# 17- Paper-BKSPTIS-2018-v.1.pdf

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# THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY TOWARD ISLAMIC RELIGION IN THE WORLD

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*Abstract* – Rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in this age makes changes of human life and not less islamic religion. ICT has undoubtedly become the central drive for the evolution of a modern society. ICT plays an important role in development of the modern society which carries moral obligation to drive the society for an authenticated output. Ethical issues are directly related with ICT to diminish the unauthenticated uses of ICT applications. ICT services provide important part in development of the advanced society which represents moral responsibility to motivate the society for an authorized return. Ethical issues directly related to use of unauthentic use of ICT services. The Muslim world, like the rest of the participates in the world of evolution such changes in lifestyles bring raise a number of ethical issues. The global explosion of the Internet and its continued use by individuals, Islamic organizations and scholars to motivate society. Islamic ethics address the means whereby mankind ideally accommodates divine guidance as applicable human behavior as well as good conduct and personal morality. In today, there are thousands of Islamic websites operating and online in various of countries as well as languages. Thus it appears that a new paradigm has emerged in the construction of Islamic knowledge. With an ever-growing number of Muslims connecting to the Internet and submitting questions to even the most geographically remote mufti, it is well worth considering the role and impact of these Internet-based muftis and on-line fatwas.

*Keywords*: ICT, Islamic Religion, Online, Websites, Society

## 1. Introduction

The Internet has transformed the character of human social interaction in such a manner so as to allow us to connect with many individuals. Boyd and Ellison (2008) explain that since their appearance of social networking websites (SNW) have drawn millions of users who have 'integrated these sites into their daily practices. Wilson et al. (2009) suggest that SNW have come to play such a significant role in enabling communication and relationship building for many individuals, in particular young people, that it would be crucial to investigate the various factors that influence their usage. The initiation of the mobile phone has had a massive impact on the way people communicate around the globe. Through the use of these devices people are not tied to fixedines any longer and are free to call anyone, anytime, anywhere. The addition of smartphones and other online mobile devices such as the tablet brought about the added value of mobile Internet usage. Coupled with social media applications this technology enabled people to use SNW on the go, from any location around the hour. Zichkur and Smith (2012) report that 46 percent of Americans use smartphones, with reasons for using them including convenience, nonstop access to email, Internet, gaming, camera, texting and making phone calls.

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Religiosity and the Internet as a cultural system, religion needs to be regarded in the framework of technology adoption and Internet usage patterns, since we can easily fail to notice that it permeates almost all aspects of life with its related practices (Hirschman 1983). Rather than the general propensity to view technology adoption, media usage and religion separately, the interplay between the medium adopted and religion need to be considered jointly for a wider and deeper appreciation of the interaction between the two (Buddenbaum, 2002). The relationship between religiosity and communication technology as an empirical concern is a complex and multi-dimensional as there remains a perceived inherent conflict between science and religion with their opposing and mutually exclusive world views (Brossard et al, 2009). It is important to recognize the distinction between religion (a person's religious denomination) and religiosity (the strength of a person's religious observance, as signified by their observance of their religion's rituals, and the extent to which their daily life is guided by the precepts adopted by their religion). Religion can be a highly powerful force guiding moral behavior and deterring religious people from taking part in many socially undesirable activities. groups of. Table 1 shows the data of internet usage in the world from the year of 2000 to 2016.

