

**NEW AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA INFLUENCE OF MUSLIM  
STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON SELECTED ISLAMIC ISSUES:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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# **NEW AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA INFLUENCE OF MUSLIM STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON SELECTED ISLAMIC ISSUES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

For a new medium, the Internet use is being pervasive among students and it could influence students' perception on various issues. However, the traditional media (TV and newspapers) are standing tall among the existing media. As such, this study tries (1) to find out the demographic characteristics of the Muslim students in the study in relation to their media use; (2) to determine the level of usage, trust, and influence on the Internet, TV, and newspapers among heavy users; (3) to explore heavy users' (new and traditional media) perception level on some selected Islamic issues; and (4) to study the relationships between heavy users' trust and influence on the new and traditional media with selected Islamic issues. Using the premise of the Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur, 1976), the study probed the heavy users of Internet, TV, and newspapers among a total of 369 Muslim students in Malaysia. Data collected through survey research were analyzed using SPSS WIN 16 to answer the objectives of the study.

Keywords: Internet influence, traditional media (TV and newspapers), Muslim students, Islamic issues, Dependency Theory

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## INTRODUCTION

University students of today are more exposed to the new media compared to earlier students. Present students depend a lot on the computer, especially the Internet, for various reasons to satisfy their needs and gratification, in keeping abreast with the changes and development in the scientific technology that is fast evolving, and making work and study much easier to accomplish, among other purposes.

This study is confined to students in a university in Malaysia as Muslim students are highly encouraged to seek information, considering searching for knowledge is an *ibadah*. Being students, the traditional media are expensive, specifically, the newspapers while television (TV) is only confined to certain areas in their hostel. However, they can explore the traditional media content through the online services rendered by the station, channel, and publisher for the online radio, online TV, and online newspapers, respectively. The question is what about the Islamic issues that emerged and in the limelight quite recently. Do the students get information on Islamic issues through the Internet, TV, and newspapers? If they do, how much do they use the Internet, TV, and newspapers for such information and do they trust the Internet, TV, and newspapers information? And once, they obtained the information, will the information influence their perception of such Islamic issues? What are their stands on the Islamic issues in the nation?

As such, the present study tries (1) to find out the demographic characteristics of the Muslim students in the study in relation to their media use; (2) to determine the level of usage, trust, and influence on the Internet, TV, and newspapers among heavy users; (3) to explore heavy users' (new and traditional media) perception level on some selected Islamic issues; and (4) to study the relationships between heavy users' trust and influence on the new and traditional media with selected Islamic issues.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Internet Users

By the end of the twentieth century, the Internet had become well established and it is a daily routine for millions of people around the globe to get hooked up to it. The Internet is a global communication channel that provides users with, generally, three kinds of information: information on products, news and research information, and information obtained through peer-to-peer processes and online communities (ACMA Report, 2009). The Internet allows its users to be engaged in activities that can be grouped into two main types: solitary activities that do not involve direct contact with other people like web surfing or news reading, and social activities that involve direct contact with other people like using email, instant messaging, and discussing through chat rooms (Zhao, 2006).

The Internet was first introduced in Malaysia in 1987 by the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronics Systems (MIMOS) and it started offering services to limited number of the public in 1991 (Salman & Hasim, 2011). With the introduction of Internet *Desa* (village Internet centers) and the distribution of free netbooks to low income households, the Internet penetration in the sub-urban areas is catching up with that of the urban areas (Salman & Hasim, 2011). Many government efforts have contributed to the adoption and to the use of the Internet among Malaysian population, for instance, the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) and the High Speed Broadband (Salman, 2010).

The Internet is largely populated by educated younger generations. About half of the Internet users in the United States aged between 18 to 44 years old (Pew Internet, 2009). From this segment of the Internet population, college and university students are the savviest Internet users. For instance, since the early beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, about 93 per cent of college students in the United States access the Internet in a given month, 88 per cent of them own a computer, and 56 per cent have broadband connection (Aiken, Vanjani, Ray, & Martin, 2003). Studies on some university students revealed similar figures in Malaysia where about 82 per cent of them own a computer or laptop, and 54 per cent with Internet connection by 2008 (Ayub & Saodah, 2010). Two years later, Lahabou and Saodah (2010) found that there is an increase in the computer/laptop ownership (91%), with 85% of them get connected to the Internet. Their educational level, the availability of computers (computer labs and electronic classrooms), and

free access to the Internet provided by their college/university may explain for the predominance Internet users among students.

Islam considers the Internet as a tool and the rule of the tool depends on the way it is used. According to Campbell (2007), opinions of Muslim scholars about the Internet are either negative or positive. The negative aspect is when religious leaders condemning the “bad” use of the Internet which might sway users away and making them forget their daily obligation. She interviewed Muslim college students and found that the students valued the positive opinions of Muslim scholars about the Internet when the scholars viewed it as offering wisdom and guidance to the community. The Internet also plays the role as an alternative medium for the Muslims.

Bahfen (2008) studied the Internet usage among Muslim students in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. He found that Muslim students in all four countries actively use the Internet to thrash out various viewpoints regarding Islamic teachings and practice; to defend Islam through online discussions; to build networks; and to discuss alternative sources of news related to the Muslim world. These activities are positive in nature.

### **Trust in the Internet**

Trust is a broad concept with different meanings across disciplines and subject areas, but with no commonly agreed definition (Dutton & Shepherd, 2003). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines trust as “a firm belief in the reliability or truth of a person or thing”; “a confident expectation”; and “reliance on the truth of a statement without examination”. This conventional definition is closely related to a greater level of confidence in the reliability and security of the Internet.

The bulk of the studies about trust on the Internet focus on information on products and online shopping (Alam & Yassin, 2010; AMCA, 2009; Consumer WebWatch, 2002; Dutton & Shepherd, 2003).

