INTERNET APPLICATION AND E-ZAKAT IN MALAYSIA

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Zakat institutions and SIRCs are categorized under Religious Non-Profit Organizations (RNPOs). Most zakat organizations in Malaysia have already developed and used web-based internet applications and e-Zakat as a media to communicate with citizens and deliver services (Kaslam, 2009). The e-Zakat as an electronic and online delivery of services creates new sphere of zakat and promote more efficient and cost-effective zakat institution, facilitate more convenient services, allow greater public access to zakat information, and make zakat institution more accountable to citizens. However, in many countries disclosure of information by RNPOs and other Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) in the form of written and online approaches are crucial for many reasons. Atan, Zainon, Nam, & Aliman, 2012 mentioned among the reasons why their disclosures are so crucial are: (i) information disclosed can be used by stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the organizations, (ii) the disclosures of information can potentially improve stakeholders' perceptions, and thus enhance the accountability and transparency of the organizations. According to Saunah Zainon, Ruhaya Atan and Yap Bee Wah (2012), disclosure of information by NPOs is vital due to few factors such as it can contribute to improve stakeholder's perception which eventually will increase the level of accountability and transparency of the organizations.

The emergence of internet and concerns for developments in processing capacity as well as data storage over the 1990s has significantly altered environment for ICT use across society and institution. Development of ICT and its wide applications has contributed a significant change in a way an institution disseminate information and delivery services to citizens. This application enables the citizens to get service or information in minutes or hours, versus today's standard of days or weeks. In Malaysia government believes with the implementation of *Islamization Policy in 1985* and the *Corporatization Policy in 1991* and deployment of ICT, zakat can be improved and play significant role for Muslim society. The corporatization of zakat centre at state level has contributed significant change and management improvement in zakat organization by having improved technology to bring zakat information direct to consumers. Many zakat organizations in Malaysia introduce online zakat or e-Zakat to users to ensure they obtain update and informed zakat information electronically. These technology

applications can transform the business of zakat organizations which traditionally used manual system to more people oriented where this technology is user-friendly to parties, organization's staff and website' users.

Besides that, e-Zakat also known as one of the electronic service delivery that significantly facilitates more convenient services, allow greater public access to zakat information, and make zakat institution more accountable to citizens besides improve internal work processes, increase the performance and enhancing governance sphere of zakat organizations.

Although most fundamental use of web-based is for information delivery to citizens by adopting broadcasting model website, but web or portal can also be used as a platform to facilitate interactive communication between zakat organizations with citizens, business communities and other agencies. To support this, website may need to contain information that is useful to public, presented in a way that may help them with enquiries, and which will enable them to pay zakat online with zakat organizations. The strategy for using website should be integral part of communications strategy for zakat organizations. In particular, corporate communications strategy of zakat organization should be updated to reflect maturity of web as a mainstream communication channel, including providing services in enabling interactions for electronic service delivery.

REFERENCES

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