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The Rochester Institute of Technology

Department of Communication

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A Case Study of Religious Engagement Online:

How Malaysian Muslim Students Access Islamic Information

by

Mohd Adam Mahadi

A Thesis submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication & Media Technologies

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A CASE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT ONLINE:

HOW MALAYSIAN MUSLIM STUDENTS ACCESS ISLAMIC INFORMATION

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Abstract

The spread of digital technology has expanded how people engage with religious information. Religious activities are no longer restricted to physical spaces as the Internet allows users to customize their religious experiences. This study, grounded in the uses and gratifications theory, explores how Malaysian Muslim students access religious information across two mediums: print and electronic media; as well as investigating the relationship between the preferred medium for accessing information and religious engagement. Malaysian Muslim students studying in Malaysia and the United States were recruited online for preliminary and in-depth interviews. The results show that access to the Internet, availability of print sources, location of users and the level of religiosity, influence how Malaysian Muslim students consume religious information.

Keywords: Malaysia, religious engagement, Islam, uses & gratifications, media

A Case Study of Religious Engagement Online:

How Malaysian Muslim Students Access Islamic Information

Religion is important for most human beings as a significant spiritual support in their lives. There are two kinds of religions: monotheism, the belief that there is only one God, and polytheism, the belief that there is more than one God. The major monotheistic religions are Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and these religions share similar characteristics: Abrahamic faiths and sacred texts (Byrne, 2011). Besides their faithful worshipping of God, the followers of these religions also engage in activities such as religious discussions and debates, deepening their religious knowledge and educating people in religious knowledge. Once electronic media emerged into the present era, procedures and methods for those activities have been modified. Eickelman and Anderson (2003) concluded that the increasing number of media and means of communication leads to the multiplication of the possibilities in creating and innovating activities, communities, and networks. For example, Muslims are able to create and watch videos related to religious knowledge or engage in online discussion.

In line with new technology, social and religious perspectives have expanded from traditional local activities into borderless global activities and engagement. The religious engagement and purposes across the globe are universal; each society of Muslims in nations is diverse in its culture and perspective. Lawrence (2002) stated that a researcher should observe Muslim internal diversity to understand the global Islamic practice in the technology era. He suggested that an Internet user would find ample diversity within Islam on the Internet. Most Muslims in different places across the globe have varied emerging perspectives on the

information technology. It is important to study every local community of Muslims, their practices, and dissemination of beliefs.

This study examines the religious engagement, or religiosity, and the motivation behind using chosen media for religious information, corresponding with the choice between print media and electronic media among Malaysian Muslims. The goal is to understand the function of both traditional and new media from the perspective of modern Muslims, as they conduct religious activities. This study builds on the study conducted by Ho, Lee and Hameed (2008) and attempts to explore what motivates media users to consume information on electronic versus print medium.

In the previous study, which Ho et al. (2008) conducted in Singapore, they sought to describe the types of religious activities that Singaporean Muslims engaged in on the Internet. The authors found that Singaporean Muslim Internet users are more likely to be involved in online activities related to personal religious concerns, seeking answers to their concerns. Ho et al. (2008) reported that those Internet users approved of the digital technology, but did not elaborate on what motivated the users to engage with the medium for religious purposes. Nevertheless, the study focused on religious activities of the Muslim minority in Singapore. The authors of the study concluded that the scope of their research needed to be expanded into the similarities and differences between electronic media and print media in religious activities for Muslims.

While Ho et al. (2008) focused on the Muslim minority in Singapore, this study focuses on Muslims in Malaysia where the majority of the population are Muslims. The study examines the influence of religion on media choice and uses based on the uses and gratifications theory.

According to German (2007), the theory can be used to explain the motivation behind particular users and their choice of specific media through religious preference and degree of involvement. The theory is applied in the study because media choice has become complicated due to increasing options, such as the Internet, print, radio, and TV. It is critical that religious communities deal with multiple technologies while conducting their religious activities and building stronger community ties.

Literature Review

Previous Studies

The research on the topic is ongoing, with many researchers focusing on the identities of Muslims through media representation. Aydin and Hammer (2010) studied the portrayal and representation of Muslims and Islam in media production. They said that some researchers tended to conduct research on media representation and production rather than behavior and motivation of Muslims behind media usage (Aydin & Hammer, 2010). Similar to this, Sands (2010) also studied Internet consumption among Muslims. Her study found that the shift across most parts of the world, from print media to a multi-featured media, clearly indicates that the ways of acquiring knowledge and constructing identities have evolved. Sands (2010) also added that print and broadcast media have shaped religious engagement, leadership, and representation of Muslims. Moreover, the Internet has invited some Muslims into alternative forms of engaging and identifying themselves. Sands (2010) explained that some Muslims adopted some contents from older media forms into new media forms using a mix of written text, imagery, and sound. For example, Muslims are able to create their videos on YouTube or create their profile pictures on Facebook to promote their communities using the multimedia platforms. Sands (2010)

thought that developing critical understanding of multimodal identity and communication in

Muslim societies is important when studying Muslims' engagement with the new media.

Ho et al. (2008) conducted their study to learn what types of religious activities Muslims

in Singapore used the Internet for, and the purpose of these activities. The researchers also used

the planned behavior theory in examining the effect of Internet perception and religiosity and

other variables on the religious purpose of using the Internet. According to Ho et al. (2008), their

reason for conducting this study was because many empirical studies relating to the religious

motivation of using the Internet were mostly descriptive and exploratory. They researched and

found that online religious engagement is strongly correlated to both personal religious concerns

and traditional religious activities, such as listening to online Islamic audio files, sending online

Islamic celebration greeting cards and searching for mosques. However, traditional religious

activities are more likely tied to the Pillars of Islam.

The Pillars are requirements such as *shahadah* (the declaration of faith) where Muslims

declare their belief in the oneness of Allah and the prophecy of Muhammad, *salah* which is

performing five daily prayers, paying *zakah* which means obligation of an individual to donate a

certain proportion of wealth each year to charitable causes, fasting between sunrise and sunset

during *Ramadhan* that is the ninth month in the *Hijrah* or Islamic calendar, and performing *Hajj*

which is the pilgrimage to Mecca during the twelfth month of the *Hijrah* calendar (Esposito,

2011). These activities are required in the life of every Muslim, except if Muslims are unable to

perform Hajj when they have either poor health or insufficient means. These traditional activities

are not done through either print media or electronic media. Media-based religious activities are

voluntary but are encouraged for Muslims, such as reading the Quran, sharing religious and

Islamic historical books, learning answers to personal religious concerns, and building a

brotherhood and community. This study focuses on the media-based activities.

In addition, Ho, Lee and Hameed (2008) stated that the theory of uses and gratifications

have been used in many studies including the one examining the religious uses of traditional

mass media and the Internet. Instead of using the theory, they decided to use the theory of

planned behavior because they believed that the former theory was ineffective as it is assumed to

select and attend different media messages based on social-psychological factors. Although, it is

true that the former theory is ineffective when used to examine the media use in religious

aspects, some religious readings bring the same messages in different mediums. Muslims believe

that the Quran is the literal word of God and no word in the Quran is changed; the Quran is

always the same content no matter what media form it takes (Ali-Karamali, 2008). Ali-Karamali

(2008) also added that Muslims prefer to read the content in both languages such as original

Arabic and native languages because sometimes translations bring different meanings and errors,

which can reduce accuracy of the message. Since Malaysian Muslims have both the print-based

Quran and the online-based Quran in Arabic-Malay and Arabic-English languages, the theory of

uses and gratifications is needed to understand their needs in choosing media. Besides language,

Muslims also may seek the religious and spiritual experience in reciting and reading of the

Quran. Media uses for religious purpose need to be researched through comparison of electronic

and print media.

Muslims and Islam in Malaysia

Muslims are people who believe in Islam, a monotheistic religion like Judaism and

Christianity. According to a narrator of the video provided by Films Media Group (2004),

trading in Asia in the early seventh century facilitated the spread of Islam to Southeast Asia, but the spread became more significant in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when trade brought prosperity to the same region. The narrator also explained that Malay society in Malaysia and Indonesia has been closely identified with Islam. However, there are other Muslims from different backgrounds including Chinese and Indian Muslims. Compared to Singapore, the majority in Malaysia comprises Muslims as 60.4% of Malaysians in terms of religion while 50.4% of Malaysians are Malay in terms of race (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012).

Religiosity

Religiosity, or religious engagement, is significant to this study because it involves participation in and performance of religious activities by Muslims. German (2007) stated that religious engagement is more likely a construct to be perceived in religion. She added that it refers to the degree of observance or intensity of belief. Primary indicators of the degree of religiosity are performing prayers, understanding the Quran; following properly the *Sunnah* of Muhammad which is the set of references to the sayings, actions, and deeds of the Prophet; and sharing Islamic values and thoughts with the community. These indicators reflect both actual and optimal performances of religious Muslims whether these Muslims use electronic, print, or both media forms. Media-related engagement includes personal, spiritual and *ummah* (community) performances such as reciting the Quran, learning and conducting daily *hadith* (the reported words of the Prophet Muhammad), sharing and discussing understandings of Islam and advice with others, and learning about *ibadah* (Islamic worship) knowledge. These engagement activities are included in the study along with the religious background.

