Globalization, Media and Islam:  
The case study of Ummah

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Abstract

This thesis begins with the examination of the concept of *Ummah* before exploring the concept of globalization in combination with the media and how these have impacted on contemporary Muslim perception of *Ummah*. This study investigates the theological meaning of *Ummah* and examines its media narrative in the globalized world. It finds that although the theological meaning of *Ummah* understands Muslims as a whole, it turns to an exclusive concept in terms of media narratives in the globalized world.
Introduction

Globalization and migration have contributed to a growing interest in Muslim communities across the World. These two realities have triggered the focus on issues of cohesion and unity of *Ummah*, the Muslim Community. The current social change has impacted on all dimensions of Muslim life, from everyday life issues to political and religious expressions. On the one hand, the Western interest in religion, culture, and community has designated Muslims as unique cases in terms of political, social and cultural framework. On the other hand, Muslims have recognized themselves as a global homogeneous community defined exclusively through faith, which is itself a distorted image full of pathologies. Such interpretations not only overlook the internal diversity of Muslims in respect of specific issues, such as those of ethnicity, religiosity, spirituality, and region to name some. But also, they remove the complexity in which Muslim identities have been constructed over the years. However, the commonality in Muslim behavior and sentiment is undeniable which helps us believe that Islam is above cultural, political and national identities.

Islam is the second growing religion in the world today, its transnational potential with shared “civilization-characteristics” among Muslims globally, consists of particular interest. It seems that Muslims recognize more themselves in religious terms than as members of specific national or ethnic communities. Islam calls Muslims to accept their common faith as the key-source of their identity and the *Ummah Islamiyah* (Muslim community of believers) the most prominent unity to which a Muslim should belong. Accordingly, Islam is a transnational religion and its *Ummah* is a transnational community based on faith. Maybe a better understanding of the concept of *Ummah* developed from Frederick Denny does also confirm it, “all the members of the Ummah have equal protection […] like a tribal sort of arrangement […] but the ummah itself is the tribe, a super -tribe, with God and Muhammad as final arbiters and authorities” (1977, p. 47). Therefore, the Islamic identity seems to be over the national one.

The last decades have referred to diaspora and transnationalism as sings of modern times, given that their notions are becoming recently very prominent in social and political discourses. Although these concepts review traditional issues in the field of migration, and minorities, race and ethnicity, exploring processes of mobility and settlement, they also refer to a community’s consciousness of places and people.
anywhere else. The term ‘diaspora’ has been shifted from the analysis of roots in the past to the analysis of routes in the present (McKoughlin, 2013). This transition recognizes that people’s modern experiences cannot anymore been viewed in the nation-state frame. Indeed, one the one hand, the idea of diaspora has been marked by the restart of one’s new life, and a new “home” abroad. On the other side, according to some contemporary scholarly, diaspora is defined as the metaphorical spaces between the old and new mother country for envisaging alternative forms of belonging (McKoughlin, 2013, p. 34).

Moreover, this symbolic and ritual Muslim connection generates the idea of a transnational *Ummah* and suggests a consciousness of Muslim community which shapes Muslims’ minds in the past, present and future. Amongst these groups, a gradual consciousness of underlying Islamic identity has been growing recently. Its main objective is to house a sense of belonging to, and a feeling of participation in a worldwide Muslim community (*Ummah*). Especially, for the second and third Muslim generations of non-Muslim world, the idea of a universalizing Islam became a ‘strategy’ of self-identification. And thus, the ‘old’, ethno-cultural, and homeland Islam of their parents turn into the multi-ethnic modernizing Islam.

While the concept of *Ummah* has historically a territorial orientation, for instance the first establishment of *Ummah* in Medina by the Prophet of Islam. Muslims, nowadays, have reacted to several international ‘conflicts’ and injustices over Muslims. This reaction produces a more de-territorialized ummatic narrative asking for unity and determined action among Muslims all over the world.

The use of the Internet enables Muslims to become members of the community online, and to share their values among other Muslims. Thereby, the Internet is a tool for change, as well as a mechanism for raising their voices by providing a counter narrative of the world. The new technology media contribute to Islamic community’s expansion given the dissemination of Islam content production. It is the technology that both encourage the religious aspect of Islamic culture, and interrupts the Islamic social ethics. In our case studies, we will present the *Ummah* - narrative construction from a mainstream magazine, *islam today*, and the online propaganda magazine, *Dabiq*.

This dissertation is divided into chapters, with a following overview of each chapter:
Chapter One: The Challenge of Ummah in the era of Globalization: explaining the concept of Ummah according to Qur’anic sources, which is considered as the authority of Islamic faith, and at the same time analyzing the Ummah’s socio-political dimensions. Also, we will explore the notion of globalization based on the theories related to globalized society and its challenges for the Muslim community. Also, it will examine the role of Ummah in Muslim diaspora and if the Muslim community has been influenced from the various national and cultural identities across the world.

Chapter Two: Traditional, New Media and Ummah: examining the notion of traditional and new media in the era of globalization and exploring the reasons of this transition. While, we will attempt to investigate the role of media in the Muslim community, and the response of Muslim media in the Western media narrative of Islam.

Chapter Three: The Research: in this section, we will present the analysis of the study made on two different media in order to see their Ummah perception and how the Muslim community is being projected from a mainstream magazine, islam today, and the online propaganda magazine, Dabiq. In order to examine their Ummah-narrative, we used qualitative narrative analysis.

Chapter Four: The Results: discussing the differences and similarities of the Ummah media narratives of the magazines and presenting our interpretation of the analysis.

Chapter Five: Discussion: in this section, we present the challenges we accepted through this study in terms of the method used by the analysis and the results.

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusion: summarizing the analysis by discussing the most important points of this study.
CHAPTER ONE: THE CHALLENGE OF UMMAH IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

1.1. The concept of Ummah

The term *Ummah* is mentioned many times in primary sources of Islamic knowledge including the Qur’an and Sunnah¹, also known as “the body of traditional social and legal custom and practice of the Islamic community”. The Qur’an is the Muslim core source, and thus the whole Muslim community, regardless of its origin and nationality, identifies it as the holy book without questioning its authenticity. Therefore, we can state that the concept of *Ummah* is very important for the Muslim community. The Qur’anic interpretations and representations of the *Ummah* vary in its meaning. We will start exploring its theological meaning and then we will continue with its sociopolitical meaning. We do not intend to explore deeply the Qur’anic documents to conduct a full investigation of the different meanings of the concept of *Ummah*, however, we will review the opinions of the scholars concerning it. It seems useful to reproduce this scholarly work in order to have a complete perception of the Muslim *Ummah*. According to the literature, the concept of *Ummah* is appeared in both Qur’anic and extra-Qur’anic sources, the “Constitution of Median” which is also referred to as the “Charter of Medina”, while it is the first establishment of the Muslim community in the history.

The term *ummah* (Lewis, 1988, p. 32) originates from the pre-Islamic period, introduced in early Arabic as well as in other Semiotic languages; it can be used of groups defined in various ways. It can have an ethnic character, as the Qur’an refers to the *Ummah* of the Arabs. It can be religious when Qur’an speaks of the *Ummah* of the Christians and Jews. It can become moral, since the Qur’an mentions the Ummah of good people against the *Ummah* of bad people. It can also be interpreted as ideological, since the Qur’an speaks of the Ummah of those who perform good behavior among the Christians.

Hassan (2011, p. 49) defines Ummah as “its diverse meaning ranging from followers of a prophet, or of a divine plan of salvation, to a religious group, a small group within a larger community of believers”. Saunders (2008, p. 306) gives us the etymology of the word *ummah* and asserts that “the word is more closely linked to the gloss of ‘people’, and is thought to be a cognate of the Hebrew *am* and Aramaic *ummetha*, historically it has been translated as ‘nation’, and is often used in Arabic to

¹ See the definition of Sunnah: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sunnah
denote the Western concept of ‘nation’”. On the other hand, Al-Ahsan (1992, p. 11) claims that “it is clear that the Ummah means community”. From Saunders and Al-Ahsan’s study it suggests that Ummah, etymologically and generally speaking, means nation and community. Nevertheless, a nation consists of several communities, and often different ones. These two comments will be better perceived by the following Qur’anic excerpt.

Al-Ahsan (1992, p. 12) interprets the Qur’anic verse: “And mankind was not but one ummatun wahidatan (united in religion) but (then) they differed” (Qur’an 10:19) as “Man is the only species within which more than one Ummah exists, and the basis of this division is a set of ideas or an ideology”. In relation to Al-Ahsan’s interpretation it emerges that the Ummah is not an exclusive concept of certain species but it includes the whole humanity, even though the members of the humanity are divided into different religions.

The meaning of Ummah becomes gradually more complex when one goes deeper to Qur’anic study. For instance, the Qur’an (10:47) states “the followers of each prophet form an Ummah”, this verse has a twofold explanation. Firstly, it refers to ‘each prophet’ by providing to the concept of Ummah a religious basis, and secondly it recognizes the existence of other beliefs. At this point, we need to make a further analysis of the verse 10:47. In accordance with the Islamic theology, Jesus Christ and Moses are considered as prophets; however they were unable to deliver the divine message of Allah. Thus, their followers, the Christians and Jews are members of the Ummah. Al-Ahsan states “The Qur’an claims that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Moses and Jesus were all Muslims because they surrendered to the will of Allah” (Al-Ahsan, 1992, p. 16). That is to say, the Ummah mentions the followers of these prophets because it considers them as Muslims.

In that short analysis, we understand that the criterion to become a member of the Ummah is to be Muslim. To be more precise to our assumption, we would like to add Sachedina’s interpretation on this issue. According to him (2001) the concept of Ummah is also referred to the Muslims as the best community (Qur’an 5:48). This verse does not deny the existence of other religious communities, but insists of the supremacy of the Muslim community compared to other communities (Mubashar, 2011, p. 148).

To conclude based on the Qur’anic analysis of the concept of Ummah, we see a variety of interpretations, and however, it becomes apparent from its gradual
development that the *Ummah* identifies Muslim supremacy over other communities. In this respect, it is abundantly clear that the religious aspect remains the essence of this concept. To have a thorough knowledge of the concept of *Ummah*, the issue of religion itself is not enough; we need to examine the sociological and political dimension of that concept, as we know that the Muslim community, religiously speaking, has not been the same since Muhammad’s death.

