State of the Art in Publishing of Islamic Children's Books

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Abstract: This paper examines the trend of publishing of children's Islamic books among Muslim community particularly in Muslim countries. The paper identifies missions of Muslim publishing companies whilst explain the opportunities brought by innovations in information and communication technology (ICT) on publishing industry. It highlights instant access to publication, popularity of e-book, online selection through online catalogue, online shopping as well the changing of document format such moving documents, sound, image and self learning directives. Innovation of ICT has motivated large number of Islamic children books publishers to publish on electronic format. Muslim publishers such as Darussalam, An-Najm publishers, Ta-Ha publishers, Faqir publication and KUBE have open many branches in different countries and they publish books in different languages. Related to ICT and globalization is the innovation of e-books which has boosted access even among Muslim with low income. Publishers and authors were recommended to synergy publishing children books with content which reflect the prevailing situation and giving clarification from Quran and al-hadith.

Key words: Publishing · Islamic Children Books · Islamic e-books · Technology · ICT and Religion

INTRODUCTION

Background and Introduction: Publishing means to bring to the public attention or announce and it comprehends the process of production and dissemination of literature or information [1]. Generally, publishing is the art and science of making and distributing information to the audience through different media. Currently publishing has widened up its horizon to production of film and software, that involves stages of the development, acquisition, copyediting, graphic design, production (printing or electronic equivalents) and marketing and distribution of newspapers, magazines, books, literary works, musical works and other similar electronic media [2, 3].

The history of publishing in Islam is archaic partly as it is inextricably linked with the history of development of Islamic civilization. Early Islamic publication was found in cave walls paints, palm-leaf stalks of date, thin white stones, parchments, scapula and from memory of man like Abi-Khuzaifa al-Ansari who knew last verse of surat at-Tawba [4]. The innovation of paper technology in 10th century contributes to Quranic publication as it is today. The Quran manuscripts were re-organized by Sahabah in order to be accessed and make the Quran practical. After the death of Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH), his companions (Sahabah) undertook the task of interpretation, thus starting a new age in commentary (tafsir) for publishing purposes. Most of the Sahabah, including Abu Bakr, refrained from commenting with their personal views and only narrated comments by Muhammad (PBUP). Others including ibn Abbas used their own knowledge from the Arabic language to interpret the Qur'an, Uthman (R.A), Ummay (hijazi script), Ubayy ibn Ka'b's who served as a secretary for Muhammad (PBUH) [5, 4].

Likewise the invention of printing in publishing industry manifested the easy dissemination of Islamic knowledge and information to large Muslim population than before. However, as the need for information

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increased electronic publishing emerged. The innovation of ICT was necessary in order to reconcile with Muslim needs as well as managing bulk information. The adaption of ICT in Islamic publication was conceptualized as a means to simplify access, dissemination and simplify update of Islamic books for saving client effectively and efficiently. ICT has re-innovated children's book publishing industry in terms of format, media, contents, coverage, convenience and accessibility. It is through that innovation where Muslim children can glimpse to e-leaning, access to e-publications and online publication associated with variety of Islamic Television channels.

Justifications for Publishing Islamic Children's Books: A study on the state of the art on publishing Islamic children's books (PICB) is crucial to the whole Muslim society as Islam religion proclaim a need to educate children as well Muslim Ummah in order to leave the educated Ummah to safeguard the religion and spread moral spirit to the next generation. The argument was supported by Quran verses as Allah S.W.T. says in the Qur'an in Surah 9, Verse 121:

"Let them devote themselves to studies in religion and admonish their comrades when they return to them so that they may guard themselves against evil."

Islam is the second-largest religion and one of the fastest-growing religions in the world. The growing number of Muslim population need to be accessed to education material basing on Islamic content in order to equip them to become competent in this globalized world of faith. It is through publications of Islamic books which strengthen teaching, learning and research through dispensing Islamic knowledge of jurisprudence. In that essence it is the role of Muslim publishers to guarantee a valid venture of communicating and transmitting knowledge. In that context, it is the responsibility of Muslim publishers to ensure availability of Islamic books to all age and especially for Muslim children. Published content should be extracted from Holy Quran and hadith as advocated in Islamic faith to believe on the books brought to us through prophets in form of revelation (Wahhy).