Uses and Gratifications

Although new media such as the Internet emerged into the family of media in the present era, printed products are still surviving and currently being used. While each media brings the same content to audiences, each one has a slightly different role and purpose of usage. Print media may have a few different roles for users to apply in their usage even though the present era is under the domain of the Internet and electronic medium. For example, the print media enables users to read in the absence of Internet network access. German (2007) defined the theory of uses and gratifications as an approach presuming that individuals have their own personal reasons for using different mediums. The theory also consists of some approaches of McQuail's Audience and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (German, 2007). The approaches concurred that varied human behavior and thought processes are complex and impossible to generalize, which means that we may not understand the motive of each individual in using the same media.

This theory is very important in the study because it is useful to examine the perspective of each user towards the function of media and his or her motive for engaging in religious activities. Religious gratification that consists of religious experience and spiritual feelings has not been immersed into the theory. Byrnes (1984) mentioned that a religion psychologist, Gordon Allport, believed that a religious intention is a strong drive leading people to go beyond themselves. The assumption is that the religious activities include acquiring religious information and satisfying personal religious concerns. Religious activities may be different in pursuing gratification compared to other leisure and pleasure activities.

Among these needs, information needs are most important to acquire, facilitating survival as we become dependent on media. Users may not become dependent on all types of media for

the same information, because each type of media is perceived and interpreted differently. Media

selection is more likely to affect the feelings, cognitions, and behaviors of users when

information needs become significant enough to strengthen the motivation of seeking

information (Orlik, 2009). The information needs and media selection may be either met or

conflicted. The preferred media forms may have important features for users to become familiar

and comfortable with, such as gathering information and engaging in religious activities.

Moreover, most media users have needs for companionship and connections, which are

divided into real social and parasocial needs. For social needs, it is common that they use some

media form to communicate with people and develop a relationship between two interacting

people. On the other hand, the parasocial needs are different; each user needs a relationship with

imaginary or virtual friends and characters in specific media, such as cartoons or characters in

television. Orlik (2008) added that electronic media does give some sense of virtual

companionship as users are able to choose some companions to satisfy the need of

companionship. This companionship gratification may be applied to electronic-based and print-

based religion texts such as the Quran and the Bible, for the reason that the texts are considered

the divine inspiration from God. Reading the texts may make users feel closer with God and

fulfills their religious companionship needs. The degree of satisfying religious companionship

needs may be varied depending on the motivation and media use for users. The study needs to

examine the relationship between religious companionship and media selection.

The Study

This study focuses on religiosity and the purposes of medium consumption corresponding

with media choices and the difference of print and electronic mediums. German (2007) believed

that religiosity is important in affecting how users view and use media, as it is a matter of degree. In the life of each devout Muslim, Islam guides every aspect of his or her life. Islamic religiosity and religious engagement are broad as they encompass a major part in a Muslim's life. Among the Islamic religious activities, four activities were chosen to focus on in the study based on their significances for Muslims. The activities are: reciting the Quran, learning Islamic history, learning and applying both *fardh ain* knowledge (compulsory practices) and *fardh kifayah* (compulsory practices that a few people should know and perform in the local neighborhood), and *dawah* which means missionary works through sharing Islamic knowledge with others and educating them on the importance of the religion (Esposito, 2003).

Since the previous study by Ho, Lee and Hameed (2008) demonstrated that the online religious activities are related to personal religious concerns, a particular concern is assumed as an issue for performing rituals such as fardh ain and fardh kifayah. It is important for all Muslims to acquire knowledge related to performing religious activities. Insufficient knowledge may lead some Muslims to seek personal religious solutions. The previous study did not include print media as a variable in their research. This research study examines the relationship between print media and those religious activities and motives. Print media is considered to be more important for users who seek answers for their personal religious concerns among Malaysian Muslims, since texts in print media cannot be edited.

Although, it is easy to seek solutions for the concerns through the diverse and global Internet, it is complex to seek certain answers through diverse outlets available on cyberspace within different opinions and languages. Lawrence (2002) stated that there is still a conflict between different Muslim groups in cyberspace that broadens the appeal of Islam. He also added

that the print media could echo, but not predict or influence, how Muslim cyber users seek

answers. Since the present study focuses on Malaysian Muslims, their preferences on types of

community, whether local, national or global, are studied. Tendency to use the Internet and

electronic media for personal religious concerns may not make sense if these users prefer the

online local community while they have read and bought print-based books in their local areas

and communities. In order to understand how Malaysian Muslims access religious information

online, the study asks the following research questions (RQ):

> *RQ1: What factors influence Malaysian Muslims' choices when accessing specific virtual*
>
> *communities to seek information for personal religious questions?*

Surfing the Internet is more complicated because it is assumed to be less credible than the

print-based books. Therefore, it brings up a question: Why is the Internet used for information

needs? Stafford, Stafford, and Schkade (2004) stated that users might be motivated by the feeling

of joy in the processes of random browsing and site navigation. Is it possible that users navigate

for random Islamic knowledge? Is it because they choose the Internet for better answers

compared to straightforward print-based texts? To answer these questions, this study applies the

theory of uses and gratifications to understand leading factors, motives, and features of media

types. The motivation and factors influencing media selection are significant topics to be

researched and studied.

> *RQ2: What factors and motivation lead Malaysian Muslims to choose Internet over print*
>
> *references for their personal religious questions?*

In addition, the study examined the tendency of Malaysian Muslims towards reading the

print-based Quran and factors influencing their choice. Reciting and understanding the Quran is

important for Muslims, as it increases their spirituality, bringing them closer to God. Geaves (2010) supported that recitation of the Quran is central in the life of each Muslim. The Quran has been published in print form for a very long time in various sizes and interpretative languages across the world. Many Muslims who originally owned print-based Quran books now have more options, due to the introduction of electronic media including mobile apps, and will have different levels of expectations and satisfaction with their reading experiences. Ho and Wang (2012) noted that users using both print and electronic media would have different experiences with each medium. Therefore, it is necessary to research the motives and factors influencing users who prefer to read the print-based Quran.

> *RQ3: What factors and motivations lead Malaysian Muslims to choose print media for reading and reciting the Quran?*

Beside the Quran, Islamic history is also important for Muslims to understand their whole religion. The knowledge of religious development is significant for many devout Muslims to understand, and they take some parts of history as inspiration and guidance for themselves and their friends. *Sirah* (history in Arabic language) has been presented through several formats such as TV, radio, print media, and the Internet. It is interesting to use the theory of uses and gratifications in studying the preference of Malaysian Muslims in media choices for historical information needs, since Malaysian Muslims have been living with the Internet. Based on the observed situation, some devout Muslims tend to read some printed historical books rather than reading virtual history texts and watching historical videos on the Internet. Therefore, this study investigates methods employed by religious Malaysian Muslims when seeking knowledge on historical texts.

RQ4: What media sources and mediums do Malaysian Muslims prefer when seeking

access to historical Islamic texts?

Methodology

This study adopted the methodology from Ho et al. (2008) and Croucher, Oommen, and

Steele (2009). This study employed qualitative interviews to answer all research questions as

nuanced explanations for motivation and behavior cannot be studied as numerical information.

Along with this reason, the relationship between media preference and religious engagement can

only be interpreted by looking through each category of data. Tendency towards using specific

media in religious area needs explanation and description in the study, and it cannot be identified

solely as a variable. Moreover, the religious engagement is generally a social action used to

describe interpretively in the study.

For the purpose of this study, both the preliminary and in-depth interviews were

analyzed. Beneath the qualitative system, the procedure in the study is the whole interview,

which is divided into both the preliminary interview and in-depth interview. This procedure is

necessary to understand the relationship between media selection and religious engagement such

as religious backgrounds and religious activities. Renard (1996) noted that the study of religious

practices is frequently regarded as a concern of anthropology. The preliminary interview is a

better way for collecting data related to media preferences and community, because the function

of the preliminary interview is to collect data and narrow the sampling size for the in-depth

interview. Also, the preliminary interview enables discourse and provides explanations for

interpreting motivation and religious engagement behind the media use. On the other hand, the

in-depth interview is used to summarize and understand factors and motivations leading to media

use. Plus, it provides insight into behaviors and motivations of users toward the media use through the responses of subjects.

Since the previous study (Ho et al., 2008) focused on Muslim minorities in Singapore, this study focuses on Malaysian Muslims who are the majority in Malaysia for several reasons. Among the reasons, Malaysia is a neighbor to Singapore and it is important to see the similarities and differences between those groups in order to validate the conclusion of the previous study. In addition, there are many Malaysians with varying levels of access to media: for example, Malaysians studying in the United States have a higher chance of having media access, while some students in Malaysia are limited to some media only. Moreover, the chance of contacting Malaysians through social networking is higher as the proficiency in Malay language is applied in conducting the study. The most important reason is that the Muslim population in the study cannot be generalized based on the overall group with the same faith. All Muslims have slightly different opinions and cultures in customizing their ways of living.

