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Development Prospects of National Creative Industry Through Islamic Films in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Creative industry sector which contributes to the country's development of economy also offers opportunities for the local artists to further generate new ideas that are competitive for the international level. At the same time, the development that is brought by the creative industry has also produced a huge prospect to the programming and broadcasting services in Malaysia. With regard to this, the creations of new ideas in upholding the local creative industry through the making of Islamic films are among the initiatives that need to be supported by all bodies as this will also promote Islamic values and Islamic Malay cultures in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Islamic Prospect of Islamic Films and Prospect of National Creative Industry*

Introduction

Creative industry is known as the industries that involve individual creativity, appearances and talents that possess potentials of generating profits and job opportunities through the promotion and exploitation of intellectual properties. Creative industry is also referred as an art for economy that involves talented individuals, corporate bodies and further contributes implications to the country in terms of national income and image. The UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS)¹ defines creative industry as the industries that involve individual creativity, appearances and talents that possess potentials of generating profits and job opportunities through the promotion and exploitation of intellectual properties. According to this definition, United Kingdom classifies 9 areas² under the creative industry which are advertisement and marketing, architecture, craft, graphic and fashion design, television, video, radio and photography, IT application, software and computer service, publishing, Museum, gallery and library; and music, performance and visual arts.

1 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, (2015), *Industries Economic Estimates-January 2015 (Statistical Release)*, p. 4.

2 *Ibid.* p. 33.

Current development of global economy shows that creative industry is among the crucial sources that contributes to the development of a country's economy as well as provides the culmination of culture for developing and developed countries. Hence, it also opens up more job opportunities for Malaysians in upgrading the country's economic status through creative industry. In Malaysia, creative industry contributed about RM9.4 billion to the National Gross Domestic Production (NGDP) in 2008 and 2010. This clearly shows that creative industry serves as one of the industries that has potentials in generating high income for the country; at the same time upholding Malaysian cultures. Therefore, integrated action plans are important in ensuring the sustainability of the industry in an organized and comprehensive manner can be organized.

In conjunction with the New Economic Model³ which is developed to achieve Vision 2020, the economic sector is highly dependent on knowledge, innovation, creativity and high skills where servicing sector is seen as a catalyst to create a high-income nation. Thus, Malaysia should no longer depend on export, agricultural, mining and electronics sectors as a result of the world economic crisis which took place in 2008. Malaysia's experience in the world financial crisis where we were dependent on export sector has made the country's leadership to focus more on service industry.

Creative industry area that is highlighted in the National Creative Industry Policy⁴ encompasses all areas of creative industry that may generate income including supporting industry and other related industries such as distribution and marketing. The scope of creative industry⁵ is divided into a few industrial categories as follow:

- i. Creative Industry of Multimedia. This industry is formed by the industries that apply current technological advancements in producing creative products. It includes the categories of film production and TV, advertisement, animation design and digital content.
- ii. Creative Industry of Cultural Arts. Creative industry of arts and culture comprises of industries that are related with the production of art products that represents Malaysian culture such as craft arts, visual arts, performance arts, creative writing and fashion and textile.
- iii. Creative Industry of Cultural Heritage. Industry of cultural heritage is a form of industry that is related to the activities of museums, archives, reservation and rescue.

The Development Of National Creative Industry

Contemporary development of national economy through the increase in the involvement of creative industry is seen as a way to generate economy through financial returns that are formed by the hiking numbers of investment in the related industries. This includes the establishment of new companies in the filming, recording, printing and other aspects. In the meantime, the supporting industries are also assisted by the establishment of companies

3 National Economic Advisory Council (2009), *New Economic Model For Malaysia Part 1*, Putrajaya: National Economic Advisory Council

4 Ministry of Multimedia Communication and Information (2010), *Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara*, Ministry of Multimedia Communication and Information: Kuala Lumpur

5 *Ibid.*

related to event management, equipment leasing or rental, catering and others. Development of creative industry also helps boost the existing companies as well as providing more opportunities and lessen the percentage of unemployment in Malaysia⁶. Emphasis on creative industry may help enhance the number and level of expertise among the players in the industry. Hence, strong supports coming from the government and private bodies as well as conducive environments are seen as a force that will attract creative experts from overseas to contribute to the country.

