the incredible number of Islamic websites is **Islam Way Radio**, which is one of the largest Islamic multimedia sites on the Internet. It is available in many languages, such as Arabic, English, Urdu, Dutch, and French. It has also what called a Discussion page for discussing different topics in Islam. Moreover, it offers free e-mail service to Muslims. (<http://www.islamway.com/>).

Based on the verse taken from the Glorious Quran that says "Those whom God (in His plan) wills to guide, He opens their hearts to Islam; those whom He wills to leave

wandering, He makes their hearts closed and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies. Thus does God [heap] the penalty on those who refuse to believe." (Qur., 6:125), the **converts to Islam** site was established.

It is dedicated to all converts to Islam everywhere. It is built and maintained by converts to Islam also. It was created also to assist new Muslims in learning more about their new-found faith. It is designed for those who are just interested in learning more about Islam. It is very simple, but at the same time educational for the newly converted to Islam. (<http://convertstoislam.org/>).

Al-Sudays Quranic Recitation site is another Islamic website that offers audio of the Qur'an in order to teach Muslims how to read Qur'an. It is established by Shaikh Abd al-Rahman al-Sudays, who is one of the most famous Quranic readers in Mecca.

It presents the 114 suras of the Qur'an in addition to Du'a Khatam al-Qur'an (prayer given at the end of reciting the Qur'an). Furthermore, visitors to the site can hear the *adhan* from Mecca itself. In addition, it has other pages, such as Al-Bukhari Hadith Audio, Islamic Fiqh Audio, and an Islamic resources page. (<http://www.hamoislam.com.quraa.htm>).

Also among Islamic websites is **Mosque of the Internet**. This site was established by the Sammania Spiritual and Academic Heritage Society under the directorship of Shaykh Hassan Ash-Shaykh Qaribullah. It presents the prophets' stories, *fatwa* to Muslims; explains the Qur'an in English and in Urdu; and it presents *sira* of Prophet Muhammad.

Moreover, it introduces Islam, and most importantly there is the Children's Corner page, in which the site offers information about Islam to Muslims' children. Furthermore, it presents prayer time, information about fasting in Ramadan, and *hadith*. It also publishes a bilingual Arabic-English Islamic magazine (<http://www.mosque.com/>).

Al-Saud House site is another Islamic website that has some missions, such as human rights in Islam, freedom of speech, news, books, views, activism, and dissidence. (<http://www.saudhouse.com/>).

Another Islamic website is **Nation of Islam Online**, which presents information about mosques in the world. In addition, it presents news to Muslims. It also presents politics from Islamic perspective. Furthermore, it presents history of 70 years of the Islamic nation in North America. (<http://www.noi.org/announce.html>).

Islam In Brief is an Islamic website that gives general information about Islam, such as introducing Islam, Qur'an and *hadith*, and death in Islam. Moreover, it presents different articles about Islam, and one on the concept of worship in Islam. Furthermore, it defends Islam, presents the *sira* of Prophet Muhammad, and the concept of Islamic tolerance. (<http://tblr.ed.asu.edu/abdrahman/islam.hm>).

The Islam Page believes in the concept that Islam is the solution to any problem. It presents the Qur'an in many languages, such as Spanish, German, French, Dutch, and English. It also presents the debates of the famous comparative religious expert, Ahmad Deedat. Moreover, it presents *hadith*, concept of *jihad* in Islam, Islamic movements, life after death, and *fatwa*. Furthermore, it presents history, women in Islam, *hajj*, Islamic festivals, and information on Ramadan. In addition, it presents multimedia Islamic dictionaries and a glossary of Islamic terms, a catalog of human rights abuses against Muslims, and information about Islamic countries (<http://islamworld.net/>).

Islam Today introduces Islam and Muslims to visitors to its site. It also explains what Qur'an is, presents audio Qur'an, and it gives the scientific proof of Qur'an. It

is also details some issues of *fiqh*. In addition, it presents prayer times and a guide to Islamic centers and bookstores that carry Islamic books. (<http://www.angelfire.com/tx/islamtoday/index.html>)

Idara Dawat-O-Irshad, USA Inc has a lot of activity for memorization of the Holy Qur'an, explanation of Qur'an, and developing Islamic practices for both adults and children (<http://irshad.org/idara/control/idara.htm>).

Global Islam gives the 99 attributes of Allah, and describes important concepts such as *zakat* in Islam, *hijab*, and *sira*. It also presents the concept of God in Islam, *fiqh*, and explains several meanings in Islam, such as the Hijra (emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina), and *hikma* ("wisdom") (<http://members.tripod.com/bimcrot/global.html>).

Al Islam presents miscellaneous information about Islam and selected Arabic books concerning Islam. It also includes a calendar of Islamic holidays, a list of announcements, and news about Islamic events. In addition, it has pages that are devoted to different Islamic aspects (<http://www.habbak.com/islam/>).

Islam Online, the case studied in this research, is one of the most comprehensive Islamic website resources on

the Internet. It is based in Washington, D.C. Many individuals and organizations have contributed to compiling the wealth of information on hundreds of websites that are linked to Islam Online on Islamic religion, culture, countries, and people. There are 15 main pages, such as Religion (the proposed sample for this study), General Topics, Prophet Muhammad, Children, People, Culture, Countries, Associations, The Holy Quran, Education, Women in Islam, History, Publications, Reference, and Resources.

Here are some examples of the different sites linked to Islam Online.

Women In Islam website is an international organization that is created by and for Muslim artists. It was established by International Muslim Artists Network (IMAN). It is designed to be for Sunni Muslim women to promote sisterhood internationally. It includes 21 sites that discuss several issues related to women affairs in Islam. For example, it has women in Islam who examine the Quranic verses and *hadith* of the Prophet and the early Muslims commentators on the position of woman in Islam. It also describes women in Islam versus women in Judaeo-Christian tradition, and it discusses marriage in Islam. In addition, it has a link to the Edmonton Islamic resources, which includes

definitions of Islamic terms, a variety of texts, discussions of modern and women's issues, and converts' stories. (<http://www.islamonline.com/PAGE10.html>).

The Holy Quran page is another resource page of Islam Online, and is one of the most comprehensive sites for the Holy Qur'an. It includes links to 29 sites dealing with Qur'an from different perspectives. It offers Qur'an in many languages, such as Arabic, English, Spanish, and Persian. It also has *hadith* according to Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, *fiqh*, Islamic laws, Islamic teachings, and a prayer calendar. Most importantly, it includes topical index of the Holy Quran which offers an easy way of locate certain passages. (<http://www.islamonline.com/quran.html>).

From Islam Online also is the Islamic Culture page (<http://www.islamonline.com/PAGE13.html>), and the History page. The latter includes a long list of different sites that present Islamic history in different countries, such as Tanzania and the US. It also presents chronological Islamic history in other Islamic countries, and Turkish Islamic history in the different countries that were ruled by the Turks. In addition, it presents Islamic history in the Arab and the Middle East countries (<http://www.islamonline.com/PAGE11.html>).

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CHAPTER IV

**RESEARCH
DESIGN AND
METHODOLOY**

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Research Design and Methodology:

A. Research design

1. Statement of the problem

Historically, there has always been a conflict between Western and Arab interests in many parts of the globe. Evidence of this international conflict is seen in the handling of the Middle East peace process. This and many other conflicts have led to the involvement of the media in shaping international public opinion on the current situations in the area. The Western media have therefore been working to further the cause of their governments by building stereotypes about the Arab world.

Through television images of angry rioters burning the American flag in Lebanon and Iran, radio news descriptions of Hamas as a fundamentalist terrorist cult in Palestine, movie images from films, such as "The Delta Force" that link Islam with terrorism, and newspaper articles, Islam has often been portrayed and stereotyped as a religion of polygamy, violence, and anachronistic religious practices.

Zakzouk (1998) states that Islam, ever since its advent, has been facing a continuous and severe struggle against repeated endeavors to destroy the truth for which it stands, and to distort its image. He argues that the struggle between truth and falsehood and between virtue and sin will continue until the end of the world; the struggle against Islam will continue as long as inhabitants of the earth exist (p.7).

El Qoraeiy (2000) argues in his article entitled, "The case and its dimensions," that there is a mutual interest to lead both religions and civilizations the Islam and the Christianity to decent discussion. He states that both Muslims and Christians have started such discussions, which aim to correct the misunderstanding between them in the past two decades in the 20th century.

However, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of Islamic websites on the Internet, Islam Online as a case study, whether to introduce Islam to non-Muslims, to defend Islam and Muslims, to spread Muslim news, to offer an explanation of Quraan and *hadith*, to write about the Islamic history, to solve Muslims problems, or to answer Muslims' questions about Islam.

2. Research Questions:

Like any research, there should be specific questions for a scholar to examine. In this study, there will be 10 research questions.

Question 1

What are the Islamic websites?

Question 2

What is (are) the mission(s) of the Islamic websites?

Question 3

Do they exist to introduce, define, defend Islam, to explain Quraan and *hadith*, or to explain Islamic history, or for all the previous reasons ?

Question 4

Do Islamic websites answer Muslim's questions about Islam?

Question 5

Do Islamic websites exert effort to give the real image of Islam?

Question 6

Does the role of Islamic websites deserve to be studied?

Question 7

What is the impact of Islamic websites on non- Muslims?

Question 8

What is the impact of the Islamic websites on Muslims?

Question 9

Are Islamic websites successful in their role in disseminating Islamic *da'wa*?

Question 10

What else should Islamic websites do for Islam and Muslims?

3. Research Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1

The more Islamic websites there are, the more likely Islam and Muslims are defended on the Internet.

Hypothesis 2

The more Islamic websites there are, the more *da'wa* would be spread worldwide.

Hypothesis 3

If Islamic websites were there, then more news about Muslims will be spread.

Hypothesis 4

The more Islamic websites that there are to offer explanations of Qur'an and *hadith*, the greater the likelihood that *da'wa* will reach both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Hypothesis 5

The more Islamic websites there are, the more Muslims will know about their religious identity.

Hypotheses 6

The more Islamic Websites there are, the more Muslims' problems will be solved.

Hypothesis 7

The more Islamic websites there are, the more likely *da'wa* will be enhanced.

Hypothesis 8

The more Islamic websites there are, the more Islam will be known to all Internet users.

Hypothesis 9

The more Islamic websites there are to satisfy Muslims' needs in different cultures in different languages, the more likely *da'wa* will reach non-Muslims as much as Muslims.

B. Research Methodology

This research proposes to examine the role of the Internet for the purpose of Islamic *da'wa*. To achieve this target, the researcher decided to use the content analysis method to evaluate the role that Islamic websites play for the sake of Islamic *da'wa*. He also seeks to know whether Islamic websites introduce Islam, explain Qur'an and *hadith*, write about Islamic history, presenting *aqeeda*, *fiqh*, *sunna* or *sira* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Since the researcher found a tremendous number of Islamic websites on the Internet, he decided to use content analysis on the Islam Online website as a case study, for he found it the most comprehensive Islamic website on the Internet. It includes links to many sites, broadly categorised as religion, general topics, Prophet Muhammad, children, people, culture, countries, associations, the Holy Qur'an, education, women in Islam, history, publications, reference, and resources.

Case Study:

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), case study is a type of qualitative research techniques. The purpose of using case-study technique is to systematically investigate individual events, organizations—as in our case—groups, or individuals (p.102).

According to Yin (1989), a case study is “an empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident.” Merriam (1988) lists four characteristics of a case study, such as particularistic, descriptive, heuristic (as in our case), and inductive.

Heuristic

Heuristic is the best applicable characteristic for this study. This is when a case study helps to bring out why a certain phenomenon has been studied (p. 103). The case study also has advantages like giving a huge amount of information about the case under investigation. It can also explain why something has happened. It gives the researcher the chance to deal with a wide array of evidence (p. 103).

In this study the researcher uses Islam Online's Directory as a case study in order to gather a wealth of information about the development and the impact of Islamic websites for Islam and Muslims.

Since the researcher's main target is to examine the role of the Internet in the purpose of Islamic *da'wa*, he found that the focus should be on the Religion page for content analysis and then to study what such sites do for Islamic *da'wa*. Also, he found that the Religion page includes links to sites that introduce Islam, Qur'an, *hadith*, *sunna*, *fiqh*, *shari'a*, *sira*, and Islamic history.

On the other hand, in order to emphasize the importance of such websites, the researcher conducted an intensive online interview survey, in which he interviewed some

of the webmasters of the sites linked to the Religion page.

Hence, the researcher designed two questionnaires, in which he used both types of open-ended and closed-ended questions by which he interviewed some of the Webmasters of the Religion website from Islamonline. In addition, he interviewed a number of expert scholars in the same field.

The first type of questions allows respondents to answer freely. Open-ended questions also give the chance for a researcher to gather more information. Both types are useful in pilot studies because they save time and resources since all responses could be included in the final measurement instrument. However, the major disadvantage of the open-ended question is that the amount of time consumed (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997, p. 39).

As for the closed-ended type of questions, they provide a list of answers to make it easy for the respondents to choose from the list. By contrast, open-ended questions gives the chance to provide detailed answers.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), personal interviews involve inviting an expert in a field to

respond. There are two types of interviews, such as structured and unstructured interviews. As for the structured one, standardized questions are asked that make the questions easy to be answered, while in the unstructured interview broad questions are asked that make the questions difficult to be answered.

There are certain steps in constructing a personal interview, such as selecting a sample, constructing the questionnaire, constructing an interview guide, training the interviewers, collecting the data, making necessary callbacks, verifying the results, and tabulating the data. Personal interviews have some advantages, such as they are the most flexible means of obtaining information, some observations could be observed by the interviewer during an interview, and a kind of rapport could be also established during an interview between the interviewer and the interviewed person. In addition, in personal interviews, it is difficult for the interviewed to terminate the interview.

The researcher used nonprobability sample to save time. According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), a nonprobability sample is the best to apply in cases where time needs to be saved. Therefore, the researcher will use the purposive sample in order to send two sets of structured questions. The first set will be sent to

academic professors (theologists) or those who teach comparative religion studies, for they may be interested in such study. The second set will be sent to the editors or the webmanagers of the Islamic websites sample that were subject to content analysis in this research study. The researcher selectively chose six webmasters of the Religion page from Islam Online website and three of the expert scholars in the field from the list of MSANEWS website.

At the beginning a brainstorming session was conducted to test the questions with a group of five professionals: Dina Hussein, Atef El Hoteiby, Ahmed El-Godi, Abdel Ghani Igbara, and Mahitab Ezz El-Din, who recently earned their Masters Degree in the same field from the department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the American University in Cairo.

The objective of the brainstorming session was to consider the following issues:

- 1- The role and impact of Islamic websites.
- 2- The role and impact of Islam Online websites.
- 3- The development of Islam Online websites.
- 4- How well-known the Islam Online website is.
- 5- How Islam Online websites could be developed.
- 6- How clear the content of Islam Online website is.

7- How valuable the content of Islam Online website is.

As a result of this session the researcher reconstructed the questions to fall into two sets: the first concerned with the users of Islamic websites generally, and Islam Online specially, the second concerned with the Webmasters and the editors of Islam Online websites. The two sets of questions included 36 questions.

Then a pilot study was conducted to pretest the two sets of questions. As a result, two sets of questions were designed. Set (A) consisted of 23 questions concerned with the users of Islamic websites, Islam Online as a case study, to measure the reasons and the benefits they could get from Islamic websites. Set B consisted of 13 questions concerned with the webmasters and the editors of the Islam Online website to get to know the development of their websites, their impact on users, and how they could be improved. To achieve this target open-ended, close-ended, multiple choice, and checklist type of questions were used to achieve the maximum amount of information needed for the study.

To pretest the validity and reliability of the questions, a pilot study was conducted. A group of five experts in the field were selected for this pretest. The list of experts

included Dr. Fowler, a professor at the department of Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC Dept.) in the American University in Cairo (AUC), Dr. Keven Kennen a professor at JMC Dept at AUC, Dr. Magy Zanger a professor at JMC Dept at AUC, Dr. Hassan Ragab, a journalist in the leading Egyptian daily newspaper *Al-Akhbar* and a lecturer in JMC Dept at AUC, and finally Daneil Rolph, a professional editor at the American University in Cairo Press.

As was stated previously, the researcher found that the best research method for this study is content analysis.

Definition of Content Analysis

According to Walizer and Wienir (1978), "content analysis is any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information" (p. 112). Moreover, Krippendorf (1980) defines content analysis as a "research technique for making replaceable and valid references from data to their context" (p. 112).

