
THE RESPONSES OF SELECTED MALAYSIAN TRADE PUBLISHING COMPANIES TOWARDS TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

As digital technology advances, e-book has emerged along with printed book as an alternative to readers in the market. In some developed countries, the trend of e-book reading and buying have increased noticeably. However, looking at the broader context of the impact, e-book is only among the many aspects that have affected the industry. As argued by scholars, the end-product of the book industry is not the only aspect being affected, instead, the whole book creation process is experiencing changes. In order to have a better understanding of these issues, this study attempts to explore the current condition of Malaysian book publishing industry by analysing the responses of selected local trade publishing companies towards technological development in their pursuit of organizational success. In doing so, a case study of six local trade publishing companies comprises of large, small and medium, and government-funded publishers is conducted. From the case studies analysis, it is evident that these companies have responded vigorously to technological developments in their pursuit of organizational success. The Internet, computer technology, and social media are also becoming rather important in their book publishing practices.

Keywords: Trade publishing, Technological advancement and innovation, E-book, Publishing business, Publishing chain

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of e-book and how it is affecting the book market and its players in the industry have been a focal discussion of scholars and researchers in the field of book publishing when they discuss about the impact brought along by technological development (Antonio Cordon-García, Linder, Gómez-Díaz, & Alonso-Arévalo, 2014; Hjarvard & Helles, 2013; OECD, 2012; Thompson, 2012). From historical context, printed book has been the primary

medium for content delivery since Gutenberg invented the printing machine. However, now that e-book has emerged, another option is made available to the readers in the market. In some developed countries, the trend of e-book reading and buying have increased noticeably, and digital readers, such as tablets, smartphones, and e-readers, are noticed to have huge influence towards the readers' tendencies of reading e-book (Coopers, 2011). This development is evidently related to the emergence of companies such as Amazon, Apple, Google, Sony, and Samsung, that have revolutionized the information, communication and digital technologies (Kulesz, 2011).

However, looking at the broader context of the impact, e-book is simply one among the many aspects that have affected the industry. As argued by Thompson (2012) and Hjarvard and Helles (2015), the end-product of the book industry is not the only aspect being affected, instead, the whole book creation process is experiencing changes. Thompson (2012) points out that the impact can be observed in at least four areas of book publishing, namely (1) operating systems, (2) content management, (3) sales and marketing, and (4) content delivery (format). Some of these changes include the innovation of back-office publishing systems; computerized system for stock management and control; electronics and digital file; digital printing; e-marketing; e-commerce; digital sampling; as well as e-books. In addition, Hjarvard and Helles (2015) mention that the emergence of e-book has caused players in the industry to reassess their business model and practices as the development is not merely involving the changes of format, but rather, the whole process in the industry.

Therefore, in order to stay competitive in the global market, industry players need to reconsider their positions and the relationships with one and another. Publishers, for instance, could lose control over the entire value chain if they are unable to maintain their roles in the chain (Béhar, Colombani, & Krishnan, 2011). As pointed out by Hetherington (2014), the fact that digital delivery is growing rapidly and the marketplace is appearing to be uncertain yet constantly developing, publishers need to rationally look into the opportunities offered, at the same time balance off the risks and constraints of resources in the current environment. The growing importance of newer technologies such as e-book, e-commerce, e-marketing, and digital printing need to be given attention. Being able to come out with strategic plans, besides from predicting upcoming challenges and making longer-term judgement towards the rewards and the risks of distribution, as well as outsourcing, will contribute to enhancing the entire publishing infrastructure.

Malaysia, as a developing country, is in the process of adapting into this new environment. With the market value of the industry estimated to be around RM847 million and the total of annual new titles published to be averaging at around 17,000 books (Malaysian Publishers Association, 2018), it would be interesting to find out how the current condition is in Malaysia. Therefore, by concentrating on the trade publishing sector, this study attempts to analyse the responses of local publishing companies towards technological development in their pursuit of organizational success through the case study of six local trade publishers. Technological developments are perceived to have transformed each and every link of the publishing chain, from reading and writing to printing and selling (Kulesz, 2011). As the transformation is remarkable, the findings of this study will enable a clearer and comprehensive picture on how these selected companies have responded to technological development in their pursuit of organizational success and the extent of which these developments are changing the conventional practices of book publishing in the industry.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Technological development as one of the external forces influencing media industries, in particular, is considered very closely related to the development of media industries. Doyle (2013, p. 17) argues that, the media industries are profoundly dependent on technology and thus, are constantly affected by new advancements that are changing the ways media content is being produced and distributed. Similarly, Küng (2008, p. 128) agrees that the transformation and improvement of technology are constantly existed in these industries. Not only that, technological development will always result in challenging environments for the players. For instance, business models may no longer be compatible and relevant due to the advancement of technology. The end-products of media too, may become unpredictable because of these advancements.