1.1.1. **Sociological and Political meaning of Ummah**

From the earlier scholarship to the recent study, the Constitution of Medina is considered as a formula of the first constitution of a ‘state’ without having exclusively religious bonds. This document comprises 47 articles related to the first Muslim establishment in Medina by the Prophet Muhammad. There are certain points that need to be taken into consideration, for instance, the issues linked to religious, tribal and territorial aspects of *Ummah* should be examined in order for us to acquire a further contribution of knowledge of its gradual development. The concept of *Ummah*, as explored earlier, does not have only a religious basis. In particular the article 25 of the Constitution of Medina states: “The Jews of Baru Awf are a community (*ummah*) along with the believers. To the Jews their religion (*din*) and to the Muslims their religion. (This applies) both to their clients and to themselves, with the exception of anyone who has done wrong or acted treacherously; he brings evil on himself and on his household” (Denny, 1977, p.41). From this article, we assume that a certain group of Jews ‘are an *ummah* along with the believers’ which possibly means that they form a parallel community to that of the believers, while it might also mean that they are members of one *Ummah*. ‘To the Jews their religion’ means that they are allowed to practice their own religion; we infer that the *Ummah* does no longer comprise a religious concept (Montgomery, 1956, p. 241). Besides this interpretation, there might be another explanation for the Jewish exception based on historical evidence. The Jewish tribes were prominent in Medina, and thus Muhammad wanted to incorporate them in his community under Allah’s authority.

As far as the sociological view of *Ummah* is concerned, Hassan (2006, p. 312) describes *Ummah* as the ‘transformative concept’, specifically, he argues that “*Ummah* became a transformative concept in the sense that it played a significant role, changing first, the Arab tribes into an Arab community and, later as Islam began to expand to non-Arab lands, different groups of Muslims into a community of
believers”. In short, in the pre-Islamic Arabia, the Arabic world was divided into different tribes, each one with its own tradition. When Muhammad with his followers emigrated to Medina in the 7th century, he wanted to ensure the security between his followers and these tribal societies (Arjomand, 2009, p. 556). Muhammad established his community (*Ummah*) in Medina based on a religious unity of his followers from Mecca and those who converted to Islam in Medina. Therefore, Muhammad managed to shift the Arab tribal community into the Arab Muslim *Ummah*.

*Ummah* has its political aspect as well. By the founding of the first *Ummah*, the Prophet Muhammad established the ‘Constitution of Medina’, known also as ‘Charter of Medina’ which was a document of the creation of “the earliest written constitution of a state in the world” (Arjomand, 2009, p. 556). Arjomand also states that at the heart of this Constitution is the founding of a political community and argues that this charter was made to form the settlement of the religious question among the different tribes in order to maintain peace in the area.

Another issue emerged from the establishment of *Ummah* is the element of the territorial basis. *Ummah* as being identified in the Constitution of Medina was expanded across a certain territorial area. However, it became evident that the factor of locality was not officially accepted by the members of the *Ummah*. A territory could never have been considered as a prominent factor of *Ummah* due to the nomadic nature of Arab tribes (Montgomery, 1956, p. 241-242). The issue of territorial boundaries will be further discussed in the following section regarding to *Ummah* and Diaspora which raises doubts over ‘ummah-consciousness’ in relation to Muslims’ political and cultural identity.

Marranci (2008) gives us an anthropological point of view of the concept of *Ummah*. According to the anthropologists the understanding of *Ummah* should be based on the interpretations illustrated by/within the Muslim community through ethnographic research. However, he notes that neither the anthropological nor the sociological approach manage to be liberated from the essentialism of this concept. Just a brief look at how sociologists interpret the *Ummah*, it will help us to understand Marranci’s theory. The majority of sociologists today have based their understanding of *Ummah* on the aspects of social belonging to the group and social identities, especially with the current challenges of divisions within Muslims, a collective identity from the sociological perspective, is needed.
Marranci finds a paradox in the concept of *Ummah*, on the one hand it seems that Muslims are aware of the divisions within *Ummah*, but it does not seem that those divisions have been acknowledged as a functional denial of the Ummah. There are several cases in resent Muslim reality that prove that Muslims have the sense of belonging, in particular throughout of crises. For example the Danish Cartoons Affair, where Islam and its Prophet were involved in offensive circumstances, it appeared that Muslims could disregard their differences so as to find a unity within Islam to protect Islamic culture and heritage. In an effort to resolve this *Ummah* paradox, Marranci states that the *Ummah* is a community of feelings in a way that communities are not based on rational processes, but rather it is the feelings that may be shared through Muslims in the form of ethos. According to his theory of the ‘community of feeling’, external forces threaten the concept of *Ummah*, while he asserts that ‘the shared ethos is, or seems to be, this internal dynamic in favor of a visible unity’.

To sum up, even though the concept of *Ummah* is based on a religious uniformity of its members, it is clearly evident that it has sociological, as well as political dimensions that are visible from the Muslim community’s formation in the area of Arabia till the present situation with Muslim challenges. The concept of *Ummah* has been analyzed via a variety of viewpoints, such as, theological, historical, sociological and anthropological, each one applied different approaches. While the theological approach has focused on the different meanings of Ummah provided by Islamic sources, the historical approach has studied the first experiences and representations of the Muslim community, especially during its formative years in Medina as related to the theological conceptualization of *Ummah*. The *Ummah*, considered as a symbol of cohesion, remained active for all Muslims regardless of different time periods exerting an impact in terms of the sense of belonging to a community. We come to the conclusion that *Ummah* is a religious-socio-cultural community which constitutes the basis of Islam.

1.2. *Ummah* and Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities

Islam was always at the heart of the Western interests, as well as the Muslim *Ummah* was analyzed and defined recently by global scholarship. The current globalized world has given the chance to Muslims to be heard outside of the so called Muslim world, given the fact that their lives have been changing since a great number of Muslims lives in the West. We believe that a variety of different factors lead to this
transition and we consider that it would be advisable to analyze this globalization process and how this has impacted on the Muslim community.

According to the literature there is not one definition of the concept of globalization, some scholars insist on talking about globalization theory, while others referring to a gradual global process of the half of this century. In addition to this, the issue of the exact date of the existence of globalization remains in question. In this section of the thesis we will not examine the different definitions and perceptions of the concept of globalization, but we will present the essential sectors involved in the globalization process: economy, culture, and technology associated with the Islamic culture, as well as how academics and scholars consider the concept. Some believe in the renewal of Islam, while others remain reluctant to follow the globalized process.

From an Islamic perspective, the term globalization is related to the Arabic term ‘al-awlamah’ and refers to “an openness and enthusiasm in knowing other nations around the world” (Harun and Hasan, p. 2). There is evidence that the concept of globalization was incorporated in the Qur’an, in the chapter al-Hujurat, verse 13: “O mankind! We created you from a single pair of male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you might get to know one another...”, according to Harun and Hasan, this verse expresses the Allah’s willing to create different nations within the humanity in order to interact with each other. They believe that the concept of globalization is not foreigner to the Islamic thought; however, they do not analyze it any further. In relation to this point of view, globalization is seen as a human flourishing based on Qur’anic will.

By the term globalization, Akbar (1994, p. 1) refers to the ‘rapid developments in communications technology, transport and information which bring the remotest parts of the world within easy reach’, however, his understanding of globalization is not positive. He notices also that the Islamic culture has been dramatically affected, often negatively, by this globalization process and he highlights the need of deeper exploration of Islam, not as an exotic group of people but as a part of the global community. According to Akbar, the global community should look at the Muslims, given the latter have been considered as a current reality to non-Muslims as well.

As stated previously concerning the starting point of globalization, scholars seem not to coincide. Given the fact that the Muslim world and the West have long been economically and historically interconnected through international commercial transactions during the European colonial power over the Muslim East., Akbar (1994)
considers this international collaboration as an early form of what we currently call globalization. By this point of view, we infer that globalization as a phenomenon does not appear in the late twentieth century, but rather it is seen as a process of historical depth. However, all scholars agree to the fact that the late twentieth-century globalization is different in form from the earlier one.

The element that came to supplement or change the shape of the present globalization process is the role of ‘culture’. Even though it is not purely new to global interlinked communities, since there are examples of alliances between colonials and locals which implicated more than commercial collaboration, the cultural factor has now an impact of people’s interaction by acting as socialization agents. Nowadays, the cultural movements or ‘cultural flows’ (Akbar, 1994) between nations are the main focus of this contemporary globalization process, however, this does not mean that these movements are separated from economic and political factors. It becomes obvious that not all the cultural movements influence the international community, given the ‘flows’ derived from the West have mainly more power to be adopted by the global audience. As a result, based on the Western influence on culture, we are witnessing the emergence of a gradual ‘homogenization of culture’ (Akbar, 1994, p. 3) also referred to as ‘global culture’ in which everyone share the same values, beliefs, and worldviews. The questionable point here is how certain cultural ‘messages’ will be interpreted by some world’s peripheries, and also how these will be embed in relation to local values.

Han Aart Scholte claims that the idea of globalization is referred to the idea of Westernization or modernization of the global community. Prior cultures in the underdeveloped countries are replaced by the Western one, destroying also self-determination (Scholte, 2007, p. 12). He also states that globalization as a process of Westernization is often identified as colonization. In his article ‘Defining globalization’ (2007), Scholte also refers to other definitions of the word globalization. He says that globalization is internationalization, which explains the growing international exchange and interdependence among the world communities. Globalization means liberalization through which the capital mobility removes any ‘boundaries’ in economic order. Moreover, globalization is universalization in terms of disseminating various elements to people living across the world.

It seems that Western societies have shown prompt adjustment to the new global condition, whereas other societies, such as Muslim societies, are being
challenged by these growing global flows and cannot balance on cultural and even political situations. For Muslims, these challenges seem to cause problems in the local and global scale bringing new changes in their community, and sometimes raising doubts over Muslim identity, as we will see in the following chapter of the thesis.

Another element of this globalized world is the informational exchanges between people or nations through the facilitation of new technologies. The significance of such technologies is that they facilitate the information to be in several diverse directions simultaneously providing to a great number of audience new influences. The new technologies are detached from territorial basis, and thus they are able to channel messages to all those with access to receive them, even indirectly to those who do not have the means to be direct actors to this impetuous process (Akbar, 1994, p. 3). Accordingly, both the cultural global process and the new technology of communication are considered as important parts which play a vital role in propagating cultural influences throughout the world. The new technologies are the tools to disseminate different cultures mainly coming from Western societies.

Modern technological advances and communication has provided also a novel interaction between Muslims across the world, in particular those coming from the middle and upper class, creating new means of trade, commerce, and welfare programs. According to Mazrui (2003, p.9) this network of relationships has been unexpectedly beneficial for the ‘trans- national nationalism’ of the Muslim Ummah. Especially, the communication and information technology of the World Wide Web and the Internet, have had two major, and inter- linked effects (2003, p.12), such as: the shrinkage of national sovereignty, and distance. There are examples in Islam giving evidence that these two concepts were not new for Muslims, Mazrui explains them in detail.

