

BUILDING A POSITIVE IMAGE OF AWQĀF THROUGH MODERN MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Shafiu Ibrahim Abdullahi

Department of Economics, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The development of wāqf in modern times has been a topic of discussion, particularly in terms of aligning the managerial architecture of awqāf with contemporary realities. One of the challenges facing awqāf today is the lack of funds to support their activities, while some have been marred by poor performance, historical neglect, and a colonial past, which has negatively affected their image. Therefore, there is a need to focus on organizational image building when redeveloping wāqf. This paper aims to create a positive image of awqāf in the public mind by exploring the role of modern marketing and communication tools in achieving this objective. The study relies on an intensive review of selected literature and a critical analysis of existing awqāf operations. The findings suggest that awqāf could provide long-term resources to deal with challenges that go beyond political winds and short-term business interests. Awqāf could be instrumental in tackling environmental challenges, such as afforestation campaigns and green financing. The perpetuity of sadaqat jāriah (perpetual charity) distinguishes wāqf from other charities, giving it an element of permanency. Nonetheless, modern awqāf administration suffers from system workflow malfunction, poor recruitment drive, and state control, which are linked to poor performance and inefficiency. To revive awqāf, there is a need to separate the sector from the public bureaucratic culture of the past decades. The paper concludes that modern marketing and communication tools are necessary to create a positive image of awqāf in the public mind, which can help to achieve the organization's mission.

1. INTRODUCTION

Waqf, a concept that originated in Islamic societies, has been instrumental in the development of various facets of life. During the Ottoman Empire, waqf institutions contributed significantly to public works, such as the building of schools, libraries, hospitals, roads, and others. Even today, hundreds of thousands of waqf institutions are spread across the Muslim world and beyond, contributing to development. Waqf combines the perpetuity of spiritual and material reward for the benefactor and the beneficiary. It is also called habs or sadaqat jāriah. Unlike other charities, waqf has a unique feature of sadaqat jāriah, which gives it an element of permanency. Waqf has been used to eradicate poverty, provide financial security, supply basic necessities, train and educate unskilled labor, propagate Islam, create employment, protect the environment, dispense various types of social benefits, develop infrastructure, promote charitable causes, preserve social justice, provide scholarships to students, and empower communities.

The waqf sector is considered one of the most important socio-economic institutions in Islam. However, modern waqf administration suffers from malfunction in the system workflow and poor recruitment drive. Waqf management, depending on its nature and needs, requires professional experts such as engineers, contractors, media professionals, and investment

management specialists. The gap between the waqf management requirements and the actual organization of the workers' system explains the current state of waqf management. Scholars have criticized state control over waqf, which is linked with poor performance and inefficiency of the sector. The self-financing method of waqf institutions limits external funding through participation, which has made them stagnant.

In many Muslim countries, waqf investments are not based on sound scientific and objective foundations. The waqf sector must be separated from the public bureaucratic culture of the past decades. On the revival of waqf, scholars in the Western world see the issue differently. Some scholars noted that it was the emergence of 'great wealth' in Islamic countries that caused the revivalism being witnessed in the waqf sector. Others see waqf emergence as a commitment device to give property owners economic security in return for social services.

Waqf also performs the function of a social financing tool. The Islamic social finance sector that comprises zakat, waqf, and Islamic not-for-profit microfinance is described as fast becoming a major component of mainstream Islamic finance. Its potential for developing the larger Islamic society is enormous. In recent years, much discussion has emerged regarding the need to develop the managerial architecture of waqf in the Muslim world to make it align with modern reality. Numerous waqf institutions are suffering from a lack of funds to run their activities. The link between waqf and sustainable development cannot be overemphasized here. Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The famed sustainable development goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, comprising 17 goals, 169 targets, and 300 indicators to be achieved by 2030.