Another definition was provided by Kirlinger (1986), namely that "content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables" (p. 112).

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this study are to measure the role of Islamic websites, and to evaluate the development and the impact of the Islamic websites by studying Islam Online as a case study.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), "a sample is a subset of the population that is a representative of the entire population" (p. 61).

The Sampling:

In this study the researcher will use both nonprobability sampling and probability sampling.

Sample Selection

Since this study is based on a case study to examine the role of the Islamic websites for the purpose of Islamic *da'wa*, Islam Online website has been selected as the case study. For it is one of the biggest Islamic Directory. Another reason for selecting Islam Online website is that it is consisting of the most comprehensive list about Islam.

There are some points that should be considered when studying the nonprobability sampling, such as the purpose of the study, cost versus value, time

constraints—as in such case—and amount of acceptable error (pp. 62-63). Since this study is designed for academics and professionals, a nonprobability sample will be the best for this study because it allows a scholar to take the case study as a purposive sample.

Justifications

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), a nonprobability sample is best applicable for saving time. Therefore, the researcher finds it the most suitable method for his study.

Purposive sample

Purposive sample, which is a type of nonprobability sample, was chosen for several reasons, such as it includes subjects selected on certain criteria, or on purpose. There is another type of purposive sample, which is quota sample. As for the quota sample, subjects are selected to meet a predetermined percentage. (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997, p. 64).

As a result of the advantages mentioned above, the researcher will take the Islam Online website as a study case. Moreover, the researcher will focus on the “Religion” page as it is the most comprehensive list compiled by the Islam Online Directory as a purposive

sample, for it gives the most sufficient information about Islam.

Probability sampling

A second method that will be used for the cause of this research study is probability sampling, because it follows mathematical guidelines, by which the chance for selection of each unit is a known sample (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997, pp. 63-64).

Simple random sample

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), random sampling is the most basic type of probability sample because it gives an equal chance for every subject in the population to be selected (p.65). The simple random sample will be used as a way of selecting the study's samples from the Religion page compiled by the Islam Online Directory. A simple random sample also does not require detailed knowledge of the population, external validity could be statistically inferred, it is easy to obtain a representative, and the possibility of having classification error does not exist (p. 67).

Justification

Accordingly, the researcher will use a simple random sample as it will give him the chance to choose the existing samples under the religion listings. It will also

help the researcher to avoid errors, will ease in finding the representative samples, and will give knowledge about the not required population.

Unit of Analysis:

The unit of analysis, according to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), is the smallest element of a content analysis, but also one of the most important. In written content, such as this case, the unit of analysis might be a single word or a symbol, an entire article, or a story. In this study, the units of analysis will be then the articles included, such as introducing Islam, defending Islam, spreading Muslim's news, explaining Qur'an and *hadith*, narrating Islamic history, answering Muslims' questions, or including all the previous activities.

Categories of Analysis

The categories of analysis of this research study will be taken from the Islam Online website as a case study. This study will examine every article that introduces Islam, presents Qur'an, *hadith*, *sunna*, *aqeeda*, *fiqh*, *shari'a*, Islamic history, defending Islam, correcting misunderstanding of Islam or the different terms of it, or including all the previous activities.

Establishing the quantification system

In this study, the quantification system will be the interval level such as the following.

Introducing Islam.....defending Islam..... explaining Quraan and *hadith*..... telling Islamic history..... answering Muslims questions'.....

The brainstorming objectives are:

1. The controlling factors of Islamic websites. So, the researcher had to explore the development, role, and the impact of Islamic websites in the sense of Islamic *da'wa*.
2. The aspects that affect the content of Islamic websites.
3. Who are the users of Islamic websites?
4. The researcher had also to explore the impact of Islamic websites on both Muslims and non-Muslims.
- 5- Since the topic is entirely new, the researcher was also limited to the literature available at the time of conducting the research which he claims was valid and reliable.

CHAPTER V

**PRESENTATION
AND
INTRPRETATION OF
RESEARCH
FINDINGS**

Chapter V

Presentation and Interpretation of Research Findings

Of 46 sites under Religion from Islam Online website, the researcher has chosen 25 sites randomly. Not found were the following sites (and the reasons for not finding them): Al-Islam Information (Access forbidden), Anjuman Serfroshan-e-Islam (URL is not found), Glossary of Islamic terms and concepts (unable to locate the server), Hanif's Page on Islam (Not Found), Islam 1-800-Ask (not available).

Muslims Online is a different site since it offers only services to Muslims, such as free e-mail, search, chat, listserves, free homepage, and an Internet server.

It should be mentioned that Quranic verses are used in most of the cases as evidence and proof to what is discussed.

Reliability

Reliability and validity tests were conducted before analyzing the coded data of the survey.

First, out of the 612 articles were drawn to be recorded by an independent coders. Second, the coders were trained to conduct content analysis using the same system of analyzing the available data. Having been well trained, the coders coded the 612 articles.

Applying Holsti's formula of intercoder reliability:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{(N1+N2)}$$

Since: M= Number of coding decisions on which two coders agree.

N1= Total number of coding decisions for the first coder.

N2= Total number of coding decisions for the researcher.

The researcher found the following.

$$\frac{2 \times (1089)}{(612+612)} = \frac{1,088}{1,224} = 0.88 = 88\%$$

The results indicate an acceptable level of intercoder reliability.

As for the rest of the sites under Religion from Islam Online website, the researcher analyzed 612 articles. The results came as following: 64 articles are about introducing Islam, which is 9.6% of the sample of the

analyzed articles. There are 59 articles of defending Islam, which is 9.60% of the total number. There are 39 articles about *fiqh*, which is about 6.00% of the total number of articles examined.

As for *aqeeda*, it has the largest number of the total articles since there are 258 articles corresponding to 42.00% of the total sample. There are three articles dealing with the *sunna*, which is 0.40% of the total number of articles. There are 45 articles dealing with various issues concerning *hadith*, which is 7.30% of the sample. There are also 62 articles about Qur'an, which is 10.00% of the analyzed sample.

In addition, 77 articles of the sample under examination are about Islamic history, which is about 12.60% of the total sample. Shari'a is the subject of five articles to make 0.80% of the total sample. As for *sira*, only one article dealt with it, for 0.10% of the total number of articles.

As for introducing Islam, Mohammed (2000) states in his article entitled, "A revolution without revolutionaries," that Islam teaches human beings the oneness of Allah, the equality among all human beings regardless of their race, or their color; it teaches them the role of the mind in attaining faith, and the kindness to parents, neighbors,

and relatives. Islam also teaches people that Allah needs no middle men, or mediators, like those who are worshipped (e.g., Christ) in Christianity.

Moreover, there are some articles about introducing Islam that explain the Islamic *da'wa* principles of peace and mercy. The moral system of Islam, *hajj* and *eid* sacrifice, and human rights. There are other aspects of introducing Islam that are covered in the articles, such as giving a clear idea about what Muslims believe, including the concept of God, the oneness of God, and why Muslims should use the word *Allah* instead of God, in addition to the 99 attributes of Allah.

Furthermore, there are some articles about the Muslims' beliefs about birth, such as people are born free of sin, never charged for their sins until the age of puberty, and that no one is responsible for others' sins.

There are also some articles concerning the introduction of Islam that deal with marriage, for example, the importance, conditions, and duties of marriage. They also present advice to husbands, and shed light on death and the life after it. Pillars of Islam (2000) is an article that introduces Islam and its beliefs. It gives clarification of each of the five pillars, such as its meaning, applicability, and timing. "The true religion" is another article that

introduces Islam by explaining the meaning of the word *Islam*, the message of Islam (the oneness of Allah), the universality of Islam, and the recognition of Allah (Phelip, 2000, pp. 1-6).

In addition, there are some articles that give introductory information about prayers, in which they speak about the right timing and the names of the five daily prayers as *fard* in Islam, the numbers of *raka'as* in each prayer, and the *adhan*.

Discover Islam is another site that introduces Islam. It consists of 25 posters. Each poster has a different subject. For example, the first poster, Discover Islam, gives the opening of the Glorious Qur'an. The second poster, What is Islam and who are Muslims?, gives the origins of the word *Islam* in Arabic. It clarifies that Islam is not a new religion, but is the same religion that all the previous Prophets and messengers told people about before.