Sample Population

The data sample was limited to Malaysian students, and included current students and former students who had graduated after March 2012, between the ages of 18 and 28 years, in early 2013. Each respondent was a Malaysian student, either currently or formerly, studying in Malaysia or studying abroad in a country outside Malaysia such as the United States and Australia. It was unnecessary to include the locations of their institutions because location was not necessarily a variable in determining the relationship between media and their uses and gratifications. The sample size for the preliminary interview was expected to be at least 60 students while the sample size for the in-depth interview was expected to be about 50 students. A

convenience sampling method was used because this study focused on a limited population, which consisted of Malaysian students who were studying in Malaysia or abroad. This current population is thought to be less than 200 students worldwide due to the networking constraint. In the in-depth interview, half of the sample was expected to be Malaysian students in Malaysia while the other half was expected to be Malaysian study abroad students in institutions outside Malaysia, regardless of location.

The sampling methods vary due to the different parts of the interview procedure. Sampling of Malaysian students was convenience when it was conducted through networking on Facebook and email. The procedure of sampling Malaysian students studying abroad began with attending an Islamic religious workshop that was hosted specially for chosen Malaysian students from some institutions in the Midwest and Eastern regions of the United States, to understand their responsibilities and improve their devoutness. Eventually, the next step was informing students from every institution in attendance about the study and then collecting email addresses. Once the set of questions for the preliminary interview was prepared, all students who had given their email addresses received an email including the link to participate in the interview. Along with responding to the interview, each student was asked to share the link with his or her institution's members. Concurrently, the procedure of sampling Malaysian students studying in Malaysia began with seeking and contacting some known friends, who were currently studying in Malaysia, through Facebook. Since the question of willingness to participate in the in-depth interview was contained in the set of questions for the preliminary interview, the sampling for the in-depth interview relied on the responses to the question. Also, the answers to the question narrowed the sample size for the interview.

Preliminary Interview

In the procedure of the preliminary interview to study perspectives of media usage relating to religious engagement, a questionnaire containing some questions concerning the background of the subject, religious participation, and media choice was prepared (see Appendix C). Some questions were adopted and modified from the study of Ho et al. (2008). The questions of religious participation were included to measure the amount of time and frequency in using chosen media for religious activities. Meanwhile, some questions about media choice were prepared to study the media usage for personal religious concerns, historical learning, and other religious activities. This set of questions was significant to learn about the relationship between types of medium usage and religious engagement. Along with some opened-text questions, some questions were tabulated to make data collection easier, instead of having complex answers in the study about media preference.

Since the study focused on Malaysian Muslims who were living far away from the Rochester Institute of Technology, where this study was conducted, the questions were distributed online and then redistributed in various ways, including posting on social networking pages and link sharing through mutual friends. For that reason, the solution for distribution was to build an online survey site containing interview questions and allow the questionnaire link to be accessed and shared with subjects. The set was duplicated and translated into English - Malay languages because some Malaysian students in Malaysia might be less fluent in American English. This method was also employed by Ho et al. (2008) to ensure that the study managed to capture adequately the majority opinions of the Muslim community. The set in English was distributed to Malaysian study abroad students in the United States and the United Kingdom

where the native language is English. Online friends who were currently studying in some

institutions were an important resource in expanding the social network among Malaysian

students. They helped in distributing interview questions and gathering responses from at least

60 current and former students in both Malaysian and international institutions. This method for

conducting preliminary interviews was also effective because it allowed for collection of

anonymous responses, as some subjects might be reluctant in answering questions relating to

their religious involvement.

In-Depth Interview

The in-depth interview was conducted once the sample size was narrowed. This interview

procedure was adopted and modified from the study of Croucher et al. (2009). Once the

responses for the preliminary interview were collected, the next step was to look for respondents

willing to participate in the in-depth interviewing process. However, it was less effective than the

offline face-to-face introduction because the personal email address was provided on the

tabulated response to schedule an interview, instead of asking for a respondent's email address.

As a result, the chance of receiving willing responses was low for several unknown reasons. To

solve the problem, another tabulated response asking for the email of each subject who was

willing to participate was added to facilitate contact and to schedule an interview afterwards. The

location of subjects was considered in planning interviews, as the desired subjects needed to

include Malaysian students in both Malaysia and foreign countries.

Once email addresses from some respondents who were willing to participate were

received, the next step was to contact them further and to set the online interview. In addition to

that method, there was another way to obtain more willing interviewees which was through

posting on a Facebook page. The online interview was conducted on both populations of

Malaysian Muslim international students in the United States and Malaysian Muslim students in

Malaysia to reduce sampling and respondent bias based on the location. Visiting and offline

interviews were not included in the study because it was impossible to conduct an offline

interview with the subjects in Malaysia in the limited period.

In the study planning, the tools of online interviews included Skype and other instant

messengers such as Yahoo! Messenger and Google Chat. However, some interviewees chose

Facebook chat messenger while another one chose Skype. The in-depth interview procedure

brought some interesting observations to light. The average time spent participating in the

interview was 56.25 minutes while the longest time on the interview was 75 minutes and the

shortest time was 40 minutes. In the interview, it was necessary to ask the participants personal

questions and gather information concerning their media usage, and their motivations affecting

their perspectives of media use in their religious engagements (see Appendix D). Some testing

questions were included into the interview procedure, to determine the level of religiosity of

interviewees and the influence of media forms on religious performance. The responses to the

questions led to one of two sets of two final questions; once the interviewees answered in

accepted ways, they would be questioned about their Islamic educational background and their

ways of learning. Otherwise, another set of questions about their religious purposes in using

media, and the background and perspective of religious media, was used. These sets of final

questions were used to investigate the relationship between the media use background and

religiosity level.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection was completed, preliminary online responses were tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet and in-depth interviews were organized in a word processing software for further analysis and data translation. Data from both sets of questionnaires were separated based on the language and sorted. The collected set of the data was first sorted based on the status of responses and then the location of the institution. The data of responses from students who were studying in Malaysia were ordered and sorted into the first part. Another part was sorted within the data of responses from Malaysian students abroad in the United States. Along with the number of responses provided by the survey website, all responses were organized by gender and religious affiliation. Then, these numbers were set as the reference along with the procedure of data analysis. The gender was highlighted to make analysis easier to identity the relationships between gender and some other categories. There were some unusual responses as well; for example, a particular respondent gave the answers "1,000,000 minutes" to questions regarding to the time spent per day for seeking personal concern either using print media or online media. As a result, the particular response data were discarded to avoid the distortion in data analysis.

At the completion of the in-depth interviews, all data from four respondents were organized and sorted based on the questions that had been applied in the interview. Along with organizing the data, most of the responses in the Malay language, plus some foreign words, were translated. Data translation was conducted through understanding the context from the respondents first. Otherwise, the data would be biased or misinformed, and it might affect the study. In understanding and translating properly the context, respondents were asked to assure that their responses were understood and interpreted clearly. Then, the next step was determining

key points in all responses corresponding to all interview questions, and relating them to some

research questions in the study.

Analyses were conducted on all responses to determine and relate significant key points

of various categories for answering some research questions and revealing some supporting

information. Since the number of respondents who believed that they have sufficient Islamic

knowledge was very low, the data of these respondents were analyzed and compared to each

other.

- RQ 1: What factors influence Malaysian Muslims' choices when accessing specific virtual

communities to seek information for personal religious questions?

- Responses with regard to preferences of virtual community, access to electronic media,

and thoughts about effective media form in sharing knowledge.

- RQ 2: What factors and motivation lead Malaysian Muslims to choose Internet over print

references for their personal religious questions?

- The minutes per day spent using either print form or the Internet for the personal

concerns were counted. Also, the preferences in using media form for the solutions to

personal concerns and the availability of shop were analyzed.

- RQ 3: What factors and motivations lead Malaysian Muslims to choose print media for

reading and reciting the Quran?

- Responses of time being spent and preference to read the Quran based on each media

form were analyzed.

- RQ 4: What media sources and mediums do Malaysian Muslims prefer when seeking access to

historical Islamic texts?

- The analysis was conducted on the responses regarding significance of Islamic history in every subject's life and the time being spent and media preference to read religious text.

Limitations

Meanwhile, there are some limitations in the study that need to be overcome in the future. Since this study focused on Malaysian Muslim students and Ho, Lee and Hameed's study focused on Singaporean Muslims, the study cannot be generalized to Muslims because Singapore and Malaysia are neighboring countries, which means that the subjects in both studies are similar in their cultures and languages even though they are different in lifestyle and technology access. In addition, the study needs to be expanded significantly by conducting more interviews with willing participants to examine and understand the relationship between media selection and needs for acquiring historical information, and factors influencing selection of specific media and for reading the Quran.

