

Making Islamic Popular Music in Malaysia, 1996 – 2016

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyse the development of the *nasyid* genre in the Malaysian music industry over a period of two decades (1996-2016), from the perspectives of the producers of this music. The word *nasyid* derives from Arabic, which means 'to sing or chant'. The research seeks to provide further understanding of *nasyid* and to consider various perspectives on the changes that took place over the period under scrutiny. The research addresses the so-called 'Raihan phenomenon' of the late 1990s, which led to a growth in *nasyid* as a genre of Islamic popular music. The thesis explores both the genre of *nasyid* and its wider landscape and context. It also investigates the changes regarding musical instruments and musical style, analyses the lyrics and languages of the music and the evolution of images and the changing retinue of the participants in this musical genre. Furthermore, this research considers the scope and structure of the music business and the marketing practices that surrounded *nasyid* in Malaysia. As an insider to, and a veteran of, the Muslim Malay music industry, the author uses his knowledge and insights to enhance understanding of *nasyid* in Malaysia. The study uses qualitative research techniques including multiple analysis methods, in-depth interviews, content analysis and participant-observation fieldwork. This fieldwork was carried out in two phases, over 11 months (September 2015 to January 2016 and April 2016 to September 2016), with industry experts, singers, composers, lyricists, arrangers and musicians, Islamic scholars, media workers, and music retailers, as well as related organisations and recording labels working in the Malaysian music industry, especially within the genre of *nasyid*. The findings and results of this study show how *nasyid* grew rapidly over the two decades in question. The research draws together knowledge from respondents experienced in the Malaysian music industry; a key aim is to use this knowledge to enhance the commercial viability of *nasyid* in the Malaysian music industry and beyond. The conclusion summarises three major findings, namely: (i) the complexity of defining Islamic popular music

and *nasyid*; (ii) the style and characteristics of *nasyid* and Islamic popular music in Malaysia; and (iii) the place of halal literacy within the business models used by the music industry of Malaysia. Suitable recommendations are put forward to help maintain this music in the future by considering the training systems for educating emerging *nasyid* artists. Overall, this thesis seeks to achieve three things, namely: (i) provide detailed knowledge on this music for international scholars of ethnomusicology and popular music studies; (ii) inform participants in *nasyid* and related Islamic music genres about the structure of the industry; and (iii) present ideas on the business models deployed and provide suggestions for improved economic outcomes.

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Bila dipuji kejayaan kita	When one's success is praised
Sebenarnya bukan milik kita	In reality, it's not ours
Oleh itu sedarlah sentiasa	Always keep in your heart
Semuanya dari Allah	Everything is from *Allah*
Hati gembira terasa bahagia	When one's heart is full of joy
Itulah tanda nikmat dariNya	They're blessings from Him
Ingatlah Allah bersyukur padaNya	Remember and be grateful to Him
Ucapkanlah Alhamdulillah	Say *praise to Allah*

These were among the lyrics that were deeply embedded in my mind. It was in 1997, when I was 13 years old, that these lyrics, along with their melodious tune, brought meaning to my life. They made me feel calm. The song is from the group *Raihan* (an Arabic word meaning 'fragrance of heaven'), the first Malaysian Muslim pop group to gain truly transnational celebrity status that stretched far beyond Southeast Asia (Barendregt 2011). When I first heard them, it was commonplace to hear pop, rock, and ballads aired on Malaysian radio. However, I was surprised that a *nasyid* (pronounced *na-syeed*) song was actually being broadcast because it was not common to hear songs of this nature out of season, i.e. the month of *Ramadhan.* Regardless of where I was, be it at restaurants, in shopping malls, on the bus or in the car, I heard this song aired regularly.

Nasyid is a popular performance art that includes Islamic elements (Yusof 2014). *Nasyid* can be sung with or without the accompaniment of musical instruments. There are two common types of *nasyid* rhythms in Malaysia, namely, rhythm of the desert and contemporary rhythm. Rhythm of the desert denotes melodies inspired by Middle Eastern countries while

contemporary rhythm denotes modern melodies appropriately accompanied by music technology. The main purpose of *nasyid* songs is to educate listeners by delivering positive, moral, and religious messages. They consist of verses of poetry, or compiled portions of poems, that are presented vocally in the form of songs. Their lyrics have very sacred elements, such as references to the remembrance of God (*Allah*) and the Prophet Muhammad, improving awareness of Islamic teachings, respect for parents and elders, persistence in the pursuit of knowledge, expressions of gratefulness to *Allah*, and other positive themes. *Nasyid* is not just about the lyrics of the song but also about the individual's or group's style that makes up the image. This musical style is not only about conveying moral messages, but also about being a form of entertainment. Fikri and Tibek (2014: 43) claim that the purpose of entertainment in Islam is to have a calming effect on one's busy life and to obtain blessings from God. Other than consisting of religious lyrics that inspire 'good moral conduct', these songs should also be pleasing to the ear. This led me to wonder how *nasyid* songs in this style became very popular.

In the 1990s, many music stores displayed posters of Raihan in their windows. I still recall the image of the group's cover album depicting five men, all dressed in white and each sporting the *kufi* (a close-fitting, brimless cap), against a black background with the group's name displayed prominently in bold (Figure 1.1). They were immensely popular.



Figure 1.1: Raihan with their first album cover in 1996[1]

In 2000, I attended a *Raihan* performance at my school, Bandar Penawar Islamic Secondary School (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama Bandar Penawar, Kota Tinggi Johor*). The performance was sold out. The highlight of the show, to my mind, was when the school's *Nasyid* group, of which I was a member, was invited to sing alongside Raihan. That experience left an indelible imprint on my mind.

Over time, more *Nasyid* groups emerged in Malaysia, most notably *Hijjaz, Rabbani, Brothers, Firdaus,* and *Saujana*. Their performances encompassed a variety of genres such as traditional Malay music, R&B, and pop. They also undertook other singing styles such as ballads and acapella. Though the group members were, generally, of different ages and either gender, the vast majority of the performers were male. With the rise in popularity of *nasyid* groups in the entertainment industry, I was encouraged to become a *nasyid* artist, too. I asked

[1] Photo from https://www.discogs.com/de/Raihan-Puji-Pujian/release/5319903

myself, “why not me?” In Islam, we are encouraged to spread good words and deeds and embody good moral values. I believe that music is the most interactive approach to doing thus, and I considered it my own social responsibility to accept this inner prompting. From my observation of my surroundings, I found that many of the younger generation, my friends included, were not practicing what was expected of them in Islam, such as attending the daily prayer meetings at the mosque (*Masjid*) and religious classes taught by religious teachers (*ustaz*).[2] (thesis statement 1 ‘evolution’)

In 2002 when I was 18, I joined the *nasyid* group UNIC (“You and I See”). We were mentored and signed by the established popular group, Hijjaz. They taught us how to be professional *nasyid* singers. More specifically, they taught us how to use several types of voice such as unison voice, second voice, third voice, and how to harmonise effectively in our singing. They were also instrumental in giving us valuable pointers on how to dress appropriately for the stage and for outings in public; how to field questions from the press and a myriad other tip vital to perfecting our communication skills. After this training, they gave us the opportunity to produce an album and sign a recording contract with them (Hijjaz Records label). Our first album sold more than 60,000 units and achieved a ‘Gold Award’ (awarded to albums with more than 25,000-unit sales in Malaysia). We were also nominated for ‘Best Vocal Group’, ‘Best *Nasyid* Song’, and ‘Best New Artist’ at the prestigious AIM, *Anugerah Industri Muzik* (Music Industry Awards), and *Anugerah ERA* (ERA Awards - ERA is a major radio station in Malaysia) in Malaysia for a number of years. UNIC won one award in 2003 for the ‘*Best Nasyid Song*’.[3]

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[2] An *ustaz* is a person who possesses vast knowledge of Islam. They normally come from Islamic schools or institutions and are knowledgeable in Islamic issues.

[3] ‘Best *Nasyid* Song’ titled ‘*Hanya tuhan yang tahu*’ (Only God Knows), won the Anugerah ERA (ERA Awards), 2003, composed by Isman Nadim, a member of the *Hijjaz Nasyid* group. It defeated the four other nominated songs.

When I consider all that has happened with regard to *nasyid* and how its popularity has grown, I realise that *nasyid* has had a major impact on audience development. The music industry in Malaysia holds *nasyid* singers in high esteem. Often, when there is a social or religious issue involving music, the *nasyid* groups are the ones often sought for comment by the media. In light of this public role, UNIC's manager, Hasyim Ngadiman, advised us to spread the message to our audience that, 'One must love the songs, not the person who sings the songs'.

Significant changes in the *nasyid* music industry have occurred since then, and the landscape of Islamic popular music in Malaysia has undergone a transformation. In the late 1990s, *nasyid* was typically performed with an Arabesque music ensemble, giving the music a traditional feel. Groups began to spring up in response to a perceived decay in moral and spiritual values among the young. Therefore, the lyrics were mostly educational or inspirational, consisting of praises to God and the prophets, knowledge about Islam, and Islamic history. After a while, the themes of the songs changed. Stories of love between men and women became a common feature, with only a few references made to Islam. Musically, *nasyid* songs today are more open to incorporating non-traditional musical instruments such as drum kits and electric guitars. As people in Malaysia are increasingly exposed to music from around the world, *nasyid* songs have adopted styles that are more varied. Now, *nasyid* is commonly performed in pop, R&B, hip-hop, rock and reggae styles.

The images and dress styles of *nasyid* singers are also much more varied now. While some retain the traditional dress code, there are those who prefer more modern and casual clothing. The most crucial change that has taken place is that the Islamic popular music industry, as a whole (including *Nasyid*), has gradually moved closer to the mainstream of popular entertainment, especially after many popular non-Islamic artists became Islamic in character and appearance. Celebrities interested in the Islamic lifestyle have become a trend.

Malay Muslims have become more interested in these styles and are more accepting of Islamic entertainment to a point that it has become a significant part of the current popular culture in Malaysia.

The popularity of *nasyid* proves that there is a market for religious music in a popular style. Since the 1990s, various mediums of Islamic entertainment have flourished including radio, television, magazines, and online media. The increase in popular Islamic television programming in Malaysia has also helped to promote many Islamic figures or singers such as *Imam Muda* (Young Islamic Leader), *Pencetus Ummah* (Islamic Community Leader), and *Da'i* (Islamic Preacher). These Islamic programmes were created as a platform for young adults to display their talents and creativity in propagating Islam. Often, these programmes are structured as competitions for a range of candidates, where tasks or topics are given to determine the best (and winning) contestant. This has led to the creation of specific stations that target the Islamic market, for example, the radio station and website, *IKIM.fm*, television stations, and *TV Al-Hijrah*.

Malaysian performing artists have followed this trend. Several *nasyid* singers left their *nasyid* groups to pursue solo careers outside of the genre. Two examples of these are Yassin Sulaiman (from the *Nasyid* group *Brothers*) and Faizal Tahir (from the nasyid group *Mirwana*). Many already popular Malaysian singers or musicians such as Iwan, Sham Kamikaze, and Akhil Hayy also adopted a more religious lifestyle. They shifted from secular musical and presentational styles to enter the Islamic popular music scene. This suggests that the division between *Nasyid* singers and pop singers has begun to disappear.

Several Malaysian female singers also transformed their image from a 'pop-look' to an 'Islamic-look' by adopting more modest styles and wearing the traditional hijab (headscarf). Examples of these include Ziana Zain, Liza Hanim, and Shila Hamzah. Despite these subtle changes, these performers retain their core popular music following. Pop star Siti Nurhaliza is

a music icon in Malaysia, who is also known as the 'Celine Dion of Asia'. Born in 1979, she began her singing career at age 12. She has produced an album every year since 1996 and has won numerous awards for her efforts (Munan 2008: 232). She started wearing the headscarf in 2013, when she was 34 years old, to project an Islamic image and still sings in the pop song genre with occasional releases of Islamic-oriented tracks. However, she has never declared herself as a *Nasyid* artist. There is a Malaysian hip-hop group called One Nation Emcee, which, though it does not cultivate an Islamic image, has released an Islamic-themed song entitled, *'Syukur (Kau Yang Satu)'* (Gratefulness [You are the Only One]). There are also singers who, though they have portrayed an Islamic image since the start of their careers, do not position themselves within Islamic popular music (e.g. Yuna and Najwa Latiff). Although they have worn the *hijab*, as required in Islam, since the start of their careers, they have not released any Islamic songs nor have they been involved in Islamic-related events and media programmes.

By the mid-2000s, the image and musical styles of Islamic popular musicians began to be more accommodative of Western popular music. In the late 1990s, *nasyid* artists were easily recognisable by their attire because they had a traditional image that enabled the audience to identify them. Wearing plain loose clothes topped with a *kufi* (a close-fitting, brimless cap for men) and a *hijab* (headscarf for women) was then the identity of *Nasyid* artists. However, that distinction is no longer applicable, or even popular, now. While there are artists who have maintained an Islamic dress code, many others have not. In 2014, I had a conversation with a friend working in the music industry, who expressed his misgiving in the following fashion:

> *Now, everyone wants to be like a western artist. They sing Islamic songs, but dress like a Western star. What is wrong with singing nasyid songs and dressing in an Islamic style? People will respect us more, if not, we will be just like them and be without our own identity (Anonymous).*

Thinking about his misgiving initiated a series of questions in my mind, namely, "What is the current state of 'Islamic popular music' in Malaysia? What is the difference between *nasyid* and Islamic popular music? What are the contemporary sounds of *nasyid* and Islamic popular music? What constitutes an Islamic image? Does image matter for an Islamic popular music singer? Is it the same business model that is implemented in all music business operations, including that of Islamic music?" I then designed a research strategy to gather information that could present a better picture of the evolution of Islamic popular music in Malaysia over time. This would also facilitate an empirical analysis of Islam and music, especially in Malaysia, by enabling a close examination of the different facets of the cultural landscape, which I had divided into the aspects of images, lyrics, music styles and business models.

Recognising the validity of the questions that had arisen, coupled with my strong interest and background in Islamic popular music, I began gathering information for a preliminary study, through informal conversations with friends in the Malaysian music industry. I sought their opinions with regard to my questions. Meeting them at various locations such as concerts, their studios, restaurants, and even shopping malls, the basic question I asked most often was "What is the current state of *nasyid*?" (*Bagaimana Nasyid pada hari ini?).* This preliminary investigation provided sufficient background on Islamic popular music for a more in-depth research project. From my personal experience in the Islamic popular music industry and from my preliminary enquiries, I surmised that Islamic popular music in Malaysia had changed in many different ways. This drove me to undertake a more comprehensive study of Islamic popular music in Malaysia. In 2014, I was offered the opportunity to pursue a doctorate degree, and I decided to undertake my research on Islamic popular music in Malaysia at the University of Nottingham. This thesis presents the results of that research.

To begin with, I provide a brief overview of the pertinent aspects of Islam as a religion, the various perceptions of music in Islam throughout the Islamic world, and the emergence of Islam and Islamic music in Malaysia. This is necessary to provide a clear picture of the relationship between Islam, music and Malaysia itself (the study considers the history of *nasyid* and its development in Malaysia). This research provides an overview of previous research including scholarly articles on music in Islam and the role that globalisation has played in shaping the Islamic popular music industry. This research will present descriptions of the various types of music circulating and performed in Malaysia. Beginning from the traditional music of the pre-Islamic era to the Islamic era and then to modern times where Western music has penetrated the borders and influenced the popular culture and music of Malaysia, this research chronologically outlines the evolution of music in Malaysia. I examine how Muslims have overcome the challenges they face due to globalisation, as conflict has occurred in parallel with progress.

The thesis will also explore the concept of Islamic popular music, *nasyid*, and its wider cultural landscape (as stated previously) from the perspectives of people involved in the production side of Malaysia's music industry. There are three key points involved in this study: Islam, music, and Malaysia. Through ethnomusicological research, this study will provide an in-depth study of the sociological and anthropological impact of Islamic popular music in Malaysia. This research is necessary because there are very few studies associated with Islamic popular music in this country. As a researcher, I am in a unique position because I have been personally involved in the Islamic popular music scene for two decades. This perspective has enabled me to analyse the industry from the inside. I have been able to gather information from the most appropriate sources and channels through my personal networks and connections in the industry. Thus, I am able to provide a comprehensive account of the industry, which will help to enhance our understanding of *nasyid* and assess its current state in the country.

1.1 An overview of Islam

The belief system of Islam plays a significant role in the structure and content of Islamic popular music. In order to understand Islamic popular music, it is necessary to define Islam and understand its history. The word Islam derives from the word 'as-salam', meaning both 'peace' and 'submission'. For Muslims, it is not just about obtaining a sense of peace, but surrendering to the universal will of God through morality and spirituality (Ashraf 2008: 2).

According to Nigosian (2004: 98), Islam is commonly believed to have emerged during the time of Prophet Muhammad (c. 570-632) during the sixth century C.E. in the Arabian Peninsula. However, Muslims believe that the religion is rooted in the common biblical tradition that begins with God's creation of the universe and the first human being, Adam. They believe that a long line of prophets and messengers followed this – as many as 124,000 – who were all exemplary in character and did not claim divinity, but merely spread the message of the existence of God. Islam professes that the first revelation sent to Muhammad was when he was 40 years old, in the year 610, at a retreat on Mount Hira. The message brought to him came through an angel, Jibril (Gabriel), ordering him to read (Iqra'). Throughout Muhammad's mission of spreading Islam, more divinely inspired utterances were revealed to him in stages and in relation to various events (Esposito 1999:140). Collectively, these verses formed the Quran, which consists of 114 chapters (Saddique 2011: xiv).

While some Muslims argue that Muhammad was the 'living Quran', to devout Muslims, Muhammad is the ideal role model (Esposito 2011: 11). Not only is he known for his piety, he was a prophet who was also a charismatic political leader. After his death, narratives of his traditions, or Hadith, recounted details of what he said and did, revealing his behaviour, practice, and the values he held throughout his lifetime - this is known as *Sunnah* (see glossary) (Neusner 2009: 146). There were two scholars widely known for compiling the most reliable

Hadith, in the ninth century. The scholars were Al-Bukhary and Muslim. The *Sunnah* (see glossary) includes stories or traditions covering everything from Muhammad's advice about prayer, fasting, marriage and divorce, diplomacy, and holy war, to his teachings and examples (Neusner 2009: 146). The Quran and the *Sunnah* (see glossary), together, form the Shari'ah, also known as Islamic law (Ahmed 2002: 3). In sum, the history of Islam illustrates the ideas of Islamic ground rules based on Al-Quran and Al-*Sunnah* (see glossary) which set out the practices of Islamic law.

1.2 Music in Islam

'From the very beginning of Islamic history, therefore, the question of music and its legal status has been surrounded by an aura of ambiguity, which, in fact, has been a positive rather than a negative of Islamic law' (Nasr 1997: 217).

We can surely ask how the 'positive' aspect of Islamic law, referred to by Nasr above, applies to countries or regions where the implementation of Shari'ah law hampers musical expression. Clearly, in several Islamic countries, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, 'state policies aimed at Islamicisation have affected and hampered artistic production' (Raseuki 2009: 28). Conner (1976) argues that Islamic legalists officially prohibit music. The Qur'an, however, does not prohibit music, and official condemnation is largely unsuccessful. In fact, music often receives a privileged place, for example in Sufi religious ceremonies. Many religious leaders (such as the Caliphs) patronised the classical music traditions at their courts, and many of the great Islamic philosophers wrote on musical theory. Islamic music in the Middle East and North Africa has traditionally emphasised vocal music, in both sacred and secular spheres, and the primary object of the instruments is to provide accompaniment. Although considerable variety exists in the music of Islamic countries, religion has provided a

dominant central link. Ornamentation is particularly important in religious chanting, and the recitation of the Qur'an, which is normally referred to as ‘reading’, is a highly developed art of vocal ornamentation.

Conner also states that four major classical music forms (Arab, Persian, Turkish and Indian) have improvisatory elements (as does most Islamic folk and religious music), based on systems of modes (*maqam* in Arab lands, *dastgah* in Persia, *makam* in Turkey, and *ragas* in India; Conner 1976). In practice, most genres of Islamic popular music have not used notation, except occasionally as a mnemonic guide. In modern times, notations have been devised for teaching and for preserving aspects of the classical traditions which otherwise might be lost.

Randel (2003: 422) argues that ‘Music is central to any world religion, and Islam is no exception’. He observes that the Islamic context has influenced many musical traditions worldwide because the religion resides in various communities. Hence, its beliefs are spread and its messages are expressed in various musical languages. The call to prayer or the chanting of the Quran, for instance, originated in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, yet it still signifies Near Eastern music and has inspired cultures from Central Asia to Southeast Asia, and even in countries in Southern Africa. Islam has three principal words or terms for prayer: *shalat* (prayer), *du’a* (personal supplication), and *zikr* (mystical recollection) (Raseuki 2009: 119). These three Qur’anic terms indicate the main Muslim prayer practices which draw many of their typical features from the encounter of Islam with the cultural settings of the Middle East, particularly in the early centuries of its development, as well as that of the lands Islam eventually conquered.

The word ‘music’ and its use as a terminology came from the word *musiqa* (also referred to as *musiqi*) and derives from *mousike* (Harnish and Rasmussen 2011: 46), from the Greek language. The Muslims borrowed the term from the eighth until the tenth century of Hijrah, the beginning of the Muslim calendar, which was in 622 CE (Al-Faruqi 1993: 31). However,

as the combination of both poetic and musical expression developed in the Arab lands and became the pinnacle of music's hierarchy, the term *ghina* (singing) became the term used to refer to musical expressions, while *musiqi* was reserved for the science of music (Shiloah, 2001: 16). Al-Faruqi (1993: 31) argued that, since the term 'music' originated from Greek civilisation, musicologists and ethnomusicologists defined 'music' as the harmonisation of sounds, voices or instruments that produce emotional satisfaction, aesthetics and a structural belief system that shapes the foundation of one's belief.

Based on this definition, Ab Majid and Yusof (2008: 90) argued that three characteristics underlie Islamic popular music. These are the sounds or musical instruments; a product that satisfies one's emotions and aesthetics; and fulfilling a specific purpose, such as a belief system, and others. There are examples that correlate three of these characteristics used as a means of ibadah (deeds or means of worship in Islam). In some forms of ibadah, no musical instruments are used, especially in ibadah that is concerned with the Quran, the *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage), *tahmid* (Islamic form of chants in praise of God) and *takbir* hari raya (Islamic call in celebration of the coming of 'Eid al-Fitr or the festival marking the end of the fasting month). However, according to Ab Majid and Yusof (2008: 90), in other forms of ibadah, such as the *azan* (the call to prayer), *zikr* and *selawat* (forms of Islamic chants), musical instruments are used by Muslims. Some of the practices of ibadah in Islam that include the use of one's voice, aesthetics and meeting a specific purpose in seeking the pleasures of Allah, are the recitation of the Quran, azan, talbiah of *hajj*, *zikir*, *selawat*, *tahmid* and *takbir* of 'Eid al-Fitr.

Originally, the association of these ibadah practices and music was disregarded. Today, however, one observes and acknowledges that the characteristics of these ibadah are musical or musically incorporated (Ab Majid and Yusof 2008: 91). Even though the azan consists of no musical instruments, the caller of azan (*muezzin*) uses his vocal ability melodiously through a sound system or broadcast to call the Muslims of the community to attend prayers (Randel

2003: 422). Quranic recitations illustrate vocal artistry. There are sets of rules (*tajweed*) for guidance, and a great degree of creative improvisation is essential as the creation of melody depends on the deliverer (recitor). Therefore, the sound of language produced itself can be musical. There is also the *selawat*, which refers to Islamic chants in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, while the *zikr* is the chanting of Islamic verses in remembrance of, and praising, God, which can be done through acapella singing or singing with musical accompaniment, usually with an ensemble of rebana or drumming (Rasmussen 2010: 39).

In many countries, religion, including Islam, is associated with cultural traditions and norms, and even behaviour regarding how one listens to music. Tobin (2013) explores the Islamic norms of music consumption among Jordanian residents in Amman, especially in the time of Ramadhan. Ramadhan is a holy month in the Islamic calendar, when Muslims fast from dawn until dusk in order to understand the sufferings of the poor. Fasting centres on cultivating religious practice, encouraging self-reflection and learning self-control by refraining from negative behaviour such as lying, gossiping, and backbiting or slandering. Paying alms to charity is also strongly encouraged during the fasting month. The month ends with 'Eid al-Fitr, a celebration of the end of the month of fasting.

Tobin states that Ramadhan also emerged as a period of time in which the tensions surrounding the debates of music's compatibility with normative Islam are enacted in terms of a conflict between cultural and Islamic authenticities (2013: 292). However, in spite of the findings, the main purpose of referencing Tobin's study is to highlight the fact that music creates considerable debate within the Muslim world, namely, whether music is permissible in Islam. Some Muslim scholars believe it to be forbidden while others believe that it is permissible, as long as it is aligned with Islamic laws and ground rules. The issue here is that there are two existing and contradictory frameworks, one for religion and the other for culture (Tobin 2013: 292-293). Through the use of a large-scale survey, Tobin undertook ethnographic

research which revealed that the public of Amman found music in general, including Islamised pop music, to be *haram* or forbidden. However, the research also indicated a shift in ethics and practices during, and outside of, the period of Ramadhan. During Ramadhan, people prayed at specific times, and they fasted and avoided listening to music. However, Tobin found that when Ramadhan ended, the majority would often miss prayers and revert to listening to music (2013: 310-313).

Tobin also highlights that the moral and ethical shifts, as well as the temporary forms of consumption, portray flexibility and openness in modern Islam. The practices of these shifts are sustainable as they are conducted collectively with the support and like-mindedness of family members, friends and colleagues. Besides, Raseuki (2009) argues that Islamic debates seriously look beyond 'music and islam', often revolving around a concept of *'Sama'* (to listen). In this, views vary from complete rejection (prohibition) to conditional acceptance (permissibility) of music. In order to appreciate why 'music' is such an issue in the Muslim world, it is important to understand three points: Islam as a religion; what the perceived dangers of music are; and the foundation of Islamic law (the Quran and the Hadith, as well as a brief history of the origin of Islam and its relation with 'music'). In conclusion, Islam and music raise complex questions among the public. In the Malay world, context determines the prohibition or permissibility of music. The following subsection will briefly explain the ideas that form the structure of this thesis.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

To recap, the purpose of this research is to analyse the development of nasyid in the Malaysian music industry over a period of two decades (1996-2016), from the perspectives of the producers. The investigation aims to bring out various understandings and opinions, which

serve to analyse the changes regarding all aspects related to the nasyid genre. The author focused on three related topics: Islam, music and Malaysia. One central question steered the research: 'What is Nasyid today and how has it developed since the Raihan phenomenon (*fenomena Raihan*) of the 1990s? Guided by this question, the author was motivated to research the development patterns of the nasyid genre in the Malaysian music industry over the two decades in question.

The first part of the thesis explores the scope of Islamic popular music, nasyid and its landscape. The second part investigates the transformation in musical styles and musical instruments. The third part analyses the lyrics and languages of the music. The fourth part examines the evolution of images and participants in nasyid. The final section of the dissertation considers the scope and structure of the business and marketing perspectives within the industry.

The author uses qualitative research techniques including multiple analysis methods, in-depth interviews, content analysis and participant observation to gather evidence for this study. Finally, the thesis conclusion summarises the finding, gives recommendations (particularly to Islamic parties who associate with nasyid artists, or any related Islamic programmes, to help improve nasyid in the Malaysian music industry) and attempts to understand how this genre and industry will remain sustainable in the future. Thus, the following chapters will explain more regarding this research topic

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a brief overview of the Malaysian music industry. It starts by outlining the historical development of music that is classified as Islamic. It also highlights certain issues with regard to the relationship between Islam and music and briefly discusses aspects of the music business, including the concept of 'halal literacy' that influences both the production of music and its associated fashion trends among Muslims in Malaysia. The outcome of the discussion in this chapter is intended to lead to a better understanding of the framework for Islamic popular music. This chapter highlights the current perception of popular music as a part of the Islamic culture and tradition in Malaysia from the point of view of fans, artists and academic researchers. The chapter starts with an elaboration of how audiences accept Islamic popular music as a new genre of music, explains its rise in popularity despite ongoing debates about the appropriate roles of music in Islam and suggests what is the style of nasyid at the early stage when Tarannum was particularly important. The differences between Islamic scholars and jurists regarding music and *nasyid* are explored. Finally, this chapter highlights the objectives of undertaking research on Islamic popular music.

2.2 Popular Music in 'Text and Meaning'

Tom Solomon (2012) explains that it was only over the last 30 years that studies in popular music developed in academia. Since then, Solomon argues that the analysis of popular music, as a whole, with regard to the issue of theoretical language for popular music and musical meaning has been identified.

Music as text refers to not just the words of songs but also the idea that brought about any musical object, which here includes sound recordings, video clips and associated media such as album covers. As such, they can be considered in all multimedia parameters as texts that can be subjected to formal analysis. Since the field of popular music studies emerged in the mid-1990s, the more specialized area of research has come to be known as popular musicology. Derek argues that popular musicology "is distinct from popular music studies in that its primary concern is with criticism and analysis of the music itself, although it does not ignore social and cultural context" (2016: 2). According to Solomon (2012), the primary text for the analysis of popular music produced since the last half of the twentieth century has most often been sound recordings. The text metaphor has also been applied to multimedia productions, especially the music video. The majority of work in popular music analysis continued to draw on commercial recordings produced in the studio and have redefined the text of analysis to include not just sounds and images but also the social actions that produce them in acts of performances. Solomon (2012), investigated the question of how popular music expresses meaning. He summarizes in his article that there are four broad theoretical approaches to the question of how musical sounds articulate meaning - 1) formalism, 2) ideological critique, 3) subjectivity and 4) history/geography. He added that the theoretical approaches could be as detailed as in ranging from formalist approaches to the analysis of meaning; from formalist approaches that assume meaning resides purely in structural relationships within popular music texts; through approaches that find musical meaning in ideological critique; through the subjectivities that music constructs; and the historical and geographical process that musical sounds may articulate.

2.3 The place of popular music in Islam

Islam is a religion that caters to one's *'fitrah'* or innate nature. That is why its teachings claim to be in accordance with what is 'natural' for every being (Ab Majid and Yusof 2008). Therefore, it is plausible to say that many people are inclined to listen to music due to their *'fitrah'*. However, not all types of music are acceptable in Islam. The perception of music amongst Muslims has been a long-running debate and remains contentious due to persistent differences on the matter. Imam[4] Al-Ghazali (1998: 376) claims that three significant criteria influence music in Islam and that these are *zaman* (time), *makan* (place), and *ikhwan* (activity). So, what does the Islamisation of Music mean? Many Islamic academicians have discussed the process of 'Islamisation', and how it may be defined. The term 'Islamisation' in Arabic is *Islamiyyah*. It derives from the word 'Islam' and refers to the process of being compliant, in line, or in accordance, with the teachings of the religion (Iskandar 2000:501). Syed Muhammah Naquib al-Attas suggests that this process offers one freedom from the old, traditional beliefs of superstition, myth, animism, nationalism, and the (liberal) mind influenced by secularist influences (cited in Daud 2005: 97).

Islamisation of music is an effort to free music from superstition, myth, animism and secularism and return the Islamic believers to their original *'fitrah'*, which is to seek the pleasures of Allah with absolute devotion. On another note, at present, there is a major influence of secularism in the Malaysian music industry with many songs promoting worldly pleasures and straying from the message of Islam. The Islamisation of music is not a new concept in Islam, as it existed at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, when he recognised and

[4] Imam is a leader who normally has a wide knowledge about the rules of Islam

acknowledged music from the Ansari people as mentioned in a Hadith[5]. Prophet Muhammad showed his acceptance through his tolerance (Qardhawi 2002: 29-30) and open-mindedness by allowing two Ansari women to sing after the Prophet's companion, Abu Bakar, had rebuked them to stop earlier. The event proved that Islam permits the playing of music and singing by women, which is opposed by others who believe that women are not allowed to perform musically. As long as the performance stays within the confines of the laws of Islam, such as dressing modestly and refraining from seductive movements and vulgar language, it is permissible.

According to Shiloah, 'the attitude toward music (in the world of Islam) has always been ambivalent, as expressed in a series of contradictory feelings and concepts: predilection and mistrust; divine-devilish; exalting-disruptive; admissible-prohibited' (2001: 60) Al-Atawneh (2012: 398) argues that Muslim scholars and jurists (fuqaha') have tried to determine whether leisure and entertainment (*malahi*) is permitted or prohibited in Islam. If prohibited, what are the reasons? If permitted, to what extent? Scholars have varying opinions due to their research and interpretations of Islamic sources such as the Quran and Prophetic traditions (Hadith), different schools of thought, as well as their socio-cultural backgrounds. Muslim scholars have only been able to acknowledge and observe the differences of the Islamic rulings with regard to leisure and entertainment in contemporary Muslim societies, and arriving at a final consensus on the permissibility of music is unlikely.

According to Shiloah, 'since the first centuries of Islam, there have been ongoing controversies over this concept of *sama'* (listen) among legalists, theologians, spiritual leaders and mystics, which led to age-old arguments (1997: 144). *Sama* means listening or audition.

[5] A saying or action ascribed to Prophet Muhammad or an act approved by the Prophet

By extension, it also refers to the music that is listened to, including dance. The long-running debate about *Sama'* emerged during the first century of Islam and has been perpetuated with various degrees of intensity until the present day.

Shiloah (1997) states that some authorities, for instance, tolerated a rudimentary form of cantillation and functional song, but banned any instrumental accompaniment; others allowed the use of a frame-drum but without discs, forbidding all other instruments, particularly those belonging to the cordophone family. The mystic orders, for whom music and dance held a vital part in the performing of spiritual and ecstatic rites, were seriously concerned with the debate and participated ardently in the polemics. In this respect, one should remember that most of the harshest attacks against music and dance led by the jurists were obviously directed against the mystics or Sufis, and their singing and dancing practices, which, in given cases, embodied manifestations of profligacy. Soon after Islamic music progressively emerged, apart from the 'age-old arguments', other debates among Muslim scholars arose. Sarkissian argues that the relationship between music and Islam is especially problematic when considering popular music: "If some segments of American society thought that rock and roll was 'the devil's music' in the 1950s, imagine what contemporary Muslim clerics think of the kinds of music available to young people today, both in broadcasts and on the internet. In some parts of the Islamic world, 'music' - or at least organised sounds that lie outside strict parameters - are banned." (2005: 124)

Through the examination of top Muslim scholars and religious institutions, Al-Atawneh (2012: 414) investigated the issue of permissibility in the Islamic legal perspective by analysing scholastic opinion, legal argumentation, and methodology, focusing on music and audio-visual media. With regard to music, he found that many scholars recognise that the Quran does not contain a specific commandment in reference to music. However, there are Quranic terms that classical jurists employ with regard to music. Suliaman, I (2000: 2) argues that music is not

directly mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith. In the Quran, there are stories of Prophet Daud and Prophet Sulaiman in various chapters and verses that relate to the art of singing (Quran, 2010, 38:17-20, 34:10, 21:78-79). However, there is no distinct term for 'music' in the Quran. It is also difficult to find the term in the Hadith. Terms such as *'Macazif'* (open-stringed instruments), *'al-Ghina'* (entertaining expression by way of tunes), and *'al-Mughaniyyah'* (singer) come closest. For instance, there are arguments about the phrase 'idle talk' (*lawh al-Hadith*) found in chapter 31 (*Luqman*), verse 6 of the Quran:

> *"...And of the people is he who buys the amusement of speech (idle talk) to mislead [others] from the way of God without knowledge and who takes it [i.e., His way] in ridicule. Those will have a humiliating punishment." (Quran, 2010, 31:6).*

There is also disagreement with the term 'seductive voice' (*bi sawtika*) mentioned in the Quran, chapter 17, verse 64:

> *"...And incite [to senselessness] whoever you can among them with your voice and assault them with your horses and foot soldiers and become a partner in their wealth and their children and promise them. But Satan does not promise them except delusion." (Quran, 2010, 17:64).*

In the case of the first verse, some Muslims are of the view that the verse does not directly condemn music or singing as the term used is 'idle talk'. Some interpret the term 'idle talk' to mean 'frivolous stories' or 'distracting stories' (Haleem 2010). These interpretations translate the verse to mean that those who speak tales thoughtlessly or initiate diversionary conversations to lead people astray from God will be punished. With regard to the second verse, again there is no clear mention or transliteration using the words 'sing' or 'music' in this verse of the Quran. Nooruddin (1991) referred to the term 'voice' merely as one's 'speech'.

Therefore, the interpretations signify that the verse refers to one's enticing speech and that the verse has no association with singing, songs or music.

However, some scholars argue that 'idle talk' in the first verse does refer to 'music' and 'singing', thus, translating the verse to mean that those who create music or sing in order to turn others away from God will be punished (Khan & Al-Hilali 1999). The second verse with the part that reads, 'And incite [to senselessness] whoever you can among them with your voice,' has also been interpreted by Khan & Al-Hilali (1999) to mean seducing or luring others by using one's voice through singing songs and music. According to their interpretation, the whole verse gives the perception that song and music are seductive, and, therefore, not approved of in Islam.

Al-Atawneh (2012: 397-415) believes that some Hadiths or Prophetic traditions do contain the direct mention of the prohibition of music in Islam. That is why there are some Muslims who believe that the use of music is entirely prohibited and such belief is manifested in the prohibition of family members from engaging in any musical activities, be it creating, or listening to, music. Al-Bukhary (2001: 1022) refers to a saying, alleged to be the Prophet's disapproval, which states:

> *"…There will come a day when some of my people will consider adultery, silk (for men), female singers and musical instruments as lawful."*

There are also scholars who cite the Prophet's sayings on his disapproval of music in Islam. One such scholar, Al-Tirmidhi (1977: 449), argues that the growing number of female singers and musical instruments is a sign of the end of days. As such, in some Islamic communities, music is considered an evil medium that corrupts the mind, heart and soul. Even though there is no direct statement saying that music is prohibited in Islam entirely, the

Wahhabis (followers of 'Wahhabism'- an austere form of Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia) are known to ban entertainment involving music and dancing. Music is categorised as 'idle talk' (*lawh al-Hadith*), with singing having the ability to incite immoral practices, and for that reason it is forbidden. The Wahhabis strongly feel that music has the hallucinogenic ability to cause listeners to stray from practicing religion, thereby neglecting God. They can also enforce their beliefs on others. For instance, outside Riyadh, the *Mutaween* – the Islamic religious police – patrol roads to check if drivers are playing music on their car entertainment systems. If found to be doing so, there will be a penalty or punishment (Ahmed 2008: 216). However, Al-Atawneh (2012: 415) adds that there are many other Muslim scholars who have argued against these sayings, highlighting that there is no definitive proof that music is prohibited in Islam.

Although music has permeated Muslim society throughout history (Otterbeck 2012: 227-233), there is a difference of opinion with regard to leisure and entertainment, particularly music, as a product of interpretations emanating from different Islamic schools of thoughts (Al-Atawneh, 2012: 397-415). Osman (2015) argued that, 'Discovering the meaning of the Quran is not a simple task, and as it will be seen in the variety of interpretations of even a single verse, the Quran itself allows for multiple meanings.' Therefore, despite extensive research, the interpretative skills of Quranic experts representing the different schools of thought differ in opinion with regard to some Quranic interpretations, such as those around music.

There are Muslims who consider *nasyid*, Islamic songs that focus on praising God and Islamic teachings, as the only form of acceptable music. All other genres are considered non-Islamic. According to Matusky and Tan, "the word *nasyid* or *insyad* derives from the word *nasyada*, which means 'to look for' or 'to search'" (2004: 246) Another form of the word, *ansyada*, means to recite verses or poetry in high and low vocal intonation, which is similar to singing zikir (*zikr*). *Zikr*, which means 'remembering', represents the ways of reminding oneself of God, based on Quranic verses such as this from its 33rd chapter, 'O you who believe,

remember Allah with frequent dhikir' (Esposito 2003; 67). More precisely, *zikr* is the repetition of the names of Allah and certain religious formulas as a means of performing piety. The most frequents formulas used in practice include*; la ilaaha illa Lah* (there is no god but God), *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great), *Alhamdulillah* (all praise be to God), and *Subhanallah* (God is holy) (Federspiel 1995: 132-42).

Originally, *nasyid* songs were actually poetry that was sung to spread Islamic values, often accompanied by Middle Eastern rhythms with Islamic themes, both musically and lyrically. Musically, they started out as Middle Eastern folk songs, mainly using Arab-style melodies. According to Matusky and Tan, lyrically, the songs convey Islamic messages to inculcate positive moral values and habits. They emphasise the importance of religion and often include patriotic sentiments. These songs were a form of religious practice conducted at home when studying the Quran. However, there was no use of any musical instrument as the voices alone carried the messages (Matusky and Tan 2004).

Therefore, modern music is rejected by several Islamic scholars as it is believed to be 'haram' or forbidden in Islam. If such perception continues without any effort to provide understanding, Muslims will then be left increasingly isolated in the global world of entertainment. There will even be those who will continue to believe that Islam restricts its followers from all entertainment when in truth, the religion accepts music, be it in traditional or in modern form, for as long as it is compliant with Islamic laws and teachings (Ab Majid and Yusof 2008). The admissibility of music in Islam relies on the content of the music. For instance, most of Muslim scholars argue that, if a song encourages one to seek love and peace from God, or provides Islamic educational content that enhances one's belief, then music in this context is considered acceptable. Music that induces calmness and provides spiritual solace is considered appropriate. Music may be a tool that can be used to spread good messages, good moral conduct and positive values. Therefore, the Muslim scholar, Shaykh Muḥammad al-

Ghazali, found no authentic tradition that specifically disallows music. Rather, he discovered other prophetic traditions that indicated that music was approved during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (Al-Ghazali 1989).

However, music is permissible as long as it contains a good message with content that does not objectify human beings (their physical appearances and features) or incite negative influences (drinking of alcohol, mockery of others, and intimate details of private and personal matters). According to JAKIM (2015: 7), entertainment is allowed in Islam as long as it conveys the proper meaning and abides by the principles of Islam.

In Malaysia, if a song or music includes vulgar language or a message of promiscuity, drug abuse and adultery, then the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia known as JAKIM) prohibits it because it promotes negative influences. Qardhawi (2001) explained that themes that are positive, educational and compatible with Shari'ah are acceptable. According to Qardhawi (2001), singing should only be banned if it is intended to cause sexual arousal, promote alcohol drinking, nudity and 'inappropriate' interactions between men and women. Al-Atawneh (2012: 415) concluded that contemporary Muslim scholars view leisure and entertainment (*malahi*) as essential to human life and therefore permissible by Islamic law.

The use of various media technologies is not an issue, but what matters is that the content must be filtered to suit Islamic requirements in order to spread positive messages and influences. Music is not forbidden solely because of its substance but because of the other factors that come along with it. These include its performance and presentation, and its setting (Ab Majid and Yusof 2008). Muslim Scholars from different religious institutions acknowledge the differences in their opinions, which vary between cultures and between countries. Not all Muslims within the same country share the same view with regard to 'music'. For instance, certain sects of Muslims aggressively forbid music and enforce a ban. In the case

of Malaysia, music is permissible and accepted in Malaysian society (see further subsection 2.6). In sum, Islam allows entertaiment as long as it conveys the proper meaning and abides by the principles of Islam. It should encourage Muslims to a path of harmony and should not include anything that is harmful physically or mentally.

Michael Frishkopt (1999) argues that Islamic ritual practice centres upon public language performance more so than sound. Thus, in reference to Islamic rituals in global perspective, he suggests this public language ranges from heightened speech to elaborate melody: "no clear speech-music boundary can be drawn. "Islamic music" is quasi-oxymoronic, insofar as many strict Muslims (relying on particular interpretations of Qur'an and Hadith) regard "music" (or its local lexical proxies, such as Arabic musiqa) as haram (forbidden); religious performance genres, for which the usual words for music tend to be avoided, carry special names (such as adhan for the call to prayer)." (Frishkopt 2008: 480). The diversity of meanings of both 'Islam' and 'music' makes the phrase 'Islamic music' unwieldy and misleading (Frishkopt 1999 and 2008).

Ismail Zain defined the specific policies governing the formation of a Malaysian national culture. The base of the national culture is the culture that is native to this region; traits from other cultures, which are pertinent, should be absorbed to enrich the national culture; and Islam, as the official religion of Malaysia, would play its role in the formation of national culture (1977: 9). These policy guidelines are often described as the basis of the Malaysian national culture, but that room must be allowed for some influences from the other racial and religious groups. The existence of the national culture is intended as both a reflection of national unity and an aid to its promotion. Since music is an important cultural marker, some musicians (especially those in broadcasting and education) find themselves in the forefront of nation building. This is not a theoretical situation; it is a practical one, which musicians in Malaysia must deal with on a regular basis. Music and musicians in Malaysia are expected to

play an important role in the process of building and defining their nation. Furthermore, everyone (students, teachers, composers and performers) is expected to do their part in this process, and it affects most kinds of music making, be it directly or indirectly (Chopyak 1987: 431).

According to Chopyak, music clearly plays a role in Malaysia's national development plans. Since independence in 1957, government policies have evolved relating to music and the national culture. The creation and acceptance of a truly Malaysian music by both the urban and rural populations have been of the utmost importance to cultural policy makers. Music in the public education system and mass media is therefore expected to promote and reflect the national culture and, hence, national unity. Because of the centralised mass media, a relatively small number of musicians has had a large impact on the development of modern Malaysian music.

Due to the passion of the author in Islamic popular music, this subsection discussed interesting points by comparing debates among Muslim and non-Muslim scholars in which they highlighted that its centrality and problematic status renders ‘Islamic popular music’ highly productive of complex issues. Thus, this subsection also draws on the ideas of the current debates regarding the Malaysian media.

2.4 Malaysia’s Musical Diversity

Contemporary Malaysian culture is a multi-ethnic political construct of various settlements and waves of migration throughout history. Hooker (2003) indicates that the seventh or eighth century saw the Hindu-Buddhist era, followed by the Sumatran-based maritime kingdom known as the 'Srivijayan Culture'. In 1403-1511, Melaka (one of Malaysia’s states located in the west of Peninsular Malaysia) emerged as a dominant power centre that

established the Malay empire. It was a hub of international trade, which witnessed interaction between foreign traders, which included Arabs, Gujaratis, Indians, Siamese, Chinese, Japanese, Cambodians, Persians, and the Malay communities from the archipelago. Many of these people settled in Malaya and served the government. However, the Malay sultanate in Melaka fell in 1511 with the rise of European power. The country then experienced the Portuguese Era for 130 years from 1511-1614, the Dutch Era for 183 years (1641-1825) and the British Era from 1826-1957. Malaya was also occupied by Japan during World War II (1941-1945).

This history of multicultural exposure and international trade has greatly influenced musical trends in Malaysia. Malaysian traditional music consists of several diverse genres, styles and sounds. Examples of these include the instrumental ensemble *kertok*, which is an ensemble consisting of between six and twelve men playing wooden xylophones tuned to the pentatonic scale (five notes per octave). This ensemble originated from the indigenous population of the Malay Peninsula (also known as *orang asli*). Other instruments such as the bronze gong were adapted from Chinese instruments. The Malay gamelan is of Indonesian influence and the *serunai*, a double-reed instrument, is thought to be of Indian origin (closely related to the *shehnai*). When Arabs landed in Malaysia in the 13th century they introduced skin drums, the *rebab* (a three-string spiked fiddle), the *gambus* or lute (related to the *oud*) and the choral tradition of *hadrah (hadrah* are religious songs from the Sufi order commonly accompanied by tambourines) (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo 2000: 62-70). The presence of various instruments produced a variety of art forms and musical creations. Prior to the introduction of Islam in Malaysia, then known as 'Malaya', pre-Islamic ethnic Malays were Hindus and Buddhists. Consequently, many Malay art forms derive from these religions.

The Malays, Indians, and Chinese make up the majority of the Malaysian population. It includes practicing Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists. According to Razak (2006), during pre-Islamic Malaysia (before the 14th century), the Malays were mostly Hindu and much

of the Malay traditions today have a rich Indian or Hindu influence. For instance, one of Malaysia's most prominent forms of ancient artistic tradition is the *wayang kulit* or shadow puppet play. The roots of this art form can be traced back to the Hindu epic poem, the Ramayana. However, Malays have refined and modified elements of *wayang kulit*, by fusing it with other cultural influences. For instance, although the storyline originated from India, and the craftsmanship of the puppets is Indonesian and Malay, the core of the music is from Middle East countries in imitating the style of the Arabic language (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo 2000: 62-70).

Another Malay traditional performing art that dates back to the pre-Islamic era is the *mak yong* dance-drama. Descended from the old Malay kingdom of Patani (now part of southern Thailand), it has developed into the great Kelantan-Patani mythology. The music in *mak yong* includes the *rebab* fiddle, double reeds and percussion. Before a typical performance, the *semah kampung* or spiritual offering ritual is conducted to pay respect to the spirits (Nasuruddin 1995). However, the practice of such art form is now discouraged in Malaysia and ironically is banned in its traditional home – the state of Kelantan – because it contradicts contemporary Islamic beliefs (Yousof 2014: 131).

Silat is a native martial art that came from the Malay Archipelago and is very well known and practiced in Malaysia. It is an art not only for self-defence, but also for performances in small ensembles of long drums, double reeds and gongs. In the state of Malacca, lies an old trading town rich with the residue of historical settlements by the Dutch and the Chinese, which brought about the existence of a folk music called the *ronggeng*. This music is played using violins and button accordions accompanied by frame drums, hand drums, and sometimes, a brass gong. The Portuguese also influenced a dance form called the *Joget* where couples dance without touching each other and the dance is accompanied by flute, *gambus*, harmonium, and drums (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo 2000: 62-70).

Achieving independence required a certain amount of unity among the various groups living in Malaya at that time. Even so ‘since independence the principal preoccupation of Malaya's (*sic*) government leaders has been the preservation of the country's fragile unity and the welding of a truly united nation’. Part of the reason for this is ‘that in the pre-independence period, what existed was not a single Malayan nationalism but three streams of nationalism for the Malays, Chinese, and Indians’ Music, particularly through the mass media and education, played an important role in this process of unification by the Malaysian government. Although this has been encouraged ever since independence was achieved, the outbreak of racial violence in 1969 added urgency to the matter (Chopyak 1987: 432).

In the Malaysian music industry, contemporary music is that which may also be recognised as an updated version of various music styles such as the ballad, *dangdut*, pop music, rock, irama Malaysia, and soul jazz. Ballads or sentimental songs have their own identity. Ballads are a form of folk song that were popularised at the end of the 19th century. the term ballad described the sentimental music of the Victorian Parlour (see Frith 2001). The contemporary ballad is played in a variety of styles such as rock ballads, soul ballads, country ballads, and even heavy metal ballads. A ballad is also understood as a song that tells a story, which can be dramatic, funny, romantic or otherwise in order to convey the message of the singer.

Simon Frith (2001) writes that pop music is adopted from foreign countries, mainly in the global West. Pop music is usually played on electronic instruments and is easy to listen to due to its being characterised by short songs with a strong beat and interesting tunes. Pop music is also normally performed in simple rhythms that are easy to remember. As Frith explored regarding with contemporary music, he also made this claim in relation to Dangdut style. He mentioned that *Dangdut* is also well known as a form of contemporary music. This type of music arose in the middle of the 20th century from the ideas of young musicians of urban

Indonesia, although it actually derived from Malay, Hindustani, and Arabic music. At some point in time, *dangdut* music was used as a tool to spread and communicate Islamic teachings and messages. The proclaimed King of *Dangdut*, Rhoma Irama, who was the most well-known musician of this genre in the late twentieth century, urged his followers to reject extra-marital sex, government corruption, drugs, and gambling, using religious expressions.

2.5 Malaysia's Music Industry in the 20th Century

By the first decade of the 20th century, many Malaysian composers were well trained in the performance of Western and local instruments, and in the basic theory and elements of Western classical music. They relied heavily on Western models such as the symphony, symphonic poem, lyric song, and other forms. The art music of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was known as 'serious music' (*muzik serius*). The musical activity of these composers planted the seeds for the development of a contemporary music movement in Malaysia (Matusky and Tan 2004: 393).

In 1949, Life Records became the first recording company registered in Malaya. Other recording companies soon followed (RIM 2005). The Recording Industry Association of Malaysia (RIM) is the national recording industry trade association set up to represent the locally incorporated recording companies in Malaysia. RIM currently represents 170 such companies and businesses, all of which are involved in the production, manufacturing and distribution of local and international sound, music video and karaoke recordings.

It was Malaysia's legendary entertainer, P. Ramlee, who was the first Malay artist to play a significant role in transforming the music industry into a popular culture from the 1940s until the early 1970s. P. Ramlee was a singer, musician, composer, lyricist, arranger, actor, comedian, director, scriptwriter and film producer (Lockard 1998).

In the mid-1960s, a new genre of music called *'Pop Yeh Yeh'* came onto the Malayan scene. Imported from Singapore, Pop Yeh Yeh quickly spread to Malaysia in the late 1960s. A typical example of a 'Pop Yeh Yeh' singer was Zainudin Md. Dom, who was well known for the song, *'Alamak, Tolong Kahwinkan Aku'* (Oops, please let me get married Mom). There were also other singers and bands who were very popular with Malayan listeners, such as Roziah Latif and The Jayhawkers (1965), A. Rahman Hassan and Orkes Nirvana (1966), L. Ramli and Youthful Ria (1967), and A. Halim and D'Fictions (1967). At that time, most of the local and international recording companies were established and operating through Singapore.

In the 1970s, Ahmad Nawab emerged on the Malaysian music scene and became a celebrated musician, composer and producer within popular music. Ahmad Nawab's works were written for many of Malaysia's leading artists of the era, such as Sharifah Aini, Uji Rashid, Hail Amir, Latif Ibrahim, A. Razak, and J. Mizan. Another legendary pop icon of this time, Sudirman Hj. Arshad became famous after winning the *'Bintang RTM'* (RTM is the acronym for Radio Television Malaysia or Radio and Television Station of Malaysia) in 1976. *'Bintang RTM'*, or Star of RTM, was a national singing competition organised by RTM. Sudirman Hj. Arshad was a lawyer who became a singer and popularised a new modern style of music. He also achieved the title of Asia's No. 1 Performer on March 19, 1989, after winning the Asian Popular Music Award at the Royal Albert Hall, London. Sudirman's musical style and international success influenced many aspiring singers and led to a wave of talented newcomers and imitators in the 1990s.

In the early 1990s, mainstream music in Malaysia thrived due to a growing variety of genres with quality music production, which led to large sales. As more music programmes aired on television, artists gained more exposure and the audience became more aware of them and invested in them. Therefore, artists of this era obtained massive popularity and increased in worth. The music industry flourished with the continuous emergence of talented new artists

and bands. Popular singers such as Jamal Abdillah, Aishah, Ziana Zain and Anuar Zain are still renowned for their strong ballads. Groups such as Wings and Search displayed powerful rock vocals. The group, Exists, gained recognition for their soft-rock style. The most popular genre in the 90s was commercial-pop, in which female singers such as Siti Nurhaliza (13 times winner of the Best Vocal award at Malaysia Music Award) and Liza Hanim (Best Vocal award winner at *Anugerah juara lagu ke 17*- Songs award competition 17th edition) gained high regard for their versatility and vocal skills. For the upbeat music and dance genre, the Malay enthusiasts I interviewed referred to groups like KRU[6], for example. Traditional Malay songs in the rhythms of *dikir barat, joget* and *zapin*, popularised by Noraniza Idris, also became part of the mainstream music scene. Even a marginal style such as *dangdut*, propagated by Amelina, Iwan and Mas Idayu in the 1990s, was embraced by the Malay mainstream. In 1996, and within this musical context, a form of Islamic popular music known as *nasyid* emerged and rapidly grew in popularity following the emergence of the group, *Raihan*.

2.6 Islamisation of Music in Malaysia

Hilarian (2007) illustrates how Muslim Arab traders from the Middle East played a significant role in shaping the traditional music of the Malay Archipelago – this includes Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and East Timor. The migration of the Hadhrami Arab culture, religious practices and music into Malaysia included the introduction of the *gambus* (lute) from Hadhramaut, Yemen. Islamic traders came in three different periods: 1) The Early Period, in the 7th century of early trading exploration; 2) The Middle Period, in the 15th century which

[6] KRU is a rap group from Malaysia, who produced more than 15 albums (by January 2018). With over 1,000,000 album sales and multiple awards, they are very popular in Southeast Asia. Source: http://www.krumusic.com/artist/kru/

was the most prominent and influential period of Islamic contributions by Arabs, Persians and Indian Muslim traders; and 3) The Later Period, in the 19th century when Arab entrepreneurs and religious figures took on influential roles in the culture, society and politics of the Malay World (also known as *Alam Melayu*). The 15th century is regarded as the Golden Age of Malay history. During this period, the Melaka Empire grew in prominence, and Islam was introduced (2007: 9). In 1409, the founder of Melaka, Parameswara (a Hindu prince) married the daughter of the Sultan of Pasai in Sumatra and embraced Islam. As part of the marriage ceremony, the Melakan court brought the Persian court musicians from Pasai to entertain the guests. Hilarian explains that, 'Arab and Muslim communities with strong political and economic control of the Malay world may have been responsible for the promotion of Arab cultural activities that were immersed into and emulated by the Malay population' (2007: 9).

The *gambus*, *marwas*, and *rebana* are examples of the contributions of the Muslim realm to music in the Malay Archipelago (Hilarian 2007:9; Kunst 1994:237). In the Malay version, *ghazal* singers are accompanied by an ensemble of instruments thought to be of Arab origin such as the *rebab* and *gambus* (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo 2000: 62-70).

Gambus, the musical genre most closely associated with Arab communities, is the name of a wooden lute found in both Malaysia and Indonesia, but the term is also used generically to describe a small ensemble that incorporates the gambus instrument (Berg 2007). There are two types of *gambus*. One looks like the classical Arabian *'ud* which is also referred to as *gambus Hadhramaut*, and the other is similar to the Yemeni *qanbus*, which is called *gambus Melayu.* Both forms of *gambus* are used interchangeably in the performance of Malay musical genres including *ghazal, zapin, hamdolok, asli, inang* and *masri* (Hilarian 2007:2 and 12). Malay scholars and musicians agree that the *gambus Hadhramaut* was brought in following the rapid spread of Islam in the 15th century. The instrument was more fully assimilated in the

region after Islam was more fully entrenched and the Malay World was Islamised (Hilarian 2007: 9).



Figure 2.1: Gambus Hadhramaut image[7]



Figure 2.2: Gambus *Melayu* inspired by Gambus *Hadhramaut*[8]

Zapin is a music or dance style and is well documented in Mohd Anis Md Nor's (1993) *Zapin: Folk Dance of the Malay World* which describes the development and influence of the

[7] Picture source from http://indielombokinfo.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/gambus-as-traditional-musical.html

[8] Gambus *Melayu* picture source from https://www.rebana.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/gambus-melayu.jpg

zapin dance in Malaysian arts. The texts of the songs are set in the pantun[9] (Malay verse) form. Although associated with Hadramaut heritage and generally accepted as an Arab-descended dance style, no evidence has been found of a Hadrami dance style related to this genre (Nor 1993:8). Nor notes, however, that the zapin dance style resembles Hadrami dance styles. There are a number of elements in the performance of the zapin, which echo the Hadramic dance tradition. These include the linear formation of zapin performers who dance facing one another; the Johore dancers' practice of rhythmically stamping their feet on the fourth count of their four-beat dance phrase while tracing a recurring forward and backward floor plan; and the solo vocal accompaniment in the form of a quatrain over a basic melody. Zapin also demonstrates some modifications of the Arab zafana dance traditions (Nor 1993:9). Nor notes a similar phenomenon in Malaysia:

> *Zapin Melayu was regarded by the Malays as more refined or halus than Zapin Arab...Zapin Melayu was adapted from a more robust Arabic tradition and made to conform to the subtleties of controlled movements and the suppression of outward expressions of highly charged energy. Zapin Arab, on the other hand, required high energy, with its bigger stepping motions, higher skips and jumps, wider arm sways, and more exaggerated stooping and bending of the upper torso* (Nor, 1993:8).

2.7 Islamic Music and its Impact on Social Development in Malaysia

The author's own field experience as participant observer is undoubtedly the fundamental fieldwork method in ethnomusicology. It is an advantage to the research as he helps to gain direct access to Islamic popular music in Malaysia in the ethnographic manner. Furthermore,

[9] Pantun (pronounced 'Pun-Tone') is a poem (of traditional Malay culture). It consists of sentences and adheres to specific rules.

it allows the reader to understand Islamic music and its social impact because the information was drawn from the author's experiences. Not only did the Arab traders and missionaries spread their musical influences, they also instilled their spiritual belief of Islam within Malaya, which is evident in Malay traditional musical practices.

For example, *Dikir Barat* is a musical form native to Pattani (in Southern Thailand) and was introduced to Malaya in the 1930s (Halid 2011: 4), which was later popularised by the east coast state of Kelantan in the late 1940s. Added by Halid, the musical art form involves singing in groups. The two lead singers *Tok Juara* and *Tukang Karut* would alternately sing verses to the beat of the tambourines. In response, Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo (2000: 62-70) describe how the rest of the group repeat and sing the same verse, followed by vigorous clapping of hands. As Islam spread, the people of Malaya embraced the religion, especially in Kelantan, where *Dikir Barat* is most celebrated. Although *Dikir Barat* is not of Arab cultural influence, due to Islamic influence, the contemporary manifestation of *Dikir Barat* is widely known as an Islamic musical tradition, whereby the lyrical content praises Allah such as in the dikir barat song *kuasa pencipta alam*[10] (Power of the creator) by Asrul Faizal (Broughton, Ellingham and Trillo 2000: 70)

In most Islamic societies, music is a 'thorny' issue (Sarkissian 2005: 124). There is often a division between those who believe that music is acceptable and those who do not (see also chapter one). Those who believe that music is completely unacceptable would enforce rules to forbid it altogether, while those who embrace music look at music in a more positive manner. *Nasyid*, initially popularised in Malaysia, became one of the most popular

[10] This song explains that we need to pray to Allah when we encounter hard times. The lyrics describe a heavy flood on the east coast of Malaysia.

contemporary Islamic arts in Indonesia over the past decade. Adjie Esa Poetra's book *Revolusi Nasyid* (2004) describes three main forms of *nasyid* 1): *nasyid* Melayu (Malay *nasyid*) that uses percussion, 2) *nasyid* acapella that is similar to R&B styles, and 3) *nasyid* that uses hymn (or hymns) about jihad themes (themes that promote Islam) (Poetra 2004: v). These three forms of *nasyid* may use both Western and Middle Eastern music styles. The texts of popular *nasyid* songs are mostly in the Malaysian or Indonesian language, making them less esoteric than foreign-language texts (Barendregt and Zanten 2002:78).

