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PhD Dissertation Thesis Defense

Entitled

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

by

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Abstract

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

Keywords: Islamic information, Da'wah centers, UAE expatriates, Dubai, non-Muslim, new Muslim, media representation, media use, digital radio.