Then, in the third poster, what do Muslims believe in?, it gives the reality that to be a Muslim, one should believe in the oneness of Allah, Judgment Day, angels, hell and paradise, and all the prophets. In its fourth poster Discover Islam also gives an idea about why Islam is

often misunderstood. Furthermore, it discusses whether Islam, Christianity, and Judaism have different origins.

In the rest of the posters, Discover Islam illustrates who is Muhammad, how Muhammad became a Prophet and a messenger of Allah, how the spread of Islam affected the world, and what is Qur'an. This site also discusses whether there are any other sacred sources apart from Qur'an; the five pillars of Islam; the tolerance of Islam toward other beliefs; what Muslims think about Jesus; the importance of the family in Islam; the status of woman in Islam; the view of elderly, death, and afterlife in Islam; war in Islam, and human rights in Islam.

The Understanding Islam and Muslims site also gives an idea of what Islam is and defining the word *Muslim* from the Islamic perspective. Among the topics under "introducing Islam" is women in Islam. It introduces Islam by presenting men's responsibilities in Islam, and women's responsibilities, husband's rights, woman's rights, significance of the marriage contract, significance of the dowry, and spiritual standing of women. Again the Understanding Islam and Muslims site presents an introduction to Islam by illustrating what Islam is, who Muslims are, their beliefs, why Islam seems strange to people, who Muhammad is, and many other articles that deal with basic information about Islam.

Introducing Islam by giving declaration of faithful statement and providing information about the most famous Islamic mosques. It also presents human rights in Islam in an article, which clarifies the human rights in Islam, such as security of life and property, the protection of honor, security of private life, the right to protect against tyranny, and freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of conscience and conviction. Furthermore, it calls for the protection for religious sentiments, the protection from arbitrary imprisonment, the right to basic necessities of life, equality before law, rulers are not above the law, and the right to participate in the affairs of the State.

In *Defending Islam*, there are several articles that explain the reality of the spread of Islam by the sword. There are also some articles that discuss polygamy, stereotypes and misconceptions of Islam and Muslims, and the distorted image of woman in Islam. Among the issues discussed under *Defending Islam* is the Muslims' concept of *jihad*. There are 11 articles concerning this issue, as *jihad* is frequently misunderstood as a kind of terrorism.

Some other articles discuss the Islamic conquest by providing evidence that the Muslims' tolerance with the

other nations and the good leaders from the Muslims led many nations to believe in Islam and to adopt the Muslims' language and culture. They also raised the issue of spreading Islam by the power of the sword. Furthermore, there are some articles that discuss woman in Islam, for example, her status and her superior status in Islam compared with other religions, as well as some other articles that defend Islam against various other misconceptions.

Fiqh is another category that is included in the analyzed articles. There are some articles about *fiqh* that give a clear idea about what is allowed (*halal*) and what is prohibited (*haram*). There are also 19 articles on the Muslim parents' role in managing the affairs of their children who may study in non-Muslim schools or non-Muslim countries and on how to help them keep faith and commitments to the Islamic *da'wa* principles with their children.

There are also some articles that deal with *jihad* in Islam and the *jiziah* (tax on non-Muslims) in Islam, who should and should not pay. Marriage, *hijab*, prayers, moon calculations, Islamic calendar, Ramadan, *hajj*, fasting in Ramadan are other topics discussed from the point of view of *fiqh*.

Moreover, there are some articles that discuss women's rights in Islam, Islam and modernism, as they discuss the similarities and the differences between religion and latest science discoveries, in addition to answering Muslims' questions about different aspects of their religion. Furthermore, it gives a prayer schedule and the Qibla direction for the different parts of the globe.

In addition, Astronomy for Islam site presents *fiqh* about astronomy, calendar, banking, and society. It also answers questions concerning different aspects of *fiqh*, such as fasting in Ramadan and what might spoil one's fasting, *zakat* and how can one make up for missed fasts, prayers in planes and cars, blood testing during fasting, and many other problems of *fiqh*.

Aqeeda is one of the most widely discussed aspects in the analyzed articles. Among the issues that are discussed are the five pillars of Islam, the confession of the oneness of Allah, the Prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad (*shahada*), prayers (*salat*), charity in Islam (*zakat*), and pilgrimage (*hajj*).

Most of the articles about *aqeeda* deal with comparative religious issues. They focus on the oneness of Allah, and the claims about the crucifixion of the prophet Esa (Jesus). Some articles focus on the Islamic beliefs, such as

Allah is the Eternal without beginning and the enduring without end, nothing can overwhelm Allah, nothing can happen without His will; He is different from any created being, and He causes death without fear and restores life without difficulty.

As for *aqeeda*, there are also some articles that are concerned with the Satanic verses, debating non-Muslims, the prayers in Islam, and why people convert to Islam. Others deal with the existence of Allah, His Names, and the concept of Allah as a One and Unique Allah. For instance, in his article entitled, "For people who think," Abd-Allah (2000) argues that the Qur'an is the final book. He also explains how several concepts and beliefs are mentioned in Qur'an, the nature of God, nature of man, free will, and reason applied such as the presence of evil, life after death, messengers and prophets, eternal salvation, forgiveness of God, and the straight way (pp. 1-9).

Faith and Progress is another article that includes *aqeeda* and Quranic verses as an evidence. Its questions are of interest to mankind, such as where did one come from and to where is one going? In other words, how and who brings one to the world, and what is the end? It discusses earlier thinking from the perspective of logic and the Islamic point of view. It also includes many

Quranic verses that touch on these issues (Harwood, 2000, Faith and progress, pp. 1-13).

Moreover, there are nine articles that deal with *aqeeda*. The articles deal with the concept of Allah, the concept of worship in Islam, the book of *Tawheed* of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab, and other imams' explanations of the concept of Allah and *tawheed*.

Many articles concerning *aqeeda* discuss comparative religions by presenting some verses from different sacred books concerning crucifixion. There are also articles that deal with both Judaism and the Christian faith from the Islamic point of view. In addition, the issue of women in Islam versus women in Judeo-Christian tradition, between the myth and the reality, is discussed in some articles. One of the most important issues that is always brought up is the myth and reality of crucifixion. In addition, there are some video pictures of Adam and the stories of the prophets Abraham, Moses and the life of Egyptian pharaohs, with verses from the Bible that are discussed from point of view of *aqeeda*.

Furthermore, there is the issue of the Prophet Abraham's creed and its misconception as a separate faith. For some people think wrongly of the Prophet Abraham's faith as a faith that stands by itself. The article clarifies that it is

the same *da'wa* of all the prophets who came either before or after him.

Aqeeda is also the main focus of Ahmed Deedat's lecture concerning comparative religious issues. God is the Creator, rejection of racism, and the pillars of Islam are among the issues discussed from the point of view of *aqeeda*. Moreover, there are other articles on *aqeeda* that present an explanation of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah.

Sunna is another category of the content sample given by About Islam and Muslims. There are some articles that provide definitions of the Sunna. They discuss that *sunna* is everything the Prophet Muhammad used to do, and why Muslims follow him and do exactly as the Prophet used to do. As for *sunna*, there is an article that discusses all the procedures that should be done when someone dies according to Prophet Muhammad's recommendations. The Virtual World of Islam site also gives *sunna* by stating the last Sermon of the Prophet with his recommendations.

Hadith is Prophet Muhammad's sayings. About Islam and Muslims' site gives an explanation of what *hadith* is, and who are the famous collectors of *hadith*. About Islam and Muslims has three *hadith*-related articles. that deal with

various aspects in Islam, mainly about fasting, its benefits, and Allah's rewards to human beings from it. Moral System of Islam is another article which gives *hadith* about God-consciousness, social responsibilities towards parents, other relatives, and neighbors (pp. 1-3).

There are also 21 articles that have *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) concerning many aspects of Islam. The articles deal with Muhammad the Prophet, the Message of the Prophet, Muhammad in the Bible, mutual communication between Muslims and Christians, Prophet Abraham, prayers performance, *haji* information, and Islam and civilization.

Qur'an is provided in many articles as a kind of evidence. About Islam and Muslims is one of the sites that presents the history of Qur'an. It talks about what non-Muslims think of the Qur'an; and it presents the correlation between the Qur'an and modern science; and it gives interpretations and translations of the Qur'an in both English and Arabic languages.

The Astronomy For Islam site states the facts that have been discovered in the 20th century despite the fact that they already were mentioned in the Qur'an, which was revealed between 610-632 CE. For instance, it gives some verses that deal with the creation of the world

"Don't the unbelievers see that the universe was once joined together, then We burst it apart. We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?" (Qur., 20:30).