The Internet users are demanding the websites providers to offer credible information with the identity of the sources of the information as well as the availability of ways for reaching these sources (Consumer WebWatch, 2002). For instance, a study by Consumer WebWatch found that 80 per cent of the Internet users say “it is very important” to be able to trust the information and they also wanted the advertisement to be clearly labeled as advertisement. Generally, the Internet users have high confident expectations in their online activities. They

were found to be less likely to think that people who went online put their privacy at risk and they have more confidence in the Internet as well as in the people they can communicate with on the Internet than non-Internet users (Dutton & Shepherd, 2003).

But a few Internet users are willing to trust the websites that sell products or the sites that offer advice about which products and services to buy and about 95 per cent of them see it very important that the sites disclose all the fees related to a given product (Consumer WebWatch, 2002). Another important issue about trust on the Internet is the use of credit card to shop online. A study of the British Internet users found that even though about 65 per cent of them had used their credit card to shop online, they are still worrying that someone might get their credit card number and misuse it (Consumer WebWatch, 2002).

### **Trust on the Media**

The issue of public trust has been and will always remain a great concern for the traditional as well as for the new media. The people will not bother using these media if they do not believe or trust them. Despite this concern, the public overall trust in the media has declined in the past two decades (Cassidy, 2007). For example, a report by Pew Research Center revealed that 60 per cent of Americans think that the media are politically biased in their reporting, whereas only 42 per cent thought this way in 1986 (Cassidy, 2007). Similarly, it was found that the British public has an increasingly negative view of the media, especially the newspapers (Greenslade, 2009).

A comparison of the public's trust on the Internet, TV and newspapers provides mixed results depending on when and where the study was conducted and who were the respondents. For instance, Kiouisis (2001) found that residents of Austin, Texas rated news/information in the newspapers the highest in credibility, followed by the Internet, and TV. In 2002, Online News Association conducted a nationwide survey of U.S Internet users. They reported that online news (the Internet) was rated as credible as that of the traditional media sources (Cassidy, 2007). However, the same nationwide survey panel found that journalists believed that the online news sites standards are below those of the traditional sources, and thus, they tended to rate online news sites low in trust than did the public users.

But as the Internet began to establish itself as a key news source, the public trust on it also began to increase. The interactive nature of the Internet may also explain for this change.

The Internet allows its users to cross-check news stories instantaneously from different sources, to follow links for further information, and to exchange opinions about the news stories with other users through commentaries or direct chat. Thus, not surprisingly that a research conducted by AMCA (2009) indicates that Internet users rate the Internet highly as a source of trusted information (27%), followed by newspapers (20%), and TV (17%).

### **Influence of the Media**

Most studies use media believability or media credibility for media trust. Trust precedes influence. Media have some extent of influence especially on heavy users. Saodah (2009) found that the Internet has a strong influence on the adolescents among urban Malaysian women. She also found that there were positive relationships between TV believability and TV influence, and between the Internet believability and the Internet influence, regardless of age groups. The influence of the Internet is more pronouncedly experienced by the adolescents (15-24 years old) compared to the old adults women (40 and more years old). She argued that media use is related to media believability which in turn related with media influence, meaning that the more the respective medium is used, the more believability it gets and the more influence it will have on the users.

TV has a wide influence on its audience (Mohd Yusof, 2006; Saodah, 2006). It affects not only the knowledge of the audience but also attitudes (liking and agreement on issues). Saodah and Shafizan (2008) found TV influenced the behavioral part of the women in their study. They concluded that TV influence has a powerful impact on women action.

### **Islamic Issues**

Islam and Muslims are facing infinite number of contemporary issues both from outside and inside the Muslim countries. From the old topics of attacks like the number of the Prophet wives and polygamy, the twentieth century's issues of human or women rights and democracy, to the after 9/11 issue of terrorism, Islam and Muslims are constantly in the spotlight. Even though the mainstream media is slowly improving in terms of the objectivity and accuracy in its coverage of Islam, there are still profound misconceptions about Muslims and their faith within the

mainstream media that remain unaddressed (Bahfen, 2008). Thus, the Internet can be an alternative source for young Muslims who are trying to create harmony between modernity and tradition.

Malaysia, like other Muslim countries, has its own national Islamic issues facing the Malaysian Muslim society. The most current among these issues includes the problem of baby dumping, the “Name of Allah controversy”, the Malay special privileges, and the issues of allowing non-Muslim leaders to speak in a mosque or surau. Reports of babies found buried, dumped in dumpsters, wrapped in plastic bags and thrown into rivers were regularly published in local newspapers and have understandably inflamed and outraged the public (NEW Straight Time, 2010).

For the “Allah controversy”, it all began with the Catholic Church “Herald” use of “Allah” which is the name of God in Malay language. The Home Minister revoked the license for Herald publication. The case was brought to the court for hearing by the Catholic Church which gained a ruling in its favor from the Federal court. Following the ruling of the court, Muslims were very angry. Three churches were attacked and many Muslims protested in the mosques across the country (Kassim, 2010).

The present study investigates the trust and influence of Internet, TV, and newspapers on Muslim students’ perception of some selected Islamic issues and looking at Dependency Theory to help explain the contention.