As Margaret Sarkissian notes, *nasyid* songs are sometimes 'peppered with specialised Islamic [Arabic] vocabulary' (2005: 132). Thus, even in *nasyid,* Arabic terms are sometimes used to express the sense and feel of Islam. Over time, *nasyid* transformed from being informal domestic music making with lyrics often in classical Arabic, to something more public and popular. Starting in the 1950s, it became a form of mass entertainment, performed during intermissions at Qur'an reading competitions or in association with religious celebrations (especially *Maulidur Rasul,* the birth anniversay of Prophet Muhammad). While the unaccompanied style of singing continued, *nasyid* accompanied by percussion instruments began to appear around this time. By the 1970s, *nasyid* was also sung to the accompaniment of other instruments, ranging from acoustic guitars to synthesisers.

As Islamic music developed in Malaysia, Muslims were exposed to songs that fused religious messages and music together. This form of music is known as *nasyid*. Between 2000 and 2005 *nasyid* became very popular among Islamic youth because it provided them with a 'modern Muslim Malay' form of lifestyle (Barendregt 2012: 317). There already existed musically inclined and melodious vocals in some Islamic religious practices and rituals. These include recitation of the Qur'an (alone or in groups), *Istighfar* (act of repentance and seeking God's forgiveness), *Zikr* (chants of remembrance and praises of God), *Selawat* (complimentary

chants for Prophet Muhammad) and recital of supplications or prayers in Islam (Yusof and Bidin 2011: 59).

However, many Malaysians, lacked interest in these kinds of melodious vocals, religious practices and traditional rituals. These Islamic traditions could not compete for the attention of younger listeners who were more interested in popular culture and music from abroad. *Nasyid* emerged as an infusion musical style, which combined contemporary sounds with Islamic religious messages. Against a background of the rising popularity of boybands in the mid-1990s, the resurgence of Islamic awareness in Malaysia and an economic downturn due to the financial crisis, the *nasyid* group Raihan was signed by Warner Music and became very successful (Sarkissian 2005: 128).

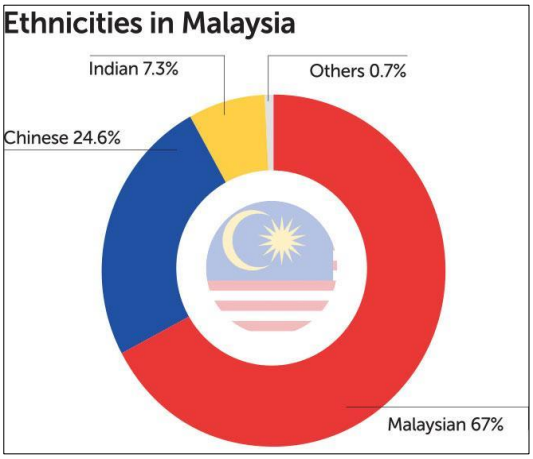


Figure 2.3: Ethnic groups in Malaysia [11]

[11] source from https://www.worldfinance.com/special-reports/malaysias-waning-political-monopoly



Figure 2.4: Map of West and East Malaysia [12]

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country. Malays form the majority of the population followed by the Chinese and Indians as the second and third major ethnic groups, respectively. There are other ethnic minority groups, mainly in the eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak. These groups include the Iban, Bidayuh and Kadazan. According to the Malaysian constitution, a 'Malay' is by default one who is a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, and follows Malay customs (Nagata 1974: 335). In other words, to be a Malay is to be a Muslim. If a Malay renounces the Islamic faith, he or she is no longer considered a Malay but just a Malaysian. Zakaria (2011: 1) considers the integration of Malay culture and Islamic religion in Malaysia as the Malay Islamic art and culture.[13] Living in the era of globalisation, access to information, knowledge and even entertainment is easily attained via advances in telecommunications and technologies (Ibrahim 2004: 1). In this context, Muslims in Malaysia embraced foreign entertainment, and this affected the identity of Malay Islamic arts and culture, including *Nasyid*. Ibrahim (2004: 134) argues that societies are globally connected and culturally intertwined. In Malaysia, cultural synergy is taking place even in the fields of the arts, theatre,

[12] source from https://lazyviruses.weebly.com/sarawak--sabah-malaysia.html

[13] We can see this mix of Malay and Islamic culture in the wearing of '*batik'* (Malay traditional cloth) following Islamic guidelines.

films and popular culture, such as music. In consequence, the current generation has adopted a more 'Western' lifestyle, which Zakaria argues, has resulted in the decline of religious values and increased individualism (2011: 12). However, to Islamic conservatives, the performing arts are seen as non-compliant with Islamic teachings anyway. This conservative attitude or backlash against internationalisation is gaining ground.

In order to revive traditional Malay Islamic art and culture, Zakaria (2011) suggests spreading awareness and educating Muslims about the significance of Malay Islamic art and culture because it can be an effective vehicle for uniting the community. Funds should be more accessible in order to conduct activities and programmes to revive Malay Islamic heritage:

> *Malay Muslims should realise that these rituals are not against Islam. Even if there is some bid'ah (innovation with a negative connotation), it can be aligned and adjusted to Islamic teachings. Malay art is not just about propagating good deeds, but also about fostering unity among Muslims. The younger generation should be given awareness so that their faith in God could be strengthened through these religious, yet racial activities. The government, through its agencies, should promote and encourage the Malays to retain their heritage that is not against the teachings of Islam. Programmes on the Revival of Malay Islamic Heritage should be underlined and executed. The relevant bodies should allocate funds for those Malay Islamic Heritage Programmes. The cultivation of understanding and the appreciation of Malay Islamic Heritage should start from primary school so that a strong foundation can be formed* (Zakaria 2011:13).

Ghani (2009) also considers the effects of globalisation on Islamic entertainment. He addresses the unresolved issue regarding the status and legality of entertainment in Islam and the confusion amongst the Muslim community due to the divided stance of Muslim scholars. In his research, he examined the Muslim attitude towards entertainment and the experiments in implementing Islamic entertainment both in Malaysia and in Iran. He found that the major problem faced by Muslim communities is that there is a lack of interest in their own art and

culture, especially in the present era of globalisation that is dominated by non-Islamic culture. He concluded that Muslim scholars needed to commit and provide their expertise in order to resolve some of the key issues conclusively through academic and political means.

In response to the influx of foreign pop culture, music and entertainment into Malaysia, efforts have been made to nurture Islamic entertainment through creating *nasyid* groups by concerned Islamists (Ghani 2006:53). These groups combine contemporary popular music with their Islamic messages in order to bring Muslim followers closer to their religion. At first, the musical contents of *nasyid* songs were mostly acapella-influenced, featuring close vocal harmony sung either by the whole group or by a soloist with backup singers. Malay frame drums (*kompang* and *rebana*), as well as other percussion instruments such as shakers, conga drums, the triangle, the cowbell, and Middle Eastern dombek-like drums, were frequently used to accompany these singers (Sarkissian 2009: 141).

From the 1980s, a new generation of *nasyid* groups that were more experimental were introduced and one of them was a group called Nada Murni (1987). They used a much greater variety of instruments and were more open to world music. This resulted in the diversification of contemporary *nasyid* styles and a loosening of its definition. A song is considered *nasyid* if it contains Islamic messages in its lyrical content, but is otherwise open to variation in that it can be traditional Malay or *acappella*, percussion accompanying vocals, mainstream pop, hip-hop, R&B, ballad, soft rock, or even reggae.

The popularity of *nasyid* rose in the late 1990s and has since become one of the main genres in the Malaysian music industry. Major global recording labels including Warner Music, BMG and EMI (Nuvich, 1997) signed *Nasyid* groups. As the author is the insider in this line, he could describe that *Nasyid* songs flooded the airwaves, *Nasyid* popularity brought about

various online portals and a radio station, IKIM.fm, dedicated to promoting the genre. Islamic-oriented magazines and television channels also played a major role in marketing *nasyid*.

The Malaysian recording industry has been in existence since the early part of the 20th century. The American and European record companies not only exported records to Asia, but also started making recordings there at a very early date (see Table 2.1).

	Country			Yearly
Year	Germany	United Kingdom	United States	Total
1910			813	813
1912	19,000			19,000
1913			12,705	12,705
1922			513	513
1925		42,372	17,133	59,505
1929	380,392	169,956	48,409	598,757
1930	192,985			192,985
Total	592,377	212,328	79,573	
(Total for all countries 1910–1930 = 884,278)				

Table 2.1: Recordings Imported into Malaya 1910-1930 (Gronow, 1981)

Data on records imported into, or produced in, Malaya are not complete but it is clear that a large number of recordings of a wide variety of music existed at an early date. Furthermore, the record companies were not just focusing their business on the Europeans who lived in Asia. Record companies immediately realised that they would also have to record native music in order to expand their business. 'Gaisberg 1903 [an American] had recorded 1700 discs of Indian, Burmese, Siamese, Malay, Javanese, Chinese and Japanese music' (Gronow 1981: 251). It seems safe to assume that this new technology had little impact on people living in the remote, rural areas, but was primarily an urban-based phenomenon. Record companies would record 'in fact anything that might interest the primarily urban record buying public' (Gronow 1981: 274).

Yusof (2014) studied the effects of globalisation on Islamic arts, including Islamic popular music. He discusses the emergence of various forms of music that penetrated the Malaysian popular music industry and suggests that these genres created uncertainty among

Muslims, especially when it came to specifying which type of music was permissible in Islam. This ambiguity was even more prominent when combined with the lack of knowledge concerning what Islamic music actually was. He opines that the concept of *wasatiyyah,* or moderation, in Islam is essential (Yusof 2014: 2) and that Muslims, if guided by Islam, can enjoy music provided it is devoid of any form of extremism and the lyrical content is not too strict nor too lenient. He also argues that the permissibility of the music itself relies on various factors such as the performance of the singer, the sort of musical instruments used, the content of the lyrics and the audience perception of, and response to, the music (Yusof 2014: 3-5). The best form of religious entertainment, as an alternative to the mainstream, is one that provides a combination of contemporary music and Islamic content. This accurately describes *nasyid*.

Yusof also conducted a survey to investigate the effects, on listeners, of *nasyid* songs aired by a local radio station in Malaysia (IKIM.fm, which aired only *nasyid* songs). The responses of 697 respondents (248 males and 449 females) were measured by whether they 'agreed' or 'disagreed' with the statements or questions given. The indicators showed that more than 85% of the respondents agreed that radio IKIM.fm was a medium of *dakwah (see glossary)* (preaching); its lyrical content was educational; the songs played provided peace to the listeners; the station and its music were effective for moral education; and it improved or strengthened one's *aqidah* (religious faith or belief system), which is part of self-development in Islam. The fusion of Western popular music and Islam is the alternative for those who seek conservative entertainment with Islamic values.

2.8 Islamic music in Southern East Asia

An important intervention in this field has been scholarly works of Barendregt (e.g., Barendregt 2016; Barendregt and van Zanten 2002). His research has focused on the apparent tensions

between the East and the West, activism and commercialism, religion and popular culture. In particular, he has sought to compare the rise of *nasyid* in Malaysia and Indonesia. The comparison illustrates how the shifting sound of *nasyid* responds to new social movements.

Barendregt addresses the fact that *nasyid* music deals with most of the challenges that confront Asian Muslims but provides a balance between the East and the West; the tensions between pop and religion are sonically articulated through *nasyid* music. The research finds that the development of *nasyid* in Indonesia was a major influence on *nasyid* music in Malaysia. Barendregt (2011) also emphasises that *nasyid* has been continuously shaped and reshaped through the processes of globalization. To the majority of Muslims, who are young and well educated, Southern Asian *nasyid* is a young, urban version of Islam. *Nasyid* music helps illustrate why Islam has increasingly become both an ideology and a fashion for Muslims throughout the world (Tan 2016).

Bart and Zanten (2015) also focused on the distinctive form of *nasyid* in Indonesia. *Qasidah*[14] was a type of popular music performed mainly by the Muslim youth of Indonesia. New sub-genres emerged, like qasidah rebana, which seemed to have a more traditionalist approach to Islamic popular music. Thus, only recently has *nasyid* become popular in Indonesia. In the early 1990s, *nasyid* became popular in Indonesia in not only religious schools (or Pesantren) and mosques, but also universities and high schools. Bandung, in particular, was the home of many new *nasyid* groups. *Nasyid* in Indonesia had three main variants. The first, *nasyid* Melayu, is characterised by its typical use of percussion. The second is *nasyid* acapela (acappella singing), and the third is a form that makes prominent use of hymns, and emphasises the defence of one's religion (jihad). In Indonesia, the Islamic resurgence has gained real

[14] *Qasidah* refers to poems that praise and recount Prophet Muhammad's life story.

momentum since more leeway was allowed for the staging of public manifestations of Islam after 1998. *Nasyid* music can be considered the soundtrack of this emergent Islamic middle class and the new forms of public culture for which it is striving (Barendregt and Zanten 2002).

2.9 Tarannum Style as the 'root' of Nasyid

The traditional sound is the *Tarannum* style. At the early stages of Islamic popular music, the sound was delivered by *Tarannum*. *Tarannum* is defined as a musical piece that varies according to vocal tone and rhythm (Hassan Maliji S. 2007). Traditional *nasyid* started in Indonesia with popular groups such as Al Suraya, Al Jauhar, and others. At that time, it was clear that Prof. Al Baki was amongst the pioneers of 'classic or traditional *nasyid*' and hence this phenomenon influenced much of Malaysian music at the time (Hassan Maliji S. 2007). In his blog on the the history of Ahmad Baqi, Ahmad Syauqi explained that Ahmad Baqi deepened his knowledge in *Tarannum* prior to learning the art of *nasyid*. It showed that the rhythm in *nasyid* has the same format as the rhythm in the recitation of Al-Quran (Sholeh Fikri and Siti Rugayah Hj. Tibek 2014).

According to Fakhrul from UNIC (interviewed in 2015),

> "*Tarannum is traditional music, which became a cardinal music form as early as this genre started, with Quranic rhythms applied with appropriate voical tones."*

Based on his experiences and reading, Fakhrul strongly believes that his background in the *Tarannum* style stemmed from a strong relationship with the Quranic concept, prior to his joining UNIC (contemporary *nasyid* group). He shared that traditional *nasyid* was all about *Tarannum* and classical songs of the desert (in Arabic countries of the Middle East). He also

described traditional or classical Indonesian music in this way because, according to him, their performance styles were adapted from Arabic music, including '*Marhaban*', '*Berzanji*' and '*Tilawah*'. In support of these claims, Raseuki (2009) explains that *marhaban* is in fact a song sung in praise of the Prophet during the celebration of his birth anniversary, while *berzanji* could be described as a poem in Arabic on the Prophet's birth. The *tilawah* is a way of reading the Quran.

Although *Tarannum* is a form of Arabic music, many songs were influenced by the *Tarannum* style via the use of its various forms. This has been adapted into Malay music:[15]

> *Maybe there is a history where Arab traders spread Islam and brought elements of their culture along with it, such as the* syair *(poetry recitation), the* qasidah *from Yemen, and so on. I kept wondering how Yemeni culture could reach Malaysia. It turned out that we were influenced by Arabic music. Tarannum songs such as* Bayati, Sobah, Hijjaz, Nahwan, Rast, Siqah *and* Jiharkah *affected many songs. They were translated into Malay. This is how the music came to be and why it has a lot of Arabic influences, with the traditional sounds of the Arab lands.* (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

This respondent believes *tarranum* to be important influence on *nasyid*:

> *When we talk about Tarannum, we have to acknowledge that it originated from the Middle East. In Malaysia, the Qari (Quranic reciter) and Quranic icons in the field of Tarannum from the Arab lands and Iran heavily influenced us. This is the most influential style in Malaysia. We have figures in Malaysia who studied there and then came back to spread knowledge here. Why create nasyid? Nasyid is an*

[15] The Malay audio of this interview can be viewed at the following YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=982yQdxUykk.

adaptation from Quranic songs, for example, there is the song called Bayati. In the Quran, for example, we read Bismillahhirahmanirrahim (3.40-3.45). This is the sound of Bayati. However, when Qaris want to sing nasyid, they adapt this song into nasyid to use the song as a model to teach, or to expose the song to the people.… For example, the song of Tarannum (4.09-4.22) … is the same sound used for the Quran. They adapt it into nasyid in the same way as with other songs. For example, the song 'Jiharkah', in the Quran. Bismillahirahmanirahim, surah Ar-Rahmam (4.30-4.49). Therefore, if it is adapted to nasyid it will become a song in Tarannum (4.53-5.00). That poetic qasidah Tarannum (5.03-5.08) has been translated into Malay. How did it come to this? There is Tarannum influence because they are interested in Quranic songs, but their soul still yearns for the entertainment of Malay songs, so they have great interest in Quranic songs and it has influenced them like some nasyid songs with influence from tausheh. If it is not within the structure of the Tarannum, then it is not counted as an Arab or traditional song. This is how Tarannum and traditional nasyid are related.

The respondent explained that *nasyid* adapted the sound by inspiring the *Tarannum* style in Bayati way as read *'Bismillahhirahmanirrahim*' (with the name of Allah). Thus, to provide a better understanding of *tarranum*, Abdullah (2008) describes the traditional sound in seven ways: *Tarannum Bayyati, Tarannum Soba, Tarannum Hijaz, Tarannum Nahwand, Tarannum Rast, Tarannum Sikah,* and *Tarannum Jiharkah.*

Drawing on Hassan Maliji (2007), *Tarannum* is presented as follows: firstly, the author is interested to explore *Tarannum bayyati*, an Arabic term which means 'home or place of residence'. The characteristics of this type of *Tarannum* include gentleness or subtleness while maintaining a firm standing. It is in accordance with simple *tobaqot*, harmony and peace. The role of *Tarannum bayyati* can be described as strengthening the show, suitable as *Tarannum* opening and closing, measurements to *Tarannum* afterwards, can cause *fasohah* (see glossary) art Quran, and may cause feelings of awe in the miracle of the *Quran*.

Secondly, *Tarannum soba* could be referred to as ‘missing’, the meaning made popular by the famous *Qari Mesir*. This *Tarannum* can be described as the motion of light penetrating the soul. It is characterised by soft melancholy tunes, in accordance with simple *tobaqot*, in accordance with begging, pleading and moaning. The role of this *Tarannum* provides a sense of calm and tranquillity and a soothing offering that could result in humility and repentance. It may express and point out the art of the Quran, and evoke awe for the miracles of the Quran.

Tarannum hijaz has been used since Islamic popular music was introduced. This *Tarannum* was very popular as a pioneer *Tarannum* to a community in Saudi Arabia known as the Hijaz. Therefore, this Tarannum is known as *Tarannum hijaz*. Similar to the previous *Tarannum*, this *Tarannum* also has its own characteristics that portray its identity. The characteristics of this *Tarannum* could be determined as slow motion but an effective form of assertiveness, encouragement, agility, and something compatible with any *tobaqot* and in accordance with a stern or angry command. This *Tarannum* provides encouragement to the show, and provides enough satisfaction to both readers and listeners. It demonstrates assertiveness in the message of the Quran, and accentuates the miracle of the Quran.

Tarannum nahward was named after an area similar to *Tarannum hijaz*. This area was known as Nahward, which was historically based in the area located at Haradan Parsi, which is now in present-day Iran. This *Tarannum* has characteristics including politeness, the finesse of art, ideals to enthral people, and is suitable to a simple *tobaqot*. Hence, the role of this Tarannum is to perform a smooth reading to sooth the soul of the reader and listener, in accordance with paragraph to which it applies, and storytelling. *Tarannum nahward* may cause *fasohah (see glossary) art Quran* and cause feelings of awe towards the miracles of the Quran.

Tarannum rast also came from Persia (Iran). This Tarannum is used widely by ‘Qari Hijazi’. Then, to suit the surrounding development, *qari-qari hijazzi* modified this *tarranum*.

This *Tarannum* comprises soft motions in its delivery, but keeps the firmness in sound, formed as strains, compatible with any *tobaqot.* It is also suitable for application with any verse. The roles of this *Tarannum* make this type of *Tarannum* popular among the *qari-qari* in Islamic popular music. Its roles include providing encouragement to the show, displaying energy to the next *Tarannum*, bestowing satisfaction to the reader and listener, can cause *fasohah (see glossary) art Koran*, and it may cause feelings of awe for the miracles of the *Quran*.

Tarannum Sikah, originally from Persia (Iran), was adopted by *Qari-Qari Hijazi* (from 7 Masihi to 19 Masihi). However, from time to time, this *Tarannum* was modified by the *qari-qari* of the Zouq Egyptian culture. The characteristics of this *Tarannum* include slow motion and tenderness that pierces the heart. It features sadness and moaning, according to verses pleading, begging, and whimpering. It is compatible with any *tobaqot*. Hence, this *Tarannum* is important in that it could soften the show, satisfy the reader and listener, empower focus and conviction, cause *fasohah (see glossary) art Koran,* and evoke feelings of awe for the miracles of the *Quran*.

The last *Tarannum* style is *Tarannum jiharkah.* This *Tarannum* was also brought from Iran by *Qari-Qari Hijazi* and has been modified by the *Qari-Qari* from Eqypt based on the Zouq culture. This *Tarannum* can be easily identified, as it is performed using effective light in the delivery, with tenderness and harmony. It can be used in accordance with a simple *tobaqot*. Hence, the roles of this *Tarannum* can be seen as calming. It serves to soften the show and infuse conviction in the delivery of the music itself. As with the other *Tarannum*, the most incredible role of this *Tarannum* is to evoke a strong feeling of awe for the miracles of the *Quran.* Further analysis of this traditional music style is considered in Chapter Five.

2.10 Raihan: The Pioneers of boy-band *Nasyid*

In Malaysia, *nasyid* has been a popular art form since at least the 1950s. It was part of the mass-mediated entertainment and was often performed during interludes at Quranic reading competitions (Matusky and Tan, 2004: 264). It was not until the 1980s that *Nasyid* gained commercial success, especially as Islamic resurgence (*dakwah* [see glossary] movement) was on its way. According to Weintraub (2011: 4), the Islamic resurgence came about due to growing criticism of secularism, disillusionment with Westernisation (also understood by some of my interviewees as "Globalisation"), and the rejection of capitalist materialism. The former prime minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1981 to 2003), who is now back in power as the current Prime Minister after the recent general election of Malaysia in May 2018, supported an Islamic resurgence through political institution building, economic modernisation, and technological development. Most of the adherents to this movement were urban, young and from the middle class. Under Mahathir's New Economic Policy, young Malaysian intellectuals were exposed to changes in the global Islamic communities (Nagata 2004). Factors such as the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and Yemen, the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the growing influence of the oil-based economies of the Middle East led Muslim youths in Malaysia to increasingly question their government and advocate the need for a renewal of their Islamic World (Barendregt 2011: 236). In other words, Malay Muslims saw the potential economic growth of the Muslim countries and perceived the merits of implementing Islamic-based policies in Malaysia.

There were groups in Malaysia who strongly advocated that the Islamic resurgence should come to fruition in Malaysia. For example, the missionary (*dakwah (see glossary)*) movement, *Darul Arqam* (later known as *Al-Arqam),* advocated economic independence from the state by manufacturing Islamic products and building a strong entrepreneurial network

throughout Southeast Asia. Although the Malaysian Government banned this movement in 1984 (Barendregt 2011) under the Societies Act and the Internal Security Act (ISA) for deviant Islamic teachings and posing a threat to national security (The Malaysian Insider, 2010), the movement had a significant impact on culture. *Arqam* had its own musical group, Nada Murni (*Noble Rhythm*), who often accompanied their leader, Sheik-ul Arqam. Citing Nagata (2004), Barendregt (2011) describes how *Nada Murni* and other groups such as Rabbani gained unprecidented success as popular performing artists through their widely-circulated video clips. These groups did not just convey a religious creed. They also highlighted social issues such as the dangers of using drugs, the importance of finishing school education and other morally inclined messages. By using the Malay language, it was the Arqam movement that propelled *Nasyid* into a more pop-oriented direction. The group, Raihan, was able to build on the success of these earlier groups to become perhaps the most successful Southeast Asian *Nasyid* ensemble to date (Barendregt 2011: 237).

Raihan was the first Muslim pop group in the 1990s to obtain global celebrity status, gaining popularity beyond Asia. According to the online version of Malaysia's local newspaper, Utusan Malaysia, the group has performed in Kuwait, South Africa, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Thailand, Australia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei. Between 17 and 27 December 2004, they performed in seven cities in France alone (Bordeaux, Marseilles, Nantes, Strasbourg, Lille, Lyon, and Paris), and in 1997, they were invited to perform at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Edinburgh, Scotland. They also had an audience with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth during her visit to Malaysia for the 1998 Commonwealth Games held in Kuala Lumpur (Itar 2005; see Fig. 2.5).



Figure 2.5: Raihan meet Queen Elizabeth at Studio Synchrosound Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia [16]

Raihan's first album, *Puji-Pujian* (Praises), sold more than 750,000 units and is the best-selling album ever in Malaysia. Soon after their launch, Warner Music signed the group, and in 1998, they won four awards at the Malaysian Music Industry Awards (Ghani 2006: 51). They went on international tours and worked with artists such as Yusuf Islam (formerly known as Cat Stevens) and the UK-based hip-hop group Mecca 2 Medina (Barendregt 2011: 237). The late 1990s witnessed a major upsurge in the Islamic music industry as the popularity of *Nasyid* reached its peak. The emergence of Raihan demonstrated that the western-inspired boy band format was a viable format for the popularisation of *nasyid*.

Following the success of Raihan, many more *Nasyid* groups emerged. Each group appeared with a different music style and image to set themselves apart from other groups. Gradually, *Nasyid* artists began adapting and adopting popular music styles and images, and this resulted in many changes that affected the Islamic music industry.

[16] Photo from https://www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2016/03/125715/legenda-raihan

2.11 Islamic Outfit in Malaysia

There are studies that address the relationship between Islam and fashion as well as the connection between clothes and religion. As stated by Moors (2007), the past three decades saw the growth and spread of debates about the visible presence of Islamic dress in the streets of Europe and North America. These debates, which have accelerated and intensified after 9/11, focused on the appropriateness of headscarves and face veils, on whether these women were donning the headscarves or hijab voluntarily or under compulsion. Such arguments supported bans and restrictions on Islamic dressing practices in the name of modernity, secularism or women's emancipation. The influence also came from popular culture and the pressure of political contexts, which were, more or less, conducive to developments in Islamic fashion.

Thus, if the significance of dress has often been downplayed in studies of religion, the significance of religion has sometimes been underestimated in studies of Muslim dress practices. Mahmood (2001) suggested that the literature on veiling only paid scant attention to the religious motivations of many of the women concerned. Instead, covered dress has often been discussed in instrumentalist terms – for instance, as a means for women to acquire greater freedom of movement, as argued by MacLeod (1992), or as a form of identity politics or a sign of allegiance to Islamist movements (El-Guindi 1981; Ahmed 1992; Gole 1996; Navaro-Yashin 2002). Asad's (2006) critical reading of the report of the Stasi Commission, which covered the role of the hijab in French public life in relation to the state's position on secularism, is informative. Asad argues that the report's definition of Muslim head coverings as 'conspicuous signs of religious affiliation' did not entertain the possibility that the young women concerned may cover their heads because they consider this as a religious duty (see also Moors 2006).

To understand the practices applied, a few scholars have highlighted the question of how Islamic fashion fostered the global Islamic revival movement. During the twentieth century, elements of a Western lifestyle, including the adoption of the European style of dressing, became widespread in many Muslim majority countries, especially amongst those from the middle and upper classes. Contesting this trend, the 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of an Islamic revival movement, which encouraged women to adopt recognizably Islamic covered styles of dressing (El-Guini 1981). According to MacLeod (1991), this 'new veiling' has entailed a new style of covered dress worn by young, well-educated women who have consciously chosen to adopt it.

By the 1990s, fashionable styles of Islamic dress began to appear among Muslim majority countries such as Turkey, giving rise to what has developed, and become known, as Islamic fashion. Thus, in many cases, these fashionable styles of dress replaced the simple, austere and purposely non-fashionable forms of Islamic attire initially favoured in the revival movement (El-Guindi 1981; Ahmed 1992; Gole 1996; Navaro-Yashin 2002).

The move towards fashionable, yet recognizably Islamic dress was also discernible in settings where all covering outerwear had always remained the norm, such as in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. In such locations, the increased commoditization of dress and the turn to consumer culture stimulated more rapid changes in styles of outerwear (Moors 2007; Al-Qasimi 2010; Lindholm 2010). The net result is that a new global market for Islamic fashion came into being. Thus, the larger trendsetting Islamic fashion industry made its presence felt in countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Dubai, Malaysia and Indonesia (Moors 2007).

Jones describes how "…urban Indonesian women increasingly chose to adopt a form of Islamic dress called *busana Muslim*. This shift served as an index to two apparently contradictory or mutually exclusive phenomena, a rise in Islamic piety and a rise in

consumerism" (2008: 212). Thus, as an individual indirectly involved in the field of Islamic music, the author perceived the rise of Busana Muslim, as Islamic fashion in Indonesia, to have an impact on neighbouring countries including Malaysia. The rise of this Islamic fashion centres on either religion or consumerism and the rise of the fashion should be understood within the context of modernity and piety. Jones argues "the commodification of Islamic dress in urban Indonesia has not been a straightforward process, but rather is an arena for Indonesian Muslims to think about its relationship with faith, gender and materialism" (2008: 212). The Muslims in Malaysia have also embraced this message on the significance of Islamic fashion. The author get the picture that the influence of Islamic fashion or outfit is also a trendsetting fashion among Malaysians, especially Nasyid followers, or fans, due to the rise of Islamic music. The introduction of this sort of music, then, also introduced a new fashion, thus enabling Nasyid artists to have an impact on the music industry itself and the Malaysian economy.

2.12 The 'halal economy'

In Arabic, 'halal' literally means 'permissible' or 'lawful'. Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed on 2015) stated that the Halal business was not just about halal ingredients and production methods since it also questions the running of Islamic businesses. Thus, as stated by Musa (2016), Halal businesses should also draw on Halal funding methods, or Islamic finance. Purnomo (2016) argues that an awareness of halal literacy and Islamic financial literacy is critical in the running of Islamic businesses (Purnomo M. Antara, Musa. R and Hassan. F 2016)

Thus, the author, called to look further into the aspects of business implementation in Islamic business as an insider in Malaysian music industry, has reiterated that literacy has been studied widely in many fields including consumer behaviour contexts. Literacy is usually associated with knowledge and it shows that knowledge is a crucial element that informs the

behaviour of a person. In this case, literacy, in terms of what is permissible (halal) or not in Islam, is the subject matter in question, and the knowledge associated with this will lead to a clearer guidance for Muslims in determining how they should act accordingly.

Salehudin.I (2010) defines halal literacy as the ability to differentiate between halal and haram goods and services based on Islamic Law. Halal literacy is important because, before consumers are ready to adopt a product or service, they will go through the process of knowledge, persuasion, decision and confirmation (Rogers 2003). According to a paper entitled '*Bridging Islamic Financial Literacy and Halal Literacy: The Way Forward in Halal Ecosystem*', halal literacy refers to the ability of a person to combine a set of knowledge, awareness, and skills to differentiate between Halal and Haram goods and services based on Shari'ah Law (see Purnomo, Antara, Musa and Hassan 2016).

Equity, debt, and derivatives are several types of financing in Islamic finance with four main components that include Islamic banking, Takaful & Retakaful, Islamic capital market and Islamic interbank money market. Islamic banking usually manages financing activities. Islamic banking or the Islamic financial institution is the branch of Islamic finance. It is a banking system based on Shari'ah (Islamic law) called Fiqh (see glossary) Muamalat (Islamic rules on transactions). The rules and regulations of Fiqh Muamalat come from the Quran and the *Sunnah* (see glossary), which involve the concept that is implemented in the Islamic business model, which complies with the concept of 'Tawhid' (Beekun 1997). Based on his experience, the author will use the Islamic business model to elaborate the concept of Islamic business. The Islamic business model will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

2.13 Conclusion

This chapter explains the origins of Islamic popular music: its roots, influences over time, and factors catalysing the popularity of the music. It outlined the factors that influence the acceptance and popularity of *nasyid* as a new genre of music in Malaysia, as well as some restrictions on the status of music and singing in Islam. Furthermore, the ideas of Islamic fashion and the concept of business in Islam in relation to the music industry have also been briefly explained. This chapter also elaborated on some of the limitations of the study, providing information from various scholars regarding the Malaysian music industry, in preparation for the discussion in the following chapters of *nasyid* and Islamic popular music.

3 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study examines the development of *nasyid* in Malaysia over a period of two decades. It draws on data collected during 11 months of fieldwork in Malaysia (from September 2015 to January 2016 and then again from April to September 2016). Drawing on interviews with industry experts and an original analysis of musical outputs, the research focuses on the period between 1996 and 2016, when Malaysia experienced rapid modernisation and significant changes in its music industry. The research seeks to identify the characteristics or elements that help to define the *nasyid* songs in terms of musical styles and features, lyrics and language used, images and personalities, business practices, and the backgrounds of specific individuals and groups involved in producing this music. The aim is to explore the evolution of the *nasyid* genre in the Malaysian music industry.

This study fills a research gap by addressing the lack of qualitative data on differentiating between Islamic popular music and *nasyid* in Malaysia. It argues that *nasyid* has changed significantly over the course of 20 years and that those changes have had a dramatic impact on the Malaysian music industry and the regional musical landscape. This study also argues that *nasyid* represents an important form as a part of the Malaysian popular music market. This study attempts to illustrate how *nasyid* retained certain traditional Islamic values despite significant change, development, and popularisation over the 20 years in question. This chapter establishes the research questions and objectives, explains the methodology, and outlines the structure of the thesis.

3.2 Research questions and objectives

The thesis investigates the following research questions:

(i) **How is Islamic popular music and *nasyid* defined by industry practitioners in Malaysia?** Islamic popular music and *Nasyid* have a complex relationship with one another because both carry similar meanings and convey similar messages based on Islamic practices and principles. As argued by Sarkissian (2005: 126), *nasyid* has long been part of the Malaysian soundscape. Thought to have originated in the Middle East, the genre has always been associated with both poetry and the dissemination of Islamic values. According to Matusky and Tan, "*nasyid* songs comprise sung poetry using Middle Eastern rhythms with Islamic themes for the purpose of spreading Islamic values. It is believed that *nasyid* originated in Middle Eastern folk songs. These songs remind us of our human nature (especially for Muslims who read and study the Qur'an and the Hadith [Practices and Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad]). They also serve to inculcate good values, morals and habits, and stress the importance of religion and allegiance to nation" (2004: 262-263). The complexity apparent in defining Islamic popular music and *nasyid* among members of society generates this question since the two terms are often used interchangeably.

For this reason, these two terms (Islamic popular music and nasyid) communicate ideas and, hopefully for industry practitioners, a better understanding of audiences of *nasyid* in Malaysia. By explaining the two terms and examining their meanings from the perspectives of people involved in the industry, this research aims to identify key similarities and differences between Islamic popular music and *nasyid*. This line of enquiry attempts to develop a better understanding and perception of Islamic popular music for industry practitioners.

(ii) **With *nasyid* songs now appearing in various music styles, how has the development of *nasyid* affected the musical content and musical instruments?** Since the 1990s, *Nasyid* in Malaysia has been well known for its boy band format. Their songs are produced in the form of various modern genres such as pop, R&B, rock and hip-hop. However, there is still a variety of other Islamic music styles that maintain traditional sounds as well, such as *Tarranum, Qasidah, Zikr*, and Islamic ritual music (Quranic recitation) and sermons. The popularisation of *Nasyid* and other styles have encouraged the promotion of a greater diversity of styles including contemporary (modern) and fusion. This question investigates whether the current situation of having traditional, contemporary and fusion styles of Islamic popular music is welcome among industry practitioners and religious leaders. I examine what styles of music are regarded as acceptable and how these styles have transformed since the mid-1990s. This variety has led one Chinese Malaysian critic, Joe Lee, to ask "What makes a *nasyid* act these days, well, *nasyid*? Like jazz, that has transformed itself into so many different subgenres, *nasyid* has undergone so many changes to the extent that many are wondering what exactly is its identity, but the reality is that things are going to change for *nasyid* and if the trend continues, the genre may soon just mean all songs with humane and moral messages" (NST 6 April 2004). As Lee observes, *nasyid* is evolving rapidly. Of the established groups, Raihan and Rabbani continue to be the most adventurous with their separate missions, that is, Raihan is reaching out to new audiences while Rabbani is experimenting musically. Both groups continue to sing in Arabic and include pointedly Islamic elements (visual and musical). Hijjaz is the only other group of repute to emphasise Hadiths and songs in Arabic. Brothers, the most pop-oriented of the early wave of *nasyid* groups, disbanded and the lead singer, Yasin, has become an award-winning solo artist whose music mixes traditional Malaysian, contemporary Middle Eastern pop, and world beat sounds.

(iii) **What are the characteristics or elements that make a song Islamic in terms of its lyrical content, language used and the meanings behind the lyrics?** Apart from liking the tunes, rhythms and melodies of *nasyid*, many listeners also liked the lyrics. This came about as *nasyid* lyrics contained words of advice and kind reminders to all. At times, though the *nasyid* song may have been composed at a much earlier time, the lyrics remain relevant. The lyrical content of *nasyids* is full of meaning, useful as lessons and teachings in life (Sholeh Fikri & Siti Rugayah Hj. Tibek, 2014). The lyrical content of this music also broadened its scope from, at first, only praising God to appearing in other forms, including motivational and love songs. Islamic *songs* today are recognised in various genres such as pop, R&B, rock and hip-hop to appeal to a wider range of Muslim listeners. This question considers the open acceptance of various types of music or songs within the Muslim community of Malaysia. The insertion of foreign languages into songs, such as Arabic, also contributes to the musical meaning. Because Arabic is the language of the Quran, the use of Arabic in a song may cause a Malaysian audience to automatically label the song as 'Islamic', even though they may not understand its content. On the other hand, there are also songs that are assumed to be 'Islamic', but do not meet the criteria of an Islamic song, either as spelled out in the *Sunnah* (deeds of Prophet Muhammad that are emulated by Muslims to earn divine rewards), or as outlined by music producers and other experts in the Malaysian music industry. This question draws on interview data and musical analysis in an attempt to explore the various definitions of Islamic popular music and its musical characteristics.

(iv) **What is an appropriate image for *nasyid* artists in Malaysia, and how has this changed over the period of 20 years under scrutiny?** Image or appearance is one important reason why *nasyid* groups gain the approval of conservative Malays. These artists are seen as the antithesis of everything that is alarming, Western, and decadent about the pop music world. A

typical image seen on album covers or in media photos depicts the group members looking like "clean-cut Muslim boys (or girls) next door" (Sarkissian 2005: 136). In the early period of *nasyid's* post-Raihan popularity (approximately 1996 to 2000), audiences were able to differentiate between commercial artists and Islamic artists. *Nasyid* singers were easily recognisable by their loose clothing, topped with a *kufi*. Each group was differentiated by the designs or patterns of their *kufi*. However, these sartorial demarcations are being gradually eroded. Many artists have maintained an Islamic image through their clothing choices, but increasingly there are those who have not. There are singers who dress in an Islamic manner, but do not declare themselves *nasyid* artists. In addition, there are singers who do not dress in an Islamic manner, but perform Islamic-oriented music. This thesis will investigate how the image of a *nasyid* artist today reflects the identity of Islamic music, and how this image has changed over the two decades in question. I will also investigate how participant involvement in the Islamic popular music industry has changed over that period of 20 years, and explore other factors that have influenced the growth of this music. Since the early stages of this musical style, most of the audience members assume and refer to *nasyid* as an ensemble-based music (i.e. bands or groups rather than solo). For that reason, I will explore how participants in this industry have changed over time until the present.

(v) **What are the business models for *nasyid* deployed in the Malaysian music industry?**

Over the period of 20 years in question, the Malaysian music industry underwent significant changes, particularly concerning the Islamic business model. Negus argues that musical genres are connected to 'targeted' promotional practices (2013:26). By looking at the structure and organisation of the music economy in Malaysia, I will examine the business aspects of the involvement of major and independent record labels in Malaysia, paying particular attention to

their contribution to the *nasyid* genre in Malaysia. I will study aspects of marketing models between the late 1990s and the present.

3.3 Methodology

This study employs a diverse array of methods to investigate the research questions. I carried out in-depth interviews with 35 respondents who are principally industry experts in the Malaysian music industry, with a particular focus on people working in *nasyid* genres. The respondents came from varied backgrounds. They included singers, lyricists, composers, music arrangers, media producers, cover album designers, Islamic law experts, music distributors, recording label employees and employees of various music organizations. In addition to these interviews, I used content analysis of sources such as YouTube, newspapers, journals, blogs and other forms of social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) as well as content analysis of album covers and advertising materials.

As I have been directly involved in the Malaysian music industry since 1996, first as a fan who closely followed the rise of contemporary *nasyid,* and then as a *nasyid* artist in Malaysia from 2002, I drew on my personal experiences in, and knowledge of, the industry via participant-observation fieldwork. Participant observation has been used in a variety of disciplines as a tool for collecting data (Kawulich 2005). Further details of the methods of research will be explained in the next section of this chapter.

The nature of this study requires a multi-method analysis of Islamic popular music, thus, qualitative research was chosen and conducted for this study. In recent years, the field of education has seen an increase in the number of qualitative studies that have included participant observation as a way of collecting information. Qualitative methods of data

collection, such as interviewing, observation, and document analysis, have been included under the umbrella term of 'ethnographic' methods (Kuwalich, 2005).

3.3.1 In-depth interviews

This thesis analyses the changes and reports on the impact of their meaning and characteristics on the *nasyid* genre in Malaysia. Through in-depth interviews, the study will gather information questioning the events and occurrences regarding the gradual changes in the Islamic music industry over the twenty years under scrutiny. The study will also provide updates on the current situation and consider the state of contemporary *nasyid* in the Malaysian music industry. The in-depth interview will be a more suitable method for documenting data as the technique it allows the researcher to compare the gathered data with the data collected through other methods (Staks and Hocking 1999: 203). It is especially useful to avoid missing or overlooking certain information that may be relevant to the study (Baxter and Babbie, 2004). It is vital for a researcher to select appropriate respondents for the interviews. Through qualitative interviews, a researcher is able to obtain exclusive information or interpretation from the interviewee (Stake 2010: 95).

To retrieve a variety of responses as well as to obtain key insights for the study, respondents were selected from individuals with diverse backgrounds. These included Islamic scholars, *nasyid* artists, entertainment managers, producers, lyricists, media workers, recording labels as well as musicians. These individuals could be referred to as 'makers' or experts in the industry because that is their place of employment. The author's involvement in the Malaysian music industry greatly facilitated the arrangement of interview sessions. They were arranged through personal contacts, contacts via those affiliated with artists, the organisation of *nasyid*.com and Munsyeed *Nasyid*, which is the organisation that is responsible for *nasyid* artists in Malaysia. The interviews were conducted in Peninsular Malaysia, namely, Kuala

Lumpur, Selangor and Kedah during a total period of 11 months (from September 2015 to January 2016 and then again from April 2016 to September 2016).

According to Yin (2011), qualitative research interviews are typically divided into two kinds: structured versus qualitative interviews. Yin argues that a qualitative interview is a social relationship defined on the basis of the quality of the relationship between the researcher and participants. Therefore, in contrast to a structured interview, a qualitative interview will provide open-ended questions rather than closed-ended questions (Yin 2011: 132-142). In this study, the researcher used both types of interview since each type has its own advantages and strengths as far as gathering data is concerned. In a structured interview, the questioning is based on a formal list of questions, as a sample in the appendix section illustrates. For this method, I played the role of an enthusiastic but sympathetic interrogator during the interview sessions. I conducted face-to-face interviews with all of the respondents. Each interview session lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Malay, as this was the native language of the respondents. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then translated into English. The respondents were asked to check and clarify all the information gathered from the interview so as to avoid any misunderstanding or errors.

3.3.2 Content Analysis

The musical output of the *nasyid* genre in Malaysia between 1996 and 2016 was analysed in detail, with a focus on the musical and visual aspects of the changes in musical styles and artists. The data for the content analysis was taken from albums, the content of the products, print media, television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, social media discourse and other areas that were deemed relevant to the research.

I analysed the content in two main parts, namely, music products and news media. These two aspects were chosen and examined to support the other investigative methods and

obtain extensive information and a clear picture regarding *nasyid* in Malaysia. The data collection phase involved contacts from a number of significant entities relevant to this research, such as major recording labels, independent Islamic labels, print media companies, television and radio stations, and social media. The data collection process was crucial as it enabled the researcher to extract valuable information from key informants, which is the main method in this approach. The information concerning music products and news media was gathered from other methods as well through the interview approach.

3.3.3 Participant-Observation Research

Participant-observation research was conducted to improve the quality of the data collected. It contributed to the interpretation of the research questions and research objectives. Participant-observation research has been for many years the standard approach of similar studies. Participant observation is the process through which researchers learn about the activities of the people under study in an everyday setting through observing and participating in activities. It provides the context for the development of sampling guidelines and interview guides (DeWart 2002).

The author has been a *nasyid* artist since 2002, which places him in a unique position to carry out this study through participant observation. This method provides researchers with ways to observe nonverbal expressions of feeling, determine interpersonal interaction, and understand how participants communicate with each other. The author's access to the fieldwork site enabled him to obtain a wealth of information. He was able to check definitions of terms that participants had used in interviews, observe events that informants were unable or unwilling to share with an outsider for various reasons, and to observe situations informants had described in interviews, thereby enabling him to take note of distortions or inaccuracies in the descriptions provided by the informants.

3.4 Research Ethics

This research follows the code of research conduct and research ethics guide produced by the University of Nottingham (https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cas/research-and-ke-support/ethics.aspx). There are foundations and specific requirements for research practice that were taken into account in making sure that the researcher followed the guidelines, especially with regard to the participants' safety and to avoid any harm befalling them during the research process. Central issues associated with the research, such as personal data, research data, other sensitive data, confidentiality, data sharing, as well as criminal offences concerning obtaining, possessing or publishing information were taken very seriously by the researcher. For that reason, the author had to be extremely thoughtful in dealing with any data or piece of information gained for the purpose of this study. Certain portions of the information or data gathered from individuals or companies are kept confidential as requested by the respondents. The following chapters will explore all the data gathered and begin the analysis in this thesis.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: ISLAMIC POPULAR MUSIC, *NASYID*, AND THE MALAYSIAN MUSICAL LANDSCAPE

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the concept of Islamic popular music and *nasyid* will be thoroughly explored. It sets to explain, from the Malaysian context, Islamic popular music in relation to *nasyid*, and their distinct roles in the Malaysian music industry. Therefore, this chapter also aims to clarify some misconceptions about the nature of Islamic popular music, and the function of *nasyid* and its existence in Malaysia. The data from those with expertise in Islamic popular music is analysed and interpreted by carrying out in-depth interviews and content analysis. The chapter seeks to identify the representative elements of Islamic popular music.

Globalisation may be defined as an increasingly strong interdependence between disparate parts of the world, resulting in the phenomenon that events and developments in one region influence many other regions (Meuleman 2002). This process of globalisation has given the populations of many Muslim countries access to greater knowledge, increased communication, and the fruits of improved trade and vibrant economies. With globalisation, Islamic popular music is gaining in popularity as artists such as Maher Zain and Humood Othman, both from the Middle East, gain wider audiences in Southeast Asia. Meuleman (2002) argues that globalisation affects the demand for Islamic popular music and increases the number of Islamic popular artists. The changes that have come about because of globalisation have helped connect Islamic popular music artists with artists from other styles of music, and it has also led people to become more accepting of Islamic music. This affects both the economics of the music industry and the sounds of the music. For instance, Sami Yusof—known for his fusion of classic Islamic popular music and Western popular music—made his

name as a global Islamic pop star because of the increased interconnectivity of Muslim communities around the world (El Asri 2006).

This phenomenon enabled performers such as *Grup Yürüyüş* (The Group Walk), who sing in Arabic and Kurdish (Tas 2014: 381), to emerge in Turkey and develop a fan base internationally. Tas argues, "One can predict that the Islamic popular music will gain a new impetus in keeping pace with globalization, but it will certainly not resemble that of the 1980s" (2014: 381). The Turkish group believes globalisation helped Islamic artists to 'place' their first steps in the music industry:

> *Reminiscent of Uludere …the group, which included Kurdish and Arabic words in each of their albums, announced the name of their songs with the songs they uttered in the street shows made within the country or around the world, especially those about the atrocities towards the ummah. The group also voiced its reaction to the current political issues and took note of what they did with the 'Ergenekon' piece on the emerging new coup plans. They made a big impact especially on social media with the Tree Kurdu they prepared for the trip after a better acceptance by the people globally. Thus, this proved that influences of globalization brought better outcome for Islamic popular music in terms of boosting its confidence to deliver its messages* (YeniSafak, 2017).

The development of Islamic popular music was different in terms of acceptance by audiences and even in terms of exposure; globalisation created a broader playing field for Islamic artists.

> *Of course, globalization was one factor that influenced the development of nasyid in Malaysia … the acceptance of the music style itself was due to globalization, which created a better environment for Islamic artists and the Malaysian music industry. The development of the Malaysian music industry indirectly encouraged nasyid to stand confident in the industry. However, the relationship between nasyid and Islamic popular music in Malaysia needs to be much better defined*. (Abd Fattah, interviewed in 2016)

Hence, as argued above by producer Abd Fattah (interviwed in 2016), globalization played a role in changing *nasyid* in Malaysia.

4.2 Music and Islam in Malaysia: Overview

There is a wide variety of popular music available to the people in Malaysia. In addition to a large amount of foreign music, there is a great variety of styles within Malaysian popular music. The musical discourse within Malaysia consists of multi-layered artistic practices, living heritages, and the unique cross-cultural mix of the country. Interculturalism and its connection to interdisciplinary arts is facilitating a transformative artistic power on our cultural understanding. As Penny observes, "these circumstances can be articulated as an unfolding of 'knowing from the inside' of artistic and educational practice, a correspondence through music, and an appreciation of divergent ways of thinking elucidated through scholarly reflection and critique" (2014: v).

The musical culture of Malaysia is influenced by many different foreign elements. Western cultural influences include pop bands, jazz groups, combos, soloists and singing groups. Perhaps, the most famous of all are the *bangsawan* theatre musicians of the 1920s and 1930s (see Matusky and Tan 2004). *Bangsawan* music blends Indian, Western, Latin American, and Malay traditional instruments. The Malay elements such as the singing style, vocal ornamentation, cyclic drum patterns, and the use of the Malay language are mixed with the Western harmony and orchestration. In this way, popular music in Malaysia from the mid-twentieth century onwards was influenced by Western rock. Songs like "Rock around the Clock" were performed by Malay artists. Some of the song lyrics were translated into Malay, but original melodies and rhythm remained the same and these Malay bands used the same instruments as in the original songs (Matusky and Tan 2004: 447).

According to Matusky and Tan (2004), pop yeh yeh music of 1960s Malaysia developed through the inspiration of the The Beatles. Many of these bands had similar set-ups to the Beatles with three guitars and a drum set, known as *kugiran*. They performed in the nightclubs, stage shows, and other occasions. Popular groups from that period include The Siglap 5, The Hooks, Nirwana, and Mutiara Timur. From the 1970s to the 1980s, popular music in Malaysia was influenced by the transnational music of artists such as Michael Jackson, Madonna, ABBA, and Boney M. Local artists and music groups such as The Search, Wings, Lefthanded, and Bumiputera Rockers, imitated this type of music.

In the mid-1990s, some Malaysian artists and composers tried to find their own identity in popular music. Manan Ngah, M. Nasir, and Pak Ngah were among the composers who experimented with this new popular music called *Muzik Nusantara*. In this music, the composers tried to mix Malay traditional instruments such as *kompang*, *rebana*, *serunai*, *rebab*, gamelan instruments and others with Western instruments. With new technology, many Malay traditional instruments have been sampled and used in recording music. This helped composers to mix Malay musical instruments with Western instruments in their recordings (see Matusky and Tan 2004). These musicians established a platform for Nasyid musicians in the 1990s.

As stated by Barendregt (2006), from the late 1980s to the mid 1990s, the Malaysian missionary movement, Al-Arqam, used music to articulate ideas of Muslim Malay modernity. Al-Arqam was founded in 1968 as a revivalist movement whose followers combined a Sufi traditionalist lifestyle with a progressive stress on economic self-reliance. Today, most of the better known *nasyid* ensembles of Malaysia continue to trace their origins to the Al-Arqam model villages, its Islamic entrepreneurship, and its pioneering use of audiovisual media, including music. With an official ban on Al-Arqam in 1994, Raihan was able to turn *nasyid* music into a modern and fashionable genre that was enthusiastically welcomed by the entertainment industry (see also section 2.10).

Nasyid is usually group vocal music, often performed *acappella* but sometimes performed with light accompaniment. The term *nasyid* is a derivation of the Arabic word *nasyid* (to lecture or reverberations) and means '(singer of a) religious song' (Barendregt and Zanten 2002:78). Adjie Esa Poetra's 2004 book, *Revolusi nasyid* (*Nasyid* Revolution), describes three main forms of *nasyid*. They are: 1) *nasyid* Melayu (Malay *Nasyid*), which uses percussion, 2) *nasyid* acapella, which is similar to R&B styles, and 3) *nasyid*, which uses hymns (or rhymes) about jihadi themes that promote Islam (Poetra 2004: v).[15] These three forms of *nasyid* use both Western and Middle Eastern music styles in communicating their message.

Since the early introduction of *nasyid*, the lyrics have tended to be written in Arabic. Today, however, the texts of popular Malaysian *nasyid* songs are mostly in the Malaysian or Indonesian languages, making them less esoteric than foreign-language texts (Barendregt and Zanten 2002: 78). However, as Sarkissian notes, *nasyid* songs sometimes use specialised Arabic vocabulary (2005: 132). Thus, even in *nasyid*, Arabic terms are sometimes used to express the sense and feel of a Middle-East-centred Islam.

In focusing on the Malaysian music landscape after the Raihan phenomenon of the 1990s, a more extensive exploration of *nasyid* production in the studio is called for in order to identify the creative powers behind the genre. Sarkissian, in her extensive analysis of Malaysian *nasyid*, describes the music as originally and primarily acappella in style (2005: 141). Stylistic variations have mushroomed, however, and now songs on Islamic themes that commonly incorporate musical features from Latin rhythm, rap, and rock are still accepted within the genre of *nasyid*.

Malaysia has been influenced by Indonesia for centuries and this influence is evidenced in *nasyid*. The famous Indonesian Islamic preacher AA Gym, who himself composes *nasyid*,

describes *nasyid* as ‘one way of approaching *dakwah (see glossary)*’ (*salah satu titik sentuh dakwah (see glossary),* which can also be translated as ‘one point of contact with *dakwah (see glossary)*’) (Poetra 2004: xiii). *Dakwah (see glossary)* is the act of teaching about Islam and it is a powerful and legitimising word in Islamic communities because performing *dakwah (see glossary)* is considered an act of reverence to God. *Dakwah (see glossary)* plays a fundamental role in *nasyid* through *nasyid* lyrics that promote proper behaviour and the fulfilment of religious doctrine. According to Matusky and Tan,

> *The earliest nasyid in the history of Islam was recorded during the Prophet Muhammad’s journey from Mecca to Medina, when he was welcomed by the people of Medina as they sang the nasyid piece Tola ’al Badru* (2004: 262).

‘*Nasyid* Continues Alive in Malaysia's Music Industry’, the article written by Mohyin Z (2015), compared sales figures of *nasyid* over two decades to illustrate that the genre is growing in popularity. She adds that *nasyid* could be sold even in premium premises and is held in the same regard as many international genres of popular music. She also states,

> *At that time the song was always on the lips of the whole community, thus becoming a sign of acceptance of nasyid identity as a branch of art and also to add colours to the entertainment industry with its contemporary and modern nasyid images* (Mohyin Z 2015).

Mohyin Z believed that the acceptance of this music was incredible in that it even overtook the popularity of well-known secular pop artists. This was proven at that time by the number of albums sold, as Mohyin explains,

> *This is evidenced by the sale of Raihan’s album, which reached 650,000 units in a few months. This number catapulted it as the best album throughout the history of album production in the country*.

The rise of the music industry in Malaysia has allowed Islamic popular music to take its place alongside other popular genres. Music and Islam at the early stage were in a complicated relationship especially in many parts of the Islamic world including even those countries based on Islamic Sha'riah law such as Iran, Pakistan, and Egypt. Raseuki (2009) argues that some Islamic scholars insist that the Qur'an itself lacks any clear statement, either positive or even negative, about music. In the relationship between Islam and music, some Islamic debates about the line between music and non-music often revolve around a concept called *Sama* (see also Chapter Two), which means 'listening' or 'audition'. The concept of *Sama*, as stated by Poetra (2004: 4), is an extension of *dhikir* (or *zkir*). The Qur'an itself prescribes the constant remembrance and praise of God, and all these ritual activities have as their source the recitation of the Qu'ran. The *hadith*[17] reveals a similar ambivalence about music, as many sayings offer reasons both for and against musical activity, as mentioned by Shiloah (1997). On the other hand, Seyyed Hossein, according to Nasr, argues that,

> *From the very beginning of Islamic history, therefore, the question of music and its legal status has been surrounded by an aura of ambiguity, which in fact, has been a positive rather than a negative aspect of Islamic Law* (Nasr 1997: 217).

Throughout the history of Islam, there have been ongoing controversies over the concept of *Sama* among legal scholars, theologians, spiritual leaders, and mystics. The views vary from complete rejection to full acceptance on the point of music. The attacks against music and dance, for example, emanate from legalists who wish to undermine the mystics or Sufis because of their many opinions regarding music in Islam. According to Shiloah,

[17] A saying or action ascribed to Prophet Muhammad or an act approved by the Prophet

> *With the emergence of the numerous mystic confraternities, the debate became increasingly heated since music and dance were doctrinally essential to the performance of the Sufi rituals, which enable the faithful to experience religious feelings to the most effective degree* (Shiloah 1997: 144).

Thus, practically speaking, many acknowledge the existence of permissible music, particularly that which is played by 'pious people', which refers to chosen people such as the Sufis and their followers. Thus, the Islamic character of music cannot be defined by its own qualities, but rather by those who play the music, or by the context in which the music is played.

Confusion has arisen about the relationship between Islamic popular music and *nasyid* and this has led people who are in the Islamic popular music industry to study the relationship between the two. This has become an interesting issue among Muslims, particularly in the Malaysian context. Here, the author draws his understanding of how Islamic popular music has evolved and what people understand about Islamic popular music and *nasyid*. This encourages the author to explore information regarding Islamic popular music and *nasyid* in the next section, which is based on the opinions of people involved in production in the Malaysian music industry.

4.3 Islamic Popular Music and *nasyid*: the music makers

Music is a complex issue in most Islamic societies. Sarkissian argues that "there is often a tension between hardliners who believe that music has no place in Islam and try to prohibit it at every turn, and those who tolerate it, albeit within well-defined parameters" (2005: 124). From time to time, due to a lack of understanding concerning this issue, music becomes more of a problem when dealing with popular music and young people.

Currently, Islamic popular cultural practices can be found almost everywhere in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, and even among Muslim communities in Europe. In Egypt, Pakistan, Morocco, and Lebanon, Muslim heavy metal and hip-hop artists have created a thriving underground music scene. Since 2000, music video channels in Arabic countries have started to broadcast videos of a new style of religious music that combines lyrics in praise of God and the Prophet with Western-style instrumental music and a set of high-quality visuals and storylines in contemporary settings. These instances and others, like halal songs, Islamic boy bands, Islamic reality TV shows, Islamic tourism, and Islamic film suggest that Islamic revivalism and associated piety movements are more compatable with contemporary popular culture than previously thought. Commercial Islamic popular music and videos emphasise the perceived dignity and humanity of Islam and its harmonious integration with a comfortable middle-class, and modern lifestyle (see further Weintraub 2011). Within some Islamic societies, music or even the least organised sounds such as accapella style, which lie outside strict Islamic parameters, have simply been banned. For instance, in Afghanistan, under the Taliban, music was not tolerated (Baily 2001).

All of these examples illustrate that Islamic popular music can be permissible in certain contexts. Issues surrounding Islamic popular music and *nasyid*, particularly in the Malaysian music industry, are especially good examples of the definitional struggles over music. *'Islamik Muzik? Atau Musik Islami' (Islamic music or music Islam)* both express the same meaning of the term Islamic music in a Malaysian overview. One of the respondents, who was a pioneer on Islamic music scene in Malaysia, Abd Fattah, (interviewed in 2016), strongly expressed what the main concept of Islamic popular music is: "The 'Islamik Muzik' is basically songs that deliver good messages to people and this music has progressed massively in the Malaysian market up to the present day." 'Islamic music' is well known to most Malaysians. Most people understand that the essential purpose of Islamic popular music is to convey good things to

Muslim people. The respondent has been involved in this music since before the 1990s, the time of '*Zikr*' or '*Salawat* Songs' phenomena and the Nada Murni Group, and he experienced this growth first-hand.

Another interesting point regarding the Islamic music style before the 1990s was that it was mostly in the form of praising Allah in the style of *Zikr* and *Qasidah*. A key feature of these styles was the repetition of the names of Allah and an attempt at demonstrating piety in the lyrics. Abd Fattah (interviewed in 2016) explained that the most common words used in the lyrics were '*La ilaaha illal Lah (*There is no god but God*)*, *Allahu Akbar (*God is Great!*),* *Alhamdulillah (*All Praise to God!*),* and *Subhanallah (*God is Holy*)*:

> *Nasyid or Islamic popular music is well known, especially in the eyes of Malaysians. It is still part of popular music, but it is different only in that its lyrics contain divine or godly elements couched in good messages* (Al-Manna nasyid Group interviewed in 2015).

According to this respondent, Islamic popular music and *nasyid* generally play the same role to present popular music to the people with the addition of a distinctive style and uniqueness of religious content. These are the main aspects that are to be considered and which Islamic popular music artists try to bring out in their music.

In this discussion, the author explores the definition of Islamic popular music and argues that, together with *nasyid*, it constitutes music that is acceptable to Malaysian Islamic communities. At some point, both terms have been marked as the same, particularly in Malaysia. In an attempt to untangle this complex terminology, this section first seeks to understand what Islamic popular music is all about and attempts to define *nasyid* in Malaysia. Then, the author explores these categories and how they relate to each other in the music industry. Finally, the remainder of the chapter seeks to provide an account of the rise of Islamic popular music in Malaysia.