**Table 1. Comparison of world internet usage from year 2000 to 2016**

| Year | Internet Users** | Penetration (% of Pop) | World Population | Non-Users (Internetless) | 1Y User Change | 1Y User Change | World Pop. Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2016* | 3,424,971,237 | 46.1 % | 7,432,663,275 | 4,007,692,038 | 7.5 % | 238,975,082 | 1.13 % |
| 2015* | 3,185,996,155 | 43.4 % | 7,349,472,099 | 4,163,475,944 | 7.8 % | 229,610,586 | 1.15 % |
| 2014 | 2,956,385,569 | 40.7 % | 7,265,785,946 | 4,309,400,377 | 8.4 % | 227,957,462 | 1.17 % |
| 2013 | 2,728,428,107 | 38 % | 7,181,715,139 | 4,453,287,032 | 9.4 % | 233,691,859 | 1.19 % |
| 2012 | 2,494,736,248 | 35.1 % | 7,097,500,453 | 4,602,764,205 | 11.8 % | 262,778,889 | 1.2 % |
| 2011 | 2,231,957,359 | 31.8 % | 7,013,427,052 | 4,781,469,693 | 10.3 % | 208,754,385 | 1.21 % |
| 2010 | 2,023,202,974 | 29.2 % | 6,929,725,043 | 4,906,522,069 | 14.5 % | 256,799,160 | 1.22 % |
| 2009 | 1,766,403,814 | 25.8 % | 6,846,479,521 | 5,080,075,707 | 12.1 % | 191,336,294 | 1.22 % |
| 2008 | 1,575,067,520 | 23.3 % | 6,763,732,879 | 5,188,665,359 | 14.7 % | 201,840,532 | 1.23 % |
| 2007 | 1,373,226,988 | 20.6 % | 6,681,607,320 | 5,308,380,332 | 18.1 % | 210,310,170 | 1.23 % |
| 2006 | 1,162,916,818 | 17.6 % | 6,600,220,247 | 5,437,303,429 | 12.9 % | 132,815,529 | 1.24 % |
| 2005 | 1,030,101,289 | 15.8 % | 6,519,635,850 | 5,489,534,561 | 12.8 % | 116,773,518 | 1.24 % |
| 2004 | 913,327,771 | 14.2 % | 6,439,842,408 | 5,526,514,637 | 16.9 % | 131,891,788 | 1.24 % |
| 2003 | 781,435,983 | 12.3 % | 6,360,764,684 | 5,579,328,701 | 17.5 % | 116,370,969 | 1.25 % |
| 2002 | 665,065,014 | 10.6 % | 6,282,301,767 | 5,617,236,753 | 32.4 % | 162,772,769 | 1.26 % |
| 2001 | 502,292,245 | 8.1 % | 6,204,310,739 | 5,702,018,494 | 21.1 % | 87,497,288 | 1.27 % |
| 2000 | 414,794,957 | 6.8 % | 6,126,622,121 | 5,711,827,164 | 47.3 % | 133,257,305 | 1.28 % |

In addition, religion has an integrative function in the form of social support coming from the religious group which the individual belongs to. This support acts as an alternative to the aforementioned behaviors as anxiety-reducing mechanisms (Hood et al, 2009). Therefore, the more highly attached people are to the values of their religion and the more integrated they are into their religious community, the less susceptible they are to various chemical and behavioral dependencies. Secularization theory suggests that increased Western emphasis on rational thought, scientific empiricism and technical progress over the past 400 years have led to a steady decline of mysticism and religion as valid world views about the nature of things (Swatos & Christiano, 1999). Utilizing secularization theory as a framework, Armfield and Holbert (2003) argued the strength of religiosity should be negatively related to Internet use because the content found on the web is largely secular in nature and non-representative of religious values. The findings based on US survey data were consistent with this hypothesis. Secularization theory is one of the principal paradigms in the study of mass media and religion (Buddenbaum & Stout, 1996) and provides the base for the work in this study. This theory suggests that attachment to strong religious beliefs reflects a lifestyle that is traditional in nature, and that this life style is coming under mounting attack from rising secularism that is spreading across the world (Swatos & Christiano, 1999). All types of mass media are hypothesized to reflect the move toward increasing secularization, presenting a largely secular picture of the world we inhabit. As a result, strong religious beliefs correlate negatively to all forms of mass media use because the overwhelming majority of media content does not reflect traditional religious values. This argument is consistent with the personal identity function delineated in uses and gratifications perspective (e.g. Blumler, 1979), which postulates that individuals often turn to media to reinforce some preexisting norm or value structure and stay away from media channels that do not reflect their values. The present study sought to extend Armfield and Holbert's (2003) work by considering whether young adults with greater religious profile differ from those who are the opposite in terms of the perceived consequences of social media usage. Do religious individuals view the positive and negative outcomes of social media usage in the same ways as less religious ones? Based on secularization theory one would expect religious people to suffer less from the negative aspects of social media usage while viewing positive features as inconsequential or unimportant to them.