### **Dependency Theory**

Dependency Theory was espoused by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975). They explained that the more dependent a person is on having his/her needs gratified by the media use, the more important will be the role the media play in the person’s life and, therefore, the more influence those media will have on that person. For this study, the new media used is confined to the Internet while the traditional media selected are TV and newspapers. It can be summarized that an individual’s level of dependency is a function of the number (frequency) of and the centrality (importance) of the specific information-delivery functions served by the Internet, TV, and newspapers and the degree of change and conflict present in the society. Self conflict arises when



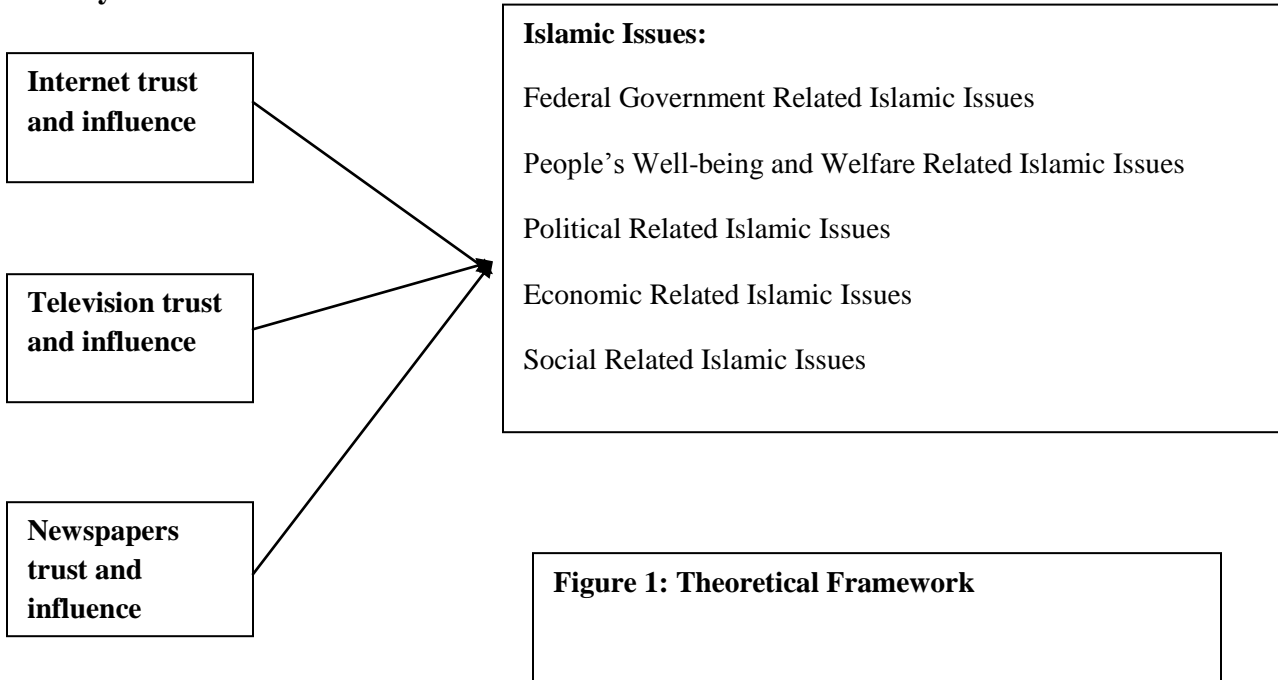
there is incompatibility between one's belief and the information he/she gets from the sources of information, in this case, the Internet, TV, and newspapers. Contradiction might influence the individual to seek for information that support one's stance.

The Internet has become sophisticated with its ability to supply voluminous information to the masses, regardless of age, religion and creed. Therefore, we are becoming increasingly dependent on the Internet to understand the social world, to act meaningfully and effectively in the society, and even for fantasy and escape. However, not everyone is equally influenced by the Internet. There are other traditional media that supply similar information to their audience. Those who have a greater need, and thus, greater dependency on the media will be most influenced. University students are found to be the most dependent on the Internet for many reasons, among them are for educational purposes. Students are also dependent on the Internet for news during crisis situation or in a time for change or conflict. As the crisis deepened, individual dependence on the Internet increases as many people around the globe are willing to share their ideas and experiences to the fore. This is because the Internet can be accessed everywhere, any time as long there is computer accessibility to the source of information. Likewise, the traditional media are able to supply the students with similar information.

The choice for the Internet is more profound because it is pervasive, has the interactive potential, its private and public function, its interconnectedness, and with low degree of regulation. With the hypertext nature of the Internet, the user is in control because of the web interactive nature. With multimedia facility, the Internet is currently the most popular medium among the university students. Since the traditional mass media, especially the newspapers, are getting more expensive, the Internet is also being equipped with the news conveyed by the newspapers, endlessly. As such, the Internet helps in the information explosion with its information superhighway to form a global village with everyone in the net gets connected. The effects on the users of the Internet are educational in nature, mainly, on the cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and conative (behavior), in that sequence. Therefore, the thinking comes prior to the feeling and the action, in response to the information gained. Hence, this study tries to explore only the perception of the Muslim university students pertaining to certain issues on

Islam that are considered meaningful to them and to the nation at large, through the Internet , TV, and newspapers (Figure 1).

**Heavy Media Users**



**Hypotheses of the Study**

Based on the literature review and the underlying principles of the theory, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: The more exposed the users are to the media, the more trust the users have on them which in turn influent their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the media.

H1a: The more exposed the users are to the Internet, the more trust the users have on it which in turn influent their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the Internet.

H1b: The more exposed the users are to TV, the more trust the users have on it which in turn influent their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the TV.

H1c: The more exposed the users are to newspapers, the more trust the users have on it which in turn influent their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the newspapers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study employs a cross-sectional survey research design. It was used to tap the information of the population (undergraduate students) at the time of the study, based on the obtained sample. The advantages of survey research design among others are that (1) it can be used to investigate problems in realistic settings; (2) the cost incurred for the survey is reasonable considering the amount of information gathered for the study through administration of the questionnaire used as the instrument for data collection; and (3) a large amount of data could be collected with ease and within a short time span.

### **Sample of the Study**

Basically, the present study used respondents from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) only. A total of 369 students, a sub-set of the total of 9036 university undergraduate Malaysian students, were gathered and analyzed for the study.

