

# The Role of Da'Wah Institutions in Shaping the Mental Image of Islam: An Evaluation of the Qatar Guest Center Experience

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## Abstract

This study examines the role of da'wah (Islamic outreach) institutions in shaping the mental image of Islam, with particular emphasis on the Qatar Guest Center as an applied model of institutional da'wah. It proceeds from the premise that mental image is a decisive factor in shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors, and that such images are influenced by multiple sources, most notably media representations and personal experiences. The study conceptualizes institutional da'wah as an organized activity grounded in strategic planning and the use of modern communication tools, aimed at presenting Islam in a balanced manner and correcting misconceptions. It further highlights the close relationship between da'wah and mental image formation, demonstrating how outreach efforts influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The paper underscores the role of the Qatar Guest Center through its diverse programs, including multilingual lectures, interactive activities, and digital content, all of which contribute to enhancing accurate understanding of Islam and fostering positive impressions among diverse audiences. The findings indicate that the Center has effectively utilized modern communication tools to reach a broad audience, despite challenges such as negative stereotypes, cultural diversity, and limited resources. The study concludes that enhancing digital content, strengthening partnerships, and developing human capital constitute strategic approaches to improving the effectiveness of institutional da'wah and achieving sustainable impact in shaping a positive global image of Islam.

**Keywords:** Institutional Da'wah, Mental Image of Islam, Islamic Communication, Intercultural Dialogue, Digital Da'wah Strategies

## Introduction

The mental image of Islam has become a central issue in light of rapid global transformations, where perceptions of religions and cultures are increasingly shaped by media and digital communication rather than direct experience. In this context, Muslim societies face multiple

challenges related to correcting misconceptions and promoting an accurate understanding of Islam, particularly amid the widespread circulation of negative stereotypes associating Islam with violence or extremism. Accordingly, da'wah institutions emerge as key actors in presenting a moderate and balanced Islamic discourse that reflects the true values of Islam, such as tolerance, justice, and compassion (Zanati, 2023).

In the modern era, Islamic outreach has evolved from traditional individual efforts into organized institutional work based on strategic planning and contemporary communication tools, enabling engagement with diverse audiences both within and beyond Muslim societies. This study aims to shed light on the role of da'wah institutions in shaping the mental image of Islam through an analysis of the Qatar Guest Center, which represents a distinguished model that combines authenticity in content with modernity in method.

The significance of this study lies in its engagement with an issue of intellectual, cultural, and media dimensions that directly influences intercultural relations and contributes to fostering dialogue and mutual understanding among civilizations and religions. It also seeks to provide a scientific evaluation of the Qatar Guest Center by analyzing its objectives, programs, and strategies, and by assessing its impact on improving perceptions of Islam among target audiences (Al-Qahtani, 2023).

The study is guided by the following central research question: To what extent are da'wah institutions, particularly the Qatar Guest Center, effective in constructing a positive mental image of Islam? This question gives rise to several sub-issues related to the concepts of mental image, institutional da'wah, and mechanisms of influence in the digital age.

### **The Concept of Mental Image and Its Components**

A mental image refers to the general impression or cognitive representation formed in individuals' minds toward a particular subject, whether a person, institution, or religion. It is not merely a set of objective facts but rather a composite of perceptions, emotions, and experiences accumulated over time through exposure to various sources, including media, personal encounters, and social interactions. Mental images play a crucial role in guiding behavior and decision-making by directly influencing attitudes and orientations.

This image consists of three interrelated components. The cognitive component includes the information and knowledge individuals possess about a subject, whether accurate or distorted. The affective component reflects the emotions associated with that subject, such as acceptance or rejection, attraction or aversion. The behavioral component manifests in actions or observable attitudes that reflect the underlying mental image (Al-Busafi, 2024).

In the context of Islam, the mental image among non-Muslims is shaped by multiple sources, including international media, political discourse, and personal interactions with Muslims. Often, this image is distorted due to unbalanced media coverage or the association of Islam with extremist acts, resulting in persistent negative perceptions.

Hence, da'wah efforts play a critical role in correcting these distortions by providing accurate information, highlighting the humanistic dimensions of Islam, and presenting positive models

of Muslim behavior. Building a positive mental image requires addressing all components, cognitive, affective, and behavioral, rather than focusing solely on knowledge dissemination.

### **The Concept of Institutional Islamic Da'wah**

Institutional Islamic da'wah refers to organized efforts undertaken by governmental and non-governmental institutions to present Islam and communicate its teachings through systematically designed plans and strategic frameworks, employing diverse and contemporary methods. It represents a natural progression from traditional individual initiatives to coordinated collective action grounded in structured planning and continuous evaluation.

