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A Research on the Making and Creating of Popular Music



Abstract: - The study aimed to observe how the Nasyid music genre has evolved in Malaysia over the past two decades (1996-2016) from the artists' points of view. The word Nasyid stems from Arabic, which means 'to sing or chant'. The study aims to shed light on Nasyid, taking into account different points of view on the evolution of the term over the period under investigation. The research addresses the so-called 'Raihan phenomenon' of the late 1990s, which led to a boom in Nasyid as a genre of popular music. This thesis investigates not only the Nasyid genre but also the larger environment and context in which it exists. It also studies the changes relating to musical instruments and musical style, analyses the lyrics and languages of the music, the evolution of pictures and the changing retinue of the participants in this musical genre. Furthermore, this research addresses the scope and structure of the music business and the marketing practices that surround Nasyid in Malaysia. Multiple analysis approaches, in-depth interviews, content analysis, and participant-observation fieldwork are only some of the qualitative research techniques used in this study. Over 11 months (September 2015–January 2016 and April 2016–September 2016), researchers spoke with professionals in the Malaysian music industry, including Nasyid singers, composers, lyricists, arrangers, musicians, scholars, media professionals, music retailers, and related organisations and recording labels. This study's findings and outcomes demonstrate the rapid expansion of Nasyid over the two decades under consideration. The final section of the study provides a brief overview of the three most important findings: (i) the difficulty in defining Nasyid and popular music; (ii) the similarities and differences between Nasyid and popular music in Malaysia; and (iii) the business models used within the Nasyid genre in the Malaysian music industry. Appropriate suggestions are made to aid in the future preservation of this music by taking into account the training methods for educating up-and-coming Nasyid artists. The goals of this thesis are to (i) educate international scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology and popular music studies about Nasyid and related music genres; (ii) educate participants in Nasyid and related music genres about the structure of the industry; and (iii) present ideas on the business models deployed and provide suggestions for improved economic outcomes.

Keywords: Nasyid, music genre, popular music, music industry.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The popularity of Nasyid indicates a market for religious music in a popular style. Since the 1990s, many means of Islamic entertainment have grown including radio, television, periodicals, and online media. The rise of Islamically themed shows on Malaysian television has also boosted the careers of numerous Islamic leaders, scholars, and musicians, including Imam Muda, Pencetus Ummah, and Da'i. These Islamic events were developed to give young people a place to share their ideas and enthusiasm for Islam with a wider audience. Many Islamic events were created to enable youngsters find an outlet for their thoughts and passion about Islam with a larger audience. Often these shows are in the form of contests among a number of contestants who undergo trials or themes designed to establish the best performer who is eventually crowned as a winner. As a result, there have been specific channels that cater for the Islamic market such as IKIM.fm radio station and website, television stations, and TV Al-Hijrah.

This trend has also been taken up by Malaysian musicians. A number of famous Nasyid singers left their bands to start solo careers which have thrived. Two examples of this are Yassin Sulaiman (from the Nasyid group Brothers) and Faizal Tahir (from the Nasyid group Mirwana). Iwan, Sham Kamikaze, and Akhil Hayy are just a few of the well-known Malaysian musicians who have recently become more religious. They changed their image and songs to fit in with the Islamic popular music culture.

Several Malaysian female singers have gone from having a "pop-look" to having an "Islamic-look" by donning the hijab (headscarf) and dressing more modestly. Ziana Zain, Liza Hanim, and Shila Hamzah are just a few examples. These artists' primary fan bases have remained unchanged despite these alterations to their popular music. Known as the "Celine Dion of Asia," Siti Nurhaliza is a Malaysian pop icon. She debuted at the young age of 12 with her singing career. requiring no. She started wearing the headscarf in 2013 (aged 34) to create an

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Islamic image and still sings in the pop song genre with occasional releases of Islamic-oriented music. She is an artist, but she hasn't come out and said she's a Nasyid. One Nation Emcee, a hip-hop group from Malaysia, has recorded a song called "Syukur (Kau Yang Satu)" (Gratefulness [You are the Only One]) that features Islamic themes even though the group does not actively promote an Islamic image. Some artists (like Yuna and Najwa Latiff) have presented an Islamic image from the beginning of their careers but do not consider themselves to be part of Islamic popular music. Since the beginning of their careers, they have adhered to the Islamic dress code by wearing the hijab, but they have not participated in any Islamic-themed events or media shows.