## 2. ICT Toward Islamic Religion

Internet was initiated as a medium of communication between government scientists and experts in the defense force with no intentions to use it as a public medium for mass communication (M. Jaffe, 1995). The way people communicate with each other has changed with ICT. ICT, which began with a telephone voice contact has now created a direct two-way relationship, a combination of sound and pictures known as "video conferencing" (M. A. Yusof, & N. Mohd, 2013). Instead of having various devices for various uses in terms of communication, internet can be accessed for communication purpose through various devices such as a laptop, smartphones and/or tablets. Online services such as Skype, instant messaging services, e-mails and others can be used for communication. Synchronous communication (quick) and asynchronous (not in real time) communication happens over internet. Twitter is an example for the former and YouTube is an example for the latter. When two or more individuals communicate in real time via texting or chatting, it's a synchronous form of communication (A. F. Wood, & M. J. Smith, 2001).

Over time, internet has become (M. Jaffe, 1995) a platform for the public to communicate online with sophisticated devices. With the evolution of Social Networking Websites (SNW) (A. Bandura, 2007), internet has attracted many more users. Social media provides a platform for users to share and communicate their views regarding religion and beliefs as well as many other matters (Ashitari, 2009). Thus Muslim communities can use the internet as a medium for shaping their relationship between their social, political affiliations and religious identity (Ashitari, 2009). People from all over the world are able to discuss issues related to Islam through available online discussion forums. Muslims and non-Muslims can take part in the online discussions. Everybody in the forum can raise questions. Paltalk and Yahoo Messenger are examples of free accessible software for online discussions that can be downloaded and used to participate while writing or speaking. Many Islamic talks and discussion rooms are run by different scholars are accessible in Paltalk 24 hours a day.

Moreover, ICT has witnessed a rapid growth and made has influenced human relationships, especially in progressing new means of communication. This new technology offers a system for its users to communicate with each other disregarding time, place and distance. Figure 1 show a graph internet usage in the world since 1993 to 2015.
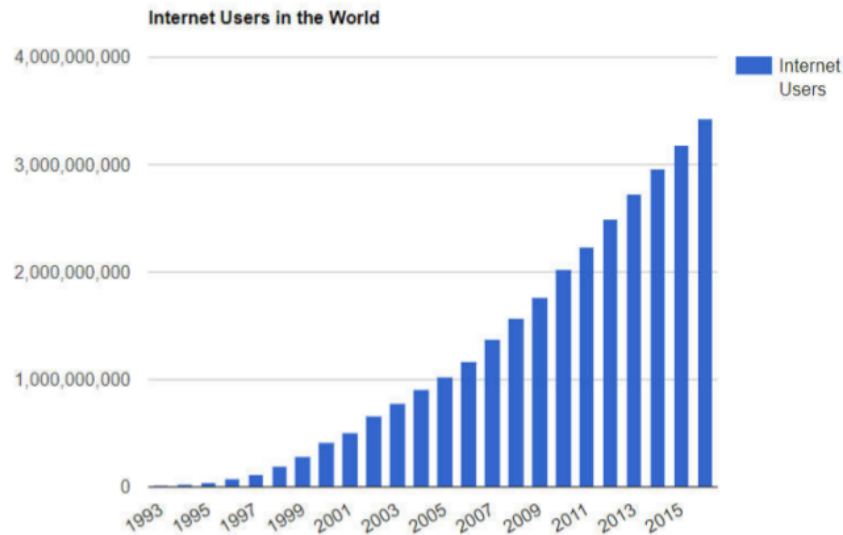
**Internet Users in the World**