Such da'wah is characterized by administrative organization, relying on clear institutional structures that define roles and responsibilities, thereby enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. It also depends on strategic planning to identify objectives, target audiences, and appropriate communication methods. Moreover, it is marked by specialization, incorporating qualified personnel in fields such as Islamic studies, media, languages, and intercultural communication (Ahmad, 2026).

Institutional da'wah seeks to achieve multiple objectives, including introducing Islam accurately to non-Muslims, correcting misconceptions, reinforcing Islamic values within societies, and supporting new Muslims in their integration. It also contributes significantly to promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

In the contemporary era, institutional da'wah increasingly relies on digital technologies, including websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications, enabling outreach to global audiences. It also employs modern communication techniques such as storytelling, visual media, and interactive engagement.

Today, da'wah institutions constitute one of the most influential instruments in shaping global Islamic discourse, contributing to the presentation of a balanced image of Islam that reflects its true essence, free from distortion or misrepresentation.

### **The Relationship Between Da'wah and Mental Image Formation**

Islamic da'wah is intrinsically linked to the formation of the mental image of Islam, as it serves as a primary channel through which Islamic concepts and values are communicated. Da'wah is not merely the transmission of information but a communicative process aimed at influencing individuals' perceptions, emotions, and behaviors, thereby reshaping their mental images (Al-Yazidi, 2022).

Its importance lies in its capacity to address negative stereotypes by promoting a balanced discourse centered on shared human values such as justice, tolerance, and compassion. It also contributes to building bridges between cultures and enhancing mutual understanding among peoples.

The effectiveness of da'wah in shaping mental images depends on several factors, including the credibility of the message, the mode of presentation, and its cultural relevance. The

personal conduct of the داعية also plays a crucial role in embodying Islamic values, thereby reinforcing positive influence.

In the digital age, da'wah has gained unprecedented reach, as content can quickly disseminate to millions. However, this also presents challenges, particularly the need for high-quality, professional content tailored to digital audiences (Al-Zuhri, 2020).

#### *Tools of Influence in Da'wah Institutions*

Da'wah institutions employ a range of modern tools to enhance their impact on mental image formation. Chief among these is digital media, including websites and social media platforms, through which diverse content is disseminated to wide audiences.

Multilingual content is another key tool, enabling engagement with diverse cultures and facilitating accurate understanding of Islam. This includes books, articles, videos, and educational applications.

Direct interaction, such as meetings, dialogues, and field visits, also plays a significant role by fostering personal communication, building trust, and correcting negative impressions through lived experience (Al-Murshid et al., 2024).

#### *The Qatar Guest Center: Background and Establishment*

The Qatar Guest Center is one of the leading da'wah institutions in the State of Qatar, established to introduce Islam to non-Muslims and support new converts. Its establishment responded to the growing need for organized institutions capable of addressing contemporary challenges.

The Center adopts a moderate approach, focusing on presenting Islam in its authentic form without extremism. It relies on qualified and specialized personnel across various fields, enhancing the quality and effectiveness of its outreach efforts (Al-Thuwaini, 2023).

#### **Objectives and Strategies**

The Center aims to introduce Islam accurately, correct misconceptions, and promote cultural understanding. It also provides educational and guidance programs to support new Muslims. Its strategies rely on modern communication tools, including digital media, event organization, and multilingual content delivery (Al-Zuhri, 2020).

#### *Programs and Activities*

The Qatar Guest Center offers a comprehensive range of programs designed to promote accurate understanding of Islam among diverse audiences. These include multilingual introductory lectures that present Islamic concepts in a simplified and culturally sensitive manner. The Center also provides specialized educational courses covering creed, worship, and ethics.

In addition, it organizes field visits, such as mosque tours and cultural events, enabling experiential learning and fostering positive engagement. The Center also produces diverse media content, including videos, publications, and multilingual digital materials, thereby expanding its global reach (Jabbar, 2021).

Special attention is given to new Muslims through support programs that include education, guidance, and follow-up, facilitating their integration and ensuring a comprehensive and sustainable da'wah approach.

#### *Impact on the Mental Image of Islam*

The Qatar Guest Center has made a significant contribution to fostering a positive mental image of Islam among its target audiences. Through its moderate discourse emphasizing shared human values, it has successfully addressed misconceptions and promoted a balanced understanding of Islam.