The waqf sector has the potential to play a crucial role in the attainment of the SDGs. However, achieving this potential requires the development of innovative models for waqf management, the establishment of appropriate regulatory frameworks, and the engagement of all stakeholders in the waqf sector. The sustainable management of waqf assets, efficient allocation of resources, and effective implementation of waqf projects can contribute significantly to the attainment of the SDGs. The potential of waqf to contribute to sustainable

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Silk (2006), marketing is the process of planning and executing the development, value, promotion and distribution of products, services, and ideas to create mutually beneficial exchanges. In marketing and communication, branding is very important as it holds a strategic position in how a product or service is perceived by the public. Marketing, generally, always focuses on the audience perspectives. Kotler (2004) sees brand as a name, symbol, design or combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product or service. Advertising helps in building a brand and positioning it in the public mind. Organizations that succeeded in their area of business are great marketing organizations. Some marketing researchers have viewed marketing communications as signals that possess information content for stakeholders that can be used to judge an organization (Shrivastava and Dawle, 2020; Boulding and Kirmani, 1993). Advertising and publicity are potentially important signals to audiences and play important roles in shaping the corporate brand and organizational performance. Marketing professionals bridge psychology, sociology and graphic design principles in order to create a clearly defined message for their target audiences. The message is the information intended for the audience to know, created in a tone that appeals to their values (Wright, et al., 2015). Marketers put target audiences at the core of their activities by trying to ensure what is being offered meets the needs and preferences of the target audience (Nadube and Didia, 2018; Fox and

Kotler, 1980). According to Hibbert and Horne (1996) and Ayyıldız, Akmermer, and Akyüz (2017) many conservations non-profit organizations are turning to marketing to increase the amount of public financial support. Other branches of marketing such as cause related marketing to have a positive role to play in boosting the image of the organization undertaking them. According to Varadarajan and Menon (1988) and Lee and Johnson (2019), causerelated marketing represents the confluence of perspectives from several specialized areas of inquiry such as marketing for nonprofit

organizations, the promotion mix, corporate philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, fund-raising management, and public relations.

The literature on charitable giving is awash with a lot of ideas on how to manage these organizations and the major sources of getting funds. Yang, Brennan, and Wilkinson (2014) argued that charity and society need each other; society needs charities to fulfill the gap that neither private sector nor public can address, while charities need society to exist and for their sustenance. More importantly, charities rely on society to provide resources for their sustainability and growth. Donors' trust is considered central to survival of these organizations (Torres-Moraga, Vásquez-Parraga and Barra, 2010; Herzlinger, 1996). How such charitable organizations can influence donor trust to maintain steady growth has been extensively debated. According to Sargeant and Lee (2006), trust is probably the only most influential tool for charities which can not only attract new donors to charities but also retain their standing donor base. Fukuyama (2009) defined trust as a function of social networks, cultural ethics and collective values which can nurture both prosperity and social cohesion. Trust is a social capital in itself.

It has positive and constructive effects on an organization such as improving natural sociability among the organization members, cutting transaction costs, and simplifying adaptive forms of esteem to authorities (Kramer, 1999). But, when charities fail to maintain public trust, they may face unfavorable consequences such as decrease in donations, loss of image, shrunken self-sufficiency, and finally downfall (Yang et al., 2014). According to empirical studies, people's perception about charities is that they trust charities less than in the previous decades; reasons for this include 'blurred boundaries' (Populus, 2020; Gaskin, 1999) suggesting that large public and private corporate organizations and big charities are behaving alike. For example, charities have started to have businessstyle orientation and format; there is serious competition among charities in areas such as fundraising and in trying to de-market one another that make charities move away from their traditional base. According to Gaskin (1999), it is this 'blurred' boundary in the way charities operate as well as unfavorable media reports that intensify decline in trust in charities.