Physical or non-physical development and research is undoubtedly crucial in bringing the creative industry forward and this covers the development of infrastructure, equipment, technology, human capital, software and delivery technique. Continuous research may enhance creativity and opens up more innovation opportunities as well as exploiting technology towards producing quality products that comply to the Islamic regulations in the international level⁷. Malaysia's seriousness in producing creative industry products is vital as a way to ensure that local products are competitive in both local and international markets. Besides, integrated efforts may also uphold our country's culture and art as well as promoting the Islamic creative industry in Malaysia.

The culture of appreciating intellectual properties may also be practiced among Malaysians, aligned with the development of creative industry. The efforts taken in improving awareness on intellectual properties will help preserve national heritage as well as to ensure royalty returns are given to the artists involved. Creative industry also helps strengthen international ties through memorandum of understandings and cooperative networks in terms of human capitals, infrastructure and products of the industry. Cultural visits and exchange of human capital may increase skills, expertise and technology transfer. Mutual productions will also enhance ties between countries in order to promote sharing of experiences and knowledge that will be useful for producing quality products. At the same time, society members should also support the commercialized products in accordance with the Islamic principles that are shown in the shariah-compliant films.

Developed nations such as the United Kingdom, Japan, Spain, Singapore and other countries in the Asian region have long-explored the creative industry where the UK is deemed as the pioneer to the industry. The emphasis of creative industry development is mainly towards the digital content development and computer applications that serve as a support to the growth of servicing sector such as health, education, government services and businesses. In fact, New Zealand⁸ has identified three main sectors that need to be emphasized in the development of its economy which are biotechnology, ICT and creative industry. For creative industry, the focus is given to the areas of broadcasting, filming and designing. Since New Zealand is just a small country, designing aspect is not deemed as a main sector. Instead, supporting sectors to the servicing industry such as health and education are seen as a main sector.

In the ASEAN region, Singapore is leading other countries in developing the creative industry. Singaporean government policies put a serious emphasis on the aspects of arts, culture, and audio visual contents in the development of ICT in its country. In Singapore, focus is given to the development of IT and computer application, advertisement, broadcasting, producing, interior designs, graphic and fashion, architectural service, antique and craft trading,

6 Ministry of Multimedia Communication and Information (2010), *op. cit.*,

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.* pp. 13 in. <http://www.wecreate.org.nz/home/facts-stats/>, dated 10 June 2015.

performance arts, cinema service, industrial design and photography. Investments in ICT has brought Singapore to a higher level in the region. Emphasis is also given to education sector as the main catalyst as well as long-term investment in the development of creative industry in Singapore⁹.

Contributions made by the creative industry towards NGDP in developed countries are mostly between one to five percent. In Malaysia, creative industry is estimated to contribute about 1.27 percent to the NGDP¹⁰ and advertising sector is among the main contributor to this figure. This development shows that creative industry has the potential to contribute to a more dynamic economy for the country. Singapore, through its main plan "Singapore Fusion Media 2015"¹¹, has allocated S\$500 million (RM1.2 billion) to develop its creative industry in the form of investment funds including capitals from banks and strategic investors. This main plan is aimed at making Singapore a region media hub, attracts more talents from overseas, at the same time develops local talents.

Film Industry In Malaysia

Film is seen as a medium that portrays life. All concerns that are related to it should be presented in a visual form that is moving as a story-teller for human being's lives. Film, according to Arsiah Sarji, Faridah Ibrahim and Mazni Buyung¹² is an image that is formed in a moving visual that contains story-telling elements that are written, edited in a form of dialogue, visual and sound, which later is recorded using cameras, edited using several technical procedures and used as an art product that has various importance to be shown in cinemas and televisions. With regard to this, Adi Pranajaya¹³ thinks that films have functions in the society. The social functions of films are its involvement in social life, economy, politics, ethics, beliefs and others. The aesthetic function of film is the presence of products that are able to nurture the sense of beauty among the viewers¹⁴. According to Abu Hasan Hasbullah¹⁵, films directly possess relationship with thoughts and feelings regarding beauty, enthusiasm and perfection or aesthetic.

The implementation of Islamic Shariah in the filming industry also takes into account the government's hopes in producing first-class minded human capitals as well as to promote cooperativeness among Malaysians. Film and religion are inter-related and every country has their own identity of filming design and history. This is supported by Mayer¹⁶ that film and

9 *Ibid.*, <http://internasional.kompas.com/read/2013/11/19/1226123/>, retrieved on 25 June 2015.