### **Research Instrument and Measurement**

A questionnaire is used for the study. Selected questions from the original questionnaire were used for the present study. The selected information is as follows:

- (a) **Background of the Respondents** - gender, year of program, and age.
- (b) **Level of Internet, TV, and Newspapers Usage** is measured using number of days students used the media for the past week, ranging from 0-day to 7-days in a week.
- (c) **Level of trust towards the Internet, TV, and Newspapers** is measured on a four-point scale, ranging from 1-strongly distrust to 4-strongly trust.
- (d) **Level of Internet, TV, and Newspapers as sources of information** is measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1=no to 5=a lot.

(e) **Level of Internet, TV, and Newspapers** is measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1=no influence to 5=a lot of influence.

(f) **Islamic Issues** comprised of federal government related Islamic issues (3 items), people's well-being and welfare related Islamic issues (2 items), political related Islamic issues (1 item), economic related Islamic issues (3 items), and social related Islamic issues (5 items) and they are rated on a five-point scale, ranging from 1-no to 5-a lot, giving a total of 14 items.

### **Data Collection**

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual study to measure the flow of the questions, the sequencing of the questions, the problems faced by the respondents, and the time taken for completing the questionnaire. Reliability test of the variables with more than three items was used to analyze for homogeneity, as well as for the cohesiveness of the items.

The actual study was conducted at 20 public universities and 8 private universities. Data were collected from early March, 2011 until the end of April, 2011, using questionnaire as the research instrument. The respondents were given ample time to answer the questions in the questionnaire. The time spent in answering each questionnaire ranges from 10-30 minutes. The collected questionnaires were validated for complete responses. The response rate from each university varies from 80% to 98%. This study uses IIUM students only, a sub-set of the total population.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using SPSS 16 WIN for both Descriptive and Inferential Statistics in order to answer the objectives of the study and to test the formulated hypotheses. The Descriptive Statistics used are frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and cross-tabulation while the Inferential Statistics used to analyze the data are one-sample t-test and correlation. The significant level (p) was set at 0.05.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the study are presented according to the objectives of the study, followed by testing of the research hypotheses of the study.

### **Demographic Characteristics of Muslim Students in Relation to Media Use**

Media use is divided into two groups, namely, low media use and high media use. The high media users are named as heavy users. They use the media for four and more days per week. Results of the study found that both male (83.9%) and female (86.1%) are heavy users of the Internet but are low users of TV for both male (82.2%) and female (79.0%) students (Table 1). However, male students are heavy user of newspapers (61.0%) than the female students (34.7%).

Regardless of year of program, all students are heavy users of the Internet (85.3%). They are also low users of TV (79.9%). But for newspapers, first year students tend to be low users of the newspapers (70.3%) compared to second, third and fourth year students who exhibit similar proportion of low and heavy users.

Regardless of age group, all students are heavy users of the Internet (85.4%) but low users of TV (80.1%). However, for newspapers, there is an almost similar proportion for low (56.8%) and heavy users (43.2) across age group.

### **Usage, Trust and Influence on the Internet, TV, and Newspapers among Heavy Users**

Generally, the heavy users use the Internet as a source of information moderately ( $M=3.97$ ,  $SD=0.988$ ). Similarly, for TV ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=1.029$ ) and the newspapers ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=0.973$ ), as they use the media more as sources of information (Table 2).

In terms of level of trust, based on the mean, the heavy users are less likely to trust the Internet ( $M=2.81$ ,  $SD=0.620$ ), TV ( $M=2.66$ ,  $SD=0.749$ ), and newspapers ( $M=2.60$ ,  $SD=0.667$ ). However, the percentage of strongly trust is slightly higher for the Internet (75.9), followed by TV (65.7%), and newspapers (65.2%).

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of new and traditional media use**

Demographic Characteristics	Level of Media Use					
	Internet (%)		TV (%)		Newspapers (%)	
	Low (0-3)	High (4-7)	Low (0-3)	High (4-7)	Low (0-3)	High (4-7)
<b>Gender:</b>						
Male	19 (16.1)	99 (83.9)	97 (82.2)	21 (17.8)	46 (39.0)	72 (61.0)
Female	35 (13.9)	216 (86.1)	196 (79.0)	52 (21.0)	162 (65.3)	86 (34.7)
<b>Total</b>			<b>293</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>158</b>
	$X^2 = 0.299, p=.584$		$X^2 = 0.504, p=.478$		$X^2 = 22.611, p=.000$	
<b>Year of Program:</b>						
1 <sup>st</sup>	22 (21.4)	81 (78.6)	84 (83.2)	17 (16.8)	71 (70.3)	30 (29.7)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	13 (10.6)	110 (89.4)	100 (82.0)	22 (18.0)	62 (50.8)	60 (49.2)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	14 (13.6)	89 (86.4)	80 (77.7)	23 (22.3)	53 (51.5)	50 (48.5)
4 <sup>th</sup>	5 (13.2)	33 (86.8)	27 (71.1)	11 (28.9)	22 (57.9)	16 (42.1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>54 (14.7)</b>	<b>313 (85.3)</b>	<b>291 (79.9)</b>	<b>73 (20.1)</b>	<b>208 (57.1)</b>	<b>156 (42.9)</b>
	$X^2 = 5.485, p=.140$		$X^2 = 3.172, p=.366$		$X^2 = 10.497, p=.015$	
<b>Age (years old):</b>						
Young (19-22)	42 (15.6)	228 (84.4)	216 (80.6)	52 (19.4)	159 (59.3)	109 (40.7)
Old (23-31)	12 (12.1)	87 (87.9)	77 (78.6)	21 (21.4)	49 (50.0)	49 (50.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>54 (14.6)</b>	<b>315 (85.4)</b>	<b>293 (80.1)</b>	<b>73 (19.9)</b>	<b>208 (56.8)</b>	<b>158 (43.2)</b>
<b>Mean=21.67, SD=1.476; Min=19, Max=31</b>	$X^2 = 684, p=.408$		$X^2 = 0.84, p=.668$		$X^2 = 2.545, p=.111$	

The Internet influence on heavy users is moderate (M=3.10, SD=1.259). But for TV (M=2.66, SD=1.096) and newspapers (M=2.62, SD=1.062), the heavy users claimed that they are less than moderately influenced by them.

