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The Political Economy of Shariah Compliant Ads on TV Al Hijrah

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Abstract

Privatisation Policy (1983) has urged television (TV) stations to compete for their survival in generating income from advertising. Furthermore, this policy has imposed TV Al Hijrah in a dilemma because of its establishment as a non-profit TV station is based on Islamic Absorption Values Policy (1985), which was contained in Islam Hadhari Policy (2003). Therefore, this study attempts to comprehend the influence of political economy of Shariah compliant advertising of TV Al Hijrah for its strict and controlled conditions while increasing the advertising income. Based on the interview sessions with a producer and executive producer of TV Al Hijrah, the researchers found that, the influence of political economy is important towards the Interpretation of Shariah Compliant, Shariah Compliant Products and Social Responsibility Advertising. In conclusion, the influence of political economy towards Shariah compliant policy will strengthen the policy so that it can be understood as one of the Islamic requirements in Muslims daily life, including the publishing and viewing of the advertisements.

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Keywords: Political economy; sharia compliant advertising; Islamic broadcasting.

1. Introduction

TV AlHijrah is actually has a great significance in the context of the Islamisation of the country, when the country became the hub of halal food, while the Islamic financial system also was among the best in the world. In addition, Malaysia has become a model Muslim country and the Shariah compliant television channel is a complement to Islamisation in Malaysia.

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The support and regulation from the government are needed in influencing the television broadcasting policy including in selecting the content and concept of a TV show (Megat, 2004). The influence of content selection does not only involve the Sharia compliant advertising but it will also fulfill the advertiser's requirements and needs. This political economy influence is beyond the sectors, which according to Syed Husin Ali (1987), "the position and strength of the economy allow a person to achieve a strong position in politics. It shows that, the economic and political factors nowadays have become close when they were integrated together. When the integration of economic and political became close at the leadership level, the greater influence and power will cover other areas". Privatisation Policy (1983) has given an impact to political economy which also influences the Malaysian TV stations. This policy is a key to the media hegemony scenario where the mutual political economy influence is integrating together and dominating the power and policy in TV station administration. Media Hegemony Theory suggested that the ruling class has the economic power not only on political (ideological and structure of government), but also the culture (science, art, education, public communication) as a way to control the society (Bryant & Miron, 2004). The political economy control is required in a competitive environment in order to generate income from advertising. In fact, in reality there is no broadcasting system in the world that can escapes from the government (political economic) influence and regulation (Asiah, 1991).

However, this is a great challenge for TV stations that must be faced in order to determine the advertisements that can be aired on television, because TV advertising is their main income. As a corporate entity, the income of free-to-air TV (FTA TV) reported by Nielsen Adex on advertising expenditure (adex) market share reported August 2013 decrease to 34.0% compare with August 2012 at 37.6% (Yang, 2013). Based on this figure, reported by Nielson TAM 2012 and 2013 FTA TV channel (table 1), TV Al Hijrah viewership market share 2012 just 0.7% compare to other channels, but increase to 1% on June 2013 (Media Planning Guide, 2012; Media Prima, 2013).

Table 1. FTA TV channel market share by viewership (Source: Nielson TAM).

Channel	2012 (%)	2013 (%)
TV3	27.5	25
TV9	7.7	8
TV2	7.4	7
8TV	6.3	6
NTV7	5.2	5
TV1	5.1	5
TV Al Hijrah	0.7	1

The competition to get the advertisers will only cause an audience scrambling to happen in the context of "the talk about spending the money to get audiences", but in reality, the audience is just a commodity. The TV station will produce a number of programmes to attract more advertisers, but sometimes the TV station is overlooked when selecting the advertisement with good values which based on the policy of Malaysia TV content regulations. Therefore the selection of Sharia compliant advertisements will be reducing the advertising income. Furthermore, the TV station is an organisation that has a structural interplay between the investor, management and agenda setting (Hasan & Satria, 2009). The integration of political economy power will influence and control all areas and sectors, including the advertising industry. This situation will determine the decisions and policies of Sharia compliant in all TV Al Hijrah production including TV shows, TV dramas and TV advertisements. In the early stage, they received many criticisms from the producer, but now they started to understand the situation.

2. Al Hijrah as an Islamic TV station

TV Al Hijrah presence is seen very strange among the media persons in the early stage of its establishment. However, with the support from Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), its pioneer and all the members, they are now ready to face the challenges of a new dimension in the world of broadcasting in Islamic country like Malaysia (Utusan, 2013). In authorizing broadcasting policy with Sharia compliant that accordance with the Islam Hadhari Policy, TV Al Hijrah has to face a great criticism and pressure in selecting the content of the advertisements from the corporate companies. As a new TV station with the vision to deliver the message of dakwah

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