# THE UTILIZATION OF WEBPAGE IN CONVEYING PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMUNICATION AMONGST ISLAMIC HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

*Penggunaaan Laman Sesawang untuk Penyampaian Komunikasi Perhubungan Awam di Institusi Pengajian Islam.*

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## Abstract

Whether targeting the public or the media especially journalist or editors, websites exist to ensure the information is available for people to access based on few criteria. This paper intends to explore the utilization of webpage in conveying Public Relation (PR) communication between Islamic higher learning institutions. Qualitative content analysis method was used to compare the differences in PR perspective between *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia* (USIM), *Univeristi Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia* (UIAM) and *Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor* (KUIS) websites. The findings of this study indicated that the webpages analyzed were relatively interactive in nature and that they are focusing on the important PR elements and strategies. In conclusion, more often than not, the three websites analyzed consider the PR aspects of the design and taking into account the nature of the web community who wants fast and usable information that can educate rather than told.

Keywords: website technology, public relations, Islamic Institution.

## Abstrak

Sama ada mensasarkan orang awam atau media terutamanya wartawan dan editor,kewujudan laman web dapat memastikan maklumat tersedia untuk semua pihak berdasarkan kriteria. Kajian ini bertujuan mengekplorasi kepenggunanan laman web di dalam menyampaikan komunikasi perhubungan awam di institusi pengajian tinggi Islam di Malaysia. Analisis kualitatif digunakan di antara laman web Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia

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(UIAM) dan Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS) untuk membandingkan kepelbagaian perspektif perhubungan awam. Keputusan kajian menunjukkkan ketiga-tiga web yang dibandingkan adalah interaktif dan menjurus kepada aspek-aspek penting dalam strategi perhubungan awam. Kesimpulannya, kesemua laman web yang dianalisis mengambil kira aspek perhubungan awam daripada segi reka bentuk dengan mengambil kira komuniti web yang pada masa kini memerlukan infomasi yang pantas dan berguna disamping cara pengguna lebih gemar belajar dari laman web berbanding dengan  jika diberitahu tentang sesuatu maklumat.

Kata kunci:  teknologi laman web, perhubungan awam, Institusi Pengajian Islam.


## INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Web has continuously grow exponentially, at first with the discovery of web browser and search engine such Google which has made any kind of information accessible to anyone. The internet discovery is truly revolutionary concept that radically changed and transformed media system that has been in place since Guttenberg invented the printing press in 1400s (Wilcox, Cameron & Weber; 2015). From Public Relations (PR) perspective, a website is literally a distribution system in the cyberspace in which companies and organizations can use as a platform to promote and advertise product and services, post news releases, provide corporate background and product information, position papers and uploads event photos which are accessible by the public and the media personnel. Seitel (2014) suggests that with the massive development of technology, PR department now has become more than ever, interactive. Journalist meanwhile he said, remains the primary customers for most in PR – has embraced internet as their primary source of research and reporting. Hence, PR is essentials in all part of communicating effectively in order to build valuable relationship and therefore the internet is the medium for communication in bound to have implication on the practice.


## COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN THE WEB

Seitel (2014), suggests that "at the heart of the internet is a sense of community", that perhaps and establishes to build rapport amongst the web community. This has always been a challenge in PR perspective. He also highlights the use of internet by PR practitioners inevitably will grow as the century proceeds because of four distinctive reasons; (1) the demand to be educated rather than told, (2) the quest for conversion, (3) the need for real time performance and (4) the need for customization. These aspects consequently allow any PR practitioners or individuals to be part of the familiar areas of cyberspace community. Therefore, in the cyber community, webpage exist as the 'first face" of an organization, institutions, companies or government agencies to the public, where it

allows unfiltered communication as if it has its own voice – "unfettered and unaltered by the media or other intermediaries (Seitel, 2014).

In discussing the virtual community in communication on the internet, Holtz's (2002) ideas are related to Seitel (2014) in a way that PR success depends on knowing which publics, which strategies audience – can have impact on the organization's ability to meet its objectives and what kind of conversation can it create about the organization that can make the audience closer. One of the areas of consideration in utilizing internet webpage as a public relation tools is the aspect of diversity and inclusion. According to Mundy, this idea is becoming a competitive cornerstone to all types of organization models especially in the last 10 years – where there is an increase in the best practices in PR around the world (2015). In contemporary perspective, there is a need to study and investigate what a new generation or corresponding diversity and inclusion drive the PR best practices may resemble. Therefore, organization can best engaged stakeholders respective of their relative position, driven by diversity and their needs and expectations (Mundy, 2015). Having this aspect in the webpage can relatively attract myriads of audience and facilitate the dissemination of messages easily on the web.