Its interactive activities have enhanced direct engagement, enabling dialogue and trust-building based on real experiences rather than abstract information. Moreover, its use of digital platforms and multilingual content has allowed it to reach diverse global audiences. These efforts have led to increased interest in learning about Islam and noticeable improvements in perceptions, with Islam increasingly viewed in a more objective and moderate light, rather than through negative stereotypes (Flak & Jafaleh, 2020).

#### *Challenges and Constraints*

Despite its achievements, da'wah institutions face several challenges that affect their effectiveness. Foremost among these are negative stereotypes in global media that often associate Islam with extremism, complicating efforts to correct misconceptions. Cultural diversity also presents challenges, requiring flexible and context-sensitive approaches (Atta Allah, 2023).

Additionally, limited financial and human resources hinder expansion and sustainability. The competitive digital media landscape further necessitates the production of high-quality, engaging content capable of attracting and retaining audience attention.

At the level of the Qatar Guest Center, the most prominent challenges lie in the need for continuous development of da'wah content in line with contemporary transformations, as well as keeping pace with digital shifts and emerging technologies to ensure sustained impact and the ability to reach a diverse global audience.

#### *Development Proposals*

The role of the Qatar Guest Center in fostering a positive mental image of Islam can be strengthened through a set of developmental proposals aligned with the demands and challenges of the digital age. Foremost among these is the enhancement of digital content to make it more professional and engaging, through the use of multimedia formats such as short videos, visual illustrations, and interactive content tailored to the nature of social media audiences (Al-Yazidi, 2022).

Expanding international partnerships with cultural, media, and educational institutions is also a crucial step toward increasing outreach and engaging broader audiences across diverse cultural contexts, thereby contributing to a more balanced representation of Islam. Furthermore, investing in the training of da'wah personnel in intercultural communication skills and the use of modern digital tools is essential for improving institutional performance.

Finally, leveraging artificial intelligence technologies to analyze audience behavior and personalize content can significantly enhance the effectiveness and impact of da'wah messages (Al-Murshid et al., 2024).

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study demonstrate that da'wah institutions play a pivotal and multidimensional role in shaping the mental image of Islam, particularly in the face of contemporary challenges such as conceptual distortion and the proliferation of negative stereotypes through global media. The study establishes that da'wah has evolved beyond the mere transmission of religious knowledge into a strategic communicative process that actively influences perceptions, emotions, and behaviors, thereby contributing to the construction of a balanced and authentic image of Islam.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that the effectiveness of institutional da'wah is closely linked to the adoption of moderate discourse, the strategic use of modern communication tools, and the ability to deliver multilingual and culturally sensitive content. The case of the Qatar Guest Center illustrates how an integrated approach that combines intellectual depth with media engagement can yield measurable success in correcting misconceptions and fostering intercultural understanding. In addition, the study finds that credibility and relationship-building, grounded in dialogue and mutual respect, constitute essential determinants of successful da'wah, surpassing purely informational approaches. Continuous institutional development, particularly in adapting to digital transformations and enhancing human capital, also emerges as a critical factor in sustaining effectiveness.

Based on these findings, several contextually grounded recommendations can be proposed. First, da'wah institutions should adopt comprehensive strategic communication frameworks that integrate traditional religious scholarship with contemporary media practices. This recommendation is particularly appropriate given the study's finding that fragmented or purely traditional approaches are insufficient for addressing complex global perceptions; its implementation would enhance message coherence and expand outreach effectiveness.

Second, it is essential to invest in specialized training programs for da'wah practitioners, with a focus on intercultural communication, digital engagement, and critical thinking skills. This recommendation directly responds to the study's identification of credibility and professional competence as key determinants of effectiveness, and its implementation would lead to more persuasive, adaptive, and context-sensitive communication strategies. Third, institutions should prioritize the development of multilingual digital platforms that provide accessible and accurate representations of Islamic teachings. This recommendation aligns with the study's emphasis on the importance of reaching diverse global audiences, and its implementation would significantly reduce the impact of misinformation and misrepresentation. Finally, strengthening institutional collaboration at both regional and international levels is necessary to unify efforts and maximize impact. Coordinated initiatives would enhance resource efficiency, ensure consistency in messaging, and reinforce the global presence of balanced Islamic discourse.

Collectively, these recommendations, grounded in the study's empirical and analytical findings, offer a practical pathway for enhancing the effectiveness of da'wah institutions and

improving the global mental image of Islam while promoting the values of coexistence and intercultural dialogue.

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