By the mid-2000s, Islamic popular performers' public personas and musical styles had begun to become more accepting of Western popular music. In the late '90s, Nasyid musicians were immediately recognised by their conventional look and the clothes they wore to performances. Wearing basic baggy garments capped with a kufi (a close-fitting, brimless cap for men) and a hijab (headscarf for women) was then the identification of Nasyid artists. However, nowadays that difference is neither useful nor widely accepted. Some musicians and performers have stuck to an Islamic dress code, but many others have not. In 2014, I had a talk with a buddy working in the music industry, who voiced his misgiving in the following fashion: Now, everyone wants to be like a Western musician. They perform Islamic music yet look like pop stars from the West. I don't see the problem with Nasyid music or Islamic attire. If we treat people with dignity and respect, they will treat us with dignity and respect in return.

1.2 Rationale

I started wondering, as I considered his doubts, what the current situation of 'Islamic popular music' in Malaysia is. How does Nasyid differ from other forms of Islamic pop music? What are the modern sounds of Nasyid and Islamic popular music? How do we define an Islamic symbol? Does image matter for an Islamic popular music singer? Is this business model used by all music industries, including the Islamic music industry? Then, I devised a study plan to collect data that would paint a more complete picture of Islamic popular music's development in Malaysia. The ability to dissect the cultural landscape into its constituent parts—images, lyrics, musical styles, and commercial models—would also be useful for conducting an empirical study of the relationship between Islam and music, particularly in Malaysia.

Recognising the importance of the problems raised, and drawing on my extensive experience and interest in Islamic popular music, I began conducting informal interviews with colleagues in the Malaysian music industry to compile data for pilot research. I wanted to know what they thought about my inquiries. My standard opening line wherever we'd meet, be it at a concert, in their studio, in a restaurant, or even in a shopping mall, was, "What is the current state of Nasyid?" What is Nasyid like today? This exploratory study has laid the groundwork for further study of Islamic popular music. My background in Islamic pop music and some preliminary research led me to the conclusion that Islamic pop music in Malaysia has undergone significant changes in recent years. This prompted me to dive deeper into researching the kind of Islamic pop music that is most prevalent in Malaysia. In 2014, I was offered the option to pursue a doctoral degree, and I was selected to undertake my research on Islamic popular music in Malaysia at the University of Nottingham. The findings of that study are presented in this thesis. First, I give a high-level introduction to Islam, the numerous ways in which music is viewed within Islam around the Islamic world, and the development of Islam and Islamic music in Malaysia. This is required to present a comprehensive picture of the relationship between Islam, music and Malaysia itself (the study covers the history of Nasyid and its growth in Malaysia). This study summarises prior studies, such as academic publications, on Islamic music and the impact of globalisation on the Islamic popular music scene. This research will give descriptions of the numerous forms of music circulating and performed in Malaysia. This study provides a historical overview of the development of music in Malaysia, beginning with the traditional music of the pre-Islamic era and continuing through the Islamic era and into modern times when Western music has pierced the borders and influenced the popular culture and music of Malaysia. I explore how Muslims have surmounted the obstacles they face owing to globalisation, as conflict has happened in parallel with growth.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The thesis will also study the notion of Islamic popular music, Nasyid, and its wider cultural environment (as indicated above) from the viewpoints of persons working in the production side of Malaysia's music industry. Islam, music, and Malaysia are the focal themes of this analysis. This study will provide a thorough analysis of the cultural, social, and anthropological effects of Islamic popular music in Malaysia via the lens of ethnomusicology. This research is vital because there are very few studies linked with Islamic popular music in this country. Being actively involved in the Islamic popular music scene for the past two decades puts me in a special position as a researcher. This perspective has enabled me to examine the industry from the inside. Because of the relationships I've built in this field, I've had access to knowledge from the best possible sources. Thus, I can present a full overview of the industry, which will assist in deepening our understanding of Nasyid and assess its current situation in the country.

- (i) Educate international scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology and popular music studies about Nasyid and related Islamic music genres
- (ii) Educate participants in Nasyid and related Islamic music genres about the structure of the industry

(iii) Present ideas on the business models deployed and provide suggestions for improved economic outcomes.