As with conventional nonprofit organizations, marketing is seen as a strange tool to use in promoting charities. The belief is that charities do not need promotion since they are not built to generate profit. Charities in the western world have since realized the urgency to use marketing and advertising to communicate their operations and needs to the public. Most works in this area have not directly treated the issue of marketing, branding and advertising of *wqāf*, but some of the research matters they treated may have some indirect relation to the issue. Hati and Idris (2014) have measured the impact of customer perceptual reaction to the credibility of social enterprise advertising. The study found that customers' socioeconomic status and religiosity have no significant influence on their intention to channel their donations via *Islāmic* social enterprises. It is the social enterprises' advertising which significantly influences their support intention. Kashif et al. (2018) examine the moderating role of brand credibility within the customer-based brand equity model to investigate donor perceived brand equity of charity brands in Pakistan. The 'results indicate that donor perceived brand association, brand awareness and brand loyalty strongly relate to perceived brand equity of charity brands. In a related paper, Rizal and Amin (2017) empirically investigate the role of perceived *ihsan*, *Islāmic* egalitarian attitude and *Islāmic* religiosity on cash *wāqf* contribution. The result shows significant relationship between perceived *ihsan*, *Islāmic* egalitarianism and *Islāmic* religiosity on cash *wāqf* contribution. Abdul Shukor et al. (2018) explore the relationship between integrity, reputation, trust on *awqāf* institution and intention to endow cash *wqāf*. The findings show that integrity and reputation of *awqāf* institutions have direct impact on endowers' trust on *awqāf* institution, which consequently lead to endowers' intention to endow cash *wāqf*. A number of works have shown the role of religiously embedded message on influencing advertising. Ustaahmetoglu (2020) studied the influence of religious messages on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. His findings show that the attitude and purchase intention toward advertisements with religious messages is more likely to make purchase possible than advertisements without religious messages. A paper by Alam, Mohd, and Hisham (2011) provides further evidence on the role of religion in influencing the consuming public.

3. SUGGESTED APPROACHES TO IMPROVING *WĀQF* IMPACTS, IMAGE AND FINANCES

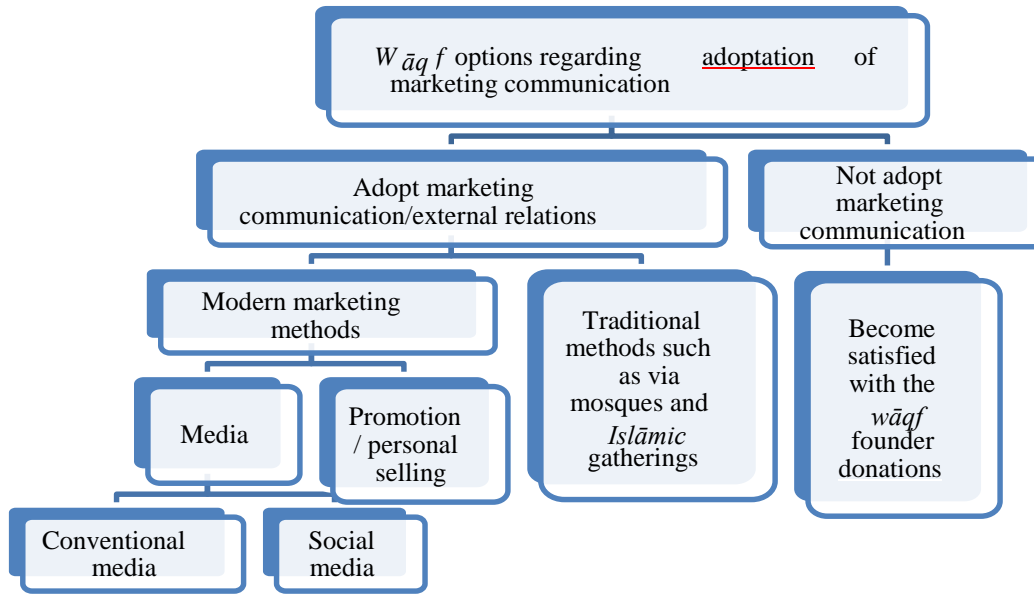
3.1 ON MEDIA MANAGEMENT AND BUILDING OF TRUST

