

## CHAPTER FOUR

### AL-RESALAH AND AL-HIJRAH TELEVISION CHANNELS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to 'Adawi (2011: 52) establishment of an Islamic satellite television channels is a duty laid upon Muslims because television is the medium most capable of achieving the duty of *da'wah*. In response to this duty, Islamic satellite television channels are spread in many Muslim countries and broadcast in the languages that suit the target audiences. Even though the programs on these television channels are characterized as Islamic, whereas Islam never contains mistakes; they remain production of human efforts that are subject to errors. Studying operating examples and making use of their experiences reduce errors of Islamic broadcasting. The objective of this chapter is to set forth two experiences from two different Muslim countries in order to serve as a current experience to enrich the field of Islamic broadcasting and help the current and future Islamic television channels to utilize them. This chapter identifies and discusses both al-Resalah and al-Hijrah television channels. It concentrates on both channels' background, vision and mission, objectives and target audience. It also touches on the philosophy and strategy of al-Hijrah programs.

#### 4.2 AL-RESALAH TELEVISION CHANNEL

According to 'Adawi (2011: 70) who studied *the Role of Aesthetic Composition in Contemporary Islamic Media: A Case Study of al-Resalah Television Channel*, *al-Resalah* in Arabic means the message. It is an Arabic language Islamic satellite

television channel aimed at presenting Islam. Al-Resalah, owned by Prince al-Waleed bin Talal of Saudi Arabia, was launched in March 2006. Al-Resalah broadcasts twenty four hours daily and accepts advertisements and programs sponsorship. 'Adawi (2011: 70) further states that Tariq al-Swuaidan is the General Manager of the station as the position called in Arab countries which is the same of chief executive officer (CEO). Al-Swuaidan is a popular Islamic motivational speaker and Television preacher (Wise, 2006). The motto of al-Resalah is *Ibda' wa Asalah* (Creative and Authentic). This motto is chosen because as al-Swuaidan (2008: 2) discusses, al-Resalah returns to the roots of Islam and the noble Qur'an, but it is also creative in representation, in the way of talking, and it is authentic in the principles of love and peace and in following the values of religion. Al-Resalah is recorded all over the United Arab Emirates and from Morocco to Kuwait, and broadcasts from Cairo. It has slots on Arabsat and Nilesat satellites, serving primarily the Middle East, North Africa and Europe (Osama Kanaker, 2010: 7). The funding of al-Resalah television comes from the Prince al-Waleed bin Talal 100%, but this funding will reduce to zero over five years, and the channel should be able to fund itself if it is successful (al-Swuaidan, 2006: 7). However, this agreement was not fulfilled because the financial capital allocated for setting up the channel at the beginning of establishing al-Resalah was cut off.

#### 4.2.1 Vision and Mission of al-Resalah

According to Ibrahim (2011: 2) the vision of an Islamic television channel should emanate from Islamic *'aqidah* for both its form and content. Al-Resalah specifies its vision to be a satellite television channel that offers Islamic broadcasting distinguished by its creative thoughts and innovative high quality programs that are in accordance with

international specifications (al-Resalah, 13 May 2013). Al-Resalah makes a bid to broadcast unprecedented and innovative programs for its audience. It also seeks to offer Islamic innovative television programs that attract a large audience and do not contradict Islamic rules. Al-Resalah confirms its vision to provide broadcasting that does not contradict Islam as a whole and not only based on *'aqidah*.

Furthermore, al-Resalah seeks to achieve the mission of creating positive change in the thought of the Muslim Arab nation and maintaining moderation among young generation by eschewing extremism. Al-Resalah also tries to improve behaviors of Muslim youth and advises and supports them to be responsible for development (al-Resalah, 20 May 2013). Wise (2006: 1) questions the ability of al-Resalah to provide moderate programs by saying the new Islamic television channel al-Resalah is amid a buzz of speculation about whether the station, billed as the first-ever moderate Islamic entertainment channel, would be able to offer a sufficiently appealing product (Islam-friendly comedies, talk shows, reality TV, music videos and game shows) to attract secular viewers. This questioning is answered by the General Manager of al-Resalah who says: "We only represent moderate and modern Islam. We have viewers all over the Arab world" (al-Swaidan, 2006: 1). The question to be raised is what is moderation? Muslims from one country to another differ in specifying the notion of moderation. The notion of moderation is a matter of debate because it is not a fixed criterion.

#### 4.2.2 Objectives of al-Resalah

According to Kanakir et al. (2010: 3) al-Resalah television channel has five main objectives to fulfill throughout its broadcasting: changing incorrect principles, directing

interests, developing skills, developing relations and introducing role models. It is stated in al-Resalah website (2013) that al-Resalah seeks to correct five main principles. First, al-Resalah directs its efforts to consolidate moderate and record the true thoughts of the Muslim community. Second, al-Resalah wants to implant Islamic principles, demonstrate the glory of Islam and promote Pan-Arabism. Third, al-Resalah attempts to stabilize right convictions and correct the incorrect ones. Fourth, al-Resalah seeks to present positive values such as truthfulness, honesty, humbleness, patriotism, fairness etc. Fifth, al-Resalah assures the respect of mind and the use of proofs which involve refusing imaginary impressions that have no proofs. Osama Kanaker (2010: 9) argues that al-Resalah has some programs that serve its objectives like *Hattem al-Quyud* (Demolish Restrictions), *Yathununa Annahum Yuhsinun* (They Think that They are Doing Well) and 5×3. Notwithstanding, fulfilling these objectives cannot be through a number of programs. Therefore, al-Resalah allocates some programs, in each season that are related to these principles.