**Figure 1. Internet usage in the world from year 1993 to 2015**

The development of ICT has dramatically reformed teaching and learning procedures in higher education (Anderson, J. W. 2003). The use of ICT provides strong learning settings and can alter the learning and teaching process so that students are able to consider knowledge in an operative, self-directed and useful way (Bentzin, A. 2003). Attending Islamic classes becomes easy through IT even while one is at home. Virtual classes make it possible to take part in classes globally. Currently, Muslims who cannot afford to travel, especially women who have restricted movements, can learn and train at home. They can take part in online classes and lectures carried out by top scholars all over the world.

## 2.1. Islamic Websites and Social Media

There is a general expectation that the mass media have at least some effects on audiences. Within the field of media studies, this issue has been a central debate for decades, with views oscillating between those who consider the media to have powerful effects on audiences and those who hold that such effects are limited. Although in the 1930s media effects were thought to be direct and powerful, subsequently, in the absence of supporting evidence, it was concluded that media effects were more limited than first thought. However, the diffusion of television in the 1960s and '70s reinvigorated effects research. Among the most important contributions is that of Stuart Hall, who highlights the polysemic nature of texts and thus of differential readings (Hall, 1980). Hall explains that while the producers of media content will construct their messages in order to encourage their "preferred" reading, this reading may not necessarily be "dominant". The culture, knowledge and experiences of audiences may all contribute to a "negotiated" and even an "oppositional" reading of the text.

The predominant attitude underlying the attacks was that Arabs and Muslims were not Australians and were not welcome in the Australian. The study identified a widespread perception in the community that media reporting was a central contributor to a climate of inter-community tension and racist violence. In order to investigate the relationship between the negative reporting of Islam and violence, discrimination and socio-economic marginalization of Muslims, empirical research is required to test the public's knowledge of Islam and attitudes

towards Muslims. In this regard, researchers have made significant progress by shows that only one-fifth of the peoples surveyed had a knowledge of Islam that was "reasonable or better", and that half of those he surveyed knew "a little" about the faith. One-third of respondents were completely ignorant of Islam. The respondents' lack of knowledge of Islam was related to their feeling of being threatened by Islam, with 61 per cent of those with a little knowledge of Islam feeling threatened, dropping to 46 per cent among those with a reasonable or better knowledge of Islam. Demonstrating the importance of direct contact with Muslims in counteracting misconceptions, his study reports that less than half of the respondents knew any Muslims.
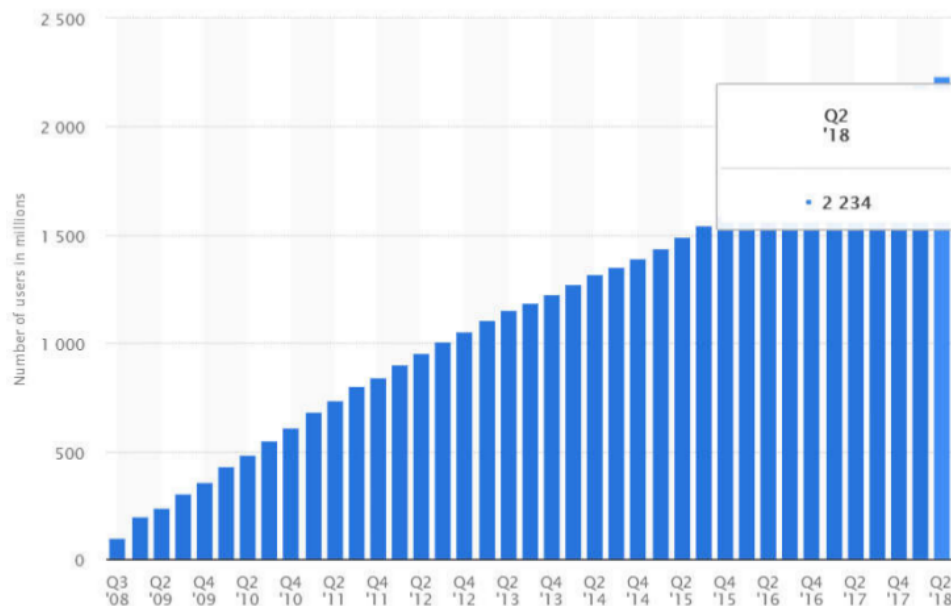