There are also some verses that talk about space, such as "And it is He who ordained the stars for you that you may be guided thereby in the darkness of the land and the sea." (Qur., 6:97).

Among the issues discussed from the Quranic point of view is what was raised by a Christian archbishop who asks Sheikh Sayed Tantawi to answer him. It takes the claims of some Christians of the contradictions of the Quranic verses among the verses which ask Muslims to fight non-Muslims and kill them any where, and the other verses that encourage Muslims to deal with non-Muslims nicely. For example, they claim that there are some verses from Qur'an which are misunderstood by some Muslims by considering them an order from Allah to fight non-Muslims. Accordingly, some Muslims do such terrorism.

About the Heavens, there are some articles which mention and explain some verses, such as "He who created the seven heavens, one above another: No want of proportion will you see in the creation of Most

Gracious, so turn your face again. Do you see any flaw?
...And We have adorned and lowest heavens with lamps.”
(Qur., 67:3-5).

In addition, the site provides some verses about space flight, such as “O assembly of Jinns and men, when you can penetrate regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate them! not without power [or authority] will you be able to pass” (Qur., 55:33).

Other articles about the Qur'an give the 99 attributes of Allah and the relevant verses to them in the Qur'an. Moreover, they also talk about the oneness of Allah as shown in the Qur'an, such as who is Allah, the *tawheed* concept, Allah is unique, and the concept of worship in Islam.

Furthermore, there are some articles about the Qur'an that discuss the evidence that the Qur'an is the word of God, its consistency with recent science, the structure of the Qur'an, the proof of the depth of meanings of the Qur'an, and the order in the Qur'an against committing acts of terrorism. In addition, there are Quranic *du'a*, which mention all the verses of *du'a*, or special prayers to Allah for salvation and comfort, in different languages. It presents recordings of readings of Qur'an and meanings of the Holy Qur'an as well. Who is Allah in

Islam is another site, and it talks about certain terms and how the Qur'an explains and refer to them. For example, "Allah. No Father, No son" and the explanation of them in both the Qur'an and the Bible. Another site, called Who Is God, presents the Qur'an by giving explanations of how the Bible and the Qur'an refer to God's character and His love for humans.

Islamic history is another issue discussed in the analyzed articles; some articles talk about Ali Ibn Abe Taleb as one of the caliphs in Islam, Fatima Al-Zahraa, Imam Hassan Al-Mujtaba, and Imam Hussein Al-Shaheed. The About Islam and Muslims site also presents Islamic history, by providing many articles that discuss caliphs or Islamic leaders, Bosnia and the repeating of Tatar history, the Islamic contribution to science, and Palestine.

Among the issues raised under Islamic history is the crusades and their expeditions against Islamic countries. In addition, a chronological study of Islamic history from 570 CE to 1327 CE included 59 historical articles at the Islamic history, Chronology: Early Islam site; this site presents many events that occurred in Mecca, on the subcontinent of Saudi Arabia, or in the Arab world and describes various periods, such as the end of the Roman empire, the end of the Persian empire, the caliphs, the

Umayyad and the Abbasid caliphates, the opening of Morocco, and the opening of Spain. In addition, an article is provided about Turkish history since Turkey is an Islamic country.

Furthermore, it presents some articles on the most famous caliphs like Harun al-Rashid. It provides also information about Sufis and Sufism, the Mamlukes and the Turkish history until the end of the Ottoman empire. Finally, it includes articles about Ferdinand of Argon and Isabella of Castile and the end of the Muslims' rule in Spain, and Christopher Columbus' trips discovery.

Islamic history appears once more under the Al-Hijrah Calendar-1421 AH site. The articles discuss Shi'a history, and the twelve imams' autobiography, such as Imam Ali Al-Murtatha, Hassan Al-Mujtaba, Hussein Al Abdeen Al-Shujjad, Mohammad Al Bakir, Jaffar Al-Sadiq, Musa Al-Kathum, Ali Al-Reda, Mohammad Al-Jawad, Al-Hadi, and Hasan Al- Askarri, and Mehhdhi Al-Muntadar.

A History of Medieval Islam is another site that presents Islamic history. It deals with the Seljuk Turks emergence in the mid sixth century in Asia and how they began to expand and increase their numbers until they became the third dominant race of Muslims after the Arabs and the Persians.

shari'a is among the issues discussed in the analyzed articles. The articles deal with wedding (bases for choosing wives; what to do before one has sex with his wife, *mahr*, *walima*, duties and rights of husbands and wives), polygamy, conditions of marriage and divorce, and matters relating to widowhood in Islam, and *jizyah* (the tax on non-Muslims). The articles also illustrate the necessity of the protecting non Muslims during war in order to give them the chance to learn about the truth of Islam. In addition, it helps Muslims spread the faith of their religion.

As for the *sira*, the Virtual World of Islam illustrates an article that talks about Prophet Muhammed's history as an autobiography.

CHAPTER VI

SURVEY RESEARCH

Chapter VI

Survey Research

Intensive online interviews

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Islamic websites on the Internet, and in particular, *da'wa*. It examines whether they defend Islam and Muslim, introduce Islam to non-Muslims, spread Muslim news, offer an explanation of Qur'an and *hadith*, write about Islamic history, or answer Muslims' questions about Islam. To this end the researcher conducted a content analysis.

Also, for this purpose the researcher conducted a pilot study with experts in the field. Since it is difficult to get the desired number of answers to online questionnaires, the researcher chose an applicable approach to achieve the desired target of his study, which is an intensive online interview.

In order to achieve this target, the researcher conducted the online intensive interview by sending two sets of questionnaires, one to the scholars of theology as experts in the field, and the second to the webmasters and the

editors of the webmasters, to evaluate the role of the Islam Online website as a case study.

The objectives of the online intensive interviews were to consider the following issues:

- 1- The role and the impact of Islamic websites.
- 2- The role and the impact of Islam Online websites.
- 3- The development of Islam Online websites.
- 4- How Islam Online websites could be developed.
- 5- How clear and valuable the content of Islam Online website is.

Based on the answers of the intensive online interviews, the answers came as the following:

As for the first objective, examining the role and the impact of Islamic websites, the answers were quite clear that Islamic websites are playing a significant role in Islamic *da'wa*. It is obvious that Islamic websites introduce Islam, present Qur'an, *hadith*, *sunna*, *fiqh*, *aqeeda*, *shari'a*, Islamic history, and most importantly they defend Islam to correct its negative image in the Western media.

Moreover, Islamic websites are playing a crucial role in presenting Islamic religion to non-Muslims by counting

on logic, wise discussions, and presenting a valid and wise discussion. The webmasters emphasize that they get feedback be it criticism, questions, or any other kind of reproaches. Hence, website masters and editors claim that they take this feedback seriously into consideration and answer it.

The webmasters also get feedback from both Muslims and non-Muslims in many aspects of religion, such as Qur'an, *hadith*, Islamic practices, *aqeeda*, and especially on comparative religion and *fiqh*.

The second objective of online intensive interviews is concerned with the role and the impact of Islam Online websites. Since Islam Online is the case studied in this work, the researcher emphasizes its role and impact. There is consensus that the Islam Online website is playing a vital role in Islamic *da'wa*, since it presents under Religion a comprehensive content concerning Islamic religion for both Muslims and non-Muslims. These links introduce Islam, present Qur'an as an evidence for different aspects of Islam for Muslims, and show Qur'an as an evidence for recent science technologies, even though it appeared more than 14 centuries ago.

As for the impact of Islam Online on non-Muslims, the researcher received answers that claim that there are about 20 persons who convert to Islam monthly. As for Muslims, there is always feedback about the content that takes the form questions on *fiqh*, *aqeeda*, *sunna*, and Quranic verses.

The third objective of the online intensive interview has to do with the development of Islam Online websites. Most of the answers showed that such websites were developed by groups of people rather than outside companies. Most of the answers also emphasized that the available content is offered by organizations rather than companies, list servers, or syndicates.

The fourth objective of the interviews has to do with how Islam Online websites could be developed. The answers were focused primarily on improving the speed factor, because it is far too slow due to its large webpage. There are some answers that focused on improving the content and increasing the number of links. Search engines are another problems that should be looked into, according to one of the answers, since the attempts to develop search engines are still insufficient.