A survey conducted by Mustafa Kanakir (2007: 230) about whether television is able to create change among its viewers, discovered the following results. Great change is 31.2%, average change 42.84%, weak change 14.52%, no change 4.94% and do not know 6.48% as shown in Figure 4.1.

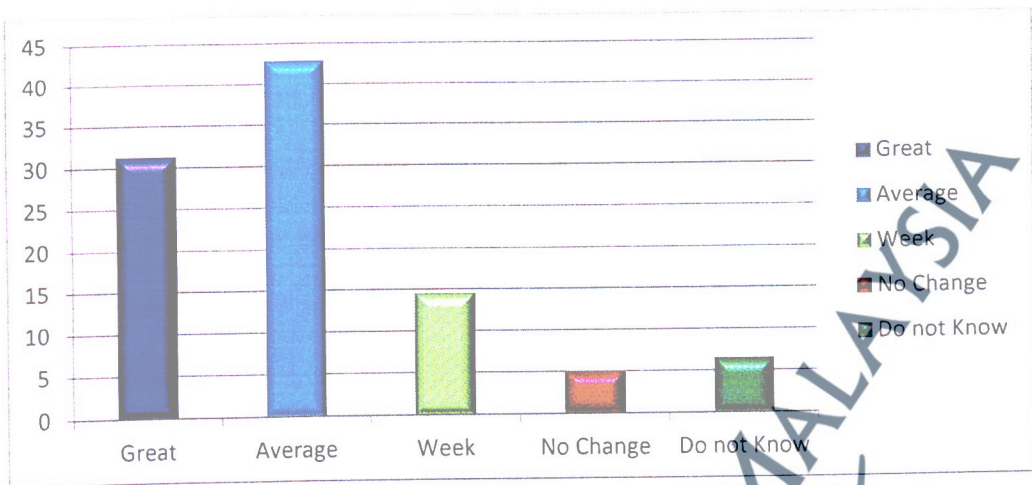


Figure 4.1: Creating change by television

However, Mustafa Kanakir opposes this result based on studies that prove the great impact of television on its viewers and the noticed impact of television on Muslim audiences. This finding appears to be as a result of the lack of knowledge among Arab societies about theories and impact of television. This result may be due to the arrangement of the question in the survey because it comes after some questions about Islamic programs in television and respondents might assume that it concerned Islamic television channels which do not make change among its audience not about television in general. In this case, this chart reflects the audience's attitude of Islamic television channels' impact. Therefore, al-Resalah has to improve its program to change the incorrect assumption made among audiences.

In addition, the second objective of al-Resalah is directing audience's interests. Al-Resalah concerns itself with interests like reading, art, beauty, sport, education and entertainment. Zulkiple (1998: 35) argues that it can be assumed that viewing religious programs is closely associated with religious interest. Religious interests in al-Resalah are

associated with interests of everyday life. An example of this objective is a program called *Khawater 8* (Reflection 8) which is a program broadcast every Ramadan. *Khawater 8* was broadcast in Ramadan 2012. This program encourages young people both males and females to make charitable contributions and volunteer to perform jobs in twelve countries such as Kuwait, Egypt, Niger, Switzerland, Turkish, South Korea, Spain, Jordan, Uganda etc. In the first episode of *Khawater 8*, the presenter stated that more than five hundred volunteers contributed to successfully perform different tasks all over the twelve countries such as renovating houses for poor families, establishing a library in a condominium, lending a helping hand to an orphanage. Al-Shuqairi, the presenter of *Khawater 8* stated that more than thirty projects were successfully completed during this season and financial gifts for the best three projects were offered. This program emphasizes creation and not imitation in all its projects. Voluntary jobs continue even after Ramadan for young people who would like to volunteer at any time. This program is not produced by al-Resalah, but al-Resalah buys it from the producer. Al-Resalah attempts to guide the interests of its audience to conform to Islamic teaching. This is derived from Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) saying who says:

«لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونَ هَوَاهُ تَبَعًا لِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ».

Which almost means: (None of you believes until his fancy is following what I bring.) (Hadith. Abu Bakr Bin Abi 'Asim. Bab 'Ma Yajib An Yakuna Hawa Almar' Taba'n Lima Ja'a Bih: Juz '1; #15).