Islam religion propagates children education since early childhood and the parent or guardian who fail to fulfill that mandatory obligation will be responsible for that negligence. However, Allah (S.W.T) guarantee Muslim in provision of education for the seekers as substantiated in Quran verse Taha 114 "My lord increase me in knowledge". Islamic books are therefore of superior quality as they reflect cultural authenticity which accurately portrays the history, customs, philosophy, values and Arabic languages or with taste of Arabic language which is the original language for Quran. Islamic knowledge advocating elimination of stereotyping with only one book namely the Holy Quran and Islam as a total way of life should form the foundation of children's learning.

The Role of Muslim Publishers in Publishing Islamic Children's Books: Muslim publishers are obliged to publish Islamic religion books for children of all ages. This has been substantiated when our beloved prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was being revealed Wahhay through angel (Jibril) to read and educate people in the 9th century. It is through this commandment all Muslim societies are obliged to acquire knowledge, practice and transmit it through preaching to other societies (Islamic Ummah). Similarly, Islamic religion recognizes that we become truly Muslim through knowledge and not only through birth. For this purpose all Muslims are obliged to educate children according to Islamic codes as revealed in Quran surat (al-'Alaq 96:1-5) about 440 years ago in cave of Hirah in Mecca that:

"Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not".

This narration and others are still valid and powerful in today's world as were put into records by different caliphers in different calligraphies. Also Allah Subhanah watalah (S.W.T) in surah (Al-Imran 3:164) says:

"Indeed, Allah conferred a great favor on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger (Muhammad) from among themselves, reciting unto them His Verses (the Qur'an) and purifying them and Instructing them the Book (the Qur'an) and Al-Hikmah while before that they had been in manifest error".

These verses commanded Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to read, write in essence of seeking knowledge and succeeding knowledge to all generations. Islam as a way of life encourages its followers to continuously strive for improvement through seeking and increasing knowledge from anywhere it is offered [6, 7]. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in most of his al-hadith always advocated the importance of knowledge and made obligatory to all Muslims to acquire and educate other Ummah as he said that "Seek knowledge, even if it is in faraway China" [8].

For Muslim children to get valuable knowledge, it is very important for publishers of children's materials to be knowledgeable enough in selecting contents to be exposed to children and be able to comprehend the moral spirit of Muslim community. In that sense publishers and societies should have a mutual understanding on what to be brought to children's mind, in order to cultivate enthusiasm, learning, confidence and ability to write, speak fluently and make argument basing on Islamic faiths. Muslim parents are obliged to cultivate passionate reading habit and culture to children since early childhood. This is important as it stimulates children imagination, play, curiosity, discussion, reflection, inspiration and expose children to a wide range of language features and vocabulary particularly Arabic as Islamic language [5].

It is through publication of Holy Quran that comes to magnify all human ways of life to suit to what Allah (S.W.T) has guided us to adhere. Muslim publishers played pivotal role in awakening Muslim in most important issues pertaining children books contents as proclaimed in holy Quran.

Mission Statements of Muslim Publishing Companies:
Muslim publishers strive to achieve the objectives and rewards (sawab) as promised by Allah (S.W.T) that the one who spread knowledge (ilm) will be rewarded abundantly [8]ý. Muslim publishing companies have set their mission in consideration on fulfillment of the publishing goal, in order to serve Muslim communities worldwide through publishing innovative, relevant and authentic books [9]. Further, mentioned below are some of Muslim publishers mission as extracted from different publishers' websites are:

- Strive to make and continual assistance in making the teachings of Islam more readily available and accessible for everyone.
- To promote accurate representation of Islam by providing correct information thereby encouraging individual responsibility for seeking and acting upon the truth.
- To increase awareness as to the extent of oppression against Muslims throughout the world and the conspiracy that exists to exterminate Muslims and the religion of Islam from the face of the Earth.
- Presenting books free from sectarianism and in accordance with the Quran and the Sunnah.

- Producing books in concise, easy, lucid and comprehensive form.
- Keeping the prices of the books less than the global market prices.
- Maintaining the quality of books according to international standards.
- Working to develop a better understanding of different schools of thought among the Muslims.
- Presenting books written by the most senior Islamic scholars and authors.
- Editing of manuscripts by a board of senior editors.
- Supervising every stage of publication by a team of professional technical staff.
- Catering to the needs of the present-day problems faced by Muslims.
- Introducing educational devices for the learning of Quranic teaching through modern technology.

