

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE EFFICACY OF ISLAMIC DOCUMENTARY: A CASE STUDY OF TV3'S JEJAK RASUL PROGRAM

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Abstract

This quantitative research focuses on public perceptions towards the efficacy of Islamic documentary, a case study of TV3's Jejak Rasul program. This research addresses through three objectives; first, to study the respondents' behaviors, attitudes, and values towards TV3' Jejak Rasul program, second, to analyze respondents' preference of contents in Jejak Rasul program, and third, to examine respondents' assumption regarding the relevant of Jejak Rasul program in the future. Data for this entire research is gathered using a survey method, which involved 300 respondents were non-probability sampling was applied. This finding will categorize into three sections according to the objective. Firstly, the viewers watched the program in order to strengthen their knowledge about Islam. Second, the viewers prefer to watch in-depth stories about Prophets and Messenger, where it is the fundamental contents' treatment for the program since its inception in 1995. Lastly, the study has clarified that Jejak Rasul program still relevant to be aired for the next coming years. Ultimately the researcher concluded that even though Malaysian viewers has been perceived as the entertainment-oriented people, Jejak Rasul is still relevant to be produced and continued as it still an important medium for viewers to gain their religion knowledge. With the completion this research, the researcher hopes that this study should be able to support other studies in the future.

Keywords: Public perception, Islamic documentary, Jejak Rasul program, TV3

1. Introduction

In this study focuses on the efficacy of religious program or Islamic documentary towards the Malaysian audience by concentrating on one of the most influential Islamic programs in TV3 – Jejak Rasul. The Jejak Rasul Series was first aired on TV3 during Ramadan in 1995. It is a 30-episode documentary that depicts the struggle of the 25 prophets as mentioned in the Quran. The documentary that takes the style of a travelogue covers various locations in the history and the lives of the Prophets and Messengers.

The main purpose of this travelogue documentary was to educate the audience about the Islamic history and the struggles of Prophets in spreading Islam in this world. However, the documentary concept has been developed and evolved within the series' progress to include the history of Islam and how the people perceived it. It also encompassed on the impact Islam had on politics, economy, education and the culture of the locals.

Problem statement - Malaysians viewers are served with an assortment of television dramas from international and local, while Islamic documentaries slowly gaining popularity on the screen. Furthermore, television stations in Malaysia currently in a race to publish the most popular drama series, especially novel-based dramas that is currently a hit among viewers. However, this latest trending contributes to a non-impressive ratings for religious programs which results in a lower number of viewers of that particular program. As a start, on identifying Islamic documentaries' ability to sustain viewers' attention in the future, this quantitative study tries to reveal the public perceptions towards the efficacy of Islamic documentary through a case study of Jejak Rasul program.

As for the above mention phenomenon, this study tries to seek answers to several research questions as stated below:

- What are the respondents' behaviors, attitudes and values towards TV3's Jejak Rasul program?
- What are the respondents' preferences of contents in Jejak Rasul program?
- How respondents' think about the relevance of Jejak Rasul program in the future.

1.2 Scope and Rationale of the Study

This study will involve Malay young adults between ages of 20 to 40 years old who enjoyed watching Malaysian television. The 300 respondents were randomly chosen regardless of their demographic, psychographic and sociographic background. The area of study varies in several states in Malaysia because the study is conducted through a social media medium – Facebook. The respondents are currently working or studying in different states, hence, it is easier and cost-saving to conduct the study through the chosen medium.

1.3 Significant of the Study

This study may be significant as a contribution to a more conducive approach in publishing and creating a productive Islamic documentary. Hence, the researcher needs to know the public perceptions of Islamic documentary, such as the well-established *Jejak Rasul Series* and their expectations for this genre in whole.

2. Literature Review

2.1 People Watch Religious Programmes as to Fulfil the Needs

In the research done by Peter Horsfield (1987)¹, people are usually engaged with certain television programmes because they want to meet their personal and social needs. In addition, this is in line with the research done by Abelman (1987)² who had found that the viewers have 22 motives on why they watched the religious television programmes. The motives include information-learning, dissatisfaction with other media, spiritual guidance, entertainment, avoiding commercial TV, feeling close to God, moral support, companionship, convenience, economic inexpensive, passing time, arousal-excitement, salvation, habit, escape-forget, topic for communication/discussion, behavioural guidance, product advertising, relaxation and social interaction.