Furthermore, al-Resalah's third objective is to develop human skills such as administrative skills, personal skills, artistic skills, technical skills, and social and human

skills. Administrative skills are handled by focusing on planning, taking decisions, organizing, marketing ideas and products, quality and authorization. Personal skills like delivering speeches, dialogue, listening, managing time, innovation and leadership are also aimed to be developed by al-Resalah among its viewers. Al-Resalah also concerns itself with skills of art such as photography, drawing and acting. Technical skills like skills of using a computer, modern equipment and programming is the fourth kind of skills to be developed by al-Resalah. Social and human skills are the last sort of skills to be developed such as skills of communication and human relations. Al-Resalah is also concerned with the skills of establishing families and social intelligence (al-Resalah, 17 July 2013). The General Manager of al-Resalah is an expert in this field. He is renowned for his television programs and books of managing time and developing human efforts and skills (Osama Kanaker, 2010: 9). Al-Swuaidan (2006: 6) specifies the aim of his programs by saying "I'm talking here about how to be creative, to become a leader, organize your life and your time, improve your communication skills, learn public speaking, decision making, running meetings and so on - management and leadership skills". Al-Swuaidan further clarifies the nature of his programs by saying that they are not lectures. Usually it's done through an exercise, and usually they are challenging exercises that the young people who undergo them are surprised. Al-Swuaidan (2006: 6) gives more explanation of his programs by saying "I let them work, and I watch. Then after they are done, I tell them where they are wrong and what they do well. From that, they learn and viewers learn teamwork and leadership skills".

Moreover, according to Dakir and Ibrahim (2005: 13), the purpose of communication in Islam is to strengthen relations among Muslims, and between Muslims and non-Muslims

to establish human solidarity. In conformity with this purpose, al-Resalah specifies its fourth objective - to develop human relationships such as familial, marital and friendly relations in order to produce positive personalities that play positive roles in building the whole society. An example of developing marital relations is a program titled *al-Dawrah al-Ta'hiliah fi al-Hayat al-Zawjiah* (A Preparatory Course for Marital Life). The idea of this program is unprecedented and infrequent on other television channels (Kanakir et al., 2010: 2). In this program, the presenter discusses and elaborates the Islamic point of view about marital relations such as choosing a wife, engagements, marriage ceremony, husband-wife families relations, raising children and other factors. Another example is *Ahla Bait* (The most Beautiful House). This program focuses on how to create love among family members through respect and cooperation. In this regard, al-Swuaidan (2006: 7) argues that the use of such kind of programs is necessary because "Islam is not only a relation between us and God. It is how we handle life, and how we interact with others and how do we deal in a positive way". The objective of developing relations is a necessity because the life of human beings is not but communication and relations. Mustafa Kanakir (2008: 20) argues that Muslim broadcasters have to consider three kinds of relations: with the Creator (SWT), the audience and one's own self. Even though the overall focus of al-Resalah programs touches on the three kinds of relations, this objective appears to focus mainly on the second kind of relations.

The last objective of al-Resalah is introducing role models for the audience. Al-Swuaidan (2006: 4) discusses that al-Resalah aims to introduce role models through the personality and performance of presenters of the programs. He says: "now, the performance itself should have a message in it. The way they dress, the way they talk-these anchors and stars

are role models to the youth, and the question is whether they are positive role models and are they showing that in this program from the way they dress and the way they talk?" Kanakir et al. (2010: 4) argue that al-Resalah focuses on five kinds of role models. They are: historical models, scholars, sport models, successful personalities and innovators and religious personalities. Al-Resalah also introduces Muslim and non-Muslim scholars who are specialized in religious, natural and human studies. Besides that, al-Resalah seeks to introduce sportsmen models who have positive impact on the young. Al-Resalah goes further to introduce successful personalities who have experiences because they can change people's behavior and spread hope among them by presenting the difficulties they have faced and how they solved them. Innovators and religious abiding personalities are introduced by al-Resalah too. Al-Resalah's focus on role models is apparent throughout its programs. For example, *Fi Hubi al-Mustafa* (Loving the Prophet) is a program where the presenter chooses her episodes from the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to serve as a model for the audience. *Ula'ika Aaba'i* (Those are my Ancestors) is another program that introduces role models. The presenter narrates and comments on stories of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) companions may Allah be pleased with them and their followers.

The objective of introducing role models conforms to the noble Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Allah (SWT) says in the noble Qur'an:

{لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ}

Which almost means: {There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern} (al-Qur'an 33: 21).

This verse introduces the first model for human beings i.e. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Other models are introduced by the Prophet (PBUH) himself such as his caliphs (Mustafa Kanaker, 2008: 29). Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says:

«فَعَلَيْكُمْ سُنَّتِي وَسُنَّةَ الْخُلَفَاءِ الْمَهْدِيِّينَ الرَّاشِدِينَ».

Which almost means: (Follow my Sunnah and the Sunnah of my rightly guided caliphs) (Hadith. Abu Dawud. Bab Fi Luzum al-Sunnah: Juz'4: # 4607).

The Prophet's companions, Muslim scholars and the wise can be introduced as models for the audience too. These kinds of role models are not only narrated by a presenter, but they should be broadcast in different forms of drama and cartoon.