As for the fifth objective of these interviews regarding how clear and valuable the content of Islam Online

website is. The answers claim that there is clear and valuable content.

However, improving content is always needed to handle the different concepts of different individuals according to their cultures and backgrounds.

Results of the online Interview questions.

Having conducted the online interview with both expert scholars of the field and the Webmasters, the researcher found the following,

- 1- Islamic websites are playing a significant role by introducing Islam, presenting Qur'an, *hadith*, *aqeeda*, *fiqh*, *sunna*, *shari'a*, Islamic history, and most importantly defending Islam against the negative Western media of porting Islam.
- 2- Islamic websites play a crucial role in enriching Muslims information about different aspects of Islam.
- 3- Islamic websites answers all the claims of non-Muslims concerning *aqeeda*, Islamic history, women, or any other claims. In addition, they have a good impact on non-Muslims that is clear from the number of individuals who convert to Islam.

4- Carefully, Islamic websites take the feedback of their users in considerations. They answer all the questions of their Muslims users about Islam concerning its practices, *aqeedah*, *fiqh*, or any other aspect of Islam in an easy and understandable language.

5- There is a consensus that Islam Online's Search Engines are quite slow and need improvement.

CHAPTER VII

**ANALYSIS OF
RESEARCH
QUESTIONS
AND
HYPOTHESIS**

Chapter VII

Analysis of research Questions and Hypothesis

A. Research Questions

Having conducted the content analysis for the content of twenty two sights under the Religion site from Islam Online website, and interviewed nine experts in the field, the researcher discusses and analyzes the findings.

Question 1:

Question one focuses on what the Islamic websites are. In order to answer this question, the researcher analyzed a sample of the Islamic websites to show their role in serving the Islamic *da'wa*. The content analysis show that The Islamic websites are sites on the Internet which provides a wide variety of information for Muslims. In addition, everything covered relating to Islam and Muslims.

Questions 2:

The second question is concerned with the missions of the Islamic websites. This was found clear from the findings of the content analysis of the sample website selected from the Religion list under Islam Online

website, which was taken as a case study that Islamic websites have different missions. For example, some Islamic websites introduce Islam, some defend Islam, others explain Qur'an and present *hadith* about different aspects of Islam, such as prayers, fasting, good dealing with neighbors, and good dealing with parents. In addition, some Islamic websites present Islamic history, like some present all the previous information related to Islam and Muslims.

Question 3:

The third question deals with the reasons of the existence of the Islamic websites, whether to introduce Islam, defend Islam, to explain Qur'an and present *hadith*, to present Islamic history, or for all the previous reasons. According to the findings, there are some Islamic websites which introduce Islam, some defend Islam, some explain Qur'an and *hadith*, and some present Islamic history. There are also some sites which include all the previous aspects. The variation depends on the missions that they have set to accomplish.

Question 4:

The fourth question deals with whether Islamic websites answer Muslims' questions about Islam. It was clear

from the findings concerning *fiqh* that Islamic websites answer Muslims' questions concerning several aspects in Islam, such as Investigating Islam and Astronomy for Islam websites .

Question 5:

The fifth question concerns the effort exerted by Islamic websites to give the real image of Islam. It was obvious from sixty four articles about introducing Islam that there is a great effort from the different Islamic websites to convey the real image of Islam and to prove how a peaceful and fairness religion it is.

Question 6:

The sixth question raises an essential issue, which is the importance of studying the role of the Islamic websites. Having analyzed 612 articles concerning all aspects of Islam, the researcher finds that the Islamic websites deserve to be studied carefully for what they offer for Muslims in depth and valuable information concerning Islam. They defend Islam in using logical and peaceful argument as Islam recommended that Muslims should argue with non-Muslims in a good and calm way.

Question 7 and Question 8 deal with the impact of Islamic websites on both Muslims and non-Muslims. From the analyzed data, it is quite obvious that have impact on both of them. The researcher finds that the Islamic websites play a crucial role in enhancing Muslims' information about their religion. They provide in depth information about *aqeedah*, which helps Muslims to make sure of their faith and to be able to argue logically and peacefully with non-Muslims, if they have to. Islamic websites also refute all the claims about Islam which help Muslims to answer such claims with confidence. Therefore, the researcher believes that Islamic websites are successful in their roles as supporters of the Islamic *da'wa* in such great medium.

Question 10:

The tenth question inquires about what else should be provided by the Islamic websites for both Muslims and non-Muslims. The answer for such question will be included in the recommendation section.

B. Research Hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1:

The first hypothesis suggests that Islamic websites defend Islam and Muslims. It was obvious from the

analyzed content of the sample that Islamic websites play an important role in defending Islam by answering all the claims about spreading it by sword. Islamic websites also defend logically and with evidence the stereotype of Islam of being a religion of polygamy, terrorism, old customs, considering women as inferior creature.

Hypothesis 2:

The second hypothesis predicts that Islamic websites play a crucial role in introducing Islam to non-Muslims around the world. The researcher finds that Islamic websites introduce Islam to non-Muslims in comprehensively nice way. They explain what Islam is, what Islam means, how one can be a Muslim, the pillars of Islam, the status of women in Islam, the importance of marriage and family in Islam, and several other aspects of Islam. They are also Covering such a variety of topics clarifies what a peaceful and fair religion Islam is.

Hypothesis 3:

The third hypothesis proposes that Islamic websites spread Muslims news. This was clear from the findings of this researcher as some of the articles that are

analyzed discuss Muslim countries, from the political and social perspectives.

Hypothesis 4:

The fourth hypothesis suggests that Islamic websites present an explanation for Qur'an and *hadith*. From the findings of the analyzed content, it is clear that Islamic websites give a clear explanation of Quranic verses and *hadith* of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

Hypothesis 5:

The fifth hypothesis suggests that Islamic websites write about Islamic history. The findings of this search show that there are 77 articles which deal with Islamic history under the Religion list only in Islam Online website. Therefore, Islamic websites are most likely to present Islamic history in a sufficient way.

Hypothesis 6:

The sixth hypothesis predicts that Islamic websites help to solve Muslims' problems. It seems clear that some Islamic websites offer to contact them for certain requirements. For example, Muslims Online website, which is one of the Islamic websites under the religion

list, most likely helps in solving Muslims problems by offering them e-mail, search, chat, listserves, free homepage, and an Internet server.

Hypothesis 7:

The seventh hypothesis proposes that Islamic websites answer Muslims' questions about Islam. This seems clear from the 39 articles that deal with *fiqh* questions asked by Muslims to be able to worship their God in a proper way.

Hypothesis 8 and Hypothesis 9 deal with the assumption that Islamic websites are well known to the Internet users, and the degree of satisfaction which Islamic websites give to their Muslims users. From the analyzed data of the conducted online intensive interview, the researcher found that Islam Online website is well-known to both Muslims and non-Muslims, which seems clear from the number of the monthly visitors.

It is obvious that the Internet is of a paramount importance for the Islamic *da'wa*. For Islamic websites could play a crucial role for Islamic *da'wa* by debating the other religions websites, such as answering-Islam.org, and debate.org which criticize Islam and Muslims. Islamic websites could use the Internet as an invaluable

tool for introducing Islam with its peace and mercy principles, answering all the claims of non-Muslims about Islam. In addition, Islamic websites could use the Internet in explaining Qur'an and apply it to the modern science, to explain *hadith* to show how great was the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Islamic websites could also debate the comparative religion using the Internet as the most advanced communication medium.

The Internet is used by other religions websites as a mean to spread their religion's principles, and to combat Islam. This seems clear enough from some non-Muslims, such as answering-islam and debating-org, whose main focus is to criticize Islamic principles, its Holy Book, its Prophet *hadith*, its history, and its understanding of the other religions.

As it was clarified in the literature review, some non-Muslims websites are focusing on criticizing Qur'an as the main source of Islam. They use some verses, which they completely misinterpret to claim that Islam order Muslims to kill non-Muslims around the Globe. They entirely misunderstand such verses, for there was a certain occasion for which each verse was told to the Prophet (PBUH). Qur'an can not be superficially read or interpreted. It has to be studied in perception.

Hadith of the Prophet was also misinterpreted by such websites. As a result, many claims have been said about the Prophet (PBUH). Several situations were taken to be evidences against Islam. As a result, such non-Muslims websites concluded that Islam is a religion which calls for violence and illogical beliefs to the extent of accusing it of being invalid religion for such age.