Islam and globalization are allies in terms of setting boundaries on national sovereignty. Particularly, Muslim identity is based on the ideal of a common Ummah that is upon national, racial, ethnic, and gender boundaries. Likewise, the new communication technology defied the concept of nationhood and may be contributing in the creation of a trans- ethnic community. By contrast, the printed media in the past may have been targeting on the construction of the nation- state by producing national consciousness. The shrinkage of distance is also encompassed in Muslim consciousness. In this idea, we find two sources, through hijrah and faith; Muslims seem to bridge the idea of distance. That is to say, hijrah (migration) is the journey of
the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in order to establish the new Muslim community and start performing his religion. Thus, the concept of *hijrah* is identified as the celebration of determined transition and also is the start of the Islamic era or calendar. The other Islamic element which also seeks to shrink distance is through faith. All Muslims across the world follow the same Muslim ritual life, among others, the annual pilgrimage in Mecca receiving millions of believers from every corner of the world (Mazrui, 2003, p.13).

Globalization is a phenomenon with gradual social, economic, and cultural change, providing opportunities and challenges to communities. It may seem that the concept of globalized world has put barriers to Muslim values and culture, however, Islam has encountered the mechanisms to promote its spiritual and ritual practices. We have seen that there are two groups of Muslim scholars in respect to the issue of globalization. The first group sees globalization as a challenge for Muslim *Ummah*. According to this group, globalization is used by the West as a means of spreading Western ideas or ideology, that is, a modern re-colonization (Abbas, 2011, p. 288). On the contrary, the first group sees positively the concept of globalization in which they find various opportunities for a Muslim revival.

**1.3. Muslim Diaspora and the issue of identity**

The literature reveals that the concept of *Ummah* is prominent in the discourse of scholars of Islamic Studies in both Muslim and non-Muslim works. They refer to *Ummah* either as spiritual in nature concept or as a community which has an almost eminent impact on Muslims’ religious, political, and cultural behavior. Scholars and researchers study also the role of *Ummah* in the modern transnational Islam that is described as extra- geographical, diasporic, but still religious. We have noticed that Westerners scholarship on Islamic narrative has viewed *Ummah* quite differently than perceived by Muslims. From the Western understating of *Ummah* perspective, many authors focus on how *Ummah* has being reflected on Muslims’ political ethics having failed often to capture what *Ummah* really means for the Muslims. Whilst, the Muslim interpretation for the *Ummah* is based now on its spirituality and religiosity, given the Caliphate’s removal, they understand its concept as symbolic. On the other hand, they might have not been able to analyze the *Ummah*’s political dimension in Muslim life. This contradiction between Muslims and non-Muslims becomes obvious.
when they explore the Muslim diaspora in which they attempt to analyze Muslim identity outside of the alleged also, as the Muslim world.

Sayyid (2010) attempts to explore the Muslim political identity through Muslim diasporic *Ummah*. He argues that the concept of globalization provides possibilities of new forms of political identities which transcend the national territories. Accordingly, he states that the view of national citizenship as the only valid process, through which political expression has been defined, is not anymore sufficient. It is suggested that the perception of nation as homogeneous concept is not since recently legitimate, given the human mobility is one of the main components of the current globalized world. In respect of that, Muslim identity seems to be diasporic, that is, it is not matched by an ‘over-arching political structure’ able to embrace it. By calling Muslim identity diasporic does not mean necessary that he views a specific group of Muslims as diasporic, rather than the fact of being Muslim itself is diasporic, the latter is also referred by Sayyid as ‘Muslimness”. In relation to this point of view, Akram (2006, p. 394) asserts that the territorial pluralism has remained imprinted on Muslim thought during history while being accompanied by the ‘*umma*-consciousness’.

By the term ‘*umma*-consciousness’, we refer to the ‘self’ and also that of the ‘other’. This means that Muslims identify themselves within the community, and among other Muslims, and not necessarily positioned themselves against the ‘other’. One could also state that this consciousness is subjected to specific situations, as oppression, violence, and social injustice against Muslims. This understanding would explain the conflicts between Muslims and Western policies, especially in cases of Islamist movements which are engaged in violent resistance.

In reference to the unity of Muslim diaspora, there are two main points we would like to stress. On the one hand, Muslims seem to be attracted by the possibilities offered currently by the globalized world and the liberal ideas of a pluralistic community. On the other hand, there are Muslims who want to protect the traditional Islamic culture from external influences, mostly from Western societies. These two forces are not per se a matter of destabilization within the Muslim *Ummah*. However, it has been destabilizing when this conflict has been reflected on Muslim communities’ foreigner relations with Western nations. This is the case of U.S. foreign policy in the advent of 9/11 which forces Muslims to decide between Islamism and alliance with the Unites States (Kull, 2014). For the Islamic point of
view, there is one Islam in which fundamentalist ideas are not included, though, this decision has left Muslims with a need to determine their Islamic identity. However, it becomes obvious that most Muslims refuse the idea that there is a clash of civilizations within Ummah.

We would like to express that this diversity within the community may be related to the level of globalization of each Muslim group across the world, especially in the Muslim world. We have discussed earlier the impact of globalization on Muslim’s life, in terms of their religious, social and political expression; however, not all the countries of Muslim world were ready to adopt the ideas imposed from the current globalized world. As a result, the difference in institutional development among Muslim countries may lead to a weakening of religious institutions in society, while leading to a deeper emphasis on personal religiosity (Hassan, 2011) which may impact on religious and political pluralism.

It appears that the clash of civilization within Muslim community affects Muslim identity who feels the need to protect their religious identity, generally speaking, against anti- Muslim narratives by Westerns. In an effort to resolve this conflict, it is suggested a better system of Muslim integration into Western societies. Relevant to this underlying identity- crisis of Muslims, in the northern hemisphere Europe Australia and New Zealand, referred as the antipodean perspective of American and European model (Pratt, 2011), Muslim communities appear to have the same challenge. For the majority of people in both countries seems difficult to develop an Australian identity which will not challenge or worse case scenario undermine their religious and ethnic culture, as well as identity markers. These cultural agencies guide Muslims’ interactions and expressions in the world. Identity refers to the exploration of one’s self and it can have great impact on how we have been navigated in life. We are witnessing that Muslim identity is caught up in the global phenomenon of Islam and the Internet age where the Western cultural positions are interconnected with the Muslim cultural heritage generating internal oppositions.

The question of this dualistic vision of Muslims seeing themselves as foreigners living outside of the Muslim world has also been answered by the Muslim philosopher, theologian, and writer, Tariq Ramadan. Ramadan (2004) thinks that the notions of nationality and faith should not coincide. He thinks of nationality as an element of identity, a layer of Muslims’ identity which helps people to relate to one another in time and space. Whilst, faith gives reason to life and to people’s existence.
For Ramadan, being a Muslim is a way of life. It becomes clear that religion, from a theological point of view, plays a significant role in the life of Muslims, as well as the Muslim identity is constructed upon religious principles which should be distinguished from cultural elements.

This strong connection within *Ummah* is derived from belief and not nationality or ethnicity. In particular, Ramadan (2004, p. 9) states that “Above and beyond the diversity of their national cultures (Muslims), the essence of their faith, their identity, their being in the world, is the same; they define themselves on the basis of points of reference that explain their sense of belonging to the same community of faith, and at the same time, more profoundly, root them in the universe of Islam.” Accordingly, all Muslims will define themselves within *Ummah*, among fellow Muslims with whom they share the same Islamic ethics.

It becomes apparent that Muslims across the world do not have the same national culture, but they share the same cultural Islamic identity guided by common principles ordered by Islam. Islamic culture identity is based on spiritual beliefs, the Islamic way of living, the law and government, these elements built in Muslim mind and heart the spirit of Islamic confidence. Islamic culture is portrayed by a dynamic character rather than static as it is very often misinterpreted by both Muslims themselves and the secular Western narratives. In contrast with the Western cultural process driven by secular ideas and rationality, Islamic cultural process is motivated by both rational and religious principles (Nurullah, 2008, p. 48).

As a result of globalization process, Islamic diaspora and identity is being challenged. On the one hand, there is the pop culture with secular references propagating by the media, and on the other hand, it is the Western cultural values inspired by the globalization process which has begun to assimilate into Islam (Stone, 2002). However, the unity and shared attitudes and sentiments among Muslims exist not only across the Islamic world but almost everywhere. Islamic identity is expanded across the world, it may be adapted by a wide range of world societies, or it may express diversity among Muslims, however, its reference is back to Muslim community (*Ummah*). In the opinion of Stone (2002, p. 128), the significance of *Ummah* is the common Muslim manifestations of the ethnic group, the region, and the town which are misunderstood by various political authorities in an attempt to coincide them with the nation. Thus, this association causes conflicts related to the understanding of different identities.
CHAPTER TWO: TRADITIONAL, NEW MEDIA AND UMMAH

2.1. An Overview: From “old” media to “new” media.

In this part of the thesis, we would like to present the definitions used by scholars for traditional and new media. It is an overview of literature related to the transition from old media communication to new media communication. It is considered advisable to look at the definitions and characteristics of the old and new media in order for us to have a deeper understanding of the *Ummah* narrative emerging in our case study.

The last two decades has seen a huge transition from the traditional media to the new media, which is based on the access to digital technologies, such as the Internet. The Internet is not only a tool for people who want to get information about anything, but it is also considered as a means for the traditional mass media globally, given the recent communication technological advances which empower the old or traditional media with modern means of news production and dissemination (Faatin and Mujabeen, 2005). Accordingly, we live in the new era of communication technology which is characterized as the age of the media, since its rapid increase and development is more dominant than ever before.

Despite the rapid access to new information and to content production, we have witnessed a sort of interactive features between new technologies and traditional media. This media interplay encourages platforms of discussion about media content and news updates among citizens, re-shaping a new way of communication. Additionally, these interlinked networks could shape a new media environment transforming the current hierarchy. New media technologies have initiated “a new format of Internet news that incorporates tools allowing individuals to comment on and discuss news content, from both the blogosphere and established media websites (Verdier, 2009, p. 52). To put it another way, these new digital platforms allow communication channels between individuals and/through media.

In addition to this, the onset of Internet and the transition to new media technology, update the quality of the traditional mainstream media. This new feature, imposed by the new media content, establishes a supplementary source for traditional coverage and a means of expanding its audiences. The case of New York Times is a great example showing this influence, when the American newspaper republished blog content from its printed edition (Verdier, 2009, p. 85). As a result, we could
assume that “networked communication has begun to surround the traditional media system” (Friedland et al., 2006, p. 19).