Public relations (PR) are an integral part of marketing. PR is in the forefront when it comes to positioning an organization to the media and the larger public. PR development is one of the main areas of weakness in the *wāqf* industry in the *Muslim* world. PR will help in promoting or protecting a *wāqf* image or its offerings. In a nonprofit sector such as *wāqf*, PR is the best available tool to further promote its activities. Unlike in the case of for-profit organizations whose motives will always be viewed from the angle of making profit and self-interest, charities attract media firms. Media can help charities publicize their activities and accomplishments, but at the same time, where they detect any ill practice, they may play a part in ruining the trustworthiness of an organization. Story prepared by *wāqf* means for PR purpose shall be unique and imaginative. It shall be more than just issuing press releases. It requires a bit of creativity in the message in order to better capture public attention. *Awqāf* shall fully utilize what is made available by the PR program to tell their stories to the world before someone else does it for them in unfavorable manner. *Wāqf* can use its special attribute of being a pillar of *Islāmic* society and its economy in the previous generations to sell its brand image much faster in today's world. Additionally, *wāqf* shall use annual reports, brochures, articles, newsletters, audiovisuals and internet to pass their messages across. These channels have already been put to good use by some *awqāf* around the *Muslim* world. Strategic communication plays an important role in how donors perceive the charity organization's pledge and how they respond to it. *Wāqf* shall fully utilize special *Islāmic* events such as annual Ramadhan period, Hajj period, and others. to promote their activities. They can also strengthen partnership with existing *Islāmic* banks and other *Islāmic* organisations in achieving their goals. *Wāqf* institutions shall continue to organize annual conferences on *awqāf* and charitable giving and invite notable scholars to present papers and speeches. The media shall be invited as well to cover the events. On ways of choosing to deploy modern marketing communication or not, a *wāqf* has many choices available to it. A *wāqf*, which is administrably satisfied with what its founder provides to it for running its activities, may not need to advertise or adopt any marketing scheme. Old *awqāf* that stick with traditional method of gathering charities for their social causes can continue to use mosques and *Islāmic* gatherings as channels for passing the desired messages across.

One important way of influencing potential donors to contribute to *wāqf* is through communicating the successes of the organization to the public. Communicating past successes has been recognized as an effective way of attracting donations. Another way to raise funds is by emphasizing the important goals the *wāqf* wants to accomplish in the future. Thus, *awqāf* shall focus their advertising messages on successes achieved so far and future goals. In order to succeed in carrying out their functions *awqāf* must build their brand image. A strong relationship exists between strong brand image and organizational effectiveness. An efficient and effective organisation, in general, has strong brand image. Abdullahi (2020) listed what a *wāqf* shall do in relation to building it brand image; "it must be seen for what it is, source of support for the *Islāmic* society. *Wāqf* benefits must also be clear for everyone to see, i.e., both the donor and the beneficiary. *Wāqf* must stand for all the values cherished by *Islām*. Looking at the history of *wāqf* that goes back into millennia, it symbolized *Islāmic* culture. The public image represent by *wāqf* shall be that of empathy, kindness and generosity. *Wāqf* shall move with the modern world, change it (sic) management to confirm with the needs of the time." *Awqāf* shall maintain the highest corporate governance standards as they try to gain the hard-earned donors' trust. No individuals will donate their hard-earned wealth to a *wāqf* when they distrust the capability and credibility its fund managers.

FIGURE 1

Wāqf Communication Strategy



Source: author's conceptualization,

Note: conventional media are the mainstream media such as TV, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, etc.

Wāqf can perfectly serve the need of modern *sharī'ah* compliance. Corporations are allocating resources for corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Thus, modern CSR programs shall be absorbed into the concept of modern *wāqf* in the *Muslim* world. *Wāqf* shall serve as a medium through which sharia compliant firms execute their corporate social responsibility. Hence, *awqāf* shall get in contact with *sharī'ah* compliant firms in order to solicit donations in the form of CSR donations. Because of its religious and historical roots, *awqāf* have better chance of getting public trust than conventional charities such as the ones established as nongovernmental organizations (NGO) or the usual small and discontinuous *Sadaqat* across the *Islāmic* world. These peculiarities shall be factored in by managers of *awqāf* in the *Islāmic* world. Of note here are the prominent positions and physical locations occupied by *awqāf*; many of these *awqāf* are located in strategic places in *Muslim* communities, making them invaluable assets. In terms of rewards in the hereafter, both *wāqf* and the annual *zakāt* are high rewarding acts of *Ibadah*, despite the fact that one is voluntary and the other involuntary. Table 1 shows how *wāqf* compares with other ways *Muslims* spend their wealth. In terms of continuity feature of the act of *Ibadah*, *wāqf* is acknowledged as continuous charity when it is compared to *zakāt* that is given to predetermined people and causes. But, when it is compared to spending money on worldly things, even though the worldly spending may be halal, these worldly spending are less rewarding than charities. Giving for charitable causes holds a prominent position in *Islāmic* society.