## INTERACTIVITY OF WEB-PAGE
Another vital aspect of a webpage to exist when carrying PR communication is its level of interactiveness. In research on PR, the possibility of interactivity between the public and the organization is an issue of high levelness or given the highest priority. Interactivity can be seen as one of the main characteristic of internet and has been the subject of numerous studies in the field of communication (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007).

In discussing the nature of interactive degree Esrock and Leichty (1998, 2000), Kent and Taylor (1998), Yan (2003), Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) and, White and Raman (1999) suggest that the level of interactivity between PR and organizational webpage can be identified in two different approaches:

**1. The dissemination of information.**
The level of interactiveness influences the image of the company that the public has.

**2. The generation of relationship between the different public and organization.** The degree of interactivity is high when internet is used to make bidirectional communication easier and to establish the build relationship by allowing dialogue and interaction between organization and public (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007).

In accessing the level of interactivity on education related webpage, Saiki (2010) highlighted five categories of the level of instructiveness perceived by the viewer. The first level is the "narrative" level where the

user of the website is a passive receiver of information such as text to read and videos. This followed by, "interactive," which includes media that allows the viewer to explore the website actively and decide what to view without changing the content. Online tours and links to other web pages are examples of media at this level. The third level, "communicative," includes media that allows the viewer to discuss and debate ideas, such as through e-mail and discussion blogs. The fourth level, "adaptive," includes media that allows the viewer to discuss ideas with direct feedback from the instructor. The fifth and highest cognitive level, "productive," includes media that allow learners to discuss and show their understanding of information (Saiki, 2010). All these elements highlighted are some of the aspects that discussed and observed in some of websites analysed in selected Islamic institutions in Malaysia to determine the effectiveness of the dissemination of PR messages as well as forming the relationships between the companies and the public.

**CRITERIA OF GOOD AND EFFECTIVE WEBSITE**
In parallel with the development of technology, PR strategy evolves and become a combination of multi-disciplinary studies and strategy embedding information technology advancement, marketing strategy, publicity and many others. Some of the challenges to ensure the effectiveness and relevancy of a webpage is some contain can be "outdated, not modern, static, stale, overwhelming, cluttered, frustrating, unintuitive, ordinary and fragmented" (Allen, 2013). He then suggests some areas that can be the central of a website such as the branding and communication, findability and information architect, and lastly the readability and usability. According to Everhart *et al.* (2007), corporate website should have a section or pages for; (1) about us info, (2) contents, (3) services and products, (4) news, (5) press releases and (6) events and activities. Thus, the aforementioned criteria are some of the elements that can influence the effectives of a particular web design to establish few PR aspects and messages to ensure that it can be presented in an effective and effective ways.

Sepeck (2005) highlights that organization or corporation should have brief information about the organization, links to article and content information of the organization (cited in Everhart *et al.*, 2007). Having latest news and event on corporate websites are helping the audiences be informed of the ongoing activities of the company. News, press releases and company information helps journalists to access information and publish stories accurately and ensure mutual beneficial relationship with the journalist information should be accessible. According to Jacob Nielson (2001), most journalists are only able to find 68 percent of questions on website, suggesting that PR news are poorly done (cited in Everhart *et al.* 2007). Nielson suggests of having facts and figures on websites recommending the followings; (1) listing PR content, (2) offering financial information and (3) providing pertinent image. Because of that, there is a great need for the webpage to showcase comprehensive details of their PR messages to facilitate the need of the journalist who

are reporting news and events for a particular companies as well as the general public at large.