4.3.1 Islamic popular music in Malaysia

On the practical side, the first stream of Islamic popular music was overtly immersed within Islamic discourse in attempts to reinforce the moral coherence of a distinct Muslim community. It is partly defined by the way lyrical content references the traditions, beliefs, and religious figures within Islam. However, this genre also includes music that deals with broader concepts of Islamic morality and spirituality, ranging from deep and abiding respect for one's mother to boundless gratitude for the beauty of creation. Crucially, in all instances, it tends to be clearly rooted in specific Islamic practices and beliefs. Such music, therefore, can be tentatively conceived as a form of para-liturgical practice. Indeed, it is perceived to exist within a spectrum of Islamic sound that is arguably reminiscent of Al Faruqi and al-Faruqi's typology of '*handasah al sawt*' or the art of sound (Al-Faruqi 1986).

Morris argues that Islamic popular music carries religious stories, chants or poetry, and that musicians often create such music by utilising the concept of "remembrance." Hence, as with *zikr*, chanting, and poetry, "Islamic popular music is also considered as a form of religious practice, celebration, and reaffirmation" (Morris 2013: 3). In general, people identify Islamic popular music as a kind of music that is carried by Muslims and presented in Islamic ways, which shows its own unique identity, especially in terms of its lyrics and music. It is not easy to classify or describe Islamic popular music precisely due to various opinions regarding what it actually is. Various scholars agree, however, that all knowledge regarding Islamic popular music should refer to the basic concepts of Islam. What is classified as Islamic popular music actually differs depending on the geographic, cultural and religious contexts. In sum, an understanding of what counts as Islamic popular music is contextual.

As Islam in Malaysia was discussed in the previous chapter, here we will also consider Malaysian musicians travelling abroad. In 2015, for instance, Bazli travelled with his *nasyid* group (UNIC) to South Africa for performances. Based on his very brief experiences there, he

claims that African Islam is based on '*Syahid'* or martyrdom, which in turn influences their perspectives on how music is considered:

> *…the Muslims there deem music to be 'haram' or forbidden. Therefore, their Islamic popular music has no music, just vocals for performances. If you go to the UK, the music there is more diverse due to fierce competition and global exposure. Therefore, Islamic singers there are more open to other genres and have to compete through popular music styles while instilling Islamic or Godly messages and positive values. However, the objectives of both Islamic popular music and* nasyid *in Malaysia are one and stand for the same thing, which is to spread Islamic or Godly messages. What differentiates them are aspects of the musical arrangement, image and performance styles. Due to that, we believe that Islamic popular music and* nasyid *are 'in the same boat' but Islamic popular music could be a form of nasyid or even in another style* (Bazli of UNIC, interviewed in 2015).

Bazli argued that for Islamic popular music to be accepted in South Africa, it must only consist of vocals[18]. Based on his experiences, he believes that there are similar tensions between the concept of music and Islam in Africa. According to Frishkop (2008), throughout Islamic history, there has been disagreement over the legitimacy of public musical practice – as entertainment, or even (sometimes, especially) as devotion (see also Shiloah 1997 and Gribetz 1991). Such disputes flared in Muslim Africa, too, particularly during periods of attempted reform. In West Africa, the social status of musicians appears to have declined with the spread of conservative Islam. Given a respectable text and a context, male vocal forms are most acceptable. Accompanying frame drums (Arabic: *tar, duff*), and occasionally flutes (Arabic: *nay*), are often sanctioned, in accord with the Hadith and musical traditions.

[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Do8k_vJ45fE (accessed on 3rd January 2017). In this link, we see how Ahmad from Durban, South Africa, sings *Iman Mutiara* by Raihan.

Hafiz Hamidun, one of the music producers, reinforced the contextual nature of music when he put forth his argument to the author in an interview in 2015,

> *Islamic popular music is just a small branch of the music category. Therefore, when we talk about the scope of the music industry, it actually means that Islamic popular music is part of it. Therefore, it is important to question how people define Islamic music.* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

The author's view of Islamic popular music is based on considerations with regard to whether the music carries Islamic elements. For example, if the music is presented in a sexy manner, it is not Islamic and, therefore, cannot be categorised as Islamic music. However, if the music is presented in a polite manner and the lyrics carry elements of 'goodness', it can be regarded as Islamic, even if the song talks about debts or paying debts. Thus, to define Islamic music accurately, it may be easier to articulate what is not Islamic music. According to Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015), Islamic popular music contains three essential elements: *iman* (faith), *akhlak* (morals), and *adab* (mannerism). To Muslims, *Iman* and *akhlak* conduct the way and manners of Islam. Hence, if the song, music, performance or the craft itself has these elements mentioned, it can be labelled Islamic music.

> *First of all, I don't know whether or not there is such a term as 'Islamic music'. If we look at the religious aspect, I'm also uncertain about the definition of Islamic popular music because, based on what I remember in terms of religion, it's really rare to hear the term 'Islamic popular music' because philosophically, if we talk about religion and if such a term exists, Islamic popular music would mean that it's fundamental what music should be and also how the music is structured itself. If we follow the ways of Islam, I believe there is no reason to have any labels such as, 'This is Islamic music' and 'This is not Islamic music'. This is based on my understanding of it. Therefore, if we talk about Islamic music, it is quite complicated because it is related to the Islamic rules (hukum). When it is related to Islamic rules, Islamic popular music at this moment, if we label it as Islamic music, there are specific guidelines but the guidelines do not apply within the ways we enjoy music. Therefore, for example, if it should not cause distraction to a person's life, perhaps it doesn't mix men and women, the content, the lyrics…. These are like guidelines, but it doesn't say how Islamic popular music is supposed to be. It's just stating*

> *the Islamic criteria needed in the content, but it doesn't say specifically what kind of music is actually Islamic music.* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

In contrast to Hafiz Hamidun's opinion, another respondent, who is a *nasyid* singer, (Idzwan UUM, interviewed in 2016), believes that Islamic popular music refers to music that contains Islamic content and input, especially in the lyrical content. Idzwan holds that Islamic music simply equates with positive music in terms of the way the music is performed and the appearance of the artist. He believes that the content, suitability, and meaningfulness of the songs are important and that the music should aim to make a positive impact on audiences, especially when the content and style of this kind of music are produced with the intention of 'giving' something good to people. Therefore, it is possible that even love songs, motivational songs, or indeed any song with a positive message, with beneficial outcomes and effects on listeners in line with Islamic principles, could be categorised as Islamic music.

Consider the argument put forth by Hazamin from Inteam Group (interviewed in 2015), who also shares a similar opinion regarding the elements of Islamic popular music:

> *My understanding of Islamic popular music at the time, in early stage of 1990s, was that the music uses simple percussion, only using percussion and acapella style or even Arab-like music. That was my understanding in the early years, meaning that Islamic popular music, which contained pop-style music was not considered an Islamic popular music to me back in '98 until 2000. Maybe because I was influenced by the senior nasyid groups at the time such as Raihan or Rabbani and even before them, Nada Murni. So earlier on, this was my understanding, meaning the Islamic popular music industry went through an evolution whereby I began to see that Islamic popular music is very broad and is not covered by one specific genre of music but is more focused on the concept, lyrical content and how the artist carries out and performs the song. From there on, I began to understand that Islamic popular music incorporates lyrics with positive content, and does not stray from its basic roots, and includes Tarannum, Arab-style singing skills, and could be in variety music styles.* (Hazamin of Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015)

Hazamin argues that this music could be characterised by its lyrical content, and the ways in which the artists deliver their performances. According to him, Islamic popular music conveys a religious message. *Dakwah (see glossary)* (preaching) has been practiced in Islam since the time of the Prophet. If an individual is a religious teacher and is able to teach, then they should share the Islamic rules that cover all the regulations of the religion. In such a manner, all those who are involved in Islamic popular music should preach through their medium. In other words, the purpose of this sort of music is to call others towards goodness, provide advice, remind each other of doing good, and share historical stories that could be used as lessons for the edification of society. This is in line with the opinion, given below, of one of the people directly involved in the Malaysian music industry:

> *… if we look at what we understand of Islamic music, we can say that's it's a form of music that is accompanied by or consists of songs or lyrics that convey a religious message.* (Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016)

In his opinion, then, the basic understanding regarding this type of music could be gathered from the lyrics. He added also that there is a new term in Indonesia call MUPOS (Musik positif), which means positive music. He believes that this idea indirectly resulted from *nasyid* and that this could be a synonym for Islamic popular music. Malaysian *nasyid* singer Fuad Priakustik argued a similar point:

> *Actually, to me Islamic popular music simply equals positive music in terms of the way the music is performed, its appearance, and the content. Of these, the content is the most important and it should consist of good messages. Personally, I say it is very important to ensure that the content is not 'empty', it doesn't let us drift to the left or right, but it makes us stay on track with the content itself. Whatever it is, be it a love song, or motivational song, whatever the song, the content must have a good message to*

> *convey, especially when it comes to Islamic or any religious song. So… it's actually not based on genre, nor based on musical arrangement, but more on the content of the song.* (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015)

This respondent strongly asserts that Islamic popular music should be 'measured' by its content. Songs that convey good messages, motivational themes, or portrayals of Islamic teachings could be referred to as Islamic popular music. Another point of view that gives further information in relation to Islamic popular music and how this type of music should be categorised:

> *As a clear example, if we look at western songs and their lyrics, it's actually not about the music or instruments which changed but it's more in the aspects of the lyrics … the messaging in Islamic popular music is the same and circles around the messages of Islam. So if we cross out of that circle and we don't call to religion or convey 'positive' advice, to me, it means that it has diverted away from Islamic music and become the same as other songs which do not carry religious messages. So Islamic popular music is very broad and, even if we're not in nasyid but still bring forth Godly messages, the music can be categorised as Islamic popular music because they're conveying the same message. It's just that the genre is different.* (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

Another respondent argued that the most important thing is examining the lyrics without focusing too much on other aspects. However, the author's point of view differs with this statement. The author believes that in determining how to define Islamic popular music, the complete package should be scrutinised in relation to the music i.e. lyrical content, and identity of the artists themselves.

Clearly, there are many diverse views on defining Islamic popular music among producers of this content. As previously mentioned, this music forms a complete package. This

notion is shared by another producer who considers Islamic popular music as not only being easily recognised by just looking at the lyrics:

> *Islamic popular music comprises a few elements. Those elements, basically, illustrate that the music is Islamic. First of all, there is the message that you convey through your lyrics. Second, it depends on how the song is performed and who performs it. There are nasyid songs that are performed by rock singers and sometimes people will dismiss it as rock only. Thirdly, what I can see in terms of Islamic music is that the music is compliant with the Islamic rulings, meaning that if there's a nasyid concert but the audience in the concert are mixed in gender, jumping around and crazy, it wouldn't be considered Islamic music.* (Fadzli from TV Hijrah, interviewed in 2016)

According to the arguments above, Islamic popular music should be defined as having several elements including lyrics, performance style, and Islamic rules. The respondent mentioned that those elements are necessary to help people understand the relationship and minimise tensions between Islamic popular music and *nasyid*.

Other perspectives gained from interviewing respondents contrast with the previous point and emphasise image as the key defining feature for some, and music and context as important to others:

> *Nasyid is the same as Islamic music. It is just that, in Malaysia, maybe some people view nasyid based on image, what they wear is like nasyid with kufi and so on. My view, generally, Islamic popular music is based on the musical instruments used and the lyrics, which are positive, religious or talk about one's love for the Prophet. To me, that is nasyid and Islamic music.* (Azalino of Universal Music, interviewed in 2015)

> *In Malaysia, people are more comfortable with referring to Islamic popular music as nasyid. When we conduct lectures about Islam, people will invite artists who have elements of nasyid. Even if they invite*

> *other artists, they will invite those who have transitioned into singing religious songs. So, then, commonly Islamic popular music refers to nasyid*. (Fedtri Yahya, interviewed in 2015)

Ultimately, it appears that there are many features of Islamic popular music. These features are emphasised in different times and places. As one *nasyid* singer puts it

> *I think there is no music that is specific to Islam, or even labelled as Islamic popular music… but actually whatever music… kind of music, or genre of songs can, basically, feel Islamic; it can be called Islamic popular music because if we look at music as a whole, we have not seen anything in this world of Islamic music, in the same way that we identify Arabic music, Western music and Malay music. We cannot clearly identify Islamic popular music.* (Huzaimi Nowseeheart, interviewed in 2015)

The respondent maintains that in order to look at this term further, all features of the musical form need to be examined. He also believes that any music or art which can be identified as representative of Islamic values through the production of music or lyrics with the outcomes of achieving 'goodness', can be considered as Islamic music. He conceives of Islamic popular music as derived from the concept of 'Islam combining with Music', portraying an Islamic way of life with music, thus becoming Islamic popular music.

This perspective has also been highlighted by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*: JAKIM), which provides the rules and standard procedures, in its 2015 Guidelines to the Islamic Entertainment Industry, in dealing with Islamic entertainment to ensure that the environment retains the Islamic concept. According to these guidelines, several main aspects are required to provide the ground rules. These include the artist, the performance, and the song (JAKIM 2015). Thus, Huzaimi, from the *nasyid* group *Nowseeheart,* indirectly reflects these guidelines in articulating his view on defining Islamic popular music.

Clearly, this particular music is not easy to define. Distinct Islamic popular music does not exist since there is no definite confirmation of what it is. Perhaps, it is necessary to develop a special method to define such music. Perhaps the closest definition would be Islamic popular music that contains appropriate messages, as claimed by the makers. This reflects the kind of music that was developed by Raihan (a pioneer in this sort of Islamic popular music) and therefore, may be defined in terms of it being imbued and associated with Islamic images, as well as performed within Islamic confines. Islamic popular music does not necessarily borrow the Islamic sound as much as the influences of Qur'anic cantillation, but in fact draws on various popular music formats.

Therefore, the author argues that in Malaysia, Islamic popular music is not necessarily *nasyid*, nor is *nasyid* necessarily Islamic popular music. Because of related elements such as lyrics and images, they tend to be conflated. To shed some light on the issue, the author will investigate *nasyid* to further. The following subsection examines *nasyid* in a more detailed manner, explaining the characteristics in an effort to provide a better understanding of this popular genre of music.

4.3.2 *Nasyid* and the Malaysian music industry

According to Barendregt, *nasyid* is the musical component of an emergent civil Islam (2006a: 184). *Nasyid* stands for an acappella song that mainly uses vocal harmonies and is predominantly performed by male vocalists. Performers of *nasyid* trace the origins of the music style to the Middle East, and the term *nasyid* itself is known to derive from an Arabic Word (*An nasyid*). In consequence, *nasyid* songs generally have a rhythm identical to that of Arabic songs that use the '*padang pasir'* (desert) or 'Masri' rhythm.
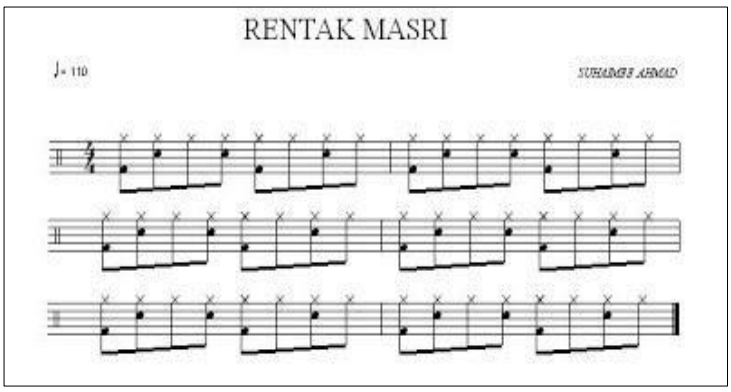


Figure 4.1: Masri or Padang Pasir rhythm by Suhaimi Ahmad[19] (accessed on 23rd July 2017)

The emergence of *nasyid* songs coincided with the arrival of Arab traders to the region. It is therefore not strange to observe that the melody of *nasyid* is very similar to the melody of many Arab songs. In a blog by Ahmad Syauqi on the history of Ahmad Baqi, it was explained that Ahmad Baqi deepened his knowledge in *Tarannum* recitation (see section 5.5.1) prior to learning the art of *nasyid* (Ahmad Syauqi 2009). He shows that the rhythm in *nasyid* has the same format with the rhythm in the recitation of Al-Quran; both are in the style of *Tarannum*. This connection has encouraged many people to assume that *nasyid* is Islamic music.

Nasyid songs "comprise sung poetry using Middle Eastern rhythms with Islamic themes for the purpose of spreading Islamic values" (Matusky and Tan 2004: 262), which, as the findings in the previous section demonstrate, can be regarded as having the same purpose as Islamic popular music. These songs serve to inculcate good (Islamic) values, morals and habits. As Matusky and Tan explain, "[t]he words '*nasyid*' or '*Insyad*' derives from the word '*Nasyada*', meaning 'to look for' or 'to search'. Adding the letter 'a' to the beginning of Nasyada results in '*Ansyada*' meaning to recite poetry or verses with high and low vocal

[19]Source from http://malaysiadrummerzone.blogspot.co.uk/2009/09/rentak-melayu-tradisional-drumset.html (accessed on 23rd July 2017)

inflections" (2004: 262). At the early stages, *nasyid* was performed informally at home while seated on the floor in a circle formation after studying the Qur'an. Teachers would teach and sing *nasyid*, which was then followed and repeated by the students (Matusky and Tan 2004: 263). The voices alone carried the songs' texts and their messages, which is quite different to the highly instrumentalist versions we hear today.

Sholeh Fikri and Siti Rugayah (2014) argue that *nasyid* is a form of 'musical art' that contains Islamic teachings and lessons about social problems. The role of *nasyid* is bi-functional as both an entertainment and as means for delivering religious and social messages. Many other genres of music can both entertain and deliver messages, but *nasyid* is distinctive in its attachment to Islam. The appeal of *nasyid* is based on its particular rhythms and melodies as well as its lyrical content. The lyrics of *nasyid* contain words of advice and behavioural reminders to people. Even though many *nasyid* songs have a long history, the lyrics often remain relevant to current issues. The lyrical content of *nasyid* is full of meaning, containing lessons and teachings on life. In this research, via interview sessions with music makers in Malaysia, it was found that a large number of the respondents retained strong beliefs in their own understanding of comparing the terms Islamic popular music and *nasyid*.

By focusing on *nasyid* in Malaysia, an interesting topic to be touched upon is its evolution since the 1990s, when Raihan transformed the Malaysian music industry by pioneering a new form of popular *nasyid* in the mainstream. In the late 1990s, *nasyid* commonly used percussion as its main accompanying instrument. From around the year 2000 onwards, the 'atmosphere of old *nasyid*' changed and modern instruments such as the guitar, flute, and electronic gadgets began to appear more frequently in recordings, as the Munsyeed President explained:

> *In 2000, InTeam emerged and released something new, 'love nasyid'. No one ever thought that a nasyid song would talk about love. As we all know, at the time before InTeam's emergence, nasyid lyrics*

> *revolved around* tauhid *(oneness with God), inviting people to pray, fast, love Allah, confiding in Allah and so on. That was all, and these issues were repeated. However, when InTeam came out with love songs, it put nasyid back on the map and garnered a lot of attention. For example, the song 'Nur Kasih' was such a success that it topped the charts in Carta Era (Era Charts), which was a very popular radio station at the time. That was a good benchmark and it was an indicator that showed that nasyid had become a new wave in the industry, which was then developed by UNIC.* (Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016)

In this subsection, information obtained from interviews is analysed to explore the respondents' views on what they know as 'Nasyid in Malaysia'. A few respondents state their opinions below:

> *Islamic popular music does not necessarily mean that it is nasyid, but nasyid means that it is certainly Islamic music that is performed. The situation is like this; nasyid is an Arabic word which means 'song', it differs with every song and some Arabs call a song 'Terani'. Terani is also a song and so on, one side they call it Terani. However, nasyid songs are based on religion, gentleness, and they mostly convey good messages, which motivate and anything good that come along that line. However, to be honest, Islamic popular music does not mean that it is nasyid. Why do I say this? It is because Islamic popular music could be in rock, pop, jazz, blues and other styles unless it is in the Islamic way and consists of elements related to Islamic music.* (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015)

This respondent expressed the opinion that *nasyid* is Islamic popular music but that Islamic popular music is not confined only to the *nasyid* form. This shows that Islamic popular music could be delivered in other styles of music that remain true to the required Islamic guidelines. Another respondent adds:

> *To be clear, any genre can be categorised as Islamic popular music as long as the content of the song does not stray from the positivity, which is Islam. Islam is something that is good…. If you call a song*

> *Islamic popular music but the song talks about something cheerful, yearning for the love of a girl or individual and not for our role model, the Prophet, that is not Islamic popular music at all. I am sorry to say that. We have to be unwavering in this. Therefore, when it comes to Islamic music, it cannot be as if you are worshipping an individual. No, it has to be more general that brings an impact to music listeners, a good impact.* (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015)

The context of Islamic songs should be contemplated from every angle and not just from a specific content, such as the *Zikr*. Hence, the author would put forth this argument if people say that Islamic popular music is *nasyid* due to its song content that is akin to the *Zikr* or the *Qasidah.* Some artists do not want to be labelled as *nasyid* artists because they want to be more universal. One of the nasyid artists in Malaysia raised this point, too:

> *Sometimes people get confused with Islamic popular music and nasyid. When it comes to Islamic artists, they will refer to nasyid artists only. Here, the issue that I notice is labelling. What are people's perceptions of nasyid? Most of their perceptions are that a nasyid artist is a 'goody-two-shoes', does not dance on stage, has the ability to preach or lecture, and the concert performance involves Quranic recitation. However, sometimes, non-nasyid artists also perform Islamic popular music in different styles of performance. They are not as heavy with the religious content as nasyid artists are and maybe they focus more on the songs. To mention an example of an artist who has transitioned himself to travel in an Islamic direction in Malaysia now would be Sham Kamikaze. He is a musician but he does not declare himself a nasyid artist; he is an Islamic musician like Ali Terrarosa. They do not label themselves as nasyid artists and they still carry their former rock group's name behind their name. I think that Munsyid is a nasyid artist who performs Islamic popular music but still it does not mean that those who perform Islamic popular music are nasyid artists. Thus, we can observe and see how Islamic popular music brings together nasyid and non-nasyid artists. So, Islamic popular music is the umbrella term for nasyid artists and those who are not nasyid artists in the industry.* (Fadzli from TV Hijrah, interviewed in 2016)

Fadzli discusses that most Malaysians will simply assume that any songs that advocate 'goodness' are *nasyid.* This is influenced by the the labelling of the artist and causes confusion.

From this, it is clear that Malaysians have classified any goodness songs as *nasyid*. Fadzli strongly argues that Islamic popular music is an 'umbrella' for artists in the Malaysian music industry rather than a synonym for *nasyid*. Another respondent made a similar point about *nasyid* carrying good messages:

> *If we look at nasyid earlier on, it actually originated from an Arabic word 'nasyada', which means 'to enthuse the spirit' or 'to provide words of encouragement'. Therefore, if you look at the definition in the Malaysian context, you can see that nasyid has been tied in its own format with kompang, drums, and does not consist of strings and so on. This was back during the time of Nada Murni and the early days of Zikr and so on. That used to be the character of nasyid music in Malaysia. When contemporary music came in during the rise of Raihan in 1995 and onwards, then there was Nowseeheart, Saujana, and amongst the pioneers of contemporary nasyid were changes in the use of traditional instruments such as kompang, which was the sole instrument used for nasyid. When the contemporary style of nasyid became popular, during the earlier stages, there were backlashes but after a while, the masses began to accept the music. So even that, we consider as nasyid. It is not determined by the characteristics of the music or the genre. However, in Malaysia, those accepted as nasyid singers now are those like Maher Zain. He is considered a nasyid artist. The same goes for Harris J, they consider him as a nasyid artist, even Opick and even Ramli Sarip, who performs God-related songs. Like the song 'Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar' (do good deeds and avoid bad attitudes), is considered an Islamic song or nasyid because it is based on a good message. In Malaysia, it is nasyid when the message of the song invites, or calls, the public towards (Islamic) goodness, but if it strays out of that, then people do not consider it nasyid. They will label it as some other type of song.* (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

In Malaysia, people are not sufficiently informed about the range of Islamic music, so *nasyid* is often seen as its full extent. According to Fikri (2014), within Islam, there are only a few musical genres that are considered 'Islamic'. They are mainly *nasyid*, *Qasidah*, *Tarannum*, and Pop Religi. Except for pop religi, which is music consisting of lyrics regarding religion and has influences of pop music, the types of music were spread in parallel with the spread of Islam

and globalised development. The pop religi contents of such music are normally religious teachings about *solat, haj, zakat, sadaqah,* and other religious values.

To add to this discussion and provide further information regarding the depiction of *nasyid,* AIM (the Music Industry Awards of Malaysia, 2002) is used as a reference. For 'Best *Nasyid* Artist', Nora, who is a well-known pop artist, was nominated along with classic *nasyid* artists such as InTeam, Hafiz Hamidun, UNIC, and Saujana. Nora is a famous pop singer, but the song that earned her the nomination, relates to Islam and is called *Doa* (Prayer), thus it could be classified as an Islamic Song. Her song praises Allah, so the organisers and music experts categorised it as *nasyid,* even though the melody is different from ordinary *nasyid,* in a pop style. Such responses mean that any type of music may be described as Islamic popular music by virtue of its lyrical reference to the religion (Fedtri Yahya, interview in 2015).

To provide adequate information as regards the aims of this study, an attempt is made to investigate what Islamic popular music is in wider society. Other respondents, whose comments are given below, also shared their views regarding Islamic popular music and *nasyid*. For them, these two terms should be clear in the eyes of the audience. This confusion has not only impacted audiences, but also makers in order to produce quality and significant Islamic popular music in future.

> *To me, Islamic popular music is different; it is just that it is related to nasyid. Nasyid is actually a term. It is a genre, just like universal music like rock, pop, jazz, and nasyid is within that line. Therefore, to those who like all things Islamic… the listeners are surely Muslims… then they are surely to accept nasyid. However, there are people who are always confused. They would say that it is nasyid when it actually is not. Nasyid is a genre with various types of songs that preach religious advice… So nasyid is a genre, a branch of musical entertainment.* (Ito Lara, interviewed in 2015)

Another respondent made the similar point about nasyid being a branch of music that is influenced by Islam:

> *To me nasyid has been around, and most people know about nasyid [longer than] … Islamic music. But nasyid stands as a branch of music that carries Islamic style. The term Islamic popular music is new to me because one of the factors is that we want to celebrate music and one point we have to neutralise Islamic popular music, which not only refers specifically to nasyid style so that it reaches everyone with better understanding. It shouldn't be limited to those who only listen to nasyid and Godly songs. So when we talk about positive nasyid music, it means that even people who have never heard nasyid might be able to accept it. This is what I understand about nasyid. Meaning in terms of whether nasyid is Islamic popular music or Islamic popular music is nasyid, to me, nasyid came first then came Islamic popular music that includes nasyid and positive-based songs to welcome those who never listened to nasyid because the target is to encourage us, educate people to do good things through music* (Najdi of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

Najdi of UNIC (interviwed in 2015), an Islamic law expert, argues that most people knew the term *nasyid* before Islamic popular music was introduced. According to his experience and expertise, he feels that Islamic artists try to avoid any perception or assumption that could confuse the people and do not conflate these terms. This encourages Islamic artists to be natural in dealing with these two terms by giving people the understanding that both convey the same content in their songs and include songs with positive religious content. Apart from that, he believes that this type of song could indirectly encourage people to do good things and educate them. In relation to this issue, another expert in the music industry said the following:

> *Once they have been exposed to songs that are positive then they can dive into nasyid, which is more religion-oriented and more solid. I do not know of any double meaning but just solid. By solid, I mean we can clearly see their projection. Sometimes, with positive-based songs, the topic can be about love but we do not know if it is love towards a person, or God or the Prophet. So when nasyid is solid, ok like wahai Rasulullah (oh Prophet Muhammad), wahai Tuhan (oh God)..it is solid and we know to whom the song is referring to. So we do not feel cautious or doubtful, being cautious and doubtful is not a good feeling. However, in a way, it is good as it raises questions, which make you think, but it is not fun to*

some people. There are no surprises and this is what I mean by solid. (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015)

Interestingly, since its development, most people have merely assumed that *nasyid* is Islamic popular music. With limited information and knowledge, communities have easily made the assumption. People with expertise and experience, who have been involved in this form of music, argue that Islamic popular music is not only classified as *nasyid* but *nasyid* can be described as Islamic music. This is important in order to develop a functional definition of Islamic popular music. Islamic popular music can be classified as *nasyid.* It can also fit into other genres such as pop or ballad, with suitable messages and melodies that adhere to Islamic regulations and guidelines. An example of this is the music of Mawi, an artist who conveys good Islamic messages in his songs. One of his songs, *'Al-Haq'*[20], was not produced as *nasyid* but as contemporary pop, in collaboration with Dato AC Mizal (a pop artist). This song is still considered Islamic popular music due to its content of praise and 'good' messages. This collaboration between Mawi and AC Mizal introduced a new approach in the Malaysian music industry by providing 'fresh music' on Islamic themes, while at the same time retaining the content of praising God or Allah and communicating good Islamic messages. The lyrics of this song, given below, illustrate the Islamic messages in the music:

Ku bersujud padamu,
berdoa pada yang satu,
Padamu aku mengadu,
Allah yang satu,

Mohon petunjuk darimu,
berderai air mataku,
Ku ingin dekat denganMu.

[20] This song could be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkLeCIrsgTw.

I prostrate myself before you,
I pray to the one,
I confide in you,
The one and onlyAllah,
I seek guidance from you,
My tears flow continuously,
I want to be close to you (Allah)

Of the 35 respondents who participated in the interviews, 27 strongly believe that Islamic popular music and *nasyid* are not necessarily constituent of one another, but share similarities in the kinds of messages they convey. In significant contrast to the majority, four respondents believe that these two terms are the same. Thus, in this subsection, the results show that though some respondents agree that the two terms can be classified as the same, most disagree. This discussion also analysed the meaning these two terms carried in society, particularly among the makers, which provides the first comprehensive study of the perspective of the music industry on this debate.

The most remarkable argument from this data was articulated as follows: *"There was no such thing as Islamic popular music, but then Islamic popular music emerged from nasyid … and nasyid stands as a genre of music in the Malaysian music industry."* Producer Abd Fattah Farihin (interviewed in 2016) felt that the broad term Islamic popular music is commonly used in Malaysia to refer to any music that has Islamic messages or elements. The term emerged following the recent cultural revolution in the development of *nasyid* from the 1990s onwards. Based on the information gained, the author concludes that *nasyid* is a genre in the Malaysian music industry, and that the term Islamic popular music was introduced following the increasing popularity of *nasyid* (see section 2.7).

4.4 Conclusion

The findings here illustrate the multitude of perspectives of the makers regarding the relationship between Islamic popular music and *nasyid*. This research identifies the elements that contribute towards developing Islamic popular music and *nasyid*. Due to changes taking place because of globalization, *nasyid* helps to maintain a traditional Islamic core for reference in other styles of music classified as Islamic popular music. The most important point is that these musical styles continue to follow the Islamic rulings and preferences.

Various respondents expressed their views on dealing with the challenging issue of identifying Islamic popular music and *nasyid* in Malaysia. These individuals have been involved directly or indirectly in Islamic popular music and have contributed ideas to help peel the 'outer' layer of the issue by drawing on their experiences and providing a variety of examples. The fact that Islamic popular music and *nasyid* have been referred to as the same 'thing' for carrying the same concept of conveying messages of 'goodness', has also been agreed upon by a few respondents. On the other hand, examining it based on its relationship to other elements such as images, lyrics, and the types of melody production or music style has contradicted these perspectives. The images, lyrics and music style production are required to retain three main components: *iman* (faith), *akhlak* (morals), and *adab* (mannerism). These three components serve as the 'root' to other elements that determine the Islamic nature of the music. The next step is to examine how musical instruments and musical style of *nasyid* in the Malaysian music industry have evolved over the two decades in question.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND MUSIC TRANSFORMATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the aspects of sound and musical instruments of *nasyid*. It also seeks to answer the research question regarding the style of music that is preferred, dominating and trendsetting from the Islamic point of view, and how the transformation of *nasyid* from its early stage in 1990s could be compared to the present style of the music. Even though many scholars have raised this topic from time to time, the challenges and complexities of the music have not been explicitly addressed to facilitate an understanding of traditional, contemporary and fusion music. Therefore, this chapter offers various opinions of the 'makers', elicited through interviews, regarding Islamic musical styles, and details the difficulties or issues pertaining to this genre in Malaysia by explaining the process involved in the making of *nasyid*, including the instruments used. By examining the musical instruments and technology involved in making this music, some light can be shed on the issues at hand. It is hoped that this can help resolve some questions faced by scholars dealing with this sort of music, as mentioned by one of the music arrangers in Malaysia, who mentioned that music production in Islamic music in its early days used specific instruments as stated as below:

> *You may produce rhythm by clapping your hands and you also may produce sound and music by blowing air across specific instruments, and this is what actually happened in past in terms of the earliest sound and music production. The variety of hard-blown and soft-blown wind instruments at the early stage, in the 1990s, had been identified.* (Along Exist, interviewed in 2016)

In general, audiences define the melody of popular Islamic music as calm music or even music that gives 'peace' to the listener. In this section, the author will discuss the three musical styles within this category—traditional, contemporary, and fusion—to study how the different sounds have evolved.

> *In terms of sound or music, it has evolved. In the early 1990s, most sounded traditional then because we used percussion. Nowadays, we use a full band with guitar and so on. So, there is no issue with people going in that direction as long as they don't go overboard*. (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015)

Fuad argued that the music developed in the 1990s as traditional music; the rhythm of Quranic recitation and classical instruments (percussion) were the central musical features. This was followed by the development of contemporary styles, which symbolised modern music accompanied by various instruments. Thereafter, fusion styles were introduced, influenced by new technologies and globalisation. Thus, this section will provide information on these three Islamic popular music styles. The transformation of *Nasyid* music can be traced, as is evident in the subsection below, from the phenomenon of the emergence of *nasyid* artists such as Raihan, Inteam and Rabbani.

5.2 Raihan, setting a 'Benchmark' for Islamic popular music

The music style that was introduced by Raihan was followed by several other *nasyid* groups in Malaysia, such as Nowseeheart, Saujana, and many other pioneers of contemporary *nasyid* (Utusan Online 2000). This article argues that Raihan transformed the music industry in Malaysia; they improvised their performance styles and became more flexible because they

were trying to bring something new into society. Raihan thought outside of the box and made stylistic changes. Their core change was a switch from the use of traditional instruments such as *kompang*—the sole instrument used for *nasyid* as percussion in the traditional versions of *nasyid*—to the use of other instruments in their contemporary *nasyid* music.

When this contemporary style became popular, that is, during the early stages when this music style was introduced in the 1990s, there were backlashes initially though after a while the masses began to accept the music. The contemporary *nasyid* style brought something modern but it was not a problem because the music attracted the audience to accept Islamic popular music: "Raihan was a trendsetter and they set the benchmark for *nasyid"* (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015). Raihan combined *nasyid* with percussion and there were questions surrounding why they did so. Nevertheless, this is what Raihan brought into the world of *nasyid* to bring more colour into the music. In the years 1995 and 1996, they rebranded the term '*nasyid'* to '*nasyid* contemporary'. In doing so, they brought something different to the table and won the hearts of many. The music style of modern contemporary 'coloured' Malaysian Islamic popular music because of the increase in the entry of new contemporary *nasyid* artists such as Inteam and UNIC. The demand for this type of music style led newcomers to follow the trend:

When the contemporary style of nasyid became popular, during the earlier stages, there were backlashes but, after a while, the masses began to accept the music. So, that was still considered nasyid. It was not determined by the characteristics of the music or genre. At that time, the demand for this style of music was great. Most nasyid artists just followed their lead. (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015)

5.3 UNIC introduces 'Fresh Pop Music' as Dakwah

According to Utusan Online (2002), UNIC preferred to be categorised as Kumpulan Group *Dakwah (see glossary)* or Modern Pop *Dakwah (see glossary)* Group instead of being referred

to as a *nasyid* group. For this reason, UNIC was well known as the 'Backstreet Boys of Malaysia' since they did not appear in traditional clothing, like the other *nasyid* groups, but in trendy Western-style clothes that conformed to Islamic propriety.

In the media, UNIC denied the assumption that they were trying to dissociate themselves from the general *nasyid* concept because the *nasyid* music was fading. Rather, they sought to infuse new strains of music into Islamic music. They wanted to breathe new life into *dakwah (see glossary)* songs, which could be delivered through modern pop music. The UNIC revolution was also highlighted in the newspaper, Sinar Harian. One of the group members, Fadzli from TV Hijrah (interviewed in 2016), had this to say to Norhidayyu Zaainal of Sinar Harian in 2013:

> *Before this, we brought more love-loving music styles but now we are turning to education. Besides entertaining, we have a message to share with the community. We are more mature in bringing this new concept such as pop modern because at the same time our ultimate aim is to educate people in general. After all, the revolution is also in line with our 11-year engagement period in art* (Sinar Harian 2013).

In order to explore further the musical style adopted by UNIC, the author solicited the opinions of 'music makers. According to Along Exist (interviewed in 2016), UNIC sparked an interest in contemporary *nasyid*. This group built their own identity in music by introducing instruments such as the guitar, live drums, and pop elements:

> *It (the nasyid world) was revolutionised because they started incorporating guitar instruments in nasyid songs, the first Malaysian nasyid group to do so. If I am not mistaken, it was for one of their albums.* (Along Exist, interviewed in 2016)

UNIC introduced a new approach by using a guitar in their performances. This had an impact on the Malaysian music industry. This strategy helped transform Islamic music into a contemporary style of music.



Figure 5.1: The Taylor 410 acoustic guitar might be the first guitar used in *nasyid* songs. Music arrangers used the keyboard (Korg Triton) in the early 2000s. Pictures courtesy of Along Exist (music arranger in Malaysia).[21]

Figure 5.1 depicts a Taylor 410 acoustic guitar and a Korg Triton keyboard used by music arrangers for the song entitled '*Jalinan dan Hanya tuhan yang tahu'* (Relationship and Only God knows). This picture was taken in ADA studio, located in Kuala Lumpur. In music production, those songs recorded by UNIC with the composer were the first examples of well-known Islamic music in Malaysia that used a live guitar and a drum kit in the music.

[21] Photo by author

5.4 Fusion Music – Synonymous with Rabbani Wave?

Azadan is a member of the *nasyid* group Rabbani, known as 'pure tones'. This group is important because they were prominent on the Malaysian music scene before Raihan, having recorded as many as 44 albums since 1986. Through their songs, Rabbani were able to stimulate contemplation on the true nature of life on earth, and the future, among their fans. Apart from beautifully presenting messages that were symbolic, Rabbani also diversified their song rhythms in various musical tastes in both Malay and Arabic, or in combinations of both. Apart from the classic *nasyid*, Rabbani included a variety of rhythms from the modern pop, elements of the *ular* folk song, and the Western concert style in their hymn songs. This illustrates how the *nasyid* rhythm became commercially viable (Utusan Melayu 2000). One of the musicians interviewed commented on this group thus:

> *The evolution occurred with Rabbani releasing a song produced by KRU. Even though, to me, this is not nasyid… it is something new… why not permit it? The lyrics are still religious. So, the genre is considered as pop nasyid or contemporary nasyid.* (Bazli of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

Another expert in the Malaysian music industry explained further:

> *Rabbani was originally associated with pop songs. But, over time, year after year, they tried to show something different and conducted trials and partnered with international artists who were known for their concepts of pop, R&B, rap, and so on, which have been well received. So, the songs are still labelled, or considered nasyid songs, or Islamic popular music tracks, because of the support by the players of nasyid, though in mixed music productions.* (Erwan of IKIM.FM, interviewed in 2016)

Along these lines, the author believes that the changes brought by Rabbani by their approaches in mixing and combining the various styles of music while keeping in line with the way of Islam, shows the positive progress of Islamic popular music. Rabbani also incorporated fusion

music in their performances (see examples of fusion music by Rabbani in subsection 5.7). In the discussion above regarding the revolution in the style of Islamic popular music, the author traced its development from the traditional to the contemporary, and then to fusion. The following discussion will elaborate how the transformation of the music style progressed further.

5.5 Musical transformation of the *nasyid* style

In general, audiences define the melody of *nasyid* as having a rhythm that characterises calm music, or even music that gives 'peace' to the listener. Based on the data gained from the interviews discussed previously, *nasyid* can be described as traditional or contemporary. In this section, the author will discuss three music styles, namely, traditional, contemporary, and fusion.

5.5.1 Traditional

In traditional music, the rhythmic recitation of the *Quran* (*Tarannum*), classical instruments and the acapella style are the main concepts. This was followed by the development of music into the contemporary style, which symbolises modern music accompanied by modern instruments. From time to time, fusion music takes place, aided by technology and globalisation.

5.5.1.1 Tarannum style in *nasyid*

Tarannum style was the foundational syle in Nasyid at the early stages (see also Chapter 2). Further investigation of Tarannum encouraged author to explore the different categories of Tarannum here: Tarannum Bayyati, Tarannum Soba, Tarannum Hijaz, Tarannum Nahwand,

Tarannum Rast, Tarannum Sikah, and Tarannum Jiharkah. Thus, the following table (Table 5.1) outlines all the *Tarannum* with a succinct summary of their characteristics.

Tarannum	**Characteristics**
Bayati	1. Gentleness or subtleness. 2. In accordance with simple *tobaqot* (stage by stage), harmony and peace. 3. Plays the role of strengthening the show.
Soba	1. Motion of light penetrating the soul, soft melancholic tunes. 2. In accordance with simple *tobaqot* simple, in accordance with begging, pleading and moaning. 3. Provides a sense of calm and tranquillity and a soothing offering. 4. Could bring out results with a good impact including humility and repentance.
Hijjaz	1. Slow motion but effective. 2. Form of assertiveness, encouragement, agility to turn on the show, be compatible with any *tobaqot*. 3. In accordance with a command, being stern or angry. 4. Provides encouragement to the show, and provides enough satisfaction to both readers and listeners. 5. Demonstrates assertiveness in the message of the Quran
Nahward	1. Polite, the finesse of art, ideally enthralling people, and suitable to simple t*obaqot*. 2. Performs a smooth reading, soothes the soul of the reader and listener. 3. In accordance with paragraphs and storytelling 4. May also cause *fasohah (see glossary) (smooth)* art Quran.
Rast	1. Comprises soft motions in its delivery but keeps the firmness in the sound.

	2. Formed as strains, compatible with any *tobaqot*. 3. Suitable to be applied with any verse. 4. Provide encouragement to the show, displaying energy to the next Tarannum, bestowing satisfaction to the reader and listener.
Sikah	1. Slow motion, convincing, tenderness of a pierced heart, features sadness and begging. 2. According to the verses, pleading, begging, and whimpering, compatible with any *tobaqot*. 3. Sound that is performed to soften the show, satisfying the reader and listener, and conveying strong focus and conviction.
Jihakah	1. Easily spotted as it is performed using effective light in the delivery, exhibits tenderness and harmony, and is also in accordance with simple *tobaqot*. 2. Seen as calming tensions in offerings, serves to soften the show, bringing conviction in the delivery of the sound of the music itself.

Table 5.1: Characteristics of *Tarannum* (adapted from Hassan Maliji 2007)

In 2006, the group *Fareast* (pronounced Far-East) produced an album titled Halawatul Iman (The sweetness of Iman) with eleven tracks. These songs included 4 out of the 7 Tarranum styles in their musical form: *Bayati, Hijjaz, Nahward* and *Rast*. For example, in the song *Ahlan bina*[22] (Welcoming Prophet *Muhammad*), they used Tarannum *nahward* and *hijjaz* to structure their singing style. According to one of the group members, Nabil Ahmad (interviewed in

[22] Song Ahlan Bina from Fareast nasyid group link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6rlPNH4Hpg

2019), this was the first full album of nasyid in Malasyia that drew so heavily on tradional nasyid by using Tarannum as the main musical feature.

5.5.2 Classical musical instruments

In order to describe the traditional music style, the author provides a few examples of songs that could expand understanding on this topic. A discussion bolstered by relevant examples and explanations regarding the instruments used, can lead to a better understanding of these classical instruments. The first song highlighted is 'Puji-Pujian (see footnote).'[23]

> *This is something very beautiful in terms of success in preaching, to a point where even non-Muslims were humming or singing songs, such as the Syahadah, from the album Puji-Pujian. This is what happened. It was the first wave. It helped nasyid to flourish and receive tremendous recognition in society. People started seeing nasyid as a phenomenon.* (Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016)

The puji-pujian song was said to be a *nasyid* phenomenon and this is why the author has chosen to analyse this song. The analysis reveals that Raihan uses a very traditional sound in terms of instruments in that it uses the *kompang* in the beginning part of the song. Generally, the *kompang,* as shown in figure 5.2, is a Malay traditional instrument that produces two types of sounds, specifically, those that go '*pak'* and '*bung'*. Throughout the song, Raihan uses only the *kompang* as their main instrument and includes the tambourine in order to invest the song

[23]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLU2RNcgeyk&list=PLxj0975UZejs_hgSKt4hJRwY52dQqQo0C&index=5.

with a more traditional style. However, the bongo and the shaker are introduced after 02 minutes and 37 seconds into the song.



Figure 5.2: Kompang [24]

According to Ismail, Arif, Yahya, Siswanto and Nawi (2015), the *kompang* is a traditional musical percussion instrument that can produce sound when the constrained membrane is beaten with the palm of a hand. The membrane that covers the traditional *kompang* is made of either goat or cow skin, while the frame is made of wood. Rattan tie is used to secure the membrane onto the frame. The *kompang* is a musical instrument that has long been part of traditional culture practiced in some states in Malaysia when celebrating the brides in wedding ceremonies. The unique sound of the *kompang* played in an assembly creates a joyful and happy environment in the wedding ceremony. The rhythm is almost the same as traditional music and it is usually played by a group of people.

[24] Photo by author

Thus, in this discussion, one *nasyid* artist interested in this topic states: *'Traditional music is arranged based on traditional Malay instruments such as the kompang (*Fuad Priakustik. Interviewed in 2015*).* This respondent believes that there is a strong relationship between the *kompang* and traditional style music, in which *kompang* plays a central role in producing the related rhythm (commonly Malay rhythm), the traditional sound and ambience. Another *nasyid* artist, Hazamin, from Inteam (interviewed in 2015), gave similar input about the use of the *kompang: 'So this is what we know of percussion. There was more influence from Malay rhythmic styles of music during the earlier years as we used a lot of the kompang, and it was used as the primary traditional instrument'.*

Based on the investigation of the Puji-Pujian song, other than the *kompang*, the instruments used were the tambourine, the bongo and the shaker. This discussion explains these supporting instruments used in the making of this song. The tambourine is an instrument that can be held in the hand or mounted on a stand, and can be played in numerous ways, such as stroking the jingles, shaking the jingles, or striking the jingles sharply with the hand.



Figure 5.3: Raihan used the tambourine their song Puji-pujian. (Photo by author)

From the interviews, the author learned that traditional Islamic music also used other percussion instruments to produce Malay rhythms. According to Suhaimee Ahmad (2009), Malay rhythms included *'Rentak Asli', 'Rentak Inang', 'Rentak Zapin' and 'Rentak Masri'. 'Rentak Asli'* is a soft rhythm that is easy on the ears and readily enjoyed by the people. *'Rentak Inang'* was widely used in old songs, but could be accommodated into the rhythm of new

songs. Occasionally in *'Lagu Asli'* songs, this rhythm would be used to change the mood of the song. *'Rentak Zapin*' is well known in Johor[25] because of its *Zapin* dance. This rhythm is familiar to the people in Middle Eastern countries. *'Rentak Masri'* is generally used in exceptionally rhythmic songs and *nasyid* songs. These rhythms are widely used to structure traditional melodies supported by traditional instruments. The following illustrations by Suhaimi Ahmad (2016)[26] describe the structure of these rhythms.

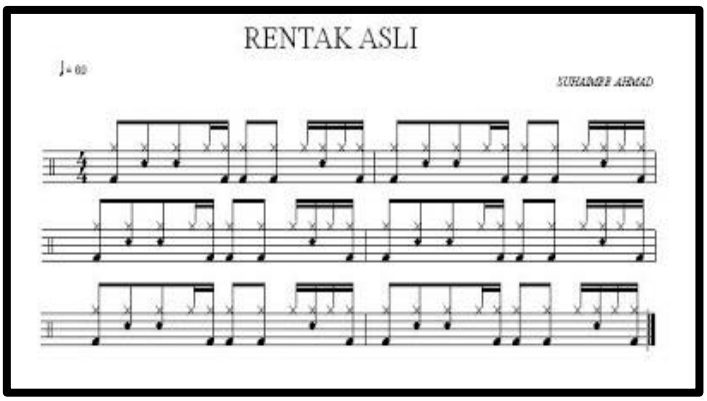


Figure 5.4: Asli rhythm by Suhaimi Ahmad
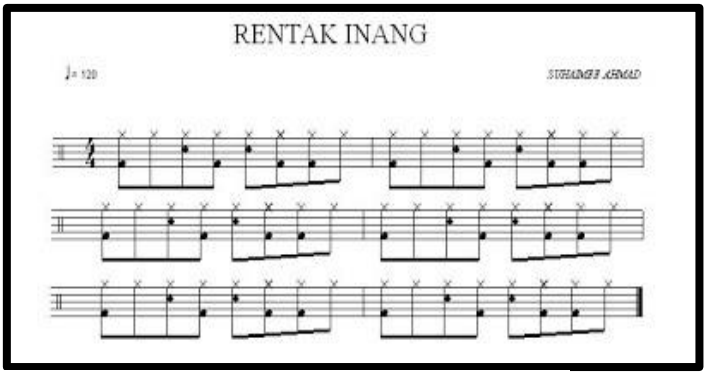


Figure 5.5: Inang rhythm by Suhaimi Ahmad

[25]Southern state in peninsular Malaysia
[26] The illustrations by Suhaimi Ahmad for figures 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 are from http://malaysiadrummerzone.blogspot.co.uk/2009/09/rentak-melayu-tradisional-drumset.html (accessed on 13th February 2016)

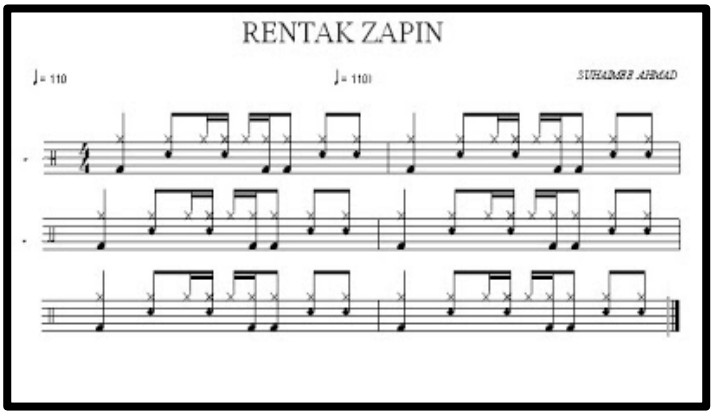


Figure 5.6: Zapin rhythm by Suhaimi Ahmad
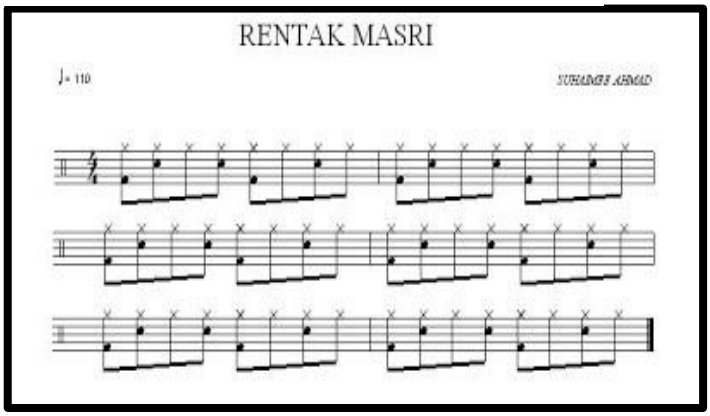


Figure 5.7: Masri rhythm by Suhaimi Ahmad

To return to the 'Puji-pujian' song, the bongo[27] , which is heard after 2 minutes and 37 seconds into the song, is a percussion instrument that consists of a pair of small open-bottomed drums of different sizes, as shown in figure 5.9. The conga[28] , as shown in Figure 5.8, is a tall, narrow and single-headed drum.

[27]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9gzjPLh-IA.
[28]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKMVLKmgxAw.



Figure 5.8: Conga (Photo by author)



Figure 5.9: Bongo (Photo by author)

In addition to these, they use several ‘toys’ such as shakers, at this same point of the song. A shaker (figure 5.10) is a percussion instrument used for creating rhythm. They are called shakers because the method of creating the sound involves shaking them — moving them back and forth rather than striking them. They may also be struck for a greater accent on certain beats. One of the most recognisable of the percussion instruments in this family are the maracas, a pair of rattles made from gourds. The maracas are often found in South American orchestras and bands, and many other musical forms have adopted the rhythm of the maracas. The maracas are usually oval or egg-shaped as shown in Figure 5.11.



Figure 5.10: Shaker normally used by percussion[29]



Figure 5.11: Maracas egg[30]

In detailing the 'Puji-pujian'[31] song, the author also wishes to examine the vocals. Raihan used several types of vocals in this recording. For example, at 01 minute 49 seconds into the song, they put a second voice into lead vocal and add a third voice to give weight in the back up vocal at 02 minutes 17 seconds. What is interesting in this song is that Raihan put some 'padding' by using their voice as back-up vocal sounds such as 'huuuuuuuuu… haaaaaaa' and put several layers of this to form the technique of harmonising.

The chief focus of this discussion is to consider the music style and instrumentation in 'Puji-pujian'. Percussion is commonly used in this type of music production to reference

[29] Photo from https://derringers.com.au/latin-percussion-lp-rock-shaker-gold
[30] https://www.didgeridoobreath.com/Egg-Shakers-Percussion-Instruments-p/egg-shaker.htm
[31]https:/www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLU2RNcgeyk&list=PLxj0975UZejs_hgSKt4hJRwY52dQqQo0C&index=5.

traditional instruments and styles. In the early stage of this musical evolution, the makers claimed that this type of instrument was used to the identity the music as Islamic popular music; these instruments were used widely in related performances at Islamic events too. This point was argued by Hafiedz Udu (interviewed in 2016), who believes that traditional percussion instruments such as the Gendang and the Rebana are always be used to accompany *Selawat*, *Zkir* or any other related godly songs:

*I noticed in nasyid that they used the 'Gendang'. To my mind, the gendang was used a long time ago when we did not have the 'Rebana' and it was very widely used in Sarawak. They used the rebana together with 'Selawat', 'Zikr' and the songs that praise Allah. (*Hafiedz Udu, interviewed in 2016*)*



Figure 5.12: Rebana is a type of traditional instrument (Photo by author)

The author agrees with this statement based on his own personal experiences. The wide use of the gendang and the rebana as percussion led musicians to explore further regarding the rhythm. As argued by one of the respondents,

> *The kompang was commonly used for Malay style and it was only later that we added the use of the conga and the table, which produced Latin sounds. Then we were exposed to the darbuka later on, which has Arab-like musical sounds and rhythm. (*Hazamin from Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015*).*

This respondent also put forward a similar argument on the uses of percussion instruments in order to help produce various rhythms, by considering the type of instruments used. Rhythms of Malay, Latin and Arabic music could be produced as part of the traditional music style of Islamic popular music. Other than the *gendang* and the *rebana*, the *darbuka*, as shown in Figure 5.13, also plays a role in helping generate rhythm in the traditional style, especially when deploying elements of the Latin style within the recording.



Figure 5.13: Darbuka[32]

[32] Photo from https://www.amazon.com/EGYPTIAN-DARBUKA-DRUM-DOUMBEK-TOMBAK/dp/B019ZPBBMG

5.5.3 A capella Style

Another example of a song that illustrates the characteristics of traditional music is the 'A capella' style. This discussion aims to analyse the contrasting music styles and instruments used within this style. The section uses the song *Kenangan* (Memory) by the group Saujana, as a case study of traditional music.[33] Saujana produced the song and the lyrics, but Telaga Biru holds the copyright of the song.

The introduction and spread of Islamic popular music led *nasyid* artists to improvise music styles. A capella in *nasyid* in Malaysia is common. This song is highly suitable to demonstrate the organisation of the vocals since no instruments are used. Only the vocals are used to organise the music.

Kenangan appeared on the album *Keluarga Bahagia* (Happy Family) (1997). In analysing the song, it can be seen that it starts with back-up vocals in unison voice after which a layer of 2nd voice and bass voice are put into the mix. Then comes the lead vocal, which continues to be supported by back-up vocals. After 31 seconds into the song, they use unison, 3rd, bass and falsetto in their back-up vocals behind the lead vocal. Most of the makers believe that the traditional music style of acapella is very simple, as is evident in this example,

> *The one who introduced the harmonies technique was the group named 'The Zikr' because, at the time, Farihin Abd. Fatah (nasyid producer) started installing harmonies, similar to gospel singing, into the group in Acapella style. This harmonizing technique is applied in zikr, selawat and other Islamic related songs. (*Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016*)*

[33] The video of this song can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kpt0269lpEg&index=7&list=PLxj0975UZejs_hgSKt4hJRwY52dQqQo0C.

The acapella style is also widely used in entertainment in the international music industry. Gospel acapella is extremely popular. According to Mudimbe (2012), gospel music production has become a booming industry for the youth, especially in Kenya. Generally, gospel music is a genre within Christian music. It is music composed and performed for many purposes, including aesthetic pleasure, religious and ceremonial purposes, and as entertainment products sold in the marketplace. Gospel music commonly has dominant vocals with the strong use of harmony and Christian lyrics. In *naysid*, similar forms of acapella are used to communicate Islamic themes. We can see these similarities in the analysis of 'kenangan', which, though it is performed in a traditional acapella style, is still part of Islamic popular music, in contrast to 'Puji-pujian', of the previous analysis, which used musical instruments.

Thus, this discussion has demonstrated that, during the early stage of Islamic poular music, the dominant style of music was the style of the Tarannum, which is defined as a musical piece that varies according to vocal tone and rhythm. In addition, the author highlighted several types of instruments used in the traditional music style of nasyid. These include the kompang, the tambourine, and several percussion instruments, namely, the gendang, the rebana, and the darbuka. The discussion then rounded off with the explanation regarding the place of vocals in the acapella style to illustrate the sounds of this traditional style of Islamic popular music.

5.6 Contemporary

In the Malaysian music industry, contemporary music has been known as modern music or music which is an updated version of various styles such as *Ballad, Dangdut, Pop Music, Rock, Irama Malaysia, Jazz* and *Soul*. In contrasting traditional music with contemporary music, one *nasyid* artist argues as below:

> *During the early rise of nasyid in Malaysia, we could see that performers only used their voices with acapella, kompang and percussion. As time passed, the piano started dominating the music scene, and nasyid developed positively. Instruments actually help in terms of creating the feeling of a song. The piano is used to play the soft melody whereas drums create enthusiasm. Therefore, if these instruments are wrongly placed in a song, the message will not get across. If it is a religious song and it is rushed with too many beats, it will lose its direction and the strength of the lyrics will weaken. Personally, I think that nasyid songs with religious lyrics should possess strong wordings and melody supported by the music with instruments such as the guitar. There are various ways to play the guitar. Some play it instrumentally, the acoustic guitar is soft in sound, and there is the electric guitar. There are other instruments, too, that suit this genre. (*Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016*)*

The respondent admitted that at the early stage of Islamic music, the use of vocals and the *kompang* was common among musicians and artists. The choice of a diversity of instruments led to some changes in Islamic music, which, in turn, led to the development of contemporary music. He also added that the instruments should be used in suitable places in the song to synchronise it with the lyrics and communicate the intended message.

Singer Fakhrul from UNIC (interviwed in 2015) mentioned that, at the early stage of Islamic popular music, there were no contemporary songs such as Al-Suraya, Selimut Putih, and others. The main sound or music was traditional music. He related this to history, specifically to when Islam was spread by Arab traders, who brought their culture along with

them. At that time, the music changed in tandem with culture. As time passed, improvements in sound quality and musical features were influenced by other elements of the environment and all of this helped to produce new forms of music known as contemporary music.

Other people involved in the music industry in Malaysia also believe that improvements have occurred in music production, especially in composition and arrangement. Hence, according to another respondent, Faiz of IKIM (interviewed in 2015), the deveopment of sound quality and musical techniques in Islamic music could be distinctly heard in contemporary music styles such as Ballad, Rock and, even, Dangdut, which was quite popular back in the 1990s. Now the music has evolved following the trends and demands of fans.

Traditional and contemporary *nasyid* have always been classified when that *nasyid* referred to the type of music it presented. One of the pioneers in Malaysia, Ito Lara (interviewed in 2015), provided this understanding to help define those two different forms of music. He prefers the original (traditional) form of music. He stated that traditional *nasyid,* performed in traditional musical styles, was beautiful because of the originality of the sound itself, with the music based on the *Tarannum* and the rhythms following line by line. He also explained that improvements in the music and the emergence of contemporary music styles such as *nasyid* in pop or ballad, demonstrated something good, the range of quality in the Islamic music industry. He believes that Islamic popular music will be sustained and reach new heights in the music industry in Malaysia with this creative approach by modernising Islamic popular music or even revitalising the music to be more current and in line with the other popular genres in Malaysia.

One of the experts in music arrangements in Malaysia, (Along Exist, interviewed in 2016), argued that the changes in music production from traditional to contemporary should also consider fusion music. He believes that healthy competition among musicians has fostered growth and promoted improvements in music production: ‘The music has developed and

changed'. From a different angle, he opined that the audience would not get bored with what they were listening to and that they would easily accept Islamic popular music in Malaysia. He looked back upon his 15-year involvement and experience in the Islamic popular music industry, i.e. since 2001, when UNIC cut their first album. By looking at his early involvement in Islamic popular music, we can see how he adjusted his music composition and arrangement styles. He implemented this strategy with the group UNIC as UNIC used contemporary music in their first album to introduce themselves to the people. He also believed that this phenomenon would allow people to hear a larger scope of Islamic popular music in the future.