Digital communication is a new information transmission model based on technological advances. The new communication forms of technology give rise to a number of changes to communicational skills, cease the initial hierarchy in mass media, and bring identity crisis in old media (Peciulis, 2016, p.239). In his article Digital era: from mass media towards the mass of media, Peciulis (2016), mentions the features of digital era as they have been identified by P. Joseph (2008): interactivity, momentariness, mass authorship, declining physical spaces, and cost reduction. Interactivity is considered as a form of dialogue between individuals or social groups. Momentariness is perceived as a spontaneous communicative reaction, it is the time of preparation of content, dissemination of information, and consumption the content. Mass (group) authorship means that the consumer of information, known also as the “receiver”, according to the “old” media terminology, could be simultaneously a potential producer “sender” of information, that is, a content creator. Declining physical spaces means that there are no territorial, social and cultural limits, in the light of the Internet space offers several interconnected spaces. Cost reduction is another characteristic of the digital era, this is related to the fact that content production and dissemination is less expensive than the traditional one in mass media community, while the only necessary tool you need is the access to the Internet.

As far as the difference between the “old” audience and the “new” audience of pre-digital and digital era is concerned, respectively, this article (Peciulis, 2016, p. 239) gives us R. Monosson’s (2005) observations on the issue. The characteristics associated with both audiences are: heterogeneous vs. fragmented, disorganized vs. disjointed, state-level vs. global, vast choice vs. unlimited choice, and passive vs. interactive. In the following lines, we try to analyze each one. Heterogeneous vs. fragmented audiences; according to M. Castells (1996) suggests that the new technology creates audience division known as digital exclusion. Disorganized vs disjointed audiences refer mainly to the content production rather than audiences. In both analogue and digital eras the audiences are not homogeneous, however, the content produced by the main mass media was united. Whereas, the current content especially that from social media groups create a dialogue for further discussion of the issue. State-level vs global, the audience of digital era is translocal. Vast choice vs. unlimited choice, the traditional media provided a certain variety of content, whereas,
the digital media offer a wide range of content thought Internet browsing. *Passive vs interactive*, this one is quite contradictory, the traditional audience *controlled by the flow*, whist, the digital one *controlling the flow*.

In the book, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan described the media with the phrase -medium is the message- to highlight the pervasive role of mass media on audiences (Faatin and Mujabeen, 2005, p.4). In his writings, George G. (Shuriye, Ab. et. al., 2013, p. 1212) states about the passage to new media environment liberation: “A new age of individualism is coming, and it will bring with it eruption of culture unprecedented in the history... We will discover that television was a technology with supreme powers but deadly flaws. In the beginning the powers were ascendant; now the flaws dominate. The cultural limitations of television, tolerable when there was no alternative, are unendurable in the face new computer technologies on the horizon”.

Moreover, Anderson (2003, p.888) states that the transition into new media conveys previous “private” or highly situated discourses from interactive contexts to public display, where they are reattached to a public world and return as information conveyed through new media technologies with different habit of reception”, thus, the message conveyed returns back to the “receiver” as a new message. Besides this, Anderson finds similarities between religious new media programs and the revolution of print and observes that there is an “officialization” of language, stating “to Islamize knowledge, science, and politics generally pursue entextualization strategies to recast those subjects in Islamic vocabularies with modern arguments.” This is relevant to our case study, since the new media discourses shift Islamic narratives into a contemporary context without being dominated by Muslim terms for transnational consumption. However, this is not the case of *Dabiq*, due to its propaganda narrative; its religious vocabulary is a norm through its pages.

Although, the old media was built to provide ways of propagation of information, entertainment, and education in an effort to change the behavior and attitude of the people, it appears to be used for exactly the opposite. The new media currently may provide new potentials for disseminating hate speech, and terror which threaten democracy and human rights. Especially, social media has amplified a war through words. It is evident that through social media several protests, for example in the Arab Revolutions, tried to co-ordinate their operations, while in Tunisia, Libya
and Egypt, the authorities underrated the power of social media resulting in the expansion of protesters (Essam, 2012).

2.2. Islam, Community and New Media

In this part of the dissertation, we will explore the relationship between the Islamic community and media, in an effort to understand how either the traditional media or the new media portray Muslims, as well as the Muslim community. It became apparent that the media, especially the Internet are providing a new form of Muslim “awakening” that explains the kind of transformations made in the Muslim community regarding the values and practices defined by Muslims throughout Islamic history. Although the role of media is in question by many Muslims scholars, we cannot neglect the fact that it is used as a key source for change, as well as a mechanism with which the Muslim community maintains active.

Islamic community in conjunction with media is a unique case in the universal media sphere because it embodies both the religious and political authority. These two fundamental factors often challenge Muslims and fuel identity crisis or misunderstandings. On the one hand, the media can provide a constructive dialogue, based on common Islamic values, among Muslims, in particular in times of inner crises. On the other hand, it can deviate from its value system, depending on the context each media illustrates. In accordance with the literature, we argue that the media is one of the key-factors for the establishment of communication and propagation of Islam which could be effective for both Muslim and non-Muslim world.

From an Islamic theological point of view, mass media is perceived as a means of da’wah (invitation to Islam), to convey the divine message to people, either Muslims or non-Muslims, through the truth of Islamic Faith (Ishak, Mohd., and Solihin, Soh., 2012). A further analysis to this term will help us understand this coincidence. Therefore, throughout the Islamic history those who perform da’wah used several communication patterns depending on a variety of factors, such as the level of people’s local civilization. In the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the message of da’wah was performed through oral communication. Nowadays, in the light of technological progress, the communication became easier and immediate because of the interconnected communication networks used for all types of information. Da’wah can be carried out through any aspect of personal and
community level behavior, emphasizing the importance of Prophet Mohammad as an exceptional example that inspires those who want to follow.

However, *da’wah* should explore new ways to communicate the Islamic message within the Muslim community, as not to remain historically and culturally isolated. To approach the community, *da’wah* needs to adopt a contemporary discourse on current issues providing narratives from the Islamic perspective. The Muslim community is not considered as a homogeneous group, therefore, the “duty” of those who call for *da’wah* is to provide different levels of communication based on the cultural, racial, educational background of each community (Ishak, Mohd., and Solihin, Soh., 2012, p.265). In our case studies, the Islamic magazine *islam today* presents multicultural contents about, for instance, Muslim African-American minorities, whereas, *Dabiq* propagates Islamic cultural heritage through propaganda narrative which cannot be analyzed any differently. However, the analysis of both magazines will be discussed in the following section of this thesis.

According to Campbell (2005) through the development of a “spiritual shaping of technology” perspective, religious communities domesticate the Internet and frame the new technology in a way that transform the Internet religiously acceptable and socially relevant (Cheong et al., 2009, p.10). Brace et al. (2006) argues that researchers should not neglect the “symbolic and communal aspects of religious identity formation and its spatialities” when they study the representations of religious communities in the media and how they are being projected (Cheong et al., 2009, p.10-11). We will also state that in the case of the *Ummah*-narrative media construction, the religious and cultural aspect of the Islamic identity should be identified as spiritual given the diversity in Muslim community.

In the words of Dale Eickelman and Jon Anderson cited by Deborah Wheeler (2002, p.2), the Internet for Muslims is a “reintellectualization of Islam”. By reintellectualization, they mean “presenting Islamic doctrine and discourse in accessible, vernacular terms, even if this contributes to basic reconfigurations of doctrine and practice” and continue that “Islamic discourse has [...] become accessible to significantly wider publics, it has also become framed in styles of reasoning and forms of argument that draw on wider, less exclusive or erudite bodies of knowledge, including those of applied science and engineering. In other words, new technologies offer a “reformation” of Islam through the process of rejuvenation of religious and legal narrative by keeping at the same time, an underlying Islamic framework. It
becomes abundantly clear that the aim of media content is not to spread fear and threats to people, neither to create religious and cultural crisis, but to explore and discuss the different aspects of Muslim life as to develop further understanding of Islamic society for equally Muslims and non-Muslims. It is a tool to communicate with Muslims, to talk about their problems and to show the Islamic openness to people from other beliefs.

As discussed thoroughly by Saifee et al. (2012) in their article, entitled *The role of Mass Media and Information Technology in Islamic Education*, mass media, as well as information technology contributed to preach Islam to the entire world. According to this research the number of Islamic channels in both the West and the Islamic world showed a marked increase in their viewership which proves that the audience wanted to access information about any issue through an Islamic scope. These channels offer an alternative-narrative to the image of Islam as it is being reflected by the Western media. Thus, media is changing our understanding of authority by producing new powers, normalizing old and traditional hierarchies, and creating new spaces that give opportunities to people to speak up for themselves. One may argue that this representation of Islam could achieve Muslim integration in Western societies as these channels target English-speaking audiences, as well.

However, scholars of sociology of religion seem to become skeptical when it comes to the use of Internet by religious factors. Lorne Dawson speculates that the Internet will lead to the “proliferation of misinformation and disinformation” by opponents of specific religious groups or disgruntled members the “loss of control over religious material” by religious organizations, and provide “new opportunities for grassroots forms of witnessing” which inspire the development of unofficial or alternative voices to traditional discourses (Campbell and Teusner, 2011, p.62).

In the recent past, we have seen that Muslims, and the Muslim community, have been affected negatively by Western media representations of their religion. While, Muslim media mainly in the West, are not amenable to wear down stereotypes for the Westerners either. As a result, we observe that neither the representation of the West in the Islamic world nor the Islamic world in the West is just; it is rather based on ignorance and prejudice (Kai and Hafez, 2000). One of the main contributing factors that lead to this two-way misrepresentation is their history of the oppression to Western colonialism and its following repercussions which let Muslims to react with bitterness over Western culture (Shuriye, Ab. et. al., 2013).
In our study, we have noticed that various articles and studies of media representations and Internet participation of Muslims feature two common points. On the one hand, they recognize the immediate impact that printed media content or digital content has on Muslims and Muslim community, identifying the dynamic relationship between Muslims and media production. On the other hand, it appears completely clear that the approach used by Muslim researchers is centralized on victimization of Muslims by the media. It seems, though, important for scholars in the West to study Muslims not only as passive human beings without media participation and production but to overpass this superficial perception and move forward to shape new media analysis on the issue by accepting the complexity of Muslim identity.