All of these motives can be related to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which has been popularized by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974)³. This theory viewed people as active viewers since they are able to examine and evaluate various types of media to accomplish communication goals. They also believe that people actively seek out specific media and specific content to obtain specific gratification or results. Hence, viewers will continuously seek and use the media as a medium to fulfil their needs and wants. Through their findings, they also discovered that people use media to fulfil a need to either connect with or disconnect from others. It shows that the media is a very important medium for people no matter who and where they reside.

2.2 People Trust the Da'wah in Islamic Documentaries

Not all ages love to watch Islamic programmes. Hence, the producers of religious programmes should play an important role to capture and attract viewers' attention to watch the said genre. They should be able to make the Islamic documentaries, for instance, as an important show to watch. This phenomenon being discussed in the Agenda Setting Theory.

In the Agenda Setting Theory, Weaver (1980)⁴ stated that people's beliefs on the importance of an issue are highly related to the amount of space and time the said agenda is being addressed in the newspaper, radio and television. Thus, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important. This theory can also be applied to Islamic documentaries. The more frequent an Islamic documentary is aired on television, the more information, knowledge and Islamic messages the viewers will obtain and trust.

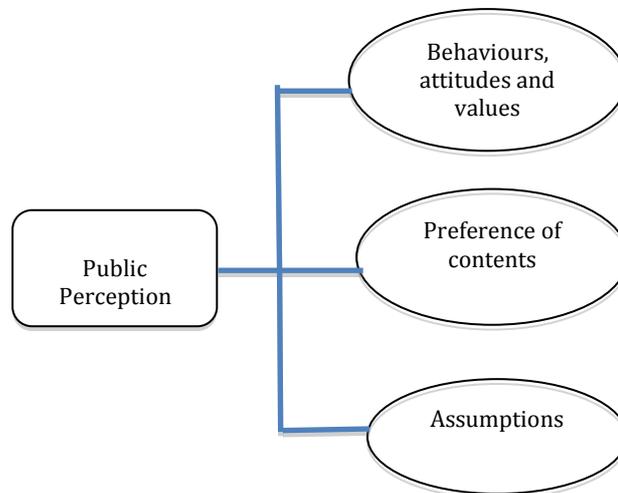
2.3 People Believe the Information Provided in Islamic Documentaries

One concept to add on our understanding of how people process information regarding mass communication is the idea of the schema. Schema as defined by Graber (1984)⁵ is "a cognitive structure consisting of organized knowledge about situations and individuals that has been abstracted from prior experiences. It is used for processing new information and retrieving stored information."

The concept of schema has become widely used by psychologists, cognitive scientists and communication researchers because of its apparent usefulness in understanding how people process information. It means that

perception can also be determined by someone past experiences related to certain things and events. Through their past experiences, people will make their own perception whether it is good or bad.

2.4 Conceptual Framework



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The aim of this study was to ascertain the public perception towards the efficacy of Islamic documentary programs on Malaysian television. Therefore, this study was conducted using the quantitative method, of which this method requires that the variables under consideration must be measured. The data were collected after a week by using 300 self-administered survey method, in which it was done through the distribution of questionnaires. Additional materials and information were collected through secondary data, which included journals, book, and websites.

With computer network access made nearly permanent in our daily lives, alternative means of data collection are being made available to researchers. Recent studies have explored various computer-based techniques, including electronic mail and Internet surveys.

3.2 Location & Population of the Study

The study is conducted using social media via Facebook and the selected respondents are based in different states in Malaysia.