**Table 2: Level of use, trust, and influence on the Internet, TV, and newspapers among heavy users**

Media-Related Variables	Frequency (%)		
	Internet	TV	Newspapers
<b>Level of Trust on the Media</b>			
Strongly distrust (1)	10 (3.2)	6 (8.2)	12 (7.6)
Distrust (2)	66 (21.0)	19 (26.0)	43 (27.2)
Trust (3)	213 (67.6)	42 (57.5)	99 (62.7)
Strongly trust (4)	26 (8.30)	6 (8.2)	4 (2.5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>315 (100.0)</b>	<b>73 (100.0)</b>	<b>158 (100.0)</b>
<b>Test value=3</b>	<b>Mean=2.81, SD=0.620, t=-5.456, p=.000</b>	<b>Mean=2.66, SD=0.749, t=-3.904, p=.000</b>	<b>Mean=2.60, SD=0.667, t=-7.513, p=.000</b>
<b>Media as the Source of Information:</b>			
None (1)	8 (2.5)	2 (2.7)	5 (3.2)
A little (2)	16 (5.1)	10 (13.7)	10 (6.3)
Moderate (3)	61 (19.4)	20 (27.4)	35 (22.2)
Much (4)	120 (38.2)	32 (43.8)	72 (45.6)
A lot (5)	109 (34.7)	9 (12.3)	36 (22.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>315 (100.0)</b>	<b>73 (100.0)</b>	<b>158 (100.0)</b>
<b>Test value=3</b>	<b>Mean=3.97, SD=0.988, t=17.471, p=.026</b>	<b>Mean=3.49, SD=1.029, t=4.328=.000</b>	<b>Mean=3.78, SD=0.973, t=10.137, p=.000</b>
<b>Media Influence</b>			
No influence	43 (13.7)	14 (19.2)	30 (19.0)
Little influence	48 (15.2)	16 (21.9)	39 (24.7)
Moderate influence	97 (30.8)	26 (35.6)	52 (32.9)
Much influence	84 (26.7)	15 (20.5)	35 (22.2)
A lot of influence	43 (13.7)	2 (2.7)	2 (1.3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>315 (100.0)</b>	<b>73 (100.0)</b>	<b>158 (100.0)</b>
<b>Test value=3</b>	<b>Mean=3.10, SD=1.259, t=1.387, p=.166</b>	<b>Mean=2.66, SD=1.096, t=-2.670, p=.009</b>	<b>Mean=2.62, SD=1.062, t=-4.468, p=.000</b>

### Level of Perception of Heavy Users of Media on Some Selected Islamic Issues

Heavy users of the media are considered as those who have used the media for four days and more per week.

There are many issues pertaining to Islam that were asked in the study (Table 3). We have separated the Islamic issues into five categories, namely, (1) the Federal Government related Islamic issues, (2) people's well-being and welfare related Islamic issues, (3) political related Islamic issues, (4) economic related Islamic issues, and (5) social related Islamic issues.

The heavy users of the Internet, TV, and newspapers seem to have similar perception on the Islamic related issues.

Questions asked on issues related to the Federal Government were on corruption, administrative system, and public service delivery system. The students were not happy with the Federal Government's action on corruption. They think that the Federal Government is less successful in administering the nation fairly. They also think that the public service's delivery system is less transparent and efficient.