As it has been clarified before, Islam is entirely for development and using every possible mean to support its *da'wa*. It has been also explained that Islam is for unity and good spiritual of brotherhood. Therefore, using the Internet as an invaluable medium for Islamic *da'wa* has become a must, especially while we are at the dawn of a new millennium in which communication technology is a power, which gives strength and victory for whoever possess it.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Chapter VIII

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

I. Summary and Conclusions:

Islam is a religion which counts always on what a mind would accept of logic. It is a universal religion for it always depends on convincing non-Muslims by giving the chance to think deeply of all aspects of the life. This in turn leads to belief in the existence of God as the Great Creature of such life.

Islamic *da'wa* is universal also for its principles, which recommends equality among human beings regardless their race, color, languages, or nationalities. The universality of the Islamic *da'wa* is stated clearly in the Holy Qur'an, "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) Of a male and a female, And made you into Nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (Not that ye may despise (Each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most Righteous of you. (With all things) (The Holy Qur'an, .)

Through the different forms of media, such as print, and electronic media, the Islamic world is always facing several serious and endless attempts to distort its image. The Internet, the most sophisticated communication technology which comes from unlimited and uncontrollable space, has become one of the most dangerous media forms used to distort the image of Islam and Muslims.

Since Muslims are asked to inform the others of non-Muslims of the Islamic *da'wa* principles which call for fairness, mercy, peace, and equality, it has become a necessity for Muslims to combat such purposive campaigns against Islam and Muslims. Therefore, the Internet, especially that we are at the dawn of the third millennium, is going to be the most suitable medium for launching the Islamic *da'wa* and conveying the real image of Islam.

Accordingly, the researcher decided to conduct this study to evaluate the role played by Islamic websites on the Internet as a mass medium in serving the Islamic *da'wa*.

The objectives of this research are to examine the role of the Islamic websites on the Internet in supporting the Islamic *da'wa*. To examine whether Islamic websites

defend Islam and Muslims. To examine whether Islamic websites introduce Islam to the non-Muslims. To examine whether Islamic websites spread Muslims news. To examine whether Islamic websites offer an explanation of Quraan and *hadith*. To examine whether Islamic websites write about the Islamic history. To examine whether Islamic websites solve Muslims problems. To examine whether some Islamic websites introduce Islam, some defend Islam, while others explain Qur'an and present *hadith* about different aspects of Islam. In addition, some Islamic websites present Islamic history, and some present all the previous activities missions.

3. It is clear from the findings that the Islamic websites answer Muslim's question concerning Fiqh and several aspects in Islam.

4. It is obvious that there is a great effort exerted from the different Islamic websites to convey the real image of Islam, and prove what a peaceful and fair religion it is.

5. Islamic websites defend Islam using logical and peaceful argument as Islam recommended Muslims to argue with non-Muslims in a respectable and calm way.

6. Islamic websites are successful in their role of supporting the Islamic *da'wa* in such great medium. For they play a crucial role in enhancing Muslims information about their religion. They are giving valuable information about *aqeedah*, which helps Muslims to make sure of their faith, and be able to argue logically and peacefully with non-Muslims, if they have to. Islamic websites also refute all the claims and stereotypes about Islam which help Muslims to answer such claims confidently.

7. Islamic websites play a crucial role in introducing Islam to non-Muslims around the world. They explain what Islam is, what Islam means, how one can be a Muslim, the pillars of Islam, the status of women in Islam, the importance of marriage and family in Islam, and several other aspects of Islam, which clarifies how Islam is a peaceful and fairness religion Islam is.

8. It is clear from the analyzed content that Islamic websites give a clear explanation of Quranic verses and *hadith* of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH).

9- It was obvious from the analyzed content that Islamic websites play an important role in defending Islam by answering all the claims about spreading it by sword. Islamic websites also defend logically and with

evidences the stereotype of Islam of being a religion of polygamy, terrorism, old customs, considering women as inferior creature.

10- The researcher recommends that Islamic websites deserve to be studied more carefully for the valuable information concerning Islam and Muslims.

11. Recommendations

From the results of this study, it is evident that Islamic websites can play a vital role for the purpose of Islamic *da'wa*. Islamic websites can also play a crucial role in combating and correcting the negative image of Islam, which the Western media have successfully emphasized in their people's minds. For fulfilling this goal, the researcher recommends the following to support Islamic *da'wa*.

A- Recommendations to support the Islamic Websites.

1. Since one of the Islamic *da'wa* principles is Unity, there should be co-ordination among the different Islamic websites for a better and more active participation to combat the negative Western media of their attempts to destroy the image of Islam and Muslims.
2. Islamic websites should give the facility of a better navigation by making them easier to be found.
3. Islamic websites should have better Search Engines.

B- Recommendations to support the Islamic da'wa for Muslims on the Islamic Websites.

1. Islamic websites initiated by Arab countries should have well-prepared Du'at, language and cultural wise, to deal with both Muslims and non-Muslims from the different parts of the world successfully.
2. Islamic websites, especially those that exist in Arab countries, such as Al Azhar website must exert more effort to serve Islamic *da'wa* by presenting more content by tackling different aspects of Islam.
3. Islamic websites should direct the Islamic *da'wa* to all aspects of life. For example, living up with economic situation in Muslims countries by taking well-care of agriculture lands, better industrial production, and directing Muslims youth to work instead of wasting their time are among the Islamic *da'wa* principles.
- 4- The family in Islam is of a paramount importance since family is like a back bone of a body. Therefore, Islamic *da'wa* emphasizing the importance of well-care of children upraising to assure having good Muslim communities in the future.

5- Political wise, Islamic *da'wa* emphasizing the principles of Islam for a better co-releations with other countries whether Muslims or non- Muslims countries. It assures also the Qur'an and Sunnah as a law for the Islamic countries.

C- Recommendation to support Islamic *da'wa* for non-Muslims on Islamic Websites.

1. Islamic websites might have a better approach to non-Muslims by offering proposals to solve their different problems, such as political, economic, and social problems. In order to promote Islamic *da'wa* as a universal one, they should first offer problems of daily life. Then after receiving feedback from the users, they tell them that this is the Islamic ideology of dealing with such circumstances.

2. Islamic websites should also hold more online debates among the different cultures and the different religions. In other words, Islamic websites should hold "online" conferences for more debates concerning comparative religion studies.

CHAPTER X

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Chapter X

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Islamic Websites Content Analysis Coding Sheet

[illegible]

Date: APRIL 19, 2000

Dear Sir,

My name is TareK Mokhtar. I am doing my graduate studies at the Journalism and Mass Communication Department at the American University in Cairo. At this point, I am conducting research for my Masters Degree entitled *Islamic D'awa and The Internet: Islamonline Website Case Study*.

The following questionnaire has been designed as a part of this research study to examine the development and the impact of Islamic Websites on the Muslim and the non-Muslim Internet community.

As an expert in the field, you recognize of course, the importance of research in this field. I am writing to ask you help and assistance to serve as a distinguished member of a selected sample of experts to assist in answering the attached questionnaire which may guide future development using the Internet in serving the Islamic Da'wa

Your active participation will be invaluable to this study. I understand that you have tremendous responsibilities and I hope you will find the time to respond. All information will be treated in strict confidence, only the researcher will have access to the original data. Please complete the questionnaire and e-mail or fax it to me (Fax: 002-02-354-1440) Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely Yours;
Tarek Mokhtar

Questionnaire A

1. Do you visit Islamic Websites?

☐ Yes

☐ No

(If yes, continue answering the following questions).

2. How did you learn about Islamic Websites?

☐ Friends

☐ Browsing the net

☐ Publicized by institutions or organizations (mention their names)

3. How often do you visit Islamic Websites ?

☐ Daily

☐ Monthly

☐ Weekly

☐ Less than Monthly

4. Do Islamic Websites play a significant role in providing information about the Islamic religion?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ To some extent

5. List the Islamic Websites you remember having visited?

6. Are you aware of Islamonline?

☐ Yes

☐ No

(If yes, continue answering the following questions).

7. Does Islamonline Website worth to be browsed?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. In your experience, how well-known is the Islamonline Website?

☐ Very well-known ☐ well-known

☐ Not well-known ☐ Unknown

If no, state why not?