In this regard, we will reproduce the survey conducted by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed (2008) on Muslim communities globally to study their perception of themselves as well as of Islam in conjunction with the world. It was a complex survey with face-to-face interviews with Muslims from 35 Muslim majority nations, and nations with a great number of Muslim minorities. Besides its pioneering methodological structure, the survey provides new subjects for further research especially for media studies assuming that the representation and self-representation of Muslims illustrated by Esposito and Mogahed survey change the Western perception of the image of Islam. It seems that they concern about the distorted image of Islam and want to differentiate themselves from the radical voice of Islam across the world. In a talk at the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies of Malaysia (IAIS), Esposito pointed out the awareness and participation of Muslims in the affairs of their adopted countries adding that Muslims are now more educated and better integrated (Abdullah, 2018, p. 191).

Varisco (2009) addresses, also, the gradual appearance of virtual *Ummah* (Muslim Community) in cyberspace over the last two decades. According to his study with the emergence of *Ummah* in the digital world we are witnessing a variety of content about Islam or by Muslims in English and other Western languages that act as monitors on the media as to deliver counter-religious content to the mainstream Muslim media, creating a kind of religious competition among Muslim groups.

As discussed earlier, Muslims decided to enter digital space almost from the beginning of the dawn of the Internet, envisaging a virtual *Ummah*, an idealized unified Muslim community with believers who have access to their sacred texts, join online communities, participate in their sectarian-building Muslim identity via social
media such as, Twitter and Facebook, and even develop a platform of their own view and against the views of “apostates” - disbelievers (Varisco, 2009, p. 158). This variety of Muslims Internet users, members of a broader digital world community, propagates different religious narratives while still be in the same Muslim community sphere. Besides the extremists who use digital platforms for propaganda speech, the majority of Muslims, especially the younger generation, incorporates Internet into their life in order to spread the Islamic faith or to talk about Islam.

Benker (2006) as well as Bruns et al. (2011) have recognized virtual Ummah as the “networked public sphere”, while Campbell (2012) identifies it as “Networked religion” where she finds five distinct features- networked community, storied identities, shifting authority, convergent practice, and a multisite reality. However, Al- Rawi (2016, p. 21) argues in his review of literature on virtual Ummah, Gitling (1998) has asserted that the virtual Islamic Ummah is not present or unified, it is rather divided in separate online communities which he named as public sphericules resulting in propagating fundamentalist views from both sides (Cunninham et al. 2000).

In our research, we will see that new media played an important role in the construction of Ummah- narrative communication pattern. The emergence of the virtual Ummah is the main objective of both Dabiq and islam today by using religion as a tool. In the following section of this thesis, there will be presented the analysis and results of the research.
CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH

3.1. Methodology

This research will examine the magazines *islam-today* (Issues 1-28) and *Dabiq* (Issues 1-15) and its messaging-content regarding the re-defining of Ummah. The focus of the magazines is twofold, not only do they appeal to English-speaking Muslims around the globe but also they address the Muslim community by providing a sense of belonging, each one through its communication strategy. The study will present and analyze the communication patterns used by both *islam-today* and *Dabiq* in order to shape the Muslim identity, “consciousness” and authority through Islamic religious and social values. From a mainstream magazine, *islam-today*, whose definitions of community combine a more modern interpretation of Islam with aspirations of the modern world, to the extreme magazine and conservative voice of Islam, *Dabiq*, where we find the Islamist framework of Muslim community in an effort to act and organize in the name of Islamic faith and devotion to God calls for action. Although we do not want to compare and contrast the development of these two magazines in order to find similarities in their communication background, we do see the similar narratives that religion is applied as a tool subject to many uses and effects.

According to *islam-today’s* editorial message, the magazine addresses the concerns and aspirations of modern Muslim life by offering its audience solutions to their problems through its unique and dynamic content. The decision to name the magazine *islam-today* in small letters instead of the capital “I” refers to the actual need of believers to show submission to God, and also the word “today” wishes to point out to the present by presenting a contemporary understanding of the world today while aspiring to build a future through faith. Therefore, we expect to see a lot of religious references in their content. The magazine’s publication started in November 2012 and since today it counts 68 issues by proposing a wide range of contents such as articles, reports, interviews.

*Dabiq* has started its publications since the establishment of the *Khalifah* on June 29th, 2014, Daesh (Islamic State) al-Hayat Media Center published it as an online magazine to legitimize its politico-military activities towards others. The selection of the name, *Dabiq*, has played a vital role in Daesh’s ideology, *Dabiq* has symbolic meaning for the Islamic heritage since it is the village in the Northwest Syria where,
according to a *hadith*\(^2\), a battle with apocalyptic significance will take place between Muslims and their enemies before the Romans’ defeat at Constantinople\(^3\). In almost every issue of the magazine, we observe excerpts from *hadiths* that give prominence to certain religious dimensions resulting in eschatological triggers in an effort to bring historical frames to the presents.

This dissertation will use narrative analysis as the basic theoretical orientation to examine the nuances of both magazines messaging as to shape perceptions of *Ummah* using it as a mechanism to appeal to its readership and to empower its narrative.

The narrative approach enables the social research to examine and analyze how the nature of the research process is socially constructed and the importance of the “stories” as to construct the identity of the narrator. The narrative analysis is a part of the *social constructionist* framework that provides us with the knowledge of diverse approaches of the understanding of both the production and the analysis of qualitative data (Earth and Cronin: 2008).

According to Rosenweld and Ochberg, the focus point of the narrative analysis moves from the realist look of the “story telling” to the role it plays in the social construction of identity. That is to say, we shift from the “what” to the “how” a narrator or a medium tells the story. Instead of concentrating on the realist approach of stories, we focus on the *content* of a story/narrative and its constructed nature, that is, its *form* (Earth and Cronin: 2008). As far as the *content* of a narration is concerned, we observe the following frame. On the one hand, the content of a story/narrative may include piece of information that does not provide a certain value, this kind of content is called *surface content*. On the other hand, the content of a story/narrative may include a value content with underlying meanings such as the motives or intentions of the narrator, the symbolism of certain items used etc. Regarding the *form*, we focus on aspects related to the construction of the messaging, the sequence of events, and the use of language (Earth and Cronin, 2008).

\(^2\) According to Britannica: Hadith (“News” or “Story”) record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, revered and received as a major source of religious law and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Qur’an, the holy book of Islam. It might be defined as the biography of Muhammad perpetuated by the long memory of his community for their exemplification and obedience. The development of Hadith is vital element during the first three centuries of Islamic history, and its study provides a broad index to the mind and ethos of Islam. [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hadith](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hadith)

Language has significance in several ways, since the choice of words may transform a specific meaning in the analyzing process, it is essential to set a framework. Therefore, this research will begin by establishing the following distinct criteria:

1. The frequency of religious items, such as excerpts from Qur’an and hadiths in the messaging.
2. The frequency of plea to Muslim Ummah in their speech.
3. The use of Islamic history as a tool to frame their messaging.
5. The use of narratives related to Islamic values and norms.

In this section of the thesis we will try to explore the communication strategy of both magazines through narrative analysis with qualitative method approach as a means to understand their communication outline and how this reflects on the perception of Ummah targeting not only Muslims but also Western societies. The aim of the research is on one hand, to analyze the “ummatic” narrative in the mainstream Muslim magazine published in London islam-today, and on the other hand, in the ISIS’s propaganda online magazine Dabiq. In short, studying the magazines, we might acquire a better understanding of each magazine’s reflection of Ummah. Also, this study does not focus on islam-today and Dabiq rather it seeks to explore each other’s narratives of the same religious concept, the Ummah. Another relevant factor is to examine the differences between islam-today and Dabiq, because the dissimilarities could work as an indicator for a proper understanding of their ulterior motive. This knowledge could also be beneficial for further research projects on how the perception of Ummah is being reflected by traditional media and new media. Therefore, we study exclusively the written documents, which include 15 issues of Dabiq (from July 2014 to July 2016) and 68 issues of islam-today (from November 2012 to March 2019). The magazines are available and accessible to everyone on the internet. However, some editions were not easy to find.
Research Questions:

1. Do the magazines *islam-today* and *Dabiq* create a sense of belonging to all Muslims through an “ummatic” narrative?
2. How is the concept of Ummah developed in relation to the magazines’ narratives?

Hypothesis:

1. This research proposes that it is important to acknowledge the role of Islam in societal activities of the believers in order for us to understand the gradual alteration of the Ummah from a religious concept to a societal phenomenon and thus the way that it is communicated.
2. Therefore, the concept of Ummah, which embrace the Islamic Unity, can be conceded as a translocal society with unified aspirations.
3.2. Dabiq

3.2.1. The beginning and evolution of Dabiq

Dabiq is an extremist English-speaking online magazine produced by Islamic State (IS) also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Having started in July 2014, Dabiq was one of the main means of ISIS’s communication while being the organization’s official flagship English-speaking propaganda magazine. According to the literature on ISIS’s communication strategy, halt of its publication and its shift to Rumiyah is considered as a sign that proves that ISIS’s media is being forced to change its strategy. The examination of the reasons that lead to this shifting narrative is crucial to understand the organization’s purpose, therefore, in the following paragraphs we will try to present an overview of the literature.

In particular, from a media perspective, Comerford (2016) speculates that ISIS changed the name of the magazine (from Dabiq to Rumiyah) in an effort to give emphasis on the virtual unifying caliphate rather than the physical one, given the loss of the city, Dabiq. According to him, the ISIS’s fighters have denied to fight for the lands of Iraq and Syria, and thus the physical image of the caliphate has been abandoned, resulting in its virtual idea again, likewise the view by al-Qaeda.

Also, Siyech (2016, p. 26) affirms that “since IS’s short-sighted and self-defeating strategies, it will not be long before its state-building project crumbles”. The Research Analyst goes a little further to his analysis, stating that although, ISIS’s recruitment numbers are undergoing a crisis, from 2,000 recruits every month, the number has declined to fewer than 50, it is still early to think of its end yet “while the group will lose its territory in Iraq and Syria, its capacity to conduct attacks in Iraq and elsewhere will not be diminished”. He argues that IS’ alliances will continue helping its recruitment, and also the media propaganda will keep disseminate extremist Islamist messages. Johnson also, asserts that ISIS operations had authority over a third of Iraq, and a third of Syria having control more than 9 million people at the end of 2014, but its expansion had declined, losing 22 per cent of that territory by March, 2016 (Wignell et al, 2017, p. 9). These observations in conjunction with the transition of Dabiq’s communication narrative prove that ISIS uses media narrative for propaganda incorporating theological ideas based on Islam.