> *I have faced a situation whereby, it was either the second or the third album, DambaKasih, I had already prepared the songs, but then I found out from Isman InTeam that they did not want piano in their songs. So, it was Isman, who revolutionised the nasyid world because he started incorporating the guitar in nasyid songs, if I'm not mistaken, for UNIC's album. He made that [guitar] opening and he told me to do whatever I felt like doing and not feel as if nasyid restricted me in any way. It was a positive change, which allowed people to hear a greater variety of Godly songs and expand the nasyid fan base.* (Along Exist, interviewed in 2016)

He mentioned above that contemporary music embodied positive change, which attracted people to listen to a larger variety of religious songs and expand the *nasyid* fanbase. Generally, several genres can be classified as contemporary music, but the most prominent, perhaps, is the ballad. Ballad or sentimental music has its own identity. A ballad song could be a song that tells a story, which can be dramatic, funny or even romantic in order to convey the message of the song. Nowadays, *nasyid* in Malaysia also derives inspiration from ballad music since the demand for contemporary music has been highlighted in the music arena.

Pop music is commonly adopted from Western countries. The concept centres on accompaniment played with electronic instruments, and this style is easy to enjoy due to the

short duration of the songs, strong beats and catchy melodies. Pop music is also performed in a simple rhythm, which is easy to remember. As stated early on in this chapter, this genre can also be classified as Pop Music. Along Exist (Pop-rock music arranger, who has close personal and work relations with many nasyid groups in Malaysia) supports this point by mentioning that he could see the wide range of production styles in popular Islamic music. The previous discussion clearly showed that *Tarannum* and Arab desert music were alive in the 1990s. The presence of Raihan before *Nada Murni* (pioneer of the Nasyeed group) brought *nasyid* into the contemporary fold when it was also mixed up with the pop genre (the contemporary song will be used as example in this section as well). From his point of view, their style changed and became modern because of the preference of the people and culture in Malaysia. This attracted listener and encouraged them to accept Islamic music.

Dangdut is also a well-known style in contemporary music. This type of music arose in the mid-20th century, from the ideas of young musicians of urban Indonesia, who actually derived their inspiration from Malay, Hindustani, and Arabic music. At some point in time, dangdut music was used as a tool to spread and communicate Islamic teachings and messages. Another form of contemporary music is Rock, which has major influences from the blues, rhythm and blues, and country music. This music centred on electric guitar as the primary musical concept. In Malaysia, Irama Malaysia, also known as ethnic music, is a branch of contemporary music that has been easily accepted by listeners due to the attractive features of the music and performance style.

Music produced by *nasyid* groups such as UNIC, Rabbani, Nowseeheart, and Mestica employ all of these styles within their contemporary Islamic popular music recordings. These *nasyid* groups bring something new to Islamic popular music. Azadan from the *nasyid* group Rabbani (interviewecd in 2015) argued that Islamic popular music is universal. Some people sing ballads, pop and even Irama Malaysia, but they all give importance to the concept of God,

and so their songs can still be called Islamic songs even though they present a new type of contemporary music. Apart from *nasyid* singers, other local artists from other genres such as Siti Nurhaliza, Nora, Ramli Sarip and Jamal Abdillah also deliver Islamic popular music for divine songs. This proves that Islamic popular music does not have to be represented only in *Tarannum* or *berzanj*i styles (Quran rhythms), but can also be performed in other ways to attract fans from different backgrounds. Another respondent agreed that Islamic popular music presented a new, contemporary musical style:

> *Back then (in the 1990s), the mindset of people was normally "you can't do this and you can't do that," but now we can do anything. All instruments are allowed and we can even live stream the music. For instance, Maher Zain brought a huge change to Malaysia. From Maher Zain came Maulid with R&B styles; only then were they brave enough to do so. If not for Maher Zain, [Maulid] would have feared to coming out with such a genre. They said so themselves. Thus, nasyid music is actually tied to the traditional style, in terms of instruments and arrangement. Traditional means following the style during the time of Arkam. It has not been that long though, only 15 years or so. UNIC was actually the spark of contemporary nasyid, and the ones to include instruments such as the guitar, live drums, and pop elements. It is something to be proud of. Then with this style came Devotees and I was also involved with Devotees.* (Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016)

These comprehensive statements from various people that are involved in the Malaysian music industry create an assumption regarding the transformation of the Islamic popular music style in Malaysia. The evolution of musical style from traditional to contemporary music was improvised and, somewhat haphazard, in Islamic popular music in Malaysia.

A song in the style of modern acapella is 'AinulMardiah' (Cover version released in 2017 by Identity).[34] This song provides a great example of modern acapella. Modern acapella

[34] This song can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qj1uYwgTa4Y&list=PLxj0975UZejs_hgSKt4hJRwY52dQqQo0C&index=8.

is not performed as simple or common acapella. More organised vocals are the main concept of this style of music arrangement. In this song, they organise the vocal arrangement differently from traditional acappela (which was discussed in the previous section); the analysis shows the creative touch applied in the modern style. The point that draws much interest to this type of song is the use of 'beatbox' in replacement of live instruments. This beatbox represents several instruments such as drums, bass, shakers as well as other percussion instruments. In this song, modern acapella is also mixed together with vocal back up such as 'huuuuu...haaaaaa....' and a layer of harmonising remains. The lead singer sings the song with an extra touch in a little bit more modern style as this can be seen after 01 minute 25 seconds into the song, using a distinct R&B style.

When compared with the acapella forms delivered in traditional style, discussed in the previous section, it is clear that there is a difference in the music style and musical instruments used. The author compares those two songs as they are both acapella but a transformation is evident in the Ainul Mardhiah version performed by Identity. The R&B music style and the use of the 'Beatbox', in place of live musical instruments, are the two main reasons why the Ainul Mardhiah version is classified as modern acapella.

Another song that illustrates the different types of contemporary music in Islamic popular music in Malaysia is '*Jalinan*' (Relationship) by UNIC, produced and written by Isman Hijjaz. Hijjaz Record holds the copyright for this song, and the song can be found in the album *You and I See* (2002).[35] UNIC was the first group to use guitar in *nasyid* songs. This sparked a debate in the Muslim community as to whether the instrument was permissible or forbidden. After referring to the opinions of a few experts in Islamic law, the group decided that the guitar

[35] This song can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5yJC7cZX8I&list=PLxj0975UZejs_hgSKt4hJRwY52dQqQo0C&index=6.

could be used as long as the artist and the lyrics present a religious and good social message. The arranger and rock musician, Along, produced this song, and according to him:

> *As I recall, I have been involved since 2001… from UNIC's first album until now. This means that I have been in the nasyid world and in Islamic popular music in Malaysia for 15 years. I have been involved with all the nasyid artists in Malaysia. With regard to music, as a musician, I need to be brave and try something new.* (Along EXIST, interviewed in 2016)

'Jalinan' uses live drums, live acoustic guitar, and live tambourine, and, after 46 seconds into the song, Along (name of music arranger) introduces keyboard padding to support the melody. In terms of vocal arrangements, this group only used a lead singer for vocals, multilayered back-up vocals by using unison and 2nd voice only, and put some ad libs in after 02 minutes and 44 seconds into the song.

The data from the discussion shows that this song embodies the growth of music style when compared with the traditional *nasyid* style. The difference can especially be seen in the instruments used. The factors of creativity and music enthusiasts who demand a new approach, led this type of contemporary song to easily capture the interest of audiences. The significant changes associated with the introduction of musical instruments such as live drums and acoustic guitar presented a type of music in a modern style. Here we see how globalisation encouraged makers and *nasyid* artists to explore new styles, thus keeping abreast of musical developments in the wider world.

5.7 Fusion

Fusion music provides the opportunity for many different styles to be fused, even within a single recording or composition. Fusion music combines two or more genres of music. Over

time, 'fusion' music has been re-defined. Ivy presents the example of rock and roll, which was originally developed as a fusion of blues, gospel and country music (Ivy 2013). As also been describe by Fuad Priakustik (interviewed in 2015):

> *"Fusion is music genre that is developed by combining harmony and improvisation that been made to that music"*

As explained by Fuad (interviewed in 2015) as he is also involved in music arrangement in Malaysia' music industry, he found that fusion basically forms as music in subgenres that combined music.

> *I was able to create something new, a new sound, sound effects and new instrument, so we have to actually follow the global music trend. When there's something new, we need to update our software, sound, and instrument. It is very important because if we use old instruments, we can use old ideas but we have to incorporate new touch to make it feel new.* (Along Exist, interviewed in 2016)

Some argue that it is a good strategy to explore fusion music to uplift *nasyid* music or popular Islamic music because this will lead *nasyid* artists to be versatile and not be tied to one style:

> *It's been 15 years since I've been involved in the Islamic popular music industry. I have changed a lot. Back then you can't do this, you can't do that, but now we can do anything. All instruments are allowed, we can even live stream it and mix music. For instance, Maher Zain came to Malaysia and it brought a huge change in Malaysia. From Maher Zain came Maulid with R&B mode, only then they were brave enough to do so. (*Along Exist, interviewed in 2016)

He adds:

> *There are elements of old school percussion, Arab sound of masri and I mixed it with dance music because I've always wanted to try that for a long time. Before this I only did nasyid pop with elements of pop dance.*

As combining genres takes place in the Malaysian music industry as described by the respondent above, this new phenomenon has been followed by popular Islamic music. The best example of a *nasyid* group that is involved in fusion is the Rabbani Group.

> *Evolution in new music occurred with Rabbani releasing a song produced by KRU. Even though to me, this is not nasyid, but why not do so as it is something new in combining music style? The lyrics are still religious. So, the genre is still 'nasyid'.* (Azadan of Rabbani, interviewed in 2015)

The respondent expresses that Rabbani brought something new to Islamic popular music by producing an album with fusion music. This group courageously stands with this type of music in order to present better music to the people. The author believes that suitability and creativity are important factors that need to be considered in dealing with Islamic popular music in Malaysia because the listeners are seeking better quality results. Thus, the improvisation of musical style aids the international popularity of *naysid*.

In this section, the author provides examples of songs that could provide a better understanding of this type of musical style. Rabbani is the best example of this, and the song chosen for analysis is *'Intifada'* (see footnote).[36]

Fusion, here, refers to a combination of traditional and modern styles of singing or instruments. In this song, Rabbani introduced a new type of *nasyid* song style. In the instrumental selection, Rabbani uses a very virtual or digital sound of music. This was very new at that time as *nasyid* songs were known to be played by using percussions and keyboards only. From 00 minutes and 01 seconds until 00 minutes and 06 second they use digital sound.

[36] Further information on this interesting song can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QuwwlEj1GYE&list=PLxj0975UZejs_hgSKt4hJRwY5.

In 00 minutes, 07 seconds they start the traditional gamelan sound of '*Bonang'* and after a few second in the minutes of 00 and 14 seconds they put effect of train sound. Bonang is a musical instrument used in Javanese gamelan. It is a set of small gongs placed horizontally onto strings in a wooden frame. In the Central Javanese gamelan, the gongs are mounted in two parallel rows on a wooden frame. There are three sizes of these gongs, and they are played with two beaters, normally in octaves, often anticipating the basic melodic phrases.

Once again at 00 minute and 16 seconds Rabbani incorporates the sound of *'serunai/nafiri'* and '*Kompang*'. Based on Senin (2010), Serunai is a traditional earophonic instrument that is widely used by the Minang people. Not to miss, at 00 minute and 41 seconds they include digital music sounds similar to Disc Jockey (DJ) sound mixing effects and after the mix of modern and traditional instruments, at 02 minute and 37 seconds until 02 minute and 53 seconds, they stopped playing modern instruments and play the traditional instruments such as tambourine, shaker and rebana and sound of small gong.

In terms of the vocal arrangement, in the 00 minute and 23 seconds the lead singer and the backup vocal use of the traditional style of singing by using one of the 7 *Tarannum* which is 'Bayati'. Between 01 minute and 03 seconds and at 01 minute and 37 seconds, they coincide the 2nd back up vocal into the lead singer. The traditional way of backing up vocals for *nasyid* songs are still there at 01 minute and 49 seconds by using back up and ad-lib style. Just in the minutes of 02 and 37 seconds until at 02 minute and 53 seconds they use the lead singer and melody back up to 'huuuuhaaaaaa...' by backup singer as a padding (melody). This mix of modern and traditional vocal arrangements and musical arrangements has made Rabbani a pioneer of fusion style of *nasyid* songs.

This 'Intifada' song shows a variety of sounds and instruments used by combining traditional and contemporary styles together in one song. Thus, the author has demonstrated

how fusion music transpires in popular Islamic music. In the context of fusion music, another song which illustrates the characteristics of fusion is Ainul Mardiah (2017) by UNIC.[37] The song composed by Munif Hijjaz with lyrics by Ito Lara. The song is a new version of Ainul Mardiah compared to its original version from 2002. The song conveys the story of how one has to struggle in life to be successful, thus the reward will be gifted by the angel of heaven named as Ainul Mardiah. This new version consists of traditional and contemporary elements which led it to be classified as fusion. In this song, the mixing of *Tarannum Bayyati* from traditional music illustrates the flexibility of traditional music and potential for it to be mixed with other genres.

In term of the musical arrangement, UNIC put some effects in the 00 minute and 06 seconds until 00 minute and 15 seconds and in the minutes of 00 and 10 seconds until 01minutes and 00 seconds where there are music compositions associated with the violin. From 01 minute and 00 second until the end, they include keyboard, bass guitar, drum, violin, strumming guitar and lead guitar. When considering the music arrangement for this song, they tried to bring about a very modern style but, in terms of vocal arrangement, they used both traditional and modern styles of singing. This is evident between 00 minute and 15 seconds until 01 minute and 07 seconds, where they use the Tarannum style of singing. They also combine the style of singing which can be observed from 03 minute and 56 seconds to 04 minute and 02 seconds where they added some effective 'auto tune' to sound in a modern style. This finding has helped to prove the existence of combinations of music style and shows how they encompass traditional and modern styles of arrangements which portrays a new approach towards popular Islamic music.

[37] This song can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pr28Hov5XfY&list=PLxj0975UZejs_hgSKt4hJRwY52dQqQo0C&index=9.

In the modern era, music has grown so rapidly, raising all sorts of questions about the music. For musical instruments, the electronic keyboard introduced the piano as another phenomenon in the music industry. The piano has been used frequently in popular contemporary Islamic music which most scholars believe attracts more audiences to this sort of music. This is argued by Azalino from Universal Music (interviewed in 2015):

> *It's just nasyid before 1997 is synonymous with solely percussion. So the guitars and strings were not used until later. Piano was then introduced and all were unimaginable to nasyid artists prior to that stage, until later when other nasyid groups came along and improvised with these instruments. Now, it's more acceptable to perform nasyid with various instruments other than just percussion*.

The arrival and growth of popular Islamic music in the mainstream commercial market opened the eyes of a new generation to the potential of this form of music. Creativity and better music production techniques have been necessary to combine this music with other genres in the Malaysian music industry. Apart from the introduction of musical instruments such as the piano, there are also musical instruments that use computer systems such as Minus One that is used in contemporary *nasyid* songs. Minus One provides complete music production either in cassettes or CDs and is commonly used now. By using this type of technology, flexible and modern music production can be produced.

The development of our music industry has encouraged people to get involved and seek better strategies for music production. This situation was described by Along from Exist (interviewed in 2016) when discussing aspects of technology in music production:

I received a lot of songs from new composers. Their taste is different, and it influenced my taste. I was able to create something new, to follow global musical trends. When there's something new, we need update our software, sound, instruments. It's very important because if we use old instruments, we have to incorporate new touches to make it feel new. I also use this strategy to produce 'quality' songs. As a musician, we have to be open to it. It's good that we explore, change nasyid music or Islamic popular music so that we're not tied to just one style.

He adds:

> *Your creativity needs to be fresh. Another instrument that's considered new is more to VST, which means virtual. Virtual meaning that it's digital. Sometimes these digital sounds are great but it's not really needed in nasyid to use too much because it can disrupt the feelings or the mellow soft mood that we want to create.*

Here, the development in technology ensures the sustenance and growth of Islamic music together with other music genres. The growth in technology has not only introduced guitars, keyboards and other related instruments; but technology has also stimulated the birth of new instruments such as Virtual Studio Technology (VST). VST is a software interface used by music producers to integrate software audio synthesisers and effect plug-ins with audio editors and recording systems. As Tanev (2013) observes, music production in the 21st century is heavily based on the use of high-performance computer-based systems and the increasing production of software applications that provide high quality digital sound processing capable of pristinely emulating high-end hardward used in the music industry throughout history. Thus, in 1996 Steinberg announced the VST interface specification which allowed a new breed of software developers to recreate bulky effects units as VST plugins. This development permitted a complete studio to be created through computer software.

Advancements in the music industry has led to the improvement of well-known Islamic music production techniques, and also in the melody, rhythm and instruments used. In the 1990s, gendang and *kompang* were widely used in Islamic songs especially in the traditional style of production. With the growth in the music industry in the 21st century, fusion music compositions portrayed positive advancements in music production techniques. The characteristics of fusion music are summarised in Figure 5.14

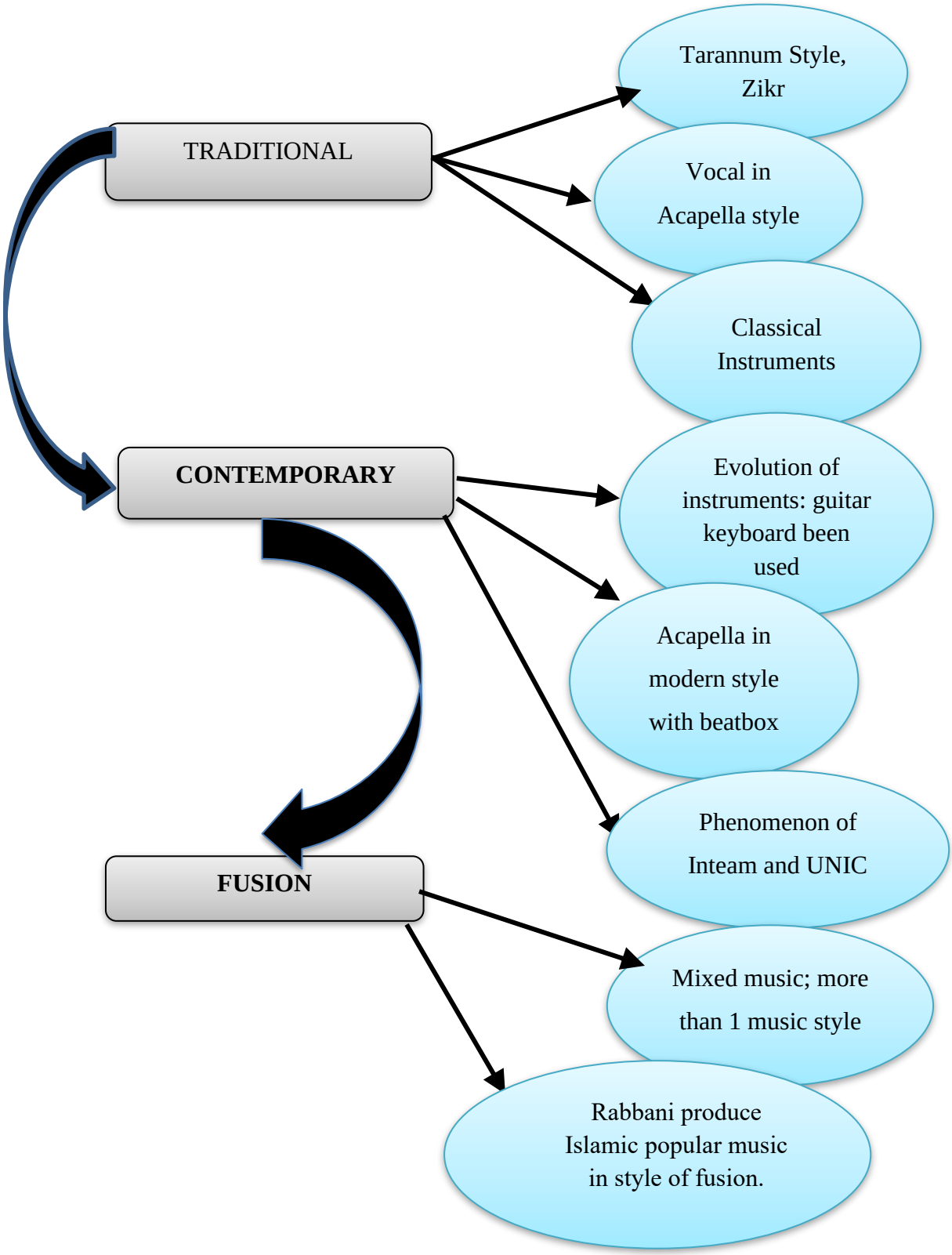


Figure 5.14: Summary of Islamic popular music styles

As can be seen from figure 5.14, popular Islamic music can be performed in traditional, contemporary, or even fusion styles as this been proved music transformation in period of time with the help of various instruments, these music styles have been meeting the demands of the fans. Some the scholars and musicians interviewed here provided their opinions on string instruments. This sparked various arguments among makers. Certain progressive uses by Islamic media organisations of forms of modern music or even musical instruments are considered impermissible in Islam by some (al-Faruqi 1985). Al-Faruqi (1985) suggests that many scholars judge the following types of equipment positively and explain that it is legal to play them: (i) *Hanbali*. Any musical instrument that sounded like a flute and stringed guitar and others. (ii) *Shafiesect*. All stringed instruments, wind and all musical instruments except drums hammered. Flute and guitar as well as others. (iii) *Maliki*. Using musical instruments like the guitar string and others. (iv) *Hanafi*. All kinds of musical instruments except drums.

In order to scrutinise the issue further, the author examined the opinions of makers. As Fuad Priakustik (interviewed in 2015) explained:

> *There were also issues with the guitar being forbidden, instruments with strings being forbidden and flute-like instruments being forbidden. So, this is my opinion based on my research and what I have read. There are no strong or clear dalil (rules) that say instruments with strings or any instruments are forbidden. It's khilaf (wrong) because, based on a lot of what I read, it's not forbidden.*

Idzwan from UUM (interviewed in 2016) argues similarly:

> *In terms of the structure of music or musical instruments, there are many different opinions, but I am no expert to discuss this matter. Although some say that string-based instruments are not allowed and so on, but the issue is debatable and it's not my responsibility to decide whether it is allowed or not, but as a music practitioner I believe that it is! It depends on individuals' opinion, as well as experts. So, my basic conclusion is that I do not have a defined term for Islamic popular music. Once we label Islamic popular music, people will be like it has to be like this, so it has to be like that.*

Concerning the issue of stringed instruments, respondents strongly support the point that it should still be debated and there is still no conclusive proof that prohibits the instruments. The discussion and examples of several songs as shown previously help to illustrate the music style of Islamic popular music in Malaysia, which includes many different types of instrument that help to convey positive Islamic messages.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter determined the progression regarding musical style and the relationship between sound, music, and musical instruments. *Nasyid* music could be traditional, contemporary, and fusion in style. The music is associated with specific instruments used to construct the rhythms and melodies to present appropriate Islamic popular music. In addition, the relationship between the instruments used and music production has also been illustrated by the author. The significance of this chapter is evident in the original statements from various experts regarding the musical period 1996-2016. The musical style of *Tarannum* was widely used in early stages. Most of the interviewees agreed that Tarannum was considered the 'root of Islamic music style' at this time. This was followed by contemporary music, especially after the Raihan revolution affected the music industry. The development of this contemporary music led the people involved in the industry to explore new styles of fusion music. These findings contain the ideas and knowledge from various people who helped to explain how the musical styles evolved, the musical instruments used, and the production techniques deployed in Islamic popular music. This chapter also considers the opinions of scholars with sectarian views regarding the use of instruments in Islamic popular music based on specific legal judgments. Based on the evidence, the author believes that there is no conclusive statement that stringed instruments or others are banned in the popular forms of Islam in Malaysia. As long as these musical instruments follow

Islamic preferences and bring something good in way of *dakwah (see glossary)*, they can be accepted by musicians and fans.

6 CHAPTER SIX: LYRICS AND LANGUAGES IN *NASYID* SONGS

6.1 Introduction

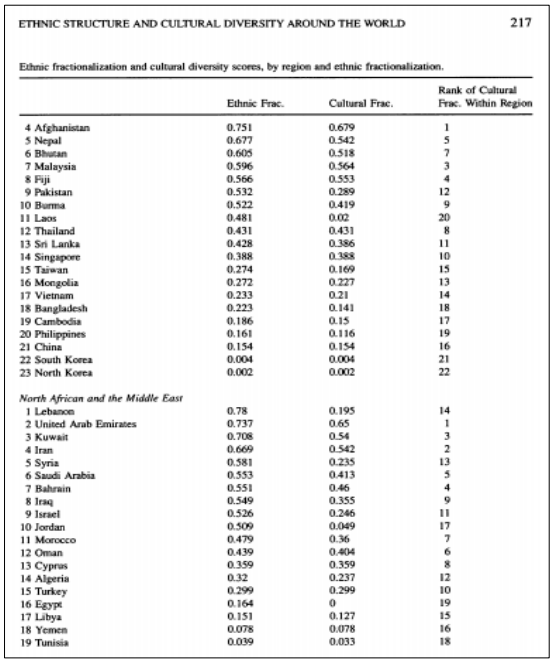
Lyrics and languages are significant elements of Islamic popular music. These elements are explained by discussing how popular songs use lyrics and languages that portray Islam. From the interview sessions, it was identified that the lyrics include some common characteristics of Islam which are: *fardhu ain* or the Pillars of Islam, celebrations of friendship, historical moments and challenges in Islam especially from the perpectives of Islam. The chapter also discusses motivational and positive values in the lyrics of Islamic songs, special occasions in the Islamic calendar, the variety of languages in Islamic songs and portrayals of the concept of love in the lyrical content. In order to provide adequate information to support this discussion, the style of lyrics also will be considered. This chapter is thus aimed at outlining the common traits or themes of Islamic popular music through its lyrics and languages used in the songs, which account for one of the key elements of Islamic popular music.

"Popular music uses several streams of information to create emotionally engaging experiments for listeners including lyrics and melodies" (Nichols, Morris, Basu and Raphael 2016: 1). Islamic popular music translates and mediates religious concepts through words. Lyrics are important elements in music production across many genres due to the role of lyrics as a means of conveying messages in a song, and at the same time lyrics can be a form of 'story telling' for the song. The relationship between Islamic popular music and its lyrics has always drawn my intention especially to Islamic music. Most people tend to look at the specific parts of lyrics when trying to define Islamic popular music. Still being interested in the relationship between this sort of music and its lyrics in the Malaysian context particularly, the author decided to explore further the transformation of lyrical content since 1996 and reviews the growth thereafter. The general context consists of *zikr*, *fardhu ain*/pillars of Islam, friendship,

historical moments, challenges in Islam, motivational saying, and Islamic events. Further exploration of this topic led to an investigation of how the concept of 'love' could be part of Islamic popular *nasyid* and the accepted by audiences. The investigation of these lyrics will help to express the relationship between this music and the lyricist. In this chapter, the second part of this discussion explains the lyrical styles from 1996 to present day. To provide a clear illustration of the lyrical style in the 1990s, the author will detail the trends in the next sub-section.

6.2 Lyrical trends in the 1990s: *Zikr* Style

Malaysia is known as one of the most multiracial and multi-religious countries in the world. It ranks in the top 10 for ethnic fractionalisation and cultural diversity scores by region (see Figure 6.1) (Fearon 2003). The majority religious denomination is Muslim and for this reason Islamic popular music had been accepted by the majority of Malaysians, especially Muslim music consumers.



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Ethnic fractionalization and cultural diversity scores, by region and ethnic fractionalization.

	Ethnic Frac.	Cultural Frac.	Rank of Cultural Frac. Within Region
4 Afghanistan	0.751	0.679	1
5 Nepal	0.677	0.542	5
6 Bhutan	0.605	0.518	7
7 Malaysia	0.596	0.564	3
8 Fiji	0.566	0.553	4
9 Pakistan	0.532	0.289	12
10 Burma	0.522	0.419	9
11 Laos	0.481	0.02	20
12 Thailand	0.431	0.431	8
13 Sri Lanka	0.428	0.386	11
14 Singapore	0.388	0.388	10
15 Taiwan	0.274	0.169	15
16 Mongolia	0.272	0.227	13
17 Vietnam	0.233	0.21	14
18 Bangladesh	0.223	0.141	18
19 Cambodia	0.186	0.15	17
20 Philippines	0.161	0.116	19
21 China	0.154	0.154	16
22 South Korea	0.004	0.004	21
23 North Korea	0.002	0.002	22
North African and the Middle East			
1 Lebanon	0.78	0.195	14
2 United Arab Emirates	0.737	0.65	1
3 Kuwait	0.708	0.54	3
4 Iran	0.669	0.542	2
5 Syria	0.581	0.235	13
6 Saudi Arabia	0.553	0.413	5
7 Bahrain	0.551	0.46	4
8 Iraq	0.549	0.355	9
9 Israel	0.526	0.246	11
10 Jordan	0.509	0.049	17
11 Morocco	0.479	0.36	7
12 Oman	0.439	0.404	6
13 Cyprus	0.359	0.359	8
14 Algeria	0.32	0.237	12
15 Turkey	0.299	0.299	10
16 Egypt	0.164	0	19
17 Libya	0.151	0.127	15
18 Yemen	0.078	0.078	16
19 Tunisia	0.039	0.033	18

Figure 6.1: Ethnic structure and cultural diversity around the world (Fearon, 2013)

According to Fearon (2003), the nature of the concept of 'ethnic group' is such that there can be many ways to categorize ethnic groups in a country, all of which are reasonably valid. He suggests that fractionalisation is not well suited to capturing the different structures of ethnicity (2013: 206). He attempts to identify the effects of ethnic fractionalisation on economic growth, political conflict, political party structure, and music development.

As mentioned, the author interviewed lyricists, composers, singers, music engineers, and other related employees working in the Malaysian music industry with a particular focus on those working in the genre of Islamic music. Along these lines, the author should also stress and argue that there is no point in producing any Islamic songs without knowing that the messages should be suitable to the songs. Some respondents agree that in the early introduction of this type of music, *zikr* was most popular. According to Najdi from UNIC (interviewed in 2015), in the early development of Islamic popular music in Malaysia when new forms of *nasyid* were introduced into Malaysia's music industry in the late 1990s, the scope of the lyrics focused on *zikr* followed by lyrics on *fardhu ain*.[38] He added that the lyrical styles of the 1990s basically expressed as *zikr*, which in some Islamic languages brought meaning through ritual utterances of the name of God or God's praise (Newby 2002: 52).

Zikr is an Arabic word that has been adopted into Malay and Indonesia as well as many vernaculars in both countries. *Dhikr*, or *zikr* in the Malaysian Language, represents the ways of reminding oneself of God (Esposito 2003: 67). *Zikr* are lyrics that praises the Muslim god (Allah) and the prophet Muhammad. These lyrics are believed to give rewards for those who recite them daily and can give some extra credit to enter heaven. Along with *marhaban* and

[38] *Fardhu Ain* is a foundation of Islamic knowledge that all Muslims should know and practice. This requires prayers to be performed five times a day, fasting during Ramadan, the payment of *zakah*, undertaking a *hajj*, etc.

hadrah, *zikr* is a widely practiced vocal style from Arabic countries which is typically sung by a group of men. The traditional version has many different regional styles, and in some cases it includes dancing and playing drums. In Kelantan, one of the east coast states of Malaysia, the basic tradition of singing and chanting *zikr* is performed by males who sing in unison voice. While singing, they will be playing particular rhythmic patterns on the *rebana besar*, which is hung in front of the players. There are many different styles of rebana played, just as there are different styles of singing (Raseuki 2009: 115-116).

Thus, in relation to the *zikr* tradition, another form in Kelantan is called *rebana kercing*, in which a group of men play rhythmic patterns on the rebana kercing while singing the *zikr's* Arabic texts. At certain times, they are joined by a group of young boys who stage a song and dance as the men play different rhythmic patterns to accompany the dance. Another variety of *zikr* in Kelantan called *zikr barat*; in which a group man sing verses of popular and non-religious text in responsorial style, usually with a rebana kercing and gong. These performances are often enhanced by dance-like movements by the chorus member. Over three decades ago, Matusky observed that the *zikr* was no longer solely religious in nature, and it was usually staged in contest between two groups of men from different villages (1985: 169-170).

Besides, very close to the *zikr* tradition are two forms of theatrical arts: the *hadrah*, of Perlis and Kedah, and the *rodat*, of Terengganu. Both are thought to have originated from the Middle East, but were brought to the Peninsula by different agents. Supposedly, tradesman brought the *rodat* to Terengganu from Sumatra and Borneo approximately 200 years ago (Nasaruddin 1985 quoted in Matusky 1985: 170).

When we take a closer look into the lyrics of *zikr*, we recognise and further understand that the theme and contents of *zikr* are vivid, and diverge from other genres by providing exclusively religious lyrics. Therefore, back then, the basic concept was whatever messages

zikr seems to deliver, it simply classified the music as Islamic. As Islamic popular music grew in popularity, the scope of the songs and lyrics expanded. Many songs were produced on themes of the beauty of Islam, the histories of prophets in Islamic, the concepts of friendship, love between humans, historical concepts, occasions in the Islamic calendar, motivation to raise soul and spirit, and *zikr* and *Qasidah*. The evolution of lyrics in Islamic music as it globalised will be discussed further in the next sub-section.

6.3 Traditional style captivates the Malaysian people

This section describes the concept of traditional style in terms of the lyrics. Some people agree that traditional lyrics were the most frequent element used during the early period in the 1990s. As one respondent argues:

> *A lot of nasyid is Arabian-like sounding, it's considered as traditional nasyid but when people listen, they could immediately tell that it's nasyid. Then the lyrics, the lyrics have to tell a story that brings us closer to God or the message of repentance, kindness, inviting people towards moral conduct, enjoining the good and forbidding the bad and so on. This is what makes up Islamic lyrics and it also includes praising Allah, praising the prophet, the pillars of Islam, the pillars of faith and so on. The development of this genre in Malaysia is rapid. At the early involvement of Islamic popular music in 1990s; percussion and traditional drum instruments were common instruments accompanying the songs.* (Najdi from UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

This respondent argues that traditional lyrics basically relate to Godly messages, preaching to Allah, and any "good" moral messages. As mentioned before, this form of traditional lyrics was already implemented in songs in the 1990s. Based on the opinions discussed, music style and accompanying instruments determine what is called traditional (see also Chapter 5). The

next discussion will describe the lyrical content which could be classified as traditional. With opinions from makers, some believe that the lyrics on themes of *Fardhu Ain*, friendship, historical moments, Islamic challenges, motivational sayings, and Islamic events are often lyrics in Islamic songs.

6.3.1 Lyrics regarding *Fardhu Ain* or the Pillars of Islam

In the early years of Islamic popular music, in addition to the lyrical scope of *zikr*, other Islamic songs produced were focused on the Pillars of Islam, and also *fardhu ain* as specific religious concepts in the lyrics. The Pillars of Islam are the core foundations of Islam for all Muslims. According to Malaysian lyricist Ito Lara, *Fardhu ain* could be illustrated as obligatory acts that must be performed by each Muslim, thus, inserting these elements into the lyrics makes it easier for listeners to understand the beauty of Islam. This approach also helps to convey the right message or enlightenment concepts of Islamic to non-Muslim listeners.

The *nasyid* group Raihan released their debut album *Puji-pujian* or *Praises* in October 1996 with Warner Music and Farihin Abd Fattah as the producer. According to Nuvich (1997), a Warner Music Malaysia producer and publisher, the album sold more than 750,000 units in Malaysia, with 200,000 units sold within the first two months after it was released. Raihan's songs evolved into a global phenomenon which benefitted the music industry when the album *Puji-Pujian* sold 3,5000,000 sold worldwide. At one point, Raihan transformed Malaysia's music industry with half a million sales of *Puji-Pujian*. This development of Islamic music led to a revolution, which was highlighted in a report by Nuvich, A (1997) in a billboard magazine article, 'Asia-Pacific Islamic pop storms Malaysia'. Nuvich, A (1997) argued that 'Raihan stole the show, beating more conventional pop and rock singers to become the best vocal group in

Malaysia. It is a sign that their music now has a mainstream appeal'. This established Raihan as a pioneer *nasyid* group in Malaysia

To provide better information regarding the lyrical elements of the Pillars of Islam and *fardhu ain*, the author further explores the *Puji-pujian* album, in which most of the songs focused on the Pillars of Islam and *fardhu ain*. Islamic popular music developed rapidly in Malaysia since the achievements of Raihan in the late 1990's and the development of this genre are demonstrated by the development of other *nasyid* groups such as *Hijjaz, Rabbani, Saujana*, and others (Frances 1999). *Puji – pujian* consists of 10 Tracks, as listed below:

Track 1: *Puji-pujian* (Praise)
Track 2: *Peristiwa Subuh* (Early Morning Prayer)
Track 3: *Iman Mutiara* (The pearl of faith)
Track 4: *Sifat 20* (Twenty characteristics)
Track 5: *Rakan Selawat* (praises to messenger of Allah)
Track 6: *Sesungguhnya* (Swear)
Track 7: *Rayuan Rindu* (Begging love)
Track 8: *Rakan Selawat* (friend of selawat)
Track 9: *Kembali* (Back)
Track 10: *Assolatuwassalam* (Poetry in praising Muhammad, the messenger of Allah)

The music on *Puji-pujian* was composed by Farihin Abd Fatah, with lyrics by Abu Bakar (Raihan group member). This was Raihan's debut album. The album was awarded as Best Album in AIM (*Anugerah Industri Muzik* or Malaysia Music Industries Award) in 1998. In 2016, this album was still in the top 10 bestselling albums in Malaysia. For this album, Abu Bakar created the lyrics by mixing Arabic words with Malay translations instead of using only *zikr* in Arabic recitation or ordinary preaching songs. Percussion and traditional drum
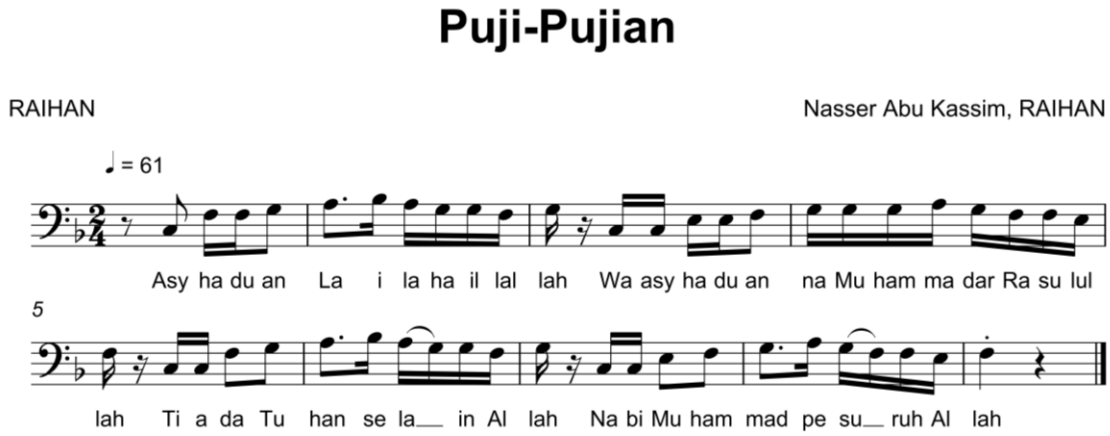
instruments such as *rebana*, *tambourine*, *darbuka*, *maracas*, and *kompang* are used as the accompanying instruments, as in many other *nasyid* songs in early years used harmonious vocals in an *acapella* style. According to Hazamin from Inteam Group (interviewed in 2015):

> *Islamic popular music at the beginning was music using simple percussion, only using percussion and acapella style or Arab-like music; that was my understanding in the early years.*

Added by the same interviewee,

> *In the early years, I do not deny that a lot of nasyid groups in Malaysia were not from music school. We as nasyid singers understood vocal techniques on our own through experience and not through formal schooling. During our university days, we started learning that acapella includes a basic voice, unison voice, and then there is the harmony with second voice, third voice, low bass voice and fifth voice, so we learned vocals with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. (*Hazamin of Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015*)*

Respondents argue that basic *nasyid* songs in the genre's first decade (early stage of Islamic popular music) were produced with simple music arrangements without a wide range of instruments and mostly in accapella style.



Ash hadu anla ilaha Illallah,	There's no God butAllah
Wa ash hadu anna Muhammadar Rasulullah	And Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah
Tiada Tuhan selain Allah	There's no God but Allah
Nabi Muhammad pesuruh Allah	And Prophet Muhammad is the messenger of Allah

(Puji-pujian, Raihan, 1996)

The verse above shows how the Pillars of Islam *Shahadah*[39] was adapted in Raihan's song, *'Puji-pujian'* or Praise. Hazamin from Inteam Group, as well as Raihan group members, explained that this approach was intended to introduce people to *fardhu ain* or the Pillars of Islam through the medium of music. This is most transparent in the phrase '*Ash hadu anla ilaha Illallah, Wa ash hadu anna Muhammadar Rasulullah*' (that is, 'only Allah is the God and Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'). Indirectly this might give ideas to people

[39] Shahadah is a first pillar of Islam which a Muslim need to recite and deeply understand the phrase of 'There is no god but Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is a messenger of Allah'.

about the roots of Islam; as mentioned in the early part of discussion, the Pillars of Islam is the foundational core for all Muslims. When we look at the foundations of Muslim life, the concept refers to five basic arts in Islam or the Pillars of Islam. Generally, the Pillar consists of *Sahadah*, *Salat*, *Zakat*, fasting, and *Hajj*. By transforming this Islamic basic form into lyrics in song, it is easier to convey the message and for it to be understood. Raihan also believes that this approach makes sense in order to introduce Islam and Islamic popular music.
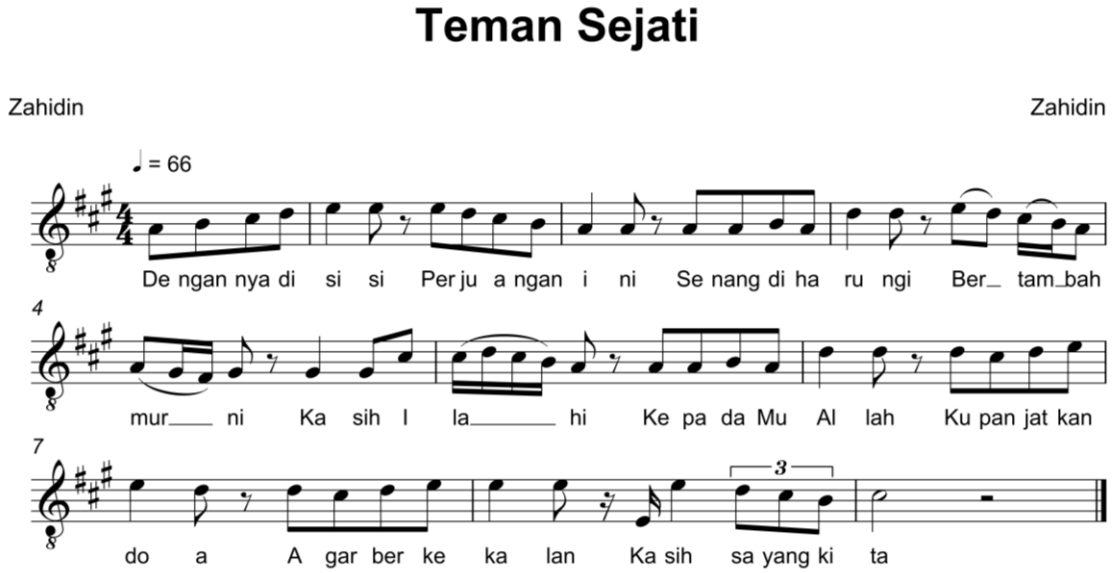
In the early years of Islamic popular songs in Malaysia, the lyrics were straightforward. The text only focused on *zikr*, *fardhu ain* and Pillars of Islam. This started to evolve as this genre in popularity. After Raihan's emergence, the development can be seen by numbers of new groups of artists making their debut, and the scope of the lyrics was also expanded to lyrics regarding friendship, Islamic histories, love, positive and motivational themes, and special events in the Islamic calendar and in Islamic history. The evolution of lyrics in Islamic music as the genre will be discussed in the next section.

6.3.2 Lyrics about Friendship

When lyricists expanded their scope of writing, they included the element of friendship. In 1997, a new group known as Brother released their debut album entitled, *We are…* (Ambang Klasik). They expanded on the theme of friendship in their songs. This album brought this group to be one of the more prominent *nasyid* groups in Malaysia's music industry by introducing new lyrics in the song, *'Teman Sejati*' (True Friend). The music and lyrics of this hit song were written by Zahidin and based on work by the composer Yassin. At this stage, this also brought another phenomenon in this genre which was marked as a great started for this group in the industry. This song shows that improvising the scope of the lyrics can produce a variety of styles that could be a suitable medium to convey messages or information relating

to the Islamic perspective rather than through Islamic talk only. With this approach, this song was a phenomenon among the youngsters.

The composer, Yassin believed that this lyrical style was accepted by the audience because this song remains popular even after 15 years. (Utusan Online 14th January 2012). The lyrics of 'Teman Sejati' are below:
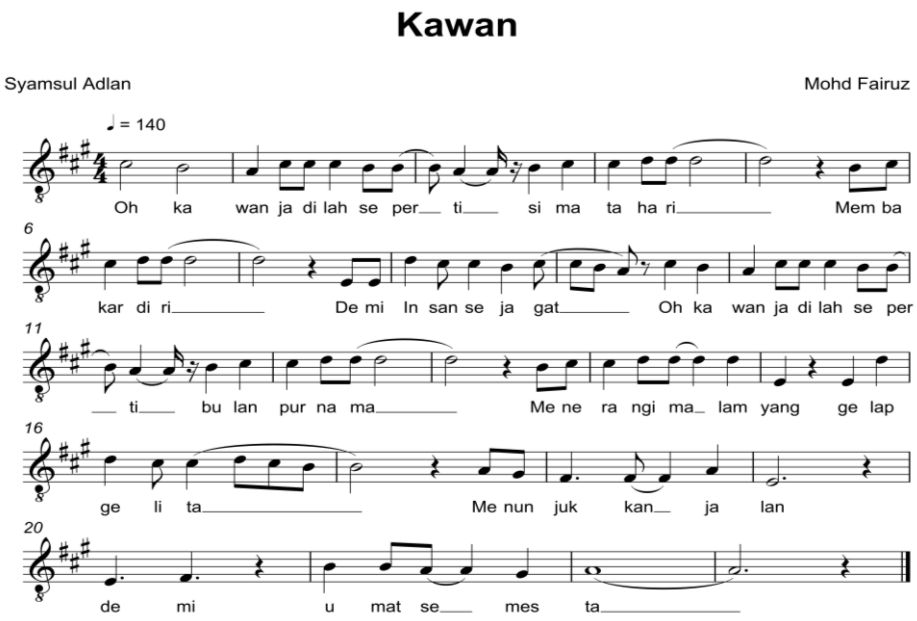


Dengannya disisi	With you by my side
Perjuangan ini	This battle is
Tenang diharungi	Easier to face
Bertambah murni kasih Ilahi	With more blessings from Allah
KepadaMu Allah	To you Allah
Ku panjatkan doa	I'll do my prayers
Agar berkekalan kasih sayang kita	For our friendship to last forever

(Teman Sejati, Brothers, 1997)

By looking to the verses of lyrics above, this song focused on the conveying a true meaning of friendship in Islamic. The phrase of '*Dengannya disisi, perjuangan ini,'* (you by my side, in this fight) portrays friends that are always together through ups and downs in life. Besides, that verse also provides a reminder and advice to keep your faith with Allah and friends will always help when you need a hand in a hard time. The second verse *'KepadaMu Allah, ku panjatkan doa, agar berkekalan kasih sayang kita' (*how thankful that person is for a great friend and keep praying to Allah to bless them with everlasting friendship).

As mentioned, this group used a new approach in their song. Compared with most of the songs in early 1990's which used lot of percussions and traditional drum instruments (Gendang), this song adapting modern pop contemporary concept by using the keyboard in the music arrangement. Brother's group believed with this new idea they could bring new and fresh music products to people and try to show their unique identity different from *Raihan*'s concept. Along these lines besides Brothers there are other groups that adapt friendship concepts in their song such as UNIC group. Their first album titled *You and I See* consists of tracks of friendship song:



Oh kawan jadilah seperti si matahari	O friends, be like the sun,
Membakar diri demi insan sejagat	Burning itself for mankind
Oh kawan jadilah seperti bulan purnama	O friend be like the full moon
Menerangi malam yang gelap gelita	Enlightening the dark night
Menunjukkan jalan demi umat semesta	Guiding the path for people

(Kawan/friend, UNIC, 2002)

The verses above are from a song titled '*Kawan*' which means friend, emphasizing the friendship element in the lyrics. Composed by Mohd Fairuz with lyrics by Syamsul Adlan, this song was one of the favourites among young Muslims in Malaysia. The first verse above illustrates that friends are going to have their own life journey that they dream to achieve. In the second verse above, the phrase '*Menunjukkan jalan demi umat semesta*' (to show muslim the right path) shows how a friend advises another friend to be a better person in future which can help and benefit to others.

This approach brought out another branch of lyrical styles aside from *zikr* or *fardhu ain* (Pillar of Islam). This friendship lyrical style was noted by a Malaysian *nasyid* singers, Hazamin from Inteam Group (interviewed in 2015), when he observed:

> *When nasyid started evolving and more nasyid groups came out, each would try to create their own identity and have their own target group or market. So, I noticed that nasyid lyrics became more mature, touching only generally on aspects of Islam, not focusing only on certain parts such as with zikr and not too Islamic on the outside. But the lyrics still contain contents that are encouraged in Islam such as friendship and moral character…*

Next, the author looks at other potential concepts in the lyrics which show the broadening of scope during this time.

6.3.3 Lyrics that describe historical moments and challenges for Islam

Lyrics can introduce historical moments and challenges in Islam. As stated by Ito Lara, the purpose of the lyrics is to call others towards goodness, advising, considering Islamic history that can be used as a lesson to be learned especially by young listeners. In addition to adapting the Pillar of Islam or friendship as a focus in lyrics, another concept that lyricists commonly implement in composing songs concerns the history of the development of Islam. But what are the lyrics regarding this history of Islam? Basically, these types of lyrics focus on elaborating the concept of Islam, including its origins, growth and acceptance as an international religion. By looking at this concept in the lyrics, we can understand the historical development of Islam, the journey of Islam and its acceptance by people in the present day. By using songs as a medium of conveying these messages, it really helps the listener to remember the histories and important moments in *nasyid*:

> *Islamic singers are more open to other genres and have to compete through popular music styles while instilling Islamic or Godly messages and positive values. However, the objective of both Islamic popular music and nasyid in Malaysia are one and the same: to spread Islam either by giving knowledge about Islam, historical details of Islam, explaining life challenges or communicating Godly messages. I believed that the medium of music is the best way to convey all those messages, like other parts of Islam, but what differentiates them are the musical arrangements, images and performance styles.* (Hazamin from Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015*)*

Along these lines, Hazamin talked regarding the concept of historical challenges in Islam and how this was implemented in the lyrics since 1996. There are songs that consider current issues and challenging elements of Islam. He explained:

I noticed that nasyid lyrics which focus on Islamic history have broadened in scope recently as they not only focus on the past histories or challenges but lyricists have started to address current social issues, world peace, Palestine and other issues that are universal.

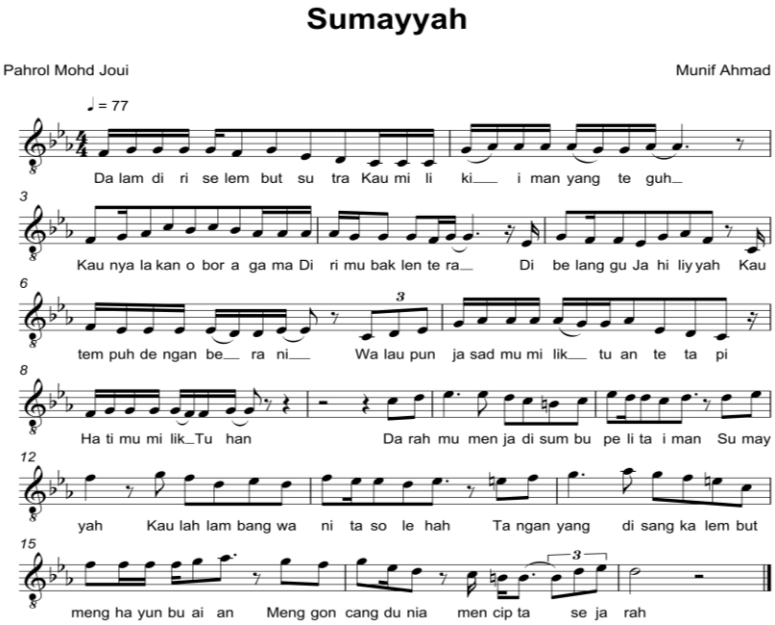
The group Hijjaz is one of the prominent Malaysian *nasyid* groups which introduced this focus to their lyrics. Hijjaz was made up of four men and made their debut in 1997 on BMG Records. They saw the potential of educating listeners by using songs as the medium to introduce this concept in the industry. They believe that by introducing and exploring these concepts in their lyrics, they can help in educating listeners on Islamic histories and challenges. By implementing this approach in their songs, Hijjaz became a leading *nasyid* group. They also own Hijjaz Music Entertainment which produced lots of successful *nasyid* groups in Malaysia and elsewhere in Asia such as In-Team, UNIC, Ae-men and Mestica under their recording label.

In the first decade of Islamic popular music in Malaysia (1996-2006), Hijjaz focused on the history of Islam on their album *Jalan Bahagia* (Happiness life-2002). In this album, one of the songs is entitled *'Sumayyah*[40]*'*, and this song brought forth the concept of historical battles related to Islam in its lyrics. *'Sumayyah'* is a good example to illustrate historical events and the growth of Islam; it has been used by Hijjaz as the main concept in lyric writing to convey the story to audiences.

This historical event inspired Hijjaz to compose a song, dedicated to this woman who played an important role in the history of Islam. Based on the lyrics, Hijjaz included all the key factors that show Sumayyah's story. They highlight the struggle, sacrifice, faith and religiosity

[40] Sumayyah binti Khabath was Abu Huzaifa bin Mughirah's slave. Sumayyah gave the ultimate sacrifice for Allah sake, her own life, and Allah honoured her sacrifice as through her death she became the first martyr in Islamic history (Reem, 2012)

which brought this song significantly to Islam. Along these lines, Hijjaz affirmed that this sort of song with the content considering historical moments could inspire others and give knowledge to audiences.



Dalam diri selembut sutra	With a heart soft as silk
Kau memiliki iman yang teguh	You had a strong faith
Kau nyalakan obor agama diri-mu	You light the torch of your religion
bak lentra	Like a lantern
dibelengu jahiliah kau tempuh	Facing the ignorants
dengan berani	With courage
Walau pun jasad-mu milik tuan	Your body may belong to your master
Tetapi hati-mu milik Tuhan	But your heart belongs to Allah
Darah-Mu menjadi sumbu pelita iman	You bleed in the name of faith
Sumayyah kaulah lambang wanita solehah	Sumayyah you symbolize a righteous woman
Tangan yang disangka lembut menghayun buaian	The hands that rocked the cradle
Mengoncang dunia mencipta sejarah	Rocked the world history

('Sumayyah' by Hijjaz, 2002)

Above are the verses from a song titled 'Sumayyah', composed by Putra Aiman (Munif from Hijjaz) and lyrics by Fahrol M Joui. Fahrol M Joui implementing Sumayyah life journey which full with challenges as she were the earliest converts to Islamic. The phrase '*Walau pun jasad-mu milik tuan, Tetapi hati-mu milik Tuhan*' from the first verse above mean 'though you're a slave and belong to your master, your master cannot take control of your faith', this phrase emphasizes Sumayyah's strong and firm faith towards Islam and Allah. Sumayyah's firm faith had become an inspiration to all Muslims and it is adapted in the second verse above.
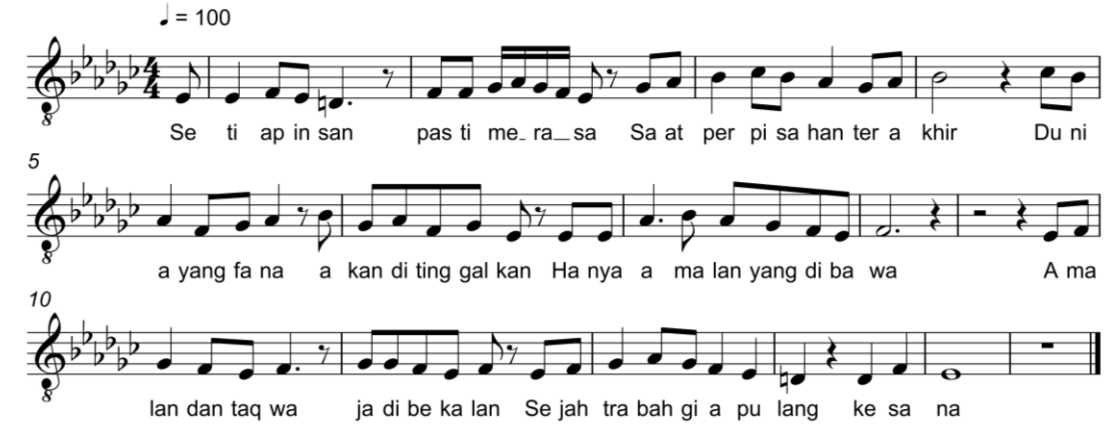
6.3.4 Motivational Lyrics

Motivational songs are one of the most frequent songs produced in Islamic popular music in Malaysia, especially during the years 1998-1999. Throughout the growth and development of this genre, the scope of lyrical writing has been broadening and lyricists see this concept as one of the most suitable concepts that can be adapted in writing. Motivational songs mostly contain lots of positive and motivational lyrics based on Islam. In the early years, Raihan released lots of motivational songs and since then there have been lots of motivational songs produced by other groups and artists.

In 1999, one prominent *nasyid* group in Malaysia, Rabbani, released a song titled *Pergi Tak Kembali* which included motivational elements in the lyrics. Rabbani debuted in 1997 with 13 members and currently consist of 8 members. Rabbani is known as a *nasyid* group that adds more modern aspects to its music arrangements, and ‘Pergi Tak Kembali’ is a song from their third album which has a modern touch with commercialised music arrangement (Utusan Online 2000).

Pergi Tak Kembali

Nazim, Asri Ibrahim RABBANI KRU (Norman, Yusry , Edry)



Setiap insan pastikan merasa	Every human will face
Saat perpisahan terakhir	A time to leave
Dunia yang fana akan ditinggalkan	The world they live in
Hanya amalan yang akan dibawa	They will only bring the good deeds
Sejahtera, bahagia pulang...ke sana	To meet God… there

('Pergi Tak Kembali', Rabbani, 1999)
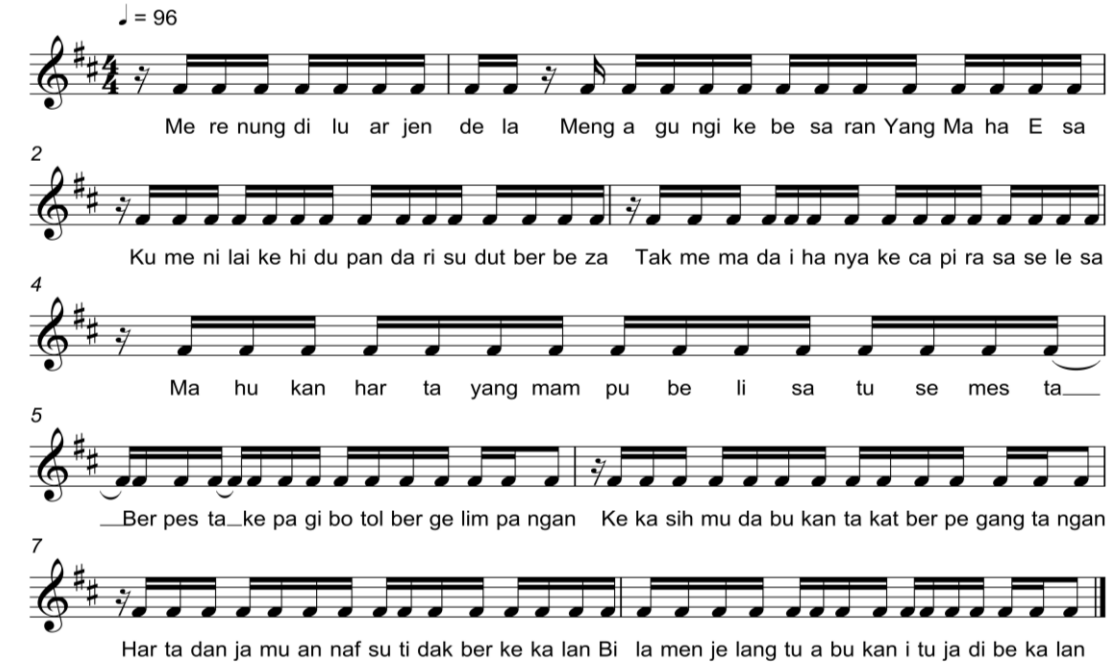
The verses above are from '*Pergi Tak Kembali'*, composed and with lyrics by KRU. The first verse above reflects on life that we all live which is only temporary; in the second verse above, the phrase *'Amalan dan Taqwa jadi bekalan'(only good things can bring you inti the heaven)* is where the lyricist reminds listeners to always do good and always live in a way that Allah encouraged. After Rabbani released albums with modern music arrangements and received positive responses from listeners, a lot of *nasyid* groups and artists started to implement modern music arrangement in their songs with motivational concepts as their lyrics. As stated by Radzin from Munsyid (interviewed in 2016):

The philosophy of nasyid has three elements. First, the most important is the 'risalah' or the lyrics. With Nasyid, we are not highlighting the music, but rather the message in the lyrics. Secondly, it must have elements of 'dakwah (see glossary)' or preaching and calling people to do good and avoid negative influences. This is what we call nasyid whereby their existence in a society brings in a positive aura. We want people to have good behaviour. For example, if there's a nasyid person in a group of friends, other non-nasyid artists may feel hesitant in terms of starting a conversation and they may change the way they converse. So there is a subtle influence of preaching present. Thirdly is 'tarbiah' or educating, and not only of other people, but also for the nasyid singers themselves.

Following Rabbani, Yassin from Brothers came out with a collaboration with Malaysian hip hop duo Too Phat and a hip-hop group from Singapore, Ahli Fiqir, when they released a song titled *'Alhamdulillah'* (All praise to Allah) in multiple languages. This is a new song experiments with rap arrangements and upbeat rhythms. *'Alhamdullillah'* is one of the successful songs as it helps in attracting the youngsters with rap. This song was released in two versions: one combined Malay and Arabic while the second combined English and Arabic languages in the lyrics.