**Table 3: Level of perception of heavy users among Muslim students on some selected Islamic issues**

Related Islamic Issues	Level of Agreement*					
	Internet (N=315)		TV (N=73)		Newspapers (N=158)	
	Mean (SD)	Overall (%)	Mean (SD)	Overall (%)	Mean (SD)	Overall (%)
<b>Federal Government Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The federal government is successful in lessening the incidences of corruptions.	2.42 (1.01)	48.4	2.51 (0.93)	50.2	2.34 (1.09)	46.8
	t=-27.519, p=.000		t=-13.496, p=.000		t=-19.085, p=.000	
The federal government is successful in administering the nation fairly.	2.72 (1.02)	54.4	2.88 (0.93)	57.6	2.63 (1.04)	52.3
	t=-22.166, p=.000		t=-10.226, p=.000		t=-16.535, p=.000	
The public service's delivery system is transparent and efficient.	2.75 (0.98)	55.0	2.86 (0.87)	57.2	2.56 (0.99)	51.2
	t=-22.237, p=.000		t=-11.090, p=.000		t=-18.089, p=.000	
<b>People's Well-being and Welfare Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
I feel safe living in a multiethnic society.	3.35 (0.96)	67.0	3.22 (1.00)	64.4	3.33 (1.03)	66.6
	t=-11.844, p=.000		t=-6.626, p=.000		t=-8.165, p=.000	
I agree that the cooperative spirit is a principal value shared by the Malaysian society.	3.68 (0.90)	73.6	3.47 (0.99)	69.4	3.62 (1.01)	72.4
	t=-6.291, p=.000		t=-4.512, p=.000		t=-4.669, p=.000	
<b>Political Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The Malay special privileges as enshrined in the constitution cannot be questioned.	4.15 (0.99)	83.0	4.03 (1.03)	80.6	4.10 (1.01)	82.0
	t=2.655, p=.008		t=0.231, p=.818		t=1.199, p=.232	
<b>Economic Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The New Economic Model (NEM) is fair to all Malaysians.	3.07 (0.93)	61.4	3.03 (0.96)	60.6	3.03(0.96)	60.6
	t=-17.470, p=.000		t=-8.568, p=.000		t=-12.556, p=.000	
The price of daily needs items is reasonable.	2.34 (0.97)	46.8	2.45 (0.94)	49.0	2.24 (0.97)	44.8
	t=-30.137, p=.000		t=-13.919, p=.000		t=-22.496, p=.000	
The country's poverty rate has been reduced because of the efficiency of the federal government's economic management.	2.92 (1.09)	58.4	2.94 (1.08)	58.8	2.77 (1.14)	55.4
	t=-17.418, p=.000		t=-8.235, p=.000		t=13.351, p=.000	
<b>Social Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
Social issues such as abandonment of babies and Mat Rempit' are at alarming levels.	<b>4.60 (0.75)</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>4.51 (0.79)</b>	<b>90.2</b>	<b>4.55 (0.80)</b>	<b>91.0</b>
	t=14.103, p=.000		t=5.404, p=.000		t=8.463, p=.000	
The name "Allah" is the exclusive rights of Muslims.	<b>4.36 (1.00)</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>4.35 (1.02)</b>	<b>87.0</b>	<b>4.31 (1.00)</b>	<b>86.2</b>
	t=6.369, p=.000		t=2.921, p=.005		t=3.818, p=.000	
Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau.	<b>3.50 (1.294)</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>3.62 (1.28)</b>	<b>72.4</b>	<b>3.37 (1.35)</b>	<b>67.4</b>
	t=-6.761, p=.000		t=-2.503, p=.015		t=-5.762, p=.000	
An Imam cannot offer a prayer for the well-being of a non-Muslim leader.	2.80 (1.259)	56.0	2.81 (1.27)	56.2	2.91 (1.26)	58.2
	t=-16.710, p=.000		t=-7.836, p=.000		t=-10.728, p=.000	
The crime rate in the country is still not that alarming.	2.21 (1.243)	44.2	2.34 (1.29)	46.8	2.20 (1.21)	44.0
	t=-25.158, p=.000		t=-10.884, p=.000		t=-18.450, p=.000	

\*1=strongly disagree(1-20%), 2=disagree(21-40%), 3=slightly agree(41-60%), 4=agree(61-80%), 5=strongly agree(81-100%); \*\*test value=4

In terms of peoples' well-being and welfare related Islamic issues, the students agreed that they feel safe living in a multiethnic society and that the cooperative spirit is a principal value shared by the Malaysian society.

Regarding the political related Islamic issues, the heavy media users, who are Muslims and mainly belonged to the Malay ethnicity, have a positive perception towards the Malay right and their privileges as it has been enshrined in the constitution, with percentage ranging from 80.6%-83.0% for all media.

Economic related Islamic issues is looked at from three perspectives, namely, "the New Economic Model (NEM) is fair to all Malaysians", "the price of daily needs items is reasonable" and "the country's poverty rate has been reduced because of the efficiency of the federal government's economic management". It is found all the economic related Islamic issues are slightly agreed upon by the heavy users of the media, with percentage ranging from 44.8%-61.4% for all media.

More questions were asked about the social related Islamic issues. The heavy users of the media strongly agreed that the "social issues such as abandonment of babies and 'Mat Rempit' are at alarming levels", with percentage of agreement range from 90.2%-92.0%. Being Muslim students, they strongly agreed that "Allah" is the exclusive rights of the Muslims. Other religions' devotees should not intervene with the issue, percentage ranging from 86.2%-87.2%. In addition, the heavy users of the media agreed that the Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau, percentage range from 67.4%-75.0%.

The heavy users of the media slightly agreed that an Imam cannot offer a prayer for the well-being of a non-Muslim leader, with percentage range from 56.0%-58.2%. Slightly more than 44% of the heavy users agreed that the crime rate in the country is still not that alarming.

### **The Relationships between Trust and Influence on the Internet, TV, and Newspapers**

Before proceeding to the findings on the relationships between media trust with selected Islamic issues and influence on media with selected Islamic issues, the relationships between each medium trust corresponding to its influence were analyzed. Table 3a shows that there is a positive relationship between the Internet trust and the Internet influence for heavy users of the medium ( $r=.244$ ,  $p=.000$ ). There is a moderately positive relationship between TV trust and TV influence for heavy users of the medium ( $r=.464$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Similarly, there is a moderately positive relationship between newspapers trust and newspapers influence for heavy users of the medium ( $r=.456$ ,  $p=.000$ ).

**Table 3a: Relationships between media trust and media influence among heavy users**

Media Trust	Media Influence					
	Internet Influence (N=315)		TV Influence(N=73)		Newspapers Influence (N=158)	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Trust on the Internet	.244	.000				
Trust on TV			.464	.000		
Trust on Newspapers					.456	.000

### **The Relationships between Trust on the Internet, TV and Newspapers with Selected Islamic Issues among Heavy Media Users**

Further analysis was carried out to gauge the trust on the media (Internet, TV and newspapers) and heavy users' perception on selected Islamic issues pertaining to Federal Government related Islamic issues, peoples' well-being and welfare related Islamic issues, political related Islamic issues, economic related Islamic issues, and social related Islamic issues (Table 3b).

Results show that there is no relationships between Internet trust with the selected Islamic issues in the study. Thus, trust on the Internet does not guarantee the perception of heavy users of the Internet positively on selected Islamic issues. However, different results appear for trust on TV and the level of perception of selected Islamic issues among heavy users of TV. It is found that trust on TV is able to positively correlate with some Islamic issues pertaining to the Federal Government, for instance, that "the federal government is successful in administering the nation

fairly ( $r=.258$ ,  $p=.029$ ) and “the public service’s delivery system is transparent and efficient” ( $r=.250$ ,  $p=.036$ ). The trust on TV among the heavy users is also associated with political related Islamic Issues, specifically in relation to “the Malay special privileges as enshrined in the constitution cannot be questioned” ( $r=.450$ ,  $p=.044$ ). All economic related Islamic issues are positively related to the trust on TV, such as, “the New Economic Model (NEM) is fair to all Malaysians” ( $r=.360$ ,  $p=.002$ ), “the price of daily needs items is reasonable” ( $r=.299$ ,  $p=.011$ ), and “the country’s poverty rate has been reduced because of the efficiency of the Federal Government’s economic management” ( $r=.392$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Among the social related Islamic issues, the only issue that has a positive relationship with trust on TV is “Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau” ( $r=.339$ ,  $p=.004$ ).