Analysis Results

General Summary

After closing access to the questionnaire, the whole collection of both sets (English and transcribed Malay) on the site showed that 258 people accessed the link, and 160 people responded and started. Ninety-two respondents completed the questionnaire, which left 67 respondents who had withdrawn from the questionnaire. The average time spent completing the preliminary interview among all respondents was 8 1/2 minutes. The longest time spent to complete the interview was 54 minutes while the shortest time was 65 seconds. In the analysis of gender breakdown, there were 52 male respondents and 40 female respondents. However, there were four respondents among the 92 respondents who self-identified as other than Muslims

which meant that only 88 respondents were Muslims. These four respondents were students in

Malaysian local institutions and owned laptops. While three of these four identified themselves

as a Christian, the remaining one respondent provided no information about his or her religious

affiliation (see Figure 1). Among these four respondents, there was one female who had a smart

mobile phone along with the laptop, who reported that she spent nine hours per week reading

religious text and prayed more than five times daily. She claimed that she always read religious

texts in both printed and electronic media forms.
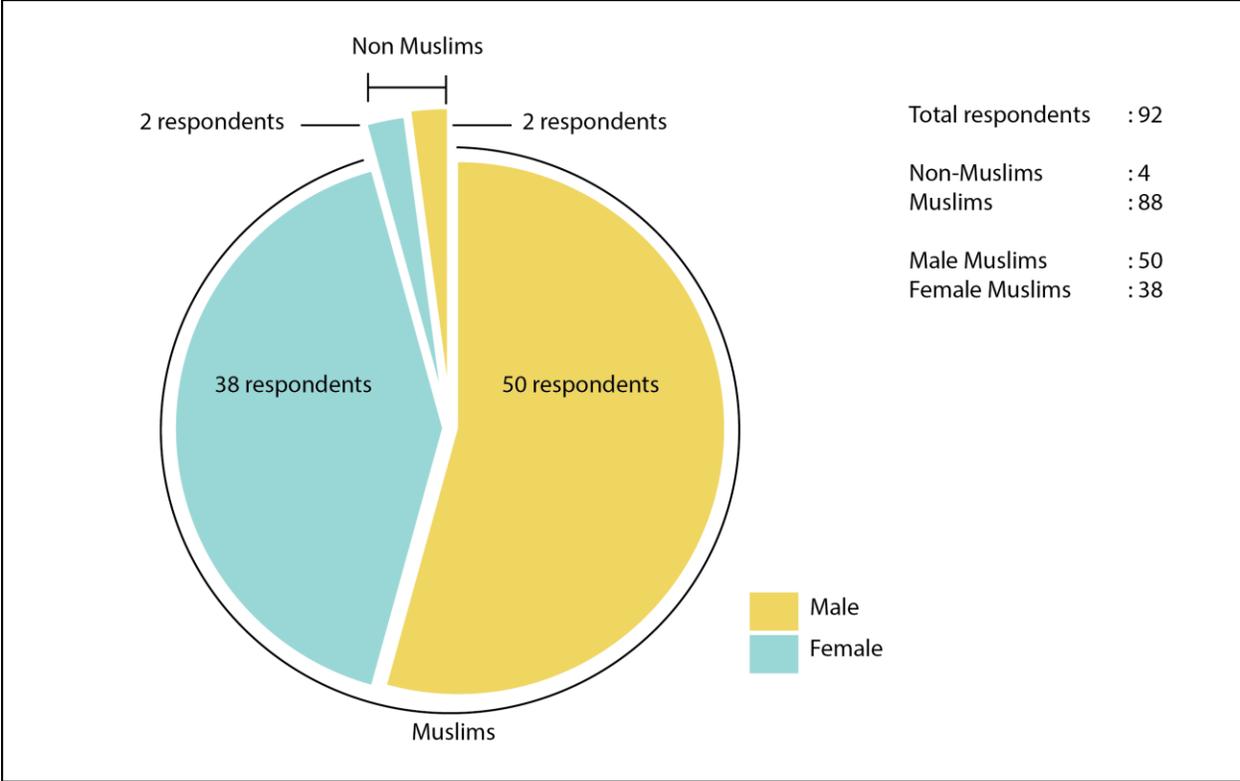
Figure 1: Results of Religious Affiliation and Gender.

Research Question 1: What factors influence Malaysian Muslims' choices

when accessing specific virtual communities to seek information for personal

religious questions?

Data results show that 12 out of 88 Muslim respondents were more likely to access an

online global community for seeking a solution to their personal concerns. Eleven respondents

among those respondents were students in the United States while the remaining one was

studying in Malaysia. In the group of those 11 respondents, there were eight respondents using

online media to seek answers for personal concerns while the other three respondents were the

ones seeking answers in-person. Meanwhile nine of the respondents in the group had both

laptops and smart mobile phones, while two others were different. One of them owned a

computer only and tended to focus on information containing hadith and Quran explanations

only. Another person had a laptop only and relied on an in-person source such as an imam.

Besides 11 subjects in the group of 12, there was a female respondent who owned a laptop, and

used online media to seek solutions even though she had four Islamic shops in her neighborhood

area (see Figure 2).
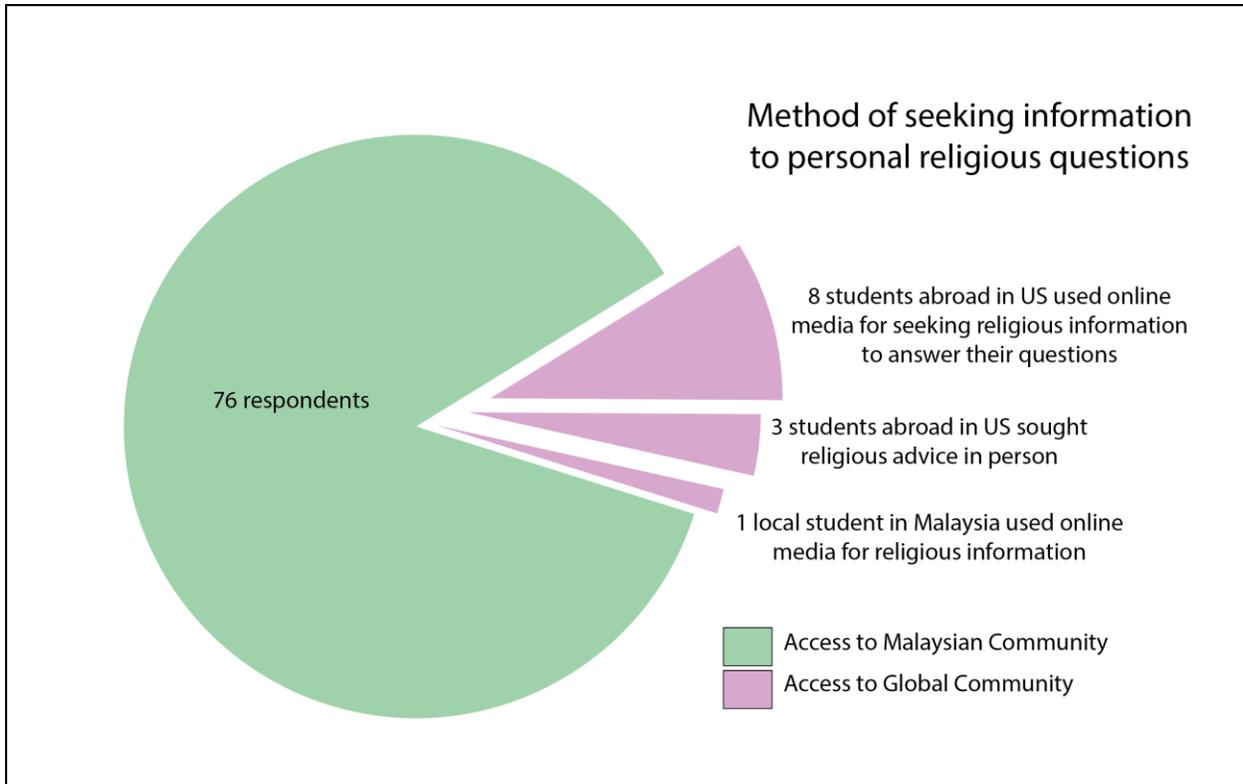
Figure 2: Results of Community Access.