The five objectives mentioned above are announced by al-Resalah television channel as their guiding principles. However, 'Adawi (2011: 72) argues that mass media has hidden objectives not stated. These objectives are usually to obtain profit. In the case of al-Resalah, the owner also owns Rotana group which is one of the leading diversified media companies operating in the Middle East. The group's portfolio comprises music production, film and series production, management services, television channels, radio stations and a production house. Rotana is widely known as the world's largest producer of Arabic music and a key distributor and producer of Arabic movies, with a library comprising more than 2000 movies (Rotana, 13 January 2013). Therefore, 'Adawi (2011: 74) suspected the existence of hidden objectives of al-Resalah which are not yet publicized. Even though he confirms the non-existence of any hidden objective, 'Adawi suggests that al-Resalah may be a shield for Rotana and other entertainment companies in which the prince owns stakes; or it might be a kind of flattery needed for big

businessmen. However, al-Resalah may be a translation of the Islamic feelings of the owner that he has to do something for Islam because. In the case of al-Resalah, the connection between the owner and the objectives cannot be emphasized because the General Manager of al-Resalah assures in an interview with al-Hufi and Hussein (2006: 2) that he and his crew are completely responsible for the objectives of the channel and it is not related to Rotana at all. He further states that the prince himself rejected the first suggested name of the channel which was *Rotana Deen* (Religious Rotana) to assure the separation of al-Resalah from other secular channels owned by the prince.

#### 4.2.3 Target Audience of al-Resalah

According to 'Adawi (2011: 75) the target audience of al-Resalah television channel is the Muslim Arab public i.e. it is not only for those who adhere to the teachings of Islam but others also find their interests in al-Resalah. Al-Resalah is also for young people both males and females. It pays much attention to women in order to uplift and guide them. In general, al-Resalah is for those who are looking for knowledge, entertainment and moderation. Al-Swuaidan (2006: 1) further clarifies the audience of al-Resalah by saying: "Our target audience is of course pan-Arab, and we are trying to focus more on women (70% of our viewers are women), as well as young people, new generations". Azzubn (2012), a member of al-Resalah team, who is in charge of relations and the one whom the researcher interviews on behalf of al-Resalah, argues that the channel focuses on women because women constitute half the society and they are responsible for bringing up the other half. He further argues that the Muslim nation lags behind because women are neglected. Therefore, al-Resalah decided to focus on women since no much Islamic broadcasting efforts was made for them.

Having focused on women, al-Resalah excludes children and teenagers as parts of its audience. According to Mustafa Kanakir (2007: 218), viewers of Islamic television channels under the age of twenty are only 23.5%, between the age of twenty and forty is 65.3% and above forty years old is 11.2% as shown in the Figure 4.2.

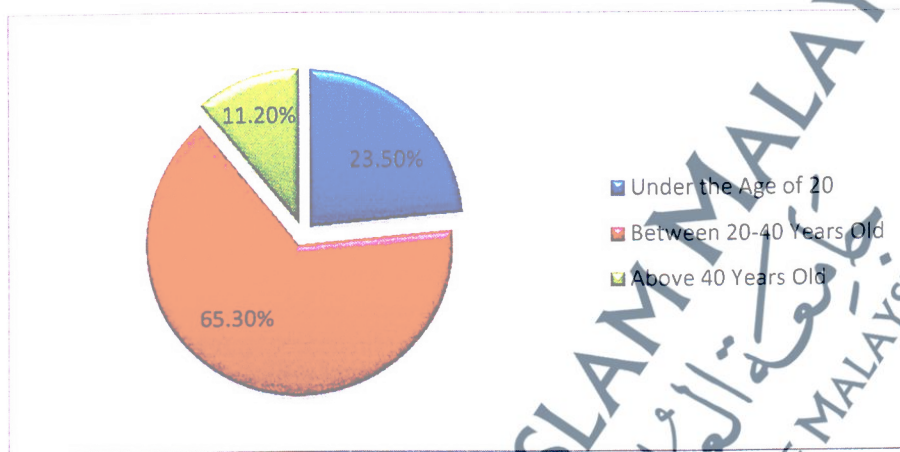


Figure 4.2: Viewers of Islamic television channels

Sabran, the head of Communication Program at the faculty of Leadership and Management at Islamic Science University of Malaysia (2010: 97), explains the reason for a limited audience of Islamic television channels by stating that religious programs are highly uninteresting because they are based on traditional ways of production. Children are in need of variety programs to be attracted to. Even teenagers seek attractive programs more than informative ones that are produced in a traditional way.