Trust on newspapers revealed a different scenario to the perception of heavy newspapers users. The trust on the newspapers is positively correlated with the perception on the selected Islamic issues (Federal Government, peoples’ well-being and welfare, political, economic, and social issues) for all items except for item that says “social issues such as abandonment of babies and ‘Mat Rempit’ are at alarming levels”.

**Table 3b: Relationships between trust on the Internet, TV and newspapers with some selected Islamic issues among heavy users**

Selected Islamic Issues	Degree of Trust					
	Internet (N=315)		TV (N=73)		Newspapers (N=158)	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
<b>Federal Government Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The federal government is successful in lessening the incidences of corruptions.	-.051	.368	.177	.137	<b>.287</b>	<b>.000</b>
The federal government is successful in administering the nation fairly.	-.095	.094	<b>.258</b>	<b>.029</b>	<b>.377</b>	<b>.000</b>
The public service's delivery system is transparent and efficient.	-.004	.941	<b>.250</b>	<b>.036</b>	<b>.297</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>People's Well-being and Welfare Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
I feel safe living in a multiethnic society.	.066	.248	.142	.235	<b>.183</b>	<b>.022</b>
I agree that the cooperative spirit is a principal value shared by the Malaysian society.	.021	.708	.185	.120	<b>.230</b>	<b>.004</b>
<b>Political Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The Malay special privileges as enshrined in the constitution cannot be questioned.	-.015	.789	<b>.240</b>	<b>.044</b>	<b>.164</b>	<b>.042</b>
<b>Economic Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The New Economic Model (NEM) is fair to all Malaysians.	-.081	.154	<b>.360</b>	<b>.002</b>	<b>.425</b>	<b>.000</b>
The price of daily needs items is reasonable.	-.055	.334	<b>.299</b>	<b>.011</b>	<b>.370</b>	<b>.000</b>
The country's poverty rate has been reduced because of the efficiency of the federal government's economic management.	.030	.599	<b>.392</b>	<b>.001</b>	<b>.467</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Social Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
Social issues such as abandonment of babies and Mat Rempit" are at alarming levels.	.012	.830	-.058	.663	-.098	.226
The name "Allah" is the exclusive rights of Muslims.	.011	.845	.136	.257	<b>.172</b>	<b>.034</b>
Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau.	-.087	.128	<b>.339</b>	<b>.004</b>	<b>.388</b>	<b>.000</b>
An Imam cannot offer a prayer for the well-being of a non-Muslim leader.	.011	.848	-.055	.651	<b>.199</b>	<b>.014</b>
The crime rate in the country is still not that alarming.	.001	.998	.103	.394	<b>.197</b>	<b>.015</b>

**The Relationships between Influence of the Internet, TV, and Newspapers with Selected Islamic Issues among Heavy Media Users**

The study also explores the influence of the Internet, TV, and newspapers on the level of perception among heavy users of the media on selected Islamic issues pertaining to Federal Government, people's well-being and welfare, political, economic, and social issues. With regard to the Internet, the item that says "the price of daily needs items is reasonable" is negatively related to the degree of influence of the Internet ( $r=-.158$ ,  $p=.005$ ) and so is the item on "Non-

Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau ( $r=-.119$ ,  $p=.037$ ). This means that the more influence of the Internet has, the less agreement on the selected issues.

As for TV influence, different items cropped out. It is found that TV influence is positively related with the item that says “the country’s poverty rate has been reduced because of the efficiency of the federal government’s economic management” ( $r=.263$ ,  $p=.027$ ) and with the item that reads “Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau” ( $r=.248$ ,  $p=.037$ ).

**Table 3c: Relationships between influence of the Internet, TV and newspapers with some selected Islamic issues among heavy users**

Selected Islamic Issues	Degree of Influence					
	Internet (N=315)		TV (N=73)		Newspapers (N=158)	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
<b>Federal Government Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The federal government is successful in lessening the incidences of corruptions.	-.081	.156	.189	.111	<b>.400</b>	<b>.000</b>
The federal government is successful in administering the nation fairly.	-.135	.071	.204	.086	<b>.508</b>	<b>.000</b>
The public service’s delivery system is transparent and efficient.	-.102	.075	.200	.094	<b>.369</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>People’s Well-being and Welfare Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
I feel safe living in a multiethnic society.	.014	.801	.033	.785	<b>.260</b>	<b>.001</b>
I agree that the cooperative spirit is a principal value shared by the Malaysian society.	-.021	.714	.178	.135	<b>.221</b>	<b>.005</b>
<b>Political Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The Malay special privileges as enshrined in the constitution cannot be questioned.	-.014	.803	.225	.060	<b>.240</b>	<b>.003</b>
<b>Economic Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
The New Economic Model (NEM) is fair to all Malaysians.	-.058	.307	.214	.073	<b>.388</b>	<b>.000</b>
The price of daily needs items is reasonable.	<b>-.158</b>	<b>.005</b>	.145	.229	<b>.347</b>	<b>.000</b>
The country’s poverty rate has been reduced because of the efficiency of the federal government’s economic management.	-.099	.082	<b>.263</b>	<b>.027</b>	<b>.353</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Social Related Islamic Issues:</b>						
Social issues such as abandonment of babies and Mat Rempit” are at alarming levels.	.002	.975	.127	.292	.013	.870
The name “Allah” is the exclusive rights of Muslims.	-.021	.708	.169	.160	.144	.077
Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau.	<b>-.119</b>	<b>.037</b>	<b>.248</b>	<b>.037</b>	<b>.278</b>	<b>.000</b>
An Imam cannot offer a prayer for the well-being of a non-Muslim leader.	.085	.137	.101	.407	.156	.054
The crime rate in the country is still not that alarming.	-.005	.825	.079	.512	.109	.180