1.4 Research Questions

(i) How to educate international scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology and popular music studies about Nasyid and related Islamic music genres?

(ii) How to educate participants in Nasyid and related Islamic music genres about the structure of the industry?

(iii) How best to present ideas on the business models deployed and provide suggestions for improved economic outcomes?

1.5 Structure of the Research

The study begins with this introductory chapter and then proceeds to a detailed literature review of the existing scholarship. Next, it also presents the methodological approach employed in the study before presenting the results and analysis. Lastly, it concludes with an assimilation and detailed discussion of the major findings in the conclusion chapter.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Background

Muslims believe the religion is rooted in the common scriptural tradition that begins with God's creation of the universe and the first human being, Adam. They believe that a lengthy series of prophets and messengers followed this - as many as 124,000 - who were all exemplary in character and did not claim divinity, but just disseminated the message of the existence of God. Islam asserts that the first revelation revealed to Muhammad came when he was 40 years old, in the year 610, at a retreat on Mount Hira. Jibril (Gabriel), one of the archangels, delivered the word to him and commanded him to read (Iqra'). More revelations from God came to Muhammad in phases and response to specific occurrences as he travelled the world spreading Islam (Esposito, 1999:140). The Quran is comprised of these verses and has 114 chapters (Saddique, 2011: xiv).

While some Muslims contend that Muhammad was the "living Quran," Esposito (2011) argues that for practising Muslims, Muhammad is the epitome of perfection. He was a prophet and a compelling political leader, and he is remembered for both. His demeanour, practise, and the principles he held throughout his existence are reflected in what is now known as Sunnah (see glossary) thanks to the stories told about him after his death (known as Hadith) (Neusner, 2009:146). Two scholars in the ninth century are generally acknowledged as having compiled the most trustworthy Hadith. The researchers were Muslim and Al-Bukharyan. All of Muhammad's teachings and examples, as well as his counsel on prayer, fasting, marriage and divorce, diplomacy, and holy war, can be found in the Sunnah (see glossary) (Neusner, 2009:146). The Shari'ah, or Islamic law, is comprised of both the Quran and the Sunnah (see glossary) (Ahmed, 2002:3). In conclusion, Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah (see glossary) provide the foundation for Islamic law, while Islamic history provides concrete examples of its application (Nasr 1997: 217).

2.2 Islamic Music

In nations or places where Shariah law is implemented, which stifles musical expression, we can certainly ask how the 'good' part of Islamic law, to which Nasr mentioned above, relates. Clearly, in numerous Islamic nations, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, 'official policies aimed at Islamicisation have damaged and inhibited artistic production' (Raseuki, 2009: 28). Conner (1976) contends that Islamic legalists formally prohibit music. However, music is not forbidden by the Quran, and official condemnation is rarely effective. Indeed, music is often given a prominent role, such as in Sufi religious rituals. Classical music was widely supported by religious leaders (such as the Caliphs) and many of the great Islamic philosophers also wrote on the subject. Traditional Islamic music from the Middle East and North Africa places greater emphasis on vocal music than on instrumental music, and this is true for both holy and secular contexts. Although there is a wide range of musical styles in Islamic countries, religion has always been a unifying factor. The recitation of the Qur'an, sometimes referred to as a 'reading,' is a highly developed technique of vocal adornment, and this is especially true in religious chanting.

2.3 Relevant Classical Styles of Music

Conner (1976) further claims that four major classical music styles (Arab, Persian, Turkish and Indian) feature improvisatory aspects (as does most Islamic folk and sacred music), based on systems of modes (maqam in Arab lands, dastgah in Persia, makam in Turkey, and ragas in India). In practice, most genres of Islamic popular music have not employed notation, unless occasionally as a mnemonic reference. Notations have been developed in recent times to aid in education and to preserve parts of the classical traditions that are in danger of being lost.

Islam is no exception to Randel's claim that "music is central to any world religion" (2003: 422). Because Islam is practised in so many different places, he says, it has had an outsized impact on musical traditions all around the world. As a result, its teachings and messages are communicated through a wide range of musical genres. For example, the call to prayer or singing of the Quran has its roots in the seventh-century Arabian peninsula, but it has since come to represent Near Eastern music and to serve as an inspiration for cultures as far afield as Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and even Southern Africa. Rasueki (2009: 119) states that shalat (prayer), du'a (personal petition), and zikr (mystical recall) are the three most common names for prayer in Islam. These three Qur'anic

phrases identify key Muslim prayer practises which draw many of their typical elements from the engagement of Islam with the cultural contexts of the Middle East, particularly in the early years of its development, as well as that of the places Islam eventually conquered.