#### 4.3 AL-HIJRAH TELEVISION CHANNEL

According to the Proposal for Application of CASP License for Free TV Station- al-Hijrah TV (n.d.: 3), al-Hijrah Media Corporation (AHMC) was incorporated under the

companies act as a company limited by guarantee in September 2009. The creation of al-Hijrah Media Corporation (AHMC) is to realize the operation of a free television station broadcasting throughout Malaysia and the production of various types of media programs based on Islamic religious teachings and universal values. *Al-Hijrah* in Arabic means 'migration'. Al-Hijrah television is the first Malaysian free-to-air (FTA) high-definition channel. It was launched on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 (Sani, 2010: 1). Al-Hijrah broadcasts in three languages: Malay, English and Arabic. It is located in the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur in a building named *Pusat Islam* (Islamic Center) of the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

The first seven months of broadcasting, al-Hijrah commenced as a local channel where an antenna could be used to watch it. On 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 2011 al-Hijrah became a satellite channel by broadcasting via Astro which exploits the number 114. Astro is the brand name of the Malaysian direct broadcast satellite (DBS) pay television service. It transmits digital satellite television and radio to households in Malaysia and Brunei. The name Astro is an acronym for All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator. Al-Hijrah made a step forward to achieving the al-Hijrah objective of being an international channel. Al-Hijrah television is funded by the Malaysian government. Sani (2010: 2) argues that the government has granted al-Hijrah television an initial allocation of RM 60 million (Malaysian Ringgit) for establishment where not the entire grant was used to run the station. The CEO of al-Hijrah television, Bukhari, said "To date the company has only spent RM30 million in setting up the channel" (Sani, 2010: 2). Bukhari further argues in an interview with the researcher (2012) that al-Hijrah saved many expenses because of

the experience of the al-Hijrah team who established the station. Otherwise, the expenses of establishing a television channel similar to al-Hijrah would have been much greater.

#### 4.3.1 Vision and Mission of al-Hijrah

The vision of al-Hijrah television is to be a channel that educates, entertains and unifies the community through creative, high-quality and universal programs that are in-line with Islamic principles and suitable for local and international communities. Malaysia is a multi-racial community composed of Muslims as a majority and non-Muslims (Proposal for Application of CASP License for Free TV Station- al-Hijrah TV, n.d.: 7). Al-Hijrah is aware of the importance of unity and it seeks to promote unity and establish peace. Zulkiple (2011: 53) argues that Islam emphasizes the primordial equality and unity of human beings by asserting that all of humanity came from one man and one woman, i.e. Adam and Eve. However, some forms of Islamic discourse emerge with the purpose of destroying unity instead of fostering it and sowing discord and conflict instead of trust, mutual respect and brotherhood (Azhar, 2011: 11). Therefore, achieving this vision is not a facile task for al-Hijrah to fulfill because it requires true understanding of Islam and society. Al-Hijrah's vision to attract its audience by choosing suitable programs for them conforms to Islamic teachings. This reflects Alif's RAA saying who says:

«حَدِّثُوا النَّاسَ بِمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَحَبُّونَ أَنْ يُكَذَّبَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ».

Which almost means: (Tell people what they understand. Do you want Allah and His messenger to be accused of lying?) (al-Bukhari. Bab Man Khassa Bil'ili Qawman Duna Qawm: Juz' 1. #137).

Moreover, the vision of al-Hijrah television is to be a channel that educates and entertains. Buyong and Ismail (2012: 1) argue that television provides information and entertainment. However, the crucial problem in this technological age is to apply Islamic precepts to entertainment and arts as all of these social items have to be reconciled with religious obligations (Zulkiple, 2012: 10-11). Secular entertainment broadcast in the Muslim World creates a state of uncertainty of the legality of entertainment in Islam. Zulkiple (2009: 57) discusses that the domination of non-Islamic culture creates a situation of uncertainty among Muslims as to what extent they are permitted to participate in or enjoy themselves with entertainment activities which are available in their contemporary life. Uncertainty of entertainment in Islamic broadcasting leads to some challenges among the Muslim society. The challenge facing contemporary Muslim society is not only that of disparaging corruptive entertainments, but also of ensuring that Islamic alternative entertainments are available to the Muslim masses (Zulkiple, 2009: 54). Zulkiple further ensures the fact that to produce Islamic entertainment products, a high degree of commitment and professionalism are required.

Furthermore, al-Hijrah television shoulders the mission to become the first television station with an Islamic concept in Malaysia that broadcasts good quality and creative programs that encourage people to continuously migrate towards the path of righteousness in all aspects of life (Proposal for Application of CASP License for Free TV Station- al-Hijrah TV, n.d.: 7). Davies (1987: 197) argues that what gets produced for television and radio at present are *da'wah* efforts which lack professional production techniques, concentrate on limited sets of agreed content heavily weighted to have minimal Islamic content, lack imagination and creativity in presentation and misuse of

opportunities of the very medium they utilize. Therefore, al-Hijrah should come up with new and original programs to fulfill its mission. Zulkiple (2012: 7) states that in order to achieve this mission, al-Hijrah television states its commitment to:

- i. Provide contents in the form of magazines, documentaries, drama, news, entertainment and sports that conform to the principles of Islam and universal values which are contained already in Islam.
- ii. Ensure that the programs aired are attractive, informative and suitable for target audiences.
- iii. Using the latest and most advanced IT, broadcasting and transmission technologies as well as channeling contents through various platforms.
- iv. Managing the studio professionally in a way full of integration, transparency, dynamism and creativity.
- v. Following efficient and effective policies, procedures and processes.
- vi. Ensuring sustainable human capital to face the challenges of the dynamic media industry.
- vii. Establishing strategic partnerships with various parties under the 'win-win' concept.
- viii. Prepare innovative and creative sponsorship packages.
- ix. Introducing company's performance incentive scheme that rewards the personnel for their outstanding performance.

