Information Transmission On Islam Through The Social Media Platform In Negara Brunei Darussalam: A Preliminary Proposal For The Actor

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Abstract: In the current context of the 4th Industrial Revolution, the mode of transmitting information, including the transmission of information on Islam, has been transformed. It has evolved from the traditional face to face method to the use of tools and high tech gadgets especially through the social media (SM) platform. This poses a challenge to Muslims who may not be able to discern the authenticity of the information on Islam and thus deal appropriately with such information. This can pose a threat to Negara Brunei Darussalam which holds fast to her Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) philosophy. As such, this paper presents the state of affairs on the use of social media as tool in disseminating information in general and on Islam in particular in Negara Brunei Darussalam. Data obtained for this paper is mainly through library research from documentary reviews. Through an analysis of the data obtained, the implications of such use are discussed. This paper offers a preliminary proposal in combating the challenge brought forth by the digital era through the role of the actors.

Keywords: Social media, 4th Industrial Revolution, Negara Brunei Darussalam, digital era and information on Islam.

I. INTRODUCTION

The transmission of information on Islam has been transformed. From the traditional face to face method, it has now progressed with the use of technology, to the use of a medium by way of tools and high tech gadgets especially through the social media platform. As such, social media is now one of the tools used in disseminating information on Islam allowing the flow of information from classical to contemporary method to occur. The implications can be grave to the Muslims society as information overflow on Islam, whether authenticated or otherwise, are virtually unchecked.

In a country that holds fast to its Malay Islamic Monarchy philosophy surely there needs to be a stop gap measure to combat this current malady facing the *Ummah* – the malady of unauthenticated information overflow on Islam. The question is what is the best mechanism to combat such a malaise? This article examines how the current use and dependence on social media has grave implications to Negara Brunei Darussalam

and proffers a solution through the actors – the users of the social media platform - offering the best defence to this modern-day challenge. Data obtained is through library research which is mainly documentary reviews. The second section is the literature review on the phases of the dissemination of information on Islam, while the third section assesses the impact of information communication technology in Negara Brunei Darussalam with emphasis on social media as a tool in transmitting information. The last section is the conclusion.

II. EVOLUTION ON TRANSMITTING INFORMATION ON ISLAM

The dissemination of information on Islam started with revelation. During the period of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), in his early forties, he received the first revelation of *Al-Quran* in a cave on Mount Hira outside of Mecca. This event

indicated that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) obtained his first revelation of *Al-Quran* by the classical method which was face to face with *malaikat Jibril.* The first five verses of *Al-Quran* revealed to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) by *malaikat Jibril* is *Surah Al-Alaq* (96: 1-5).

This was the first of many revelations which indicated that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) obtained information on Islam in a classical manner (face to face) with *malaikat Jibril.* Similar manner was used when Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) spread the word of Allah SWT to his companions which was face to face (oral). The companions of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) began to write the words of *Al-Quran* on classical entities such as bark, bone, animal skins and stone. While the earliest classical venue of education was mosque where religious scholars and students sat together in teaching circles.

A. THE PHASES OF ISLAMIC TEACHING

With the advent of time and the progress of the various industrial revolutions, a shift in paradigm on the transmission of information on Islam from classical method (face to face) to printing, and nowadays, virtual learning through social media also took place. This indicate a gradual evolution for Muslims in transmitting and obtaining information on Islam.

a. ORAL TRANSMISSION

During the early centuries of Islam, the earliest classical venue of education is the mosque where religious scholars and students sat together in teaching circles. Only in the beginning of 10th century that Madrasah was developed as both a teaching and residential institution for the Muslim. The method of teaching is still similar: lecturing and dictation by religious teacher or *Imam* of the mosque himself.

In the case of Negara Brunei Darussalam, the coming of Islam was through trade. According to Pengiran Haji Mohammad in 1992, Arabian Muslim traders became the *mubaligh* as early as the 13th century. Nonetheless, Mohamad Ridzuan pointed out, "the event of three *Pu-ni* envoys to China in 977 AD, of course, implies that Islamic influence is already established and growing in Brunei". Thus, there was an indication the spread of Islam occurred in Negara Brunei Darussalam although in a small scale.

b. PRINTING AS THE MEDIUM OF TRANSMITTING INFORMATION

During the eighth century, a new era of literacy emerged where paper began to be used and knowledge of paper-making spread to Iraq, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Spain. After the death of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), religious scholars collected and codified *Hadith* which had been preserved orally, and wrote them in ink and paper.