2.4 Music and its Traits in the Islamic Context

'Music' comes from the Greek word *mousike* (David & Rasmussen, 2011, p. 46), and the word *musiqa* (sometimes spelt *musiqi*) is derived from *mousike*. Beginning in the eighth century of the Islamic calendar (the Hijrah), or 622 CE (Al-Faruqi, 1986, p. 31), the name was adopted by Muslims and used until the beginning of the tenth century. In contrast, the term *ghina* (singing) came to be used to refer to musical expressions when the combination of poetic and musical expression evolved and reached the summit of music's hierarchy in Arab lands (Shiloah, 1995: 16). According to Al-Faruqi (1986, p. 31), musicologists and ethnomusicologists have defined "music" as the harmonisation of sounds, voices, or instruments that elicit emotional satisfaction, aesthetics, and a structural belief system that shapes one's foundational beliefs.

Based on this description, Ab Majid and Yusof (2008, p. 90) stated that three traits underpin Islamic popular music. Some examples link three of these traits utilised as a form of *ibadah* (deeds or means of devotion in Islam). When performing *ibadah* related to the Quran, the *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage), *tahmid* (Islamic form of chants in praise of God), or *takbir hari raya* (Islamic call celebrating the arrival of 'Eid al-Fitr or the festival marking the end of the fasting month), musical instruments are not used. However, according to Ab Majid and Yusof (2008, p. 90), in various types of *ibadah*, such as the *azan* (the call to prayer), *zikir* and *selawat* (forms of Islamic chants), musical instruments are employed by Muslims. The reciting of the Quran, the *azan*, the *talbiah* of *hajj*, *zikir*, *selawat*, *tahmid*, and *takbir* of 'Eid al-Fitr are all examples of *ibadah* in Islam that involve the use of one's voice, aesthetics, and accomplishing a specific purpose in seeking the delights of Allah.

2.5 Music and Rituals

The link between music and these *ibadah* rituals was initially neglected. Today, however, one recognises and accepts that the traits of this *ibadah* are musical or musically infused (Ab Majid & Yusof, 2008, p. 91). Even though there are no instruments in the *azan*, Randel (2003: 422) notes that the *muezzin*, or *azan* caller, uses his melodic voice through a sound system or broadcast to summon local Muslims to prayer. Even Quranic recitations display voice skills. There are sets of rules (*tajweed*) for guidance, and a considerable degree of creative improvisation is required as the production of melody depends on the deliverer (recitor). Therefore, the sound of words produced itself can be musical. *Zikir* is the chanting of Islamic verses in remembrance of, and praise of, God; it can be performed a cappella or with musical accompaniment, typically with an ensemble of *rebana* or drums (Rasmussen, 2010: 39). The *selawat* refers to Islamic chants in praise of the Prophet Muhammad.

The way one listens to music is just one example of the many cultural practices that are tied to religious beliefs or practices in many countries, including Islam. Tobin (2013: 292) investigates how Muslims in Amman behave during Ramadan concerning listening to music. Muslims fast from dawn till sunset during Ramadhan, a holy month in the Islamic calendar, to better empathise with the plight of the less fortunate. During a fast, one abstains from engaging in undesirable activities like lying, gossiping, backbiting, or slandering as a means of strengthening religious practice, encouraging self-reflection, and practising self-control. During the month of fasting, giving to charity is also highly recommended. Celebration after Ramadan, marked by the holiday of 'Eid al-Fitr, takes place at the end of the month.

2.6 Scholarship on Music

According to Solomon (2012), it was only during the last 30 years that studies in popular music developed in academia. He writes that the issue of theoretical language for popular music and musical meaning has been recognised through an investigation of popular music as a whole. Sound recordings, video clips, and ancillary material such as album covers are all considered "text" in this context, not only the lyrics of songs. As such, they can be considered in all multimedia dimensions as texts that can be subjected to rigorous analysis. Research into popular music has become recognised as popular musicology since the mid-1990s when the field of popular music studies developed. To which Derek (1998) elaborated by saying:

"...differs from popular music studies in that its main focus is on critiquing and analysing the music itself, though it does not ignore social and cultural context."