The analysis found that 15 persons among 88 respondents thought that print media is more effective in sharing Islamic knowledge. However, it is interesting that nine people, including six males and three females, of those 15 respondents tended to seek a solution for the concern via in-person sources while one group containing three respondents, including two males, tended to seek information through print media, and another group, including three female respondents, sought a solution using online media. On the other hand, the remaining 73 respondents chose electronic media as being more effective in sharing knowledge. Forty-seven respondents, including 26 males and 21 females, from 73 people tended to seek answers for concerns through online media while 21 respondents, including 15 males and six females, did so through in-person, and three respondents, including two males, used print media. The remaining one did not respond for the media preference (see Figure 3).
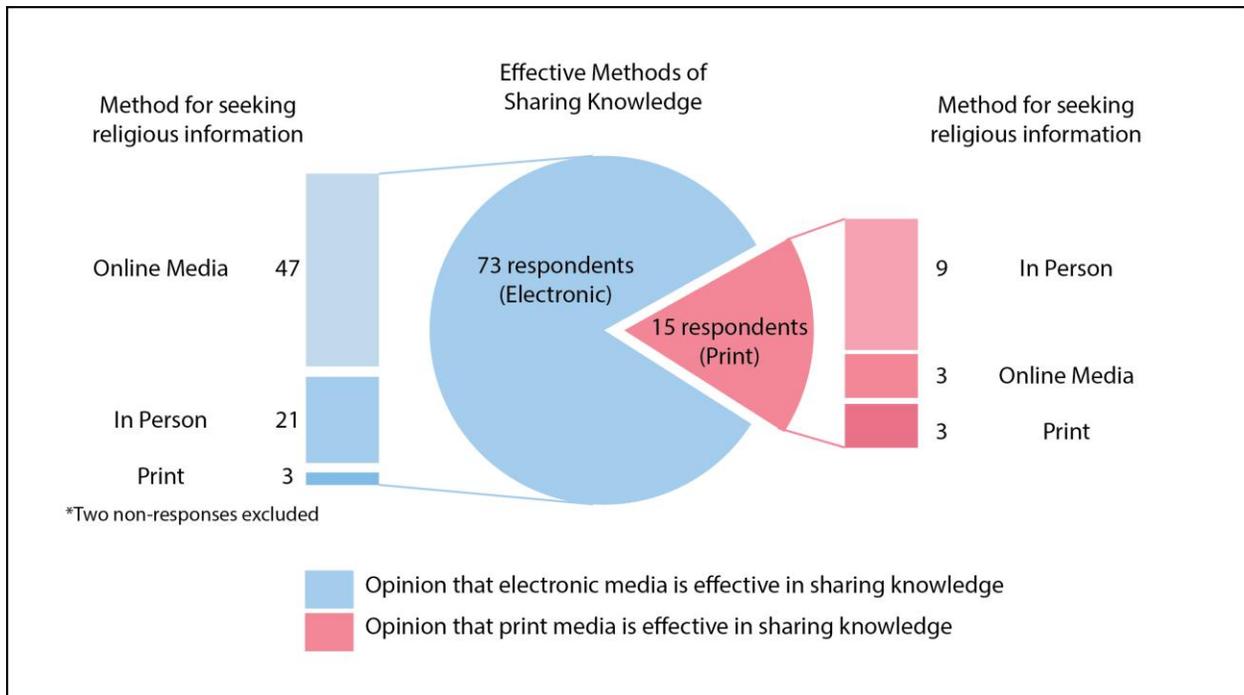
Figure 3: Results of Methods for Seeking Information and Opinion for Sharing Knowledge.

Research Question 2: What factors and motivation lead Malaysian Muslims to

choose Internet over print references for their personal religious questions?

The analysis found some reliable data for the second research question regarding factors and motivation influencing preference for the Internet over print references for their personal concerns. The study revealed that 50 respondents (26 males and 24 females) chose online media to seek answers while 30 respondents (21 males and nine females) sought in-person support and six others (three males and three females) used print media. Among 50 respondents who used online media, 26 respondents were Malaysian students studying abroad who had no shop in their areas in the United States and three other respondents were local students in Malaysia. The remaining 14 local students in Malaysia and seven students abroad in the United States had at least one shop in their area. Among 30 respondents (21 males and nine females) who sought in-person support/guidance, there were 10 respondents who had no shop in their areas, and eight out of 10 respondents were study abroad students. The remaining 12 local students in Malaysia and seven study abroad students in the United States had at least one shop in their areas. On the other hand, five persons among six respondents who used print media had shops in their area. Four of the six respondents owned laptops only while one had every access and another had a laptop and a smart phone (see Table 1).

Table 1

Media Preferences for Seeking Information and Availability of Islamic Shops

Online Media				In-Person*				Print Media			
Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
26		24		21		9		3		3	
Abroad (US)		Local (MY)		Abroad (US)		Local (MY)		Abroad (US)		Local (MY)	
No shop	At least shop	No shop	At least shop	No shop	At least shop	No shop	At least shop	No shop	At least shop	No shop	At least shop
26	7	3	14	8	7	2	12	1	2**	-	3

* One non-response excluded
** One respondent studied abroad in Australia – had five shops in her area

Findings show that an average of six respondents spent 26 minutes per day seeking

solution through print media, and 12.5 minutes using electronic media. The average time per day

spent to seek solution among all 87 Muslim respondents was 13 minutes using print media and

26 minutes using the Internet through electronic media. Based on gender, the average time spent

by 37 female respondents was 16 minutes for print media and 30 minutes for the Internet while

the average time per day for all 50 male respondents was 11 minutes for print media and 23

minutes for electronic media (see Table 2).

Table 2

Average Time Spent Per Day Seeking Answers by Medium

Average time spent per day for personal concern solution (*One non-response excluded)	Print Media	Electronic Media / Internet
All 50 Male Respondents	11 minutes per day	23 minutes per day
All 37 Female Respondents	16 minutes per day	30 minutes per day
All 87 Respondents	13 minutes per day	26 minutes per day

Research Question 3: What factors and motivations lead Malaysian Muslims to choose print media for reading and reciting the Quran?

Moreover, a finding in the analysis answered the third research question regarding the preferences of media in reading the Quran. The finding revealed that 54 of 88 Muslim respondents preferred the printed form to read and recite the Quran, while 15 respondents preferred an electronic media form and 11 respondents chose either print or electronic media depending on the situation. Among 54 respondents who preferred the printed form, 26 respondents prayed more than five times daily, 17 respondents tended to pray five times daily, 10 respondents tended to pray about two to four times daily and one respondent claimed to pray a few times weekly. In the group of 15 respondents who tended to use an electronic form for reading the Quran, there were nine respondents who reported praying more than five times daily and six respondents who tended to pray five times daily. Seven out of 11 respondents who chose either a printed form or an electronic form tended to pray five times daily, while three respondents tended to pray more than five times daily and one respondent used to perform about two to four prayers weekly (see Table 3). In addition, the average time spent to read the Quran per week was three hours for all respondents who used print media, three hours for respondents with a preference for electronic media, and five hours for respondents who preferred either a print form or an electronic form.

TABLE 3

The Relationship between Level of Religiosity and Quran Medium Choice

	More than 5 times per daily	5 times per daily	2 – 4 times per daily	A few times per week	Total respondents
Printed form	26	17	10	1	54
Electronic form	9	6	-	-	15
Both media forms	7	3	1	-	11
(*8 non-responses excluded)					80

Research Question 4: What media sources and mediums do Malaysian

Muslims prefer when seeking access to historical Islamic texts?

In answering the fourth research question about the preferences of media regarding the historical texts, the analysis showed interesting patterns. Fifty-four respondents, including 35 males, thought that Islamic history was very important in their lives, while 25 respondents, including 15 females, thought Islamic history was just quite important in their lives. Eight other respondents including five males and three females thought that Islamic history was fairly important or almost neutral (see Table 4).

Table 4

Results of Opinions towards Significance of Islamic History

Opinions	Male	Female	Total
Very important	35	19	54
Quite Important	10	15	25
Fairly Important	5	3	8
(*One non-response excluded)			87

In the case of preferences of media among all respondents when reading historical texts, 42 of 88 respondents preferred print media to read historical texts and 37 respondents preferred the Internet. Meanwhile, seven respondents had other ways such as attending a talk and a seminar, engaging in a discussion, or learning from friends. No respondent answered that Islamic history was not important in his or her life. In terms of religious devoutness, 22 of 42 respondents who preferred print media tended to perform prayers more than five times daily and 13 others tended to fulfill their full obligatory five prayers daily. Eighteen of thirty-seven respondents who preferred the Internet were more likely to fulfill their full obligatory five prayers daily and 15 others used to pray more than five times daily. Three of seven respondents who had other ways to acquire historical knowledge tended to perform prayers more than five times daily, while two others always fulfilled their full obligatory routine of five prayers daily (see Table 5).

Table 5

Level of Religiosity and Media Preference for Historical Information

	More than 5 times daily	5 times per daily	Below 5 times per daily	Total
Print media	22	13	7	42
Internet (Online media)	15	18	4	37
Other methods (Seminar / Talk)	3	2	2	7
(*2 non-responses excluded)				86

Other Findings

In addition to the findings regarding the research questions, there was an unexpected finding that six people among 88 respondents responded that they have sufficient Islamic knowledge. They were two students abroad in the United States with all access and four local students in Malaysia with limited access. Most of them were between 21 and 23 years old. Although they all relied on the Malaysian community for solutions to the personal religious questions, half of them relied on online media more while another half of six respondents relied on neither print media nor online media. However, there were only four respondents among 88 respondents willing to participate in the in-depth interview. These four respondents included two students abroad in the United States and two local students in Malaysia. Another interesting result from the preliminary interviews was that respondents believed electronic media was am important source for sharing Islamic knowledge.

On the other hand, analyzing open-texted data from the in-depth interviews with four respondents, including two local students in Malaysia and two students abroad in the United States, revealed findings to answer some research questions. All respondents suggested that electronic media was more significant to use in sharing Islamic values and knowledge, especially through Facebook social media. However, two respondents mentioned other effective methods for sharing information, including attending workshops and presentations, and printed media. Also, all respondents claimed that they just had basic knowledge of Islamic education and they still needed to learn more. In response to the question, which is the most credible source among printed media, most of all respondents stated that the Quran is the most credible source among printed media to rely on. Although, one of them explained that other credible sources following

the Quran should be ones coming from the educated writers who had advanced religious

knowledge. All of these interviewees tended to read the Quran in printed form for some

advantages, even when electronic media was used, but that depended on the situation and time.

On the other hand, they had different methods in understanding Islamic history based on their

personal comfort zone and experience. During the interview, three respondents who had a lot of

knowledge stated that they used different ways of learning to acquire new knowledge. However,

two of the three respondents stated that social interaction is significant for people to learn Islamic

knowledge.