10 Malaysia National ICT Initiative (2009), *MSC Malaysia Annual Industry Report 2009*, Cyberjaya: Multimedia Development Corporation Sdn. Bhd.

11 Ministry of Communication and Information, <http://www.mci.gov.sg>, retrieved on 23 August 2015.

12 Arsiah Sarji, Faridah Ibrahim and Mazni Buyung. 1996. *Pola Pengamalan Profesionalisme dalam Industri Filem Malaysia*. Ulu Kelang: FINAS.

13 Adi Pranajaya. 1993. *Filem dan Masyarakat*. Jakarta: Yayasan Citra

14 Mohd. Ghazali Abdullah. (2005). "*Feminisme dalam Filem Melayu Abad ke-21*". Proposal presented to the Academy of Malay Studies, Universiti Malaya on 30 September 2004.

15 Abu Hasan Hasbullah. 2005. "*Filem: Memenuhi Fungsi Material dan Fungsi Falsafah Sebagai Seni Ketujuh dan Metafizika Manusiawi*" in *Jurnal Beringin*. Kuala Lumpur: National Academy of Arts.

16 Mayer, R. E. (2005a). *Cognitive theory of multimedia learning*. In R.E. Mayer (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

religion are related because religions is a way of life and apart of human behavior. Film industry in Malaysia has been explored by Mohd Zamberi and Aimi¹⁷through one special coverage on Malay films in Singapore that discovers the relationship between the Malays and Islam. In addition, in Malaysia, Islam is the official religion that is stipulated under the PERKARA 3¹⁸. Other than that, there is also research conducted on religion and film by Suria Hani, Mazni, Mohd Faizal and Noor Adzrah¹⁹who found that the production of Malay films, directly or indirectly, has been the aim of religion. Film is a learning tool that needs to be used wisely and the efforts to promote films that are shariah-compliant is important in forming unity in Malaysia.

As the Malays are always affiliated to Islam²⁰, thus the strength of the race is determined by the religion itself. Islamic teachings that were brought through the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W are a complete guidance in undergoing lives. At the same time, it builds a civilization that brings about life's tranquility in the world and the hereafter. Islam is a teaching that mainly aims to shape individuals who are strong and balanced physically and mentally without neglecting their responsibilities for the hereafter life. Javed Mohammed²¹defines Islamic films as films that adhere to the Islamic regulations, customs and Islamic values as well as known as an effort by the Muslims or about the Muslims. Malaysia is among the countries that has potentials to promote Islamic films and it is proven when Malaysian is ranked the 6th place in 2008 as a film producer after Iran, Indonesia, Turkey and Pakistan. According to Rosmawati Mohamad Rasit²², Islamic films produced are seen as a new approach that needs to be taken as a way to promote Islamic preaching. This is aligned with the aim of Islamic films which according to Saodah Wok, Rizalawati Ismail dan Faridah Abdul Manaf²³work as medium to (a) promote ethical values, (b) promote good deeds (amar maaruf) and forbid bad deeds (nahi mungkar), and (c) disseminate information and spread Islamic teachings.

The history of Islamic Malay films in Malaysia can be seen with the production of *Sumpah Semerah Padi* in 1956 and later *Syukur 21* in 2000. According to Rosmawati Mohamed Rosit²⁴, two out of 26 films that were produced in 2009 are chosen as the samples in studying the religious elements through *Syurga Cinta* and *Muallaf* films. This shows that even though the influence of Islamic Malay films is not as strong as Indonesia, they have their own strength among Malay film producers and Malaysian society to be continuously produced. In a study, Rosmawati Mohamed Rosit found that the assimilation and application of Islamic values in Malay films have indirectly upheld the religion's and race's positions as the production of a

17 Mohd Zamberi dan Aimi (2005), *Malaysian Films: The Beginning*, Selangor : National Film Development Corporation Malaysia.

18 Malaysian Laws. (2014). *Malaysian Federal Constitution Until 10 February 2014*. Putrajaya: International Law Book Services.