3.3 Population and Sampling Techniques

This study does not involve hypothesis because of several reasons as stated below:

1. The sample was chosen from non-probability sampling
2. It does not require in research questions
3. This study cannot be generalized and not to be generalized according to the research sampling

This study only consists of young Malay adults who are professionally working, studying, housewives, jobless, group of societies, organizations and public which has the same interest, and also group of committee members in any association or alliances within the age group of 20 to 40 years old. The respondents were chosen randomly by distributing 300 questionnaires to a total of 300 Facebook friends. The said respondents are scattered around various states in Malaysia and connected through a social media medium, which is Facebook.

3.4 Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and the study used a self-administered survey questionnaires which were based on the study questions and study objectives. The questionnaires were distributed to all respondents located in various states in Malaysia.

4. Findings and Discussions

The findings of respondents' demographic, psychographic, sociographic and also all of the objectives of this study discussed as below:

Table 1: Respondents Demographic

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	121	40.5
Female	179	59.5
Age		
20-25	35	11.8
26-30	164	54.2
31-35	63	21.2
36-40	38	12.8
TV set at home		
1	155	51.3
2	98	32.9
3	35	11.7
4	10	3.4
Not related	2	0.7
Hours watching TV		
< 1	29	9.7
1-2	115	38.1
3-4	101	33.8
> 4	55	18.4
Hours watching Islamic program		
< 1	113	37.8
1-2	143	47.8
3-4	32	10.7
> 4	11	3.7

4.1 Attitude, Behavior and Value

Table 2 is the question whether the respondent watched Jejak Rasul program just to improve their knowledge about Islam. The result shows 79.65% of the respondents agree that they watched Jejak Rasul just to improve knowledge about Islam. The result also shows that 13.79% respondents being neutral about this whereas 6.56% disagree that they watched Jejak Rasul in order to improve their knowledge about Islam. As the result shows the majority of respondents watched Jejak Rasul to improve their knowledge about Islam, it synchronizes with the main purpose of the program. Jejak Rasul program storyline basically is about the Messenger of Allah or Nabi and Rasul, the struggles they faced in their era, and how they spread Islam throughout the world. There is so many lessons can viewers relate to their own life and that indirectly educate viewers about Islam.

Table 2: Respondents Watch Jejak Rasul to Improve Knowledge about Islam

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	123	41.7
Agree	112	37.9
Neutral	42	13.8
Disagree	13	3.8
Strongly disagree	10	2.8
Total	300	100.0

Table 3: Respondents watch Jejak Rasul as alternative to know Rasul and Nabi

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	140	46.6
Agree	111	36.7
Neutral	33	11.2
Disagree	9	3.1
Strongly disagree	7	2.4
Total	300	100.0

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondent agree that Jejak Rasul is their alternative method to know about the Prophets and Messengers instead of reading books (83.3%). Meanwhile, 11.2% of respondents being neutral and only 5.5% disagree that they watch the program as the replacement method from reading books.

4.2 Respondents' Preference of Contents

The result in Table 4 shows that the respondents feel towards in depth story about Nabi and Rasuls in Jejak Rasul program. The majority of the respondents that covered 89.55% agree that they like in depth story about Nabi and Rasuls in Jejak Rasul program. The result also shows 8.01% chose to be neutral, whereas only 2.44% respondents disagree with the statement that they like in depth story about Nabi and Rasuls program.

Meanwhile, Table 5 below shows that respondents (88.5%) agree that they like Jejak Rasul program emphasize more on people and culture of visited places in every episode.

Table 4: Respondents Like in Depth Story about the Prophets and Messengers

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	160	53.7
Agree	110	35.9
Neutral	23	8.0
Disagree	4	1.4
Strongly disagree	3	1.0
Total	300	100.0

Table 5: Respondents Like to Emphasize on Culture and People at Visited Place

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	128	42.5
Agree	139	46.0
Neutral	27	9.4
Disagree	4	1.4
Strongly disagree	2	0.7
Total	300	100.0

Table 6: Respondents Prefer to Watch Muslim Community in Non-Muslim Countries

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	101	33.1
Agree	112	34.6
Neutral	75	28.1
Disagree	8	2.8
Strongly disagree	4	1.4
Total	300	100.0

For Table 6, respondents have been asked whether they prefer to watch about the Muslim community who live in non-Islamic countries, and the result shows 70.7% respondents agree. The result also shows 28.1% respondent being neutral and 4.2% respondents disagree to watch it.