Al-Hijrah tries to broadcast a variety of attractive programs by utilizing modern technology which is controlled by professional and transparent management who follows effective policies and depends on sustained financial support to survive. Al-Hijrah also attempts to present and encourage prominent inventors and promote their inventions through marketing and sponsorship of packages.

#### 4.3.2 Objectives of al-Hijrah

According to the Proposal for Application of CASP License for Free TV Station- al-Hijrah TV (n.d.: 3), al-Hijrah television has eight primary objectives. First, al-Hijrah is a television channel that supports the idea of 'One Malaysia' because it is consistent with the requirements of Islam. One Malaysia is the slogan of Malaysian Prime Minister at the time of establishing al-Hijrah because Malaysia is a multi-racial country with a mixed population of Muslims and non-Muslims. Television is controlled by government in most Muslim countries. In Malaysia, for example, television commences as a government station (Sabran, 2010: 87). Sabran (2010: 89) further argues that the Malaysian government monopolized both radio and television especially before introduction of private television. Nonetheless, Davies (1987: 137) assures that Islamic broadcasting needs guaranteed independence and this cannot happen under government control. However, Sani (2010: 1) discusses that al-Hijrah television is a government initiative to establish a channel based on Islam and provide an Islamic perspective through its programs. Thus, al-Hijrah television is a commencement and contribution of the government to disseminate Islam.

Second, al-Hijrah television functions as a station that promotes unity in a multi-racial society. The Malaysian Canon of Journalism obliges journalists to contribute to nation building, to promote national unity, to work against communism, and to uphold standards of social morality (Hafez, 2002: 237). Davies (1987: 177) discusses that the prime duty of broadcasting is to serve the needs of communities. The needs of communities are different from one country to another according to social and cultural relations. The Malaysian society, for example, is in need of national unity and peace as it is a collection of societies of different cultures and religions. Azhar (2011: 15) further argues that television should promote not national but international unity. He argues that the programs of television should seek to promote dialogue, understanding, co-existence and co-operation with all the parties of the international community, in order to spread the values of justice, peace and welfare.

Third, al-Hijrah serves as an informal educational institution that disseminates knowledge to the community. Zulkiple (2006: 29) discusses that outputs of television production should provide education and impart information and should not be designed merely for entertainment. Educating and informing through television requires attractive programs in different formats to catch the attention of viewers. Al-Ahmad (2012: 3) argues that television originally is an entertainment medium and converting it to a medium for education and *da'wah* is not an easy task. It requires experience, capabilities and a right vision. Al-Ahmad questions the availability of this experience, capabilities and vision for the Islamic television channels. Islamic television channels often face different problems due to lack of experience of broadcasting. They frequently face crises due to unavailability of professional practitioners, weak qualifications of religious program

makers and poor Islamic education of program producers (Ibrahim, 2011: 1). Therefore, al-Ramani (2010:3) calls on Muslim scholars to participate in *da'wah* through television and the Internet not leaving them to whom he calls 'half-educated' - who are not able to educate others since they are not fully educated. Therefore, it is a challenge for al-Hijrah to provide fully educated and self-purified Muslim scholars who have the ability to educate the audience.

Fourth, al-Hijrah television serves as a channel that stimulates the population's economy to conform to Islamic teachings. Al-Hijrah Corporation does not only broadcast Islamic television programs, but also encourages others to invest in this field of *da'wah*. Some researchers warn Islamic television channels against being profit-seekers following after only financial benefits. For example, Ibrahim (2011: 5) states that it is a loss for Islamic television channels to become money seekers instead of seeking to fulfill their objectives because it is deviation from the essential task of the channel. Encouraging audiences to invest in Islamic television channels is a new attempt to guarantee financial support for the channel. Stimulating the population to invest is an attempt by the channel to share with its audience the importance of such investment that supports an effective medium of disseminating the Islamic message. Encouraging the population to invest and participate in Islamic television through investment appears to be more attractive than encouraging them to pay *sadaqah* and *zakah* because the public are not fully aware of the importance of television channels for *da'wah* on the one hand and the lack of Islamic television channels which attract people and demonstrate wisdom in their broadcasting on the other.

Fifth and sixth objectives are complementary to each other. Fifth, al-Hijrah introduces to the whole society that Islam is beautiful, attractive, interesting and a way of life. Sixth, the station purposes to ward off evil propaganda against Islam from within and outside the country. The image of Islam and Muslims is deliberately associated with backwardness, poverty, ignorance and terrorists, especially by the institution of international mass media (Zulkiple, 2011: 54). Azhar (2011: 6) further argues that Islam has often been considered by the western media in the twentieth century as a source of conflict, violence and fanaticism. Therefore Azhar (2011: 16) calls upon Muslim media to strive to clarify and highlight the truth of Islam and dispel the doubts harbored about it. This issue is not handled seriously by Muslims who do not make serious inroads into the task of broadcasting about Islam to a general audience (Davies, 1987: 167). The lack of lifestyle programs that present Islam as beautiful, attractive and interesting emphasizes the need of such programs. Davies (1987: 198) states that programs about contemporary Islamic thinking and ideas that can clarify the relationship between Muslims and Islam today are desperately needed. Davies (1987: 198) further clarifies the kind of programs needed in the Islamic television by saying "we need far more programs to clarify that Islam is not an abstract ideal removed from the real world, or the endless succession of programs that seek to explain or portray Islam only in the context of its past history". Therefore, this objective appears to fill a necessary gap in the production of Islamic television programs.