19 Suria Hani, Mazni, Mohd Faizal and Noor. Adzrah (2010) *Analyzed The Religious Theme In Films*, Journal of Modern Education Review, V. 4, No. 9

20 Malaysian Constitution. *op.cit.*

21 Javed Mohammed. (2010). Muslim Cinema: An Introduction Plus the Top 101 Muslim Theme Films. <http://myfavoritereview.com>. Akses 23 Ogos 2015

22 Rosmawati Mohamed Rasit, et. al (2011), *Filem sebagai Saluran Komunikasi Dac wah: Analisis Unsur Keagamaan dalam Filem Melayu yang Dipilih*. ISLAMIYYAT 33 (2011): 67 – 76.

23 Saodah Wok, Rizalawati Ismail and Faridah Abdul Manaf, (2008), *The Mediating Effect of Attitude on Perception towards Impact Change after Watching Islamic Films*, Journal of Modern Education Review, ISSN 2155-7993, USA September 2014, Volume 4, No. 9, pp. 651-662

24 Rosmawati Mohamed Rosit (2011), *ibid.*

particular film should be seen from all aspects and messages in order to ensure the values of Islam are taken as the base in making a film, not just for the sake of storytelling purpose²⁵. Another research conducted by Nuruul Hidayah Mansor, *et. al* (2015)²⁶ found the potential of Islamic filming in Malaysia in generating more thinkers and first-world minded human capitals in fulfilling the agenda of Vision 2020, thus opens up more job opportunities to arts graduates in Malaysia as well as nurturing Islamic values that are impactful to Malaysia's entertainment indicator.

The Concept Of Arts And Entertainment From The Islamic Perspective

Arts is also seen as an aspect of culture. The word 'art' is defined as something fine, beautiful and peaceful²⁷, melodious, attractive and soft.²⁸ Literally, arts is all kinds of fine and beautiful for human's feelings, regardless whether it is Allah S.W.T's creation or created by human's thoughts, skills, imaginations and actions²⁹.

Arts is closely related to Islam as Islam is basically an art.³⁰ Islamic arts have its own characteristics that differs them from other arts. Islamic arts are the formation of shapes that contain aesthetic value that is integrated with the Islamic ethical values.³¹ This is proven by the Islamic teachings that promote all human kinds to do good deeds. Koran clearly pictures its arts and beauty through Allah S.W.T's creations.³² For Jalal al-Syarqawi, arts are able to produce something that is not able to be produced in schools or universities, or in other words; to produce an art and love Allah S.W.T, and it is deemed as differentiating between knowledgeable and illiterate people.³³ While entertainment is all forms of arts that would make a person to get carried away from all sorts of disturbances, thoughts and problems that distract somebody's sleep.³⁴ It also has no any reality value related to playing, joking, talking, singing and others.³⁵

The Prospects Of National Creative Industry Through Islamic Films

- i. Prospect of Social Well-being through Shariah-compliant Entertainment Components

25 *Ibid.*

26 Mohamad Shafie Ayub, Nuruul Hidayah Mansor, *et. al.*, (2015). *Potensi Filem Islam dalam Membangunkan Sektor Industri Kreatif Negara*. Proceeding in the Seminar of Current Fiqh (SeFis) 2015 printing edition. ISBN: 978-967-13426-1-9.

27 Engku Ibrahim Engku Ismail & Abd Ghani Shamsuddin (1990), "Konsep Seni dalam Islam", (Conference Paper in the Islamic Arts Seminar Conference in Universiti Malaya, 5-8 November 1990), Pp. 2.

28 Md Hashim Haji Yahya, Md. Afandi Awang & Tuan Anuar Nik Him (1990), "Kesenian Dari Sudut Syariah", (Conference Paper in the Islamic Arts Seminar Conference in Universiti Malaya, 5-8 November 1990), Pp. 6.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, Pp. 7.

31 Abdul Ghani Samsudin et al. (2001), *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 15.

32 Sidi Gazalba (1983), *Islam dan Perubahan Sosiobudaya*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, Pp. 31.

33 M. Walid Jadda' (1989), *al-Mawqif min Sinema Islamiyah*, Cairo: Dar al-Wafa' Li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nasyr, Pp. 15.