Arab Muslims were also begun printing texts, including passages from *Al-Quran* which led to a major growth in the production of manuscript texts. One of the earliest evidence was Ibn Sina's medical textbooks which he wrote in the 10th century and were used as primary medical references for more than 800 years. With the development of paper, Islamic teaching was communicated through medium of books.

Consequently, information on Islam began to spread across the Muslims world.

c. VIRTUAL LEARNING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

After the 21st century, with the development of information communication technology, flow of information including on Islam is limitless through social media. An author has pointed out that social media enables people to share all sorts of information on Islam and to communicate with each other in an online community. Overtime, with the evolution of social media, virtual educational interactions can occur among the students through social media as part of their learning tool.

Traditional media such as radio, books and network television is primarily designed to be a broadcast platform (one-to-many), whereas social media is designed to be a dialogue (many-to-many) interaction. This many-to-many interaction allows large groups of geographically dispersed users to produce a pool of valuable information resources which can be obtained easily by social media users. While another studies represent how social media become a platform in conveying Islamic knowledge and a popular medium of communication among the Muslim worldwide.

Information on Islam is available on social media and it is uploaded by various groups of people and individuals who have different backgrounds in terms of religious sect and perspectives about Islam. With the evolution of social media, the world's greater scholars from different religious sect are on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, and this allows information on Islam to become extremely accessible to all including Muslims. Nowadays, Muslim religious scholars began to teach *Al-Quran* and *Hadith* either by uploading their preaching video on the YouTube or short verses of *Al-Quran* or *Hadith* through Twitter and Facebook. Some Islamic scholars like Tareq Al Suwaidan and Amr Khaled have over 600,000 supporters on Twitter and reach about one million Facebook followers.

Hence, looking at the current pattern, social media is widely used to transmit information on Islam. Hence, this paper has shown that the trend in transmission of information on Islam in Negara Brunei Darussalam has shifted from a mainly classical approach to include the use of a more modern approach, the use of social media. The flow of information on Islam through social media has created a virtual discussion where transfer of Islamic knowledge and learning can be done. Social media has a major impact in disseminating information on Islam to the Muslim society worldwide in general and to the Muslims in Negara Brunei Darussalam specifically.

III. THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON NEGARA BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

A report has been done by Statista as of June 2019 as shown in Figure 1 which indicated that within Southeast Asia region, Negara Brunei Darussalam leads in terms of internet penetration at 94.9%, with Singapore close behind at 84.5%. This indicates the large proportion of the population in Negara Brunei Darussalam are internet-literate coupled with the fact

that that majority of the population in Negara Brunei Darussalam are Muslims (78.8% according to International Religious Freedom Report, 2018). It thus infers that social media is the preferred platform for their social activism.
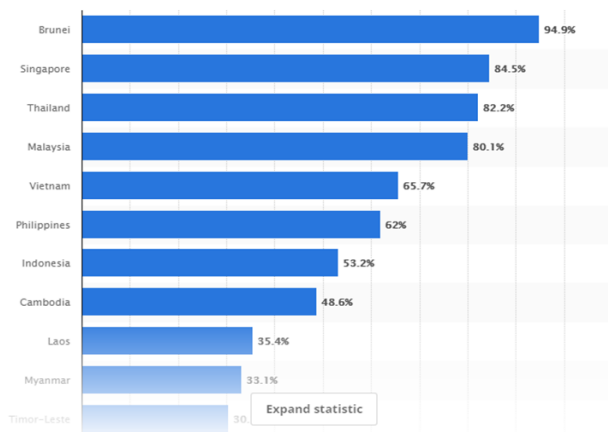

Figure 1: Internet Penetration in Southeast Asia done by Statista of June 2019

According to a census survey in 2016 carried out by the Economic Planning and Development Department, Prime Minister's Office of Negara Brunei Darussalam, the total population of Negara Brunei Darussalam is 422,678 people. From the census survey, the end users representing the largest percentage age group (71.8 percent of the population) is between 15 to 59 years old.