**Figure 2. Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 2nd quarter 2018**

The most of social media usage as graph shows in figure 2 are the active users accessing and content talking about Islamic material. Some of users have been survey to get information what the discussing while in the social media. The questions included in the survey sought responses regarding the respondents':

- Knowledge of Islam and its main teachings;
- Interaction with Muslims;
- Acceptance of Muslims as part of Australian society;
- Perceptions of Muslims as a threat to the Australian;
- Main source of information about Islam and Muslims;
- Perceptions about how Muslims are represented in the media;
- Perceptions about how political leaders influence understandings of Islam and
- Muslims; and
- Perceptions of statements made by political leaders about Islam and Muslims

## 2.2. ICT Toward Shari'ah E-Commerce

The number of internet users in the world is growing notably. Different websites give Muslim scholars and organizations the opportunity to spread Islam globally through the web. The presence of many websites offering Islamic subjects online makes it crucial to inspect their Islamic attributes and the elements that attract Muslims to use Islamic websites.

The website whose main objective is to portray the commandments of Allah (SWT) in accordance with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is called an Islamic website (M. Mahmud, et al 2011). The website which offers significant and pertinent attributes attracts more users to learn/search information about Islam. Islamic online services have lately become a significant element of many Islamic websites. These online services are evaluated by the facilities of free-software/applications, chats/blogs/forums, educational training, community development programs, online marriage opportunity, online donation, relief/assistance activities, and direct consultation with online scholars (M. Mahmud, et al 2011).

The use of information and communication technology for online commercial transactions may present some Shari'ah issues. In general, e-commerce deals with any form of business transaction executed utilizing ICT (D. Whiteley, 2010). Turban et al. (2012) explains e-commerce as the procedure of buying, selling, transferring or exchanging products, services and/or information via computer networks, including the internet. E-commerce is a very important concept in Islam. However, certain Shari'ah concepts and necessities must be achieved to certify its acceptability and validity. All e-commerce transactions must achieve necessary requirements regarding form (i.e. offer and acceptance), contracting parties (i.e. buyer and seller) and the subject matter (i.e. object and price) in order to certify their validity in view of Islamic law of contract (M. Muhammad, 2013). These requirements include connectedness, intelligibility and conformity of the offer and acceptance, mutual agreement of the contracting parties, capability of both parties to engage into transactions, legal ownership of the benefit being exchanged, permissibility of the benefit, deliverability of the asset, and the absence of anonymity. Moreover, every e-commerce transaction must be free of the component of usury (riba), uncertainty (gharar) and gambling (maisir) and must confirm the profit and justice of the contracting parties. Therefore, buyers and sellers need to "screen" the complete procedures of online transactions to confirm their agreement with Islamic law of contract.