Alhamdulillah

Too Phat (Joe Flizzow & Malique), Yasin D'Navigator, Yasin
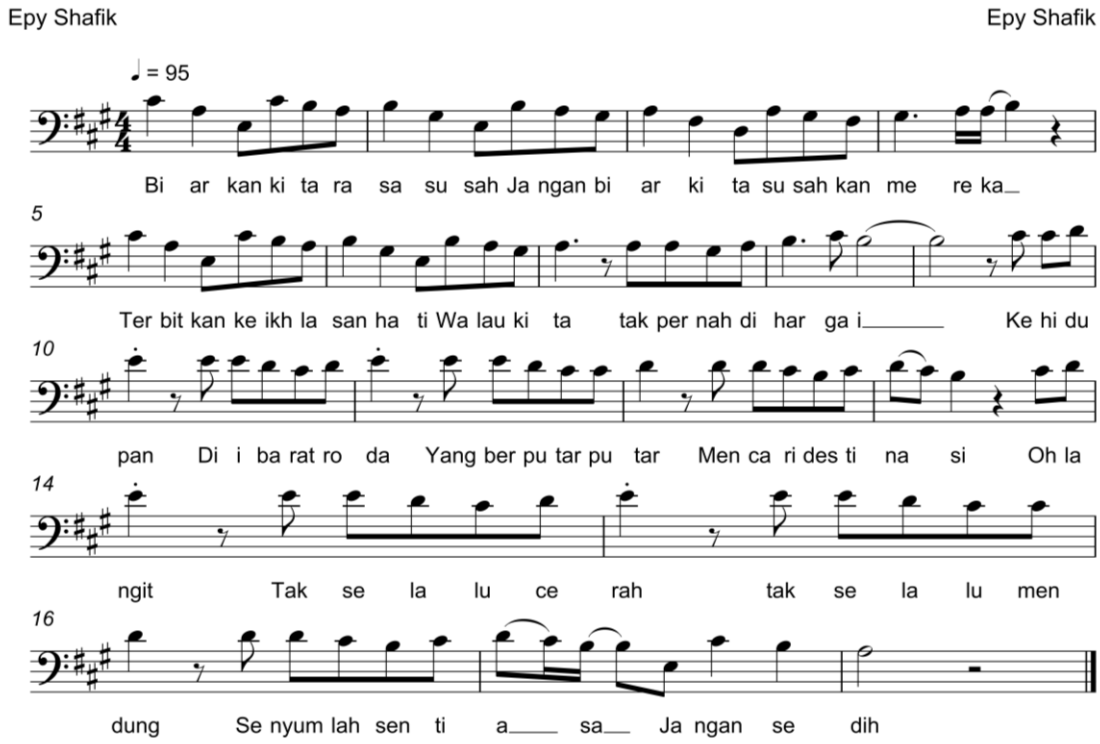


M*erenungi luar jendela,*	Looking outside the window
Mengagumi kebesaran yang Maha Esa	Impressed by the greatness of Allah
Ku menilai kehidupan dari sudut berbeza	Evaluating life from different perspectives
Tak memadai hanya kecapi rasa selesa	Being complacent is not the way
Maukan harta yang mampu beli satu semesta	Waiting for the wealth that could buy the whole world
Berpesta ke pagi botol bergelimpangan	Partying till morning with the bottles all over the place
Kekasih muda bukan takat berpegang tangan	Young couples not only holding hands
Harta dan jamuan nafsu tidak berkekalan	Wealth and lust would not last forever
Bila menjelang tua bukan itu jadi bekalan	They meant nothing in the old age

(Alhamdulillah, Yasin, Too Phat and Ahli Fiqir, 2003)

‘*Alhamdulillah*’ (All praise to Allah) was composed by D'Navigator and Yasin with lyrics by Too Phat; Joe Flizzow, Malique and Yasin infuse the elements of poetry and rap with lyrics that can motivate and inspire youths to keep them on the right path, live their life in a positive way and avoid all negativities. The phrase *'Bila menjelang tua bukan itu jadi bekalan'*(when you are old, you only bring good things as guarantee for you to enter the heaven) from the verse above is where the lyricist emphasises how important it is for youngsters to live their lives on the right path because enjoyment is temporary and can lead to negativity.

Motivational lyrics were adapted in the second decade analysed in this thesis (late-2000s to late-2010s) of Islamic popular music in Malaysia. The structure and the word arrangement were modernised as the development of this genre impacted the lyrics and arrangement. Nevertheless, the core of the lyrics always refers to Islamic practices. One of most recent songs released is *‘Epilog Seorang Manusia’* (Epilogue of a man) by Fitri Haris. This song uses the same concept in the lyrical writing but has a different approach where it portrays a human attitude to mentality and behaviour in life. By comparing the songs from Raihan in the earlier years and the latest songs, the word structure and word usage clearly show an obvious evolution where in the first decade the lyrics are straight forwards and in second decade more feeling and emotions are portrayed.

Epilog Seorang Manusia



Biarkan kita rasa susah	Let me feel the trouble
Jangan biar kita susahkan mereka	Do not bother them
Terbitkan keikhlasan hati	Show the sincerity of the heart
Walau kita tak pernah di hargai	Even though we are not appreciated
Oh langit	Oh sky
Tak selalu cerah, tak selalu mendung	Is not always bright ad not always cloudy
Senyumlah sentiasa	Smile always
Jangan sedih	Do not be sad

('Epilog Seorang Manusia', Fitri Haris, 2012)
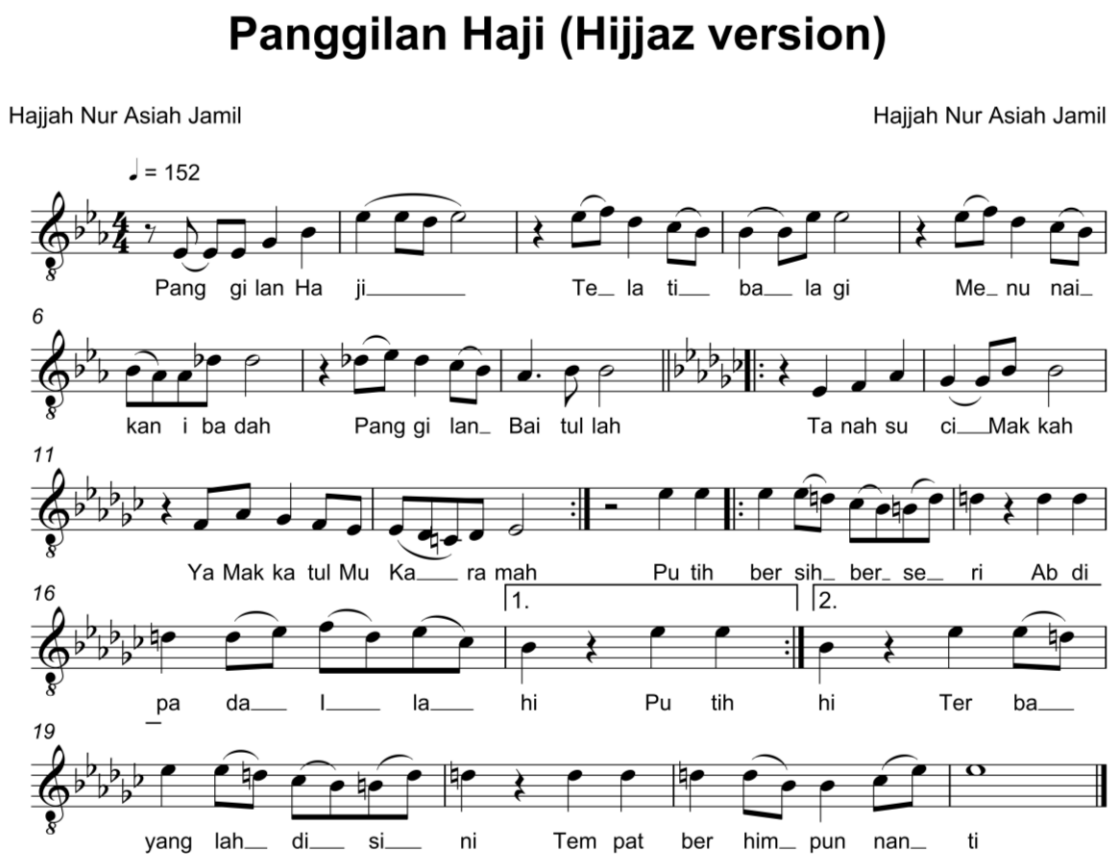
'*Epilog Seorang Manusia'* (Story of a Man) was released in 2012. Composed and written by Epy Syafik, it is a motivational song that promotes the elements of positivity in living our life with regards to mind set, attitude and behaviour. This can be observed in the phrase *Terbitkan keikhlasan hati, Walau kita tak pernah di hargai,* which translates to always be sincere in everything that we do regardless of the reaction of others, even if our effort goes unappreciated. In the second verse, the lyricist uses metaphor to advise listeners in the phrase *Oh langit ...Tak selalu cerah, tak selalu mendung (sky not always clear)* which reflects the ups and downs or the good and bad days in life, and the line *Senyumlah sentiasa, Jangan sedih (always smile and don't be sad)* presents optimism in life.

6.3.5 Lyrics on Events in the Islamic Calendar

The Islamic Calendar is also referred to as the Muslim Calendar or *Hijri* calendar. This calendar consists of 12 months. Muslims around the world use the Islamic calendar to determine the dates of religious events such as *Hajj*, Fasting, Islamic historical events (memorials) such as *Israk Mikraj*[41] and *Maulidul Rasul*, and also related holidays for other Muslim occasions. The name of the 12 months that comprise the Islamic Calendar are *Muharram*, *Safar*, *Rabi'al awwal*, *Rabi'al akhir*, *Jamadil awal*, *Jamadil akhir*, *Rejab*, *Sha'ban*, *Ramadhan*, *Syawal*, *Zulkaedah*, and *Zulhijjah*. There are lots of songs regarding Islamic occasions and events produced especially for *Hajj, Ramadhan, Israk mikraj,* and *Maulidul Rasul* since 1990s in form of *zikr*. Hijjaz released their twelfth album titled *Pelita Hidup V* which also includes one track

[41] The story about Prophet Muhammad who brought to the sky and received an order from god about perform shalat (prayer) to all muslims

titled *Panggilan Haji* on the subject of the Hajj. As mentioned in the previous section, the Hajj is one of the elements in the Pillars of Islam. It occurs once a year during the month of *ZullHijjah*, which is the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.
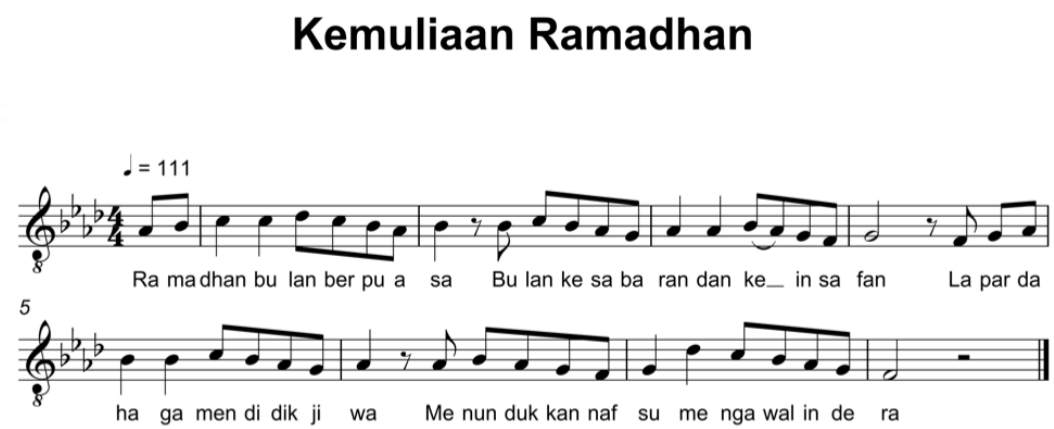


Panggilan haji	The call of Hajj
Telah tiba lagi	Is here again
Menunaikan ibadah	To fulfill
Panggilan Baitullah	The calling of the 'house of Allah'
Putih bersih berseri	In white and bright clothes
Abdi pada Ilahi	Pure submission only to Allah
Terbayanglah di sini	Here we can imagine
Tempat berhimpun nanti	The ultimate place to gather
(Tempat... berhimpun... nanti)	(The ultimate place to gather)

(Panggilan Haji, Hijjaz, 2009)

Verses above are from Hijjaz's song ‘Panggilan Haji’ which is a remake from the original version composed and with lyrics by the singer, Hajah Nur Asiah Jamil (released in the 1960s). This song implements the ritual of the Hajj in the lyrics. As in the first verse above, phrase '*Panggilan haji, Telah tiba lagi'* means the time for Hajj has arrived. The second verse above reflects one of the rituals called *wuquf*, also known as 'standing', where the pilgrim stays at Mina or Arafat.

Besides the Hajj, fasting also is one of the Pillars of Islam and all Muslims around the world fast from sunrise until sunset for the whole month of Ramadhan. Ramadhan is the ninth month in Islamic calendar and also known as the holy month for Muslims. Thus, there are many songs produced on the elements of Ramadhan and the events or occasions which relate to this month. In year 2008, two *nasyid* groups, In team and UNIC, collaborated and released a song titled ‘Kemuliaan Ramadhan’ (The sanctity of Ramadhan).



Ramadhan bulan berpuasa	Ramadhan is the month of fasting
bulan kesabaran dan keinsafan	The month to test patience and repentance
lapar dan dahaga mendidik jiwa	Thirst and hunger educate your soul
menundukkan nafsu	To tone down lust
mengawal indera	To shape bad attitude
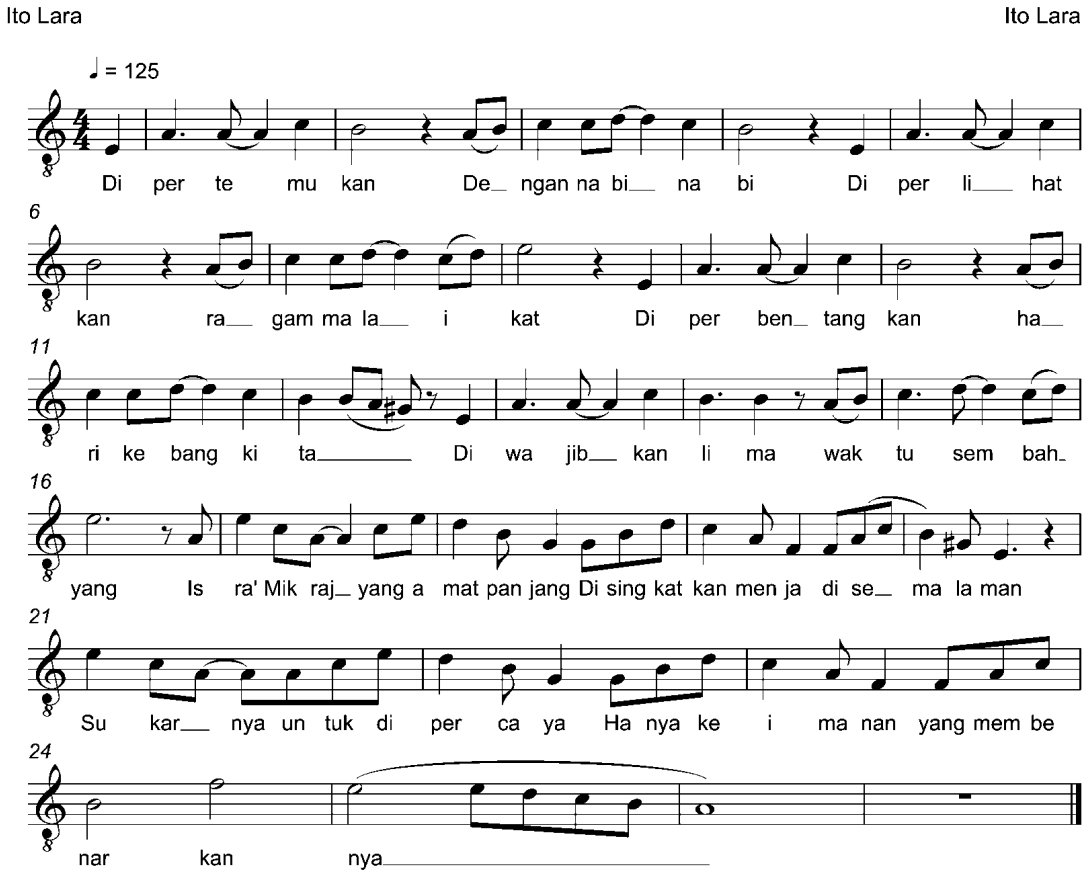
('Kemuliaan Ramadhan', In Team & UNIC, 2008)

'Kemuliaan Ramadhan' (The beauty of fasting month) is one of the songs that refers to fasting, reflection and devotion during this month. The phrase '*Ramadhan bulan berpuasa...'* (Ramadhan is a fasting month) from the first verse above is reflects the ritual that all Muslim do in Ramadhan: fasting. In the second verse, the lyricist articulates the benefits of Ramadhan to the Muslims in the phrase *'10 akhir ramadhan, dikurniakan lailatul Qadar, malam yang terbaik, diumpamakan seribu bulan...'*(Ten final night is like thousands months), which reflects the *Lailatul Qadr*[42]which falls during the last ten nights of Ramadhan.

Other than songs reflecting the special rituals or months in Islam, there are also songs produced for special events or dates in the Islamic calendar. For an example, some songs describe the event of Isra' Mikraj in the lyrics. Isra' Mikraj also known as The Prophet's Ascension or the Night Journey which falls on the 27th day of the month of *Rajab (Islamic calendar)*. This event marks the night where Prophet Muhammad was taken on a miraculous journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and then ascended to the heaven.

[42] Lailatul Qadr is a night where Muslim believe that any good action or prayer, they do on that night will be rewarded more than thousand times.

Isra' Mikraj



Dipertemukan dengan Nabi-nabi	Meeting with the Prophets
Diperlihatkan ragam malaikat	Seeing the behaviour of the angels
Diperbentangkan hari kebangkitan	Shown the day of resurrection
Diwajibkan lima waktu sembahyang	5 times prayer a day made compulsory
Isra' miqraj yang amat panjang	The long isra' miqraj journey
Disingkatkan menjadi semalaman	Has been shortened to one night
Sukarnya untuk dipercaya	It is hard to believe
Hanya keimanan yang membenarkannya	Only strong faith will believe

('Isra' Miqraj' by Hijjaz, Inteam, UNIC, Mestica, 2004)

The verses above are from the song composed and written by Ito Lara titled 'Isra' Mikraj, a collaboration betwee Hijjaz, Inteam, UNIC, and Mestica. This song was released in 2004. The
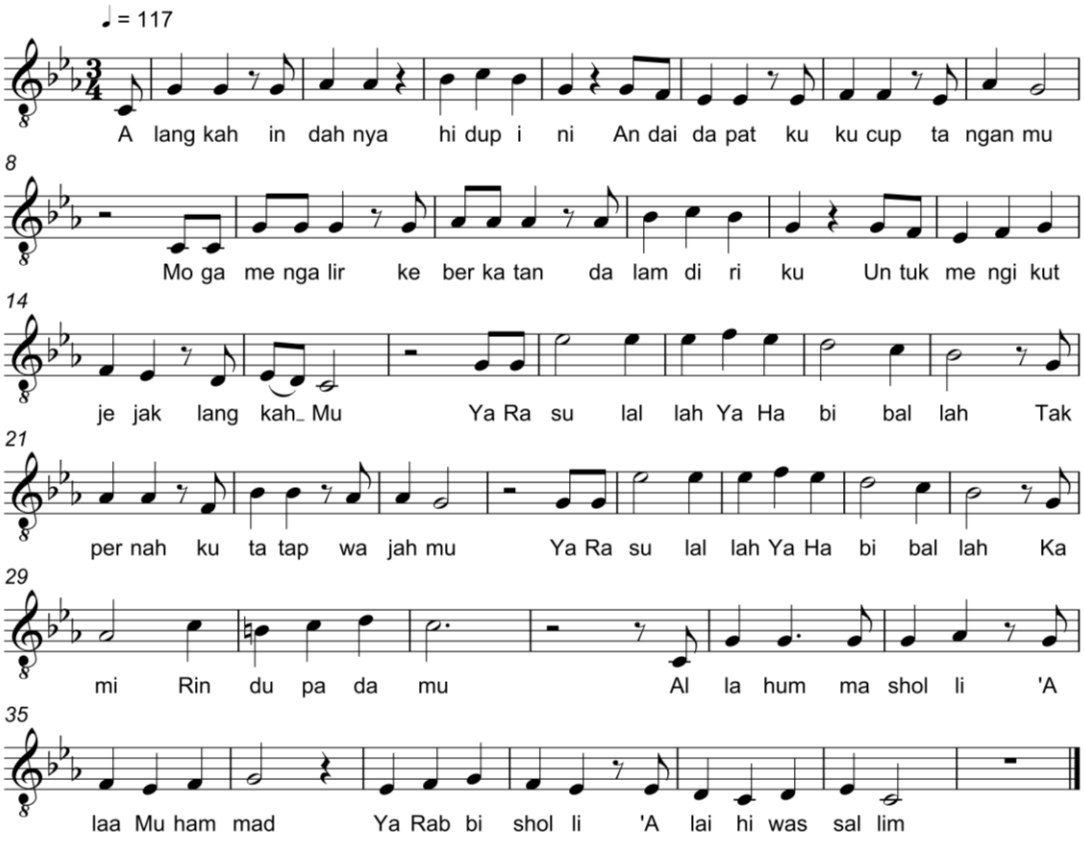
lyrics portray the whole event of Isra'Miqraj. From the first verse, the phrase '*Diwajibkan lima waktu sembahyang…*' describes the event where Prophet Muhammad was told by Allah to remain faithful regarding the obligation of prayers that must be said daily (five times daily). As for the second verse, it shows only those who are faithful and true believers will be on this special journey.

This type of song is also called 'seasonal', since it represents a certain occasion at a specific time of the year. Ahmad Fadzli bin Abd Aziz, a host of the Islamic Program and former *nasyid* singer, states that though this type of song has rarely been produced since it is seasonal, the numbers of new songs of this type are increasing from time to time. Although the scope is only focused on Islamic occasions such as *Hajj*, *Ramadhan* (fasting), *Isra' Miqraj*, *Muharram*, *MaulidurRasul* and so on, the creativity of lyricists and composers contributed to producing new songs with trendy music and lyrics arrangements. (Fadzli from TV Hijrah, interviewed in 2016)

Other than *Isra' Mikraj*, songs refer to other Islamic historical moments such as Maulidur Rasul, also known as *Mawlid* (derived from the Arabic word which means 'birth'), which is an observation of the day when the Prophet Muhammad was born: 12th day of the month of *Rabi'ul Awal* in the Islamic calendar (Muhammad A.Y. 2014). In most Islamic countries, Muslims will gather to commemorate the Prophet's birthday through a procession, recitation of the Qur'an, praising of the Prophet and rememberance of how he lived and his attributes through songs and performances. A favourite song which is frequently played during *Maulidur Rasul (Prophet Muhammad birth day)* is Raihan's song 'Ya Rasulullah'(Oh Prophet Allah).

Ya Rasulullah

Farihin Abdul Fattah — Abu Bakar RAIHAN



Alangkah indahnya hidup ini	What a beautiful life
Andai dapat kukucup tanganmu	If I could kiss your hand
Moga mengalir keberkatan dalam diriku	May the blessings flow through myself
Untuk mengikut jejak langkahmu	To follow in your footpaths
Ya rasulullah ya habiballah	Oh messenger of Allah, the beloved one
Tak pernah kutatap wajahmu	I have never seen you
Ya rasulullah ya habiballah	Oh messenger of Allah, the beloved one
Kami rindu padamu	We truly miss you
Allahumma solli ala Muhammad	Oh Allah send prayers on Muhammad
Ya rabbi solli alaihi wasallim...	(Praise to Allah)

('Ya Rasulullah, Raihan, 1999)

This song is from Raihan's third album titled *Senyum* (Smile), released in 1999. The song was composed by Farihin Abdul Fattah with lyrics by Raihan's Abu Bakar Md Yatim. The first verse above portrays the *ummah* of Prophet Muhammad, missing him dearly and wishing that they are blessed with as great a passion as Prophet Muhammad in facing the challenges of life and becoming a great Muslim. In the second verse, there is a mix of languages, Arabic and Malay. The phrase *'Allahumma solli ala Muhammad... Ya rabbi solli alaihi wasallim...'* is an Arabic verse also known as *shalawat* which means a praise, blessing, prayer and forgiveness addressed to the Prophet. As stated by Fedtri Yahya (interviewd in 2015), though this type of songs are seasonal songs, the lyrics help the listeners to remember the story or messages behind the songs, since the lyrics reflect the history of the occasions. He also added that this Islamic music commonly replaces other genres during these occasions. Even though Malaysia is a multi-religious and multiracial country, the demands and most frequently played songs will be from this genre during that season.

6.3.6 The lyrics of love between men and women
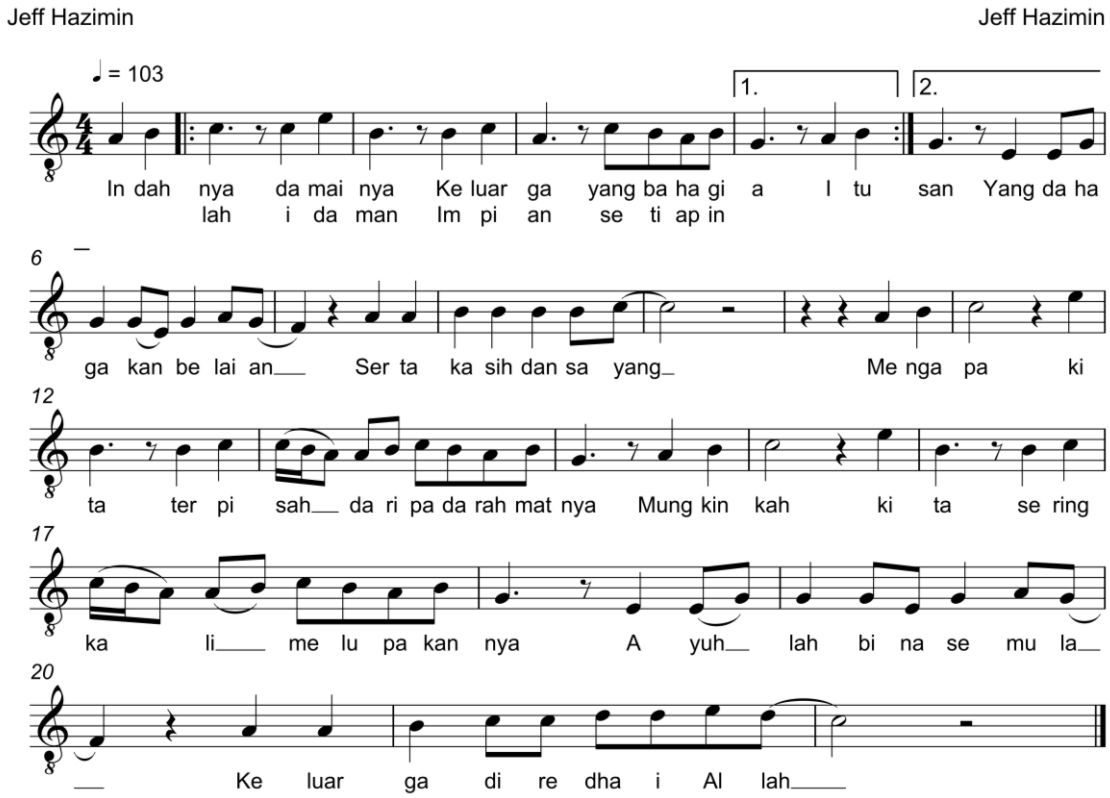
Lyrics regarding love are a new phenomenon in Islamic popular music, especially since the 2000s. Being in love is one of the most profound emotions known to all human beings. Love can be understood by various feelings, conditions, and attitudes that range from interpersonal affection to pleasure. Besides, it could also refer to an emotion of strong attraction and personal attachment. Hence, this also is implemented in lyrics and at the same time conveying the definition of love from an Islamic perspective. 'Human love' is one of the most frequently used concepts in lyrical writing at the moment. Since these relate to human nature, most of the songs with this concept always manage to capture a lot of listeners.

Since Raihan's phenomenon and *nasyid's* evolution, many groups have emerged and each of these groups tries to create their own identity for their own target market or group of listeners. This can be seen by the songs being released by the *nasyid* groups. Raihan is well known with the concept of traditional music that commonly referred to the Pillar of Islam, Hijjaz with historical tales and challenges, and Brothers with the theme of friendship. The concept of 'love' has inspired a few other groups to describe human love in their songs such as Saujana, Inteam, UNIC and many more. The author tries to investigate how audiences react to these lyrics through the words of the makers. Fedtri Yahya, interviewd in 2015, states:

> *Then we can see how the society has become more intelligent, there's a demand for deeper, meaningful lyrics, if we talk about our faith then comes the love problems between men and women, teenage problems, so then all the love songs came out because what teenager doesn't want love? To me, Islam has the answers to all questions so when we say that nasyid has an Islamic message, it answers all our questions so the lyrics can talk about anything. Let's say for example, Islam doesn't prohibit love but educates people on how to love, so from here comes such of love songs.*

Saujana (a *nasyid* group) consists of five young boys originally formed during their high school era who made their debut in 1997 under the label, Telaga Biru Publishing. Their first track from their first album titled '*Keluarga Bahagia'* (Happy Family) was a hit and continues to be an all-time favourite. This song is a great example of how the concept of love was incorporated into the lyrical writing.

Keluarga Bahagia



Indahnya damainya	So beautiful and calm
Keluarga yang bahagia	A happy family
Itulah idaman impian setiap insan	It is everyone's wish
Yang dahagakan belaian	To be caressed
Serta kasih dan sayang	To be cared and loved
Mengapa kita terpisah daripada rahmat-Nya	Why have we been separated from His blessings
Mungkinkah kita seringkali melupakan-Nya	Perhaps we often forget Him
Ayuhlah bina semula	Let's raise
Keluarga diredhai Allah	A blessed family

('Keluarga Bahagia' by Saujana, 1997)
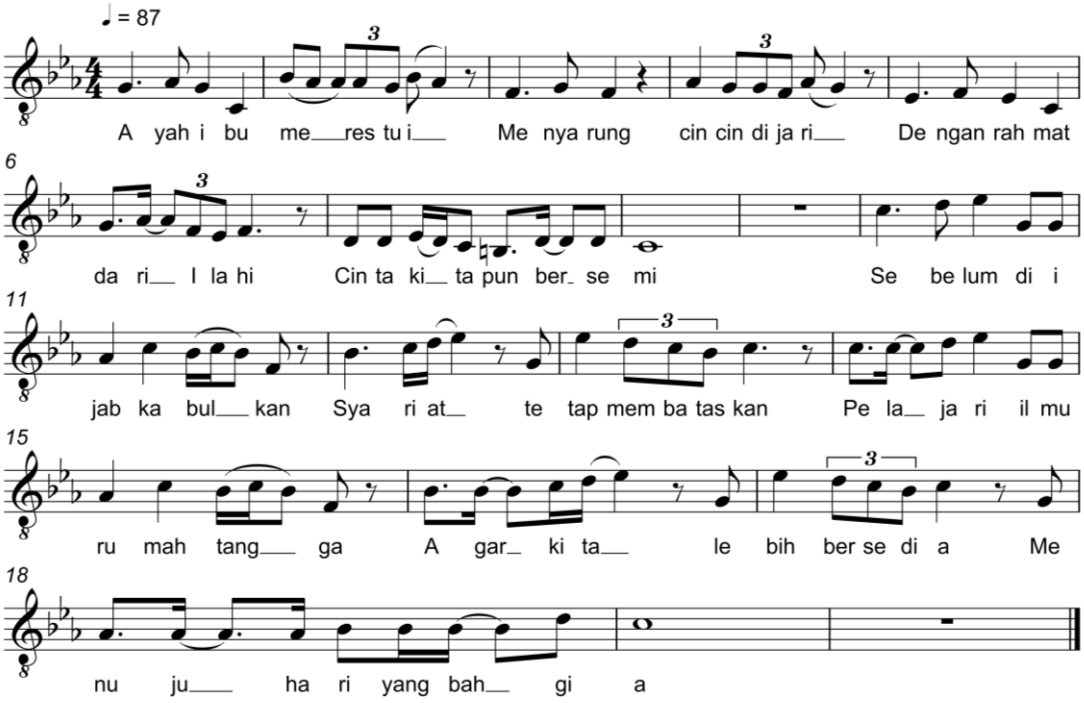
The verses above are from Saujana's song '*Keluarga Bahagia'*, which means 'Happy Family'. Composed and written by Jeff Hazimin, this song tells the story of a child who dreams of having a happy family like others. From the first verse, the phrase *'Itulah idaman impian setiap insan...*' (that's dream every human) reflects human nature when it comes to having a desire of loving and to be loved. This is portrayed in the child's (in this song) desire of wanting to be loved by the parents. Besides just reflecting the hope of a child, the lyricist also include advice to the listeners especially in this verse *'Mengapa kita terpisah daripada rahmat-Nya... Mungkinkah kita seringkali melupakan-Nya... Ayuhlah bina semula...Keluarga diredhai Allah'* (Why we fight and maybe we forgot about love from Allah, let's build again family that blessed from Allah) where the lyricist implements an advising element to the listener: to gain a happy life, we must always live our life in a way blessed by Allah swt.

Besides Saujana, InTeam is a well-known nasyid group which debuted with this concept in their songs. InTeam made their debut back in 1998 under Hijjaz Records Sdn Bhd (HRSB). In the year 2000, their song titled 'Kasih Kekasih' was released and was a hit, which also helped this group to gain popularity and at the same time convey knowledge and advice regarding human love from the perspective of Islam. The main vocalist of Inteam, Hazamin of Inteam Group which interviewed in 2015 states:

> *We (Inteam) were formed to target teenagers and university students. So, the lyrics included elements of love between people especially men and women. It was an experiment as we tried to use this approach, somehow as it was widely accepted by the audience and listeners, although there were some critics but with the listener's acceptance it proves that our approach is a successful*

Kasih Kekasih

Isman HIJJAZ, Ito Lara — Isman HIJJAZ



Ayah Ibu Merestui	Blessings from the parents
Menyarung Cincin Di Jari	Putting the ring on the finger
Dengan Rahmat Dari Ilahi	With the blessing from Allah
Cinta Kita Pun Bersemi	Our love blooms
Sebelum Diijabkabulkan	Before marriage
Syariat Tetap Membataskan	There are boundaries to keep
Pelajari Ilmu Rumahtangga	Learn how to manage a household
Agar Kita Lebih Bersedia	So that we are more prepared
Menuju Hari Yang Bahagia	To live the happy days

(Kasih Kekasih, Inteam, 2000)
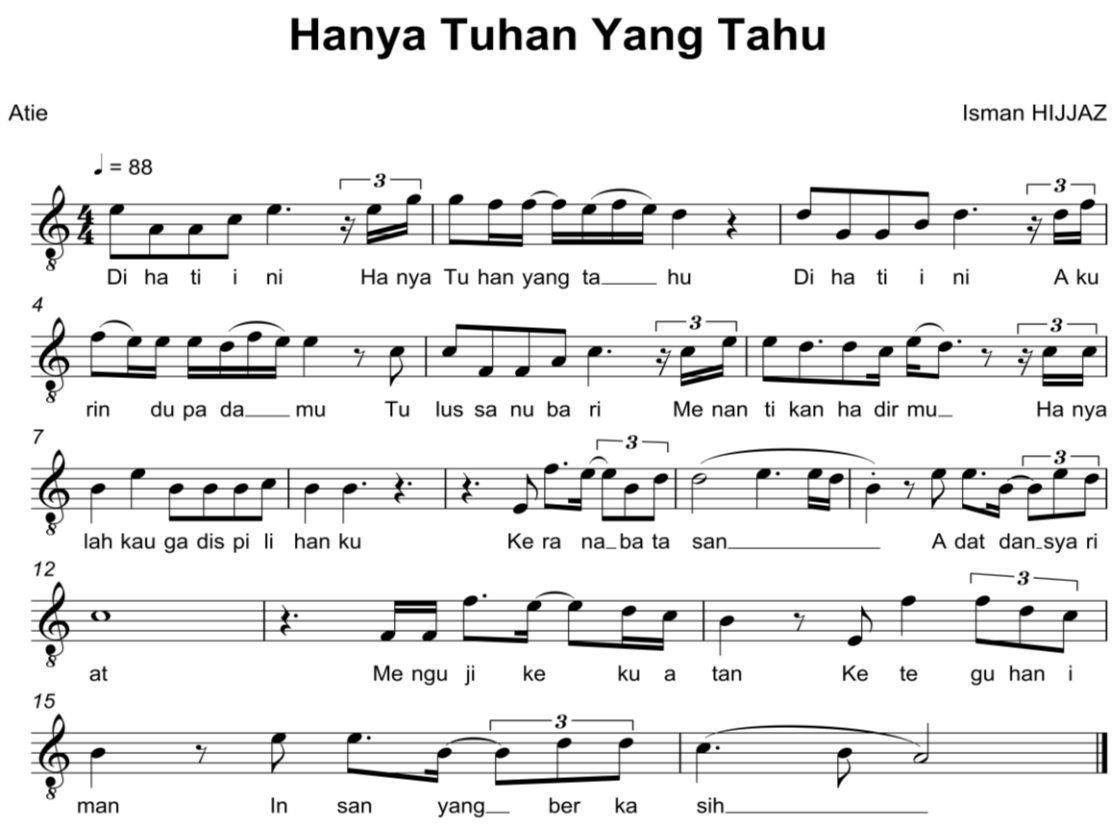
'Kasih Kekasih' by InTeam (*nasyid* group) is one of the songs which implements this concept in their lyrics. Composed by Isman Nadim with lyrics by Ito Lara, this song portrays a pair of

lovers who are already engaged, though it is also a mix with culture especially in sentence ‘menyarung cincin di jari’ or 'wearing the ring on the finger' but this cultural practice does not go against Islamic rules. This song mentions blessings from the parents, and the most important part of this song is at the verse ‘*Sebelum Diijabkabulkan... Syariat Tetap Membataskan’* (before the marriage, both must obey the Shari'ah limitation). These verses impress the Islamic guidance for gender interactions especially between strangers. The ring mentioned in the earlier verse is symbolic of being engaged or taken and wedding ceremony. As long it is not against Islamic guidance, this can be seen as an occasion where besides celebrating the couple, it is a medium for the family to inform relatives and friends regarding the marriage and to avoid any misunderstand or slander. Compared with the early years of Islamic music in Malaysia, most of it using traditional drum instruments and other percussion, the music arrangements have been modernised to suit the evolution of the musical era.

This concept is now one of the most frequently used concepts since it is easily relatable to all listeners and the words used in the lyrics are straightforward. After Inteam’s 'Kasih Kekasih' was a hit in 2000, UNIC made their debut in 2002 with their song titled 'Hanya Tuhan Yang Tahu'. This group maintains human love as a lyrical concept. UNIC is one group which started to implement lots of modernised songs to be in line with current trends in other popular songs.

As one of the members and founder of the UNIC group, I personally love the lyrics because they have a very deep meaning. 'Hanya Tuhan Yang Tahu' is a song where not only human love is shown, but what is the most important thing is how we put our trust in God's plan. As a human, falling in love is a normal thing, but how we act when we fall in love will reflect the *eeman* of that person. This is the core element that has been implemented in 'Hanya Tuhan Yang Tahu', where the lyrics show a man who finally meets the one he prayed for (his other half) and fell in love but instead of being daring and approaching the girl, he put his faith

in Allah and keeps praying for the protection of his faith. He put his trust in Allah's plans for him; if this is the right one, he believes that Allah with make it easy for him and one day he will get married to that woman.



Dihati ini hanya tuhan yang tahu...	Only God knows what is inside my heart
Dihati ini aku rindu padamu...	Deep down, I really miss you
Tulus sanubari menantikan hadirmu...	Waiting for you to come
Hanyalah kau gadis pilihanku	You are the only one for me
Kerana batasan...	There are boundaries
Adat dan syariah...	In culture and religion
Menguji kekuatan...	Testing the firmness of faith
Keteguhan iman...	Strong of faith
Insan yang berkasih…	Of two people in love

('Hanya Tuhan Yang Tahu', UNIC, 2002)

The verses above are from the UNIC song titled 'Hanya Tuhan Yang Tahu' (Only God know Everything) from UNIC's first album composed by Manis Helma and lyrics by Atie and Manis Alia. This song portrays human love from the perspective of Islam. The phrase '*Dihati ini hanya tuhan yang tahu... Dihati ini aku rindu padamu...*' (In this heart only god know, in this heart I miss you) from the first verse above shows how a good Muslim man keeps his feelings inside and keeps praying to Allah to protect his faith, while the second verse reflects the boundaries between male and female interaction according to Islamic practices. Just as Inteam, UNIC songs are more modern in music arrangements since they adopt a pop style in their songs.

Azalino from Universal Music (interviewed in 2015), who has been directly involved in the Malaysian music industry for several decades, said that as this genre grows rapidly in Malaysia, the music arrangements in producing the songs are also changing to follow the evolution of wider musical trends. At the same time, they ensure that this genre is always up to date so it won't be left behind as the trends of music continue to change. He adds that the style and arrangement of lyrics also change compared with the early years of this genre in Malaysia; nowadays, songs with love concepts are always in demand.

Huzaimi from Nowseeheart (interviewed in 2015) argued that as Islamic popular music is accepted in the Malaysian music industry, there are various aspects that grow and change in sync with the development of the industry in Malaysia. This can be seen by the lyrics used in Islamic songs in the early years where the lyrics keep repeating; the writing still focuses on the same scope and concepts in Islam. As time goes by and since this genre is accepted more and more, the old perception of the lyrics is also changing and the scope of lyrical writing has expanded. Lyrics are not only an element to complete a song but at the same time, they are a way to deliver messages, educate, and motivate the listeners.

Radzin from Munsyid (interviewed in 2016) stated that compared with the instruments, lyrics seem to be more affected in the development of Islamic music in Malaysia. He added that with the right lyrical structure, scope, concepts, and composition a song can properly convey Islamic messages to the listeners. To keep this genre current and in line with new trends and to keep up with the development of this genre, lyricists must always keep their lyrical structure and scope to fit with the music. At the same time, they have to always make sure that their lyrics reflect the concept of Islam. The next sub-section portrays another approach that has been implemented by makers of lyrics to do so.

6.4 Languages in Islamic popular music

The relationship between lyrics and a variety of languages is important in Malaysia's music industry. The author initially intended to observe the use of a variety languages in the lyrics by analysing how different languages were used in *nasyid* songs and evaluating the usefulness of this approach for audiences. He found that the variety of languages used since the early stage of this type of music has changed as the artists sought a wider audience. In Malaysia, "*nasyid* are mostly sung in the national language, a few songs in Arabic are included on albums and occasional English songs appear too: "Choice of language has important implications in a multi-racial, multi-religious nation like Malaysia. An outsider might think that singing in Malay would appeal to all Malaysians, but this is not necessarily the case." (Sarkissian 2005: 132). The songs often include Muslim-specific references that would not be comprehensible to non-Muslim Malay speakers, and while at the same time these songs are popular among Muslims in Indonesia. And, Barendregt and van Zanten have commented on the popularity of Malaysian *nasyid* groups in Indonesia, suggesting that the genre "is truly transnational in

character" (2002: 78-79). With a population almost ten times the size of Malaysia's, the Indonesian market is a significant lure for Malaysian groups in terms of record sales and touring possibilities.

In addition to using *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) in the production of most songs, this may be another strategy that leads composers and lyricists to produce songs in various languages such as Arabic, English, Chinese, Hindi, Javanese and so on. This is one approach which could help in attracting various types of listeners to this genre. Few singers and musicians consider this seriously. This approach could result in the improvement of *nasyid* song styles and concurrently attract non-Malay audiences within Malaysia and elsewhere, as Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015) argues:

> *With the coming of nasyid from Europe and America for example, people are beginning to be more open to listening to English songs because people believed that this way, we've become more educated and knowledgeable. So, when we become more familiar with English nasyid such as by Sami Yusof, then Zambika, and then Yusof Islam become more popular. Lately in the second decade of what? Maher Zain and a few others from Malaysia are beginning to accept songs of other languages and they are also comfortable with other language other than Malay. Besides, I believe that introducing more than one language in nasyid could help to attract people. Furthermore, most nasyid lovers are students, and this approach also helps students to improve their skills in English in addition to their formal education of the language.*

This was supported by the argument from Hazamin from Inteam Group (interviewed in 2015):

> *The lyrics today also insert other languages as it has become an international success, pioneered by Raihan. Languages such as English, Urdu, Pakistan, even Chinese, Hindi and of course Arabic are 'solidly symbolic' for nasyid. This has been common for a long time; even Arabic songs were popular as nasyid songs in the 1990s. So these are the experiments done by some nasyid groups who are trying to target the market outside of Malaysia. No matter what language they use, they still bring same meaning through Islamic lyrics, they still produce nasyid songs. So that's the elaboration.*

Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015) added the following point:

> *If we look at songs in the music industry not in the nasyid category in terms of the language factor, people seem to accept colloquial mixed languages. Like 'Kun Anta' uses simple language, it was accepted widely by the masses because now people are busy so they prefer music that is more direct, going straight to the heart and easy to understand.*

These respondents argue that a variety of languages have been used in *nasyid* songs since the early 1990s. They believe that by building on this approach, *nasyid* can grow exponentially to develop a global reach, and have positive impacts on audiences around the world in languages other than just Malay and Arabic.

6.5 Conclusion

The lyrical contents of Islamic songs are one of the essential elements in defining Islamic popular music. From the analysis, this chapter demonstrated how the lyrics introduce various Islamic concepts in Malaysia. These include characteristics of Islamic portrayals traditionally in the aspects of *fardhu ain* or the Pillars of Islam, celebrations of friendship, historical moments, challenges in Islam, and motivational values (from the Islamic point of view). Based on the analysis in this chapter, the author has shown the lyrics in Islamic songs can also refer to special occasions in the Islamic calendar or Islamic events which have been produced since the early stage of this music.

The transformation from ordinary traditional style to modern styles of lyrics especially in relation to the concept of love was identified in this study. Significant changes in lyrical content demonstrates the growth of lyrics from the mid-1990s to the present day. The *zikr* style

as the ordinary Islamic lyrical practice in society was also discussed. Therefore, this chapter aimed to address one of the central research questions by illustrating the role of lyrics as an important aspect in Islamic popular music.

In this discussion, the author explored the behaviour regarding lyrical style, production, artistic words associated with complex meanings, and the ways these lyrics changed when attempting to engage a wider audience. Along these lines, the use of different languages such as Arabic, English, Chinese, Urdu, and Javanese also played a significant role in engaging non-Malay audiences and introducing *nasyid* to them. It is also hoped that this analysis will help prepare Malaysia's music industry to develop future strategies and be more creative in producing lyrics for Islamic songs. By enhancing knowledge of lyrical practice, this chapter can show music producers how to encourage audiences to continue to support Islamic popular music. Next chapter moves on to explore the knowledge of participants and images of *nasyid*.

7 PARTICIPANTS AND IMAGES OF *NASYID* IN MALAYSIA'S MUSIC INDUSTRY

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the participants within the Islamic popular music industry in Malaysia. What these participants represent and portray will be scrutinised and elaborated upon, with a particular focus of the tensions between culture and religion. The role of fashion in the Islamic popular music industry, and its influence, will be examined further.

> *"Before the 1980s, at that time, generally when one listens to the lyrics of Islamic popular songs, those of religious themes were easily identified"* (Abd Fattah, interviewed in 2016)

It is no longer quite so easy to classify certain artists just by listening their songs. The positive evolution of Islamic popular music and the acceptance by audiences and participants from various age groups have clearly increased. From his experience in the music industry, the author highlights how the globalisation has become a prominent process that has led to the development of music styles. The image and personality of artists are two important factors that help audiences classify them and their genre. Following from the previous discussion on the landscape of Islamic popular music, this chapter examines the participants in this type of music and also discusses further the various types of images and personas that Islamic artists have adopted since the mid-1990s.

Here the author will use '*nasyid* artist' to represent Islamic artists discussed in chapter four. Their styles and trends vary markedly from those active in the 1990s. This chapter examines the trends introduced by *nasyid* artists in Malaysia by studying factors that have influenced the images or personae of these *nasyid* artists. An image could be referred to as the outfit that presents the individual style of an artist. It represents the artist's appearance and sometimes describes the personality that he or she carries during a performance. According to Funder (1997), personality refers to an individual's characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with their psychological mechanisms (hidden or not) while Feist (2008) contends that personality is a pattern of relatively permanent traits and unique characteristics that give both consistency and individuality to a person's behaviour.

As previously discussed, Islamic popular music communicates the concept of preaching *dakwah (see glossary)*,[43] which incorporates Islamic or godly messages and moral values. With regards to image and personality, Islamic popular music has its own visuals as *nasyid* singers will normally exhibit an Islamic image and personality in their performance style. Hence, the first part of this chapter will examine the participation of artists either in group or in solo performances. This is then followed by a scrutiny of the image and personality of Islamic artists in Malaysia, particularly in terms of religiosity, culture, and transmission of fashion trends. This chapter will draw out the potential influencing factors that contribute to the increasing number of *nasyid* artists. In addition, the varieties of trend styles and their changes over time will be reviewed.

[43] *Dakwah (see glossary)* is invite people to know and worship god (Allah). The knowledge and content about the *dakwah (see glossary)* is in the *quran* and *hadith*.

7.2 Participants in Islamic popular music in Malaysia

> *Islamic popular music had increasing presence and recognition since late 1990s after revolution of Raihan and most of people known Nasyid after that. Then, the populace became more interested in this sort of popular music and some also became nasyid artists themselves as followed by others such as Hijjaz, Rabbani, Saujana and others.* (Hazamin of Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015)

The respondent satated how Islamic popular music was developed, particularly with regards to *nasyid* artists. It began with Raihan creating the evolution of Malaysia's music industry and the ensuing improvements in lyrics and music variety. To be specific, in explaining how the figure of the contributors or people are involved in this music, the first part of this chapter explores further the participants of *Nasyid* and the visual elements that have influenced and created changes in the Islamic popular music industry. In this chapter, the author will also focus on the participants in Islamic music, the factors that drove them to join the industry, and the opportunities that had allowed them to grow. Several potential factors that influence the participants in Islamic popular music were taken into account, such as education curriculum, historical influences, a variety of Islamic competitions, and influences from foreign artists. Many Islamic artists developed their careers smoothly since being started at schools and continued further through universities. The education curriculum, as a medium of most suitable opportunities, have encouraged students or audiences to build their confidence with regard to Islamic popular music. Similarly, *nasyid* competitions have been ways to encourage students to be involved in Islamic popular music. Last but not least, the influences of artists from outside Malaysia led Islamic popular music to be improvised by seeking fresh and modern style of music which suited the current music industry. The participation of female bands in Malaysia is also considered, especially with regard to their acceptance by Malaysian society.

7.3 Participation in Islamic popular music in Malaysia

Malaysia's growing economy led to the development of its music industry. The stability of the music industry may also have positive consequences on the stability of Islamic popular music in Malaysia. Nevertheless, this genre still seeks new participants in order to ensure that Islamic popular music remains alive.

In Malaysia, Islamic popular music is accepted as a legitimate musical genre, and since the majority of the populations are Muslims, the conflict between Islam and music is minimised. This was proven when Raihan became successful.

7.3.1 Islamic popular music and education

> *When I saw the potential in nasyid, especially after Raihan had shown their ability, I was motivated and excited as I had always wanted to be one of the participants ever since my schooling days. In school, singing nasyid had developed my confidence and to express my interest. I try to deny it but the passion in this genre has always been there.* (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

The school environment may expose students to *nasyid* and encourage students to 'fall in love' with this sort of music. One of the other respondents, an expert on the Islamic popular music industry, discussed the potential of Islamic popular music in Malaysia. He strongly believed that two factors – potential and a good opportunity as best approach – constitute the requirements to become a *nasyid* artist in the Malaysian Islamic popular music arena. Performing in school was the starting point that had encouraged him:

> *Okay, I have to admit that a 'basic platform', especially a long time ago for nasyid were actually from schools or universities before all the technological developments nowadays. Most of Nasyid artists in*

> *Malaysia started their journey as nasyid artists from their school days…The same goes for me, from my university days.* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

Similar to the point raised above and based on his own experience as a musician and artist, he also pointed out that most *nasyid* artists build their musical careers from their school or university days. On a similar tone, another singer – Bazli – argues:

> *Looking back to the late 1990s and early 2000s and after the revolution where the Raihan phenomenon blasted open our music industry, nasyid opened the eyes of the market. Even students in schools went wild and wanted to go into nasyid. Students needed a platform to show their interest and what they want to deliver.* (Bazli of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

The respondent mentioned the revolution in Islamic popular music and quoted how the Raihan phenomenon had an impact on the students and encouraged their interest in *nasyid*. He also admitted that this genre had touched the students' hearts and driven them to look further into *nasyid*, even in the early years of schooling.

The author's passion and interest in exploring this research topic has brought him to look further into the interaction between Islamic popular music and its participants in Malaysia. An investigation into school and university platforms was carried out since most of the respondents claimed that *nasyid* artists in Malaysia nurtured their interest and career from the 'ideal platform'. Schools and universities are ideal platforms because they are institutions designed to provide a learning space and appropriate environment for students. Consider the comments of one of Nasyid group' members from Rabbani Group:

> *I believe the development of nasyid music, especially Islamic popular music, is growing rapidly in Malaysia because without realising it, the Malaysian government has given spacious space to the nasyid music industry itself. If we were to review the primary schools, secondary schools, and especially at universities level, and also for the government sectors there already have the Nasyid National Awards for nasyid groups among civil servants. That is why nasyid can grow rapidly in Malaysia. Even foreign*

> *countries acknowledge that Malaysia has been the 'master of nasyid' right from the early days of Islamic popular music. I would deny if someone says that nasyid Malaysia is not a product, not Malaysia's music. I would strongly deny because we introduce and develop from the 'roots' and which we've applied nasyid in the school environment, work environment and others.* (Azadan of Rabbani, interviewed in 2015)

Azadan a *nasyid* singer, argues that *nasyid* developed smoothly because a platform for development was there from primary school level and progressed further up to university level. These platforms have encouraged and nurtured students to build their confidence with regard to Islamic music. Boethel (2000) describes school curricula as community organisations that can develop and work with school staff to integrate classroom lessons in subject areas including arts, civic education, and school-to-work. In many cases, they also provide actual staff members, who are artists and musicians themselves to teach the students. Another positive outcome for schools is that the community begins to see schools as a site for work preparation to introduce subjects including arts and music, through service learning, and student entrepreneurship activities. In Malaysia's school education, the curriculum was seriously examined as documented in the 'Preliminary Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025' (September 2012). An excerpt from the blueprint is as follows:

> *The Ministry has developed its written curriculum using a wide range of benchmarks from top-performing education systems to ensure alignment with international standards on the knowledge and skills expected of students at different ages. These international benchmarks have also been aligned with the National Education Philosophy to produce a curriculum that is suitable for the Malaysian context.*

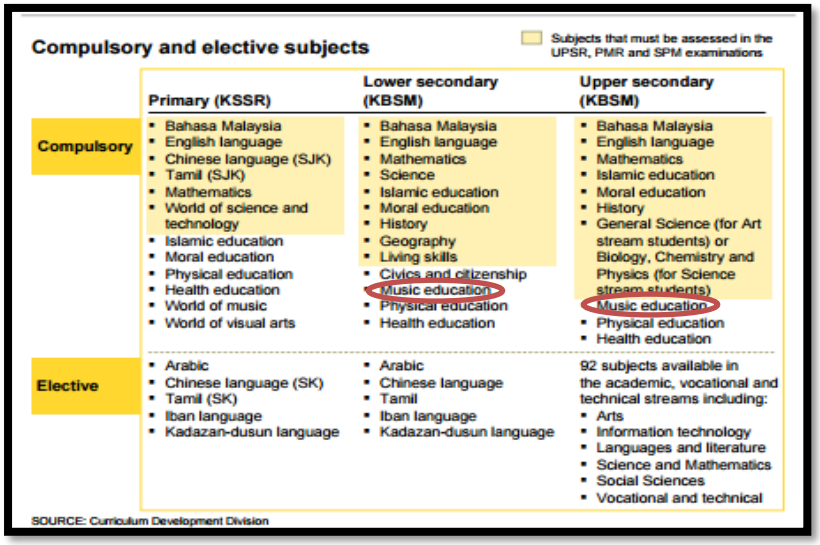


Figure 7.1: Music in the Malaysian school curricula[44]

In recent years, the Malaysian government has implemented a number of reforms such as establishing vision schools in 1997 and providing adequate teaching-learning facilities in order to strengthen the national schools. The system also made history as music became a compulsory subject in school. The aim was to encourage the teaching of traditions and customs of other main ethnic groups in Malaysia. It was reported that in 2006, 80% of the secondary schools established art clubs and at most school music clubs were involved in *nasyid*, *kompang*, choir, brass, and string bands. At the same time, the government encouraged all students to join curricula in order to balance their education system (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2006).

[44] Source from http://education-in-malaysia.wikia.com/wiki/Schooling_in_Malaysia

In addition, this medium would also be the suitable way to educate youth in schools on how and what to listen to in order to deliver the concept to the listeners. This was mentioned by a composer:

> *At school stage, it will be the best way to educate at early stage (especially students) on how music is developed. Business in Islam normally does not harm other people and must be within the commandment of halal.* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

As the author be as insider in this music industry, he noticed in sort of Islamic music, the business operate is slightly diferrent with other business concept since it been related with halal and haram concept as also relating with 'Halal literacy' conceptual (as described in Chapter 2). Added by Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015: "The concept of free downloaded always be as topic in circles among makers and audiences which also been look out seriously. Basically, this is not allowed and also effect music industry especially for Islamic music filed in angle of business itself". Fuad also mentioned that in proper way of buying the music itself such as in Tunecore, itunes is the best way to educate people which this should be highlighted in suitable platforms such as schools or even through media.

As this also been stated by Hazim (interviewed in 2015);

> *As I am involving as cover designer, indirectly I am looking on how album cover produced. We can see at the album cover for the nasyid album or zikr albums will stated soft advice to show and gently educate people about Islamic business which highlighted about 'Piracy' as below*:

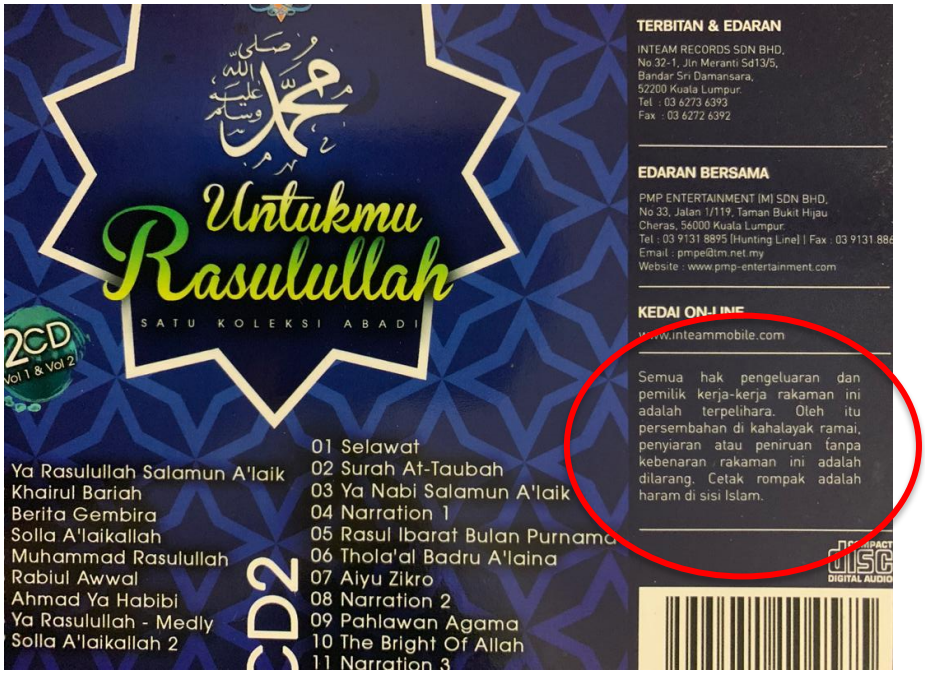


Figure 7.2: Nasyid album cover (back layout) in Malaysia (photo by author)

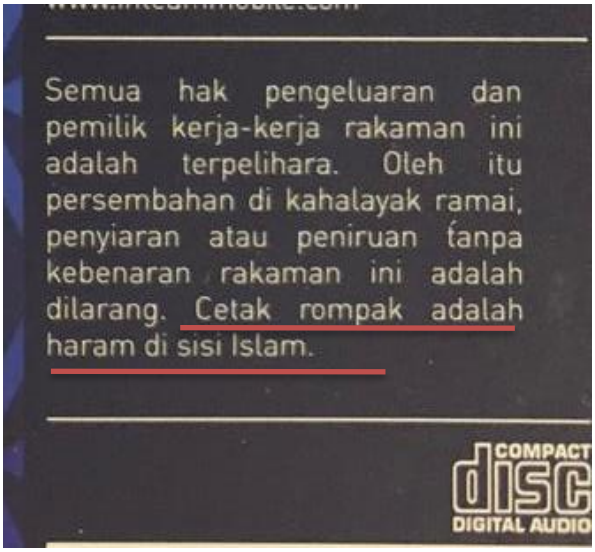


Figure 7.3: Statement educating buyers about halal literacy in Islam (photo by author)



Figure 7.4: Back album cover from Hijjaz (photo by author)

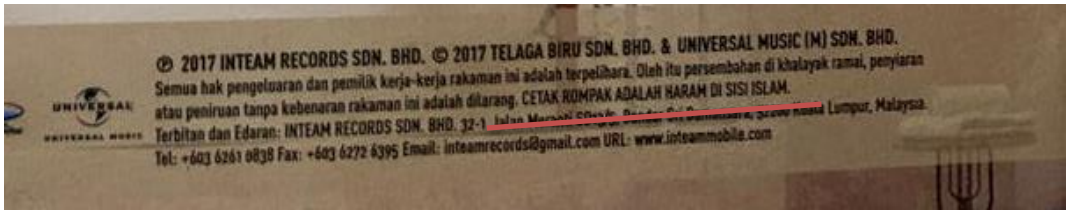


Figure 7.5: Statement on piracy being *haram* (prohibited) in Islam (photo by author)

From these two examples as shown above, the implementation of Halal literacy been educating by providing knowledge as indirectly remind people that Pricacy is Haram in Islam. It was mentioned that; All production and recording rights reserved. Public performance, broadcasting and copying process are prohibited. Strongly remind that Piracy is Haram in Islam. Thus, the author also provides an example of cover album from non-nasyid album (Figure 7.6) to be compare:



Figure 7.6: Non-nasyid album cover (back layout) from film soundtrack[45]



Figure 7.7: MIG Records statement on general copyright regulations

As we can refer to Figure 7.7, it shown that the right of production and recording been highlighted to be protected but not in term of how the Haram concept which this is potray the different implementation with nasyid album as mentioned above.