## ISLAMIC HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION WEBSITES OVERVIEW

By understanding company or corporate's websites thoroughly and learning experts' opinions and criteria for successful sites, an analysis of a variety of corporate websites can occur. From PR knowledge combined with information technology advancement, greater function of corporate image can be created for a particular website. This research will explore some of the relatively well known Islamic institution of higher learning website in Malaysia. The three Islamic institution website have been selected based on their similar characteristics which are Islamic, cater tertiary level of education and listed under the Ministry of Higher Education. The corporate Islamic institution websites which will be analyzed are; *Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia* (USIM), *Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia* (UIAM) and *Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor* (KUIS). In general most of the websites analysed projecting almost the same significant content such as contact address and number, courses offered that can be classified under the PR related communication. Some of the challenges would be for the website to be constantly maintained and updated to ensure that the PR content stays relevant and recent. Another challenge is to keep the content fresh-looking and appealing to the user that can be seen as the design and architect of the website. As an overview, various factors influence the efficacy in delivering PR messages through the utilisation of webpage.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The utilization of webpage as PR platform has been known due to its interactiveness and its ability to give dynamism in conveying PR communication. Some of the systematic aspects of PR provide overlapping multidisciplinary perspective; however, this study focuses on branding and communication, findability and information architect, the readability and usability, lastly diversity and inclusion. However certain webpage have the ability to offer more PR related communication than the other. For the content use of a page, some page merely exist but at time inefficient to deliver or share PR interrelated content. Hence, this study aims to:

1. To explore the content of selected Islamic institution of higher learning websites in disseminating PR communication content
2. To compare the highlighted content of the websites in incorporating PR aspects.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study is carried out based on the three Islamic institution of higher education. In this study, qualitative content analysis method was used to compare the differences in PR perspective between USIM, UIAM and KUIS websites. This method is suitable to be used to identify how PR messages are being distributed to their targeted audience through the utilization of the websites. This approach also can be used to explore the content of selected Islamic institution of higher education websites and to compare the highlighted content between websites in incorporating PR aspects. Coding sheet is used to determine the area of branding and communication, findability and information architect, the readability and usability, and lastly diversity and inclusion. The sample was drawn from 23th to 30th of May 2016. All 19 items listed above will be explored in terms of availability, the way these items are presented on the website and their functionality.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The website content analyzed on the three selected Islamic institution of higher learning websites–USIM, UIAM and KUIS indicated various content activities and design. The coding sheet below in table 1 indicates the instrument used showing the outcome of the study.

**Table 1: Utilization of PR in Islamic Institution of Higher Learning Website**

| No | Area | HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | **Branding and Communication** | USIM | UIAM | KUIS |
| | Home Page 1- Banner 2- Newsroom 3- Language 4- Collaboration | √ x √ √ | √ √ √ √ | √ √ √ √ |
| | Newsroom 1- Easy to access 2- Informative 3- Difficult to access | √ √ x | √ √ x | √ √ x |
| | Background, Mission & Vision | √ | √ | √ |
| | Career Opportunity / Prospective Employee 1- Academic 2- Administration | √ √ | √ √ | √ √ |

| 2. | **Findability and Information Architect** | USIM | UIAM | KUIS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Banner<br>1- Informative<br>2- Non-informative<br>3- Link reach-ability | √<br>√<br>√ | x<br>√<br>x | x<br>√<br>x |
| | Contact | √ | √ | √ |
| | Real-time communication | √ | x | x |
| | Activity Calendar | √ | √ | √ |
| | Employability / Quality of Graduate | x | x | √ |
| | Research | √ | √ | √ |
| | Number of Visitors | x | √ | √ |
| 3. | **Readability and Usability** | USIM | UIAM | KUIS |
| | Latest Update (*day/month/year*) | 26/5/ 2016 | x | x |
| | Response Time<br>1- Very slow (10 seconds >)<br>2- Slow (10 seconds)<br>3- Intermediate (1-9 seconds)<br>4- Fast (0.1-0.9 seconds) | √ | √ | √ |
| | User-friendliness<br>1- Prospective Student<br>2- Student<br>3- Parents & Families<br>4- Journalist/editor | √<br>√<br>x<br>√ | √<br>√<br>√<br>√ | √<br>√<br>x<br>√ |
| | Publication<br>1- Availability<br>2- Buy online | √<br>√ | √<br>√ | x<br>x |
| | External links | √ | √ | √ |
| 4. | **Diversity and Inclusion** | USIM | UIAM | KUIS |
| | Social media account link<br>1- Facebook | √ | √ | √ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2- Twitter | √ | √ | X |
| 3- Instagram | X | √ | X |
| 4- YouTube | √ | √ | √ |
| 5- Google | √ | X | X |
| 6- Pinterest | √ | x | x |
| Language<br>1- Bahasa Malaysia<br>2- English<br>3- Arabic | √<br>√<br>√ | X<br>√<br>√ | √<br>√<br>√ |
| Diversity | √ | √ | √ |

Instruction:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ✓ | = | Available |
| x | = | Not available |

## DISCUSSION

### 1. BRANDING AND COMMUNICATION
In the aspect of branding and communication, a few aspects can be considered to identify the effectiveness of PR messages.