TABLE 1

Conceptualization of *Wāqf* and *Zakāt* Charities

		Degree of continuity	
		Low	High
Perceived level of reward in the hereafter	High	<i>Zakāt</i>	<i>Wāqf</i>
	Low	Money meant for consumption	Money meant for investment

Source: author's conceptualization

Awqāf shall hold trust issues with the importance they deserve in order for them to succeed. The more *awqāf* identify and understand their different audiences, the greater their success in creating good funding campaign brand image. By focusing on causes that resonate with the existing concerns of large numbers of people at all income levels, and by creating structured

ways for these people to connect where none had previously existed, *awqāf* will improve their prospects with potential donors. How *wāqf* deliver social benefits while operating sustainably is a good question demanding stakeholder attention. Effective marketing and sustainability funding can help them do that. Marketing, when appropriately employed, ensures that *wāqf* managers understand the environment they are dealing with and build plan templates that will help them achieve their objectives. Researchers and practitioners in *wāqf* may not like to talk about “marketing” or “brand management” as being of social benefit and a tool to achieve their mission. Generally, the public is usually suspicious about huge marketing and administrative expenses; the more an organization is seen trying to raise public funds using marketing and advertising, the more the organization risks losing support because of the amount they are seen to be spending on these activities. In as much as managing *wāqf* distribution and execution of contributors will is important, managing how to sustain the organization through continued sourcing of donations is just as important. This is where marketing and advertising come in as the right tools for achieving that goal. Reputation is crucial for voluntary sector organizations such as *awqāf* to be able to attract donors. *Awqāf* with poor reputation cannot expect people to keep donating to their causes. But despite these mentioned benefits, *awqāf* shall be careful with using too much commercialization as the donor public may feel they are being forced to do what may not be in their best interest.

Trust is associated with facilitating efficient business transactions, increasing customer satisfaction, and enhancing employee motivation and commitment; because of these, *wāqf* shall be guided by the knowledge that they are accountable for their actions and inactions. Unlike in the secular environment, accountability under an *Islāmic* environment in which *wāqf* is part of extends to the hereafter, where all deeds in this world will be accounted for by those responsible for them before *Allāh ‘azza wa jalla*. Subsequently, *wāqf* management will account for the trust given to them before *Allāh ‘azza wa jalla* on the Day of Judgment. Because of these, the need and level of accountability under *wāqf* is far superior to what is obtainable under conventional charities where accountability stops in this world. Under the secular setting, if the usurper of *wāqf* fund is able to escape judgment in this world that is all there is to it. But under the *Islāmic* setting, even after one may have escaped judgment here, one cannot escape judgment in the hereafter. Consideration and reality such as that of accountability in the hereafter makes it necessary to develop a unique model to cater for *awqāf* different from what obtains in secular charities. The major point of departure between *awqāf* and secular charity is the belief in *Allāh ‘azza wa jalla* which led one (who must be a *Muslim*) to be conscious of the hereafter. These also make issues of materialism and commercialism less of concern in managing *awqāf* than in conventional secular charities. The fact that the *wāqf* management boards include *sharī‘ah* scholars helps reduces the fear of *awqāf* departing from their traditional *Islāmic* roots. Donors feel it easier to contribute to charities they are familiar with than those unfamiliar to them. Thus, as a brand, *wāqf* shall do whatever is necessary to increase their closeness to potential donors. The more familiar a charity is to donors, the more trustworthy and convenient the charity is to them.