Discussion

The study was conducted to understand and relate religious engagement and media

selection among Muslims in the era of technology. Generally, the finding reveals that media

selection does not affect religious engagement among Muslim students. However, the influence

of religious needs and content is still applicable in choosing and using specific media form.

Motivation of religious engagement and commitment is strongly associated with media selection

in terms of consuming messages and content, and satisfying specific needs.

In the context of support for community, it seems that most Malaysian Muslims relied on

Malaysian communities, confirming the trends observed by Sands (2010) who found that

Muslims adopted the Internet as the alternative form to engage and identify themselves in their

community. The Internet provides a multi-media experience, which allows Muslim users to

express themselves and engage in local religious activities, based on the medium of their choice.

This study's findings support observations made by Sands (2010) who noted that ways of

acquiring knowledge and constructing identities have evolved, resulting in adaption of a multi-

featured media. Another reason is probably that the Malaysian Muslims are following their

communities based on their same *mazhab* (religious foundations, not sect). They know that other

*mazhab*s are slightly different in religious practices and customs although all mazhabs are the

same in the faith and Sunni sect. Nigosian (2004) stated that Muslims have a whole religious

community within different groups and the differences do not harm the basic sense of consensus

as believers in the same faith, and the Muslims tend to consider different groups as contributing

some positive pieces in the development of Islam. Also, it confirms with Lawrence (2002) that

the conflict between different Muslim communities in cyberspace is still there in broadening the

appeal of Islam, which leads to many Malaysian Muslims turning their focus to their Malaysian

community. However, a small portion of all respondents chose to access the global community,

even when the Malaysian virtual community was available to them. Most of those respondents

were Malaysian students studying abroad, which implies that they may have encountered

different Muslim communities because they were studying outside of Malaysia. They might also

have experienced the interaction in non-Malaysian communities until they decided to access

generally most virtual communities over the globe. It implies that the tendency towards diverse

global community depends on the experience and intention of expanding understandings and

knowledge in Islamic practices, issues, and personal concerns. Furthermore, one remaining

female respondent who chose global community spent 60 minutes daily on online media through

her laptop only for personal concerns. Plus, she always used both media forms to read religious

text and she had four Islamic shops in her neighborhood area. This result shows that she might be

interested in continually acquiring more knowledge and expanding her community-access zone.

Also, she might encounter and experience many new things by both going to different shops and surfing the Internet.

Along with the study on community preference in seeking solution for personal concern, the study revealed that most Malaysian Muslims chose online media while some chose to learn answers in person from peers, and a few respondents chose print media. This shows that the Internet has become the most relied upon source for solutions to personal religious questions. Among factors of choosing the Internet over print material in seeking the solution, the absence of shops in a country outside Malaysia like the United States is clearly obvious. Being abroad reduces the sense of belonging to the identified community unless they brought Malaysian print materials with them. Most of the respondents who chose a person to ask for answers were males and it is probably because those men are more likely to be confident asking persons such as an imam or a religious friend. For instance, one of the respondents from Malaysia explained how he sought sources of information. "Recently, I am more inclined towards online media such as Facebook but sometimes I would prefer more to attending "kuliah" (seminar) class and presentation, to ensure that no misunderstanding towards all given topics," (Excerpt from a male interviewee).

The reason fewer female respondents indicated a preference for seeking answers from a person could be that it is hard to find a female devout person in Islamic institutions. Younger females are more likely to be shy to ask male imams for information, and so they are forced to go to the Internet for the solution. However, the gender-based minutes for use of each media form is almost equal, and shows that gender does not affect the preference of media form for seeking answers.

The Internet is easier and faster when seeking solutions compared to print media; the average time of all respondents using the Internet was double the time of using print media. It indicates that Malaysian Muslims enjoy the Internet longer and navigate for random Islamic knowledge. This result supports the explanation of Sands (2010) that some Muslims adopted and customized some contents from older media forms into new media forms using a mix of written text, imagery, and sound. Also, it supports Stafford and his colleagues (2004) for the statement that the feeling of joy in browsing and navigating sites randomly motivates Internet users. Since most of six respondents who chose print media have shops in their neighborhood area, it implies that Malaysian Muslims are more likely to rely on printed material when they have a higher chance to access the shops around them. However, the data is not significant enough to support the statement that print media is considered to be more important for users to seek desired information for the personal concern. Besides the factor of accessing the shops, some Muslims tend to take the Quran as the credible source for them to find answers, and others rely on some credible books through their backgrounds and authors. One of the respondents described conditions for selecting a credible source. "In choosing the credible one among the religious books, I would be more confident to read depending the background of educated authors . . .," (Excerpt from the female interviewee).

Contrary to what we learned about online media usage, this study reveals that many Malaysian Muslims strongly prefer to use the printed form for reading the Quran, even after they have been introduced to digital forms such as Quran apps and Quran websites. It confirms the statement of Ho and Wang (2012) that users do not obtain the expected outcome after using their mobile electronic books no matter how strong their motives. The possible assumption is that

users who were born before the time when the Internet was introduced in Malaysia grew up

knowing and reading the Quran in print media before engaging themselves in religious online

media. As one male respondents mentioned, the preference of media form is influenced by the

frequent exposure to a specific media form. "So far, with Allah Willing, I read Quran anytime,

anywhere but usually after finishing prayer. I prefer reading on printed forms because it is really

easy to read, plus I already get used to this way**,"** (Excerpt from a male interviewee).

Being familiar with specific media for reading in childhood is very significant in

influencing the preference of media form. The media selection is less significant in affecting

religious engagement. The result of the study shows that the background of media use is strongly

related to media selection in religious commitment. Orlik (2009) stated that media selection is

more likely to affect the feelings, cognitions, and behaviors of users. The experience of using a

specific medium shaped the feeling and cognition of belonging and being familiar with the

medium. It is what Ho et al. (2008) proposed: Muslim Internet users were associated less with

involvement in traditional religious institutions. Indeed, reading the Quran in an electronic

device does influence the religious commitment.

The average time spent reading the Quran in either a printed form or an electronic form is

significant enough to declare that the motive of reading is a very important element in acquiring

strong religious engagement. The stronger the commitment in reading the Quran, knowledge of

the Quran and the frequency of reading the Quran increases. The findings concur with the

assumption of a religion psychologist, Gordon Allport, that a religious intention is a strong drive

leading people to go beyond themselves (Byrnes, 1984). Also, the result of media preference

suggests that reading the Quran in printed form gives strong companionship gratification towards

God. However, the data in the study is not sufficient to understand the needs of having a spiritual

religious experience and companionship gratification.

In addition, the media preference in reading historical information and the significance of

the information were analyzed. The finding does not support the stated experience that some

devout Muslims tend to read some printed historical books. Important needs among many

Muslims to learn historical information do not affect media selection. It means that the

motivation and belief that Islamic history is very important to know, affects the devoutness and

religious engagement regardless of media form, confirming German's (2007) observations, that

religious engagement is a construct being perceived in the faith associated with the intensity of

belief. Since the data stated that the Internet is still useful in acquiring historical information after

the print media, it supports the statement of Orlik (2009) that information needs became

significant enough to strengthen the motivation of acquiring knowledge while media selection

affect the feelings, cognitions, and behaviors of users. For instance, one of the interviewees

explained how she uses media based on her motivation of understanding the historical

information.

> Firstly, I need sense like seeing, to experience and understand the history of Islam. I
>
> always watch videos of Islamic history on YouTube. And then, reading books relating to
>
> the topic in the video is necessary in order to make my understandings clear. (Excerpted
>
> from the female interviewee)

This response indicates that each medium has a slightly different role and purpose for

consumption; and each one brings the same content to audiences. Each media form has important

features for users to become familiar and comfortable with. Since some Muslims tend to choose

other ways beside media forms, such as attending seminars, talks, and "*usrah*" (small religious

discussion group), the needs for information and media selection are sometimes either met or

conflicted depending on the motivation of each user. As German stated (2007), the theory

explained that different individuals have different purposes in consuming different medium.

Another interviewee expressed his reliance on his chosen method to fulfill his needs for

information.

> I learnt Islamic history by attending kuliah and reading book. The best way to understand
>
> the history in Islam, is by "talaqi" (study face-to-face) with an imam or "ustaz" (religious
>
> teacher). By that, the information will be mostly correct without misunderstanding.
>
> (Excerpted from a male interviewee)

Ho et al. (2008) suggested using the theory of planned behavior, instead of the theory of

uses and gratifications, to study Muslim Internet users' religious activities. However, this study

supports application of the theory of uses and gratifications for several reasons. The theory of

uses and gratifications assumes that each user of media is an active audience, that is, they are

able to examine and evaluate various types of media to accomplish their needs such as need for

information, need for religious experience, and need for companionship (West and Turner,

2010). It is proven by the situation where most of all of the respondents preferred the Internet to

seek desired information for personal concern while they tended to use the Quran in printed form

to improve their devoutness. Moreover, the theory assumes that the right of judging value of

media content is in the hand of each audience (West and Turner, 2010).