[45] Photo from http://lagendamuzik.blogspot.com/2014/01/ost-mami-jarum.html



Figure 7.8: *Nasyid* at school (photo by author)

Figure 7.8 above shows a *nasyid* performances held at *Sekolah Menengah Agama Al-Khairiah* (Islamic secondary school Al Khairiah), located in Temerloh, Pahang, during their 'Teacher's Day 2016' celebration. This performance can be viewed[46] to provide a better understanding of how *nasyid* is actually performed at school. Music is part of the curriculum in Malaysia, and from this subject, students will gain experience in competitions or performances. Accordingly, *Sekolah Menengah Agama Al-Khairiah* (Islamic secondary school Al Khairiah) Temerloh, Pahang has proven that the Malaysian education system encourages students to balance their academic and extracurricular aspects.

[46] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQeja9SZqUk&list=RDSVCLNhe-fEU&index=2; accessed on [insert date].



Figure 7.9: Another *nasyid* activity held at school (Petronita, 2016)

As stated in the news highlighted in Petronita Portal published on October 20, 2016, during the ceremony of the Electronic Braille Quran held at *Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas* (Disable secondary school) Setapak, in Kuala Lumpur city, guests were entertained with a selection of religious songs provided by the school's *nasyid* group, who were also the champions in the National Inter-School *Nasyid* Competition (Special Curriculum Education). This shows that the school platform has become an important medium to introduce Islamic popular music to the students. Universities play a similar role. Various opinions were received on this point:

> *So, when nasyid started evolving after Raihan's success, I was also interested to join when I was in university. I started with nasyid in 2002 and at that time I was still at the UIA (International Islamic University). I was with the UNIC Group before leaving and became a solo artist. And as more nasyid groups came out, each of these groups would try to create their own identity and have their own target group or market. We as UNIC were formed and our targets were teenagers and university students. Students especially in universities are generally exposed to nasyid and this led them to join the nasyid arena too.* (Hazamin of Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015)

Our respondent argued that he began his journey by joining in Islamic popular music at the university platform as he believes that was a suitable medium at the time. He mentioned that the university served as an ideal platform for them to introduce Islamic music to audiences, attract participants, and sell albums. Another *nasyid* artist argued that:

> *A lot of those who entered the nasyid music industry gained experiences and started nasyid during their school days. This was because at school, there were nasyid groups, regardless whether it was formed for the sake of entering the industry or not, but there were nasyid competitions at elementary schools. So, when we look at nasyid artists now, they actually started at school. Now I have produced a few underground nasyid albums from nasyid artists which I had assembled from universities. These students have deep passion for the nasyid industry but they don't know how to go about it. So we assembled them into groups or as solo singers.* (Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016)

Islamic music's participants also led one of the musicians who is also a *nasyid* artist to argue as follows:

> *So, university was the platform. When nasyid artists were friendly in cyberspace made people like them more and also support them. That is why the online community was very strong at the time and they could conduct all sorts of activities. Some of them even started businesses and a profitable business venture at that. These were some of the things done earlier. From my days as a university student until now, the university remains the most appropriate and the main platform. However, it is not as strong as it used to be because lately a lot of universities are beginning to be more flexible. Back then, most of the nasyid artists started their journey in the Islamic popular music industry while they were at their universities level and only nasyid artists may perform at the university; non-nasyid artists were not allowed to enter the campus. With the universities becoming more flexible now, a lot of other artists are also permitted to perform. As such, as a platform the universities are now deteriorating even though there are still those who support nasyid, especially those in the Islamic students' associations and so on.* (Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016)

In addition, both respondents talked about universities as another platform for their careers in Islamic popular music.

7.3.2 Nasyid Competitions

Nasyid competitions have been another way to encourage students to be involved in Islamic popular music. This was pointed out by a *nasyid* singer;

> *In Malaysia, most schools have their own internal nasyid competitions. It is compulsory for schools to teach and practice nasyid. Other than contemporary nasyid, they also have to know the Arab nasyid and where did these Arab nasyids came from? Surely, it's from the influences of the songs I mentioned earlier and Arab songs are related to the Holy Quran. If kids at school perform songs with 'Tarannum[47]' then the judges will give their marks based on the method of using Tarannum; however, they still consider that as nasyid.* (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

N*asyid* may be perfomed in a number of different styles, as long as it complies with Shari'ah[48] on acceptable music. Another *nasyid* singer noted,

> *Islamic popular music or nasyid was a compulsory curriculum activity at school. Nasyid groups mushroomed in schools and there were even nasyid competitions. These were great developments, and in so doing helped to develop nasyid group itself.* (Fadzli from TV Hijrah, interviewed in 2016)

There is clearly interaction between curriculum education and *nasyid* competitions, and that interaction has helped to form new *nasyid* groups. Interviwees believed that *nasyid* competitions encouraged people, and especially students, to participate in the *nasyid* arena:

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[47] Tarannum is the name of Islamic traditional way of sound. It normally be use when recite the quran. It has 7 sounds of Tarannum which are bayati, thiqah, nahwan, ras, hijjaz, sob and jiharkah.
[48] Shari'ah is Islamic law which help Muslim people live in the Islamic way of life.

> *A lot of those who enter the nasyid music industry started during their school days because in schools, there are nasyid groups. Regardless of whether the group was formed for the sake of entering the industry, there are nasyid competitions at elementary schools. So when we look at nasyid artists now, it actually started as a result of the school nasyid competitions.* (Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016)

One example of a *nasyid* competition that was held in one of the universities in Malaysia during Maulidul Rasul 2015 can help illustrate this point. The show was held on 11 February, 2015, and information on the event was posted on University Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) website, with a headline '*Nasyid* Competition in conjunction with Maulidul Rasul 1436H'. The Islamic Centre of UMS offered cash prizes to winners of this competition.

Meanwhile, on 11 April 2016, Rosnah Md Yusuff wrote for *Kementerian Belia dan Sukan Malaysia* (Ministry of Youth and Sports of Malaysia-KBSM) and the news article was posted with a headline 'Kiranut National Skills Institute (IKBN) Kiranut' Al-Quran Recital, Memorising and *Nasyid* competitions'. The event was held at Surau An-Nur and IKBN Kinemat Limauan-Limauan hall and was organised by the Student Affairs of that IKBN branch. The event carried the theme 'Praised Moral, Nation Admired' (*Moral disanjung, Bangsa dikagumi*). Overall, the Al-Quran Recitation competition attracted seven participants and offered memorabilia to all seven participants. That news article also highlighted that the event was strongly supported by students of that IKBN Branch, resulting in eight groups taking part in the *nasyid* competition. The news article implied that, in addition to school and university platforms, the government had also given support to many *nasyid*-related programmes, such as *nasyid* competitions. This opportunity has helped to attract people's interest and thus expand the *nasyid* industry.

7.3.3 Family Influence on Islamic popular music artists

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, the Islamic dimension of Malaysian culture appears as a legacy background of Islam and the way people carry out religious rituals in public spaces. *Nasyid* comprises a genre of Islamicised music and which favourably disposes many people towards it

Although the majority of the population in Malaysia is Muslim, Muslim citizens historically exhibit broad differences in their practice of Islam. As an example, the author grew up in a pious family environment. In the morning, the author would go to a public school like other children and in the afternoon, attend an Islamic primary school for religious classes. The Islamic primary school was not compulsory and the subjects taught at the school were various Islamic subjects. Among the subjects taught were matters pertaining to the pillars of Islam and procedures on how to perform the religious obligations, such as regular daily prayers. Some of the subjects taught had been taught earlier by my parents (both are teachers of Islamic education). At the secondary school level, the author went to another Islamic school to complete his school years before progressing to tertiary education at university. This flow of education, together with my family's support and background, led me to continue and perform well in both education and music, as did other family members.

During the author's youth, he observed how family background and its surrounding environment were connected as factors which influenced people to participate in Islamic music. This was echoed by Rabbani:

> *Nasyid groups in Malaysia are from those who come from the background of religion particularly from a religious family background. The same is true for me. Even though Islamic schools or Islamic boarding school (commonly known as sekolah pondok) focused on religious subjects, there also seek to modernise, but they do have the appearance of traditional element in Malaysia. Indirectly they were forced to be*

interested in nasyid music as they mostly focus on Islamic way of entertainment. (Azadan of Rabbani, interviewed in 2015)

A similar opinion was obtained from another musician,

When they have encouragement from others, especially from their family, and they see all Islamic practices being practiced by family' members even by listening to Zikr therapy or others songs that convey good messages, indirectly they plant interest in it … I say that because I create nasyid to commercialise it. There are a lot who do nasyid for family reasons for they received support from their family members. Also, if they come from a pious family, so they would prefer to listen to Islamic music. Besides, there also do nasyid for television stations, for fun, or for educational institutions. So, what about my reason for getting into nasyid because I've chosen to commercialise nasyid but this time, it's still under the Islamic music genre. It's just that the content I've chosen is Zikr but I make into a musical. (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

To highlight family influence, the respondent looked at other *nasyid* artists' experiences and concluded that family background leads many *nasyid* artists to participate in Islamic popular music industry in Malaysia.

7.3.4 Influences from foreign artists

Between 2000 and 2005, *nasyid* was a firmly established genre in Islamic popular music, occupying a prominent position in the music and recording industries of the South East Asian Muslims. *Nasyid* continues to be popular among Islamic youths in Malaysia, having provided a young, urban audience with a soundtrack for a modern Muslim Malay lifestyle. Middle Eastern activism and its influence was not the sole role model for the development of *nasyid* or for the participants. At the same time, the western popular cultures also influenced the genre.

Indeed, present-day *nasyid* music reveals a careful balance of both East and West – currently a much-debated topic throughout the Islamic world (see Weintraub 2011).

Barendregt refers to *nasyid* as the generic term for sung poetry that was originally found in such countries as Egypt and Yemen. In the late 1980s before the emergence of Raihan, the influencing 'force' at that time was the religious nationalist music of the first Palestinian Intifada. The present-day *nasyid* is more creative musically; it began to incorporate tambourines, drums, and even synthesisers into the music. Initially this Middle Eastern *nasyid* was highly politicised, a statement similar to the wearing of the headscarves by students on campuses (Barendregt 2011).

In Malaysia, local forms of *nasyid* have similarly been a long-standing art form. Marusky and Tan (2004: 264) argued that in Malaysia *nasyid* music was already the music of the masses in as early as the 1950s. Back then, *nasyid* music was used in interludes at the state and national Quran reading competitions. Over time, *Nasyid* music transformed into a successful commercial form in the late 1980. In addition, similar genres and spiritual protest music were brought back by Malaysian students upon finishing their studies in countries such as Yemen, Jordon, Kuwait, and other Southwest Asian countries.

At the early stage especially in the first decade (1996 until 2005), the culture that has influenced Islamic popular music the most in Malaysia came from the Middle Eastern countries. The phenomenon is referred as *Arqam*.[49] Although *Arqam* was not initially political in character; it clearly propagated an alternative nation state in Malaysia, having prioritised *ummah* above national citizenship. Their calling for a re-universalisation of Islamic ties was

[49] Arqam is a big Islamic movement based in Malaysia. The founder named is Ashaari Muhammad.

no longer subjected to bureaucratisation, ethnicisation, or nationalisation by the state. At the height of Arqam's popularity, and before the movement was eventually banned in 1994, these communes were to be found in Malaysia as well as in neighbouring countries like Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. The majority of the Arqam's followers were students and young intellectuals who offered their services to the movement. Arqam could pride itself on having their own school, film unit, and studios (Nagata 2004: 107).

Sheikh-ul Arqam, the religious leader of the movement, was accompanied by Arqam's own musical group called Nada Murni. Nagata described Nada Murni as having brought Islamic genre in a *zikr*[50] concept and as they were influenced by the Middle East, it was mostly in the Arabic language. Consequently, *nasyid* in Malaysia was built up from this concept by looking at the Middle Eastern countries as their model in producing Islamic popular music in Malaysia. From that the participants have commented positively after the emergence of Raihan, and through the influence of Nada Murni.

In the 1990s, *nasyid* grew rapidly as more artists entered the music industry including Hijjaz (Hijjaz Records, formerly BMG), Rabbani (KRU Music-EMI), Brothers (Ambang Klasik), and Inteam (Hijjaz Records). These groups, with Raihan, popularised Islamic popular music with the influences from the Middle East, together with their own creativities introduced during the globalised era. In the early 2000s, *nasyid* experiences further innovations in term of music composition as they become more contemporary and more new *nasyid* groups were introduced as brought by Inteam and UNIC Groups. Thus, *nasyid* pop music was introduced as a form of Islamic religious singing through a vocal group and percussion music. This genre

[50] *Zikr* meaning is remembrance. In Islam *Zikr* means recite and praise to god Allah whether within the mind (quietly) or loudly.

has gained much support from people especially in rural areas. But how has the momentum of *nasyid* pop music increased towards the audiences?

In the 2000s, western pop music produced phenomenally successful artists such as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. Spears. Their success influenced local *nasyid* artists who introduced aspects of their styles into the local music scene, as stated by a number of singers interviewed:

> *So, before the emergence or Raihan, there was Nada Murni, which really is exactly what nasyid was with in style of Zikr or acappella. Then it was mixed with pop and became contemporary nasyid. The lyrics are still Islamic but the music is a little different. Then after Raihan along came Rabbani, Hijjaz. Rabbani on the other hand brought another evolution.* (Shamir, interviewed in 2016)

> *In Malaysia's nasyid, nasyid exisst as traditionally as early stage of introduction of this music and it had been improved with pop and others genres and is now known as contemporary nasyid.* (Huzaimi of Nowseeheart, interviewed in 2015)

> *When contemporary music came in during the rise of Raihan in 1995 and onwards, then there was Nowseeheart, Saujana and amongst the pioneers of contemporary nasyid, there were changes in the use of traditional instruments such as kompang in which was the sole instrument used for nasyid. When the contemporary style of nasyid became popular, during the earlier stages there were backlashes but after a while the mass began to accept the music.* (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

Ballad or pop artists singing '*nasyid*' became a new trend in Malaysia. Too Phat brought a new phenomenon to *nasyid* when it produced a new concept of Islamic songs under the influence of hip-hop with the song '*Alhamdulillah*' (Praise be to Allah[51]).

[51] The music video of the song Alhamdulillah can be viewed at https://a capella.youtube.com/watch?v=dmqq-9gEIR0.



Figure 7.10: 'Alhamdulillah', a collaboration by Yasin (right) (Islamic artist) and Too Phat (left).

This song brought new ‘energy’ into Islamic popular music style. With a fresh and new music arrangement combining Rap, Arabic music and also a touch of modern music, it was warmly accepted by audiences. The boyband phenomenon brought new styles to the Malaysian music industry and consumers.

The influence of Maher Zain was another new addition to the *nasyid* industry in Malaysia, which encouraged more solo artists to come up with nocvel concepts. The song ‘InshaAllah’ introduced Maher Zain to the Malaysian audience and the success of Maher Zain through this song motivated people to get involved as solo *nasyid* artists rather than forming groups. His album of ‘Thank You Allah’ was the bestselling music album in Malaysia in year 2010. Maher Zain also received eight platinum awards for his debut album. Cheng, Managing Director of Warner Music Malaysia, commented that:

> *This is a tremendous achievement especially in the digital age of music consumption. Maher’s debut album is actually the highest selling album in Malaysia in the last decade.*

Along these lines, in 2015, newcomer Humood from Kuwait brought out his hit Islamic Arabic song ‘Kun Anta’ or ‘Be Yourself’, which greatly impacted Islamic popular music in

Malaysia due to his up-to-date and outstanding music arrangement (as stated in The Rakyat post on 9th June 2015, *link provided in footnote*[52]).



Figure 7.11: Pictures that show how song 'Kun Anta' impacted Islamic popular music in Malaysia

The song was easy to understand, catchy and easy to hum along as well. This, in turn, attracted more participants to the *nasyid* industry, as pointed out by a Malaysian lyricist:

> *Like 'Kun Anta' uses simple language, it was accepted widely by the mass because now people are busy so they prefer music that is more direct, going straight to the heart and easy to understand. Then newcomers in Malaysia especially try to bring their concept as a solo nasyid artist with cheeky or catchy nasyid music. Nasyid will not die but there is a decrease in demand because nasyid song is no longer trending like it used to be. When we look at Humood's song 'Kun Anta' which exploded in popularity, he came to Malaysia and was offered many shows.* (Hazamin of Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015)

[52]http://www.therakyatpost.com/life/2015/06/09/kun-anta-takes-malaysia-by-storm-following-viral-dubsmash-video/ (accesed on 6th April 2019)

The importance of this sub-section is to describe the qualities of participants in nasyid, especially in aspects of how it could come into being. Thus, a demand by audiences for improvisation in Islamic popular music styles led various participants to innovate new marketable strategies. Contemporary *nasyid* artists in Malaysia have adopted improvisation within the music genre. The next part of the discussion investigates another key innovation for nasyid: the participation of female bands and their societal acceptance in Malaysia.

7.4 Female artists and social acceptance

The participation of female bands in the Malaysian music industry has triggered a number of important debates. A key comcern is the issue of *awrah (see glossary)*:[53] the voices of women are considered *awrah (see glossary)* to be concealed and protected from outsiders and only reserved for their husbands (and their *mahram*[54]). As stated by Beng (2017: 83-85), in the first half of twentieth century, a young muslim woman was restricted from doing the outside activities[55]. Their movements were limited to the home work and village community.

Western scholars, authors, journalists, and artists, when considering 'music and Islam' and 'women and Islam', tend to suggest that the religion has both individual agency and universal applications (Rasmussen 2010). Scholars of gender in Southeast Asia generally

[53] *Awrah (see glossary)* is a term used within Islam which denotes the intimate parts of the body, for both men and women, which must be covered with clothing. There are some arguments said that the voice of women is also an awrah (see glossary) as it has seduced sound that can lead to a bad result to a man and women. Exposing the *awrah (see glossary)* is unlawful in Islam and is regarded as sin.

[54] *Mahram* is a term who use for women who have a blood or special relationship that she never permitted to married with such as her father

[55] Restricted from outside activities who normally doing by man such as playing football and others: any activites involving with men (could not be mix together) and influence with time constraint (especially night)

promote the view that ‘complementarity’ and ‘equality’ characterise the interactions between men and women in this region, especially when compared to the neighbouring areas of South Asia, China, and the Muslim Middle East (see Ramusack 1999: 79). In her survey of early accounts of the region, Ramusack summarises the representation of women as either ‘bright butterflies’ or ’shrewd traders’. She writes:

> *Many outsider sources on women in Southeast Asia comment on their relatively high social position and limit it to their economic autonomy, the veneration of fertility in indigenous religious, and bilateral kinship systems in which descent and property may pass through both the family and male lines.*

Beyond this stereotype in Southeast Asian historiography, there is specific evidence that testifies to the theory of egalitarianism. Ramusack cites the attention given to the Minangkabau of Sumatra in Indonesia, the matrilineal and matrilocal Muslim community that has adapted its particular form of *adat*, or cultural custom, to the strong Islamic currents that infiltrated the island beginning around the 14th century. Further accounts of the status of daughters, the acceptance of premarital sexual activity, and the notion that sexual relations are ideally to be a source of pleasure for both partners, as well as the evidence of women’s literacy, political leadership, economic strength, spiritual powers, and deification as ancestors, testify to the potential ‘level playing field’ for Southeast Asian men and women.

More recently, however, scholars interested in gender in Southeast Asia in general have also identified a need to revise, in the words of editors Ong and Peletz, “dominant scholarly conceptions of gender in Southeast Asia that focus on egalitarianism, complementarity and the relative autonomy of women in relation to men” (Ong, Aihwa, and Michael G. Peletz 1995: 1). Anne Rasmussen suggests, in the Indonesian context at least, that ideas and knowledge “link women to a bundle of concepts and characteristics including shame, pollution, emotion, irrationality, weakness, danger, lack of control, imperfection, and embarrassment.” For Indonesian women making making music, she writes: “the voices and the bodies of women are

not a source of shame, and the permissibility of participation is not conditioned by deemphasising their femininity, as may be the case in other cultural contexts where women act as and work alongside men" (2010: 19).

Huda was the first female *Nasyid* group in Malaysia. Both Raihan and Huda were signed to the same label, Warner Music Production. Lisa Muhamad, a member of Huda told a journalist, 'Basically, the *nasyid* performed by Huda is to express the love to Allah and also instil good values for the people'. According to some reliable sources, the profits generated by Raihan and Huda helped Warner Music in Malaysia, which had been hit badly in the 1997 financial crisis. The success of Raihan and Huda prompted most record labels in Malaysia to create their own *Nasyid* group in the late 1990s even for a female *nasyid* group. (Kahn, 2001)

'Conveying the messages that can drive the Muslims to a positive life' is a main goal of Huda, a female *Nasyid* Group in Malaysia. According to Saharuddin (1998), he argued that as the first female *nasyid* group, they were burdened with responsibilities as wives and mothers as well (see Beng (2017: 83-85). But in being active they showed the existence of female *nasyid* in Malaysia.

Barendregt (2008) argued that since the 1980s, a new Islamic middle class has emerged throughout Southeast Asia including Malaysia and Indonesia. An Islamic resurgence gained real momentum after greater freedom was given for the staging of public manifestations of Islam after 1998. The rise of a new 'Islamic *chic',* and a publicly visible Islam, has shown that religion and capitalism are by no means incompatible. Taking *nasyid* as the soundtrack of this emergent Islamic middle class, the Malaysian group Raihan should be regarded as one of the most successful brands in today's *nasyid* industry. Whereas there is a long tradition of Islamic pop music in the Southeast Asian region, both *dangdut* singer Rhoma Irama and the female Qasidah groups of the 1980s spring to mind, Raihan is the first Muslim pop group to gain truly

transnational celebrity status, a fame which stretches far beyond Southeast Asia. Their 1996 *Puji-Pujian* (Songs of Praise) was Malaysia's bestselling album ever. Soon after the group signed a major record deal with Warner, they were undertaking international tours and also co-operated in looking to help the formation of a female *nasyid* group (Barendregt 2008). Over time, Malaysia's music industry grew more confident in dealing with female *nasyid* bands.

As audiences began to accept female *nasyid* groups, regulations pertaining to women's participation and dress code also requires understanding with the Muslims' clothing requirement (Raseuki, 2009). The author realises that female groups remain a minority, and face restictions that do not pertain to men. Women performers cover their heads, as do other young women in many parts of the Muslim world in order to participate in public life. However, they are often covering up in colourful long shirts or *baju kurung* (Malay long dress) and tying their headscarves in creative and fashionable ways. As Gole (2002: 177, 180) pointed out, the veil or headscarf is:

> *'claimed by a new generation of women … as a cultural symbol of distinction in a non-western context of modernity'.*

In the Muslim context, women's participation in performance and the wearing of the *telekung* is considered modern. Although there are restrictions on women's participation, *nasyid* provides Muslim women new ways of expressing themselves in public (Beng S.B 2007).

However, there has been arguments among Islamic scholars about whether voices are *awrah (see glossary),* a point of contention in Islamic music participation. When political party Islam Se Malaysia (PAS, Islamic Party of Malaysia) took over the state government in Kelantan in 1990 all shows were deemed as un-Islamic and they banned all public performance, including traditional theatrical acts such as *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet) and *makyong* (a form

of Malay theatre), as well as rock concerts. Hence, female *nasyid* groups were first blocked and then banned.

Based on Sahih Al- Bukhary (1987),[56] discussions about Islamic music cannot be separated with Hadith and *Sunnah* (see glossary) views. These are the guidelines that Muslims must use and hold on to in order to ensure everyday compliance with Islamic tenets. Hence, in this issue, one of the most frequently repeated hadith used as evidence that the voices of women are *awrah (see glossary)* relates to the rules for interrupting an imam during *solah*[57] (ritual prayers) if it is necessary to direct the imam's attention to something. Hence, if a woman's voice were '*awrah (see glossary)*'; women singing in the presence of men would certainly have been prohibited. What is prohibited in a woman's voice, therefore, is not the sound of melody, but for her to sing with the intention to seduce or encourage with any lyrics that not follow the Islamic rulling is what prohibited in Islam.

As stated by Felski and Rika 1995; Ardis and Lewis 2002, scholars have noted that women are often ignored of modernity and music. "Looking out that modernity and morality are often discursively produced as absolute and universal categories. An analysis of women, gender and sexuality in comparative perspective enables us to illuminate the often-abstract notions of modernity and morality in specific historical and material circumstances." Weintraub and Barendregt (2017: 14). Weintraub and Barendregt argue that women entertainers throughout Asia have often been castigated for public performances of song and dance. In Malaysia, this issue was highlighted by Abd Fattah, Farihin (interview 2016)

[56] Sahiah Al-Bukhary was a collection of *hadith* compiled by Imam Muhammad Al-Bukhary.
[57] Solah is prayer action starting from *takbeer* until giving of *salam*.

'As the female voice is considered as aurat (awrah (see glossary)), women been banned from taking part in all concerts and live entertainment shows in Kelantan since 2002'

In *The Star Online*, 22 September 2017 Hanis Zainal wrote about this issue in reference to how Kelantan banned women performances. 'The Kelantan government must lift the ban on its traditional cultural performances and the restriction it imposes on women performance in the State' says by the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights Karima Bennouce. (link: https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/09/22/please-lift-the-ban-kelantan-un-rep-stop-restrictions-on-cultural-performances-and-women/)

At this point, the Islamic popular music industry in Malaysia is still seeking a progressive musical development and provide a platform to female *nasyid* bands in order to ensure the music industry continues to grow and be diverse.

The female naysid groups include HAWA (Juara Records – recording label), Solehah (Polygram – recording label), and Mawaddah (Mawaddah Productions – recording label). The new millenium saw the emergence of solo female artists in Islamic popular music, including Waheeda and Heliza. Female singers in genres such as pop also started to bring out Islamic songs, this being a new strategy for them in the Malaysian music industry. This also illustrates that contemporary or modern *nasyid* is popular among younger Muslims as it is seen to be 'fresh', Islamic, and yet Malaysian. The new form of *dakwah (see glossary)* through music also provides a forum for Muslim performers and audiences to debate non-western modernity.[58] For example, consider the lyrics of this song:

[58] The following links allow for further understanding on how they bring out this music at feature the female *nasyid* groups Solehah and Mawaddah; available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuPsGFtQFh0

Membaca Syahadah wajib umat Islam,	"Shahadah" is Compulsory to Muslims,
Mendirikan solat perintah tuhan,	Perform prayer is an order from Allah,
Menjalankan puasa kewajipan,	fasting and pay zakah,
Membayarkan zakat untuk menyucikan,	is to purify,
Naik haji ke tanah suci kesempurnaan.	Hajj to the holy land of perfection
Iman pada Allah sudah kewajipan,	Faith in God is obligatory,
Iman pada Malaikat diharuskan,	Faith in Angel is required,
Iman pada kitab, kitab suci Tuhan,	Faith in the book, the holy book of God,
Iman kepada Nabi dan rasul Tuhan	Faith in the Prophet and the God

This song conveys religious messages and Islamic ground rules. From the lyrics, the main concept is giving people knowledge regarding the Pillars of Islam and Pillars of Faith; which are the main roots of Islam. Thus, this *Nasyid* group believes that the approach might help people understand further about Islamic practices.

In the long run, the position on statements such as 'the voice of women is *awrah (see glossary)*' or questions of whether 'whether women can sing' is that there no direct statement found in the Qur'an or *Sunnah* (see glossary). According to Barendregt (2017), some male artists in Malaysia believed that it was not suitable for women to sing in public; they should only sing for female audiences. By considering a case study of the female singer Siti Nurhaliza[59], Barendregt suggests that *nasyid* is not only about music, but perhaps more

[59] Siti Nurhaliza is a well known singer in Malaysia music industry. She started her singing career as non-*nasyid* artist. But since she wearing hijab and start singing songs about Islamic and positive message, she brings a new he dimensions on how women voice in Islamic popular music in Malaysia.

importantly it is about intention of the singer in delivering their messages to audiences. From this perspective, women may perform in certain contexts.

This sub-section sought to illustrate the place of female bands in Malaysia and concluded that currently in Malaysia, Islamic popular music continues to encourage the emergence of female artists.

7.5 The audience for *Nasyid* in Malaysia

Passion, interest and a growing number of participants in *Nasyid* as performers (as discussed previously) contribute to the development of this musical genre. This type of music engages participants and audiences in a dialogue about Islamic modernity. Islamic popular music appeals to younger muslims as they are introduced to it at school, as discussed previously, and the naysid audience is dominated accepted by students and younger people.

> *'Normally at the begnning, we as Nasyid artists believe that the best target of audiences clearly seen at the stage of school medium as students easy to accept this kind of music' (*Abd Fattah, interviewed in 2016)

> *'Nasyid composers must be updated with the current music trend of today in order to be well accepted by the audience. Only then the nasyid singers are up-to-date and suit the listeners' music preference. There are a few target audiences: 1) Kids 2) Teenagers 3) Adults The most albums sold are the ones for children's education (students) and adults'* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015).

The changes in *nasyid* music composition and the modernity of this music also attracts another group of audiences. The author been involved directly here, and university students are another key part part of the naysid auidience. Bazli of UNIC, interviewed in 2015, also revealed that the target audience is university students:

'And as more nasyid groups came out, each of these groups would try to create their own identity and have their own target group or market. We as UNIC were formed and our targets were teenagers and university students. Students especially at universities are generally exposed to nasyid and this led them to join the nasyid arena too.'

Barendregt (2011) argues that in Malaysia during the 1990s most of the followers of *Nasyid* were found in religious colleges and in universities. *Nasyid* continues to be popular among Islamic youth in both Malysia and Indonesia, providing a young, urban, often well-educated audience with the soundtrack for a modern Muslim lifestyle. Besides, from the view of the author himself, female audiences show a higher potential as the main consumers to this kind of music as compared to male audiences. And Abd Fattah (interviewed 2016) also reiterates as follows;

'The festival, shown on national television during Ramadan, led to fierce debate among nasyid enthusiasts, many of whom condemned the show's blatant commercialism. Like their western equivalents, young nasyid singers are often worshiped by largely female audiences'

7.6 Transmission of Nasyid Style

N*asyid* singers and audiences identify with modern Muslims worldwide through the universal Islamic themes projected in the song lyrics, as well as the use of Arabic terms and Middle Eastern musical modes and of vocal timbres in the singing style. Added by the author; videos of Muslims praying in mosques in different parts of the world and scenes of Muslims performing their pilgrimage in Mecca are also used as backdrops. Abd Fattah, Farihin (interviewed in 2016) describes that many male singers wear a global form of Islamic shirt or baju Melayu (Malay long shirt) over pants and kopiah (skull caps) in pastel or dark colors.

More recently, groups such as Dirwana, Nowseeheart, and In-Team have been featured in casual everyday shirts or polo necks and western-style jackets.

Regulations pertaining to women's participation and dress code also imply identification with Muslims throughout the world. As argued above, female groups exist but remain a minority. There are no mixed gender groups or bands. A variety of clothing styles have been used by *nasyid* artists to reflect their own personalities and portray the music style they perform. In general, the clothing concept of artists in the Islamic popular music genre adhere and present a 'clean' concept, which in adherence to an Islamic art form and the message conveyed by the music:

> *Islam is pure and filled with messages of kindness, thus Islamic popular music carries out the same basic objective as dakwah (see glossary). Clothing or images of artists should be formed in the best outfit.* (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

Nasyid artists believe that the suitable concept of clothing or 'dress code' should portray Islamic life. Clothing concept should be clean, pure and simple (see Figure 7.12[60]). Raihan started their career using simple and plain white outfits. However, even as developments in Islamic popular music clothing style trends continue, the underlying basic concept of pure white remains.

[60] Image source from https://www.last.fm/music/Raihan (accessed on 15 Januray 2017)



Figure 7.12: Raihan with white colour clothing



Figure 7.13: Inteam nasyid group wearing white clothing[61]

[61] Source from https://ms.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fail:INTEAM-Kasih-Kekasih.png

7.7 The conflict between portyals of culture and religiosity

*Their style (Nasyid artists in Malaysia) was more modern now as compared to a long time ago, but it is not a problem because we want to attract the audience to accept Islamic music. If you want it to be really Islamic, we have to refer back a long time ago to the Middle Eastern style. This refers to Islamic popular music or, initially in Quranic melodies, the maqam-maqam, and also the instruments are restricted to ud, lut, what we called qanun and so on. Iin Malaysia however, we have revolutionised Islamic popular music based on the preferences of people. Sadly, the changed made is looked upon by some as influences from our culture. (*Shamir, interviewed in 2016*)*

Looking at the fashion trends of Nasyid artists in Malaysia, they normally wear the Jubah (long robe). Jubah originated from the Arab lands worn by the people in the Middle East, both male & females but actually, it is not an Islamic dress code. It's what the Arabs normally wear. However, Malaysians perceived the Jubah as an Islamic dress and when it entered Malaysia, our people were not used to wearing jubah as everyday wear. The style should be suitable for it can represent an Islamic identity. Other than the jubah but other outfits can represent an Islamic image, it could be acceptable. (Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016)

The influences from other countries on Malaysia, especially concerning the style of Nasyid artists, could be reflected by history when Islam arrived from trading operations and, at the same time, Arab traders brought their culture. I believe most of the dress code influences in styling especially based on culture from outsides. (Fakhrul of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

The above respondents discussed the styles and images portrayed by popular *nasyid* artists in Malaysia. They generally believe that the styles are influenced by surrounding cultures. The development of Islamic popular music has indirectly influenced the image and personality of *nasyid* artists. *Nasyid* artists were adapting to progress of the music industry in order to be seen as contemporary, especially in fashion and style, to compete with other genres of popular music

in Malaysia. The changes in these aspects have been acknowledged particularly in terms of religiosity and culture. Based on my experiences in the Malaysian music industry, *nasyid* artists seek new ways to maintain or attract new audiences. The basic and standard benchmark of a *nasyid* artist on clothing is to keep it simple and pure. However, in the early 2000s, white was no longer 'the only colour'. Other colours were inyroduced by new artists although the underlying Islamic concept remained unchanged and was maintained. But did the *nasyid* artists act on the right path of Islamic rules and regulations (ground rulings)?

The conflict between religiosity and culture has resulted in confusion especially in determining what can be classified as religiosity and culture. One *nasyid* artist, Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015), argued that fashion needs to change from time to time because in the end, *nasyid* artists want people to appreciate what they do. He added that if the fashion of *nasyid* artists is not seen to be appropriate, it will make Islamic popular music look dull. Nevertheless, he believed that fashion should be based on Islamic guidelines, which refer to religiosity. Given this point, the author was encouraged to explore how religiosity plays the role of an 'image guideline'. In terms of dress or clothing selection, religiosity can be understood with the Islamic concept of *awrah (see glossary)*, a term used to denote the parts of the body that must be covered with clothing for both men and women (Ramusack, Barbara N. 1999). The concept of *awrah (see glossary)* has been highlighted by Hazamin Inteam Group, who quoted the Prophet stating, 'what you wear shown the morality of yourself and the morality is established from basic of your faith' (Prophet). This quote prompted the author to investigate the following: how could one describe the connection between morality (in connection with *awrah (see glossary)*) with image and personality? Apart from opinions gained from various people involved in Malaysia's music industry, the author should also stress that there is no such compulsory protocol of images or clothing explicitly stated in the *Sunnah* (see glossary) or even in the Qu'ran.

The group members of Inteam also added that morality could refer to the character (personality) and image (outfit or appearances), which implies that morality is influenced by the image and personality of a particular artist. In the case of Inteam, they used to wear *kufi* in the early days of their career but changes were seen thereafter. They tried something new, wearing Arabic robes (or *Jubah* in Malay). According to the Prophet's teaching, the best clothing is one's character. Therefore, Inteam strongly believed that whatever *nasyid* artists wear, their images and outfits are acceptable as long they are modestly dressed.

The Islamic religion points out that covering the *awrah (see glossary)* is the main Islamic practice in an Islamic image or outfit because the rule is stated in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (see glossary) (JAKIM 2015). Islam does not prohibit following any fashion trend as long as the *awrah (see glossary)* is covered. Islam emphasises that images and personality give a clear view of individual morality. Thus, the author argues that as a basic guide, in order to be fashionable in the Islamic style one should always look at *awrah (see glossary)*. Accordingly, there is no limitation in terms of keeping up with fashion trends or charting a new trend as long the Islamic artists comply with the concept of *awrah (see glossary)*. However, there exists confusion, particularly for image and personality, in the market and among the audience on what is cultural and what is religious and thus what is acceptable for *Nasyid* artists. Generally, opinions from interview sessions and cultural outfits from Malaysia and other countries have mainly influenced the fashion trends and images of Islamic artists. The *nasyid* artists believe that a visual development in image and personality is also needed in parallel to the quality of music production to help them sustain the industry. Trends nowadays are more simple, suitable and practical compared to 20 years ago during the pioneering days of Raihan. As an example of a cultural image is the wearing of the traditional Malay dress called the *baju melayu*, *sampin*, and *songkok* (shown in figure 7.14 below) that are used as outfits during performances. Most

of the singers interviewed believe that culture has influenced the image and personality of *nasyid* artists in Malaysia extensively, as well as influences from other cultures.



Figure 7.14: Hijjaz with *Baju Melayu* and *Songkok*[62]

The pioneers and people involved in the music industry believe that fashion trends and styles from the Middle East, and the West, could be incorporated into the images of *nasyid* artists and could be the main fashion line for Islamic artists in Malaysia. As this been metioned by Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015:

> *"Nowadays, nasyid artists could be see in style of western artist not only the style from middle east like back then."*

In the past, as been mentioned before in the early days of Islamic popular music introduction, the Middle East styles were the most popular outfits worn chosen by *nasyid*

[62] Source from https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/269864202643197540/

artists. Instead of the Arabic *kufti* or kurta, outfits based on the Arab style robe such as the *jubah* were worn by *nasyid* artists during performances. *Kufti* or *kurta* was another trend that attracted *nasyid* artists to choose Islamic outfit during the performance and their identity. The design and concept in simple styles with a variety of colours is the main aspect that influences choices.

Hafiz Hamidun (a Malaysian *nasyid* artist) launched a collection of Haje brand *kurta*. Haje features four custom designs with 60 overall colour variations. Kurta Signature is the introductory curve of Haje, featuring a simple, modern but simple design designed to be used for official, casual and religious use. As stated by Budiey (2016), Hafiz (interviewed in 2015) believes:

> *Kurta could be as very elegant outfit and fits all day long. The exclusive design is compatible with local tastes that want masculine and fresh style. Kurta has its own design featuring matching Mandarin collar, chest pockets and sides, as well as full buttons from the collar and cover in the middle. This curve gives the user a robust and slim effect. In addition, Kurta is the best choice for official and casual use.*



Figure 7.15: *Kurta* or *Kufti* by Hafiz Hamidun, a *nasyid* singer[63]

[63] Picture source from https://www.haje.my/shop/kurta-define/

The development of this genre involved changes to artists' images and personalities. Influences from fashion trends in Western countries are more common. The style of formal corporate outfit was the most popular trend in the early 2000s. The formal outfit was inspired by wstern bands such as Westlife and the Backstreet Boys.

These fashion trends may help to attract larger audiences, but the concept of *awrah (see glossary)* must be complied with, to comply with religiosity. This sub-section helps to provide understanding to differentiate between culture and religiosity concepts and minimise the conflict between these two issues.

7.8 The transmission of fashion trends in the Islamic popular music industry

Islamic scholars keep a watchful eye over fashion in case it becomes a 'sensitive issue'. The most common problems relate to the design of the clothing and the presentation of outfits by *nasyid* artists. Issues around inappropriate attire among *nasyid* artists in Malaysia arise due to poor understanding of the term of *akhlak*[64] and the morality of these artists. A key issue is what encouraged artists to make 'Islamic' music. For example, consider the trajectory of artists who are seen to be Islamic from the beginning of their career but who do not position themselves within the Islamic popular music industry. For instance, Yuna is the stage name of Yunalis Zarai, a Malaysian Pop vocalist and guitarist. She has complied with an Islamic outfit (as in Figure 7.16) throughout her involvement in the music industry (Chery 2017).

[64] Akhlak is from Arabic word means attitude



Figure 7.16: Yuna as Pop/Indie artist with Islamic artist style[65]



Figure 7.17: Najwa latif as a Malaysian Pop artist with Islamic style[66]

[65] Picture source from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuna_(singer)
[66] Picture source from https://malay.ava360.com/najwa-latif-ft-sleeqsyamkamarul-sahabat-official-music-video-video_c928c5428.html

Hence, it is important to show decency in clothing because the artist's image will depict how people describe the artists. In the Islamic popular music industry, the slogan 'Comes as You Are' have been instilled in portraying image and personality.:

> *'Appearance, images and personalities' basically we can look at the fundamentals by referring to the Al quran and as stated by our Rasulullah. What these had taught us on appearance and in describing the aspect of dressing is that appearance in Islam is one which should cover the 'aurah'. As Muslims, we clearly know the aurah for both males and females in Islam. If we follow these guidelines in covering our aurah, to me, we can wear anything as long as we adhere to these guidelines. Well, as Fitri had mentioned regarding the appearances, Raihan have their Raihan Dress, Rabbani with their own kopiah, Hijjaz with their own designed outfits, all of those are based on what they are comfortable with actually but in every case. They fundamentally follow the appearance guidelines in Islam. If we have our own preferences and style and which do not go against the guide in Islamic, to me we are free to wear it. And to me, we also can refer to the slogan 'comes as you are' which it means appearing with who you actually are. When we refer to that slogan, sometime we can say that they will come with their own preferences but maybe not following the guidelines and guide in Islamic ways.* (Hafiedz Udu, interviewed in 2016)

7.8.1 Middle Eastern Trends (Arab Style) as popularised by Raihan

To provide a strong statement about images and personalities in Islam, one should follow the concept in the *Sunnah (see glossary) (as also been briefly in Chapter 2)*. However, the early trend established for most music genres was western popular music. Follwing that, the trends that then most influenced Malaysia's Islamic popular music were derived from the Arabic styles from the Middle Eastern countries and this phenomenon was evident during the early days and debut of the Islamic popular music genre. This style was very popular and it has indirectly characterised the unique identity of Islamic artists. As a *nasyid* artist myself, the most important aspect that needs to be considered when it comes to an outfit or appearances is the

decency and whether the concept is allowable in Islam. The author believes that decency can increase an individual's confidence level; hence helping the artist to express well and deliver quality performances.

Raihan originally adopted an Arabic style (mostly in the *Kufti* outfit) and did not focus western styles for creating their identity. They later modified the Middle East style and became more commercialised. This view was echoed by an expert in Malaysia's music industry, Hafiedz Udu. He explained that this trend provided a clear and direct picture of the artist's image. These styles could impart an idea to audiences about the identity and beliefs of those artists. The long robe known as *jubah* was born from the Middle East trend and it serves the purpose of the *nasyid* artists by conforming to *awrah (see glossary) (see* Figure 7.18).



Figure 7.18: Jubah dress code

Fakhrul (UNIC) argued that one of the biggest developments in Islamic popular music in Malaysia concerned the image of artists. Nada Murni (Pioneer *Nasyid* Group) chose to use the Arabic long robes or the *jubah* and the artists were trying to imply that the influence of the Middle Eastern trends was in parallel to Western trends. Raihan balanced their styling and

image also by wearing the Arabic style, and their popularity helped to make the style a favourite. The simplicity and appropriateness of Rabbani's style inspired another group such as Rabbani (as shown below).



Figure 7.19: Rabbani *nasyid* group[67]

The changes and creativity in demonstrating the hybrid image have popularised the genre. The *nasyid* artists managed to keep their image up-to-date, parallel with other music genres in Malaysia. Radzin from Munsyid, the CEO of NDC Records and former member of Mestica Group, explained that:

> *In terms of images, personalities, outfits and appearances; of course, we cannot avoid the changes or even limit their development* (Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016).

[67] Picture source from http://www.11street.my/productdetail/view-20681005

Through Nada Murni, a benchmark for *nasyid* artists was established. The interviewee believed that there are no limitations on styling but one should keep the image on the right path according to the *Sunnah* (see glossary). According to Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016), the creativity of *nasyid* artists could be seen when they match jubah with *kufi* which this brought 'fresh' trend in Islamic outfit.

Hijjaz *nasyid* group believes that the image and personality of *nasyid* artists are actually based on individual taste. In the past, *nasyid* artists wore a coat with a *kufi*, and the trend then evolved to the Arabic *jubah*. This change illustrates the popularisation of the Arab Style derived from the Middle East. Most *nasyid* artists were interested in this style including Hijjaz. Hijjaz believed that suitable outfits following this trend were the main reason. Another reason was that the outfit was normally worn when going to Mecca to perform *haj* and *uah*. Creativity was applied to improve this type of outfit, particularly by making *jubah* in various colours and by mixing it with a turban or even *kufi*. Hijjaz expressed that the image and personality is not merely part of an appearance and clothing style but the overall concept of the group. (Isman Hijjaz, interviewed in 2015)

As stated by one of the *nasyid* singers (from UNIC), the trend is understood as a simple outfit that should be very convenient to carry around, easy to wear, easy to prepare, easy to iron, and affordable. The trend has proved the fact that even Arabs are amazed by the positive development of this style in Malaysia due to the improvement of *jubah* styles in Malaysia market.

> *It is a positive development. Nasyid artists need to be current, with what is in trend in terms of fashion and style. I noticed that the trend now is simplicity and practicality especially dealing with Jubah designs. Back then, nasyid artists had more of a cultural jubah image; an idea which came from the Middle East. Nowadays especially after the early 2000s, they are more relaxed and casual. With 'jubah', it is the best outfit and is reasonably priced. The Jubahs available in the market today are very attractive with up-to-*

date design and in some cases, with better and improved styling as compared to the Middle East' Jubah!
(Bazli of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

The main guideline to be highlighted is the *awrah (see glossary)* concept. One *nasyid* artist, Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015, mentioned that the Arab style has its own character that matches religiosity and their culture. This trend had been brought out to be suitable for religiosity and culture because the style complies with the *awrah (see glossary)* concept and was influenced by the Arab culture.

In order to keep this genre 'beautiful', 'its identity and appearance need to be served as well. One's image could give the overall picture through his or her appearances, and this is a natural concept in life. Following the various information received from the interviews, Middle Eastern fashion trends have significantly influenced the clothing styles of Malaysian *nasyid* artists. This view is supported by Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016: 'No limitation in dressing up as *nasyid* artist'. He also believes that the suitable style and fashion of the Arabian culture have attracted *nasyid* artists in Malaysia.

In conclusion, Middle Eastern fashions are a major trend in the Islamic popular music Industry of Malaysia. But could this have influenced the *nasyid* artists? The wearing of the Arabic style is also a common outfit for pilgrims going to perform their *hajj* and *umrah*[68]. Therefore, it is easy to adopt this style as the ideal styling for the *nasyid* artists. The Arabic musical styles have also been the music style for *nasyid* artists and the music has influenced

[68] Visit and pray at maccah and madinah

them to follow the Middle Eastern trends. Simple cutting and convenience influenced the *nasyid* artists to choose and adopt this style.

Nasyid artists hold the Arabian style concept as the main root of their image. There is no limitation in exploring the concept as long as one complies with the concept of *awrah (see glossary)*. This was the statement made by most of the people involved in the Islamic popular music industry that the author compiled during the interview session. The ideal image of a *nasyid* artist should be in accordance with the understanding of the audience. Even if the *nasyid* artists articulate their image or personality by wearing a jacket with the *kufi*, (figure 7.20) or by wearing the Arabian styled long robe with a turban, the artist's understanding of the audience seeing the performance needs to be considered.



Figure 7.20: *Kufi* or *Kopiah*[69]

[69] Photo from https://www.grosirpecikopiah.com/blog/pusat-grosir-peci-kopiah-songkok/

The potential issue appears when certain people lack knowledge or understanding about the concept of *awrah (see glossary)* but inject their own perspective that *nasyid* artists should present their identity by only wearing an Arabian long robe or *jubah* influenced by the Middle Eastern trends. To them, this trend is the ideal style. In fact, this genre has developed rapidly and the trend has positively evolved positively.

7.8.2 Western Trend as popularised by Inteam Group

It was a decade ago when the author began seeing the gradual transformation of the music and image of Malaysian *nasyid* artists. At the beginning of their career, apart from the Middle Eastern style, the most popular outfits they used in performances were the corporate style and formal outfits. The jacket or even a suit is the best example to show how this trend looked like in past few years which also been introduced and extensively used by Western' boy bands. Inteam as the *nasyid* group in Malaysia is the best model to show how the Western fashion trend immersed in the local music genre. Inteam brought their own identity in styling and set the trend in Malaysia. The visual image in figure 7.21 and personality of Inteam combined the Western style with *kufi* Similar opinions with this sort of trend had been mentioned by the manager of Rumpun Records and Universal Music, Azalino which argued that the influence of the western boy band fashion styles impacted the local music industry and therefore the *nasyid* artists in Malaysia also adopted the fashion.



Figure 7.21: Western Style of Inteam on their album covers (photo by author)

The combination of Western fashion style (jacket or suit) with Islamic outfit (*kufi*) shows that the practical trend had modernised in parallel with the group's music as *nasyid* artists. This point was expressed by one of the UNIC group members, Bazli. He believes in the image and outfit phenomenon that came from Western trends. When comparing the image and personality of the *nasyid* artists back then with the current artists, he explained that one can see many

improvements that were meant to suit the development era. However, Inteam's idea of combining of styles is something that Islamic *nasyid* artists could be proud of.

The same opinion was pointed out by one of the solo artists, who is an ex-UNIC member, pertaining to the Islamic genre in Malaysia (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015). He observed the transition over the past 20 years. He explained that the image is still conservative and Islamic artists have been trying to commercialise it. Many dress styles and outfits worn by *nasyid* artists have become famous fashion trends. But has the image and personality of the *nasyid* artists who delivered their own identity acted as trend setters to their followers? In response to this question, people often referred to Raihan and Inteam who introduced their own style and trend as an example.

The image of Raihan at some point also attracted many people. People correlate Raihan with jacket style with *kufi*, which has also been their identity even in the early involvement Raihan brought Middle East images. Along these lines, Hafiz Hamidun added that what Raihan wear is related to the message they convey in their music. This is suitable for their age but in terms of fashion styles, the trend must change according to the surrounding environment and the development of the industry. It was for this reason the transmission happened and evolved from the Western styles to other styles. Another opinion was also gained from one of the pioneers in the *nasyid* arena, Idzwan. He believes that the combination of a jacket or suit with *kufi* is also a suitable image for *nasyid* artist; it could bring a beautiful image to illustrate the genre. The ideal styling of a *nasyid* group is in accordance with the understanding of the public. Even if the *nasyid* groups wear a coat, they should wear a *songkok* or *kufi* to project the image of being Islamic.

Inteam described to the author how *nasyid* has evolved along with the transition of the images of *nasyid* artists and their fashion trends. In 1997, during the Raihan era, their outfits

were more laid back, although they still maintained an Islamic look either by wearing Western or traditional Malay style clothing topped with a *kufi*. Audience members accepted this style because it portrayed Islam. The fashion trend has evolved and new *nasyid* groups emerged with their own identity, without wearing the *kufi*. The wearing of the *kufi* is not compulsory in Islam but there are fans that prefer *nasyid* artists to wear *kufi*. Besides, the characteristic of wearing *kufi* with Western fashion styles had been instilled in the industry in the early years. During that time, all groups had their own uniform of outfits and most of them wore the same concept. This pattern was followed by other pioneer groups such as Hijjaz and Rabbani (shown in pictures below) but with their own identity style of '*kufi'*. This modernisation influenced the music industry especially in images persuading *Nasyid* artists to be sanguine in their strategy to attract audiences. Due to that, *nasyid* artists debuted with their own *kufi* style.



Figure 7.22: Rabbani with their style and their trademark kufi

[70]

[70] Picture source from http://berbagi*nasyid*.blogspot.com/2016/08/lirik-*nasyid*-yang-benar-rabbani.html (accessed on 15 February 2016)



Figure 7.23: Hijjaz wearing Hijjaz kufi and suit coats on an album cover

[71]

Faiz of IKIM (interviewed in 2015) looked at the image and personality of the artists involved as the main factors to help the sustainability of the genre. According to him, people involved in music should highlight their fashion in order to communicate knowledge and understanding. This is not to say that for this genre one should be dressed in specific ways, only that the fashions employed should comply with Islamic guidelines. He said that as long as the outfits are appropriate and do not neglect the concept of *awrah (see glossary)*, one is allowed to wear them. Faiz also added that there are pop singers who sing religious songs even though they realise that they normally portray sexy images through improper outfits used. However, when they perform religious songs, they know how to blend their image with proper and suitable outfits. For this reason, the respondent believes that the artists' images or

[71] Picture source from https://munsyeed.com/malay/tag/hijjaz-janji/ (accessed on 10 February 2016)

personalities should be similar to their music. In Islamic music, the first intention of an artist in singing a song is often to calm people with their music. Another is to spread religious messages but if the singers' images do not reflect these messages, there will be an issue arising from the conflict. Particularly this may cause confusion and conflict to the audience arising from the conflict the message (in the song) and the image of the artist who is trying to covey that message (through the song). Due to that, the idea of Western styles combined with the *kufi* could be a trend to *nasyid* artists because that trend suits the genre and it complies with Islamic preferences.

'Islamic artists could be identified based on their images'. This statement was articulated by one of the renowned Islamic lyricists, Ito Lara (interviewed in 2015). He mentioned that in terms of the image, during the introduction of Islamic popular music, it was clear that *nasyid* artists did not have an image they could be identified with. *Nasyid* artists were comfortable with a trend borrowed from Western countries. The influence of the 'boy band style' of the late 1990s gave ideas to the *nasyid* artists to come up with suitable outfits of their own. The popularity of boy bands encouraged *nasyid* artists to try something new, which they believed would attract people, particularly by presenting their dressing in a western style. The boy-band style (as illustrated by Westlife) could be described as practical outfits with jackets as shown below:



Figure 7.24: Westlife's image adopted by *Nasyid* artists in Malaysia[72]

According to Ito Lara, the way in which *nasyid* artists present their outfit is different across genres. As in the Islamic way, it is to comply with the concept of *awrah (see glossary)*. The author would like to add here that in Malaysia, people who sing religious songs also dress up casually in jeans and ties, and Ito Lara also agrees with this point of view. From this, the author itself could understand why and how the influences of the western trend were immersed in the *nasyid* style in Malaysia. The same opinion was expressed by one *nasyid* group:

[72] Picture source from http://fxpaper.fatalsystem.com/wallpaper/Westlife-5/

> *I noticed the positive impact of the boy-band evolution from western countries, which inspired the Malaysian Islamic popular music industry especially in terms of image and personality. They be more comfortable with western trend, then... Nasyid artists also perform in more confident and believe themselves as 'boyband' such as Westlife. We can see how the style adopted from West Country.* (Al-Manna Group, interviewed in 2015)

The influence of the western style into *nasyid* style in Malaysia could also be seen among the solo artists, Halim of Devotees (interviewed in 2016). He believes that the image and personality related to the Islamic popular music industry depends on the acceptance of people and the local society. The idea of Raihan wearing a coat (or blazer) together with *kufi* is called the 'Raihan Trend', although the idea came the boy bands from the western countries. Hence, in the early stage of this genre especially during the Raihan evolution, most of the other *nasyid* artists looked upon Raihan as the benchmark. A few *nasyid* artists who earlier believed that the concept should be kept to the original style itself also made changes themselves. Then there was a trend of jackets and blazers with a 'beret' hat. In terms of identity, performers began to carve an image, creating a new phenomenon, and demonstrating that it is not compulsory to don the *kufi*. Nevertheless, Halim also noticed that a few *nasyid* artists maintained a western style as their main fashion trend. They dressed up as boy bands would but with the *awrah (see glossary)* as a persistent underlying concept.

There are many contrasting perceptions, comments, and views from those involved in this industry on this point. Even though this genre does not sit in parallel with other pop genres over last 20 years, the presence of this genre could be seen by people. This is because the people and even other Malaysian artists could define *nasyid* artist based on their images portrayed apart from the uniqueness of Islamic music. Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015 explained the best characteristics of *nasyid* artists would be to refer to the images or personality

that the artist present. As the interviewee mentioned, 'Simply, it is the characteristic for *nasyid* artists'. Attitude is the main thing that needs to be considered in describing characteristics; he believes a good attitude will result in good character and personality. To him, Islamic popular music is conveying good messages, so the suitable character has to be linked with what the artist is trying to present. Fuad Priakustik also believes that it is so simple that when people ask about outfit and appearance; the best way is to follow the prophet and the *Sunnah* (see glossary) for this will surely help to be in right track. A touch of western style such as coat, suit, and blazer to be trendy in *nasyid* back then was not a problem because the image still followed the *Sunnah* (see glossary) guidelines for as was stated before that the *sunnah (see glossary)* portrayed *akhlak* and morality in Islamic view.

In relation to image and personality, the phrase *appearance of artist* in the late 1990s, artists who sang Islamic songs normally wore *kufi*. This put *nasyid* artists in the character of an Islamic artist. Outside influences such as from the Middle East and also the western countries have led to the development of the image aspect in this genre which improved the way of the styling and trending of *nasyid* artists. As an example, the popularity of boy bands outside Malaysia at that time provided a platform for *nasyid* artists to improve their style. The development of the *nasyid* artists' image and personality was regarded as healthy because the *dalil*[73] was simple: As long as the clothing is following Islamic guidelines, all types of outfits are permitted.

Based on the interviews, it could be concluded that the evolution of boy bands had a major impact on the global music industries. The popularity of boy bands also attracted the *nasyid* artists and influenced their images. At the same time *Nasyid* artists made this fashion

[73] *Dalil* = basis, rationale, reason.

trend one of the guidelines that could match with an Islamic theme. Most *nasyid* artists agreed with this and referred to by members of Raihan. During this time, the influential mass media provided a platform for these *nasyid* artists to popularise their western influenced fashion trends.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a critical analysis of the images of *nasyid* artists, based on responses from those in the industry. Factors that encourage participation in *nasyid* were including aspects of the education curriculum, competitions in schools and universities, family background and impact of other musicians and musical styles. Female groups were also discussed in this chapter to provide interpretations regarding with the issue of women and singing.

This chapter illustrated that religiosity and culture affect images of Islamic artists in Malaysia. The tension between between them provides a strong explanation of their relationship to ensure that images of artists involved are in contemporary and the styles are suitable for this genre of music. The chapter also described the evolution of image and trends over 20 years by studying how Raihan (Arabic Style) and Inteam (Western Style) inspired other *nasyid* artists. Throughout the discussions, it is hoped that it will help prepare Malaysian music industry to draw future development strategies. The next chapter focuses on the business model in line with Islamic influences will be discussed in the next chapter.

8 CHAPTER EIGHT: *NASYID* BUSINESS MODELS IN THE MALAYSIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY

8.1 Introduction

> *"In many respects it is a snapshot of the recording industry at a particular historical moment – a time when the business was structured around the manufacture and distribution of physical artefacts".* (Negus 1992: i)

In his 1992 book, Negus explains that changes took place especially in digital technologies, which refined the way repertoire was packaged and distributed. Most of the companies involved in producing popular music in the 1990s had arrived at their current form as a result of a complex history of acquisition and mergers, technological changes and booms and slumps connected to wider changes in the world economy. This chapter explores the business models and the marketing of *nasyid* music within Malaysia shortly after these changes occured. How does business take place in *nasyid*? Business models reveal a fundamental link between products, industry players, and the wider marketplace. The chapter considers both the traditional and contemporary business models, the marketing strategies involved, and the role of the media. It intends to ascertain the typical business models and marketing strategies deployed in the Islamic popular music industry, with a particular focus on those to do with the genre of *nasyid*. It explores how associations are made between elements such as image and personality and business models and marketing.

Nasyid artists portray images and personalities that differentiate them from mainstream artists. As one indirectly involved in the Malaysian music industry, the author has noticed that *Nasyid* artists are typically labelled by their audience as 'Islamic artists' (a common label used by the Malaysian audience) by way of their attire, which serves as an initial pull factor to attract the audience to listen to their music. Other factors that contribute to the popularity of Islamic popular music are the quality of the music and the appropriateness of the song lyrics (see Chapter 6, above). As Abd Fattah, interviewed in 2016 strongly stated in his interview: 'Nasyid is currently growing in popularity and expanding its audience size through creating business and marketing opportunities for itself.' Therefore, this chapter will further scrutinise and elaborate on business and marketing operations. Abd Fattah claimed that in the mid-1990s the conditions were perfect for a *Nasyid* 'explosion.' The mainstream recording industry was subject to criticism and, in response, was in search of new sounds that would help head off such criticisms. The emergence of Raihan and their subsequent success was, in those circumstances, gratefully welcomed by the recording industry.

The author, thus, found that business models were an essential strategy to provide the fundamental link between product markets in the industry and the markets for the factors of production. This is important to *Nasyid* in the Malaysian music industry in defining the market for their musical products such as albums, as well as ancillary products such as clothing, books and merchandise.

As discussed in Chapter 2, businesses implemented an Islamic model related to the concept of halal literacy. This concept points out what is permissible (halal) or not, and helps the business to follow shariah acts accordingly. On this topic, Radzin from Munsyid argued:

'... a lot of people talk about halal business in view of Islam and so on but a lot of people don't talk about halal entertainment that relates to halal business. So, we have to think

about how can we actually do business through means that enables us to create a condusive environment in compliance with our Islamic teachings and shariah. We need to know what is permissable in running Islamic businesses and which basic concepts we must follow according to the Islamic rules such as riba and profit'

Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015) added that Islamic business generally started with the concept of halal. Is it halal to produce a product or is it halal to sell it? He also added that this concept could be clearer as this might help the business side of the music industry.

This conceptual of halal literacy in Islamic business was also also highlighted by Hazamin of Inteam Group:

'Businesses in Islam not only focus on profit but how we deal with the operation and implementation akhlak and iman to make it be halal. We need to know the concept of halal is something that can eliminate fraud or oppression in business. This also needs to be in line with the concept of riba'.