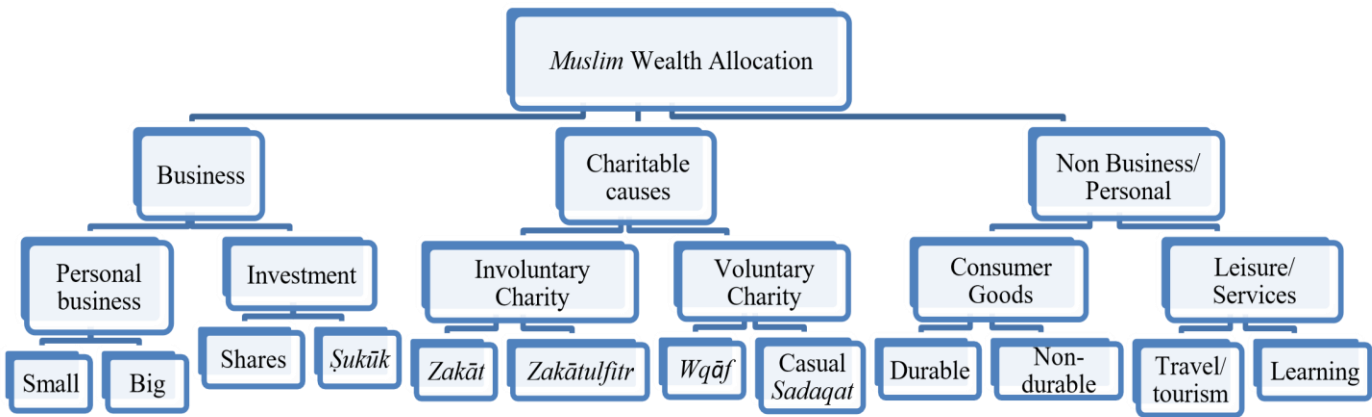
3.2 ON SETTING TARGETS AND PRIORITIES

Since *Muslims* are enjoined to spend their wealth in charity, *awqāf* must look at the available ways to attract donations to their causes. But, this as earlier mentioned is seen as unconventional because *awqāf* are known to depend on the initial bequest of the founder. The ways of getting donations to assist *wāqf* are as varied as the forms of *wāqf* available. Many needs compete for attention of a *Muslim’s* wealth apart from spending on charities. For example, *Muslims* spend their surplus wealth on purchasing consumer goods, leisure, investment in businesses, *Sadaqat*, and so forth. Then how does a *wāqf* target those *Muslims’* money to ensure that Muslim spend more on endowments than is currently obtainable. Figure 2 shows a number of ways for *Muslims* to allocate their surplus wealth.

In *Islām taqwā* (the fear of God) is the beginning and root of the actions of any pious *Muslim*. Thus, *taqwā* shall be the main barometer in prioritizing *wāqf* donation generation from various sources available. The companions of the Prophet and the generations that followed them are noted for their generosity in contributing to charitable causes and for their *taqwā*. Today’s *Muslims* cannot do better than following after them in establishing endowments and giving generously in charity. The more *taqwā* a *Muslim* is blessed

with the more likely for him or her to donate to charitable courses. For example, a rich and religious *Muslim* is expected to donate more than a poor and less religious *Muslim* or even a rich but less religious *Muslim*.

FIGURE 2
Ways a *Muslim* Allocates His Wealth



Source: author’s conceptualization

Branding *Wāqf* for Sustainable Development: A Marketing Approach

Table 2 shows how *wāqf* shall prioritize generation of charitable funds, taking into consideration various ways of allocating wealth and level of *taqwā* of the *Muslim* populace. The table is based on *Muslim* level of *taqwā* and the likely outlets through which wealthy *Muslims* allocate their wealth; these outlets can also be called sources of *wāqf* funds. Sources of *wāqf* funds include wealth means for any kind of charity not necessarily *wqāf*, tax-exempted investments such as some kind of small-scale businesses and startups, and the generality of investments that attract government taxes. It shall be noted that the table is not directing *awqāf* to forcefully collect donations from people, but it is only nudging *awqāf* in directions where they shall focus their attention when generating funds. It shows ranking of priorities based on the ease of generating *wāqf* funds and level of *taqwā*; here cell (1) is the most attractive in terms of the presumed softness of generating *wāqf* charity through the means indicate against it, and cell (9) is the most difficult to generate *wāqf* funds because of combination of low *taqwā* and deduction of tax from the wealth. *Wāqf* shall be seen as a system that interacts continuously with its actual and potential donors; in the system; the only factors making the relation sustainable are trust and fear of God.