☐ Not interested

☐ Lack of publicity

☐ Others _____

9. Rank the following topics according to your degree of interest in knowing about them from the Islamonline Websites? (Most interesting =1 and Least interesting =7)

☐ Qur'an

☐ Hadith

☐ Sunnah

☐ Aqeedah

☐ Fiqh

☐ Sharia

☐ Others (Specify) _____

10. Does Islamonline Website provide you with all the information you're seeking about Islam?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know

11. Do you find that Islamonline Website enrich your information?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, to what extent?

- ☐ Wealth of information
- ☐ Very sufficient information
- ☐ Sufficient information
- ☐ Others

12. How accurate are the information on Islamonline Website?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very accurate | <input type="checkbox"/> not very accurate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate | <input type="checkbox"/> in accurate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To some extent | |

13. Does Islamonline Website help you to understand more about Islam?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, state in which field?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Qur'an | <input type="checkbox"/> Fiqh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hadith | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunnah | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aqeedah | <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above |

14. Does Islamonline Websites succesful in introducing Islam?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ To some extent

15. Does Islamonline Websites defend Islam?

☐ Yes

☐ No

16. Does Islamonline Website play a significant role in providing information about politics from Islamic point of view?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ To some extent

17. Does Islamonline Website plays a significant role in providing information about science from Islamic point of view?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ To some extent

18. Does the content of Islamonline Website affect you?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, state how?

☐ Spiritually

☐ Mentally

☐ Both

19. As a visitor to Islamonline, is its content strong enough to convince non-Muslims to convert to Islam?

☐ Yes

☐ No

20. Does Islamonline Website need to be developed?

☐ Yes

☐ No

21. From your point of view, what are the weaknesses of Islamonline Website?

Content

Design

Lay out

Navigation

Others

22. What is Islamonline Website missing?

23. What do you suggest to improve Islamonline Website?

Thank you very much for completing my survey

Questionnaire B

1. Who developed your Website?
☐ An outside company
☐ Your group
2. Who provides your Website's content?
☐ Company
☐ Organization
☐ List serve
☐ Syndicate
3. Who are your target audiences?

<input type="checkbox"/> Muslims	<input type="checkbox"/> Judaists
<input type="checkbox"/> Christians	<input type="checkbox"/> Taoists
<input type="checkbox"/> Jews	<input type="checkbox"/> Hindus
<input type="checkbox"/> Shintoists	<input type="checkbox"/> Others
<input type="checkbox"/> All of the above	
4. Comprehensively, does Islamonline Website achieve their aim/s?
☐ Yes
☐ No
5. What is the number of hits of your Website per month?

<input type="checkbox"/>	1- 49
<input type="checkbox"/>	50- 99
<input type="checkbox"/>	100-149
<input type="checkbox"/>	150-200
<input type="checkbox"/>	More
6. Do you receive feedback from your Website visitors?
☐ Yes

☐ No

7. What type of feedback do you get?

☐ Criticism

☐ Questions

☐ all of the above

☐ Other (Specify) _____

8. Do you take the visitors' comments into consideration?

☐ yes

☐ No

If yes, State how?

9. According to the feedback you receive, rank the following topics in order of the most sought after and visited sections?

(1) the highest rank (7) the lowest rank

☐ Qur'an

☐ Islamic Practices

☐ Fiqh

☐ Hadith

☐ Sunnah

☐ Sharia

☐ Aqeedah

☐ Others (Specify) _____

10. Do you think that your Website have some impact on non-Muslims?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, state how?

11. Do you receive feedback from visitors who converted to Islam?

☐ Yes

[] No

If yes, how many in the last month?

[] 1-20

[] 21-40

[] 41-60

[] 61-80

[] 81-100

[] Over a hundred

12. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of the Islamonline Website that you would like to overcome?

Content _____

Design _____

Technical problems _____

Others _____

13. What are your suggestions to improve and develop your Islamic Website?

Content _____

Design _____

Links _____

Navigation _____

Others _____

Thank you very much for completing my survey

ISLAM ONLINE

WASHINGTON, DC

GATEWAY

TO

COMPREHENSIVE SOURCES OF
INFORMATION
ON ISLAM



SITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION
ISLAM ONLINE

MENU

Many individuals and organizations have incorporated a wealth of information in hundreds of web sites on islamic religion, culture, countries and people.

The information is organized under the following categories:

● <u>RELIGION</u>	● <u>THE HOLY QURAN</u>
● <u>GENERAL TOPICS</u>	● <u>EDUCATION</u>
● <u>PROPHET MUHAMMAD</u>	● <u>WOMEN IN ISLAM</u>
● <u>CHILDREN</u>	● <u>HISTORY</u>
● <u>PEOPLE</u>	● <u>PUBLICATIONS</u>
● <u>CULTURE</u>	● <u>REFERENCE</u>
● <u>COUNTRIES</u>	● <u>RESOURCES</u>
● <u>ASSOCIATIONS</u>	

● HOME PAGE

SITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION
ISLAM
INFORMATION ON RELIGION

GENERAL TOPICS

A large number of web sites have valuable information on various topics of the islamic religion. Many individuals and organizations have incorporated a wealth of information for use by you. Following are some of the listings:

- About Al-Islam and Muslims - to provide accurate information about Islamic beliefs, history and civilization for Muslims and Non-Muslims.
- About Islam and Muslims - comprehensive introduction to the religion, Muslims, and related issues.
- Al-Islam Information - links and information on the teachings of Al-Islam.
- Anjuman Serfroshan-e-Islam - revival of Islamic Spiritualism led by Syedna Riaz Ahmad Gohar Shahi.
- Astronomy for Islam - Islamic calendar, date conversion, prayer schedules and Qibla direction.
- Chronology: Early Islam
- Discover Islam
- Glossary of Islamic Terms and Concepts
- Hanif's Page on Islam
- History of Medieval Islam
- Islam: 1-800-Ask
- Islam Muhammad and the Koran
- Islamic Calendar Based on Predicted Lunar Visibility
- Islam and European Piracy - Muslim noble, Usamah Ibn Munqidh, wrote down some of his observations of the European Crusades
- Islam-faq
- Islam, Christianity and Science
- IslamiCity - Islamic interest and education.
- IslamiCity in Cyberspace - learn about Islamic world
- Islamic Gateway - the global Islamic movement's free website, sponsored by Muslim Parliament for the Ummah, with welfare, Zakat, Jihad and family information.
- Islam In The Modern World
- Islam and Science - historical and literary information, articles and more.
- Islamic Information Office - conveys the message of Islam through radio, television, lectures, and publications.
- Islam the Living Religion - information on Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq(as).
- Islamic Information and News Network - provides information and discussions on frequently asked questions about Islam. Offers video clips, postcards, news, articles, and more.
- Investigating Islam - Everything about Islam
- Jihader's Islamic Page - introduces the basics of Islam.
- Light of Islam - collection of texts, articles, and links.
- Maryam and Fatima's Islam Page - information regarding all aspects of Islam
- Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam - by Patricia Crone.
- Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs - introducing Islam through available ways and rightful means, the mission and services of the ministry, strengthening the spirit of Islamic brotherhood.
- Muslims Online - internet-based Muslim Community with chat, mailing lists, and free Web hosting. Become a member and help build the ummah online.
- Nida' ul Islam - comprehensive and intellectual Islamic magazine.

- **Qurani Dowa** - offering Dowas(Dua), Taweez, Wazeeefas, Istikharas and questions regarding Islam and Quran.
- **ReligiousTolerance.org: Islam** - overview of the religion: its history, beliefs and practices, and sacred texts.
- **Rizwi's Bibliography for Medieval Islam** - bibliography of largely secondary sources for the student of Islam. I indicate my preferences with red lettering.
- **Siddiqui, Rafiq - Rafiq's Page on Islam** - helps acquaint the reader with the basic teachings of Islam.
- **Statistics of the Muslim World** - from the International Islamic University of Malaysia.
- **Study Islam Online** - online courses on leadership and Islamic medicine.
- **Tariq's Islam Page** - info, photos and links.
- **Understanding Islam and Muslims** religion and people
- **Virtual World of Islam** - five pillars of the Islamic faith.
- **World of Islam** - ideologies and fundamentals of Islam. The teachings of Muhammad and the force that drives Islam to success.
- **Women In Islam** - examination of the Qur'an, Hadith and early Muslim commentators on the position of women in Islam.
- **What Islam Stands For**
- **What Does the Bible Say about Muhammed, the Prophet of Islam** - a lecture by Ahmed Deedat.
- **Web Directory: Islam and Science**

HOME