**Home Page**
Home page can be defined as the first page of a website, which usually gives an introduction to the business or organization it belongs to and links (connections) to more detailed information on other pages (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2016). Home page can be categorized as 'first face' or first impression of a particular organization via the website. Lindgaard *et al*. (2006) stated that first impressions known as very influential in a broader context which consists of studies in personality character attributions, medical diagnosis, studies of websites discovering insights of appeal and usability, trust, reliability, and relationship between numerous hedonic aspects beauty and what Hassenzahl calls 'goodness'. Zhang *et al*. (2000) in their study measured three constructs that are significant in developing an effective home page:

**1. Presentation**
The presentation of information on a home page needs to concern about graphics, colors, the quantity of displayed information, and the structure of the information. The presentation concerns of a home page involve; (1) where the information was positioned, (2) how graphics were used, and (3) what features on the site were disrupting) (McClure *et al.*, 1997).

**2. Navigation**
The quality of home page navigation is determined by user's opinion; is it easy for them to find the hyperlinks to bring them to the necessary web

page? Hlynka and Welsh (1996) classified three important criteria of interactivity in order to develop an effective home page, which are (1) quantity, (2) functionality, and (3) relevance of hyperlinks. Meanwhile, McClure *et al*. specified that navigation issues comprise of (1) understanding the meaning of each navigation icons, (2) are the graphics assisting the navigation process, and (3) the capability to search related information.

### 3. Quality

To decide whether a home page has good quality or not is very challenging (December & Ginsburg, 1995; Reeves & Bednar, 1994). Every user has its own perception about quality. One of the important characteristics of a quality home page is its quality of information. Thus, the contents must be at the highest-level, most firm, and most precise in terms of the information sources. December and Ginsburg (1995) also indicated that a quality website have to be broader than just informing its content, it should attract the visitors to that particular company. Furthermore, Aries and Farris (2000) highlighted that websites constantly need to tell their visitors how to communicate with the company. Feedbacks given by the visitors are crucial in order to improve the website constantly and at the same time to meet the users' satisfaction.

In this study, there are four essential parts have been chosen to be explored in USIM, IIUM and KUIS home page that related to presentation, navigation and quality aspects as we discussed previously; (1) banner, (2) newsroom, (3) language and (4) collaboration. *Table 1* displays that the three websites meet all of the criteria, but the study is not only beyond that. USIM, IIUM and KUIS websites have their own different way of presenting banner, newsroom and language but similar in term of presenting collaboration with interrelated associations. We will discuss in-depth about the usability and functionality of these items in the next section.

### Newsroom

Newsroom is a 'place' where the information of an organization is distributed and usually for the journalists or editors need. Cline (1982) said that journalists often have to work with PR practitioners, but they often view PR negatively (Waters, Tindall & Morton, 2010). Therefore, Daniel (2000) highlighted the importance of building good relationship with the journalists (Waters, Tindall & Morton, 2010). In this new era, there are several approaches to communicate, deliver information and build relationships between an organization and the journalists through online newsroom, website is one of them.

Callison (2003) stated that he found that the organizations ranked higher in Fortune 500 were more likely to have an online newsroom (Waters, Tindall & Morton, 2010). However, the newsroom supposed to function as it provides important, latest and updated information. In addition, to sustain a good relationship with the journalists, the online newsroom is highly recommended to add other interactive functions such as chat and

online form so that the journalists can ask directly and give feedbacks to that organization.

The result of this study shows that USIM, IIUM and KUIS respectively positioned the Newsroom section on their web home page. This will make it easier for the journalists and editors to access, read and get news and information they need. The page will be navigated to other page which displays more news when the users click the news link on the home page. The observation verifies that the information architect in the placement of PR aspect is done effectively to facilitate the needs of journalist and editors as well as other individuals.

### Background, Mission and Vision
Information of background history, mission and vision of a particular institution are significant to be placed on the website. These three aspects are the core factors that shaped the higher learning institution itself in terms of the course offered by the university, that institution's architecture, and so on. Therefore, the visitors need to be informed about this information so that their insights become clearer with the institution's background and its principles.