### 2.3. Online Media Application for Islamic Society

In the study of Islam and Muslims in the West and the issue of inter-community relations, a major focus has been the representation of Muslims in the mass media. This body of literature essentially consists of content and discourse analyses of media coverage of Islam and Muslims. A considerable body of literature concerning the representation of Muslims in the United Kingdom and United States has been produced, and provides some relevant insights for this article. Islam as media representations of British Muslims, presents the findings of her analysis of selected content of two British newspapers over a two-year period (1994-1996). Found that while the coverage of British Muslims was more detailed than that with an overseas focus, an "orientalist" discourse was present in the reporting. Orientalism treats the Orient and Orientals as an "object" of study inscribed by "otherness". This typology is based on a real specificity but detached from history, and is thus conceived as intangible and essential (Said, 1978). Focusing on the American context, (Fawaz Gerges, 2003), in his article "Islam and Muslims in the minds of America", argues that negative media representation of Islam and Muslims, coupled with the influence of certain lobby groups and foreign-policy elites, exerts significant influence on the US public, which in turn fosters hardline US foreign policy towards political Islam. Figure 3 shows a number internet users based on classification by region and continental.
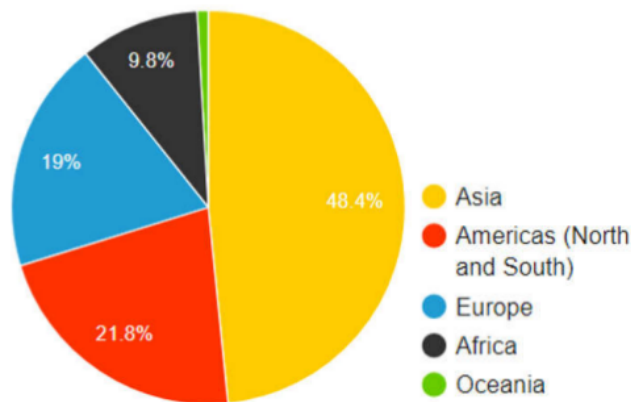
**Figure 3. Number active Facebook users worldwide based on continental**

While most analyses of the representation of Islam and Muslims in the mass media tend to focus on "factual" media, predominantly newspapers, and television news to a lesser extent, "fictional" media are equally important in the context of this research. The relationship between fictional and factual media in this context tends to be one of resonance. This point is affirmed by the whose work, Reel bad Arabs: how Hollywood vilifies a people, demonstrates that Hollywood films portraying Arabs and Muslims frequently allude to or are based upon actual events or issues, giving fictional films a factual or authoritative character. In his analysis of more than 900 films portraying Arabs and Muslims, Shaheen found the films repeatedly dehumanized Arabs and Muslims, portraying them as heartless, brutal, uncivilized, religious fanatics who are violent and terrorists. He argues that, because of their repetitious nature, such portrayals have a negative impact on public discourse and policy. Films that offered audiences a humane and humanized understanding of Islam and Muslims were very few.

Barzilai and Barzilai-Nahon (2005) argue that the Internet is a 'cultured technology' meaning that the Internet, and by extension social media, shape and are shaped by the culture in which it is being used. This view acknowledges that the Internet is a technology that frames the cultural landscape by means of complex social and value-construction processes. Understanding the religious culture is significant to those who aim to explain the values of different Internet cultures. With the rise in religious fundamentalism comes a reaction to globalization and technology (Campbell, 2005). The Internet is viewed by Muslims as largely a reflection of Western values and beliefs. There is fear in the Islamic world of the loss of its own identity due to the overwhelming amount of western content transmitted through the Internet. Some religious establishments view the Internet as a western tool intended for the destruction of the traditional values of Islam. The practice of free speech enabled by the Internet results in what is considered by religious authorities as undermining the hierarchical structure of ethics and morality that lies at the heart of traditional religion (Spigelman, 2000). In spite of the numerous theoretical attempts to ground the relationship between the religion of Islam and Internet usage, there is little empirical research done in predominantly Muslim societies. In the present study, I will attempt to enhance our understanding of social media usage and religiosity as it pertains to Islam. Unlike some Muslim countries, the practice of Islamic rituals in Kuwait is not enforced on the populace. However, it can be argued that the Australian is largely Conservative, and the practice of Islamic rituals is widespread among the population. On the other hand, Kuwait has one of largest social media penetration in the Arab world with 1 in every 3 people having a Twitter account according to one source (MEPRA 2013). This high level of social media usage coupled with conservative religious values compels us to examine the interplay between social media and religion. This will hopefully allow us to understand how the social media experience is shaped by the culture in which it is used as posited in the concept of 'cultured technology' (Barzilai and Barzilai-Nahon, 2005).