Sound recordings have largely replaced sheet music as the go-to source for analysing popular music from the latter part of the twentieth century, claims Solomon (2012). Multimedia works, most notably the music video, have also made use of the text metaphor. Many studies of popular music have expanded the definition of "text" to include not only the sounds and pictures but also the social behaviours that produce them in acts of performances, even though the bulk of studies still rely on commercial recordings made in a studio.

Solomon (2012) looked at the topic of meaning in popular music. To answer the question of how musical sounds express meaning, he outlines four main theoretical approaches: formalism, ideological critique, subjectivity, and 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.

3 Methodology

The current chapter presents a detailed discussion of the major relevant information accumulated as a part of the methodological approach in this study. It elaborates the contexts and the acceptance of such music along with their major traits.

3.1 Contexts

Music is a delicate problem in most Islamic countries. According to Sarkissian (2005), many Muslims are torn between "hardliners" who insist that music has no place in Islam and seek to ban it at all costs and moderates who are willing to allow it, but only within certain limits. From time to time, due to a lack of awareness of this topic, music becomes more of a problem when dealing with popular music and young people.

Today, Islamic popular culture may be observed all across the world, from the Middle East and Southeast Asia to Muslim populations in Europe. This includes Malaysia. Heavy metal and hip-hop have flourished in the underground thanks to Muslim musicians in Egypt, Pakistan, Morocco, and Lebanon. Videos of a new genre of religious music featuring lyrics praising God and the Prophet, western-style instrumental music, and a set of high-quality, commercially appealing images and storylines in modern settings have been airing on satellite music video channels in Arabic countries since the year 2000. Meanwhile, in the United States, performances by Islamic poet Brother Dash and stand-up comedian Shazia Mirza are garnering critical praise. Even the Great Ayatollah of Iraq approves of them, meaning they are halal. It is clear that Islamic revivalism and the subsequent piety movements are not inherently incompatible with contemporary popular culture, as evidenced by the existence of halal songs, Islamic boy bands, Islamic reality TV shows, Islamic tourism, and Islamic Films or 'Clean Cinema' alongside Islamic music. This new commercial Islamic popular song and video trend highlights the perceived dignity and humanity of Islam and its harmonious integration with a comfortable middle-class, and modern lifestyle (Weintraub, 2011). Music, or even the least organised sounds like accapella style, which falls outside of stringent Islamic limits, has been outright outlawed in some Islamic societies. In Afghanistan, under the Taliban, 'music' was not tolerated (Baily 2016).

3.2 Acceptance and Major Traits

These instances show that some forms of Islamic popular music are acceptable. Examples of definitional disputes over music include the debates over Islamic popular music and *Nasyid*, especially in the Malaysian music business. 'Islamik Muzik? Atau Musik Islami' (Islamic music or music Islam) both represent the same meaning of the phrase Islamic music in a Malaysian context. Abd Fattah Farihin, a pioneer in the Malaysian Islamic music scene and a respondent in 2016, summed up the central idea of Islamic popular music as follows: "The 'Islamik Muzik' is songs that deliver good messages to people and this music has progressed massively in the Malaysian market up to the present day" (Abd Fattah, 2016). 'Islamic music' is a term that most Malaysians are familiar with. Most listeners recognise that spreading positivity among Muslims is important to Islamic pop music's mission. The reply has been a part of this scene since well before the 1990s when the 'Zikr' and 'Salawat Songs' phenomena and the *Nada Murni* Group emerged, and he has witnessed its meteoric rise firsthand.

One additional notable aspect of Islamic music before the 1990s is that it primarily consisted of praises to Allah in the forms of *Zikr* and *Qasidah*. A defining characteristic of these genres was an emphasis on religious demonstration through lyrical references to Allah's name.