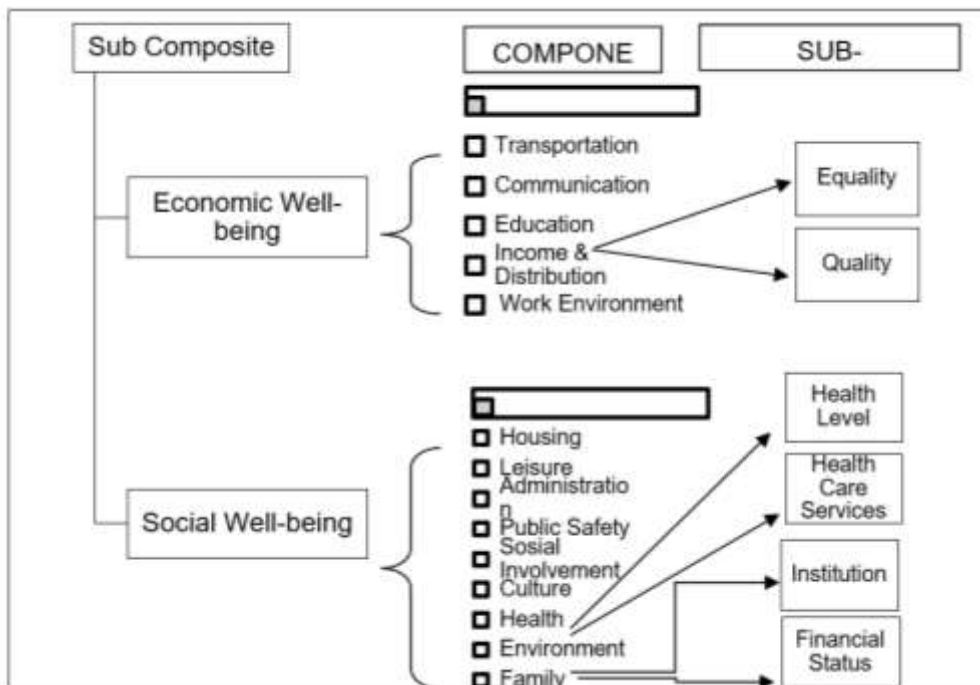
34 *Ibid.*, Pp. 11-12.

35 Mustafa al-Khin & Mustafa al-Bugha (2000), *Fiqh al-Manhaji*, Damsyik: Dar al-Qalam, Pp. 521.

Malaysians' Well-being Index (IKRM)³⁶ measures the citizens' level of well-being as a result of changes and developments of national socio-economy. There are two main measures that are used in assessing this. Firstly; the selection of well-being and development indicators that encompass the definition of well-being done through meticulous quantitative method. The components and indicators selected are mostly based on international best practices, together with issues and challenges faced by the citizens. Secondly; efforts done in analysing well-being by investigating the relationship between economic growth measured according to NGDP and well-being measured according to IKRM. These analyses involve the testing of the relationship among composite index, sub-composite index and IKRM component index with the economic growth as well as its flexibility with the NGDP changes.

The performance of Malaysians' Well-being Index according to its' 2000 till 2012 reports shows that national development policies and strategies have increased the people's safety level. According to Figure 1, entertainment component is also listed as a vital component in IKRM under the sub-composite of Social Well-being.

Figure 1: Components of Malaysians' Well-being Index for the Year 2012³⁷



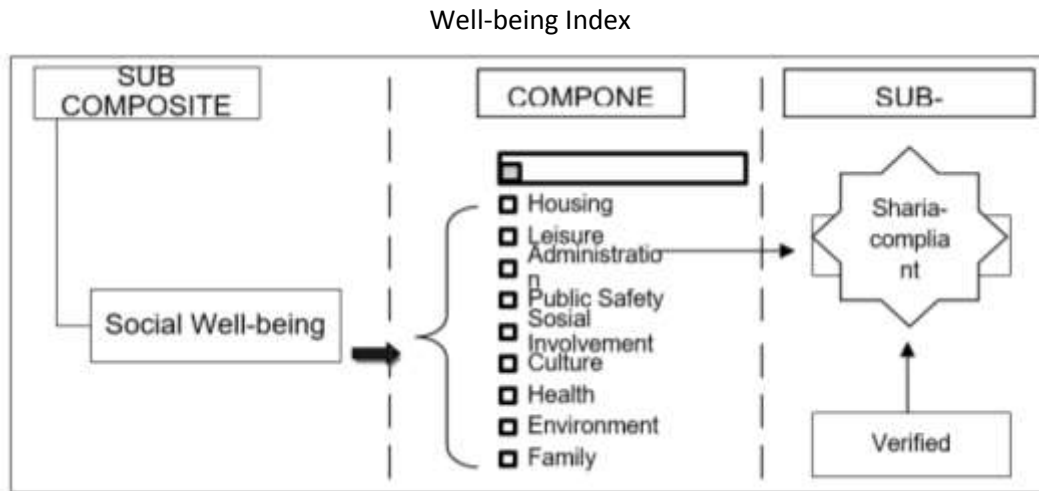
Entertainment components which are combined in the sub-composite of social well-being, together with the components of housing, management, public safety, social participation, culture, health, environment and family are seen to be impactful towards the indicators of social well-being in Malaysia. Hence, the study found that national creative industry possesses potentials to develop through the production of Islamic films. Compliance to shariah application