It is significant in most religious engagement activities such as acquiring religious

information and sharing the important information with friends. The respondent proved this

statement by describing how she used interactive media on YouTube to acquire information and

read printed media to verify the information. According to West and Turner's (2010) theory, the

audience member has his or her approach to associate the gratification of needs with a specific

medium choice. The proof is that most respondents think that online social media is effective in

fulfilling their needs for sharing information. This proof concurs with Ho et al. (2008) that the

theory of uses and gratifications assumed that users tend to select and use different media

messages based on social-psychological factors. These respondents may tend to know that

Internet and electronic media consumption has emerged in the life of everyone today and they

think it is an efficient method for sharing knowledge through online social media.

Even though the study applied the theory of uses and gratifications, the analysis was also

informed by the theory of planned behavior. The obvious situation that most users have a higher

need for acquiring information supports the theory of planned behavior from the perspective of

Muslims towards the Internet, as using the Internet is a simple and quick way to seek

information, enabling researchers to predict the behavior in using electronic media. On the other

hand, users' history with media use shaped their perspective towards specific media, influencing

behavior such as reading the Quran and historical texts in either printed form or electronic form.

Most respondents read the Quran in printed form because of their personal experience and

background. However, study data is not sufficient enough to support the theory and conclude that

the attitude towards reading the Quran in printed media predicts the strong religious engagement.

Perloff (2010) explained that attitudes could not predict behaviors when people are not able to

translate psychological attitudes into action. The attitude of respondents towards media choice

were not questioned and studied during the interview, plus there were insufficient responses to

support the theory. Along with the motive and intention, the assumption of using the theory is

that the attitude towards religious activities such as acquiring credible information may predict

the media use. Overall, the association between religious engagement and media selection is

more likely to depend on the motivation to fulfill needs such as information and companionship,

and purpose of using specific media.

Future Studies

Generally, the study on the religious engagement in terms of media selection needs to be

expanded to Muslim communities in some countries such as Saudi Arab, India, Indonesia, the

United States, England, and South Korea. Because there are many growing Muslim communities

in these countries and the level of technology access is different in each country, this data would

provide findings to understand the global Islamic practice in the technology era. The study could

also be expanded to include more interviews with students in high schools and universities across

Malaysia because most students in high school today have been exposed to the Internet and

electronic media earlier in life compared to the subjects in the study. There are also other

universities with poor levels of access to the Internet and technology in Malaysia. Alternatively,

the study may be continued in PhD research in cooperation with psychology researchers to study

religious and spiritual experience and needs for companionship through print and electronic

media among religious Muslims and Christian in Malaysia. Moreover, the study may be

expanded to examine religious engagement in terms of media selection among other religious

groups including Christians in Malaysia and Singapore.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary

Dawah (Arabic) / Dakwah (Malaysia)

> The term is for missionary work, proselytization, and Islamization especially, the activity
>
> to call individuals and communities back to God.

Fardh Ain

> Legal obligations each individual Muslim must perform: including prayer, charity,
>
> fasting, and pilgrimage.

Fardh Kifayah

> This term is a communal obligation in Muslim legal doctrine, which must be discharged
>
> by the Muslim community as a whole.

Hadith

> It is defined as the reported words of someone explaining and quoting actions and
>
> speeches of the Prophet. It could be words of Allah and explanation of the Prophet.

Hajj

> The term is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca during the month of Dhul Hijjah. This
>
> activity is one of five Pillars of Islam, where all adult Muslims are required to perform at
>
> least once in their lives if they are physically and financially able.

Hijrah

> Hijrah is the migration of Muhammad and his Companions from Mecca to Medina in 622
>
> C.E, the first year in the Islamic calendar.

Ibadah

The term is the general worship and acts of devotion. The term is for generally the

religious duties of worship incumbent on all Muslims when they come of age and are of

sound body and mind.

Imam

Imam is one who stands in front; a role model for the Muslim community in all its

spiritual and secular undertakings.

Kuliah

Malaysian / Indonesian term defines religious talks and lectures.

Madhhab

Maddhab or Mazhab is an Islamic school of legal thought. There are four Sunni

maddhabs: Hanafi, Shafie, Maliki and Hambali.

Ramadhan

Ninth month of the lunar Hijrah calendar when fasting are required.

Salah

The second one of the five Pillars of Islam. The term is the main worship activity for all

Muslims where they perform five daily prayers.

Shahadah / Syahadah

The term is the first one of the five Pillars of Islam. Muslims are required to reciting of

the Islamic witness of faith, "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger

of God".

Sirah

Sirah is the literary genre that developed out of narrative histories of Muhammad's life and activities. Also it chronicles the creation and history of the world up through the time of Muhammad, and encompasses the lives of Muhammad's Companions.

Sunnah

It is defined as everything that is referred to the sayings, actions and deeds of the Prophet.

Talaqi

Malaysian term defines the process of learning Quran directly from the Quran mentor.

Ummah

Muslim community: A fundamental concept in Islam, expressing the essential unity and theoretical equality of Muslims from diverse cultural and geographical settings.

Usrah

This meaning is a family in Arabic language. However, Malaysian Muslim community uses this term to define the small group of either all brothers or all sisters who form tight bond with an experienced mentor.

Ustadh

Honorific title of respect populary assigned to those who are widely recognized for their learning.

Zakah

Zakah is one of the five Pillars of Islam. The activity requires each Muslim with financial means to do almsgiving in 2.5 percent of their net worth annually.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (BORANG PERSETUJUAN BERMAKLUMAT)

You have been invited to take part in the research study being conducted to learn more about perspectives and motives for media preferences in religious engagement. This study is being conducted by Mohd Adam Mahadi, under the supervision of Dr. Ammina Kothari, Department of Communication, College of Liberal Arts, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). Your responses will contribute to our overall knowledge of media use and its religious functions.

(Anda dijemput untuk menyertai kajian yang dilakukan untuk memahami pandangan dan motif dalam pemilihan media untuk pengelibatan agama. Kajian ini dilakukan oleh saya, Mohd Adam Mahadi di bawah pantauan Dr. Ammina Kothari dari jabatan Komunikasi dalam fakulti Liberal Arts di Institusi Teknologi Rochester (RIT). Respons anda akan memberi sumbangan kepada pengetahuan keseluruhan dan fungsi-fungsi agama dalam penggunaan media.)

This interview includes questions about your religious engagement corresponding to media use, religious activities, and your perspective towards the significance of media in religious use. The interview will take approximately 15 - 30 minutes to complete.

(Temuduga ini termasuk soalan-soalan tentang pengelibatan diri anda dalam agama menggunakan media dan aktiviti agama serta pandangan anda terhadap kepentingan media dalam bidang agama. Temuduga ini akan mengambil masa 15 - 30 minit untuk melengkapkannya.)

Participation in this interview is **voluntary** and your personal information will be kept **confidential.** You may choose to refuse to participate, skip any question, or withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. If you do participate in the study, it is possible that you may experience difficulty in answering the personal questions. If this occurs, you are free to withdraw your participation. The information you provided prior to your withdrawal will be discarded.

(Penyertaan dalam temuduga adalah secara sukarela dan maklumat peribadi anda akan disimpan sebagai sulit. Anda boleh membuat pilihan samada menolak penyertaan, melangkah mana-mana soalan, ataupun menarik diri pada bila-bila masa tanpa penalti. Jikalau anda menyertai temuduga, anda berkemungkinan mengalami kesukaran dalam menjawab soalan peribadi. Apabila ia berlaku, anda ada pilihan untuk menarik diri. Maklumat yang diberi sehingga anda menarik diri, tidak akan diambil kira.)

Through this written consent document, the researcher has explained this study to you and answered your questions. For questions about your right as a study participant, you may contact Heather Foti as the associate director of Human Subjects Research Office at (585) 475 7673 or email at hmfsrs@rit.edu.

(Berdasarkan dokumen persetujuan bertulis ini, penyelidik telah menerangkan kajian ini kepada anda dan menjawab soalan-soalan anda. Untuk soal tentang hak anda sebagai peserta kajian ini, anda boleh menghubungi Heather Foti, sebagai penolong pengerusi dari pejabat Penyelidikan Subjek Manusia (Human Subjects Research Office) melalui email pada hmfsrs@rit.edu.)

If you have any questions, concerns, or wish to report a study-related problem, you should not hesitate to contact:

(Jikalau anda mempunyai apa-apa soalan, isu ataupun ingin melaporkan masalah kajian ini, anda dipersilakan menghubungi:)

Mohd Adam Mahadi	Ammina Kothari
Graduate Student	Assistant Professor
Department of Communication	Department of Communication
Rochester Institute of Technology	Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, NY 14623	Rochester, NY 14623
(585) 967 3522 - Text	(585) 475 4413
email: mbm7299@rit.edu	email: abkgpt@rit.edu

Please read the following and contact me at mbm7299@rit.edu:
(Sila baca yang berikut dan hubungi saya pada mbm7299@rit.edu:)

"I have carefully read, and have had this study and the terms used in this consent form and their significance explained to me. I am fully competent to accept this form and participate the interview. I understand that I am to print and keep for my record and allow my information being used for the study confidentially."

("Saya telah baca dan teliti apa yang diterangkan tentang kajian, syarat-syarat dalam borang penyertaan ini dan kepentingannya. Saya bersungguh hati sepenuhnya untuk bersetuju menyertai temuduga. Saya memahami bahawa saya boleh mencetak borang untuk rekod saya, dan membenarkan bahawa maklumat saya digunakan secara sulit untuk kajian ini.")