As presented in *Table 1*, background, mission and vision of these three institutions are adequately represented on their websites. They are easily accessed by the users as well. Therefore, information architect influences the necessity of users to understand the background of the institution. Besides that, background, mission and vision are also three main elements that brand the organization.


### 2. FINDABILITY AND INFORMATION ARCHITECT
Another aspect of PR communication is findability and information architect that can be used to disseminate information. In perspective of findability, the webpage displays crucial information that relates to the higher learning institution in terms of its latest updates on certain facts and information, activities in the campus that involves the positioning of the information that can be categorized under the aspect of information architect.

### Latest Update
The effectiveness and relevancy of a website very dependent on several factors and latest update is one of them, as mentioned by Allen (2013) earlier. The audiences of an institution are always wants to have the latest updated information of that particular institution or organization from time to time. This can prevent problems such as inconsistencies of information and to ensure the adequate information is disseminated to the audience. As USIM, UIAM and KUIS websites have been analyzed, the result shows that only USIM is likely to show its latest website update on the home page (please refer *Table 1*).

**Banner**

Banner or *banner ad* is a rectangular advertisement placed on a website either above, below or on the sides of the website's main content and is linked to the advertiser's own website. In the early days of the Internet, banners were ads with only in the form of text and graphic images. Nowadays, banners can regarded as ads with text, animated graphics and sound. Most commerce-related websites use banner ads (Webopedia Online, 2016). Some websites might not have banners, and some of them does have banners but with no function. Banner is one vital element of a website that has the function of interactiveness which can promote or highlight certain things, for example; events, programs, products, and so on. The banner can also be a navigator to another web-page that will display the details of a particular program, event, or product.

In this study, the banner of USIM, IIUM and KUIS web home page was discovered.

The result in *Table 1* shows that USIM website's banner is operating well, as it is informative and link reachability, while IIUM website has banner but it does not has the function of link-reachability and also non-informative. KUIS website does have banner on its home page and good in link-reachability; however it is not informative enough for the website visitors. Overall, the readability and usability of the website studied are relatively well-function.

**Contact**

The contact section gives the visitors to easily communicate with that particular institution. The basic information provided in this section is contact numbers, e-mail address and online form for feedback purpose. In the earlier discussion about user-friendliness, the findings reveals that the visitors of USIM and UIAM websites are able to contact the university representative by calling the phone number displayed on the bottom of USIM and UIAM home page. They also can send e-mail or fill in the form on the USIM helpdesk and Feedback page for UIAM as the second option. Although KUIS use the same approach as USIM and UIAM, the online feedback form is more focused on specific purposes.

**Real-Time Communications**

Real-time communications (RTC) is a term used to refer to any live telecommunications that occur without transmission delays. RTC is nearly instant with minimal latency. Its data and messages are not stored between transmission and reception (Technopedia Online, 2016). To test the real-time communications of USIM, IIUM and KUIS websites, an e-mail to search for job vacancy on research assistant role has been sent to these three institutions around 15:47 to 15:49 on May 27, 2016. Surprisingly, an e-mail from USIM helpdesk has been received at 15:59 to inform that the previous e-mail was successfully sent and the e-mail address used to send the mail was registered, at the same time the password was generated automatically. On May 28, 2016 at 11:19, an e-mail offered for research assistant post was received. This did not happen

to IIUM and KUIS. From this test, it can be predicted that IIUM and KUIS websites did not apply real-time communications.

### Activity Calendar

Besides newsroom, activity calendar is very important information not only to the journalists and editors, but to students, prospective students, lecturers and staffs of that particular institution. Result in *Table 1* indicates that these institutions' websites positioned their activity calendar (USIM and KUIS) and events (UIAM) at the web home page. The users will be navigated to other web page which describes the programs' details as they click the link on the activity

### Employability / Quality of Graduates

The quality of the institution's alumni and graduates is somehow essential to bedisplayed on the website. This includes information on their current job and position in order to persuade the prospective students and their parents to further their study in that university. In terms of employability or graduates' quality, only KUIS website allocates specific page to promote its alumni. This section presents the testimonials of KUIS graduates with information of their current job and position. Testimonial is a powerful tool frequently used by a business company to promote and attract especially the future customers. In contrary to KUIS, USIM and IIUM website did not have allocation for employability or quality of graduates' page.