In today's digital age, it is evident that many media companies are responding to these developments by evolving into "multi-platform media enterprises", where their focus is not towards one platform as before, especially in the marketing and distributing of their content (Albaran, 2010, p. 69). As explained by Doyle (2013), this kind of business practices, where the focus is placed on multiple platforms rather than just a single platform, has been grasped by most sizeable media organizations. And this, of course is driven by technological innovation, the adoption and changing behaviours of the public towards new technology, and the demand to have content spread through cross-platforms (Albaran, 2010). From Internet TV and radio to social media, or podcasts and videocasts, these platforms are now the primary content distribution platforms for media companies.

Apart from that, as explained by Doyle (2013), the advances in digital technologies has also spurred on the development of new forms of content: for instance, the combination of video and text, as well as interactivity, and of converged devices, such as mobile phone and media players. The transition towards digital platforms, too, means that the content of all kinds can circulate and be delivered to audiences across numerous settings and forms. And, all of these developments are not only affecting the operational aspects of a media firm, but also their strategies to survive and stay competitive in the media markets.

In the context of book publishing, the emergence of new media technologies has brought a fundamental shift in business practices of the industry players. According to Thompson (2005), the phenomenon has primarily impacted book industry as a whole, especially in the process in which books are produced and distributed. The book production processes such as editing, designing, marketing, and distribution has transformed tremendously into a new environment where almost everything is becoming digitalized and computerized.

Looking at the industry's responses towards these developments, the study of Antonio Cordón-García et al. (2014) shows that the presence of big online bookstores for e-book such as Amazon, Apple, Barnes and Noble, and Google in Spain has forced local publishers to adapt and take up digital publishing. The study indicates a massive migration of existing publishers from traditional printed into the digital formats, and at the same time, increasing the number of new publishers for digital books. This is causing the coexistence of both printed and e-book in the market. Looking at these developments, Antonio Cordón-García et al. (2014) found that, the growth of e-books into the Spanish publishing industry is in a way forcing those traditional publishers of printed books to redefine their publishing strategies and modify their business models.

The advancement of communication technology has also played an important role in developing the book publishing industry. According to Ronning and Slaatta (2011), the Internet is an example of technology advancement that allows publishers to establish and strengthen their market positions. In Europe, as well as Nordic countries, many of publishers have achieved this by creating their own online distribution channels, which allows them to reach a bigger market across the world. Ronning and Slaatta (2011, p. 108) state that “sales increasingly take place via the Internet, and Internet bookstores are of particular importance to such publishers.” This shows that the advancement of communication technologies has given a new opportunity for publishers, especially the small sized publishers, to be able to position their place in the book industry.

In the discussion related to the proliferation of small publishers, the advancement of technology such as the Internet, computer and digital innovation are among the contributing factors. These technological developments have served as the main factors for them to be competitive in the industry. As discussed by Bold (2016), the advances in technology has simplified the process of book production by reducing most of the costs. This has reduced the entry barriers to the industry and made content easily published by basically anybody.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative case study analysis is used in this study to analyse the responses of selected local trade publishing companies towards technological development in their pursuit of organizational success. It is descriptive in nature and the targeted research subjects in this case study are the publishers. A range of commercial and government-funded publishers from large, medium and small sized companies are intended to be covered in this study. The reason for such selection is due to the nature of the industry itself for being diverse with its wide range of markets, products, and services. Therefore, based on each company’s core product and market, their responses are likely to vary from one to another, leading to differences in technology uptake and business practices.

The selection of publishing companies for these case studies are based on three main criteria: (1) Large Sized Publishers, (2) Small and Medium Sized Publishers, and (3) Government-funded Publishers.

Overall, six publishing companies are selected with two companies for each category. To maintain the anonymity of the companies, specific codes are given, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Company’s Code for the Case Studies

Company (Publisher)	Code
Large Sized Publisher 1	Company 1
Large Sized Publisher 2	Company 2
Small and Medium Sized Publisher 1	Company 3
Small and Medium Sized Publisher 2	Company 4
Government-linked Publisher 1	Company 5
Government-linked Publisher 2	Company 6

As for data collection, this study employs multiple sources of data, from in-depth interview to observation and also documentary sources. The interview is carried out with the top management of the publishing companies researched in order to gain insights of the operations and business practices of the companies. Meanwhile, observation is carried out by focusing on the marketing aspects of the company in order to find out their visibility and presence in the Internet and social media. Several documents are also used in the process of collecting relevant data for the case studies, through public information related to their activities as well as other information such as company's vision and mission, company's history, organizational charts, press releases, and announcements, on their websites or in their social media accounts.