Appendix C: Preliminary Interview Questionnaire

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I, Mohd Adam Mahadi, am a graduate student of the Department of Communication at the Rochester Institute of Technology. The purpose of this research is to study religious engagement and motives in consuming two different mediums: print media and electronic media. This study focuses on Malaysian Muslims who are currently studying and formerly graduated in either local Malaysian institutions or abroad. Questions are used to gather and obtain data **anonymously** or **confidentially**.

*(Saya, Mohd Adam Mahadi, seorang pelajar ijazah lanjutan dalam jabatan Komunikasi di Institusi Teknologi Rochester (Rochester Technology of Institute). Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mempelajari pengelibatan dan motif agama dalam menggunakan dua bahan komunikasi yang berlainan: media cetak dan media elektronik. Kajian ini memberi fokus pada Muslim Malaysia yang sedang belajar atau baru tamat belajar dalam institusi-institusi tempatan Malaysia dan luar negara. Soalan-soalan ini digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data secara **sulit**.)*

Questions: *(Soalan)*

1. Gender *(Jantina)***:**   Male *(Lelaki)*   Female *(Perempuan)*

2. Age *(Umur)*   **:**   Under 18   21 - 23   27 - 28
                                            18 - 20   24 - 26   Above 28

3. Are you a college student or former graduated student?
   (Adakah anda pelajar institusi atau pelajar yang baru tamat belajar dari institusi?)
        Yes   No

4. *** If participants choose "No", stop here ***

5. Where do you study or graduate from?
   (Di manakah anda belajar ataupun tamat dari?)
      Local institutions in Malaysia *(Institusi tempatan di Malaysia)*
      Abroad institutions in *(Institusi luar negara di)* _____

6. Which of these do you have access to?
   (Yang manakah anda mempunyai akses ke?)
      _____ Computer *(Komputer)*

_____ Laptop *(Komputer riba)*
_____ Tablet Mobile *(Telefon Bimbit Pad)* -iPad / Android Nexus / Others-
_____ Smart Mobile *(Telefon Bimbit Pintar)* -iPhone / Android Mobile / Others-

7. **Do you belong to any religious groups?**
   (Apakah anda mengikut dalam suatu pegangan agama?)
   Yes - Specify : *(Ya - Nyatakan:)* _____
   No *(Tidak)*

8. **Are you a Muslim?**
   (Adakah anda orang Islam?)
   Yes, I am a Muslim. *(Ya, saya orang Islam)*
   No, I am a Non-Muslim. *(Tidak, saya orang bukan Islam)*

9. **How often do you read a religious text?**
   (Berapakah kekerapan anda baca teks agama?)
   ___ hour(s) per week *(Jam dalam seminggu)*

10. **Which media form do you always read religious text(s)?**
    (Bentuk media yang manakah anda kerap membaca teks agama?)

(Electronic media form)	Rarely	Seldom	Always
(Print media form)	Rarely	Seldom	Always
-- *(Media elektronik)*	*Jarang*	*Kadang-kala*	*Selalu*
-- *(Media cetak)*	*Jarang*	*Kadang-kala*	*Selalu*

11. **How many times do you pray?**
    (Berapakah kerap anda bersolat?)
    Never *(Tidak pernah)*
    A few times weekly *(Beberapa kali dalam seminggu)*
    2 - 4 times daily *(2 - 4 kali sehari)*
    5 times daily *(5 kali sehari)*
    More than 5 times daily including supplicatory prayers
        (Lebih 5 kali sehari termasuk solat sunat)

   *** If participants choose something besides Islam, stop here ***

12. **How much time do you spend reciting and reading Al-Quran?**
    (Berapakah kekerapan masa anda mengambil untuk membaca Al-Quran?)

___ hour(s) per daily   or   ___ hour(s) per week   *(Jam sehari -- atau --- Jam seminggu)*

13. **What media form do you tend to use for reciting Al-Quran?**
     (Bentuk media apakah yang anda biasa gunakan untuk membaca al-Quran?)
     _____

14. **What percentage have you memorized from al-Quran?**
     (Berapakah peratus anda dapat menghafal dari al-Quran?)
     ___ % of the whole al-Quran *(Peratus daripada keseluruhan al-Quran)*

15. **How much average time do you spend engaging in Islamic practices daily in one Hijra' year?**
     (Berapakah jam yang anda biasa gunakan untuk ibadat Islam setiap hari dalam satu tahun Hijra'?)
     ___ average hours per daily *(Purata jam dalam sehari)*

16. **Is there at least one Islamic shop selling religious materials in your area?**
     (Apakah kawasan anda mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya satu kedai Islam yang menjual bahan agama?)
     Yes. - One shop only or ___ shops in the area
        (Ya, hanya satu kedai sahaja atau __ buah kedai dalam kawasan)
     No. *(Tidak)*

17. **When you have personal concerns toward aspects of religious practices (e.g., issues of Islamic marriage, supplicatory prayers, or Islamic law), through what way would you be more likely to search for more information?**
     (Setelah anda mempunyai masalah dalam memahami ibadat Islam seperti isu pernikahan, isu solat sunat atau isu hukum Islam, jalan manakah anda lebih cenderung dalam mencari maklumat lebihan?)
     Using online media *(Gunakan media online)* -- blogs / forums
     Using print media such as books *(Gunakan media cetak seperti buku)*
     Through person such as peers/ imams   *(Melalui orang seperti rakan atau imam)*

18. **How much time do you spend seeking answers for a particular religious concern?**
     (Berapakah kekerapan masa anda mengambil untuk mencari jawapan untuk memahami isu ibadat agama?)
     ___ minutes using print media *(Minit menggunakan media cetak)*
     ___ minutes using Internet *(Minit menggunakan Internet)*

19. **Which virtual community do you tend to trust for information that answers a particular religious concern?**
   (Komuntiti virtual yang manakah anda lebih yakin dalam mendapat maklumat untuk pemahaman isu agama?)
   Within Malaysian community *(Dalam komuntiti Malaysia)*
   Outside Malaysian community, specify: *(Luar komuntiti Malaysia - Nyatakan:)* _____

20. **How significant is Islamic history in your life?**
   (Apakah kepentingan sejarah Islam dalam hidup anda?)
   Not important at all *(Tidak penting)*
   Not quite important *(Kurang penting)*
   Neutral *(Kurang pasti)*
   Quite important *(Sangat penting)*
   Very important *(Paling penting)*

21. **Which source media do you tend to use to learn Islamic history?**
   (Bahan media yang manakah anda lebih banyak gunakan untuk belajar sejarah Islam?)
   - Print Media *(Media cetak)*
   - Internet *(Internet)*
   - Others: *(Lain-lain:)* _____

22. **Do you feel your Islamic knowledge to be sufficient?**
   (Apakah ilmu agama anda dirasai cukup?)
      Yes   No *(Ya   Tidak)*

23. **Is educating and sharing Islamic values and knowledge important?**
   (Apakah mendidik dan mengkongsi ilmu dan akhlak Islam penting?)
      Yes   No *(Ya   Tidak)*

24. **Which media form do you believe is effective for sharing Islamic knowledge?**
   (Bentuk media yang manakah anda yakin lebih berkesan dalam mengkongsikan ilmu Islam?)
   Print media *(Media cetak)*
   Electronic media *(Media elektronik)*

25. *Are you willing to participate in an interview for the purpose of this study?*
   (Sudikah anda menyertai temuduga untuk memenuhi kriteria kajian ini?)
   Yes. Please contact me at mbm7299@rit.edu *(Ya. Silakan hubungi saya pada mbm7299@rit.edu)*
   No. *(Tidak)*

Appendix D: In-depth Interview Questionnaire

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Gender of Interviewee

2. What media-based method is significant to share Islamic values and knowledge?

3. Do you think your knowledge of Islamic education is sufficient? Why?

4. Describe how (media use) and when (suitable time) you read and recite al-Quran.
      - Is it effective for you, and why?

5. How do you learn about and understand Islamic history?
      - Why did you choose this method?

6. Among religious print media (books), which one do you consider to be credible?

7. Can you tell me about the basic history of Muhammad?

8. Can you explain the *bida'* (innovation)?

9. Can you summarize and explain _surah al-Ikhlas_?

   If participants can answer most of the questions 7 - 9, I will ask them below

10.   How did you learn these answers?

11.   Is your way of learning effective for others and why?

   **If participants cannot answer clearly these questions, I will ask them below **

12.   Tell me about your Islamic educational background.

13.   Tell me about your religious purpose for using print and electronic media.

Curriculum Vitae

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GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:
     Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York
     MARA University of Technology, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

DEGREES AWARDED:
     Master of Science, Communication and Media Technologies, 2013,
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     Bachelor of Science, New Media Publishing with Concentration in Psychology, 2011
          Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester NY
     Associate Degree in Printing Technology, 2007,
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AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:
     Media Literacy
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     Communication Education
     Intercultural Communication
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     Mass Media Communication System in Malaysia
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     Analysis on Quran Manuscripts

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
     Online Graphic Designer, Discovering Deaf Worlds, Rochester, NY,
          September 2010 - Present

     Assistant in Multimedia, RIT Malaysian Students Association,
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GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:
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     Global Leadership Certificate from the RIT Leadership Institute