### Number of Visitors

Number of visitors is a widget that usually used on blogs and can be adopted on websites as well. This widget functioned as it displays the visitors' counts. Every time the users enter the website, the sum of the visitors will be added in line with the number of visitors. From the findings, only IIUM and KUIS websites displays the number of visitors on their home page at this moment.

### 3. READABILITY AND USABILITY

PR messages conveyed through the websites need to be readable and usable. For instant the fact that the information must be of latest information and constantly updated ensures the efficient and usability of the content. Furthermore, response time of the websites is one of the important criteria of its relevancy in transferring PR messages.

### Latest Update

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result shows that only USIM is likely to show its latest website update on the home page (please refer *Table 1*).

**Response Time**
Response time means the response time taken to open a website or webpage when the users click a link that navigates to other web pages. Slow webpage execution usually because of the "server delays or overly fancy page widgets," (Nielsen, 2010). The users tend to leave slow websites. Therefore, response time is a very important aspect for an effective website. The less time taken to open a page, the better and more efficient the website is. In this section, we adopted the three categories of response-time limits suggested by Nielsen (2010) with some modification:

1. Slow (10 seconds)
2. Intermediate (1 to 9 seconds)
3. Fast (0.1 to 0.9 seconds)

Nielsen (2010) stated that 0.1 seconds creates immediate response feeling to the user. This level of responsiveness is crucial to maintain the sensation of direct manipulation, which is one of the main Graphical User Interface (GUI) methods to raise user engagement and control. Meanwhile, 1 second preserves the user's flow of thought smooth. The users feel the delay, but they acknowledge that the computer is producing the result at that moment. They still can wait within that response time of limit. However, he said, "This degree of responsiveness is needed for good navigation" (Nielsen, 2010). Ironically, 10 seconds of delay cannot remain the users to feel good. The users will certainly sense that the computer should be even faster, yet they still can be patience. But after 10 seconds, the users begin to leave that website.

The findings as demonstrated in *Table 1* depicts that the response time of these websites are in the same category, which is very slow. With internet speed of 54.0 Mbps, the response time of USIM, UIAM and KUIS websites can be described as follows.

**Table 2: Response time taken when entering websites**

| No. | Higher Education Institution | Trials | Response Time (s) | Elaboration |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | USIM | First | 11 | - |
| | | Second | 15 | - |
| | | Third | 13 | - |
| 2 | UIAM | First | 20 | - |
| | | Second | 20 | - |
| | | Third | 16 | - |
| 3 | KUIS | First | 20 | Including 4s for pop up box |
| | | Second | 16 | No pop up box appear |
| | | Third | 16 | No pop up box appear |

Although they are in the same category, however the response time of each website are different. *Table 2* indicates that USIM website has the fastest response time; 11 to 15 seconds approximately compared to IIUM and KUIS website. Both IIUM and KUIS website took around 16 to 20 seconds to display the website home page. Though USIM better then IIUM and KUIS in term of its response time, it its speed still needs to be upgraded and the causes of slow loading website needs to be removed, same goes to IIUM and KUIS website as well. According to these findings, the findability aspect of USIM website is the highest compared to two other web studied.

**User-friendliness**
User-friendly indicates that everything makes it easier for the beginners to use a computer. Online help systems are also one of the features of user-friendly programs. User-friendliness is a very important concept. However, the term 'user-friendly' nowadays often being overused then makes it seems to be cliché (Webopedia Online, 2016). The user-friendliness concept can also be applied in developing a website. In this study, the specific and right audiences were classified into five categories:

1. Prospective students
2. Students
3. Parents and families
4. Journalists or editors
5. Prospective employees (career opportunity)

In extents to user-friendliness, the value of accessibility, usability, and functionality of a website depend on the users' opinions. Therefore, an institution which targeted the specific and exact audience tend to be more user-friendly then the others. *Table 1* shows that UIAM website targeted more audiences; prospective students, students, parents and families, journalists or editors and prospective employees, while USIM and KUIS website only targeted prospective students, students, journalists or editors and prospective employees as their audiences. Positioning parents and families as targeted audience brings UIAM website to be more user-friendly because it provided information that helps parents and families of that students or prospective students. For example, UIAM website placed 'Funds and Loans' or scholarships sub-section under the 'Parents and Families' section. In contrast, USIM website does not have any section for scholarships which is crucially important to be placed on the website.