Islamic music is permissible when the music brings out good messages that follow the rules of Shariah. As stated in Chapter 7, JAKIM indicated that we must educated people about what music should be listened to and this can be achieved through the business process. But the business model must first be in accordance with the principles of halal literacy. Harding (2017; accessed on 9th May 2018) defines a business model as:

> *'... the method or means by which a company tries to capture value for its business. A business model may be based on many different aspects of a company, such as how it makes, distributes, prices or advertises its products'.*

The business model concentrates on value creation. It describes a company's or an organisation's core strategy to generate economic value, typically in the form of revenue

(Rochester, 2017). Added by Rochester (2017); the business model provides the basis for a business to compete in the marketplace, generate profits, and interact with internal players (by explaining strategy to employees and managers) and external players (stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, and investors). In addition, the business model indicates how the firm will convert inputs (capital, raw materials and labour) into outputs (total value of goods produced) and make a return that is greater than the opportunity cost of capital and delivers a return to its investors. Thus, the author understand that a business model's success is measured by its ability to create returns that are greater than the (opportunity) cost of capital, invested by its shareholders and bondholders. As highlighted by Teece (2010) below, in essence, a business model encompasses the organisational and financial 'architecture' of a business which is it is not a spread sheet or computer model, although a business model might be embedded in

> *'... a business plan, income statements and cash flow projections. The notion refers in the first instance to a conceptual, rather than a financial, model of a business' (Teece 2010:173).*

It makes implicit assumptions about customers, the behaviour of revenues and costs, the changing nature of user needs, and likely competitor responses. It outlines the business logic required to earn a profit (if one is available to be earned) and, once adopted, defines the way the enterprise 'goes to market' (Teece 2010). The common business model is portrayed below:

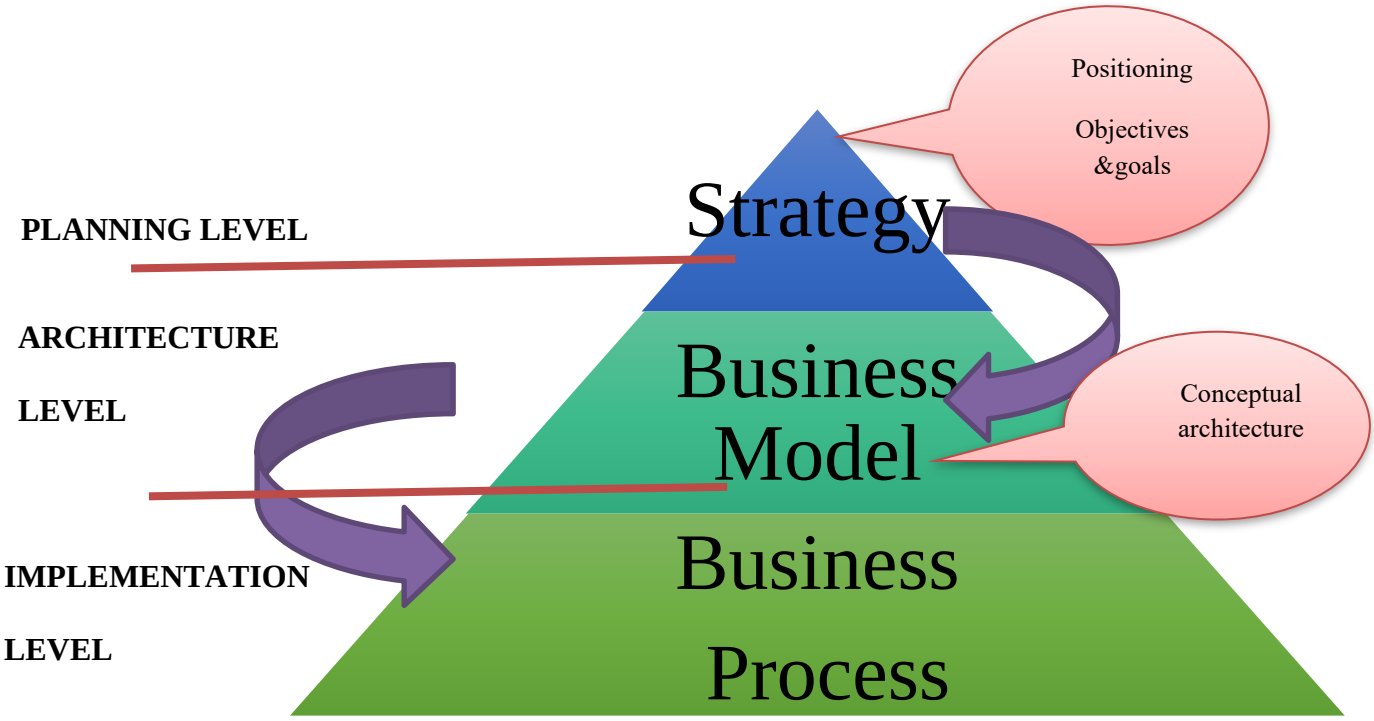


Figure 8.1: Illustration of the Business Model (E. Elijah 2010)

Rebollo (2007) summarises differences between traditional and Internet-enabled business models in Figure 8.2 below:

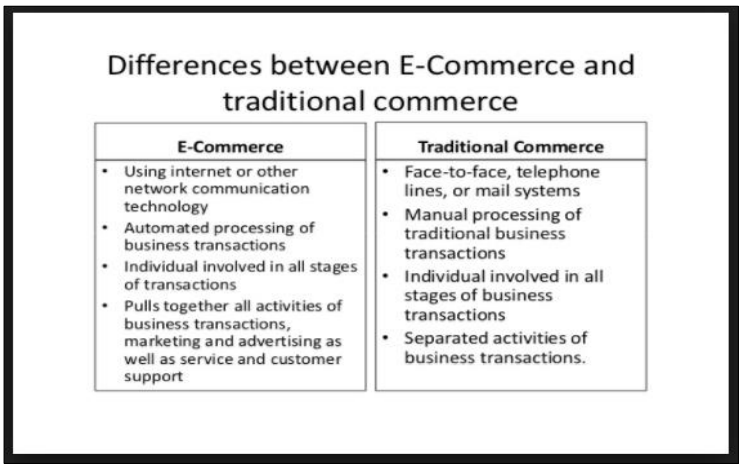


Figure 8.2: e-commerce and e-business (Rebollo M. 2007)

From interviews conducted with *nasyid* artists in the Malaysian music industry, two main strategies were revealed, namely, a 'traditional' model and an 'e-media' business concept. Teece (2010: 172) described a 'business model as either explicitly or implicitly employs a

particular business model that describes the design or any that value creation, delivery and capture mechanisms it employs.' It reflects strategies and the management's hypothesis about the demand for products and services and outlines how an enterprise may make a profit. The author gathered opinions and information from interviews conducted with experts and composers in the Malaysian music industry to show how business models were implemented.

Business models suggest what should be done, and how to create value. Strategic outcomes revolve around the determination of the overall vision, and the goals and the values that need to be realised. Beekun (1997) argues that in dealing with an Islamic business model in general, the key concept should be to uphold aspects of goodness, righteousness, equity, justice, truth, approval and piety. Beekun adds that central to Islam is *Tawhid,* the Islamic way of life, the fundamental basis of all Islamic civilisation, which brings together process, means and end. Hence, the diagrammatic representation of the idea is given in Figure 8.3 below:

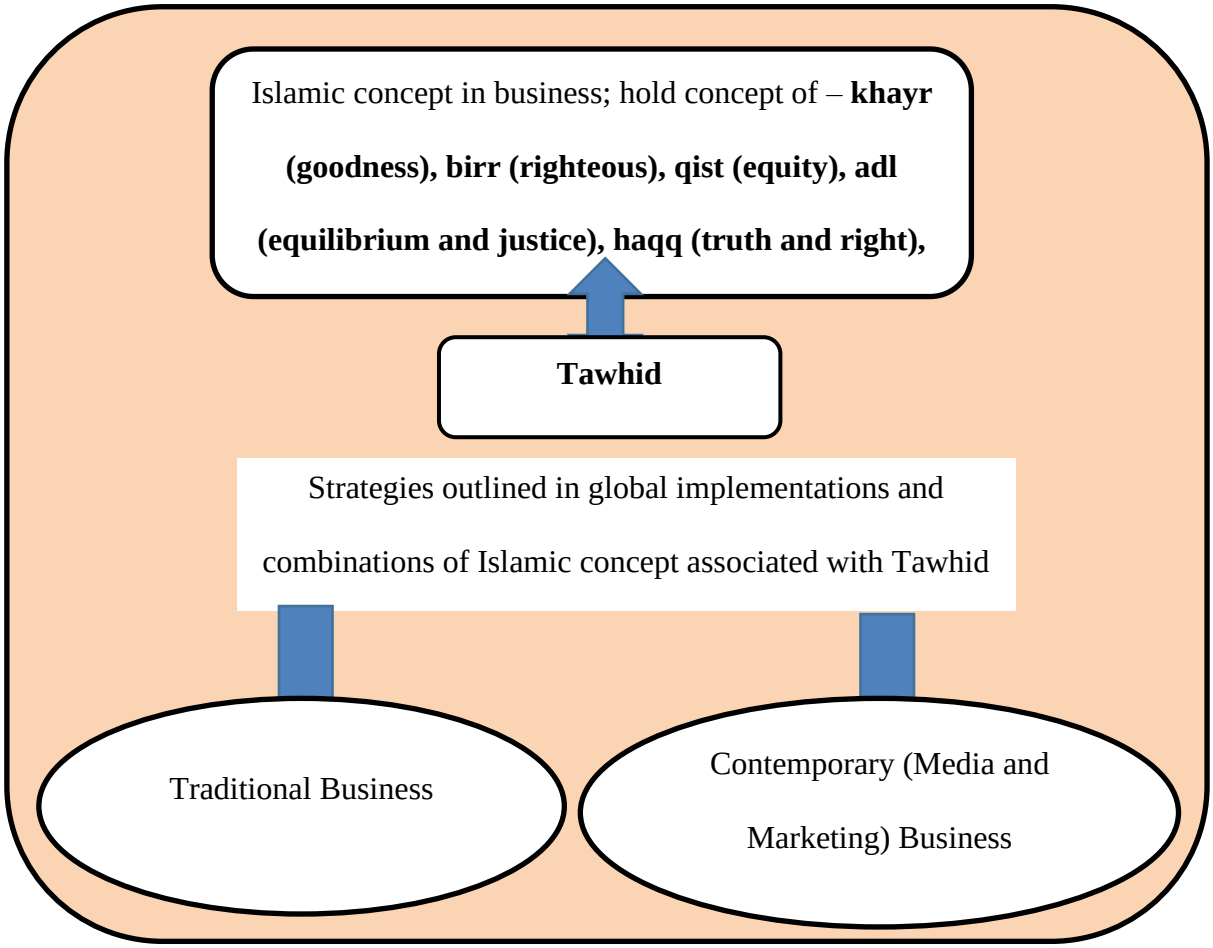


Figure 8.3: Islamic Business Model (Beekun, 1997)

The following subsections will help to portray how business operates in Islamic popular music. The author will explain the traditional business model first followed by the contemporary business model.

8.2 Traditional Business Model

The traditional business model of the Malaysian music industry, which was also widely used by earlier *nasyid* groups, has operated since the late 1980s. Artists believe that the traditional business model served as a strategic market platform and that, with the power of '*Niat'* (good

intentions), the business would run smoothly and be sustainable. Abd Fattah (interview in 2016) highlighted the role of good intentions. He argues that this was the key to the success of traditional business. He believes that good intentions and proper adherence to Islamic ruling helps to manage the business well, with the focus of the business not being only on profit. He also drew upon his experience to illustrate the point, namely, regarding his good intentions to be a good seller, especially in the direct selling of CDs. He found that this encourages and motivates artists to achieve the target of the business (selling), which enhances rapid pogress. The term 'traditional business' is widely used by artists in describing common business model practices in Malaysia. The data garnered from interviews makes it possible to understand the concept of traditional business in the Malaysian music industry, as the following three excerpts illustrate:

> *Looking at the early setup in the Islamic popular music industry, the traditional business model encompassed sales in bookstores, Islamic bookshops and direct selling.* (Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016)

> *[The focus was] 'on making the production 'cost less' rather than on the production of better-quality album covers. Traditional business resulted in slow business growth but cost-saving operations in the Islamic music industry. …artists themselves brought along their products such as albums to the venues of their performances, which saved them the cost of setting up booths or buying space in shops to market their products.* (Ayob, Padi Records., interviewed in 2016)

> *Traditional business only focuses on direct selling by the artists themselves, bookstores or Islamic bookshops. Many artisets implemented this method during their shows by promoting and selling their products at that time.* (Fuad Priakustik, interviewed in 2015)

'Traditional business' is understood as a business model based on face-to-face interaction and operates within limited opportunities or platforms for distribution. The author experienced the limitations of this directly in the Malaysian music industry, such as back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when it was common practice to be involved in direct selling in person during

musical performances. According to Idzwan (UUM, interviewed in 2016), the business of introducing and selling Islamic products in the form of song cassettes was established in the late 1990s, at the advent of the *naysid* genre. In the late 1990s, there was a surge in the interest in Islamic popular music in Malaysia, with the first half million sales recorded (Alexendra, 1997). This traditional business model provided an early platform for the *nasyid* artists to sell their products or introduce their music to the audience. It was the main medium for artists to introduce, promote, and sell their products. The feasibility of traditional business at that time indicates that it was an effective way to 'sell' *nasyid* products in the market.

In all popular music production, there are costs involved, particularly in the production of albums, and the returns are to, first, break even and, then, make a profit. Generally, it is necessary for the products to be well known to ensure sustainable development. The traditional business model gave only restricted and limited opportunities to *nasyid* artists. N*asyid* artists often have to sell their own albums or other merchandise after the performance. In general, the target audiences included children, teenagers, and young adults, as corroborated by Bazli (UNIC, interviewed in 2015). He also added that most *nasyid* artists of the 1990s earned their income by selling their products in bookshops, at exhibition booths, and via direct selling.

To achieve one of the research objectives, it is important to analyse the business model from the perspective of the Islamic popular music industry and identify the changes in the nature of this model from the early stage of Islamic popular music until the current day. For example, Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015) described the traditional business model as 'limited'. The scope of this platform was limited to performances, bookshops, and Islamic stores. Good business strategies are important to raise audience awareness of the products that artists want to sell. *Nasyid* artists believed that this model encapsulated the best business strategy to promote Islamic popular music to audiences. For example, promotion strategies often combined selling albums together with other products such as books or apparel

(commonly *Jubah* and women's craft). Hence, bookstores or exhibition booths were the best locations to attract audiences to display what the *nasyid* artists had to offer. Due to a lack of technology during the inception of Islamic popular music in Malaysia, the primary medium of communication was through the *nasyid* artists themselves. They had to use the best strategies to promote their products to audiences. By 'selling' themselves, they utilised traditional methods especially during performances in schools. They also began to sell their products at school bookstores and public bookstores (see Figure 8.4).



Figure 8.4: Bookstore and CD Store (SABA ISLAMIC MEDIA) located in Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia (Photo by author)

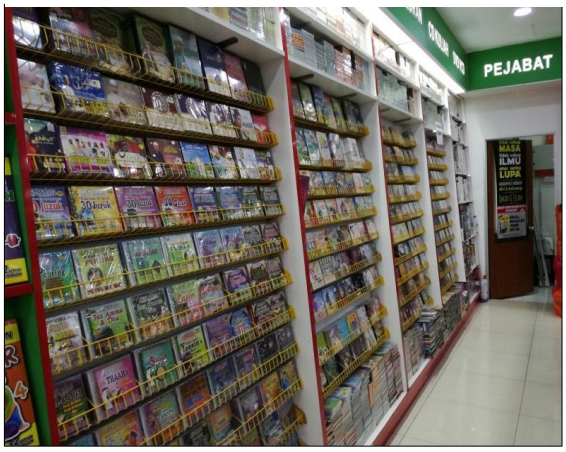


Figure 8.5: Bookstore and CD/VCD Store, SARJANA MEDIA, Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Photo by author)

> *Without the Internet and a vibrant mass media at that time, nasyid artists did not have any choice other than running their business through bookshops and shows.* (Idzwan UUM, interviewed in 2016)

Pioneer *nasyid* artists such as Raihan began their careers in the music arena. They used their shows to promote their albums, using the traditional business method as the most appropriate method to introduce their products to audiences:

> *Generally, the basics are the same. The business method should be flexible, but what we mean by 'basic' is that it is all about the trend and demand. It is all about taste; it is all about what people want. Therefore, it is like any other product, except that the content is religious. In short, nasyid artists produce products to sell and make a profit based on the demand of the audiences.* (Hazimin, interviewed in 2015)

According to one interviewee, Hazimin, Jeff, a lyricist (interviewed in 2015), at the early stages, most of the businesses of *nasyid* artists, especially those pertaining to the sale of *Jubah* and books, failed. It was difficult to sustain a career in Islamic popular music using the traditional business model since the platform to attract audiences was limited. It only focused on bookstores and stage performances, which were inadequate for *nasyid* to compete with other genres in terms of the market share. Moreover, particularly around 1996, *nasyid* was only in its early stages of development. The promotion strategies for selling albums and products were relatively primitive and ineffective. In general, albums and other products were sold mainly in rural areas.

Based on his experience in designing album covers for artists, Hazim (interviewed in 2015) opined that the prevailing focus, in the 1990s, was on the minimization of cost rather than than the production of better-quality album covers. Hazim added that the traditional business model resulted in *'slow business growth but cost-saving operations'* in the Islamic popular music industry. This meant that the artists brought along their products such as albums to their performance venues, thus dispensing with the cost of hiring retail space to sell them. This affected the revenue of *nasyid* artists and prompted them to think long and hard about

carrying on producing, or discontinuing, their products. For example, in the early stages of album cover design, most clients opted for a simple concept to keep costs down. From the perspective of album cover design, the changes and improvements in present-day covers are due to the increasing demand for more creative and better-quality album designs, which is facilitated by huge improvements in technology.

The traditional business model dominated the scene between 1996 and 2005. Business progressed slowly in the early stages due to the limitations of the medium and a lack of marketing. However, in the early 2000s, the traditional model served an increase in popularity in *naysid* amongst Islamic popular music fans. For instance, according to Halim, *nasyid* vocalist of the Devotees (interviewed in 2016), artists were able to sell 25,000 cassettes per week. Halim argued that this type of business model was optimal for *nasyid* artists, since at that point in time, Malaysia was not equipped with high technology to enhance promotion and marketing. The traditional method helped *nasyid* artists to persevere in the Malaysian music industry.

Meanwhile, *nasyid* singer, Fuad Priakustik (interviewed in 2015), pointed out that the traditional business model only focused on direct selling through the artists themselves and bookstores or Islamic bookshops. Despite this, the strategy helped the genre remain on par with others. Audiences were aware of Islamic popular music and the genre was undergoing revolutionary changes. In the early 2000s, audiences expressed their support for Islamic popular music by buying its products, especially the song cassettes.

Over time, the traditional business model became less relevant as the Islamic popular music industry stabilised and grew. The next transition of the business model, from 2006 until 2016, will be discussed in the next part of the chapter to give a better picture of this genre of music.

8.2.1 Album Sales: the alternative income of *nasyid* artists

Album sales are an important income source for *nasyid* artists. These sales supplement revenues from shows or the sale of their own Islamic merchandise. A group interview was conducted among sellers to examine this aspect of the market. The summary of arguments from the sellers is presented below:

Store(s)	Bookstore and CD Store SABA ISLAMIC MEDIA	Bookstore and CD/VCD Store MARWILIS BOOKSTORE	Bookstore and CD/VCD Store SARJANA MEDIA	Bookstore, CD/VCD Store, Robe and *Sunnah* (see glossary) Food AL FAIZUUN ENTERPRISE
Factors that direct the preparation of the album	• Best Seller • New album	• Based on category type/CD genre • *Nasyid* and *zikir* albums are next to the counter of this premises	• Emphasis and consider the section or place on the premises that could attract visitors • The album is organised according to demand, and is followed by the latest album in the market • *nasyid* albums, memories / reminiscences etc. at the back of the premises	• Only organised by category type / CD genre (There are CDs / zikir, qasidah, *nasyid*, Quran recitation, lectures etc.) • The *nasyid* & zikir album is at the back of this premises

			accommodate about four CD / VCD shelves	
The album gets the buyer's response and the album factor been chosen	• Local - Zikir Hafiz Hamidun. • Overseas - Zain Bikha • Album factor that has been chosen: most buyers are from outside the country and who are more aware of *nasyid* / international remembrance (international)	• Zikr Album (local and variety) • Album factor factors are optional: The buyer's choice is uncertain as it is more based on the interests and wants of the buyer	• Remembrance - because it is an all-time choice (not seasonal) • *Nasyid*'s Album - gaining high demand recently during Gema Gegar Vaganza • Album factor is optional: It is subjective according to the buyer's taste	• Al Quran reading albums (various) • Album factor factors are optional: Most buyers are adults and elderly • *nasyid* CDs in this premise are not as much in other survey areas as the demand and sales volume of *nasyid* CDs here are quite low

Table 8.1: Album Selling Patterns confirmed by traditional market sellers in Malaysia

Table 8.1 displays data on the album selling patterns in Malaysia in areas around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. The albums sold include albums on z*ikr*, *qasidah*, *nasyid*, and those that pertain to Quranic recitations. According to the data garnered from interviews with the sellers, the main factor that informed the arrangement order of the albums the shelves, etc., was the order of best-selling albums. The respondents added that the *zikr*, or praise, album was the most sought-after album followed by *nasyid* and Quranic recitation albums, respectively. Three out of the four retailers agreed that the best-selling albums were *zikr* albums, which generated better profits. Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015), who produced a best-selling *zikr* album himself (as shown in Table 8.1 above) agreed with this:

> *My zikr album was the most sought after by buyers even though there were other options among nasyid albums. The demand for this zikr album was a miracle*

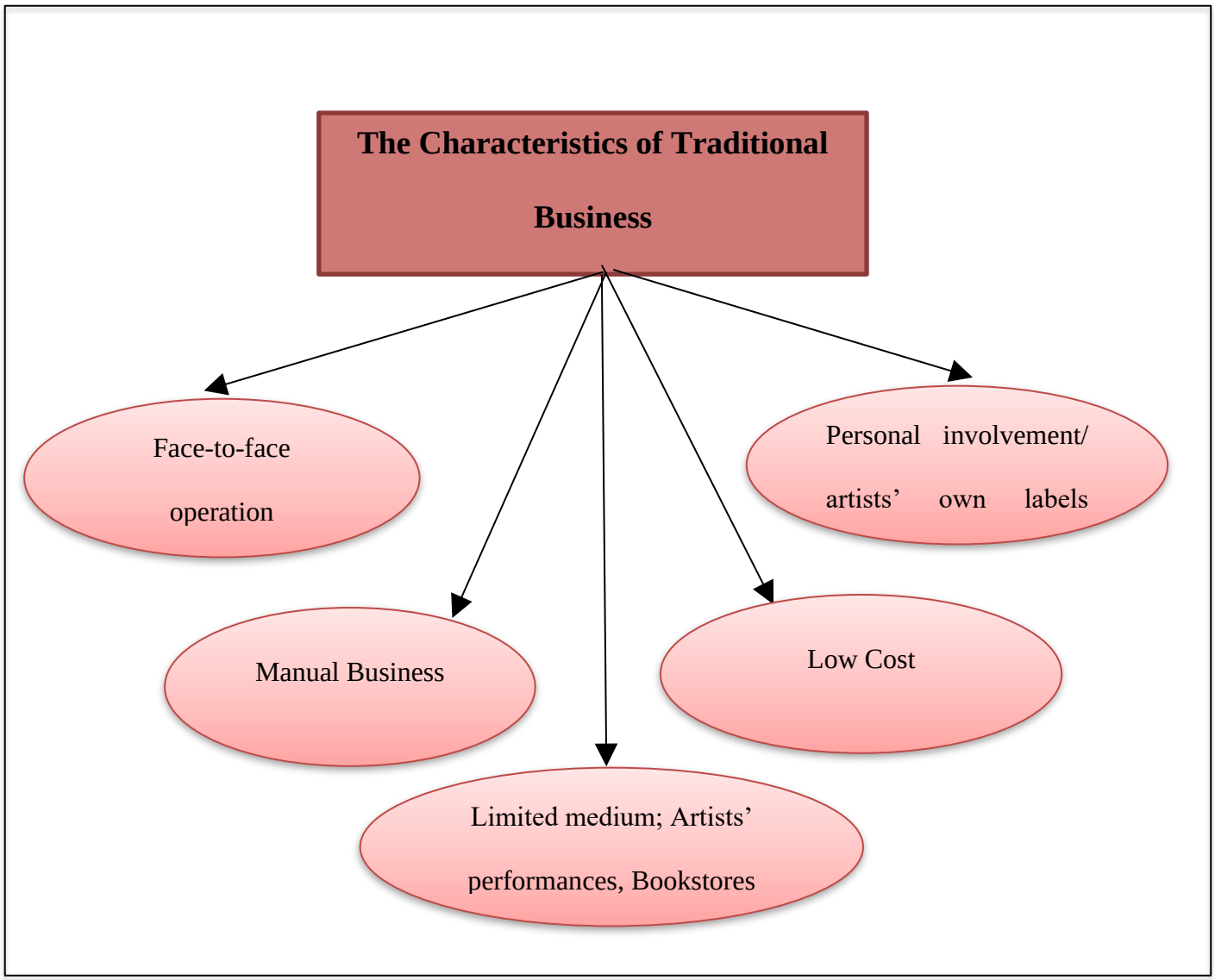


Figure 8.6: Characteristics of the traditional business model

Figure 8.6 shows the characteristics of the traditional business model discussed in this section. The diagram is based on the data gained from the views of industry participants and data content analysis methods. In sum, this subsection has provided information and discussion on the role of traditional business.

8.3 Contemporary Business

Islamic popular music was first disseminated through the traditional method when it was introduced in Malaysia. The advancement of the Malaysian music industry helped develop the Islamic popular music genre, which, in turn, stabilised the business model. However, from 2006 until 2016, slow businesses were transformed. The contemporary business model is referred to as 'present-day business'. The information was gathered through listening to the opinions and recording the experiences of various experts. The Malaysian music industry must adapt to increases in sales and the wider global economic growth. The indirect influence of technology changed the dominant music industry format and became a driver of the industry's growth. In the early 21st century, creativity and improvements in album production occurred, with the evolution of music cassettes to compact discs and eventually to downloadable digital music, which significantly increased revenue for the industry.

Technology is one of the primary factors that stimulates consumer interest and boosts the revenue gain of albums or products. Audiences appreciate new content and creativity, thus, the transformation from cassette to compact disc provided a better outcome to the music industry because it is more convenient and is of better quality. When downloadable music was established, it became established in the industry and Islamic popular music experienced increased sales. In the long term, these new carriers of music delivery resulted in better impact on the music industry and business. The development of the Islamic popular music industry drove people in the music industry to implement the contemporary business mode, as can be gleaned from the discussions with a few of the interviewees in this study.

According to a solo artist in Malaysia, Halim of Devotees (interviewed in 2016), the evolution of technology in the music industry is the main driver for increased revenues in the current business model. New formats brought a new phenomenon to the Malaysian Islamic

popular music industry. He argued that contemporary business used modern platforms, such as digital shops (Figure 8.7 furnishes an example of a CD shop) and mall retail kiosks, which were more appropriate for *nasyid* artists.



Figure 8.7: CD/DVD shop at AZBY CENTRE, Wisma PKNS, Shah Alam Selangor, Malaysia (Photo by author)

The author shared the experiences and knowledge gained during the early introduction of digital sales. Some makers also realised the 'pros and cons' of dealing with this new approach. The *nasyid* music industry experienced a fall in the sale of physical products as audiences had increased access to the songs via digital sales. Interestingly, digital sales improved the demand for Islamic popular music and sustained album sales. Another expert in the Malaysian music industry argued:

> *It can be disastrous if it is not planned well in terms of the aspects of commercei, business, copyright and publicity. It can go out of control and ruin the business.* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

The respondent highlighted that digital sales could lead to negative outcomes in the music industry, regarding, for example, copyright and publicity. The ease of downloading music could infringe the copyright of the label company and the artists themselves and, thus, entail losses in revenue. Islamic business fundamentals can be used as guidelines to help sustain and keep business on the right track. The characteristics of this business model is given below in diagrammatic form (Figure 8.8) based on the discussion on Islamic commercial business in this subsection.

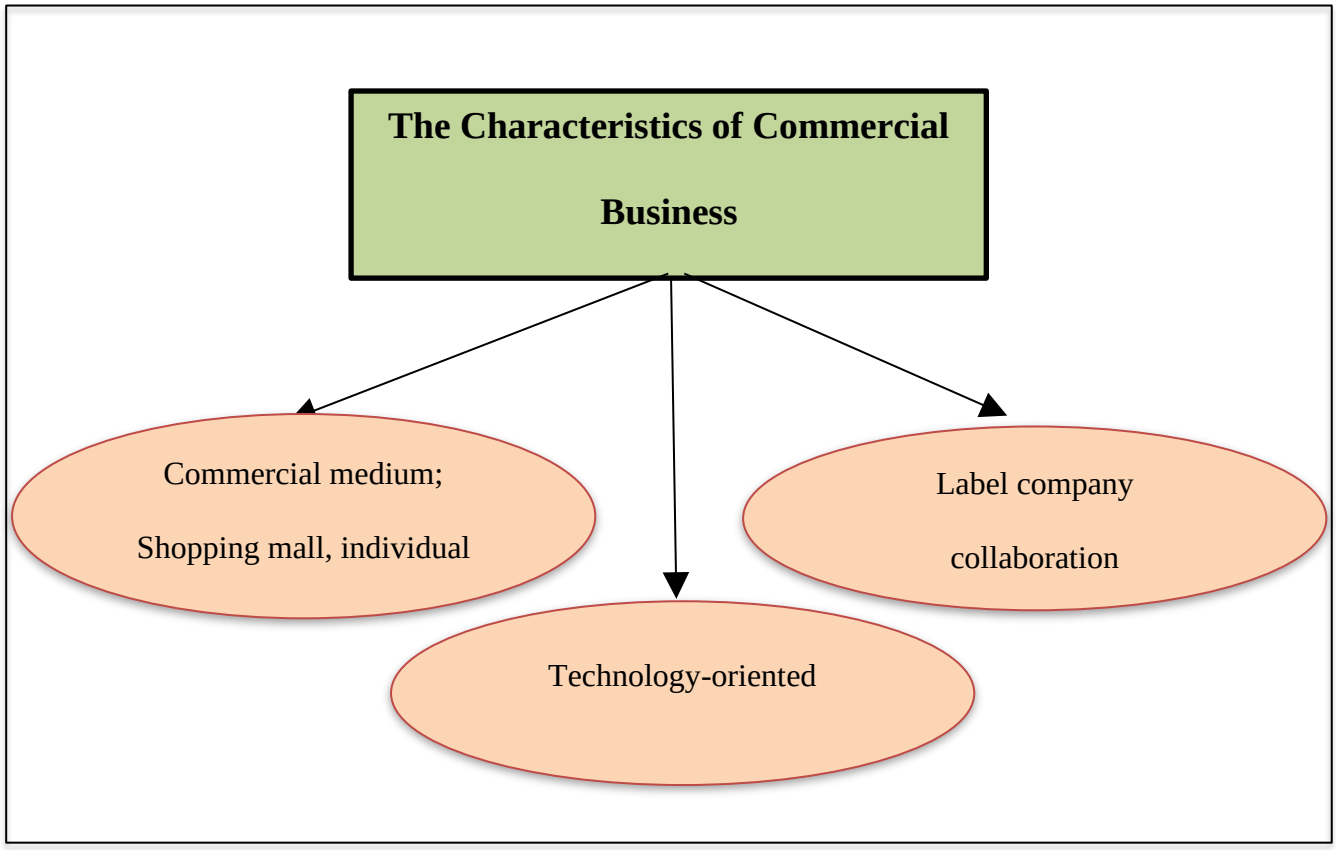


Figure 8.8: The characteristics of Commercial Business

8.4 Digital Sales in Malaysia

Looking back to before digital sales appeared in the music industry, Manuel (1993: 75) foregrounds technology throughout in his study of music and cassete culture in India. He presents a valuable historical account of cultural production. The cassete industry was a massive distribution tool in society in the 1980s, with the physical appearance of the artists themselves deemed as necessary in some musical occasions.

> *'It tries to draw out to what extent cassete-based Indian popular music has been historically and economically determined by technological 'advances' before and after cassetes, whether cassettes promoted diversity or the homogenous fare so often with products of mass culture or whether led to more progressive model of music production and distribution'* (Manuel 1993:76).

It is well documented that popular music movement was influenced by techological advancement. This can also be seen by the change of the cassette phenomenon to the Compact Disc (CD) phenomenon, as one respondent said:

> *'A few years ago, at the early stage of the Islamic music business, cassetes had the best physical sales before CDs were introduced in this business line'* (Hazamin from Inteam Group, interviewed in 2015)

Technological advances and globalization changed the style of business and the way of distribution itself. Information on digital sales was gathered, via data collection through interviews with experts and artists in the Malaysian music industry, to illustrate how digital sales affected Islamic popular music.

> *If I am not mistaken, there were only three factories that produced CDs in the early 2000s. These factories were endorsed to print CDs and have passed and complied with Islamic law. Any printing outside these facilities is considered piracy. The mastercopies are only accessible to these 3 factories and are not sent elsewhere. The 3 endorsed companies are Summit, BMT, and one the name of which I can't recall. So, if we want to go into the industry, we need to have a KDN logo and whatnot to get*

> *through all the procedures. We even tell agents to go into printing. So, the easy way is to go to big labels like Universal Music, ask them to print the albums and they'll charge you a bit and mark up the price. We pay the cost to the big label but we enter through them meaning that the printing will be assisted by them or we can register as a member of RIM. For example, InTeam is registered as a member of RIM. Many small companies are registered with RIM and once you're a member, there's a specified rate and this digital sale is developed.* (Azalino of Universal Music, interviewed in 2015)

Azalino (interviewed in 2015), who is the music manager at Universal Music, described the rise of digital production in the early 2000s as starting with just three factories that produced CDs. This influenced marketing strategy in the business model as it is related to the media platform, where digital sales is defined as the selling of advertising space on specific digital platforms such as iTunes, Spotify, and others.

The nasyid singer, Bazli (UNIC, interviewed in 2015), seriously considered this point. Recording companies became increasingly interested in *nasyid* music in the early 21st century. This led to the abandonment of the traditional business model. However, issues arose regarding competition between *nasyid* artists and those from other genres, especially surrounding factors such as music genre creativity and appearance. N*asyid* artists sought to maintain an Islamic appearance, which limited their appeal. Other genres were not subject to such limitations. Bazli (UNIC, interviewed in 2015) adds that this limitation encouraged *nasyid* artists to improvise regularly and be more creative. This included an eager adoption of downloadable music, 'new internet platforms', and online systems such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.

Nasyid singer, Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015), argued that the physical sales of Islamic albums in Malaysia peaked between 2000 and 2014 (most likely in 2007) as Figure 8.9 shows. This was because social changes provided new marketing platforms that helped sell Islamic popular music products:

The limitation in selling albums was minimised due to the availability of wider platforms for selling products, such as shopping malls.

The introduction of shopping malls accelerated growth and increased opportunities for *nasyid* artists to sell their products, especially albums. As pioneer *nasyid* singer, Idzwan (UUM, interviewed in 2016), put it, *'Business is about the power of money'*. To his mind, regardless of industry type, capitalism is the primary driver. Changes, which occurred in the music industry during the early 21st century, were the consequence of improvements in technology, in particular, the development of platforms to sell music products. This presented opportunities for Islamic popular music, and record/label companies began to approach *nasyid* artists when they recognised the potential of this genre. The change of music carriers, from cassettes to digital discs and then to downloadable systems, facilitated growth in this genre. The limitations of Islamic shops and direct selling were overcome with sales from digital downloads and retail kiosks in malls. The growth of Islamic popular music also enhanced the digital production of the big labels. The influence of technologies encouraged switching to a digital platform system.

According to Shamir, a composer and sound engineer in Malaysia (interviewed in 2016), the presence of the recording industry and digital technology boosted Malaysian Islamic popular music, which also revolutionised the music industry and business model. He stated that positive improvement in the Islamic popular music industry was due to technological advancement, which helped generate a more profitable business. The increased revenue was a result of providing suitable and approachable media, such as the digital platform, rather than just direct selling and Islamic shops.

According to another expert in the Islamic popular music industry, Faiz of IKIM (interviewed in 2015), globalisation and modernisation helped improve the *nasyid* business model, with new platforms bringing out Islamic products and overcoming limited business operations. Initially, the traditional business model was the best strategy. The progressive

improvement of the music industry led to increased commercialisation via the contemporary business model. As argued earlier, the contemporary business model improved the Islamic popular music business by encompassing various platforms to introduce, promote or sell products, including the album itself.

According to Halim of Devotees (interviewed in 2016), Islamic popular music is now sufficiently popular for artists to realise their dreams. To become a successful *nasyid* artist, one requires strength, will and persistence, but the primary driver is an understanding of the music industry. In addition to making good quality music, a good business strategy is necessary to compete with other artists and music genres. Halim of Devotees believes that understanding business, from manufacturing to retail, is a requirement for participants in the music industry for success. Transition from the traditional business model to the contemporary model led to higher sales, increased production of Islamic popular music due to higher demand, and an increased opportunity to advertise the products. According to Fuad (interviewed in 2015), who agrees, changes in the business model influenced other parts of business, such as profit generation. As increased demand led to increased investors, there was more confidence in dealing with business in Islamic popular music, such as increasing the number of label companies in Malaysia such as EMI, BMG, and Warner Music. Thus, when the business began running with great potential, other independent label companies such as Telaga Biru, Hijjaz Records, and many more were introduced.

Azalino, manager at Universal Music, discussed the business at a major label. He identified changes in music carriers and development.

> *The evolution from music cassettes to compact discs (CD) increased the revenue of the recording company. The CD was introduced in the second decade as a new wave in music, and consumers shifted to this music carrier, which eventually increased sales in the record industry. He believed the improvement in recording at the label company was due to increased demand, showing enhanced*

> *potential in the sale of CDs as compared with cassettes. Modernisation calls for technology improvisation, which also creates additional business opportunities such as downloadable music. He believed the changes in the recording company and music carrier helped to expand the product-selling platforms to better places such as shopping malls, display spaces and retail kiosks.* (Azalino of Universal Music, interviewed in 2015)

Meanwhile, Fakhrul (UNIC, interviewed in 2015) argued that *'it is difficult to sell any products without having various platforms and technologies*. In the 1990s, *nasyid* artists generated income by selling their products via direct selling in Islamic shops and through performances. When he was involved in the Islamic popular music industry, the sale of physical albums was conducted through various platforms and technologies such as music stores in malls and during the shows themselves, but new opportunities via new technologies were evident with the advent of downloadable music.

One of the pioneers of the Malaysian music industry, Ayob of Padi Records (interviewed in 2016), the person in charge of public relations in Pony Canyon (a Malaysian recording label), stated that the key players in the music industry operated businesses that generated profit. Historically, *nasyid* albums were sold in small numbers and managed by the artists. During the implementation of the traditional business model in the 1990s, albums were placed mainly in Islamic stores. The target audience was found mostly in villages or rural areas. At this stage, 300 to 600,000 units of *nasyid* albums were sold and *nasyid* artists would manage their own business. Changes in the music industry resulted in changes to the business model. This brought positive impacts since there was increased demand for the Islamic popular music industry because of improvements and increased opportunities in the promotion and sale of Islamic products. During the revolution in Islamic popular music in the second decade, *nasyid* artists encountered challenges in managing and monitoring their products. The issue occurred when label companies established platforms to distribute the albums and placed artists in a

more passive position than previously. Target audiences in villages and rural areas rarely go to malls to purchase *nasyid* albums. The change in technology led to a stagnation in the Islamic popular music industry, as there was no improvement in physical sales. However, digital sales did help the Islamic popular music industry. Ayob recalled that during the 1990s, the target audience was limited since the promotion and marketing of *nasyid* was inefficient. By the early 2000s, the development in music, lyrics, and images led to investor confidence in the Islamic music business. This helped to increase the volume of digital sales.

To summarise, the changes from a traditional to a contemporary business model occurred in the 2000s. This led to improved outcomes through various platforms, recording companies, and music carriers. The essence of this business is selling Islamic products including albums (cassettes or CDs) and other related products such as books or *Jubah*. Mostly artists faced this challenge because of competition with other genres. As a result, to maintain and keep this music relevant, better strategies were found and media identified as a flexible and suitable approach to minimise the challenge.

In the next part of the discussion, to provide a better understanding of digital sales, the album-selling pattern in Malaysia was reviewed. The author provides examples of sales statements of various Islamic songs. There are four concepts of the album explored. The sales statements are set out in Figure 8.9.

PENYATA JUALAN ALBUM

ALBUM ZIKIR

BIL	TAJUK ALBUM	ARTIS	TAHUN DIKELUARKAN	JUMLAH JUALAN									
				2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1)	KEMBARA SUFI	AKHIL HAYY	2007	91,554.06	203,347.56	55,587.48	28,828.02	21,608.34	16,335.54	7,605.00	5,840.64	1,602.12	608.40
2)	SELAWAT SUFI	ABDULLAH FAHMI	2015									16,690.44	2,737.80

ALBUM NASYID

BIL	TAJUK ALBUM	ARTIS	TAHUN DIKELUARKAN	JUMLAH JUALAN									
				2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1)	ALLAHU RABBI	INTEAM	2009			74,187.96	12,556.32	3,776.22	2,766.12	932.40	(295.26)	295.26	637.14
2)	MIRACLE HITS	INTEAM	2015									19,524.54	25,652.58

ALBUM QASIDAH

BIL	TAJUK ALBUM	ARTIS	TAHUN DIKELUARKAN	JUMLAH JUALAN									
				2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1)	BERZANJI & MARHABAN	K.NURUL HUDA	2008		21,496.80	10,697.70	8,051.16	7,067.58	8,801.52	8,152.56	5,881.20	3,204.24	1,794.78
2)	QASIDAH MASYHUR	K.QASIDAH ADDARA	2015									12,131.04	(322.38)

ALBUM MENGAJI

BIL	TAJUK ALBUM	ARTIS	TAHUN DIKELUARKAN	JUMLAH JUALAN									
				2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1)	JUZ AMMA	ADIK MUHAMMAD	2007	56,022.72	32,594.16	29,354.04	23,838.60	16,755.36	13,418.76	9,020.88	7,388.76	6,094.32	3,336.60
2)	JUZ AMMA	SHEIKH MOUTASEM	2015									14,542.92	525.36

Figure 8.9: Sales Statements for four different genres (*Zikr*, *Nasyid*, Qasidah and Quran Recitation) 2007-2016

Table 8.9 shows the sales statements for four genres of Islamic popular music, namely, '*Zikr, Nasyid, Qasidah* and *Quran* recitation' from 2007 to 2016 by an independent Islamic recording label in Malaysia. The data reveals that over 10 years, there was a significant decline in sales for all types of albums. The largest decline in sales were in *nasyid* albums, which fell from 74,187.96 Malaysia Ringgit (GBP 13,698.32) in 2009 to just 637.14 Malaysia Ringgit (GBP 117.64) in 2016 (approximately 73,550.82: GBP 13,580.67). The decline in physical album sale depicts the change in consumerism style. It also marks the necessity to embrace a change in business model and the readiness to shift to digital album sale. Further data regarding the sales of the *nasyid* Album was obtained from Inteam Records Sdn Bhd. The Inteam Group produced albums consistently compared with other *nasyid* groups. The data is provided specifically for use in this research only, as requested by the company.

INTEAM RECORDS SDN BHD

SALES REPORT JANUARY - DECEMBER 2013

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
IRSB (RM)	469,490.97	400,401.54	428,905.86	317,592.43	391,314.93	321,546.89	390,570.68	206,444.85	207,023.26	211,940.25	258,581.35	172,574.77	**3,776,387.78**
IRSB (%)	96.65	94.08	81.73	81.94	89.10	88.94	83.67	85.32	90.25	89.30	66.59	77.88	**85.64**
OTHERS (RM)	16,277.76	25,175.80	95,904.91	69,987.92	47,878.96	39,976.96	76,202.34	35,531.19	22,357.54	25,389.69	129,722.47	49,015.08	**633,420.62**
OTHERS (%)	3.35	5.92	18.27	18.06	10.90	11.06	16.33	14.68	9.75	10.70	33.41	22.12	**14.36**
TOTAL (SALES)	485,768.73	425,577.34	524,810.77	387,580.35	439,193.89	361,523.85	466,773.02	241,976.04	229,380.80	237,329.94	388,303.82	221,589.85	**4,409,808.40**
COLLECTION	312,052.81	418,779.80	398,277.23	460,062.20	440,923.24	353,659.15	325,272.10	303,490.67	365,293.23	281,501.67	232,767.62	264,015.23	**4,156,094.95**

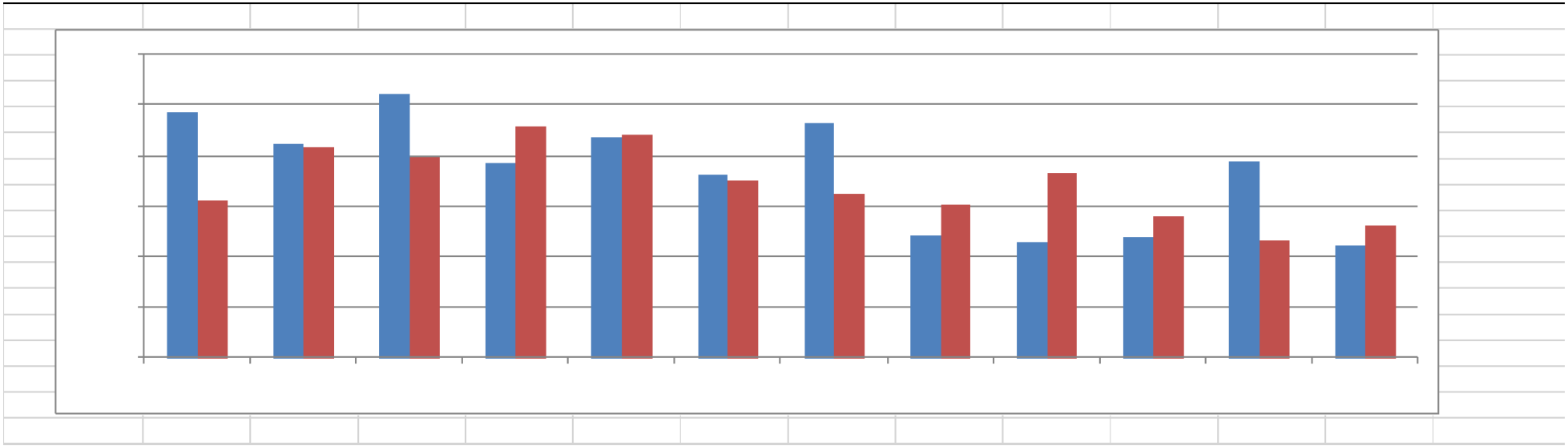


Figure 8.10: Sales and collection report Inteam records product from their own label sales from January until December 2013

WARNER MUSIC - SALES & COLLECTION

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
SALES	55,983.12	49,237.84	58,581.36	50,172.40	39,434.96	42,223.84	68,645.44	59,602.24	25,570.16	25,628.08	-	57,036.16	**532,115.60**

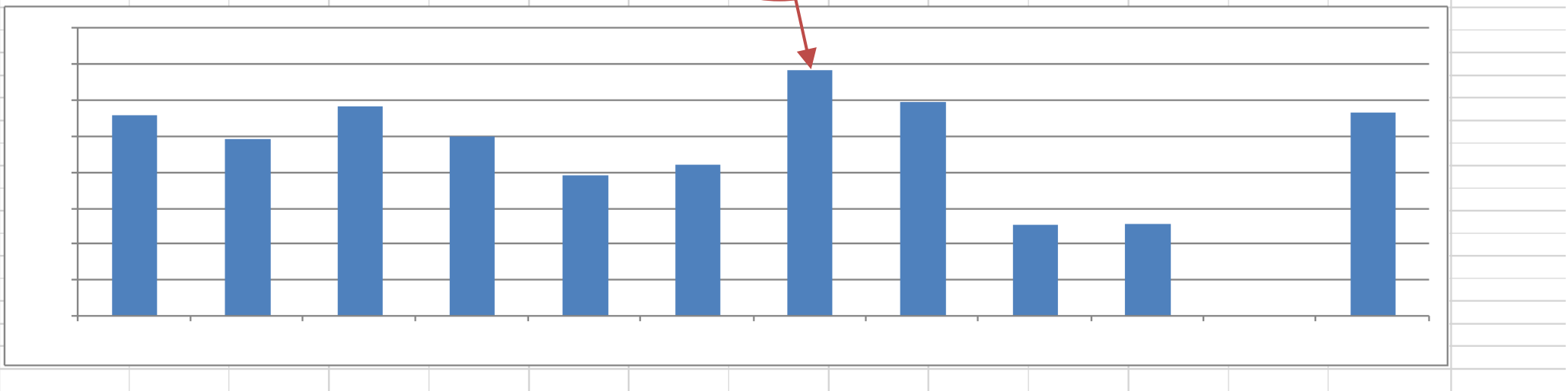


Figure 8.11: Sales and collection report for Inteam records from Warner music Malaysia, January to December 2013

Figures 8.10 and 8.11 show sales of Inteam records, which are under its own label, and their distribution via Warner Music Malaysia in 2013. The highest sales under its own label was in March 2013, with earnings of 524,810.77 Malaysia Ringgit (GBP 96, 902.85) while sales under the Warner Music label are highest in July. The difference between the sales gained from their own label is higher than that gained in collaboration with another label company. It seems that independent label companies have gained the confidence to market their own music with the stability of the *nasyid* industry.

INTEAM RECORDS SDN BHD

SALES REPORT JANUARY - DECEMBER 2014

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
IRSB (RM)	300,188.69	411,686.45	244,995.41	380,047.78	383,867.76	384,374.75	99,766.75	342,124.90	184,436.30	216,926.80	150,167.32	310,591.51	**3,409,174.42**
IRSB (%)	94.49	94.74	94.33	92.75	96.89	87.54	72.57	86.91	85.87	84.32	94.78	91.24	**90.69**
OTHERS (RM	17,520.53	22,870.96	14,727.27	29,722.41	12,322.99	54,732.27	37,710.00	51,541.49	30,351.67	40,324.76	8,275.56	29,826.62	**349,926.53**
OTHERS (%)	5.51	5.26	5.67	7.25	3.11	12.46	27.43	13.09	14.13	15.68	5.22	8.76	**9.31**
OTAL (SALE	317,709.22	434,557.41	259,722.68	409,770.19	396,190.75	439,107.02	137,476.75	393,666.39	214,787.97	257,251.56	158,442.88	340,418.13	**3,759,100.95**
COLLECTIOI	347,009.51	283,469.79	288,690.23	335,260.68	450,058.92	312,520.02	263,707.28	260,712.15	286,279.70	289,319.66	216,105.49	167,778.97	**3,500,912.40**

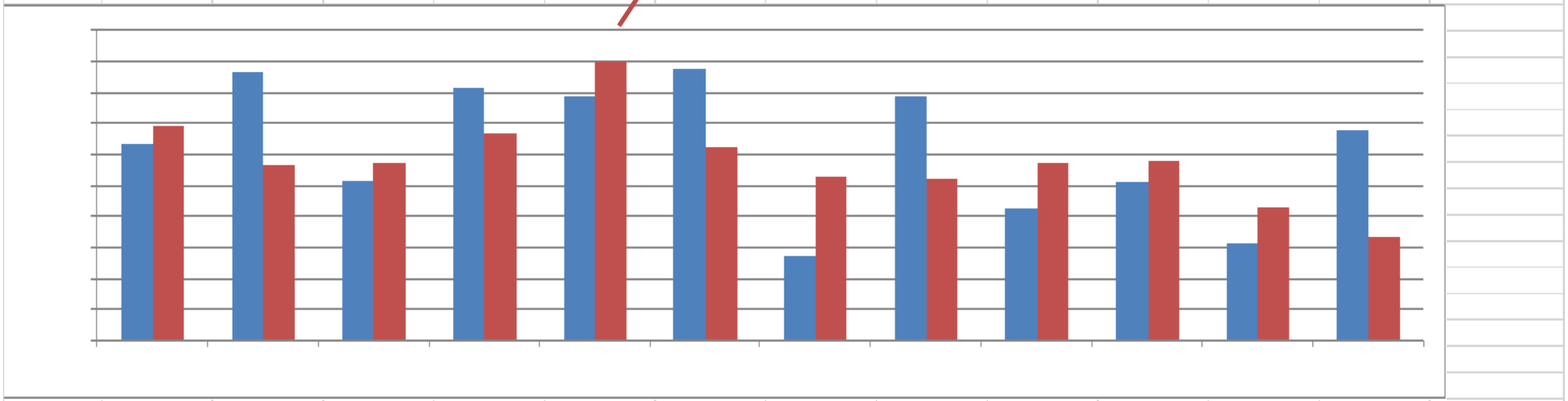


Figure 8.12: Sales report by Inteam records, January to December 2014

WARNER MUSIC/SONY MUSIC - SALES & COLLECTION

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
ARNER MUS	47,483.84	32,878.72	29,682.64	23,801.68	415.44	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	134,262.32
SONY MUSIC	-	-	-	28,708.08	45,298.56	62,082.06	63,048.72	77,494.72	28,568.64	17,796.40	12,893.57	-	335,890.75

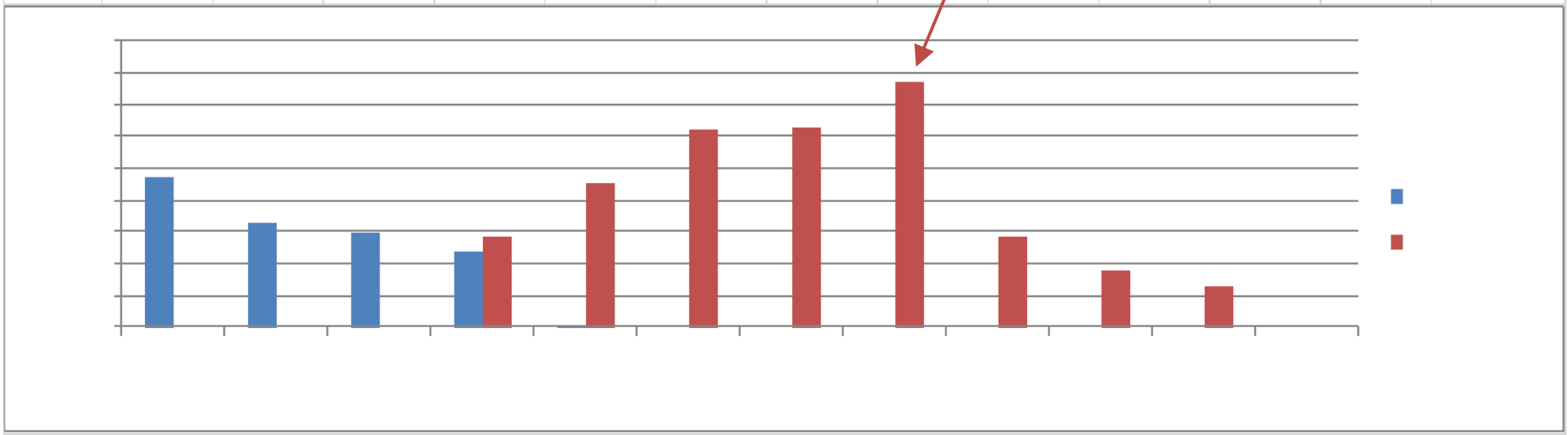


Figure 8.13: Sales and collection report for Inteam records with Warner music and Sony Music as their distributors in 2014

Figures 8.12 and 8.13 are the sales figures gained by Inteam records and sales figures made by two large labels (Warner Music and Sony Music Malaysia) as distributors of Inteam records in 2014. The highest sales were in June, with 439,107.62 Malaysia Ringgit (GBP 81, 078.33) while their distributors rang up sales in August fetching 77, 494.72 Malaysia Ringgit (GBP 14, 308.89). From the data, it is clear that, when Inteam

records changed their distributor from Warner Music Malaysia to Sony Music Malaysia in April 2014, the changes impacted sales records as they grew rapidly and this shows that Independent labels collaborate with Big labels in selling physical albums.

INTEAM RECORDS SDN BHD
SALES REPORT JANUARY - DECEMBER 2015

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
IRSB (RM)	244,486.11	177,814.41	217,843.68	215,488.04	371,858.73	184,876.39	145,327.99	117,571.70	93,379.27	88,983.81	78,784.41	141,067.99	**2,077,482.53**
IRSB (%)	90.96	92.60	92.75	96.18	95.86	94.76	94.71	92.18	91.75	93.06	92.11	88.36	**93.32**
OTHERS (RM)	24,298.12	14,202.01	17,027.10	8,553.58	16,045.53	10,216.17	8,109.52	9,973.27	8,399.35	6,640.55	6,753.01	18,584.69	**148,802.90**
OTHERS (%)	9.04	7.40	7.25	3.82	4.14	5.24	5.29	7.82	8.25	6.94	7.89	11.64	**6.68**
TOTAL (SALES)	268,784.23	192,016.42	234,870.78	224,041.62	387,904.26	195,092.56	153,437.51	127,544.97	101,778.62	95,624.36	85,537.42	159,652.68	**2,226,285.43**
COLLECTION	267,830.33	228,569.31	318,794.46	241,388.19	[illegible]	306,422.10	179,914.33	178,828.93	191,745.18	157,147.87	154,842.93	215,123.26	**2,632,108.87**

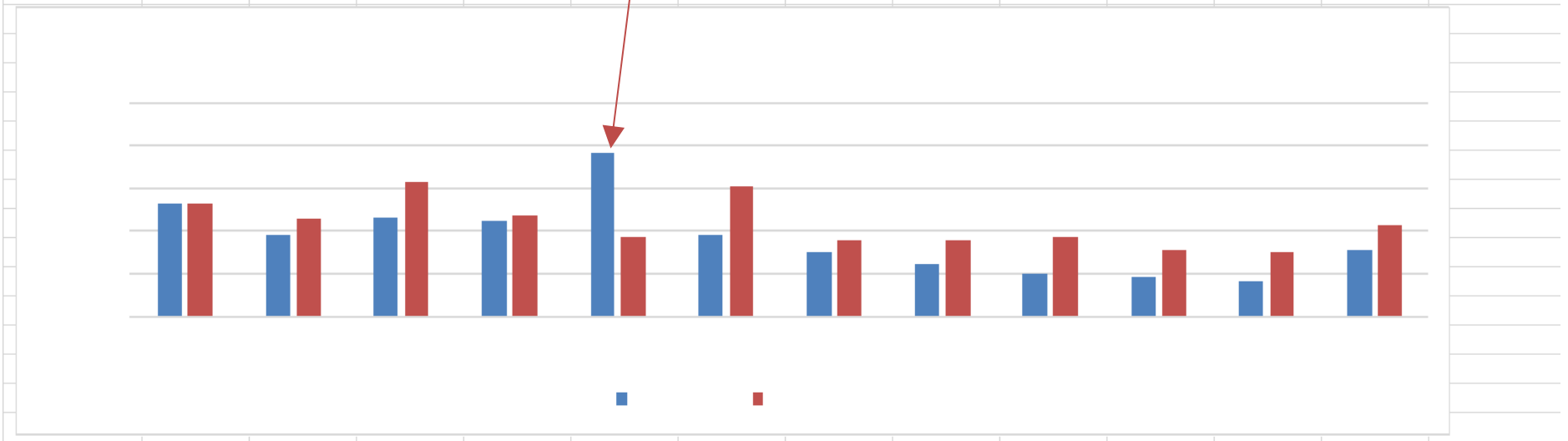


Figure 8.14: Sales report by Inteam records, January to December 2015

SONY MUSIC - SALES & COLLECTION

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
SONY MUSIC	12,247.44	16,114.24	22,939.76	14,880.96	25,398.48	26,528.80	22,274.00	11,597.76	7,856.88	9,894.64	998.96	9,731.36	**180,463.28**

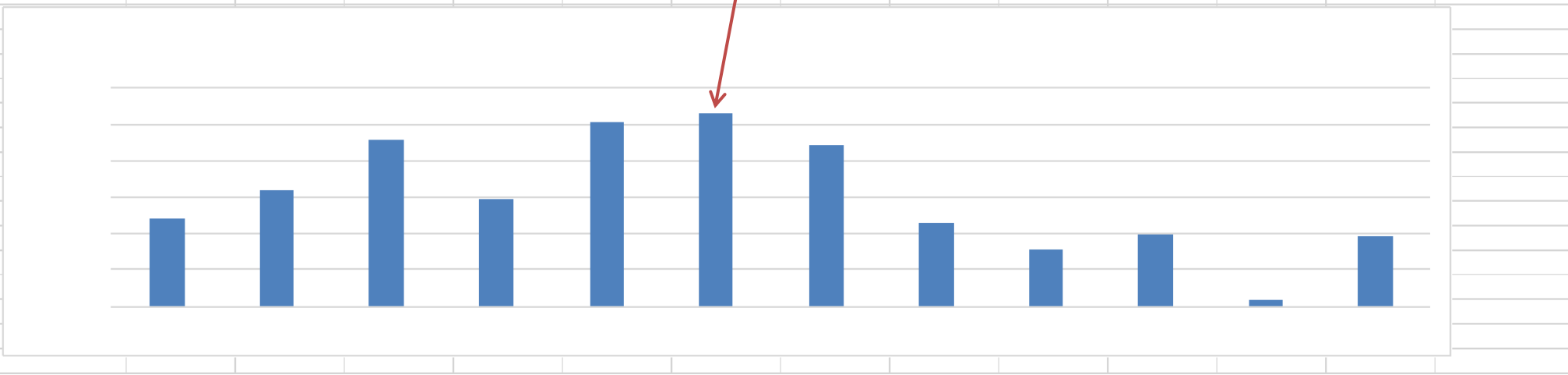


Figure 8.15: Sales and collection report for Inteam records with Sony Music as their distributor

Figure 8.14 shows that in 2015, the highest sales figure was in May with the figure of MYR 387,904.26 (GBP 71, 623.96) and subsequently sales fluctuated until end of the year. Inteam Records also distributed the albums with another major label, Sony Music Malaysia (Table 8.15), which been replaced another major label (Warner Music) as previously shown in the data for the year 2014. The reason for shift to another distributor is due to the impact of the declining sales of the big label company. The highest sales figure made by Sony Music was in June,

which contributed MYR 26,528.80 (GBP 4898.37) in sales. The sales result proved that sales made by Inteam Records itself were better even at the lowest sales result of approximately MYR 95,624.36 (GBP 17, 656.41).