Contribution of Ict in Publishing Islamic Children's Books: The explosion of information and communication technology (ICT) has created a lot of improvement in every industry in which publishing industries is not exempted [1, 10]. For a long period printed book was one of the most important information conduits for knowledge dissemination for both Sunah, faradh, fiqh, sirah, Islamic codes of conducts, tawhid, al-hadith, Islamic academic studies, Islamic research and cultural heritage as well as the media for knowledge preservation. Advancement of technology has also changed Muslims modernity of knowledge dissemination in which publishing as universal distribution has added value on the access to publication. Nowadays the most recent Islamic documents are browsed, accessed and retrieved through internet in form of electronic book (e-book). Through ICT Islamic children book contents have been transformed into digital format which mounts image, sound, moving document and portable document.

Muslim publishers, among others, Amana publishing company, KUBE publishing company, Muslim publishing companied, Ta-Ha, Faqir publication and An-Najm publishers offer a wide range of services for children publications. They have managed to invest on e-publishing which they publish e-books for children. In addition to that, they offer alternatives for purchasing online, where customers can select books through browsing on online catalogues. Table 1 shows sample of books which can be accessed through online catalogue.

Table 1: Sample of the e-book titles for Muslim children:

No.	E-book Title
1	10 Reward of each letter
2	Abu Hurayrah and Shaytaan thief
3	7 Rights of children
4	Juz Amma teacher with Blank Space for Repetition
5	Juz Amma teacher withchildren's Repetition
6	Golden advice for youth
7	Great Women of Islam
8	Moral and character for Muslim youth

Table 2: Sample of Children Book Title in More than one Language Published by Darussalam Publishers;

No.	Title
1	A Muslim child's way of life
2	Days in the life of a Muslim child
3	I want to eat my food
4	Noorani Qa'idan book (Tajweed)
5	Science of the Quran for children
6	Arabic for begginers
7	Help yourself in reading the Quran
8	Good characters
9	Kindness to animals
10	I want to eat my food
11	I want to go to sleep
12	I want to go on a journey

Table 3: Sample of Children Book Title in More than one Language Published by Ta-Ha publishers;

No.	Title
1	Wonderful creature
2	Lets learn our Islam
3	24 hours in the life of a Muslim
4	Wonderful of Allah's creation
5	Alphabet book for children
6	Colouring books eg. Mosque, animals
7	The Prophets
8	The battles of Badr and Uhud
9	Mother's right
10	Forgiveness and other matters
11	The last battles for the truth
12	The world of animals

The most popular Islamic publisher namely Darussalam Publishers as an International Islamic Publishing House established in 1986 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Mr. Abdul Malik Mujahid with its headquartered in Riyadh, has branches in many countries around the world including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Pakistan, USA , UK, Australia, Canada France, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India and South Africa. Its success is attributed to the efforts of more than 50 research scholars, experts and workers of the Darussalam institute [11]. The institute is known for the propagation of the Quran and Sunnah, its priority is to maintain international publishing standards in terms of quality and content. Through its website the company offers translation of Muslim books in canonized format for easy of understanding. This is due to fact that the Quran should be known clearly to believers word by word of the verses. Therefore Darussalam Publishers has managed to convey to the people the accurate meaning of the Quran verse the word to word translation of the meaning of the Noble Quran. Since mere word-for-word translation itself does not lead to the complete understanding, the idiomatic translation was produced on the same page of verse to facilitate for the complete awareness [12].

The company has published books in Urdu, Arabic, English and it has published the translation of the Holy Quran in 25 global languages namely Persian, Turkish, Indonesian, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Italian, Albanian, Sindhi, Pashto, Tajik, Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Swahili, Nepali, Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, Tagalog and Somali. The company publishes multilingual books, offers translation services and, most importantly, can translate the Holy Quran in local languages [13].

Also Ta-Ha publishing company offers publication of children Islamic books for fiction, non-fiction in more than one language. Some of children book titles published by Ta-Ha publishing company are listed below:

Further, Darussalam publisher has introduces a new fun way to help children and youth to learn the religion of Islam through playing games and educational toys that facilitates memorization of Surahs of the Quran and Dua's (supplication) [12].