USIM, UAIM and KUIS websites respectively have the information and interactivity needed by prospective students, students, journalists or editors and prospective employees. However, the presentation of information differentiates the effectiveness of each websites. For example, the difference between USIM, IIUM and KUIS websites is identified through the information presentation on accommodation. USIM website only displays the images of college hostels from the outside without explain further about facilities provided. In contrast, UIAM website has two sub-sections for accommodation; (1) hostels and (2) hostel facilities. The 'Hostels' sub-section supposedly displays the lists of *Mahallah* (colleges) in all UIAM campuses including in Gombak, Kuantan, Petaling Jaya and Nilai. However, currently this page is not updated. In 'Hostel Facilities' sub-section, UIAM web page displays detail information on UIAM hostels such as types of rooms, rates, features, facilities provided (bed, mattress, notice board, study table, curtain, shoe rack, mirror, etc.). Some types of the room can be rent by the public as well. Meanwhile, KUIS accommodations are depicted with images of hostels from the outside, similar to USIM's webpage, but with addition of lists of block's name in each college.

The second example is 'Transportation' sub-section. USIM website only displays the images of students enter the USIM bus with happy faces of the students without detail descriptions. Instead, UIAM website displays IIUM map for parking purpose (for Gombak campus) and the RapidKL bus code number which enter the campus together with its routes. Unlike USIM and UIAM, KUIS website directly displays the official letter (announcement) from the Office of Deputy Rector (Student Development & Alumni) about transportation facilities together with its routes and

time arrival. However, the schedule is not updated. The schedule was valid only from 6 November 2015 to 24 January 2016. In terms of interactivity, the users are able to give feedbacks – comments and suggestions to the institutions through their websites in various ways. For USIM website, visitors can choose to e-mail to helpdesk@usim.edu.my or fill in the feedback form on the USIM helpdesk page as the second option other than making phone calls. UIAM and KUIS also use the similar approach to USIM.

### Research and Publication

Research and publication are the core values to a higher education institution especially for research universities. Nowadays, the universities and colleges are using the Internet access consists of online bookstore which is the platform for the ease of the users to buy the university's and college's publication via website. USIM website provides section where users can buy books published by *Penerbit USIM*. There are various payment methods available for the users to choose to buy the books, such as (1) Bank Islam online banking system, (2) Visa, (3) Master Card, and (4) Financial Process Exchange (FPX). The users also can buy USIM journals in this webpage.

Unlike USIM, IIUM website separated the sections for IIUM Bookshop and IIUM Journals. The IIUM online bookstore webpage has the function to sell IIUM Press books in online platform. It also displays the payment methods that can be used by the users to make payment; which are (1) Visa, (2) Master Card, (3) FPX, (4) CIMB Clicks, (5) PBe Online Banking, (6) RHB Now, (7) Hong Leong Connect, and (8) Maybank2u. The users can browse all of IIUM Press books listed in this section. For IIUM journals, they can be found at the IIUM Journals section. The journals can be easily accessed and downloaded by the users without any charges.

KUIS website somehow is quite different in allocating the content of research and publication. Same like USIM website, KUIS located the publication menu in the research webpage. However, same like IIUM website, KUIS journals can be easily accessed and downloaded by the users without any identification (ID) and password requirements. Books published by KUIS are not many. For now, the college university only has journals as its publication. Instead of downloading journals one by one, the users also can buy collections of published KUIS journals which have being documented.

### External Links

External links are the links that navigate a website to the other websites which somehow interrelated to the higher learning institution, for example the Ministry of Higher Education website, *Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional* (PTPTN) website and others which connected indirectly with that institution. These external links are important to help the visitors get more information easily from the external sources. The external links are the essential sources to assist the

website's visitors to get more information that somehow interrelated to an institution.

USIM's website had listed these external links on its web home page; Malaysian Government Agencies, Public Institutions of Higher Educations, Government e-Application / e-Services and Other Useful Links. Meanwhile, IIUM website provided external links in 'Business, Government Organisations & Related Links' section on its home page; Non-Academic Programmes, IIUM Holdings Sdn. Bhd., Vendor Portal, Sudan University of Science and Technology. KUIS website however did not specify any specific section on external links, but it does have external link in image form that navigates to *Pusat Zakat KUIS*.