Moreover, Shanahan (2016) recommends that the re-naming addressed to Western readers after the seizure of the town Dabiq (2016) by Turkish forces, given the fact that Dabiq magazine took its name from the titular town “would not be a good
look ‘going forward’”. Spada (2016) finds similarities between Dabiq and Rumiyah in certain features such as the photographic style that is more familiar to the Western target group. On the other hand, Pragalath (2016) states that Dabiq had extended goals so as to propagate ISIS’s ideology, however, Rumiyah aims more on present missions. Furthermore, Friedland indicates that “ISIS has switched away from Dabiq in favor of an easier to read, less theological magazine” (Wignell et al., 2017, p. 3).

The apocalyptic message behind the choice of magazine name, Dabiq, continued to be present in all its issues, not only the symbolism of the Prophet Mohammad prophecy figured in the magazine’s name, but also the quotation of ISIS’s chief, Abu Mus’ab az-Zarqawi: “The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify – by Allah’s permission- until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq” has been introduced through all its editions. In an effort to explain the replacement of Islam State News (ISN) and Islamic State Report (ISR) by the new magazine, Dabiq, ISIS proceeded with this quote: “After a review of some of the comments received on the first issues of the two first magazines, and, Al Hayat Media Center decided to carry on the effort – in sha’allah- into a periodical magazine focusing on issues of tawhid (monotheism), manhaj (methodology), hijrah (migration), jihad (struggle) and jama’ah (organisation).” (Haroro J. Ingram, 2018, p.11).

From this quotation appeared only in issue 1, we can understand that Dabiq frames its contents with religious terminology of the Islamic faith, in an attempt to provide the essentials for the conceptual understanding of Ummah. It suggests that the Ummah should be transformed into a social concept with religious practices. Moreover, the audience is reminded of the sacred essence and the immense apocalypse through all the issues of Dabiq, since there is always a quote in the final pages of the magazine that illustrates an excerpt from hadiths striving to bring historical narratives to the present.

As far as the religious terms are concerned, according to Widhiyoga (2017) hijrah, in particular, has the meaning of abandoning or separating oneself from their roots (Masud, 1990, p. 30; Abu-Shahlieh, 1996, p. 37). As stated previously, hijrah is not only a term with religious essence, according to the Islamic history, it set the establishment of a new society in Medina by the Prophet Mohammad after His call, therefore, it is considered as a religious duty of believers and Companions of the Prophet with societal practices. Mohammad established a new society in Medina
based on Islamic values regardless of believers/companions origin across Arabia. In order to take part on this “mission” and to perform *hijrah* it needed the person to utterly abandon his or her “allegiance, attachment and deference from the tribe and transformed it to *Ummah*” (Widhiyoga, 2017, p. 207). That is to say, the followers of Mohammad believed in His Divine message and decided to join His transition to Medina leaving behind any connection with their tribe. Donner (1999) states that the establishment of the first Muslim *Ummah* in Medina is “Islam’s long life as a political force” (Widhiyoga, 2017, p. 207). In other words, we understand that *Ummah* was not only a religious expression, but it had gradually been projected as well as a political action. Despite of the spiritual connection between the members of the community, we know that the *Ummah* is not extended in a certain territorial basis, but it is based on Muslims “consciousness” through religious submission to God, while this “consciousness” recognizes *Ummah* as translocal interaction. Indeed, *hijrah* (migration) illustrated through *Dabiq*’s editions, reminds us the way that the Qur’anic verses described *Ummah*: that it is a group/society of people rather a local community of a certain territorial area. We will cite an example of a verse of the Qur’an that conveys the real sense of *hijrah* (Widhiyoga, 2017, p. 208):

> And whoever immigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many (alternative) locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him – his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.

*Sura 4 al-Nisa’ (The Women)* verse 100.

3.2.2 *Dabiq*’s publications

In this section, we will analyze the narratives used in *Dabiq* in order to present its religio-political ideology that promotes extremism, and its changes through its issues, via qualitative approach. According to the magazine’s communication design, we distinguish three types of items: *articles, statements*, and *advertisements*. *Dabiq* seems to have a range of themes in articles as to shape the perceptions and to increase its readership’s support while framing itself as the protector of Muslim Sunni faith. Its articles were the longer type of reporting, and often related to cover story, with relevant images to their topic reflecting extremist values and obligations of the
followers, mainly Muslims. The main focus of articles was on events, opinions or pieces with mixed historical and contemporary context. Statements were shorter written pieces that consisted of historical or contemporary content. Last but not least, the advertisements contained shorter statements that often featured excerpts from religious texts followed by pertinent images (Wignell et al, 2017, pp. 5-6; Ingram, 2016, p. 10). We prefer to analyze the core message of the publications with *Ummah*-based narratives on the selective thematic areas established by our criteria rather than present the narratives of each publication one by one.

**Dabiq 1-5 (July 2014- October 2014)**

From *Dabiq 1* to *Dabiq 5*, we observe that the main focus is on the establishment of a new caliphate which would preserve the importance of *Ummah* via *hijrah* (migration) to Syria, Iraq or against the West and its allies. This framing aims to polarize the radicalization of the magazine’s audience and to consolidate ISIS’s power over the “caliphate” within and outside its territorial area (the Levant). In addition, through the issues 3 and 4, the magazine wants to emphasize on foreign fighters calls in order for them to join the community, that is to say, the performance of *hijrah* is imperative illustrated as the ultimate obligation of all “true” Muslims. In particular, *Dabiqs 4-5* feature the section titled “Islamic State Reports” to stress the ISIS’s successful military operations across Syria, Iraq as well as its rising translocal influence in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Dabiq 7 (February 2015)**

In this issue, it becomes evident that the magazine hopes for new recruits, it adds new sections in order to attract new fighters/members into its governance, such as: “From the Pages of History” its narrative is to bring historical parallels to the present, “Among the Believers are Men” focusing on ISIS’s fighters as heroes who are not reluctant to confess their faith based on ISIS’s religious framing and “To Our Sisters” calling for ISIS’s female audience (Ingram, 2018, p. 13). In accordance with Ingram’s observations, we assume that *Dabiq 7* is the most crucial issue for the magazine’s evolution, given the open calling to new members. Western Muslims are mainly the target of this new communication structure.
Later issues, *Dabiq 8-14* (March 2015 - April 2016)

Through these issues, we observe the new style and strategic plan of *Dabiq*. We can see that there are longer written and multi-part articles, “cross-promotional” (Ingram, 2018, p. 13) advertisements of recent and upcoming propaganda messaging that might contribute to the ISIS’s efficacy and governance initiatives over time. Furthermore, it is clear that its focal point is the establishment of a transnational community, especially regarding Western Muslims since the English-speaking Muslims are still its primary target group. Through *Dabiq 11* (September 2015) we can state that the death of Mullah Omar caused the ISIS’s need to re-shape the new *Ummah* and to acquire its leadership, this is relevant to what happened with the Prophet Mohammad’s leadership in the past. After Mohammad’s death, a subsequent question of succession became the most important matter throughout the early times of Islam, in an effort to keep the community (*Ummah*) united. Instead, Islam was divided into two main branches, each claiming of saving the “pure” Islamic spirituality. Since then, the division of Ummah was challenging its unity. Sunni and Shia’s followers were in eternal conflict, this conflict, however, does not seem to set barriers in *Dabiq’s* narratives, which understands *Ummah* party united.

In *issue 13* (January 2016) however, it is clearly seen that the conflict between Sunni and Shiite faith is one of the main themes, the magazine contends against Shi’ism in the name of Shiite religious transgression and conspiracies (Azman, 2016, p. 5). In reference to *Dabiq 14* (April 2016) we notice that it offers a “competitive system of messaging” (Ingram, 2016, p. 2) condemning alternative religio-political narratives, such as Muslim Brotherhood, works of prominent imams and scholars, providing its own Islamic view, which works as a means to ensure its message. Ingram’s research on *Dabiq’s* radical narratives states that its “design suggests value-dichotomy and crisis-reinforcing narrative among its followers as to achieve rational and identity choices appeals to its readership” (Ingram, 2016). For the first time, we observe that the magazine recognizes the division among Muslims, this feature has both religious and ideological dimensions. On the one hand, this recognition considers the idea of one *Ummah* imposed by the Caliphate, as an exclusive concept. On the other hand, Dabiq turns against religion-political alternatives with deep ideological background relevant to ISIS.
Dabiq 15 (July 2016)

In the final issue, there is less reporting regarding the caliphate’s expansion since there is a loss of over 40 per cent of its territorial area. To that end, Dabiq shifts again its communication tactic towards foreign audience from the rest of the world. Likewise, this alteration is a reflection of its politico-military decline. By providing various images from the battle field or from terrorist attacks, Dabiq aims to inspire others to become partakers of its ideology, as well as to fight against the “disbelievers” and “apostates”. We have mentioned earlier that Dabiq not only turns against the Christians and Jews who consider them as “disbelievers”, but also it fights against Muslims who do not correspond to ISIS’s religious perception of Islamic values. The central message of this issue is the purification of ISIS’s militants that fuses identity-choice appeal to followers who have already distorted image of Islam today.

Before continue further our analysis and discuss its results, it is important to examine ISIS’s propaganda narrative as to have a better understanding of its magazine’s structure. According to Schmid’s article providing arguments to counter the twelve IS’s claims used in its propaganda, we can argue that the organization provides to its readership the notion of a “pure” Islam by using a religious and historical framework (Schmid, 2015). Creating historical parallels to the present, ISIS calls for hijrah to highlight that the Muslim community (Ummah) can only be established by sword that is violence. Indeed, the performance of hijrah was historically the primary step to join the Muslim Ummah since the era of Prophet Muhammad; however, it is promoted by ISIS as the basis for further degradation of certain concepts appeared in the Qur'an. In an effort to gain legitimacy through historical practices, ISIS hopes to imitate to a small degree what Prophet Muhammad once did in order to appeal to followers for the establishment of the Muslim community, however, it provides both historically and religiously a divergent version of Islam. Hijrah is believed as a necessary requirement in order to enter in Muslim Ummah, a religious obligation to unify all Muslims. ISIS encourages the “holy war” being reflected by jihad as to separate the “believers”, from “hypocrites”, and “unbelievers”. Schmid questions the authenticity of certain Qur’anic verses and hadiths relevant to this violent process, arguing that if Ummah is only established through a ruthless process, it will lead to “resentment and resistance among those
coerced into the correct belief – something that cannot be conductive to establishing a harmonious community” (Schmid, 2015, p. 8-9).

As far as the narratives related to Islamic values are concerned, Dabiq gives us a number of examples that prove its attachment to this type of propaganda method. We assume that it aims to create a cultural norm through religious means, that is, relevant to Islamic morals. In accordance with Simons (2016, p. 4), the role of culture is prominent in a society providing the basic forms of the “social glue” to unify the community through expressing and perceiving meaning, principles, norms, values, traditions, beliefs and rules (Matusitz, 2013, pp. 145-146). In other words, culture describes the way people should live their lives.