Nasyid, often known as Islamic pop music, is extremely popular in Malaysia. Popular music with lyrics that incorporate religious themes or moral teachings is still popular music, according to the *Al-Manna Nasyid* Group. In this discussion, the author investigates the definition of Islamic popular music and argues that coupled with *Nasyid*, it constitutes music that is acceptable to Malaysian Islamic communities. Both names have been treated as interchangeable, especially in Malaysia. This section will attempt to describe *Nasyid* in Malaysia and explain the nature of Islamic popular music to make sense of this confusing language. The author also investigates the interconnected nature of different subgenres in the recording business. Finally, the remainder of the chapter aims to provide an account of the growth of Islamic popular music in Malaysia.

4 Results & Analysis

4.1 Performance and Related Aspects: Public Perception

In case fashion ever becomes a "sensitive issue," Islamic scholars keep a close eye on it. The most prevalent concerns are the creation of the attire and the presentation of costumes by *Nasyid* artists. Poor understanding of the meaning of *akhlak* and the morality of these artists contribute to problems with unsuitable dress among *Nasyid* performers in Malaysia. The question of what inspired musicians to create 'Islamic' music is central. Take the careers of musicians who are widely assumed to be Muslim but who choose not to establish themselves as part of the Islamic popular music scene as an example. For instance, Malaysian Pop vocalist and guitarist Yunalis Zarai performs under the stage name Yuna. Throughout her time in the music profession, she has remained compliant with an Islamic outfit (Cherrie, 2017).

The notion in the *Sunnah* (see glossary) (also briefly discussed in Chapter 2) should be followed if one wants to make a bold statement about images and people in Islam. Western popular music, however, set the standard for

most musical styles early on. Consequently, during the formative years and the introduction of Islamic popular music in Malaysia, the dominant musical tendencies were influenced by Arabic genres from the Middle Eastern countries. This aesthetic achieved widespread acclaim and came to symbolise, albeit indirectly, the distinct identity of Islamic artists. As a Nasyid artist myself, the most important component that needs to be considered when it comes to an outfit or appearance is decency and whether the notion is permitted in Islam. The author maintains that a boost in self-assurance stemming from practising decency can have a positive effect on creative output. Fakhrul UNIC (2015) suggested that one of the largest advances in Islamic popular music in Malaysia involved the image of artists. Nada Murni (Pioneer Nasyid Group) chose to employ the Arabic long robes or the jubah and the artists were seeking to show that the impact of the Middle Eastern trends was in parallel to Western developments. Raihan matched their fashion and image also by wearing the Arabic style, and their success helped to make the style a favourite.

The Hijjaz Nasyid group maintains that the public's perception of Nasyid artists is founded on their preferences. Before the Arabic jubah became popular, Nasyid musicians and artists favoured coats with kufis. This modification reflects the popularisation of the Arab Style inherited from the Middle East. Most Nasyid artists were fascinated by this style including Hijjaz. Hijjaz argued that the fashionable clothing of the time was a major factor. Another factor was that pilgrims to Mecca wore the garment for the haj and uah rituals. The jubah, in particular, has been given a creative upgrade through the use of colour and the addition of complementary accessories like the turban and the kufi. Hijjaz said that the group's image and personality are more than just their clothes and how they look. Source: 2015 (Isman Hijjaz) One of the Nasyid singers (from UNIC) explained that the trend included wearing simple clothing that is lightweight, compact, wrinkle-resistant, inexpensive, and easy to transport. The improved selection of jubah styles on the Malaysian market has contributed to the rising popularity of this fashion, which has even stunned Arabs.

4.2 Attraction and Related Factors

To preserve this genre 'attractive', 'its identity and look need to be treated as well. One's image could convey the whole picture through his or her appearance, and this is a natural idea in life. The interviews revealed that the dress of Malaysian Nasyid musicians was heavily influenced by current trends in the Middle East. Halim adherents agree with this assessment. To dress as a Nasyid artist in 2016 is permitted without restriction. He also thinks that Nasyid artists in Malaysia have been inspired by the appropriate clothing and decor of the Arabian culture. The Islamic popular music industry in Malaysia is seeing a rise in interest in styles from the Middle East. Is it possible, nevertheless, that this had an impact on Nasyid creatives? Many Muslims who travel to Mecca to undertake the hajj or umrah dress in an Arabic fashion. Therefore, it is easy to accept this style as the appropriate styling for the Nasyid artists. The Nasyid performers' music has been heavily impacted by the Arabic musical styles popular in the Middle East. The Nasyid artisans opted for this style because it was easy to cut and wear.

