



Islamic State's Media Strategies for Female Recruitment



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Table of Contents

Introduction

Why is this Research Important?

Islamic State's Background and Goals

Methodology

Data Findings

Discourse Analysis

Faith-Branding

Conclusion

Introduction

Women participating in terrorism still confounds many, and vast research has been conducted to analyze the underlying reasons for this phenomenon. This research is also an attempt to understand women's involvement in terrorism, particularly the process of recruitment itself. Although the premise of the research is based on women's recruitment by ISIL, the primary objective is to determine the marketing model ISIL utilizes to disperse its propaganda. Furthermore, to analyze the language used by the female recruiters and its impact in recruiting western women.

Why is this Research Important?

The aim of this research paper is to have a clear understanding of the process by which western women are recruited by the Islamic State, in order to determine the policies that mitigate the process.

Islamic State's Background and Goals



Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is a Salafi militant organization in Syria and Iraq. Its goal is to establish an Islamic caliphate and expand the territory. The origins of the group goes back to the early 2000s under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, but became notorious in 2014, under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi when it began to conquer cities in Iraq and drive out government forces.

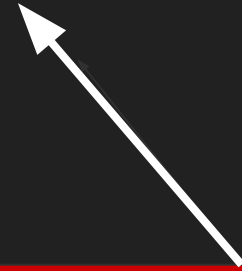
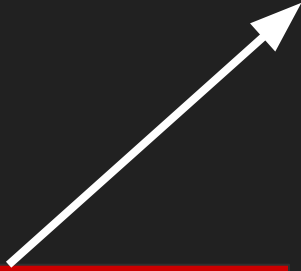
Methodology

Analysis

Qualitative Research
Data analysis on
Women and Terrorism

Discourse Analysis of
Tweets by Female
Recruiters

Comparative Analysis of
Faith Branding Models
between Megachurches
and ISIL



Data Findings

Upon analysis of tweets by female recruiters, and an analysis of Dabiq magazine, several themes frequently emerged:

1. Religious Obligation
2. Need for Identity
3. Romanticization of Marriage to a Mujahid
4. Promotion of Motherhood

Religious Obligation



- Female recruiters impose a religious obligation to Muslims to migrate for the purpose of establishing a caliphate.

Need for identity

- This need is exemplified by ISIL female recruiters' use of words like "sisterhood" to bond with the reader. This notion of sisterhood is entrenched in the idea of being part of a collective group.
- There is loss of some individual identity to maintain the collective, as evident by every woman living within the caliphate bearing the moniker 'Umm.'

Romanticization of Marriage to a Mujahid



- Promoting the idea of marriage to a Mujahid by describing the endeavour as beautiful and inherently virtuous.

Promotion of Motherhood

- The value of motherhood is tied exclusively to bearing male children.

“As for you, O mother of lion cubs... And what will make you know what the mother of lion cubs is? She is the teacher of generations and the producer of men.”

(Dabiq, Issue 11)

- To encourage Muslim women to uphold their duties as ‘Mothers in the Caliphate.’

“The fitrah is also the motherhood and mercy of mother for child.”

(Dabiq, Issue 15)

Discourse Analysis

- The tweet begins with the words ‘My sisters,’ which already indicates an existing bond and familiarity between the three women. And the fact that the tweet begins with ‘My’ suggests that those other two women are part of her, as she is for them.
- Use of the word ‘Allah’ instead of God to refer to the deity. It is possible that she used the Arabic name for God to distinguish the Islamic God from the Christian in order to show her allegiance to her religion.



Faith-Branding

ISIL also uses faith-branding.

Definition: Faith brands are religious products and services that are part of a comprehensive, cohesive marketing plan to create a product that resonates with today's consumer-conscious religious shopper.

Faith brands exist to aid consumers in making and maintaining a personal connection to a commodity product. Introducing, sustaining, and perpetuating the brand across product lines allow these faith brands to be “top of mind” in an overcrowded commercial environment.