In this regard, we notice that the individuals are being presented as heroes who fight for the maintenance of Islamic values, defending the religious ideal for the unity of the Muslim community. Therefore, the conflicts and armed attacks are interpreted as a need of the individual for the ultimate and moral virtue of the whole community. However, we see that IS uses an ambiguous narrative, on the one hand, its followers/fighters are being illustrated as the only ones defending the “pure Islam”, something that expresses a sense of loneliness against the West and its allies, and, on the other hand, they look determined, righteous and just having all the means to fight against the Western “evil”.

3.3. Islam today

3.3.1. The beginning and evolution of Islam today

The magazine is published by the Islamic Center of England and it aims to provide spiritual guidance for the Muslim community across the world, as well as hopes to cater for the social, cultural, educational needs of the members of the community through its variety of articles and reports. One of the main objectives of Islam today is to spread authentic knowledge about Islam and to give a further understanding of Muslim faith and history to non-Muslims. It hopes to build bridges within the Muslim world and establish closer bond between people of different beliefs and cultures around the globe. The religious and social affairs are two of the magazine’s main features in order to establish the concept of a unity within the Muslim community and between Muslims and non-Muslims. The magazine provides the counter-media narrative of Islam and Muslims by praising the role of Muhammad.
in Islamic History and Culture as a distinguished prophet, statesman, and reformer. The magazine’s narrative attempts to embrace all Muslims around the world regardless of their ethnicity. Through its editions we come across articles of different ethnic groups and cultural background while Islam and Muslim faith are considered a common wisdom.

3.3.2. Islam today’s publications

*Islam today* presents to the readers several sections of human interests such as: life and community issues, art, politics, interfaith, science and health. All its sections and articles are based on Muslim, mainly Shi’a, guidance that claims the promotion of right and justice in the world. This is relevant to the fact that its writers are both men and women and are not exclusively Muslims; this could be interpreted as a communication strategy to break stereotypes that promote anti-Muslim myths and labels to individuals and groups. In covering events and reporting news, the magazine aims to do it so in an ethical and a faith-based framework.

Since its initial publication in 2012 the form and contents of the magazine have changed several times throughout the years. From an Islamic-based, mainstream, monthly magazine, it became a Shi’a-oriented, online, bi-monthly magazine, and it shifted from a multi-thematic to a religious Shi’a medium. In addition to this, its length started with 68 pages and now it counts only 28 pages, as far as the advertisements, we notice that these began to make their appearance in its latest editions with an absolute Shia vision of Islam and the world. A lot of its sections do not exist anymore, except from the following: interfaith, art, and health.

In the following paragraphs we will try to present the analysis of its publications year by year, highlighting certain themes and stories that keep the central focus of the magazine:

**Issues 1-2, November-December 2012**

The focal points of the first two issues are the significance of the Unity of all faiths and the exceptional figure of the Prophet Muhammad. The emphasis of the concept of an interfaith dialogue introduces the idea of peaceful coexistence within Islam while promoting the unity of people from different religious background. In an effort to establish Islam’s credibility, as well as to inspire both the Muslims and non-Muslims, the current issues feature, also, the life of Muhammad to highlight his
extraordinary qualities as a charismatic person and amplify his capacities as a religious leader. These two central topics aim to provide a better understanding of Islam to the world targeting certain media propaganda narratives against Islam. Another theme that is present even from the first year of the magazine appearance is the historical throwbacks relevant to Islamic history regarding, specifically, concepts such as “Orientalism” and (post) Colonialism so as to mention the long-term connection of Islam with the West.

**Issues 3-14, January-December 2013**

Throughout its second year, the magazine has put emphasis on a variety of themes. In regard to the concept of a united community, the narratives show a small shift to the Shi’a faction of Islam. According to this year’s first editions, the third Shi’a Imam, Husayn, is illustrated as a key source of spiritual inspiration for the Muslims. He represents the resistance against unjust authority as well as provides a framework for the suffering everywhere, therefore, his life and martyrdom have a symbolic meaning for Islamic and Shi’a history. On the contrary, the annual Hajj (pilgrim) of millions Muslim in Makah referred to another pan-Islamic ritual, shows Muslims’ devotion to Islamic Unity without fractions. We understand that the magazine hopes to keep the pan-Islamic narrative, but it cannot distance itself from its Shi’a affiliations. However, the magazine’s tendency to distinguish the West from the Islamic history, and also the Western media perception of Islam from the Islamic reality itself, continues to create a dichotomous narrative, prominent in magazine’s communication. Finally, the supremacy of Islamic values over Western civilization is depicted through the magazine’s calls for Islamic Education. The plea for an education depended on Islamic heritage is a new narrative appeared in the latest issues of this year.

**Issues 15-24, January-December 2014**

In 2014, the magazine presented the spiritual vision of Islam in its rituals, leaving the political and societal aspect out of its narratives. In an effort to analyze the recent migration issue, *Islam today* tried to interpret it from an Islamic perspective beginning its spiritual guidance from the concept of *Hijrah* (immigration) performed by the first Muslims who followed Muhammad’s steps to Medina symbolizing the Muslim duty to remain true and sincere to his faith. Therefore, Islam is used as a
method of interpretation of current sociopolitical challenges. In addition to this, the Danish ban on Islamic ritual Slaughtering (halal slaughter) leaves and open legal window for further invasion to Muslim rituals and it can affect the Muslim community. Another theme appeared during this year’s publications is the issue of spiritual leadership within the Muslim community. In several articles, the need of a good leadership with the qualities similar to Muhammad’s is more than urgent. The magazine stresses, also, the recent problem of extremist Islam dominating in the Islamic Middle East regarding groups’ or individuals’ claims of performing the “pure” Faith. In an effort to save the Islamic Faith and solve the problems of misinterpretation of Islamic narratives, it is suggested by the magazine that the establishment of Islamic Education infiltrated by Muslim Shi’a values is more than ever before required. In the middle of the year, the magazine moves forward to the digital form of its publication producing its issues every two months. The politics section is replaced by faith and interfaith or community issues, which makes its shift to religious content consistent. Its transition to an online magazine would explain its content changes, as well.

**Issues 25-30, January-December 2015**

The narratives of these publications are similar to the ones of previous editions. The replacement of certain sections by the new ones with religious-oriented content gives us similar storytelling framework. However, it is evident that the magazine wishes to differentiate itself from the international media narratives whose content is constructed on the negative perception of Muslim community threatening the Muslim identity. According to the magazine the counter narrative to this is the spiritual commitment and ritual engagement to Islamic tradition.

**Issues 31-64, 2016-2018**

Since 2016, *islam today* has changed its style and content adding new sections: “Conference”, “Reports”, to name a few. During these two years, it initiates a wide range of advertisements regarding the Shi’a of Islam. The conference and reports sections address issues related to Shi’a cover, aiming to inform the audience about its collective actions while providing an educational background. In relation to this, the spiritual direction of the second and the third generation of British Muslims are being paid a lot of attention mainly due to the development of extremist Islam.
It becomes apparent that the magazine’s content begun its publications with the same layout but in certain cases it presented a small divergence from its initial design. However, it started being in the form of news showing a variety of a diverse thematic content related to Muslims interests within the Islamic heritage or in current social issues. During its third year of its media presence shifted to religious-based content with few social and political references. That is, it is used to be a Muslim mainstream mass media magazine that provided pluralistic content covering several aspects of Muslims’ life rather an educational magazine aiming on the spiritual and moral guideline of Muslims. This would be explained by the fact that the younger generations prefer the new media as the latter give them the opportunity to have more interaction in comparison with the traditional version of mainstream.

Faith and interfaith reports are still prominent features almost in every edition of this two-year period, providing a common ground for inter-religious dialogue that would bridge the gap between Muslims and other religions. Additionally, the magazine shows a lot of initiatives by giving voice to Muslim scholars who specialize either in faith issues or interfaith practices so as to promote future dialogues between different faiths. Beside this, the Sunni and Shi’a issues are mentioned under the umbrella of religious brotherhood, that is, the magazine understands their divergence hoping to find solutions by providing routes of communication.

Despite the variety of narratives based on the analysis, *islam today* has shown several transformations in both style and content. In 2012, it begun as an Islamic mainstream magazine giving voice to moderate Islam, while throughout the years it altered its content inclined to Shi’a narrative. In the middle of 2014, the magazine changed completely its structure by excluding certain sections associated with politics, resulting in a religious-oriented magazine. Moreover, it turned from a traditional magazine into online reducing its length (from 68 to 28 pages), and its publications from monthly to bi-monthly.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE RESULTS

Our study comprises a narrative analysis of Dabiq and islam today through qualitative method approach to explore their Ummah- narrative construction including features related to religious items, faith belief, history, and background. The major aim of this thesis is to provide the communication strategy used by both magazines regarding Ummah representations. Through the exploration of both magazines’ narratives, we could get a better understanding of how the Muslim community (Ummah) is being projected by mainstream and new media. At this point, it is necessary to clarify that our intent was not to compare a mainstream magazine with moderate Islamic voice with a propaganda magazine with controlled message by the editors of ISIS’s organization. Therefore, we understand that Dabiq cannot be analyzed any further than a propaganda item. Nevertheless, what consists an interesting point of this research is how different narratives of the same religious and social concept are being formed, for instance the Ummah- narrative construction.

According to a research on evaluating the content of Islamic websites based on a number of criteria, “a medium whose main purpose is to promote Islamic awareness through the teaching of Prophet Muhammad in accordance with the Islamic culture is called an Islamic medium” (Murni et al., 2012). Thus, the content of both magazines includes Islamic narratives and their aim or the one of any other medium with an Islamic affiliated content, is to use the Internet as a means of communication for building their relationship between the political, social affiliations, and religious identity. The relationship between the magazines and their audiences is to provide guidance in both spiritual and social level in accordance with the Islamic tradition. It is true that the “Islamic communication”, via the magazines’ different communication techniques, used the new forms of media to establish a connection between people of different beliefs even within the so called “global, uniform Islamic community”, in an effort to create the basis for a religious reform that will, in turn, unify all Muslims from all around the world.