The author has witnessed the evolution of the sound and reputation of Malaysia's Nasyid performers over the past decade. In the early stages of their career, the corporate style and formal attire were the most popular choices for their appearances. The jacket or even a suit is the perfect example to depict how this fashion looked like in the last few years which has also been popularised and extensively used by Western boy bands. The best example of how the Western fashion style merged with the native music genre in Malaysia is the Nasyid group Inteam. With their unique sense of style, Inteam became an instant hit in Malaysia. Inteam's character was a fusion of Western and kufi influences. The manager of Rumpun Records and Universal Music, Azalino Universal Music (2015), had similar views on this trend, arguing that the Western boy band fashion styles had an impact on the local music industry, leading to their adoption by the Nasyid performers in Malaysia.

Wearing a jacket or suit with a kufi demonstrates that the practical trend has updated in step with the group's music as Nasyid performers. One of the UNIC team members, Bazli UNIC (2015), brought this up. He believes in the image and clothing phenomenon that arose from Western trends. He said that if you look at old Nasyid artists and compare them to modern ones, you'll see a lot of changes that were made to make them more in line with the progressive times. Islamic Nasyid painters would be particularly pleased with Inteam's concept of fusing styles.

4.3 Individual Experiences

One of the solo musicians, an ex-UNIC member, shared this view concerning the Islamic music scene in Malaysia (Hafiz Hamidun. 2015). He saw the transition over the past 20 years. He elaborated on the image's continued conservatism and the efforts of Islamic artists to commercialise it. The clothes used by Nasyid artists often serve as inspiration for new designs. The question is whether the Nasyid artists who brought their unique identity to the masses have served as trendsetters through their looks and attitude. In response to this topic, individuals commonly referred to Raihan and Inteam who developed their style and trend as an example.

At one point, many were drawn to the character of Raihan as well. People link Raihan with jacket style with a kufi, which has also been their identity even in the early engagement Raihan introduced Middle East imagery. Hafiz Hamidun agreed, saying that the clothes Raihan wear reflect the ideas they express via their songs. This is good for their age but in terms of fashion styles, the trend must alter according to the surrounding environment and the development of the industry. This is why Western styles were able to influence and be adopted by other

cultures. Another perspective was also received from one of the pioneers in the Nasyid arena, Idzwan. He thinks it's fine for a Nasyid artist to wear a jacket or suit with a kufi, and that doing so can produce a striking visual representation of the genre. The public's perception of what constitutes the ideal appearance of a Nasyid collective holds. The Nasyid groups, even if they choose to wear a coat, should nonetheless identify themselves as Muslims by the use of a songkok or kufi.

The evolution of Nasyid, as well as the changing pictures of Nasyid artists and their fashions, were explained to the author by inteam. Even though they wore Western or traditional Malay-style clothing topped with a kufi, they still looked Islamic during the Raihan era in 1997. Audience members accepted this approach since it depicted Islam. The fashion trend has changed and new Nasyid groups emerged with their own identity, without wearing the kufi. Although it is not required to wear a kufi in Islam, many Nasyid fans do so out of preference. In addition, the trend of combining the kufi with Western fashion was established early on. During the period, every organisation had its own set of clothes, and those clothes were almost always based on a single design. Many other pioneering communities, such as the Hijjaz and the Rabbani (shown below), followed this example, each developing their own distinctive 'kufi' form. Nasyid musicians were encouraged to take a more optimistic approach to attracting an audience as a result of modernisation's impact on the music industry, particularly in terms of visuals. As a result, new forms of kufi art created by Nasyid artists emerged.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings

Nasyid has become a widely recognised kind of music around the world. This thesis examined the evolution of Nasyid in Malaysia from the inside out during a twenty-year period (1996-2016). To be considered a creator in the Malaysian music industry, one must be an expert in their field. The respondents work in numerous professions and include singers, lyricists, composers, arrangers, media producers, cover album designers, Islamic law experts, music sellers, recording label personnel, and others working for music companies. The study's premise was that Nasyid plays a significant role in Malaysia's Muslim communities. This summary of findings serves as the conclusion. To help those involved in the production of Nasyid better understand the nature of this music and overcome any challenges on the scene, we discuss the difficult problems that still exist in Islamic popular music and then offer a set of recommendations aimed at achieving a crucial objective. It also provides some advice on how to maintain the music industry's viability and ensure the continued success of this particular genre.