The newspapers heavy readers, on the other hand, showed positive relationships between newspapers' influence with many Islamic related issues that is, Federal Government, peoples' well-being and welfare, political and economic issues. From the social issues, the only item that emerged as significantly related to the newspapers influence is that "Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau" ( $r=.278$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Therefore, newspapers influence has a positive effect on the perception of its heavy readers.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

H1: The more exposed the users are to the media, the more trust the users have on the them which in turn influence their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the media.

H1a: The more exposed the users are to the Internet, the more trust the users have on it which in turn influence their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the Internet – not supported to the fullest.

H1b: The more exposed the users are to the TV, the more trust the users have on it which in turn influence their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the TV – partially supported.

H1c: The more exposed the users are to the newspapers, the more trust the users have on it which in turn influence their perception on the Islamic issues raised by the newspapers – mainly supported except for the item on "social issue such as abandonment of babies and Mat Rempit" are at alarming levels".

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study are able to raise pertinent issues that need to taken into consideration by the respective authorities.

1. The study found that heavy users of the Internet are both male and female students, from all levels of program, and with mean age of 22 years. There are more low-users of TV compared to heavy users, and the low users are both male and female students, coming from all levels of program, and are younger in age. On the other hand, the male students are mainly heavy users of the newspapers while female students tend to be low users of the newspapers. The first year students tend to be low users of newspapers while those from the other years of program are

almost equal in terms of the proportion of low and heavy users of the newspapers. This implies that the new media, the Internet, is pervasive among the Muslim students.

2. It is found that the heavy users of the Internet, TV, and newspapers tend to slightly trust the media. They use the media from “moderate” to “much” as their sources of information. The Internet has moderately influenced them while TV and newspapers have “little” to “moderate” influence on them. This means that the students use the media more than they trust them while the media tend to moderately influence them as a whole.

3. The selected Islamic issues are perceived accordingly, where some are well received by the students while others are questionable. The students are not happy with the Federal Government in lessening the incidences of corruptions, neither are they satisfied with the Federal Government administration, or the public service delivery system in terms of transparency and efficiency. Therefore, the Federal Government has to look at the issues seriously.

The issue of safety is important for a Muslim to practice Islam soundly. There should not be any threat and insecurity within the nation so that the populace can live in harmony. Even though the safety and the cooperative spirit do exist, but they are carried out to the fullest. As such, people’s well-being and welfare must be an agenda for the ruling party to improve to ensure that the nation is a safe place to live in, with people helping one another in time of need. This is because the students agreed that the cooperative spirit is a principal value shared by the Malaysian society. The well-being and the welfare of the populace need to be looked at closely as the students think that the nation is not a safe place and the cooperative spirit is dwindling. Hence the security of the nation needs to be given priority so that Malaysia is considered a peaceful place to live in where people are living in harmony, not living in threat and in fright.

The students also perceived that the Malay special privileges as enshrined in the constitution cannot be questioned. They put their firm support for such rights and special privileges for the Malays who are Muslims.

The students agreed that the New Economic Model (NEM) is fair to all Malaysians. But, being Muslims, they think that an Islamic nation like Malaysia should give priority to the Malays more than to the other ethnic groups. They are also concerned with the economic related Islamic



issues, for instance, the increasing price of the daily needs items and the poverty rate of the nation. Therefore, the solutions have to be sought out to lessen the burden of the students' financial problem so that they can concentrate on their studies with healthy mind and body, that is, mentally and physically sound, besides spiritually equipped. Based on the results, the government is urged to do something to improve the economic situation of the nation. Make this its priority in its administrative agenda for the nation. Otherwise, the students are not happy with the government transformation motive.

The students are very concerned about the social related Islamic issues such as abandonment of babies and "Mat Rempit" besides crime rate in the nation which should be tackled and solved accordingly. This social issue needs to be curbed because abandoning of babies is done by irresponsible people who do not want to be responsible for the growth and development of the children. Both abandonment and "Mat Rempit" can be seen as killing the helpless and to themselves by risking their lives, respectively.

The religious and Islamic aspects are affirmed that the name of "Allah" is the exclusive rights of the Muslims, the Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in the mosque/surau, and an Imam cannot offer prayer for the well-being of a Non-Muslim leader. Imam is encouraged to make *dua* and prayer for the well-being of fellow Muslims and for Muslim leaders, for instance, the Agong and the state rulers. Therefore, Non-Muslim leaders should take this issue into consideration, not to violate the rules and regulations of the religious places. Looking across the board, the issue of "Non-Muslim leaders should not speak in a mosque/surau" is agreed upon by all heavy users of the media. In addition, the issue of crime rate should be deeply thought, so that the populace as a whole is not scared and threatened to live in Malaysia, living in fear and in misery resulting from the alarming crime rate.

Therefore, newspapers, in general, are capable of increasing the awareness of its heavy readers in terms knowledge. All government related Islamic issues are important for Malaysia as an Islamic nation. Islam is against corruption, unfairness, inefficiency. Therefore, the government and the respective authorities should take heed of the Federal Government practices. Efforts should be taken into consideration to improve the image of the nation, as perceived by the students.

4. The study is partially able to confirm the Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur). The theory applies mainly to the newspapers, followed by TV, and to a little extent to the Internet.

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