In the beginning of our methodology, we provided five key criteria so that the research would highlight the Ummah-based narratives of both mainstream and online media. The established criteria emphasize on different thematic areas such as, the use of Islam through Qur'anic reference, Ummah-based narratives, Islamic historical narratives, Islamic interpretation of current challenges, and Islamic values and norms.
4.1. DABIQ:

According to the qualitative narrative approach, we identify the following narrative structure through all the issues of the magazine, from 2014 to 2016:

(i) The importance of *Ummah* and *hijrah* (migration) as the ultimate objectives of the Muslim faith via religious vocabulary to preach the emergence of Muslim revival

(ii) Anger over humiliation of Islamic historical events and alternative perception of Islamic tradition

(iii) Desire to fight against the West and its allies, as well as the anti-ISIS’s religious representation, given both of them degrade Islamic values

(iv) Expansion of the “caliphate” via religio-political and military operations in the name of ‘Allah’ and his prophet ‘Muhammad’

(v) Desire to provide theological order due to gradual social and political decadence

*Dabiq* generated a number of narratives irrelevant to the religion, forming a new anti-Muslim view to people with questionable religious identity. In this case the Internet enables the online ISIS magazine to provide content outside of Muslim contextualization, as well as to initiate counter-narratives for Muslims as an alibi for the revival of *Ummah*.

We realize that the magazine emphasizes on Islam and religious absolute terms, as well as on historical narratives almost in every issue, which is the key communication pattern of its propaganda narratives relevant of what we know of ISIS. That is to say, ISIS in combination with its media propaganda, illustrated by *Dabiq*, interpret selectively Islam and Islamic texts in their distorted version as to appeal groups of people with limited or in several cases with zero understanding of religion. The Qur'anic excerpts with strong religious and historical background are used as a key source in recruitment of young Muslim Westerns who believe ISIS’s claims as the only real interpreter of the Prophet’s message and Muslim faith.

We infer that its basic message is centered to create and amplify the perception of crisis on both social and religious level. While portraying ISIS as the only one with true Sunni Muslim faith who can provide the unity to the community (*Ummah*). Through its publications we show a certain variety of themes, however,
these themes were highlighted over others due to ISIS’s communication targets, hoping to shape its followers’ perception of religion and community.

4.2. ISLAM TODAY:

The magazine treats a lot of concepts related to either Islamic faith or history. Themes relevant to the projection of Muslim community (Ummah) are perceptible throughout all the years, from 2012 to 2018, showing different narratives via its publications. According to narrative analysis and qualitative approach, we have noticed the following structures:

(i) The need of a united Muslim community (Ummah) within the divided Islam is more than ever before urgent, on account of the extremist Islamic threat

(ii) The value-based narrative, mainly on Islamic Shia, providing the concept of justice, as well as the spiritual cultivation to the new Muslim generations

(iii) The ritual-based narrative aiming at the active participation in Islamic rituals

(iv) The Islamic history-based narrative, as a means to analyze current Muslim issues

(v) The dichotomy-based narrative between Western and Islamic culture

We believe that islam today took advantage of its online publication to disseminate religious, social, and legal narratives via Internet representing the mainstream Islamic voice. Also, its case is a unique example of Muslim-Western medium that moved forward to online after nearly two-year printed publication in order to expand its audience and spread broadly Islamic content.

When analyzing the islam today’s narratives of the first years’ issues, one could get the impression that the Ummah is an actual unity with globally spread, interconnecting and dynamic networks, as well as nearly homogeneous community. However, we know that this media representation of Ummah does not correspond with reality, since the eternal differences within Islam prescribe its division. As a result, the concept of Ummah, as it is being illustrated through the magazine’s pages, during the next years, is being portrayed as a normative concept used to impose a specific idea and vision of the Ummah. This idea is based mainly on Shi’a common values, since we know the magazine’s affiliation with Shi’a Islam. Moreover, according to its editorial note, the publication of the magazine projects a modern
vision of Islamic Faith “opposing extremist and exclusivist attitudes”, by contrast, *Dabiq* reflects the conservative voice of Islam akin to fundamentalism.

**Similarities**

Besides the different frames of both narrative systems, we observe certain similarities between the magazines which explain that the Islamic-based media narrative whether it is printed or online, identify the religious aspect as its flagship. *Dabiq* and *islam today* cover the same concepts, using religion as their tool to produce each one its content. The religious messages aim to awake religious sentiments of the believers. This connection is inevitable, as both magazines hope the rise of Muslim community (*Ummah*).

However, it is surprising, since both magazines have a different religious background. *Dabiq* is the media of ISIS organization with Salafist affiliations, whereas *islam today* is a moderate Islam with Shi’a alliance. It is obvious that when it comes to propagation of religious content by Muslims regardless of their background, their intent is to disseminate the Islamic Faith. Indeed, both magazines claim that the emergence of a global *Ummah* is important, ignoring, however, the significance of unity in the Muslim *Ummah*. *Ummah* is not a simple concept of unity; on the contrary it has many implications to several aspects of religious, social, political and economic sphere.

Also, both magazines seem to refer to the spiritual connection within the community as a symbolic concept. This is another paradox emerging from the magazine’s communication strategy. Although they realize the division within the Muslim community, the idea of one *Ummah* remains active, especially regarding its Islamic values and cultural norms. Their common Islamic heritage including religious, cultural, and political practices is the main factor that separates them from the rest of the world. The latter will lead us to the following similarity which provides the ‘Islamic VS Western’ narrative.

Both *Dabiq* and *islam today*, encourage dichotomy-narratives against the West, this narrative is reinforced by the plea of Islamic ethics over Western societies. They portray the West as the “enemy” of the Islamic culture, while at the same time they suggest the unity of the *Ummah* as an alternative world community.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This section of the thesis consists of two parts. The first part will discuss the method applied in the thesis and the second part will look at the results with a critical eye.

5.1. The method

Narrative analysis in conjunction with qualitative method is a frequently approach to explore texts. The fact that qualitative narrative is still being used in social research after a long time means that the method is effective. The use of qualitative methods gives us information for people’s lives in order for the researchers to understand the meaning that people attach to their experiences. The narrative analysis is quite flexible in its use. Accordingly, there is no one right way to conduct a narrative analysis.

Furthermore, it is a descriptive method which focuses on the ‘how’ question rather the ‘what’ question. For this reason, narrative analysis is the appropriate method to explore the understanding how and why people hope to discuss about their lives as a story. This factor reveals also the underlying identities of people, as well as the interaction between the narrator and the audience.

5.2. Results

There are certain points of discussion associated with the results of the research. To start with, the thesis’s initial aim was to examine the Ummah-narrative across two different media, between Dabiq and islam today. Therefore, the underlying plan is to compare the media narrative of a new media propaganda magazine, Dabiq and a traditional mainstream magazine, islam today. However, these narratives cannot be understood without the religious agent, and thus, one should be careful about his or her analysis of certain situations to highlight the differences between the organizations behind the magazines.

To clarify, Dabiq is a propaganda magazine, which means that the content of the magazine is established by the authors of the magazine to propagate messages related to ISIS’s ideology to its readers. For instance, the Ummah-narrative in Dabiq’s strategy aims to present the need of one community to be accommodated to caliphate’s territory. Also, the caliphate is described as a safe territorial area with
religious references, in order to persuade the readers to perform *hijrah*. However, the real concept of the caliphate is based on the distorted image of Islam rather than the intended representation of it by ISIS. Nonetheless, this propaganda narrative does not consist an important barrier for the thesis. To explain, our analysis is not related to whether or not the story of the magazine matches with the reality, because this thesis is centered on the messages themselves.

Another challenge for the thesis is the different explanations of the same religious concepts. For example, both *Ummah*- narrative and *Muhammad*- narrative are concepts that occur in *Dabiq* and *islam today*. Yet, the concepts have different dimensions. In particular, when *Dabiq* refers to the *Ummah*, the organization means the army of believers and not the actual Muslims. Whereas, when *islam today* mentions or even in cases implies the concept of *Ummah*, it refers to the Muslim community of Muhammad. The same case is when both *Dabiq* and *islam today* talk about Muhammad, they refer to him from different directions. The only point of their *Muhammad*- narrative which is in common, is its representation as a charismatic leader with divine message.

Lastly, the analysis between *Dabiq* and *islam today* made in this dissertation is quite limited in terms of the exclusivity of the research on five criteria. In order to acquire deeper knowledge of the magazines, one could compare and analyze other subjects, for example, the role of women, the role of Islamic education, the role of the West and to frame their narratives in both magazines. Although, we include these in our research to some extent, we did not analyze them separately rather than as sub-categories of the *Ummah*-narrative construction.
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on the similarities and differences in media discourse of the online propaganda magazine Dabiq and traditional mainstream magazine islam today. The interesting point of this research arose from their Ummah-narrative construction through their pages. We explore each magazine communication technique during the years of their publication, reading the editions of each one as to identify elements of the Ummah-narrative based on our five distinct criteria. The results of this study can contribute to how two different media construct their Ummah-narrative and how they recognize themselves into this narrative. Furthermore, the similarities between the two magazines might be an indicator of how religion is used as a pull-factor to attract people to live and behave in a religious way of living.

So as to analyze the narrative used by these media, a narrative analysis in conjunction with the qualitative approach was conducted. By that means, five different criteria were thoroughly selected on the basis of presence in the magazines. Accordingly, the themes of the criteria were chosen in terms of the Ummah-narrative construction. The five criteria are: the use of Islam through Qur'anic reference, Ummah-based narratives, Islamic historical narratives, Islamic interpretation of current challenges, and Islamic values and norms.

In the communication strategy of Dabiq, the most interesting point related to the five criteria is the use of religious terminology of various terms, such as: hijrah, jihad, jihadi, Mujaheddin, sharia, sunnah etc. The choice of the words aims to justify IS’s military operations. Dabiq uses these words to show an attachment to Qur’anic vocabulary, hoping for the emergence of Muslim revival.

However, the most important message that could be identified in Dabiq regarding the five criteria is that an individual is either with IS or an enemy of IS, which is interpreted as Islamic and un-Islamic respectively, thus means the person must be left out of the Ummah. While, in islam today a person is a true believer when he or she adopts the Shia Islamic faith and values. In both cases, we realize that the concept of Ummah becomes exclusive, which is antithetical to the primary concept of Ummah. Both Dabiq and islam today create new ummahs within Ummah in terms of the ‘Islamic purity’. Nevertheless, Dabiq hopes for the creation of a physical Ummah in the caliphate, whereas islam today wishes for a virtual Ummah without territorial boundaries.
Lastly, another element that is also prominent in both magazines based on the *Ummah*- narrative construction is the dichotomous narrative between the West and the Islamic East. This communication pattern explains again the idea of Muslim *Ummah* formed by Islamic values. Both *Dabiq* and *islam today* realize the long-lasting relationship between these two worlds. It appears difficult for the magazines to overcome the historical events that marked both Islamic and Western worlds. However, the case of *Dabiq* is unique because its target is in particular the USA with which IS has an eternal conflict.