Company Background

Founded in 1988, Company 1 has been in the Malaysian book industry for more than 25 years and is considered as one of the largest trade publishers in the country. Initially, the primary focus of the company was to provide consultation and training services related to book publishing. Looking at the potential the industry has, the company began to involve actively in publishing and distributing books in the year of 2000. The focus of the company is on the publication of Malay language books and they have been concentrating on various market segmentations in trade publishing. Currently, the company publishes around 300 new titles annually and the genre published includes adult-fiction, business, motivation, religion, food recipe, as well as children novel and comics. The company has several internal brands and imprints that cater to different market segmentations for book publishing as well as subsidiaries focusing on the distribution of their books and books from other publishers.

Company 2 can be considered as the largest publishing company in Malaysia. Founded in 1978, the initial focus of their business was in magazine publishing. In 1990, the company setup two publishing imprints to cover novels and books of various genres. Since then, they have developed and currently the company have four core businesses, namely magazine, book, newspaper, and printing. For the book section, they have three main imprints. The first imprint covers adult novel and also general books such as motivational and recipe. Second imprint focuses on religious books, including the Al-Quran. The third imprint publishes different variations of reading genres, such as children, general, motivation, teens, classic, folk stories, and religious reading materials. The company publishes an average of 30 titles every month and is regarded as the leading premiere publishing house in Malaysia.

Company 3 was founded in 2006. However, they only began to operate actively as a publisher in 2008. In the earlier years of operation, their focus was on the variedness of genres, thus they have published religion, motivation, professional, general, children, and teen novel. However, in 2011, they narrowed down their focus genres to religion and motivational books, for fiction and non-fiction. The current philosophy of the company is to produce quality Islamic contents and good knowledge input that is able to benefit the society, as well as to provide guidance for the readers to be better person through stories of life experience or fictional tales.

Company 4 was founded in 2011 with an intention to add diversity into the Malay novel scene in the country. Since their early operation, the focus of the company has been placed on the niche Malay and English fictional novel market that concentrates on urban contemporary pulp fiction. The genre of their publications comprises of thriller, horror, science fiction, urban romance, and literature. Currently, the company publishes around 30

to 50 titles annually and these titles include translations of foreign bestsellers and Indonesian titles. However, this case study only focuses on their publishing activities that are related to Malay language books.

Company 5 is a government body or institution that was established in 1956. The initial intention of the establishment was to develop Malay language as the national and official language of Malaysia, to whom has just achieved her independence from the British. However, in 1959, the institution was upgraded to a statutory body who was given the autonomy to: (i) formulate specific language related policies; (ii) organize language and literature construction and development programmes; and (iii) undertake the publishing and sale of books on a competitive basis according to the principles and practices of business and publishing. Currently, the publishing department of the institution is focusing on publishing books of Malay language from various genres and categories, including school and educational books, general books, language books, literature books, children's books, and young adult books. The focus of this case study however, will only look at trade book related publishing activities of the institution. In the discussion about the institution's responses towards technological developments and issues and challenges faced by them at present, the term "Company 5" is used.

Company 6 was established in 1993 to provide the infrastructures to enhance the translation industry in Malaysia. Therefore, their initial publishing activity was only on book translation. However, in 2012, the company is given a mandate to expand their focus to include the publishing of original works of local writers to strengthen and expand the book industry of the country. So, currently, the focus of the company could be divided into two main activities, namely the publishing of translated books and original works of local authors. Their books consist of various genres, including general books, literature, religion, lower and higher education, Malaysiana management, social sciences, arts, creative, and science and mathematics. However, the focus of this case study is only concentrating on their activities related to trade book publishing.

RESULTS

From the analysis of the six local trade publishing companies, it is evident that they have responded vigorously to technological developments in their pursuit of organizational success, especially to maintain positive growth and competitive in the market. This study manages to identify at least six responses, namely (1) the utilization of the Internet, social media and networking sites for content planning and development, (2) the usage of technologies in content development, (3) the publishing of e-book along with printed book, (4) the use of digital printing for print-on-demand strategy, (5) the utilization of the Internet and social media and networking sites for marketing, and (6) the distribution across multiple online channels.