Not only that the Ta-Ha publishers has added collection of toys and games which arose interest through introducing children to the Hajj in an enjoyable game format. Also they have makes easy way to learn the meaning and message of the five daily prayers through games. Toys and game on great mosques provides a fun way for children to learn about mosques about the basics of mosque architecture and layout. Special emphasis has focused on the Kabah and Islam's most sacred cities of Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem, where at the end of the game children will acquire knowledge of Islamic practices as salah and hajj [14].

Fig. 1: Sample of the educational toys and games:
a). Arabic number puzzle, b). Arabic numbers and letters puzzle, c). Arabic missing letters, d). The box of manners.

Fig. 2: Sample of toys and games from Ta-Ha publishers are;
a). The Hajj fun board game, b). Madinah Salat fun game, c). Hadith Challenge Game Box, d). The Great mosque game

Similarly, KUBE publishing company which has branches in 30 countries produces children's Islamic books in different aspects like fiction, Islamic studies, nonfiction, picture books, poetry and anthologies, the prophet's biography, audio, poster and other children Islamic contents from reputable children authors. Through their website they offer online shopping services

thus simplifying distribution. It is common for majority of Muslim publishers for children books to provide email addresses through which customers can contact them with enquiries or feedback [15].

Not only that, Darussalam publishing company offers a wide range of services for Islamic collection and different items which are Islamic authentic such as Quran, hadith, audio, mp3, CDs, video DVDs, digital Quran, clothes and gift at the low price and great services. They also offer classical works in e-books format with translations in variety of languages. The most distinction gained by Darussalam is the introduction of innovative educational devices for Quranic teachings through computer technology [11].

Smartphone, iPod and Android offer an option to open access repository. This means Islamic knowledge ranging from holidays, featuring stories of Muslim cultures, biographies of notable men and women, heritage, teachers study guide and different codes of Islamic conduct can be accessed in local languages even when one is travelling. Discovery of e-reader for Quran verses creates a great opportunity to Muslims as it allows reading of Quran at self pace, with guides on correct pronunciation. Furthermore, a variety of Muslim children books pertaining to all Islamic disciplines and different denominations such as Sunny, Shia, Answar and others are available and accessible once one is connected.

The evolution of ICT has cut down the printing costs significantly. Meanwhile Muslim publishers need only to print a few copies for display and the remaining could be printed upon request. Apparently there is increase usage of digital books (e-books) and electronic reading tablets popularity which are light, convenient, portable, accessible, multi-functional and eco-friendly which allows bookmark. The reduction of production costs has enhanced Muslim publishers to acquire large profits through the sale of e-books.

Muslim publishers have created blogs on which customer can post their comments, request information through Tweeter, facebook, Skype, e-newsletters and response are useful to large community rather than individual person. The most impressive aspect of ICT to Muslim publishers is its simplification of accessibility, promotion and marketing of children Islamic books. Currently, Muslim publishing allows buying and selling of children e-books worldwide so long as the recipient can browse to look for its availability and content. And with e-book facilities the collection are always available, the issue of out of stock are no more accommodated.

To say the least, the existing popularity of e-books has created opportunities for Muslim authors to succeed through enhancement of independent publishing unlike the formal procedure which contained many restrictions. Nonetheless, emergence of ICT simplifies and minimizes printing cost of Islamic children books so long no need for big warehouse.

Muslim publishers have formed a number of associations in order to safeguard their rights and interests. The most strong one is the formation of Islamic world publishers which has significantly contributed in provision of Muslim publishers' opportunity to exchange views in different aspects such as dissemination of Quran to children, Islamic teachers' guide, rights of Islamic authors, responsibilities of publishers, translations, publications, electronic publications, publication economy, distribution system, intellectual property and professional needs of Islamic world publishers through teleconference [16].

Challenges Facing Publishing of Islamic Children's Books: While ICT has simplified dissemination of Islamic knowledge especially to children, Islamic children books are in competition with circulation of other non-Islamic books [14, 16]. It is the responsibility of Muslim adults to scan the content to be exposed to children. The chairman of Islamic World Publishers conference of 2013 was worried that globalization increases the possibility of Muslim children books to be blurred with Western ideology whilst forgetting the Islamic ethics.

The Islamic World Publishers conference of 2013 commented on the need for Muslim publishers to publish quality children books contents for Muslim children which reflect history of Islamic persons, Islamic events, Islamic practices, natural environment, scholars works on sciences and Islamization contents with limited text and cartoon [16]. The conference called for the reversal of the present situation of scarcity of well-known Muslim publishers for children books about religious teaching practice or core concepts of the faith as compared to Christian and Jews. Conference resolutions recommended Muslim publishers synergy in order to safeguard Islamic religion and the future of Muslim children.