In addition, according to Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI) report in 2016, there is an increase in total household internet access which is 67% in 2013 to 75% in 2016 as shown in Figure 2. This indicates there is a large number of people who have access to the SM in Negara Brunei Darussalam over 6 years.
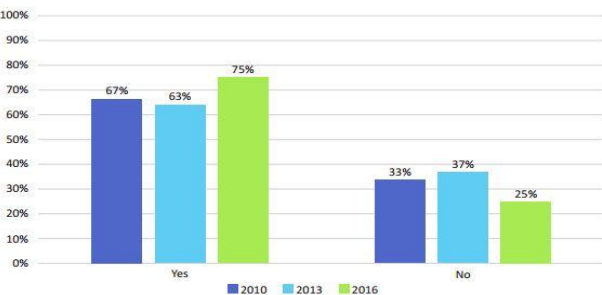

Figure 2: Household Internet Access based on Brunei Darussalam Household ICT survey 2016 done by AITI

As it can be seen in Figure 2, there is an increase in total household internet access (75%) in 2016. Based on the survey in 2016, relating to the reasons for using social media in Brunei Darussalam Household ICT done by AITI, the second highest reasons (65%) for using social media is to share information and opinions among the population in Negara Brunei Darussalam as shown in Figure 3 below.
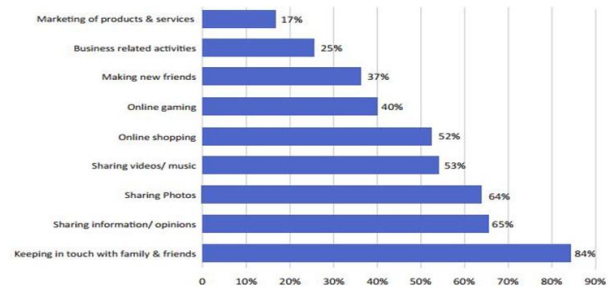

Figure 3: Reasons for using social media based on Brunei Darussalam Household ICT survey 2016 done by AITI.

This further infers that transmission of information on social media including information on Islam, has become one of the popular tools used by the end users in Negara Brunei Darussalam. This can pose a threat as any information, both endorsed and non-endorsed, can be transmitted via the social media platform resulting in the end users obtaining information of both values – authentic and non-authentic. Such a position can be alarming especially when the end users do not verify the truth and accuracy of the information obtained especially on Islam via the social media platform.

IV. THE RESPONSE – A PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

One such approach that can be explored in ensuring that the end-users constantly verify the exactness of the information obtained via the social media platform is through the Islamic-based development (IbD) approach. The IbD approach is based on the Islamic worldview and epistemology and entails the need for an Islamic-based development actor (IbD Actor). When efforts are made to ensure that the actors, the end users of the social media platform, are imbued with the features and qualities of the IbD Actor, it provides the bridge in ensuring the proper handling in receiving any information on Islam through the social media platform thus tackling the issue instead of leaving it as a personal matter or individual's rights.

Tools are the prerequisite for the qualitative spiritual development aspects of man before a truly IbD actor of social media can be envisaged. It also demonstrates the absolute importance of these tools to be used and referred to by the actors of social media. In other words without the use or reference of these tools by the actors of social media, dealing with the transmitted information on Islam will be left unchecked. There is unanimity in literatures of the very close nexus relationship of IbD to man in which the outcome of IbD is for man's benefit. In referring to this study, this means the transmission of information on Islam is viewed as an IbD process. This shows that verified transmitted information on Islam and actors of SM are essential components and complement each other. There cannot be verified transmitted information on Islam without the actors of social media and simultaneously there is no need for the actor of social media when there is no need to verify the truth and accuracy of information transmitted through social media. This complementary relationship with each other is best depicted in Figure 4.
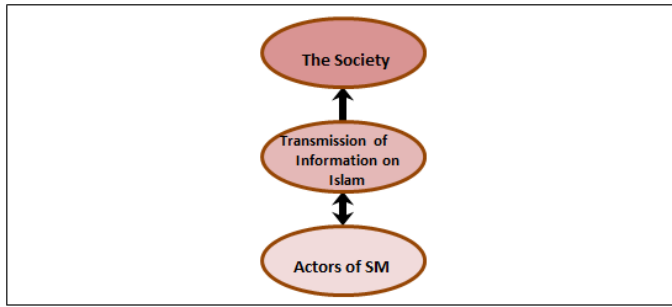
Figure 4: A summary of the interdependence of effective transmission of information on Islam with the actors of SM and vice versa

Figure 4 shows that for the effective transmission of information on Islam to transpire there is a need for the actors of social media. Simultaneously for the actors of social media to be able to carry out his purpose as servant of Allah SWT and role as *khalifat* of Allah SWT in this tangible temporary world necessitates the transmission of information. It is a symbiotic relationship that shows the dependence of each other. One cannot transpire effectively without the other. Only when these factors co-exist then a holistic effective transmission of information on Islam that has the ability to safeguard the society can take place.