36 Economic Planning Unit (2013). Laporan Kesejahteraan Rakyat 2013. www.epu.gov.my. Retrieved on 23 August 2015

37 *Ibid.*

has indirectly shown a new step and initiative in developing composite index of shariah-compliant entertainment in the Malaysians' Well-being Index. The general model framework for social well-being component suggested in improving the conventional components are as stated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Model framework for entertainment sub-component in the Malaysians' Well-being Index



Source: Adopted from Economic Planning Unit (2013) Malaysians' Well-being Report 2013. www.epu.gov.my. Retrieved on 23 August 2015.

The suggestion to assess social well-being through shariah-compliant entertainment indicator is undoubtedly crucial as compliance to shariah is fundamental to Muslims' well-being in Malaysia. In fact, shariah-compliant entertainment is seen as an effort to eradicate crimes related to media and entertainment that are now seen as portraying values and norms against the Islamic laws. Thus, there is a need to the implementations of Islamic principles in producing art works in Malaysia so as to ensure the output of faithful and credible human capitals that have high integrity created through films and dramas.

ii. Prospect of Careers in the Islamic Filming Industry

Malaysia's efforts in strengthening its economy through high technologies and services entail highly-skilled human capitals. In the context of competitive employment market, preparing workforce that are skilled and creative is a huge challenge to Malaysia's development agenda. With regard to this, every individual especially arts graduates needs to be prepared with all sorts of challenges in enhancing the quality of film industry.

Integrated efforts from all parties are important in ensuring Malaysia's workforce to be marketable and creative industry as a field that always prioritized by graduates and society in giving contributions. The implementation of Islamic principles in making films in Malaysia should be fully supported as it is based on the principles of idealistic, realistic and comprehensive as well as able to uphold the local art industry through the uniqueness of our characteristics and culture.

Therefore, developing first-class human capitals is also seen as a huge challenge for all countries as the nature creative industry which is unique entails human capitals who are full of interests, skills and unique abilities. In recent times, career prospect among artists in Malaysia is bright as Malaysia is still in need of highly-skilled artists who are able to uphold the quality of

Malaysia's Islamic films in the international level³⁸. The efficiency of human capital productivity that is improved through Islamic approach always emphasizes on clean development of human capital because the balanced between industrial component and human capital development in highly crucial in determining success in all fields including creative art and filming. The development of first class human capital in Malaysia's film industry is as important as other industries in ensuring the success of New Economic Policy that is based on servicing and expertise that is creative and innovative in nature³⁹.

Conclusion

Looking at the success stories of our neighboring country's, Indonesia, has somehow shown us the potential of Islamic films to be a contributor to the development of our creative industry; to name a few of their successful Islamic films such as *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, *Sang Murabi*, *Laskar Pelangi*, *Syahadat Cinta* and *3 Doa 3 Cinta*. All these also clearly show the potential of upholding the film industry that are based on Islam and films that are shariah-compliant have positive impacts in enhancing the quality of Malaysia's creative industry. At the same time, to ensure there is a wide prospect in career opportunities and the involvement of new ideas to local artists, strong supports from all bodies such as the government, private and NGOs are highly needed in contributing to the improvement and success of Malaysia' creative industry.

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³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Malaysian Tenth Planning. <http://www.epu.gov.my/epu-theme/pdf/nem.pdf>. Retrieved on 24 August 2015

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