Seventh, al-Hijrah aims at developing a morally-sound and honorable society especially among the youth and teenagers. Developing a morally-sound and honorable society is a necessity because it is the mission of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was sent to

complete high moral standards and Muslims have to follow his guidance. The majority of Muslims in the interim have abandoned the mission of establishing a righteous community in their broadcasting. The Islamic moral and ethical framework is absent in the practice of broadcasting in Muslim society today, and in any other system of broadcasting as well (Davies, 1987: 182). Dakir and Ibrahim (2005: 13) argue that through communication human beings can develop many aspects of the society such as economy, science etc. Besides, some codes of broadcasting and journalism consider society to be the top priority even before government. For example, Hafez (2002: 233) argues that The Algerian Code states that a journalist's obligations toward the publisher and the state rank second to his or her responsibility toward the public and society. The concern of establishing a moral society is sought only by Muslims because western media is concerned only with satisfying its audience whereas Islam does not allow dissemination of only what people and society desire (Ali, 1996: 238). Hasnain (1988: 184) argues that the Western approach to communication emphasizes individuals whereas the Islamic approach emphasizes societies at large. Thus, al-Hijrah by choosing this objective contributes to achieve an important need for societies all over the world.

Eighth, al-Hijrah seeks to become a regional and international media that spreads Islamic television programs to the world and serves as a model of Islamic television for other countries. Al-Hijrah also spends pioneering efforts to export Islamic programs by making Malaysia a hub for Islamic programs. Programs of Islamic television channels should be produced in a variety of attractive formats and should not consist only of talk which is a challenging objective to fulfill. Zulkiple (2012: 1) discusses that the recent broadcasting scenario is challenging due to lack of Islamic production houses. Producing and exporting

Islamic programs to the world requires multiple production abilities like proficiency of languages that prevail over this world, understanding fiqh broadcasting and establishing Islamic television production houses. Applying fiqh broadcasting to television programs requires a proper knowledge of television production and fiqh, and laudable efforts have been executed by al-Hijrah television channel in this regard (Zulkiple, 2012: 6). To produce international programs, it is necessary to establish a production house. Zulkiple (2012: 10) discusses that production houses for Islamic television programs at the international level are limited, among other things due to inability of Muslims to understand the importance of films and television and then nurture them according to their belief. Thus, this objective is a big challenge to al-Hijrah and it may be a long term objective to be achieved.

#### 4.3.3 Philosophy and Strategy of al-Hijrah Programs

Al-Hijrah declares in its proposal (n.d.: 12) that its philosophy and strategy of programs is clarified in three points. First, al-Hijrah broadcasts the teachings of Islam and universal values as long as they do not conflict with the noble Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In fact, it is a challenge for any television channel to ensure that its programs adhere completely with the teachings of the noble Qur'an and Sunnah because of the lack of experience in producing such programs; and the choice of Islamic programs depends on what can be sold on a commercial basis, not quality of content (Buyong and Ismail, 2012: 10). Al-Hijrah is aware that its programs are not completely Islamic. Therefore, al-Hijrah set the year 2014 as a due date to Islamize all its programs (Syed, 2013). Second, the programs of al-Hijrah cover aspects of the Muslim personality and not only focuses on religious rites such as prayer, *zakah*, *Hajj* and fast, but also on society,

economy, policy, community services, environment and culture. Third, programs of al-Hijrah include programs for children, adolescents, women, sitcom, entertainment, academic and educational programs, documentaries and news, magazines, dramas, movies, sports and recreation, sermons, forums and discussions. Such variety of programs requires producing different other than the talk show which is the first kind of program that appears on Islamic satellite television channels (Moll, 2010: 3).

Moreover, in his study *Fiqh Broadcasting: A Comparative Study of Television Program Production in Malaysia and Iran*, Zulkiple (2012: 7) argues that al-Hijrah television channel has important rules stated clearly in the guidelines of program production which are: all programs must be dissociated from any matters affecting the sanctity of Islam and humiliating and questioning the sources of Islamic law; i.e. the noble Qur'an, Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), *Ijma'*, *Qias*, *Fatwa* and *Jumhur al-U'lama'* ( Muslim scholars). Besides that, programs composed of contents that imitate the action of other religions and their forms of worship, uttering the dialogues related to the rules and laws in marriage that involves legitimate spouse and immorality must be avoided. In addition to that, the programs that broadcast the action of degrading the religion, creating disunity among Muslims, and the action that causes destruction and harm to society are completely prohibited. Al-Hijrah divides its programs into eight segments according to their target audience. The segments are as follow: 20% news, documentary and magazine, 17% soap-opera and film, 16% women, 13% children and youth, 11% entertainment, 10% educational, 9% ethics and forums and 4% action and sports as shown in Table 4.1. (Proposal for Application of CASP License for Free TV Station- al-Hijrah TV, n.d.: 13).