INTEAM RECORDS SDN BHD
SALES REPORT JANUARY - DECEMBER 2016

MONTH	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
IRSB (RM)	125,889.71	226,031.91	48,511.65	130,211.91	124,449.12	231,993.18	47,436.87	157,294.26	91,637.03	152,397.59	69,907.21	75,079.29	**1,480,839.73**
IRSB (%)	93.58	95.80	89.91	87.02	95.25	95.14	96.43	96.33	98.54	91.65	97.86	93.32	**94.19**
OTHERS (RM)	8,630.99	9,903.01	5,444.46	19,418.23	6,204.41	11,856.01	1,758.63	5,998.50	1,355.13	13,893.39	1,529.46	5,375.82	**91,368.04**
OTHERS (%)	6.42	4.20	10.09	12.98	4.75	4.86	3.57	3.67	1.46	8.35	2.14	6.68	**5.81**
TOTAL (SALES)	134,520.70	235,934.92	53,956.11	149,630.14	130,653.53	243,849.19	49,195.50	163,292.76	92,992.16	166,290.98	71,436.67	80,455.11	**1,572,207.77**
COLLECTION	123,372.37	164,281.36	191,404.73	132,119.34	203,379.97	135,144.58	129,915.86	111,234.38	120,836.98	117,981.33	99,797.51	144,837.47	**1,674,305.88**

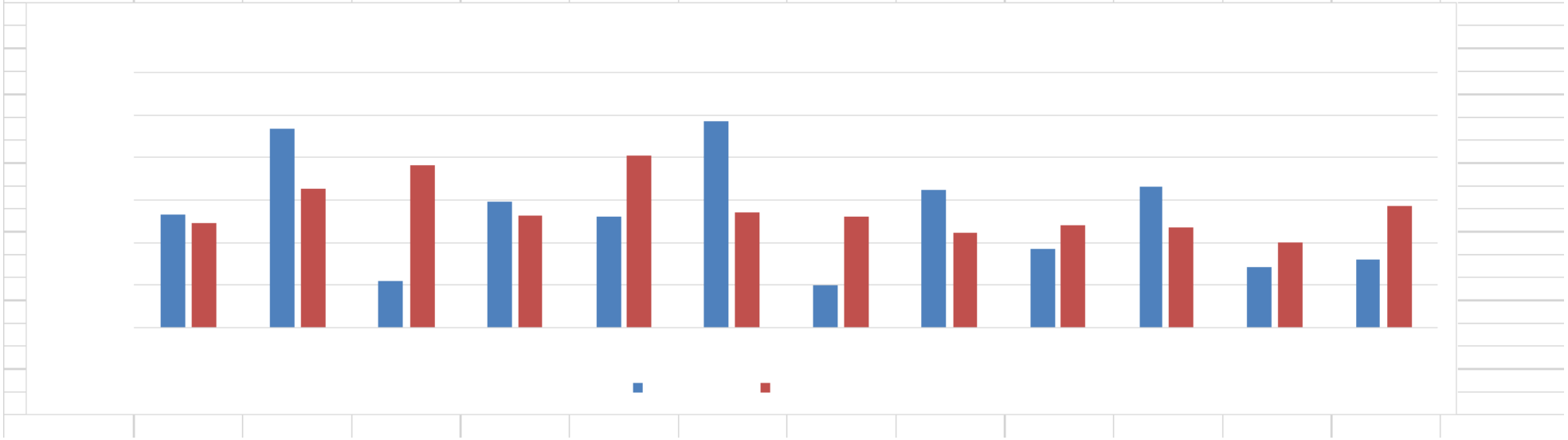
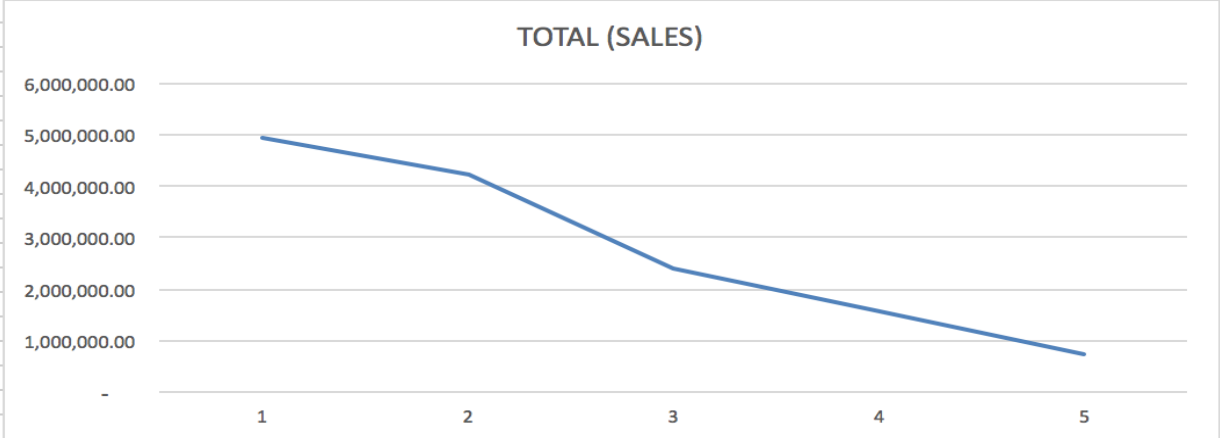


Figure 8.16: Sales and collection report for Inteam records in 2016

In 2016, according to figure 8.16, Inteam Records Sdn Bhd started distributing their own albums. Inteam Records discontinued the collaboration with Sony Music due to a decline in sales. Inteam Records distributed their own products at Bookstores and CD/DVD stores in the style of the traditional business model. Inteam Records believed in the potential of selling Islamic products through the traditional business model. Indeed, Inteam Records improved sales to MYR 1,572,207.77 (GBP 29, 0297.80) and collections improved to MYR 1,674,305.88 (GBP 30, 9149.54) within a year.

INTEAM RECORDS SDN BHD
SALES REPORT FOR YEAR 2013 - 2017

YEAR	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (until Aug)
TOTAL (SALES)	4,941,924.00	4,229,254.02	2,406,748.71	1,572,207.77	749,313.26



MONTHLY AVERAGE - SALES

YEAR	MONTHLY
2013	411,827.00
2014	352,437.84
2015	200,562.39
2016	131,017.31
2017	93,664.16

Figure 8.17: Monthly average sales report for Inteam Records Sdn Bhd from 2013 to 2017

Figure 8.17 reveals sales figures for 5 years, from 2013 until August 2017, for Inteam Records. Sales for the year 2013 recorded the highest, at MYR 411,829.00 (GBP 76041.51) with sales rapidly decling until August 2017 to MYR 93, 664.16 (GBP 17,294.47). After 2016, the group decided to carry out the business by themselves. The progress of technology in media contributes to dropping sales of physical albums because it allows people to listen, download and buy products online such as by using internet-based applications and software such as iTunes, Spotify and Tunecore. Inteam Group believed in a new approach to ensure music could be distributed and sold, including the new approach of the USB Drive format, which will be discussed in the next section.

8.4.1 USB Drive Format: an experiment in selling albums



Ms.80 Jumaat, 6 Oktober 2017

→ HIP!

Album Zikir Hati In-Team dalam bentuk pemacu kilat USB. *Kumpulan In-Team dianggotai dari kiri, Ayam, Amin, Syah dan Rahim.*

Pelopor album pemacu kilat USB

In-Team perkenal Zikir Hati mengikut konsep digemari generasi muda

Apa yang kami lihat, pemacu kilat USB masih lagi selari dengan konsep digital digemari ketika ini dan ia memudahkan peminat untuk memasangnya, sama ada dalam kereta, di komputer riba, televisyen dan sebagainya"

Mohd Syahril Abdul Khalid, *Jurucakap kumpulan In-Team*

Oleh Rozdan Mazalan
rozdan@kh.com.my

Seiring dengan perkembangan dunia digital masa kini, kumpulan nasyid In-Team menghasilkan album terbaru mereka, *Zikir Hati*, dalam bentuk pemacu kilat USB.

Mereka juga adalah artis pertama dalam industri muzik tanah air yang menerbitkan album menggunakan konsep sebegitu.

Penghasilan album muzik dalam bentuk sedemikian dikatakan lebih memudahkan pendengar atau pengguna untuk membawanya ke mana saja mereka pergi, apatah lagi ia sebuah produk yang memuatkan zikir harian, tazkirah dan lagu nasyid.

Mudah digunakan

Jurucakap kumpulan berkenaan, Mohd Syahril Abdul Khalid atau Syah berkata, selepas mengkaji keperluan pengguna hari ini, seiring dengan dunia digital yang dijadi kelompok remaja, album terkini mereka dihasilkan dalam bentuk sedemikian bertepatan dengan selera mereka.

"Sebenarnya, ia adalah projek percubaan kami dalam menggunakan kad memori atau pemacu kilat USB untuk album. Tindakan itu juga dilakukan rentetan pasaran album hari ini yang dilihat semakin merosot berikutan perubahan teknologi.

"Kenapa hari ini juga sudah beralih kepada teknologi digital. Kami tidak menafikan konsep penghasilan album muzik dalam bentuk cakera padat (CD) masih relevan, tetapi ia semakin berkurangan.

"Apa yang kami lihat, pemacu kilat USB masih lagi selari dengan konsep digital digemari ketika ini dan ia memudahkan peminat untuk memasangnya sama ada dalam kereta, di komputer riba, televisyen dan sebagainya," katanya sambil menambah, kebanyakan pengeluar kereta turut menyediakan penyambung USB dalam model terbaru mereka hari ini.

Boleh digunakan cenderahati

Bukan sekadar mudah digunakan, kata Syah, album berkenaan juga sesuai untuk dijadikan cenderahati buat peminat kumpulan terbabit.

"Pemacu kilat yang digunakan bagi album ini mempunyai memori sebanyak 8GB, sedangkan muzik atau lagu di dalamnya hanya menggunakan sekitar 200MB. Jadi, dengan kapasiti yang masih berbaki, pengguna boleh menggunakannya untuk menyimpan dokumen peribadi atau gambar," katanya.

Berserta mengenai album berkenaan, Syah berkata, ia memuatkan lapan zikir yang diadaptasi dengan lapan tazkirah dan lagu nasyid.

Sesuai diamalkan setiap hari

Menurut Muhammad Hazamin Harun (Amin) pula, lapan zikir yang dipetik daripada kitab tulisan Imam Nawawi itu sesuai untuk diamalkan setiap hari, seperti yang dilakukan Rasul.

"Di dalamnya dimuatkan lapan zikir yang dibacakan secara acapella, menerusi melodi yang dihasilkan kami sendiri.

"Pada masa sama, zikir itu turut diselang tazkirah yang disampaikan Ustaz Zul Razali Razak. Bersama menjelaskan membawa maksud setiap zikir yang disampaikan itu.

"Proses penghasilan album ini sebenarnya sudah bermula sejak April lalu, namun ia memakan sedikit masa untuk menyiapkannya.

"Walaupun proses rakamannya tidaklah sesukar menyiapkan album nasyid, tetapi kami tetap berdepan cabaran seperti mendapatkan waktu lapang Ustaz Zul. Ia antara sebab memakan kami menanggunkan seketika proses penerbitan album ini," katanya.

Kata Amin, mereka memang menghargakan khidmat Ustaz Zul untuk album berkenaan memandangkan beliau memiliki kelebihan dalam menyampaikan tazkirah dengan penuh emosi.

Tegasnya, pembabitan pendakwah terbabit dalam album mereka kali ini menjadikan projek itu lebih istimewa.

Info

In-Team

- **Kumpulan nasyid ini mula aktif** di arena seni sejak 1998.
- **Mereka pernah menghasilkan album** seperti Kasih Sekejab (2008), Impian Kasih (2011), Damba Kasih (2013), In Team 'Ini' (2016), Tiada Lagi Kasih (2009), Nur Insani (2007), Allahu Rabbi (2005), Iman & Aman (2013) dan Zikir Hati (2017).
- **Selain Syah dan Amin,** kumpulan ini turut dianggotai oleh Abdul Rahim Osman (Rahim) dan Hesam Ahmad (Ayam).
- **Album Zikir Hati** dijual secara dalam talian pada harga RM45.

Figure 8.18: Inteam *nasyid* group with their first ever Malaysia USB drive album

The Inteam nasyid group continues to produce new songs steadfastly even though the latest technology prevents the sale of physical albums today. They get along with the changes that happen and at the same time try to find another way of marketing the song by publishing it in the form of a USB drive. We hope that this concept will make it easier for listeners to install it on their own laptop or personal computer. The USB drive can also be a souvenir. Our target are the loyal fans of Inteam and students as they can also use the drive to save documents, he said. According to Shah, the production of songs in the USB drive format was also more exclusive as it released 300 units at a price of MYR 45 per unit. Those who

> *are interested can buy online by visiting www.inteammobile.com (Samudin, 2017). (Translation made from News in Berita Harian Online on 6th October 2017)*

According to Samudin from Berita Harian 6th October (2017), the Inteam Group tried a new approach to selling albums via the USB drive in 2017 which introduced a new strategy to business. The Inteam *nasyid* group continues to produce new songs even though the latest technology discourages the sale of physical albums. They adapted to change and at the same time tried to find another way of marketing their songs by publishing them in the form of a USB drive. Inteam chose this medium due to current market conditions which show a transition to digital, online, and downloadable technology.

> *We hope that with this concept it will make it easier for listeners to install it on their own laptop or personal computer. The USB drive can also be a souvenir. Our target are the loyal fans of Inteam and students as they can also use the drive to save documents* (Syahril Inteam nasyid group, interviewed in 2015).

Shah also mentioned that the production of songs in a USB drive format was also more exclusive as it was limited to just 300 units, priced at MYR45 each.[74] The next subsection will discuss further how media and marketing associate with technological influences and how they play their roles in Islamic popular music.

[74] see www.inteammobile.com. For further understanding regarding this new concept, the following video can be viewed: https://www.facebook.com/*nasyid*inteam/videos/10155746246001407/.

8.5 Media and Marketing

This section considers ideas regarding strategies in the music industry. The technologies that helped develop the music industry over the past decade are identified. In general, the relationship between media and marketing to improve business operations are outlined. Marketing varies based on perspective; they engage the target market to sell their products and maintain relationships beyond the purchase.

Media is necessary to communicate and promote messages, while marketing is an ideal way to classify the suitable promotion or potential profit gain. These two elements are the strategies used in businesses. Not all business models currently used will be successful and profitable. In the past, the Islamic popular music industry was affected by the music production and distribution medium. Currently, modern technologies and the 'internet phenomenon' have led to changes in the music industry linked to globalisation. The internet platforms offer music creators and performers opportunities to play prominent roles in the industry compared to in the past.

Media and marketing are indirectly associated with technology because technology indirectly influences the growth of those two elements. The evolution of technologies drives the upgrade of business models since it provides better opportunities for media and marketing practice. The application of technologies in the music industry led to changes in media and marketing. The development of technology due to globalisation and modernisation provides a profound effect because it changes the value chain of the music industry entirely. In the future, consumers will have much more choice to enjoy music. Furthermore, the growth of technology helps to improve media and marketing strategies in the music industry.

Strategies are implemented to help increase profit in the Islamic popular music industry business. However, to increase profitability in the existing business model, solid strategies are required. Media is the best medium of platform to promote and efficiently market the Islamic popular music products to increase the chance of success for the business. In Malaysia, the mass media and new media (Internet) allow the significant development of current businesses. This was highlighted by a Malaysian Islamic popular music maker:

> *Ok, during the Raihan era, they were a phenomenon and were very famous nasyid artists, but their success was seen slow and limited because there was no social media at the time. They only got to advertise using the mass media which is not extensive and had wide coverage via radio and television.* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

The respondent has been involved with this music industry with UNIC since the early 2000s, during which radio was the main medium. The most efficient and useful media to introduce new *nasyid* artists in early 1990s were the print media:

> *We wanted to commercialise Islamic popular music so we had to approach it similarly to the way we approach contemporary music or other music, other than nasyid. We needed to have a promotional method. Nasyid singers no longer want to go for promotion, they isolate themselves from the media and they do not want wide publicity. If you want to commercialise your product, you have to follow such methods. So, this is one of the marketing strategies available today. In terms of increasing the popularity of the artist or song, social media is the ideal platform but it does not guarantee profit, meaning it does not mean that we will be able to receive consistent or massive income.* (Hafiz Hamidun, interviewed in 2015)

How can suitable promotional methods be used to disseminate music to people? Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015), a *nasyid* artist, believes that enhanced promotional methods can be achieved by developing good relations with media channels, which could be the best approach to increase coverage and publicity. Thus, this music can be promoted effectively compared with other music genres in Malaysia.

Social media is increasingly central to the business. It is challenging to sell music products without using social media platforms. Based on his experiences, Hafiz argued that in the early 2000s, physical albums were primarily sold in stores. When Hijjaz was conceptualised, they were not comparable to Raihan because they were the pioneers. During that time, there were no social media, it was difficult to make sales in stores or promote the products. Moreover, the stores limited their sales due to a lack of widespread market demand. Previously people used cassettes. When CDs took over, nobody listened to cassettes, so cassettes were no longer used. Radios that also played cassettes began to disappear. Technological changes led to recording advancements. This meant that we had to keep ourselves up-to-date, current. The Malaysian music industry realised that media platforms needed to improvise constantly to remain sustainable. Thus, the development of media significantly changed to better quality and led to form sharper outcomes for the music industry.

8.5.1 Print Media

In general, the common media previously used to communicate and promote products in the music industry was the print media. Print media was the traditional communication medium to maintain readership. According to Shirley B. (2003), print media is classified as 'paper publication which is circulated in specific physical form such as books, magazines, journals or newsletter'. In the early stages of the Islamic popular music industry, most marketing strategies relied on print media since other technologies were not widely used. Other technology such as the radio had been used (see subsection 8.5.2) and could 'run' together with print media at the early stage of the Islamic music industry; the main print mass media were the newspapers. According to the Al-Manna Group (interviewed in 2015), this platform was regarded as important and it was the strategy that efficiently helped the *nasyid* artists in the

first decade. The respondent also added that without print media, it was difficult for them to tell people what they had and what they wanted to share with the audience. The communication presented by print media highlighted by Al-Manna Group was:

> *Print media provides news to people and triggers their interest about nasyid artists. This was observed when Raihan hit the music industry. Raihan was always featured in the front pages of most newspapers in Malaysia. This stimulated people's interest to know more about Raihan as Islamic genre artists.* (Al-Manna Group, interviewed in 2015)

Magazines also helped in communicating images of *nasyid* artists. One Malaysian composer, Bazli (UNIC, interviewed in 2015), claimed:

> *Media is an important device to drive business promotions among the public; by identifying what the artists have and what they want to sell. Thus, the most efficient way in the early stage of the Islamic popular music industry in Malaysia, was that nasyid was introduced via print media. The lack of technology at that time made this media the medium of communication with the people. Besides, this media also performed well to attract people to nasyid.* (Bazli of UNIC, interviewed in 2015)

Media strengthened the music industry, advanced Islamic popular music, and increased communication with audiences. Bazli's experiences led him to believe that media plays an increasingly important role and serves as a platform to improve marketing. This approach can help improve the Malaysian music industry. This was in tandem with the aspects of lyrics production, as described by Ayob (public relations in Pony Canyon recording label):

> *They are doing business so they go wherever they can gain profit. Back then 300 to 600,000 nasyid albums were sold, so they could manage. Rabbani, InTeam's label could manage, but now nasyid has no revenue, the distribution of the albums is in cassette stores in villages. As a result, sales are not so encouraging, where Islamic content usually goes for sale in Islamic bookstores and during lectures. For example, Ustaz Kazim is lecturing tonight and people attending seek Islamic products. People do not go to the supermarket to look for Islamic products. That is the difference. If big labels just take like 2000 copies, it's fine but a lot of the sales are from our part. For example, Raihan sold 600,000 from sales in*

> *rural areas, not through record labels such as Warner music. Marketing needs to be seriously considered such as how to promote and what we can use as the medium to market the products. The importance of media has increased.* (Ayob of Padi Records, interviewed in 2016)

The respondent identified the relationship between business and marketing. In order to operate business related to Islamic products successfully, suitable and consistent mediums should enable this music to grow as strong as other genres. He also stated that media should be used as the main 'communication' tool to 'advertise' this music.

According to Hafiz Hamidun (interviewed in 2015), promotion methods are important to yield better outcomes in business. If *nasyid* artists want to commercialise their product, they should implement methods for communication and promotion purposes. He also mentioned that prior to the advancement of media into the forms available today, print media was the most commonly used.

In sum, print media plays a significant role in communicating and conveying news, advertising, and as a promotional platform. In Malaysia, the newspaper publications *Utusan Melayu, Harian Metro, Berita Harian, News Straits Times (NST)* and *The Star* are popular print media. They are produced in an attractive style and are conveniently priced at between MYR 2.00 and MYR3.00 (GBP 0.36-0.40). This attracts readers. However, currently, media platforms such as the radio and the television are used widely and seem to be more practical than print media.

8.5.2 Radio and Television

> *Officially, I work as a producer of IKIM.FM. We started in 2001. So, to follow the two decades, we're a bit later, around 6 years, with regard to the evolution of the nasyid industry in Malaysia. However, based*

> *on my experience, nasyid started earlier, maybe during the time of our parents. It is just that exploded onto the scene of the Malaysian music industry since the emergence of Raihan on the national stage, in the early 1990s. From what I have seen in terms of development, a lot of attention was generated and now it is competing together in the music industry with other concepts or various genres. However, everyone has their ups and downs, it's just that here in IKIM.FM, in general, when it comes to music in Islam, we really support 100% as the essence of the programmes in IKIM.FM are Islamic-based content. So, there are Islamic, spiritual, Godly songs which have gained the attention of the audience as well as the radio's selection of preferences, which have been a great support for all those involved in nasyid in Malaysia. Alhamdulillah, we have been operating for 15 years and we continue to promote Islamic songs or music. What I see is that the Islamic music industry's development in Malaysia is riding on seeking updated Islamic popular music. Radio especially should be the main medium to deliver music rather than print media and this Islamic popular music had been brought out seriously by IKIM.FM.* (Erwan of IKIM.FM, interviewed in 2016)

Erwan (IKIM.FM, interviewed in 2016) argued that alternative forms of media could be considered. For example, radio might lead to better outcomes than print media. He added that from his experience, Islamic radio is comparable to other genres in Malaysia as IKIM radio has thrived for the past 15 years. In general, radio and television offer better platforms to communicate and promote the Islamic popular music industry. The advancement of media led to the growth of this genre. In the 1990s, this media was widely used by the music industry, and it gave better exposure than print media. Radio and television help attract people's interest in a product through advertisements.

The potential of this media should be further evaluated. As a result, several related programmes and strategies were produced in the Malaysian music industry to demonstrate increased popularity of Islamic popular music among audiences. The first programme that the author would like to highlight is IKIM.FM.



Figure 8.19: IKIM.FM radio logo with their motto, 'pilihan utama' (Priority choice)

Ikim FM is the only Islamic radio station of *dakwah (see glossary)* in broadcast media and operates 24 hours a day throughout the country, including Sabah and Sarawak. It is a concept that combines Islamic concept and entertainment programmes. The Malay language is the medium of communication in 95% of the programmes. The remaining are in Arabic and English (IKIM Website 2017).

> *There is a contradiction, meaning nasyid fans are like 'yes' or 'no'. However, we here at IKIM FM, do not complicate the situation because we recognise individuals who attend or appear in our nasyid industry, we have become friends. As friends, we know the heart and mind of each of them, and we know their rhythm in producing new songs, they need to follow the latest trend. So, from there we are able to understand that the music industry has evolved, it needs something that is parallel to the current time. So here, we have never discriminated against anyone in terms of their category. The acceptance of people brought us to try to do IKIM.FM nasyid Awards, to highlight talents and shows that this music also has a place in the Malaysian music industry.* (Fedtri Yahya, interviewed in 2015)

According to Fedtri Yahya, an experienced song producer and composer, the idea of IKIM.FM was as a radio station based on Islamic popular music that could be widely marketed and used as a starting point to improve the growth of *nasyid*. In particular, he believes that this is a positive development in the shrinking music industry. Categories such as 'Best *nasyid* album' in the award ceremony was used by IKIM to interest people in this music.



Figure 8.20: Al Hijrah TV use an Arabic word meaning move to a better life

TV Alhijrah (stylised as TV ALHIJRAH) is a state-owned free-to-air television network in Malaysia. It is owned and operated by Al Hijrah Media Corporation, a government owned company. It broadcasts from its headquarters in Islamic Centre, Kuala Lumpur. It was officially launched, and started broadcasting, on 1 June 2011. TV AlHijrah was the first free-to-air Islamic and HD television station in Malaysia. TV AlHijrah broadcasts 18 hours daily, from 06:00 until 00:00. It utilises HDTV technology for broadcasting. It is Malaysia's second semi-government television station after Bernama TV (now Bernama News Channel; http://tvalhijrah.com/ accessed 26 June 2017).

As the TV Al-Hijrah website explains, the station was officially launched on 1 June 2011. The channel's broadcast on UniFi started on 28 March 2012 (http://tvalhijrah.com/ accessed 26 June 2017). The author is one of the hosts of the programme and this Islamic television programme gives increased impact to the entertainment and music industry in Malaysia. The new Islamic channel, OASIS, which was introduced after the potential was seen,

illustrates the increased demand for the channel. Radzin from Munsyid echoed this (interviewed in 2016), as stated below:

> *With reference to the phenomenon of Qasidah aired by TV Al-Hijrah, I was told that when TV Al-Hijrah was established, they were looking for content that was different from what there was in Malaysia. Then they came out with an idea to highlight Islamic popular music, with content that brought forth the trend of selawat in KL, Kuching and so on. Alhamdulillah, it was very well received by the audience. It looks like the demand for Islamic TV is highly requested by the audience nowadays.*

He also added:

> *In another aspect, during the earlier rise of nasyid, we were able to see their promotional methods and a lot of it was not different from what was practiced by artists of other music genres. They also promoted using newspapers, TV, video clips and so on. It is just that the strength of nasyid in the earlier days of nasyid's emergence were that they were always requested by university events.* (Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016)

At this point, the author would like to explore another related programme - Gema Gegar Vaganza.



Figure 8.21: Gema Gegar Vaganza is a new Islamic reality singing programme in Malaysia

Gema Gegar Vaganza is a new Islamic reality singing concept in Malaysia. The first season started on 8 April 2017 and ran until 21 May 2017. It was broadcast every Saturday

from 9 pm to 11.30 pm in the draft Astro Oasis (Channel 106) and Maya HD (Channel 135). In the first week, it was broadcast simultaneously on Astro Ria (Channe104) and Astro Ria HD (Channel123). The Gema Gegar Vaganza vibe is the implemented reform after a decade of broadcasting on Astro Oasis. In line with the image of these channels, and to ensure compliance to the Islamic concept, a charging plan was monitored, original goals were tracked, and the ability to attract new viewers was measured. This reality programme generated another phenomenon in the Malaysian music industry. It attracted audiences to follow the current Islamic popular music.

The author gained experience when invited to attend one episode of Gema Gegar Vaganza programme. He believed that this programme provided a fresh idea in that it gathered the most popular Islamic artists on one stage to show what they could offer the people. The author added that this form of media was important as the TV programme demonstrates the capability of *nasyid* artists to unlock something new in keeping with people's expectations of seeking new and updated styles.



UNIC juara Gema Gegar Vaganza

KUALA LUMPUR: Kumpulan nasyid, UNIC mencipta kejutan apabila diumumkan juara edisi pertama Gema Gegar Vaganza (GGV), yang disiarkan secara langsung dari Pusat Konvensyen CIDB, di sini, sebentar tadi.

UNIC yang mendendangkan lagu Ainul Mardhiah disusuli tugasan kedua bersama kumpulan Saujana dengan lagu Kalah Dalam Menang, menerima hadiah wang tunai RM100,000 dan trofi.

Figure 8.22: UNIC won first place in Gema GegarVaganza Competition. (Shamsuddin M.A., 2017)

The news above is taken from the Gema Gegar Vaganza portal. UNIC made history when it was announced the winner of the first season of Gema Gegar Vaganza (GGV). They won a cash prize of RM100, 000 (approximately GBP 20,000) and a trophy donated by Astro. This programme highlighted Islamic popular music in the Malaysian music industry and was accepted by audiences every week during the competitions.[75]

8.5.3 New Media (The Internet Age)

> *The Internet has become an effective communication channel for celebrities talking to their fans not only on professional matters, but also on personal ones. Popular nasyid groups Raihan (www.raihan.com) and Rabbani (www.rabbani.com.my) also wish Happy Ramadan to everyone in their respective Web sites.* (NST 8 November, 2004)

By September 2004, there were an estimated 9,513,000 Internet users in Malaysia (that is, 35.9% of the national population), an increase of 157% since 2000. With increasing numbers of Malaysians able to surf the Web, whether from home or from inexpensive computer centres, the Internet has become an important tool, not only for the dissemination of *nasyid*, but also for the creation of a sense of community between groups and their fans (NST, 2004).

According to Sarkissian (2015), *nasyid* is also finding a niche in Islamic cyberspace. It is becoming increasingly common to find references to Malaysian *nasyid* on international Islamic websites, especially commercial sites that sell 'Islamic products. While the selection is

[75] To view further regarding this programme, the related website is as follows; www.gemagegarvaganza.com.my.

nowhere near as rich as those that can be found in a Malaysian record store, albums by Raihan and Rabbani are now being promoted on a variety of Islamic websites.

> *This is a compulsory marketing tool of today. Sometimes, when someone is popular on YouTube, the TV will call you, so you don't have to worry anymore. What's important is that you have to be popular in social media. InsyaAllah and we've seen that a lot of the mainstream media have made reference to a lot of materials on social media which means that the material is aired on TV and radio. So that is the strategy of today which nasyid has to follow. I think many artists are heading in that direction and they are already familiar with Facebook (FB), Twitter, and Instagram. If in Malaysia the use of Instagram (IG) is more popular than FB, then it is because people like to post pictures. So nasyid artists, too have to know how to take pictures because we have to remember that in a commercialised industry, popularity is very important. When we're popular then there's a stage show, only then will people call for events. So, we need to popularise ourselves, think of a good song, a beautiful image, and just do anything that can make you popular and this will guide your career and sustain you in the industry.* (Radzin from Munsyid, interviewed in 2016)

New media such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter serve as new platforms for dealing with the technology of internet networking. This enables globalisation of businesses. Internet exposure can unlock opportunities in media such as the television and the radio. As previously mentioned, development of media from print media in the first decade to other media such as the radio and the television, influenced the use of contemporary media with different marketing strategies to drive the growth of the Islamic popular music business.

Barendregt and van Zanten (2002) have identified five other types of websites that disseminate popular music, including *nasyid*, in Indonesia: fan sites, music-oriented e-zines, sites from which audio files can be downloaded, music-related e-commerce, and music portals. As their study shows, there is a good deal of crossover between Indonesian and Malaysian *nasyid* sites (2002:95-101). The fan sites, which range from personal blogs to extensive collections of song texts, are frequently unstable. Some are established and never updated;

others randomly disappear or are transformed into something quite different. Two of the most useful websites of the moment, 'Lirik *nasyid* and *nasyid.com*', are both Indonesian in origin but attract a large Malaysian audience. A third is the Malaysian site, *Nasyid*.com.my. A visitor to Lirik *nasyid* (http://lirik*nasyid*.com) can explore 1,423 song texts and 43 chord progressions by a broad range of Malaysian and Indonesian *nasyid* groups. Barendregt and van Zanten have suggested that personal 'archives' such as this are 'a new form of making one's own collections of song texts, [a popular activity] among Indonesian and Malaysian youth long before the Internet' (Barendregt and van Zanten, 2002: 99). *Nasyid*.com (http://www.*nasyid*.com), in contrast, is a self-described 'Islamic Song and Music Portal'.

Meanwhile in the 2000s, the internet offered music creators and performers the chance to play a more prominent role in the industry's value chain. The internet is a successful online platform and can be updated by artists themselves. In the Islamic popular music industry, the Internet provides the industry with a distribution channel to increase sales and as a marketing strategy to communicate with audiences to satisfy their interest in Islamic popular music. Malaysian Islamic popular music expert, Najdi of UNIC (interviewed in 2015), agreed with this:

> *The change is rapid every year, for instance, from rock to pop. In Malaysia, pop has the most followers. Now, the change is no longer yearly, it is sometimes monthly or weekly, the genre trend changes very quickly and this is the evolution that I see. People are fast paced because of the Internet. Everything is accessible and becomes easy for everyone, which everyone takes for granted. To talk about the evolution in the past 5 years, so much has changed in the past 5 years, too many. The Internet serves as the best medium in marketing anything including music. The improvement in strategy to get better outcome in promoting, especially in Islamic popular music, has led makers and people look on the Internet social media for dealing with'.*

On the other hand, due to the development of the music industry, people seek improvements in Islamic popular music. Impinging factors in the environment such as globalisation, consumer preference, convenience, and social media have led to the use of the Internet as the main media for attracting people and acting as a suitable marketing strategy. The author noticed that, periodically, the demand for online music (instead of only focusing on the physical carriers such as the cassette and the CD) had increased and showed the potential to be the main marketing channel. This can lead to a new wave of marketing strategies that can significantly boost the Islamic popular music industry business.

> *If back then it was through TV, now the cost for TV advertisements is 25 thousand per week and they air it 3 times per week, and it costs around 25 thousand just to produce an album. There are a lot of downloading methods now. One person buys the album and other people can download it. One person uploads it on the internet and everybody can listen to it. This is a huge problem for us and the whole industry cannot develop. One more thing, in Malaysia they do not care about quality. Once the music is downloaded, the quality drops, but they do not care. For example, parody songs on the internet, a lot of them are low in quality, but people love listening to it to a point that even radio stations have to follow suit with the audience's preference. Even low-quality songs are played. So, this is killing the industry and there are people who are investing a lot in creating good quality music, but the song is not aired on the radio because our people don't care about the quality as long as it's their taste, even though the song is recycled. The thing with recycled songs is that the melody is the same, but we have to listen to it because the listeners demand it. I am developing this with some friends and team. It is still in its early stages and we will have a channel and playlist on YouTube. That will be free, but to develop the apps, there is a charge. Today we use many social media on the Internet, which people think is free but it is not, everybody pays for their Internet, so we have to pay for the Internet and all. In addition, what is most profitable is if we look at the cost of the high license stream.* (Halim of Devotees, interviewed in 2016)

Advances in current technology help this new phenomenon. For example, the concept is similar to the 'blue tick', a symbol in WhatsApp. Gray means that it is delivered; blue means that it

has been read and the message was received. Reply is a separate issue. Here the concept of the blue tick means that it has been delivered. Similarly, our objective is to deliver, but the question is, what do we deliver? The idea is simple. Positive songs with strong messages, regardless of genre, language and country, will be gathered and compiled in one database. The database will be improved and be like TunesCore, Spotify, or even iTunes. The products can be purchased at cheaper prices compared to the physical sales of the albums in the market. This is the main purpose of this idea; development of "an app" which the makers believe is a strategy to fuel interest and generate profits.

First, TuneCore was founded in 2005 by a New York-based independent digital music distribution service. It principally offers musicians the opportunity to distribute and sell or stream their music though online retailers such as iTunes, Spotify, and others. The philosophy of TuneCore is to enable all artists to emerge to established, affordable and equal access to all channels of music distribution. By using TuneCore Music Distribution, artists keep 100% of sales revenue without giving up master recording ownership, copyrights, or merchandise rights. TuneCore Music Publishing Administration licenses and registers compositions globally and artists collect the royalties earned.[76] TuneCore is a marketing platform for the music industry that offers a suite of tools and services that enable artists to promote their craft and products, connect with their fans, and concurrently get their music heard around the world.

[76] Available at: tunecore.co.uk, 2017.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored ideas with various opinions from music makers, explaining how business has changed for Islamic popular music since the 1990s. They provided their perspectives by reflecting on their experiences, which helped to construct a better understanding of the conduct of business in the contemporary period. Throughout this discussion, ideas about the dominant business model were compared. In the 1990s, the industry deployed a traditional business model which gradually changed in the 2000s. This chapter also examined marketing practices in the industry by providing examples of Inteam Record Sdn Bhd, which may contribute to providing suitable strategies to maintain or even strengthen the music industry.

There is substantial potential for Islamic popular music to grow and be successful in business in Malaysia. The market encompasses all age groups. For the young, children's songs, which consist of names of the prophets, angels, and God can be marketed. Raihan capitalised on this demand, and their album sales reached 600,000 units because the audience comprised both the young and the old. The rise of Islamic popular music in the 1990s was attributed to promotional methods similar to those that were practiced by artists of other music genres, such as the use of newspapers, TV, video clips, and new age media. Current improvisation of business and media strategies are reflected in the implementation of new ideas through social media, which help Islamic artists gain confidence to make products that are on par with other music genres.

9 CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, *nasyid* is an internationally visible genre of music. This thesis analysed the development of *nasyid* in Malaysia over a period of two decades (1996-2016), from the perspectives of the makers. These makers were defined as people who are principally industry experts in the Malaysian music industry. The respondents work in various fields and include singers, lyricists, composers, arrangers, media producers, cover album designers, Islamic law experts, music sellers, recording label employees, and others working for music organisations. The research began with the hypothesis that *nasyid* is an integral feature of Islamic communities in Malaysia. The study was designed to attain three major objectives: (i) to define the styles of Islamic popular music and *nasyid*, (ii) to analyse the characteristics of Islamic popular music in Malaysia, and (iii) to understand the business models deployed within the Islamic popular music industry of Malaysia. This conclusion will provide a summary of the results. The challenging issues that remain in Islamic popular music are discussed, followed by a set of recommendations geared towards realising an important goal: to help those involved in the production of *nasyid* to further understand the nature of this particular music and overcome any issues faced on the scene. It also offers some suggestions on keeping the music industry relevant to ensure that this genre remains strong and sustainable.

The Malaysian music industry today can be regarded as an established and strong industry, particularly when compared with its status in the 1990s. The emergence and acceptance of new genres of music in Malaysia since then, including *nasyid*, is one of the results of this established music industry. *Nasyid*, which was initially considered a suitable entertainment style filling occasional demands for significant events on the Islamic calendar,

is now regularly aired on Malaysian radio and TV stations and broadcast online, and there is a growing demand for this music.

From the analysis of the research, which was produced based on the makers' points of view; the author believes that *nasyid* is now recognised as one of the core music industries in Malaysia. The author used qualitative research to achieve the research objectives and the findings. In this study, three data collection techniques were used, namely, in-depth interviews, content analysis, and participant observation research. The dataset gained has offered various opinions when it comes to the issues of identifying Islamic popular music and defining *nasyid* in Malaysia. These opinions are taken from those who are involved directly and indirectly in Islamic popular music and those who are responsible for providing the information based on their experience. Therefore, arguably, their opinions on *nasyid* can be considered as exceptional information, which is shared from their experience of contributing to the Malaysian music industry. These people shape the discourse about *nasyid* and Islamic popular music in Malaysia. The author was also in a unique position to access this data because of his long-term participation in the industry. Therefore, these people were the most appropriate focus for this comprehensive pilot study. Further research on audience perceptions of the industry would complement this thesis.

The general perception is that Islamic popular music and *nasyid* are similar. They carry the same concept of conveying messages of 'goodness' and *nasyid* has increasingly become a metonym for the Islamic music industry in general. Indeed, some interviewees believed that Islamic popular music developed from *nasyid*. This clear outcome was derived from the discussion in chapter four, which determined the elements or characteristics of *nasyid* and Islamic popular music. Based on makers' perceptions and content analysis, the author provides

the conclusion, derived from the analysis and findings of this thesis that Islamic popular music is comprised of several elements including aspects of images, lyrics, style of the music, and instruments used. This outcome led the author to argue based on his experience and in reference to various opinions that Islamic popular music is enhanced by *nasyid* and its associated elements.

The following chapter (chapter five) clarified the role between music and musical instruments played in *nasyid*, whereby opinions and knowledge of the 'makers' were acknowledged, which provided clear definitions of the instruments that are used and their suitability to music classified as Islamic music. The findings portray the ideas and knowledge from various people and show clearly how instruments are deployed in *nasyid*. Some issues regarding the complex conceptions of instruments used in *nasyid* as pointed out by sectarian scholars was discussed, too. Reviewing all the related opinions, the author strongly believes that there is no firm statement that string instruments are banned in Islamic music. As long as the instruments used follow Islamic preferences or ground rules and convey something good in way of *dakwah (see glossary)*, they are acceptable.

In chapter six, the study explored another element of *nasyid*, the lyrical content of the songs. This content was analysed using several contrasting examples, and it was argued by the author that lyrics are one part of *nasyid* genre characteristics. Thus, this chapter addresses one of the central research questions. The discussion of lyrical contents expressed how the music communicates Islamic messages explicitly through the lyrics. Significant lyrical contents analysed in this chapter provided a clear picture of what lyrics are permitted for inclusion in Islamic songs, some of the stories behind the lyrics, and the ways these lyrical styles have changed over the two decades in question. In the second part of this discussion, various

languages that are used in this genre of music were identified. In conclusion, chapter six illustrated the role of lyrics as an essential aspect of *nasyid* production.

The image of Islamic music artists has changed over time, too. This study examined the changes of images that happened among artists associated with *nasyid* over the two decades under scrutiny. The outcomes of examining these changes were addressed in chapter seven, which included a discussion that illustrates how the ideas of religiosity and culture influence the images of Islamic artists in Malaysia. It is hoped that this will present a clearer understanding of the two concepts and clarify the conflict between both ideas. This particular chapter was also intended to provide strong explanations showing their relationship to the images of the artists involved, which sets the trend and styles for this sort of music and its related culture. Thus, through this understanding, it also indirectly helps the artists, who want to be associated with *nasyid*, in improving their style of dress and giving them confidence. The chapter described the key participants in Islamic popular music including individual artists, groups, and the emergence of female artists. This chapter suggested factors that influenced the participants' desires to be involved in Islamic music. In addition, regarding Islamic entertainment, the perspectives of female artists were considered from various opinions. The issue regarding 'the voice of women is *awrah (see glossary)*' and 'can women sing?' was discussed, although the author found no strong statement on this issue from the point of view of the experts in the industry.

Chapter eight examined the business and marketing features of Islamic popular music. It introduced and explained both contemporary and traditional business models in *nasyid* in Malaysia. The chapter also discussed the marketing strategies related to the business models that create demand for the music and profit for the makers. As in Islamic business, the strategies

combine international models of business with a locally defined version of business that is considered appropriate in Islam. According to Beekun (1997), the Islamic concept in business includes concepts of *khayr* (goodness), *birr* (righteousness), *qist* (equity), *adl* (equilibrium and justice), *haqq* (truth and right), *ma'ruf* (known and approved), and *taqwa* (piety). Based on these concepts, the chapter observed how the business model in Islamic popular music has evolved over time.

Considering the results of this thesis as a whole, while *nasyid* shows potential in the Malaysian music industry, some challenging issues were identified for people involved in the industry. The discussion outlined the conflicting issues found within this research and suggested steps to remedy them. The analysis and outcomes from the study highlighted issues related to public and private media relations toward this particular music. One of the major challenges relates to the interpretation of media including print media, radio and television, and new Internet-age media, which all play an important role in promoting *nasyid* to audiences. These media can be used to disseminate information about the music or the music itself to the public. The research findings proved the significant role of media such as radio in promoting this type of music. Based on a content analysis of Islamic programmes aired by television and Islamic radio stations, the acceptance by audiences is considered successful. The contribution of the media is that it forms a suitable medium for communication. However, the challenges that arise stem from limitations and favouritism; for example, music that is based on Islam or Islamic programmes will not be played by other radio stations due to audience segmentation and commercial factors. In the era of capitalism, most private radio stations or television channels will only invest their resources in activities that generate revenue. Consequently, it is extremely unlikely for such *nasyid* or even related programmes to be produced and broadcast by many competing private media streams. Another challenge is related to the competition

from the diversity in the popular music industries of Malaysia. Although Muslims comprise 60% of the population of Malaysia, some respondents claim that the demand for other types of music genres such as ballads or pop is higher than the demand for Islamic popular music.

Issues regarding copyright and piracy are also significant. Although digital and internet technologies can provide better marketing strategies, the issue of copyright and piracy is one that concerns people involved in the music industry. The issue of downloading music from the Internet or even the duplication of CDs has been a common one since the introduction of these technologies —see Manuel (1993) for a related account of cassette tape piracy and popular music in India. Some respondents conceded that there are issues when the operations are not appropriately planned, which can be a disaster in terms of business, copyright, and privacy. This can get out of control and have negative impacts on the *nasyid* industry.

The distinct contribution of this research is that it provides a comprehensive determination and evaluation of the development of *nasyid* as a genre of popular music in Malaysia from the perspectives of the producers. Data analysis was achieved by engaging several methods in this research and they contributed to producing original knowledge on the industry through exploring and assessing strategies in keeping this type of music strong and sustainable. Therefore, these findings suggest pathways toward a better approach to dealing with the challenges related to this music. On the basis of these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

i) Knowledge and information banks regarding *nasyid* and Islamic popular music should be created in order to minimise any related issues. Some music producers opined that a better understanding should be cultivated concerning what exactly

constituted Islamic popular music so that misperceptions towards this genre of music and its definition can be corrected. There is no sustainable planning to ensure that *nasyid* music will continue to be in demand in the future. By creating a clear understanding of what *nasyid* truly is, we can help clarify any misunderstandings that may lead to complications, especially in relation to wrong perceptions about the music. Therefore, further research that could generate better strategies for providing information about this music is necessary. Studies on events or activities such as Islamic programmes should also educate audiences in terms of what this music is. On the whole, this approach could provide a better understanding of this type of music and help promote and sustain this music in the future. At the same time, it will encourage other composers and newcomers to produce this genre of music. The School of Creative Industry Management and Performing Art (SCIMPA) in Universiti Utara Malaysia was established to become a research and reference centre for the music management industry. This faculty is the only one of its kind in Malaysia to have gathered artists and stakeholders of the music management industry of Malaysia to take up their opinions and experiences academically. The author is a member of the academic staff of SCIMPA, who aims to keep promoting and facilitating the development of Islamic popular music in Malaysia.

ii) The findings illustrate the importance of Islamic business strategies in order to keep Islamic music popular. A consideration of business models for this genre of music should also be considered in greater depth. Thus, the recommendation is to enhance business investment and provide more support and guidance for music management and production. This can be achieved by identifying relevant business investment opportunities that could potentially help to place this music in a confident and stable

state alongside other genres. Better frameworks of management and production teams are also important for contributing to the sustainability of this music industry.

iii) Although this research contributes groundbreaking evidence and knowledge of the development of *nasyid* over the two decades in question, the research primarily interprets the elements of *nasyid* and Islamic popular music classification in Malaysia from the perspectives of the 'makers' (industry experts). The tensions and issues involved in defining the terms of Islamic popular music and *nasyid* demonstrate how these terms, and many other aspects of the industry, are contested by the makers. In an effort to improve and sustain *nasyid*, future complementary research should be undertaken with a focus on audiences, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to gain insight into their perception and knowledge of the industry. This can be done by gathering all the necessary information and then comparing the knowledge from both perspectives (producers and consumers). The discussion on local Malaysian Islamic artists recommended that attention should also focus on international artists, such as Maher Zain (Sweden) and Humood (Kuwait), who gained success in Islamic popular music in Malaysia. This would gain additional knowledge, which could serve as another source for improving this music in the future, as the audiences of these international artists might provide further insight into the music.

iv) The current study did not seriously consider the participation and involvement of women in the Islamic popular music of Malaysia. This was because the author's own position as a male artist made the prospect of interviewing female artists and audiences a challenging one. Thus, a more holistic understanding of *nasyid* especially regarding female *nasyid* artists, or women in Islamic entertainment, should be considered in future. In this respect, there are still many research topics

that can be approached which relate to Islamic popular music such as investigating ways to change and improve this genre of music by encouraging more women to participate, thereby contributing to the sustainability of the industry.

v) Additional research is needed to probe the 'Power of four crucial elements' in maintaining the quality of music production. Understanding, cooperation, tolerance and trust are the four crucial elements (mentioned by Bazli of UNIC (interviewed in 2015) , a respondent in this study*)* that are necessary for realising good and effective teamwork to create quality music that will attract audiences and maintain its relevance. As explained in chapter seven, Islamic popular music artists work not only in groups, but also as solo artists. For solo artists, the framework should be well planned and effectively executed to be successful. Consequently, the author believes that another implication is that good teamwork is a key factor in achieving great success for those involved in the *nasyid* genre. Coordination with the team producer, musician and the artist, in parallel with the four aforementioned crucial elements, could provide a basis to facilitate music management industry.

vi) More structured education for producers and musicians could generate better outcomes especially in music production. *Nasyid* artists' good attitude towards the music can help the artists involved in this genre of music to produce quality music. If they can couple this with a serious passion to become full-fledged Islamic singers, they may be able to sustain this music. Several nasyid artists mentioned this point and stressed that it would help the music to remain in the Malaysian music industry. Programmes such as seminars on management and music production should enhance creative music making and management. Music management stakeholders should be encouraged to further their tertiary education in both management and

music courses, in line with the Malaysian government's aspirations towards building professional music makers and entrepreneurs.

vii) Further exploration of knowledge concerning halal literacy in Islamic music could help educate makers and audiences, and generate a more resilient Islamic business model. Businesses must first understand the halal commandments before targeting Muslim market segments. Writing as an insider to this music industry, the author believes the government and state media are best positioned to promote this effort. Consumer education through talks at schools and institutions, and advertisements on social media may increase awareness and understanding of Muslim consumers about halal commandments.

Although *nasyid* may sound increasingly like mainstream Malaysian popular music, it continues to disseminate moral messages and Islamic values that are distinct from those of the mainstream. The author is excited to highlight that this is the first comprehensive study by an industry practitioner which has gathered comprehensive views from individuals with experience in the Malaysian music industry to produce clear data about Islamic popular music, nasyid and related topics. While the debate among Islamic scholars and theologians on the question of music in Islam remains unresolved, the author was able to explore how the production side of the music industry deals with this issue. On the question of business models, further research is necessary on detailing the pre-production, production, and post-production processes, and how the product is marketed and distributed. Sales records and contracts for artists should be examined to present a thorough understanding of the contribution and relationship of record labels to the *nasyid* industry.

This thesis represents a starting point for these initiatives. Based on this study of the key debates and trends in the industry, the author believes that *nasyid* will remain in the

Malaysian music industry, maintaining positive economic, cultural and religious progress. Additional research on audiences could contribute to ensuring that the industry will be sustainable in the future through the provision of a clearer and bigger picture that takes into account the ideas from this research (views of the makers) and the views of the audiences. The ideas for further empirical research should be considered for better outcomes and the improvement of *nasyid* and Islamic popular music, which could have the potential and ability to compete with other music genres. This study and its recommendations illustrate the subtle differences between Islamic popular music and *nasyid.* However, whether Islamic popular music arose from the ideas and concepts of *nasyid* or not, they continue to be understood as one in the Malaysian music industry.

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Appendix A

NASYID AND ISLAMIC MUSIC IN MALAYSIA

In-depth interview scripts

(Transcrips of interview will provide by request)

First and foremost, I would like thank you for taking the time to meet with me today and for agreeing to participate in my research. My name is Mohamad Fitri Bin Mohamad Haris. Currently I am a postgraduate student from Nottingham University, United Kingdom. Before we begin, I would like to briefly introduce you to my research, which is on Islamic Popular Music in Malaysia. My research focuses on the growth of Islamic popular music in Malaysia from the 1990s to the present day. The interview in which you are participating will take less than an hour. I will be noting down during the session, but I will also be taping every session as a backup reference. Because you will be recorded, I would very much appreciate it if you could speak up so that we don't miss any comment. All responses will be kept confidential. I will ensure that any information I include in my report does not identify you as the respondent, unless with your permission. Remember, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to and you may end the interview at any time.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

_____ _____ _____

Interviewee Witness Date

_____

Legal guardian (if interviewee is under 18)

1. What do you understand about the meaning of '*Nasyid*' in Malaysia? How about the meaning of 'Islamic music'? Do '*Nasyid*' and 'Islamic music' imply the same thing? Please elaborate.

(Malay language: Apa yang anda faham tentang maksud Nasyid di Malaysia ini? Bagaimana pula dengan maksud muzik islami? Adakah ianya sama?)

2. It was reported that '*Nasyid*' was at the peak of success and popularity in the year 1995. How did you perceive the situation of '*Nasyid*' at that time?

(Malay language: Bagaimana anda melihat keadaan nasyid pada zaman 1995 di mana masa itu di katakan zaman kegemilangan nasyid?)

3. In general, what are your views on the development of Islamic music from the 1990s until 2015? How has Islamic music developed within that time?

(*Malay language:* Secara amnya, apa pandangan anda tentang perkembangan muzik islam dari zaman itu sehinggalah kini tahun 2015?)

4. Now that we have discussed the overall development of Islamic music and *Nasyid*, can you share your personal views on your understanding of the difference between Islamic music and *Nasyid* in Malaysia?

(Malay language: Setelah kita mmembincangkan tentang perkembangan secara am mengenai muzik islami dan Nasyid, boleh anda nyatakan pandangan peribadi yang anda faham tentang apa itu perbezaan antara musik islami dan Nasyid di malaysia?)

5. How is the business cooperation between recording companies and Islamic music industry in Malaysia?

(Malay language: Bagaimana kan corak kerjasama di dalam muzik business di antara syarikat rakaman dan Islamic music industry?)

6. Is it the same for other non-Islamic genres? If different, please elaborate in detail and provide specific examples in terms of contract and sales?
(Malay language: Adakah ianya sama sebagaimana genre lain selain Islamic music? Jika lain boleh anda nyatakan secara details contohnya dari sudut perjanjian kerjasama dan jualan?)

7. Can you state the business strategies developed in advancing Islamic music in the 1990s and today? Is it the same between then and now or has it changed? If it is not the same, please explain the differences.
(Malay language: Boleh anda nyatakan perkembangan strategi perniagaan muzik islam dari zaman 1990 an sehingga kini 2015? Adakah ianya sama atau berlainan? Jika lain boleh anda nyatkan secara terperinci tentang ini?)

8. Can you share your views on what you perceive as traditional Islamic music and modern Islamic music?
(Malay language: Boleh anda beri pendapat mengenai Islamic music traditional dan Islamic music modern?)

9. Recently, the 'Qasidah', 'Zikir' and musical sermon concept has become a trend in the Islamic music industry. In fact, it is becoming even more popular than the previous boyband concept that was well-known in the 1990s. How is the audience responding to this more traditional concept?

(Malay language: Kebelakangan ini, konsep Qasidah, Zikir, musical sermon dan lain-lain menjadi trend di dalam muzik islam, malah ianya lebih popular dari konsep boy-band yang popular pada satu ketika dahulu, bagaimanakan konsep muzik islam traditional di terima masyarakat?)

10. What is the indicator that enables the traditional concept of Islamic music to remain relevant in the Islamic music industry? Why do you think it's gaining popularity?
(Malay language: Apakah indicator yang membolehkan ianya terus relevan di dalam industry muzik di Malaysia ini?)

11. What are the characteristics that make a song an Islamic song in terms of its lyrical content, language used and meaning behind the lyrics? Can you provide some examples?
(*Malay language: Apakah karakter atau elemen yang membolehkan sesuatu lagu itu menjadi satu lagu berkonsepkan islami atau Nasyid? Boleh anda berikan contoh?)*

12. Are there negative effects of accepting a song blindly without understanding its contents? If yes, what are they?
(Malay language: Adakah terdapat kesan yang negative sekiranya mereka hanya menerima tanpa memahami maksud sesebuah lagu itu?)

13. What is considered an Islamic image in the late 1990s and today? What changes have been made to the images of artists that represent Islamic music?
(*Malay language: Apa kah yang di katakana identity seseorang penyanyi Nasyid atau muzik islami dari tahun 1990 sehinggalah sekarang? Apakah perubahan-perubahan yang anda Nampak?)*

14. If there are changes, what are the factors that have influenced these changes? And how are the audiences responding to these 'image' changes of the Islamic music artists?
(Malay language: Jika ya, apakah yang mempengaruhi perubahan ini? Dan bagaimanakah penerimaan masyarakat tentang oenampilan artist muzik islam?)

15. How do *Nasyid* artists draw the balance between traditional religious values and contemporary culture in Malaysia in terms of their music videos, album covers, stage performances, etc.?
(*Malay language: Bagaimana artis Nasyid menyesuaikan diri dan mengekalkan nilai keagamaan dan budaya trend kini?)*

If there is anything more you would like to add with regards to the topic we have discussed, feel free to do so.

I will be analyzing the information you and others have provided, then I will be submitting a draft report to the organization in one month. If you are interested, I will be happy to send you a copy for you to review at that time.

Once again, thank you so much for your time. Your participation is very much appreciated.

Appendix B

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

1. Azalino, Saujana group singer, A&R Universal Music Malaysia
2. Azadan, Rabbani singer, Event Manager, Rabbani Production
3. Along, Arranger, Exist, Sound engineer
4. Al-Manna Group singer and Motivational company
5. Ayob, Nano Records, Event manager
6. Bazli Hazwan, Singer, Composer, Sound engineer, UNIC Pro
7. Cik Azlin, SABA Islamic Media, Seller
8. Erwan, IKIM.fm, Radio DJ
9. Fuad, Guitarist, Singer, Priakustik
10. Fadzli Aziz, TV hijrah host, Singer, Motivator, Businessman
11. Fedtri Yahya, Lyricist, TV3 host
12. Fakhrul Radzi, UNIC Pro, Quran Teacher, Singer
13. Faiz of IKIM.fm, Radio DJ
14. Firdaus, *Nasyid*.fm, DJ online radio
15. Hafiz Hamidun, Singer, Composer, Arteffect International
16. Hazamin, Inteam Records, Singer, Composer
17. Halim Ahmad, Singer, Composer, Music arranger, Devotees
18. Huzaimi, Motivator, Singer, Nowseeheart
19. Hafiedz, Percussionist
20. Hazim, rxeme studio, Art designer
21. Hafiz, Al Faizuun Enterprise, seller
22. Idzwan, Singer, Event manager, Lecturer, D'Firdausi entertainment

23. Ito Lara, Lyricist

24. Imam Muda Najdi, Islamic Scholar

25. Isman, Composer, Hijjaz, Hijjaz Records

26. Jeff Hazimin, Lyricist, TV host, Motivator

27. Khairul Nizam, Sarjana Media, seller

28. Rahim, Singer, Inteam Records

29. Radzin, Munsyeed President, Singer, Mestica

30. Ros, Slash Music Center, Seller

31. Shamir, Arranger, Sound Engineer

32. Ummi, Azby Center, Seller

33. Wan Saleh, Arranger, Sound engineer

34. Worker, Marwilis Bookstore, seller

35. Abd Fattah, Farihin. Composer and producer

Abbreviations

AIM:	Anugerah Industri Muzik Malaysia (Malaysia Music Industry Awards)
ASTRO:	Malaysia direct broadcast satellite pay TV service
IKIM:	Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (Malaysia Islamic Understanding Institute)
IKBN:	Institut Kemahiran Belia Malaysia (Malaysia skill for youth Institute)
KRU:	Malaysian pop boy band formed in 1992
KBS:	Kementerian Belia dan Sukan Malaysia (Malaysia Sport Ministry)
KBSM:	Manage the development and implementation of the integrated curriculum for secondary school
K-POP:	Korean pop
PMR:	Penilaian Menengah Rendah (Malaysian public examination taken by all Form Three students in both government and private schools throughout the country from independence in 1957 to 2013)
RTM:	Radio Televisi Malaysia (Malaysia Television and Radio)
RIM:	Rakaman Industri Muzik Malaysia (Malaysia Music Recording Industry)
SPM:	Examination taken by all fifth-year secondary school students in Malaysia
SMKA:	Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (Islamic Secondary School)
UIA:	International Islamic University, Malaysia
UNIC:	You and I see is a *Nasyid* group singer in Malaysia
UPSR:	Ujian Penilaian Menengah Rendah (Primary School Achievement Test)

Glossary

Awrah:	Denotes the intimate parts of the body, for both men and women, which must be covered with clothing
Artist:	In this research 'artist' means a singer; that is the term usually used by interviewees
Dakwah:	Propagation of Islam through word and action, calling the people to follow the commandments of Allah and His Messenger Prophet Muhammad
Dalil:	Evidence
Fatwa:	A ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority
Fasohah:	Clear voice
Fiqh:	The theory or philosophy of Islamic law, based on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet
Halal:	Refers to what is permissible or lawful in traditional Islamic law
Haram:	Forbidden or proscribed by Islamic law
Hadith:	A saying or action ascribed to Prophet Muhammad or and act approved by the Prophet
Hajj:	An annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca
Hijjaz:	*Nasyid* group name in Malaysia
Ijtihad:	Technical term of Islamic law that describes the process of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources, the Qur'an and the Hadith
Imam:	Leader in Muslim society commonly in a prayer
Islamisation:	The process of a society's shift towards Islam
Tobaqot:	Stage by stage
Ibadah:	The obedience, submission, and devotion to Allah along with the ultimate love for Him
Maqasid Shari'ah:	The highest objective of Islamic law
Mufti:	An Islamic scholar who is an interpreter or expounder of Islamic law, capable of issuing considered opinion in Islam
Maker/s:	Industry expert, producers of music
Prophet:	The Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of God

Quran:	The Holy Book of Islam; the highest and most authentic authority in Islam. Quotation from the Quran is normally followed by a reference to the number of the chapter (sura) and the number of the quoted verse (aya)
Rabbani:	*Nasyid* group name in Malaysia
Raihan:	*Nasyid* group name in Malaysia
Shari'ah:	The body of Islamic law based on the Quran and the *sunnah*
Sunnah:	Statements or practices undertaken or approved by the Prophet and established as legally binding precedents
Saujana:	*Nasyid* group name in Malaysia
Sahih Al Bukhary:	One of the Six biggest hadith collection
Solah:	Bowing, homage, worship, prayer, it usually refers to Islam's mandatory forms of ritual worship
Tawhid:	The concept of oneness or unity of God
UNIC:	*Nasyid* group name in Malaysia
Zikr:	The name of devotional acts in Islam in which short phrases or prayers are repeatedly recited silently within the mind or aloud
Zakt:	Obligatory alms