(Mara Einstein, *Brands of Faith*)

Types of Faith-Branding

Types of Faith-branding include:

1. Beheading Videos
2. Dabiq Magazines
3. Selling t-shirts
4. Anthem
5. ISIL Flag

Beheading Videos

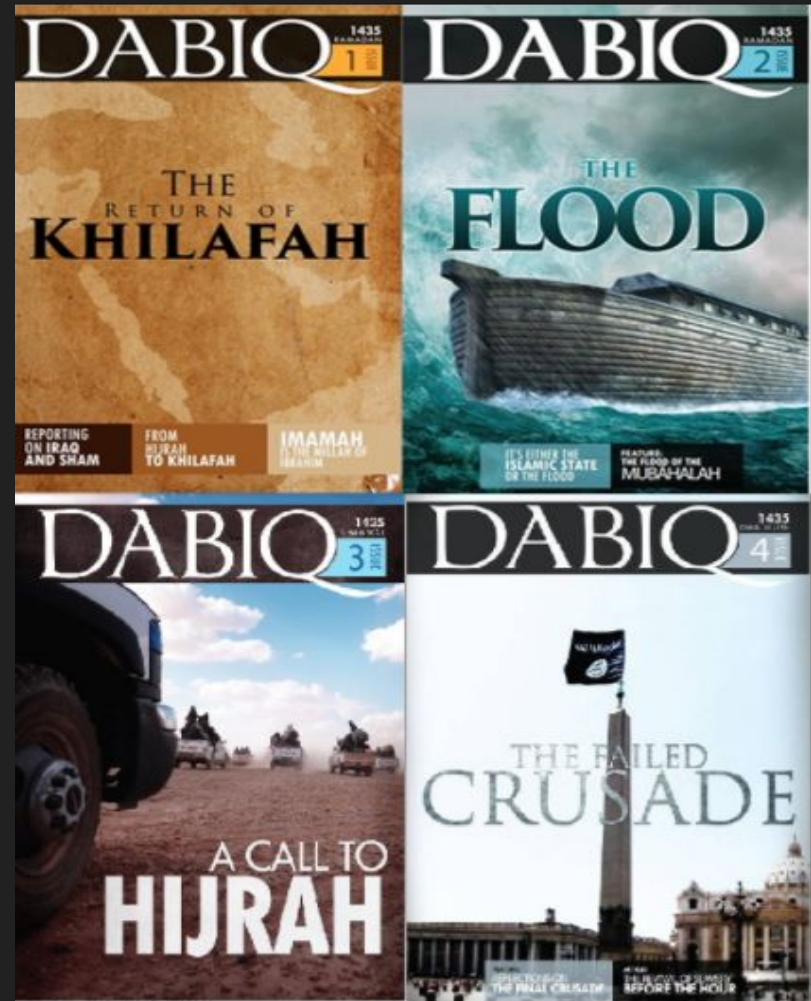
Beheading videos are efforts to maintain themselves on top of the people's mind.



Beheading video of US photojournalist James Foley

Dabiq Magazine

- Is a propaganda magazine that aims to recruit Jihadists from the West.
- The name of the magazine, Dabiq, is a town in Northern Syria. In Islamic eschatology, the town is the site where the forces of Rome and forces from Medina will engage war, with subsequent Muslim victory. ISIS interprets Rome to mean the forces of Christianity and the West, and them as the forces who will defeat the West.



Selling t-shirts

- ISIL brands itself by selling t-shirts and hoodies online, to give off the impression that they are modern, and 'cool,' and to make their ideology more palatable.



Anthem

The song has become part of the organization's identity, and it is catchy and recognizable.

Title: Salil al Sawarim (Clashing of the Swords)

English Translation: "Clashing of the swords: a nasheed of the defiant.

The path of fighting is the path of life.

So amidst an assault, tyranny is destroyed.

And concealment of the voice results in the beauty of the echo."



سلي السواريم
Saleel As-Sawarim

ISIL Flag

- Islamic flag that is customized purposefully for the group.
- An identifying logo that creates immediate association with ISIL.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

الله
رسول
محمد

Conclusion

- Multivariate processes are involved to make female recruitment a success.
- The mentioned themes serve as factors that have contributed to female recruitment by the organization.
- Analysis of the tweets indicate the existence of strong personal motivations for joining ISIL.
- Women actively joining ISIL to have a role in establishing the Caliphate.
- Upon comparison of ISIL's marketing model with Christian faith branding, it is evident that the organization's success at recruiting women is partly due to it being able to brand itself.