4.3 Relevancy of the Program in the Future

Based on Table 7, the researcher asked about the relevancy of Jejak Rasul program to be aired in the coming year. Based on the result shows, 90.82% agree that the program still relevant and should be continued while 7.06% respondents chose to be neutral. The result also shows 2.12% respondents disagree Jejak Rasul program should be continued in the coming years.

Table 7: Jejak Rasul Still Relevant to be Continued

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	181	61.8
Agree	87	29.0
Neutral	20	7.0
Disagree	3	1.1
Strongly disagree	3	1.1
Total	300	100.0

Table 8: Jejak Rasul can Give better Understanding to Young Muslim and Non-Muslim

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	169	56.6
Agree	104	33.9
Neutral	18	6.3
Disagree	5	1.8
Strongly disagree	4	1.4
Total	300	100.0

The respondents then have been asked about the capability of the program as alternative method to attract not even young Muslim, but also non-Muslim audience to have a better understanding about Islam. About 90.5% respondents agree, and 6.3% are neutral on this matter, as shows above at Table 8.

Table 9: Jejak Rasul Viewable through Online

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	148	51.9
Agree	97	34.0
Neutral	33	11.6
Disagree	6	2.1
Strongly disagree	1	0.4
Total	300	100.0

Table 9 shows that the respondents agree the program to be viewed through online. To be suited to the development of new communication technologies, 85.9% respondents were agreed that the importance of the internet as a medium of knowledge and information. All the TV programs, especially Jejak Rasul can be watched via computer and mobile gadget.

5. Conclusions

This study has reached several small conclusions and a main conclusion in line towards finding the answer of the efficacy of Islamic documentary, using a case study of TV3's Jejak Rasul program.

Firstly, this study has determined public perception towards the efficacy of Islamic documentary in Malaysia shows more positive attitudes, behaviors, and values. The majority of the respondents admit that they familiar with Jejak Rasul program and waited to watch the program in every Ramadhan month, no matter what is the theme that brought up by the producer and where is the program's location setup.

Furthermore, the majority of the respondents watched the program in order to strengthen their knowledge about Islam. The respondents also stated that they assume Jejak Rasul program as a substitute method for reading books and rejecting the statement that most of the viewers watching Jejak Rasul just because they wait for breaking fast time. In addition, respondents did not feel bored towards the program even Jejak Rasul has reached their 20 years of production. The respondents felt that the presence of Jejak Rasul program synonym with fasting month and after it successful 20 years of production, they feel awkward without the existence of the program.

Secondly, in terms of content's preference, majority respondents prefer to watch in depth stories about Nabi and Rasul, where it is the fundamental contents' treatment for the program since its inception in 1995. Researcher's belief based on findings of this study is, the program needs to have creative elements and new treatments injected in order to keep up with the current trending and massive competitors in other channels. Therefore, to retain not just loyal viewers but also to attract younger generations in gaining religious knowledge by watching the program, fresh elements are a must to instill in the next production.

Thirdly, the study has clarified that Jejak Rasul program still relevant to be aired for the next coming years. With the establishment of Jejak Rasul program as the most prominent Islamic documentary in this

country, it triggers other television productions to produce similar genre of the program. The positive part about it, people can easily have Islamic education via watching television thus provide a better way to understand Islam.

Another serious fact needs to be pondered by TV Station is the suitable airtime for *Jejak Rasul* program. The result identified that the most appropriate time for the program to be aired is between 6 to 7 o'clock in the evening, as people already resolve with breakfasting preparation and simply wait in front of the television. On the other hand, TV Station needs to make *Jejak Rasul* program available online to make sure the program accessible for viewers anytime and anywhere at their comfort.

The ultimate conclusion of this study is, even though Malaysian viewers has been perceived as the entertainment-oriented people, *Jejak Rasul* are still relevant to be produced and continued as it still an important medium for viewers to gain their religion knowledge.

End Notes

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