The Utilization of the Internet, Social Media and Networking Sites for Content Planning and Development

Based on the analysis, it is discovered that some of the publishers are expanding their content acquisition and development process by involving the readers through their feedbacks and comments to improve their content publications. In doing so, technological developments and innovation are playing an important role. Company 4, for instance, is utilizing a social

networking platform called Wattpad, a free social writing community platform, that allows anybody to share their writings with no charges for accessing all its content. Having started to utilize Wattpad since 2015, Company 4 is regarding it as a useful platform in the process of discovering the current market interests, which is eventually affecting their publishing planning. For them, the platform has helped in predicting and finding the interest of their target readers besides getting early responses of the readers prior to their publications.

As for Company 2, a big publishing company with plenty of ability and resources, an online writing community platform similar to Wattpad has been developed for the same purpose, which is to discover the market. According to the Chief Operating Officer of the company, this platform is developed as a tool mainly to acquire potential content welcomed by their target readers. Registered users can write and post any type of materials into the platform, while readers are able to read for free. Therefore, this platform is not profit-based as it is a means for the company to explore the market trend.

For Company 3, the Internet, social media and networking sites have helped them in improving their content planning and development. According to the Executive Director of the company, their editors would acquire ideas and concepts through books available in physical bookstores in the past. However, with the advantages provided by the Internet, they are now browsing through other publishers' websites and e-bookstores for the discovering of suitable ideas and potential concepts. Besides that, the editors are obtaining ideas from their readers and followers through its social media, Facebook and Twitter, to improve and enhance their contents. Apart from that, they take into consideration the number of followers in social media account in their practice of acquiring potential authors for their new books. This is because, it provides useful reference for their business planning and development, such as the number of copies for printing, the marketing of the books, as well as for book sales forecasting. As a result, content planning and development has become less time consuming and that they managed to focus on other matters.

The Usage of Technologies in Content Development

One of the significant practices that have changed due to the advances in publishing technology is the way editing and designing are being carried out. As pointed out by the Managing Director of Company 1, the emergence of Desktop Publishing Software (DTP) since 1990s have impacted the productivity of publishing companies in Malaysia. And for them, this development has been benefitting, especially in the enhancement of their productivity and efficiency.

For Company 5, they are also benefitting from this development. As explained by its Publishing Director, almost all of their editors are now using the computer technology for editing and designing processes. The Director explains that:

...with technology, it is reducing the publishing costs. For instance, previously, we used a lot of paper for editing, for re-typing, but now all these processes are done on screen. Then, previously we need to prepare film for printing, but now we no longer need to do so, therefore we are saving the cost of film. The same with the plates for printing. Previously, we used metal plates so we need to buy the chemical, we need to have camera to shoot everything. But now it is no more the same. From computer, directly to plate. From this alone, a lot have been saved. With technologies, we are not only saving costs, the time used for publishing is also becoming shorter, and

this is increasing the productivity in book publishing. For instance, previously, the process of editing 10 titles would take about a year, but now it is becoming much faster with technology.

Consequently, technological advancement is aiding to the reduction of most of the costs involved in the traditional editing method. Also, the use of computer and desktop publishing software has helped in smoothening these processes.

The Publishing of E-book along with Printed Book

Company 1 started to involve in the publishing of e-book around 2010 after discovering its positive growth in the United States and United Kingdom, besides the growing interest of book readers towards Amazon Kindle. As they see this as an opportunity to strengthen their position in the industry, they started their involvement in e-book market by converting their backlisted titles into EPUB format and worked together with e-Sentral, a local e-book platform.

Similarly, Company 2 has also started to involve in the publishing of e-book around 2010, with the same vision as Company 1. According to the Chief Operating Officer, the reading trend of electronic contents through smartphones, Kindle, and other digital devices in the western countries are some the reasons of their embracing of e-book. He states that, the focus on traditional printed books will always remain, but it has to be aligned with the innovation of e-book, as they consider both printed and e-book are functioning as supplement to each other.

As for Company 4 and Company 5, they understood the necessity to adapt to the changes brought by technological development into the book publishing industry. Thus, they are offering both printed and e-book to the market as they are treating both as complement to one and another. In the publishing of printed book, aspects such as printing-related costs, the warehouse for books or stock storage, and transportation for distribution have to be taken into consideration. However, the publishing of e-book does not require such processes. The publishers are only required to convert the content to a suitable format, upload it to e-book platforms, and these e-books can be sold straight away. Therefore, the publishing of e-book is helping them to cut down some of the costs needed as compared to the publishing of the printed form.