## 4. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The other aspect when conveying PR related messages is there exist the need to include social media links to ensure the effectiveness and the magnitude effects it derive to the higher learning institution. That and the ability to include diversity in PR relate content is utmost importance as the world is getting more and more globalised and the devide between gender, ethinicity, race and nationality disappear as far as education is concern.

### Social Media Links

Nowadays, the societies around the world are living in the era of technology. The Internet has completely "changed the way in which companies and institutions communicate and interact with their audiences" (Alfonso & Miguel, 2006). Most of the people today use social media account like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Pinterest and so on to achieve their own purposes. Business companies use these social media platforms to brand, promote, market and advertise their products and build relationships with their targeted audience. With the existing of various platforms of social media websites, the media relations of the higher education institutions should be smart enough to use these platforms to brand, advertise and promote their university to gain the confidence and build relationship with future students, parents, future employees and the public via the social media. The more social media platform be used, probably the more audience will be reached.

The findings of this study indicate that USIM uses more social media platforms compared to UIAM and KUIS (please refer *Table 1*). It uses Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google and Pinterest social media account to spread updated information, events and activities at USIM to the people. Actually, USIM has Instagram official account that is always updated, but the website did not include Instagram icon on USIM home page to link with USIM's Instagram account. UIAM only has four official social media accounts – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, while KUIS only use two social media platforms – Facebook and YouTube.

## Language

Diversity of language used is necessary especially for the international institutions of higher learning. This institution takes students and employees (lecturer for example) from abroad as their targeted audience. For that reason, the information provided on the university's websites need to have the language translation function for ease of the audience. As the result, this study shows that both USIM and KUIS websites have the function to translate the texts of information in three languages which are Bahasa Malaysia, English and Arabic, while UIAM website merely translates the texts to English and Arabic (please refer *Table 1*).

The issue came when some of the language translation functions did not work very well. USIM's website did not translate all of the texts as the sub-menu at the home page still remains in Bahasa Malaysia. This also happened to the detail information texts in all of the sections of the webpage. Oddly, UIAM website's language function for Arabic version only changes the structure from left-to-right to right-to-left. The text language still remains in English. Nevertheless, KUIS website covers well the lack of its language translation in Arabic. It prepares an Arabic online brochure for the reference of international prospective and current students. The Bahasa Malaysia and English version of the website functioned as it supposed to be, but the English version provides less information than the Bahasa Malaysia version.

## Diversity

Diversity is the fact of many different types of things of people being included in something; a range of different things or people (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2016). In this context, diversity in a higher education institution website can be seen by presenting the faces of multiracial students including the internationals. It also can be displayed by listing of the other international high learning institutions in the world that collaborate with our local universities or colleges. Diversity is essential in extent to attract the foreign future students and lecturers to further study and get the job in that particular institution.

Since USIM, UIAM and KUIS have targeted international students as their audience, each of their website have their own ways to show the diversity of students. USIM presented its diversity through 'International Linkage' sub-section that represents list of countries and international universities which collaborates with USIM. Meanwhile, IIUM website shows diversity by displaying the images of international students on some pages. However, KUIS has different way than USIM and UAIM. It illustrates diversity specifically in the online brochure which is available when the users choose to display the Arabic version of KUIS website. The online brochure is full of information needed in Arabic Language and portrays images of international students. Therefore, KUIS seems to have better representation of diversity compared to UIAM and USIM.

## CONCLUSION

In general, all the webpages analyzed were relatively interactive in nature, focusing on the important PR elements and strategies. However, there are some parts of the webpage in comparison is better than the others in its own ways. More often than not, the three websites analyzed consider the PR aspects of the design and taking into account the nature of the web community who wants fast and usable information that can educate rather than tell.

The elements that have been used to measure the public relations messages in the utilization of websites such as latest update, response time, home page, banner, background, mission, vision, user friendliness, career opportunity, language, contact, real time communication, activity calendar, employability, research and publication, social media links, external links, number of visitors and diversity have managed to capture the significant utilization of webpage in carrying and disseminating PR to the public as well as journalist and editors. In essence, Islamic education webpage offers various information to its clients namely students, future employee and parents. As technology advances, the websites evolve. All the elements of effective website such as interactivity are focused especially on how it can include two-way communication between the user and the organization, making it trendy, advanced and technologically savvy.

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