## 3. The Role of Internet in Islamic Society

Several studies have been published concerning this new phenomenon, yet their results remain ambiguous and conflicting. Gary R. Bunt has provided ex-tensive analysis of "cyber Islamic environments" in his two monographs (Bunt 2000; 2003). Jon Anderson and Dale Eickelman have discussed more broadly different forms of "New media" in the Muslim world (Anderson, Eickelman 2003). Stefano Allievi and Jørgen Nielsen have analyzed the very specific role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the construction of Muslim identity and communities (Allievi, Nielsen 2003). Garbi Schmidt has explored how charismatic role traditionally granted by sufi sheikh is negotiated in the social space that the Internet creates (Schmidt 2004). The construction of religious authority in Western Europe, with some regard paid to the Internet, was studied by Martin van Bruinessen and Alexandre Caeiro (Bruinessen 2003; Caeiro 2003, 2004). Nevertheless, these studies, originating mainly from western academic circles, lack a Middle-Eastern or Muslim perspective, like the examination of the potential of the Internet for da´wa (spreading the Islamic message) by Tarek Hassan Mostafa (Mostafa 2000).

For a long time, the Internet was seen as an influential and subversive medium which inherently promotes democracy, direct participation and generally, contests established and traditional authorities, especially in nondemocratic environments. A major change in the organization of society was predicted to occur by some thinkers of the techno avant-garde scene. Especially after the fall of the communist authoritarian regimes in the Eastern Europe, the connection between this process and information and communication technologies has taken on a powerful, implicit veracity.10 As Jessica Mathews has noted: "In the absence of thorough analysis unexamined assumptions about the Internet´s likely impact have become conventional wisdom."11 These very same expectations are clearly evident in works critically analyzing the role of ICT in the Islamic or Arabic world. "The Internet and globalization are acting like nutcrackers to open societies and empower Arab democrats with new tools" noted Thomas Friedman in 2003.12 Directly addressing the issue of on-line fatwas, an American Muslim intellectual Muqtedar Khan even stated that "the Internet has made everyone a mufti".13 Although Islamic websites have firmly entrenched themselves in the media ecology Islam online claims that is has more than a million hits a day14 there is no proof that the Internet itself is an antidote to authoritarianism and could radically reshape the foundations of the decision making process. The construction of Islamic knowledge in Europe is a complex matter with a lot of social, political and economic factors in play and cannot be understood solely within a media-centric logic.15 The following paragraphs describe three ways in which the Internet and mainly the fatwa-issuing sites have contributed to the development of European Muslim communities. These processes, or interventions, will be analyzed within the broader context Islamic discursive development in the global sphere, the networking of Muslim communities in Europe, and the construction of interpretative authority in relation to Islamic law. The findings are preliminary results of qualitative research and content analysis conducted between 2005 and 2006, as well as research of other scholars.

## 4. Conclusion

The article focus on the use of ICT impact to the University, extending Islamic knowledge by means of online Islamic literature, Qur'an, its recitation, translation, Tafseer and the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). It also discusses available online Islamic websites have been launching such as www.islamonline.com and software, which can be downloaded from the web free of charge. Information Technology gives Muslims the opportunity to gain Islamic education from their homes through virtual classes. Islamic games and videos are accessible for children to learn Islam. This interactive software motivates Muslim children to learn Islam. Today, every Muslim and non-Muslim can listen not only to Islamic talks by famous researchers of the Muslim world but can take part in online discussions on various Islamic topics. They have the opportunity to ask questions and convey their perceptions. The significance of IT in Islam is duly acknowledged in the Muslim world. From the perspective of the researchers, the Muslim world should generate a concentrated online accessible Islamic library to translate Islamic literature into every language for the global society.

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