Comparing its current state to that of the 1990s, the Malaysian music business now can be considered an established and robust industry. This well-established music industry has contributed to the development and widespread adoption of new musical styles in Malaysia since then, such as Nasyid. There has been a steady increase in the popularity of Nasyid since it was first recognised as a viable form of entertainment during special times on the Islamic calendar in Malaysia. Nasyid is now frequently featured on radio and television programmes and can be accessed via the internet.

From the study of the research, which was developed based on the creators' points of view; the author feels that Nasyid is now regarded as one of the main music industries in Malaysia. The collected data has provided a range of perspectives on the problems of categorising Islamically popular music and defining Nasyid in Malaysia. These thoughts are obtained from those who are involved directly and indirectly in Islamic popular music and those who are responsible for giving the information based on their experience. So, it might be argued that the insight they provide on Nasyid is unique, given their position as contributors to the Malaysian music scene. These people shape the discourse regarding Nasyid and Islamic popular music in Malaysia. Because of his extensive history in the field, the author was also in a special position to acquire this information. Therefore, these folks were the most appropriate focus for our extensive pilot investigation. Further research on audience impressions of the industry would complement this notion.

The common belief is that Nasyid and Islamic pop music are interchangeable. They both share the goal of spreading "goodness" through music and the term "Nasyid" has come to represent the entire Islamic music scene as a metonym. Some respondents to the survey did attribute the rise of Islamic pop music to Nasyid. This unambiguous consequence was gained from the debate in chapter four, which identified the features or qualities of Nasyid and Islamic popular music. The author concludes, obtained from the analysis and conclusions of this thesis, that Islamic popular music is comprised of numerous elements, including aspects of pictures, lyrics, musical style, and instruments employed, based on the perceptions of creators and content analysis. This consequence led the author to suggest based on his experience and diverse perspectives that Islamic popular music is strengthened by Nasyid and its connected features.

5.2 Final Results

The results accurately reflect the contributions of many different people's ideas and knowledge and provide concrete evidence of the use of instruments in Nasyid. Some concerns related to the complicated notions of instruments utilised in Nasyid as pointed out by sectarian scholars were examined, too. Reviewing all the associated perspectives, the author strongly believes that there is no definite assertion that string instruments are banned in Islamic music. It is permissible to utilise musical instruments in dakwah (see glossary) as long as they adhere to Islamic preferences or ground norms and communicate something positive. The study delved into yet

another facet of *Nasyid*—the lyrics. The author studied this content using various contrasting examples and made the case that lyrical content is a key component of the *Nasyid* genre. Therefore, one of the major concerns of the study is answered in this section. The topic of lyrical content revealed how the music delivers Islamic messages explicitly through the lyrics. Significant lyrical components reviewed presented a clear picture of what lyrics are acceptable for inclusion in Islamic music, some of the history behind the lyrics, and the ways these lyrical styles have developed throughout the two decades in question. The second section of this article focused on the languages spoken in this song. Lyrics are an integral part of *Nasyid* production.

The public's perception of Islamic music musicians has also evolved. This research analysed the evolution of *Nasyid*-affiliated artists' visual styles throughout the twenty years under consideration. It is believed that this will present a greater grasp of the two notions and clarify the tension between both beliefs. This section was written to provide detailed explanations that highlight the connections between the artists' public personas and the musical and cultural movements they inspire. In this way, the knowledge also indirectly aids the artists who aspire to be linked with *Nasyid* by enhancing their sense of fashion and boosting their self-assurance. In addition, different women's voices were heard when discussing Islamic entertainment. Although the author searched for a definitive answer to the question "can women sing?" from the perspective of industry professionals, she came up empty.

Analysing both modern and conventional *Nasyid* business models in Malaysia, it is evident how different business models can be used to generate interest in, and revenue from, musical works. The techniques, like those used in Islamic business, draw from both global and regional practices that are compatible with Islamic law. *Khayr* (goodness), *birr* (righteousness), *qist* (equity), *adl* (equilibrium and justice), *haqq* (truth and right), *ma'ruf* (recognised and approved), and *taqwa* (piety) are all part of the Islamic philosophy in business. Using these ideas as a foundation, the chapter analysed the development of the Islamic popular music industry.

6 References

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