TABLE 2
Conceptualization of Level of *Taqwā* of Donors

Different Levels of <i>Taqwā</i> level of potential Donor				
Major outlets through which potential donors allocate their wealth		High	Moderate	Low
	Taxable Investments	(6)	(7)	(9)
	Investments exempted from tax	(2)	(5)	(8)
	Wealth means for various types of charity	(1)	(3)	(4)

Source: author's conceptualization

The growth of marketing communications and the growing researches in marketing have reflected the new emphasis on effective planning and appropriate policy implementation. These initiatives shall be extended into other areas of managing *wāqf* in order to achieve organizational harmony and effectiveness. The *wāqf* management must prioritize among the various mediums available through which it communicates with its stakeholding community. On the appropriate channels of communicating (actualizing) the need to support *wāqf* development activities, these channels may be grouped into three categories: marketing/advertising, religious orientation/education, and politico-legislative. Table 3 provides possible directions on how that can be achieved.

TABLE 3

Perceived Levels of *Taqwā*

		Perceived <i>Taqwā</i> level		
		High (H)	Moderate (M)	Low (L)
Channels of Advertising/ creating Marketing consciousness on Religious the need to orientation/ contribute to education <i>wqāf</i> Politicoreligious/ legislative (P)	A			
	(A)			R
			P	
	(R)			

Source: author's conceptualization

With reference to Table 3, from the angle of who/what to

target first; all the three named channels focus on the cell 'low' (L), based on the presumed criteria of who needs the message more in order to be able to decide; followed by 'medium' (M) cell and finally 'High' (H). This is because a low *taqwā Muslim* is the one that first needs to be rescued. But, from the point of view of effectiveness, efficiency and maybe urgency or need for each channel/method by *wqāf*, the focus of marketing/advertising use shall be on the high *taqwā Muslim* group, in order to bring their attention to the existence of a particular *wāqf* activity. But, the use of politico-legislative (which includes use of pressure groups and changes in legislation) shall focus on the moderate *taqwā Muslim* group, in order to give them the necessary political and legislative incentives to donate to *wqāf*; while religious education shall focus on low *taqwā Muslims* to teach them first about the Islamic teaching pertaining to *wqāf*. The assumption here regarding *taqwā* is that religiously knowledgeable *Muslims* have more *taqwā* than less religiously knowledgeable *Muslims*; though this may not always hold true. Looking at *wāqf* as a system, this example is not difficult to practise.

4. CONCLUSION

Trust is the magnet that attracts public admiration for any organization; *awqāf* shall attract it wherever possible. *Wqāf*, no matter where it is located, shall be driven by the imperative to meet human needs, alleviate suffering, and tackle the obstacles to human development and progress. It can be a path-breaking, supporting innovation and education, field building, first movers and fast movers. It shall provide needed resources for long-term challenges that require painstaking efforts that go beyond political whims and short-term business interests. These include support for efforts to tackle environmental challenges such as afforestation campaigns and green financing. Effective marketing programs for *awqāf* require planning, just like in any serious endeavor. The responsibility for marketing and external communication planning shall fall to either a subgroup of the endowment, or the management as a whole. But, *awqāf* shall be intentional about creating a marketing plan as a part of their overall fund generation plan.

5. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Empirical works shall be conducted to gauge the opinion of *Muslims* regarding the use of marketing and advertising to promote *wāqf* image and causes. This is necessary because it will provide good background, motivation and direction for

the overall efforts to introduce modern marketing tools to *wāqf* management. Specific studies (case studies) are needed to measure effectiveness of the various tools and mediums to be used in boosting the image of *wqāf*.

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