**Table 4.1:** Percentages of al-Hijrah Genres

No.	Genre	Percentage
1	News/Documentary/Magazine	20%
2	Soap-opera and Films	17%
3	Women	16%
4	Children/Youth	13%
5	Entertainment	11%
6	Educational	10%
7	Ethics/Forum	9%
8	Action/Sport	4%

#### 4.3.4 Target Audience of al-Hijrah

Based on the demographic study of Malaysia at the time of establishing al-Hijrah television, the Malaysian population is 27 million where 63% or 12 million are Malay, and most of them are Muslims. 4.3 million out of 12 million are households and 98% i.e. 4.2 million have television sets at home. Besides, 2.5 million households and 9.4 million of the total population subscribe to Astro. Table 4.2 clarifies television population of Malaysia that al-Hijrah based on.

**Table 4.2:** Television Population of Malaysian Peninsula

Television Population of Malaysian Peninsula				
Area	Malay	Chinese	Indian/Others	Total
Kuala Lumpur/Putrajaya	1.555	1.293	425	3.274
Urban	2.569	2.518	754	5.841
City Outskirt	4.258	1.988	813	7.058
Rural	5.411	625	362	6.397
Total	12.237	5.131	1.929	19.296
Percentage	63%	27%	10%	100%
ASTRO Population for Peninsular Malaysia				
Total	5.600	2.295	1.477	9.372

Twenty seven million population of Malaysia is divided as follows: 0-14 years are 32%, 15-34 years are 34%, 35-44 are 13% and 45 and above is 21%. The population less than 35 years is 66% of the whole population as shown in Figure 4.3.

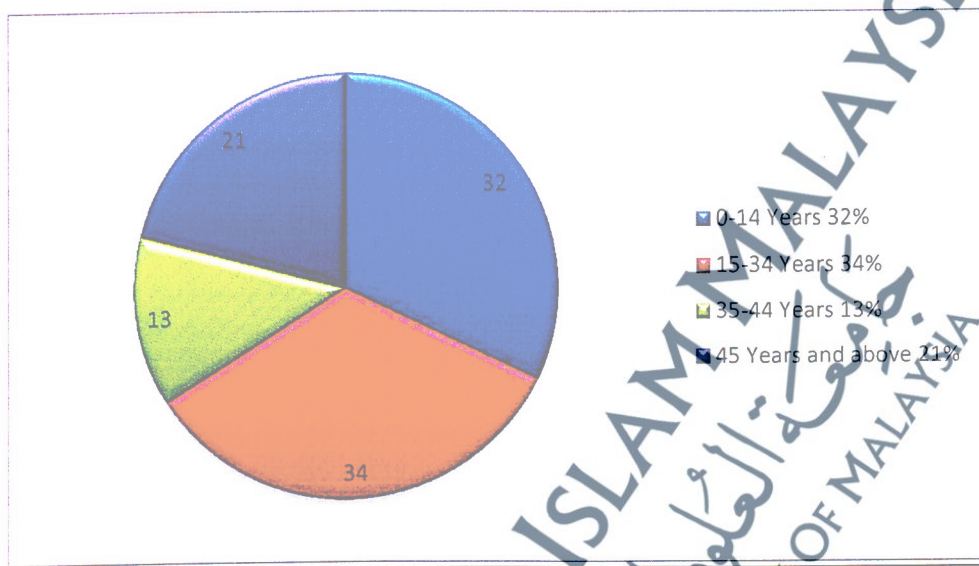


Figure 4.3: Population of Malaysia

Based on these data, al-Hijrah television specifies its audience into two main groups: general target and main target. The general target is the whole population with more focus on Muslims, and the main target is two groups 6-17 years and 18-40 years old. The reasons behind choosing these groups are because 60% of the Malay audience is less than 40 years old, and to give a fresh and creative image to the station. Both urban and rural areas are targeted divided 50:50 between males and females. Al-Hijrah tries mainly to focus on students and young families because they are the future generation. Another group of audience is children within two to three year old group who form six to eight percent of audience. These combine to make al-Hijrah the second largest channel in

Malaysia (Proposal for Application of CASP License for Free TV Station- al-Hijrah TV, n.d.: 5).

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

Even though both television channels al-Hijrah and al-Resalah strive to broadcast unique and valuable programs, they share few similarities. The differences appear to be due to different understanding of Islamic broadcasting, culture, audience and financial support. Each channel establishes its own vision, mission, objectives and target audience that suit its own situation. Even though both channels have one main objective i.e. dissemination of the Islamic message, the methods they follow to achieve this objective is not similar. Thus, Muslims should not follow a single strict method for all people around the world because each society has its own culture, belief, attitude and knowledge. Therefore, dissemination of the Islamic message should be conducted wisely to be accepted.