In viewing the potential of the end users as the IbD Actor, the IbD Actor is made up of three main constituents. They are first, distinguishing characteristics; second, socially consequential and third, unchangeable. These three constituents requires an integral approach as they are dependent and inter related with one another. The first constituent refers to the 12 distinguishing characteristics which are imperatively incumbent to be inherently present in the end users as the actors of social media. The 12 distinguishing characteristics are repentant; listen attentively; provide the best of conduct at all times; humble within one's self; high degree of patience; strengthen and defend brotherhood; charitable; righteous; possesses spiritual strength and power; moderate; does not commit major sins and preferring good over evil.

Only three constituents have been singled out as the fundamental prerequisite for the actors of SM. The making of the actors of social media begins with the moral, spiritual, physical and environmental development of the human element consisting of the spiritual, moral and ethical aspects. These are the qualitative preparation which needs to be addressed before the IbD actors of social media can take shape. This qualitative preparation of man is envisaged by Aidit Ghazali.

This study has identified the three constituents as the fundamental prerequisite for actors of social media. The first constituent consists of 12 distinguishing characteristics. The second constituent being socially consequential entails the need for man to be accountable to his actions entrenched within the concept of time consists of three important factors. The third constituent consists of five primary tools. A summary of the all the three constituents is presented in Table 1.

The First Constituent		
No.	**Distinct Characteristics**	**Inference**
1.	Listen Attentively	Foundational characteristics focus on horizontal relationship
2.	Strengthen and Defend Brotherhood	
3.	Being Charitable	
4.	Moderate	There is constant interaction role-play among these six characteristics requiring balance as any imbalance affects both the vertical and horizontal relationships
5.	Repentant	
6.	Being Righteous	
7.	Preferring Good over Evil	
8.	High Degree of Patience	
9	Humble with One's Self	
10.	Best Conduct at all Times	Pinnacle characteristics
11.	Not Committing Major Sins	
12.	Possesses Spiritual Strength	
The Second Constituent		
No.	**Factors**	**Inference**
1.	Knowledge	Sturdy shield for IbD Actor from external influences that are antagonistic to *tasawwur* entailed in IbD.
2.	Ability to perceive warnings and take lessons	
3.	Discerning Features	
The Third Constituent		
No.	**Primary Tools**	**Inference**
1.	*Al-Qur'an*	Provide a solid foundation for IbD Actor to rely upon
2.	Nature	
3.	*Qalb*	
4.	*'Aql*	
5.	Ears and Eyes	

Table 1: Summary of the three constituents for the actors of social media

Table 1 provides the essence of focus in capacity building and human development for the actors of SM. It also provides summarily the inter relations of each and every characteristic, factors as well as tools on one another as well as the inference all these have on the IbD Actor. There is a need to enhance the ability to make distinction and thus go to the next step of authenticating information received through the social media platform. Thus, actors of social media need to be imbued with the discerning features which is one the basic characteristics of the IbD Actor. However as these characteristics and constituents do not stand alone, the holistic approach of the IbD Actor in preparing the actors of social media need to be applied.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has proven that there is a dire need to address the challenge brought forth by the social media platform in transmitting information on Islam in the context of Negara Brunei Darussalam in particular. Two reasons are afforded. First, Negara Brunei Darussalam is among the top two nations within this region to have a high penetration of internet access. Second, the majority of her population are Muslims. This infers that information transmission on Islam has the potential to be widely circulated. The challenge on the veracity of such information and the behavior of the users of social media to countercheck such information received is of importance.

In order to have an effective ability to authenticate and verify information received on Islam through the social media

platform, this study proposes to take the approach of the IbD Actor as one plausible alternative in tackling this challenge. Taking the concept of the IbD Actor to be applied to the actors of social media, the need to enhance the ability of having discerning features can be addressed. In other words a more proactive approach needs to be carried out in elevating the status of users of social media to be the actors of social media.

The three constituents presented in this paper depicts how this can be achieved. When efforts are proactively made to ensure that all actors of social media are imbued with these three constituents then such steps are deemed as steps towards enabling the users of social media to deal effectively with the transmission of information on Islam.

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