Another serious challenge facing publishing of Islamic children books is associated with language problems. Most Islamic e-books are largely in English which needs to be translated in order to benefits large number of Muslim children. As argued by Muslim publishers, translation is costly, requiring expertise in editing and deep literature, writing skills and illustration in order to carter to diverse children needs. Similarly, Islamic children books published in non-western languages seem to be insignificant to be brought to the notice of world of Muslim children who are not from that geographical locality [10].

Piracy is a crime of technology which has unfortunately not spared publishing of Islamic children books. With the growth of technology untruthful publishers can easily use illegal means to gain huge profits. A worst scenario was reported in one of the Islamic websites and Tehran Times newspapers in August 2011 that the Chinese were publishing the Quran with spelling mistakes and also presentation of wrong information on Islamic values. Also, several Iranian publishers have been sending copies of the Quran to China for publication, only to have them come back home with spelling mistakes [3]. The Director of the Department of Evaluation on Publication of the Holy Quran questioned the decision to send the Quran to be published outside Islamic countries while Iran has enough publishing companies.

Publishers, Authors and Readers Comments on Publication of Islamic Children Books: The stakeholder in Islamic children book's publication recommended on the need to publish more on children contents which rise interest and portray reality of the present life. Recently children especially at youth stage are exposed to scary and terrible culture, while parents and guardians are busy with seeking daily bread, so it is only quality books in different format with simple and clear explanation will assist in nurturing children behavior.

It was evidenced that, nowadays family behavior have change with change in global technology, in most cases families are controlled by screen and wire and technology between them, that means member of family are talking on the damn cellphones and screen, while missing privilege of sitting in circle manner to discuss family issues. In that case, authors and publishers should embrace in publishing e-books and other resources in multimedia in order to cope with current situation where morality of reading books has decline to both parents and children [10]. In connection to that, authors and publishers were recommended to write and publish quality books contents which reflecting the prevailing situation of globalization and liberation, as well the side effects of the contemporary life style in order to awaken Muslim community.

Parents commented on the achievement reached by publishers of children Islamic book, as they have managed to select contents which rose interest to majority of children. Although, they highlight the present trend which indicates both publishers and authors who are experience and expertise are focusing in publishing contents in same area and their marketing strategies chosen by publishers look similar and barely overlap. In fact selected means and modalities of delivering their contents and product to their respective customers look similar. Therefore, publishers were recommended to be strategically in their publication in order to maintain their competitive advantage [1].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Muslim publishers for Islamic children books should invest more in writing and publishing of children books focusing on the prevailing situation and give clarification from Quran and hadith. More Muslim publishers should advice Muslim authors and elite to accept e-publishing as currently they host blogs, which contain little information on children education purposes. Publishers of Islamic children books should embark on e-publishing of Islamization knowledge in order to perfect content for Muslim children as advocated by Al-Attas and Al-Faruqi. This due to the criticality of Islamic knowledge as a foundation of other knowledge, at the same time scientist is proceeding with discoveries.

It is high time for publishers of Islamic children books to train workforce, recruit qualified person in order to sustain the innovation challenges brought by ICT. Muslim publishing industry needs people from different backgrounds with different experience and expertise in order increase investment on e-book services as it provides instant response and easily purchasing. In that case Muslim publishers should participate in different forums and discussion sites in order to grasp public views on their products. Currently Islamic World publisher association has only 40 members. Muslim publishers should establish marketing strategies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the publishing industry has evolved significantly from its inception. Contemporary developments motivated by ICT brought improvements such as instant publishing, interactive sound and pictures and which simplify reading for Muslim children.

Muslim publishing companies have added value to the products and services through online purchasing and e-books. Muslim publishers were recommended to invest more on e-books, to be more innovative, creative and pioneering on sourcing of necessary skills for development of Muslim companies. Challenges brought with ICT include piracy, market competition which in turn affects Muslim publishers. Muslim publishers should participate in different discussion and forum in order to grasp new skill and learn from others were pinpointed. These magnitudes of these challenges could be more daunting in minority Muslim countries, including many in Africa. For this matter much as the problem is global, only global solidarity among Muslim publishers from all Muslim countries can effectively resolve many of the problems.

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