As for Company 3 and Company 6, they are yet to consider e-book as a potential product. Both companies are not expecting a substantial growth of e-book in the near future due to its insignificant impact on the publishers' sales in the industry. Apart from that, in explaining about the current situation in Malaysia, the Chief Executive Officer of Company 6 claims that Malaysia is yet to be completely ready with the availability of all sorts of technologies for e-book buying and reading. Pointed out by him,

...In my opinion, our society is not yet completely technology savvy. For instance, these digital devices are, first, expensive. And secondly, there are restraints in its usage, for instance, its battery needs to be charged, which confines the reading process. Thirdly, let's look at the United States for instance, even their taxi drivers have an iPad. They are using their iPads to find their ways around the city. But here in Malaysia, iPad is a luxurious device and only certain people can afford it. So, these, in my opinion, are the constraints to us from using such technology.

In the meantime, both Company 3 and Company 6 are giving a full priority to the publishing of printed book rather than both printed and e-book.

The Use of Digital Printing for Print-On-Demand Strategy

As the current market of book is in the state of inconsistency, Company 2 is being more selective and cautious in the publishing of books. To do so, the company concentrates on reducing the quantity of printing and being extra careful in the evaluating and choosing of contents. In order to reduce the printing quantity as well as to control book return rate, the company have switched to use Print-On-Demand for subsequent productions. As explained by the Chief Operating Officer of the company,

... after we print around three thousand (copies), and if there is a demand, we will not reprint around one thousand, two thousand or three thousand (copies) anymore. What we do is, we use Print-On-Demand to print whatever amount that is required, and the benefits of Print-On-Demand is that we can print copies at small number of around one to two hundred copies of each book.

The utilization of digital printing is considered to be more practical to produce smaller volume of printing. According to the Chief Operating Officer of the Company 2, they are using offset printing for the first production of their titles and when there is more demand, digital printing is used for the subsequent productions.

The Utilization of the Internet, Social Media and Networking Sites for Marketing

According to the Managing Director of Company 1, the emergence of the Internet, social media and networking sites have impacted the industry and changed the practice of marketing and promotion. He explains that publishers are usually allocating a very minimum budget for marketing, due to the small margin that they obtained. Hence, when the Internet and social media came into picture, it is aiding to the publisher's marketing and promotion activities by not requiring much costs.

From the observation carried out, it is noticed that all six companies are actively using the Internet and social media to market their products. It is also observed that, regular updates are carried out in these companies' official websites by having up-to-date information provided from time to time. In these websites, information such as book catalogue, new titles releases, latest promotional activities, news and updates of the company, and also the company's details are displayed in a clear manner. The links to their social media and networking sites are also provided for easy access of their customers. For social networking sites, all the six companies are actively using platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, with frequent news updates posted – once in every one to three days. The information made available in these platforms are such as upcoming events, latest published titles, news and their latest promotional activities, as well as information related to the company. It is also noticed that they are being responsive to the comments and feedbacks made by their followers in these platforms.

In addition, email-marketing is used by Company 3 and Company 6 in promoting of their books. The information that they emailed to their customers are such as book catalogue, new titles releases, latest promotional activities and upcoming events.

The Distribution across Multiple Online Channels

The finding reveals that all the six companies are utilizing e-commerce and social networking sites to enhance their direct-to-consumer channels for distribution. To date, all of them are offering online bookselling services through either their official websites or self-developed e-commerce platforms. Interestingly, some companies are even using the mobile application, WhatsApp, to provide services related to book purchasing. Through these channels, the company is getting sales directly from the customers, without relying on any intermediaries. While, physical bookstore is still serving as the main distribution channel for all these six companies, the contribution from direct-to-consumer channels is observed to be increasing significantly.

Having started to get involved in e-commerce around 2007, the purpose for Company 1 to set up an e-commerce platform is to offer an optional channel for their readers to easily purchase their books through online, and also a part of their strategies to be more competitive in the market. Besides, the uncertainty of book market in Malaysia has forced them to enhance their sales through channels that will enable them to reach their customers directly. As it grows, the platform has also included some of the books from other publishers to which they are now offering more than 4,000 titles from 150 publishers with around 57,000 registered customers.

Moreover, Company 1 is also implementing drop-shipping program through their e-commerce platform. With third parties promoting and selling their books, it is helping them to increase their sales at the same time. With the advancement of the Internet and social media, sales through drop-shipping has become easier and more effective. The way this drop-shipping program operates is as follow:

- The agent will promote the books to their potential customers. The agent is free to determine the price and usually the price is including the shipping costs.
- After the customer agrees to buy and have made the payments to the agent, the agent will place an order in the company's e-commerce platform. When the agent registers to make an order, they will use their drop-shipping agent code to entitle for the discounts.
- Once the order as well as the payment is received by the company, the books will be couriered out directly by the publisher to the customer.

At the moment, their drop-shipping agents are receiving a discount of around 25 per cent to 50 per cent, and they are free to promote and sell the books at any platform they wished.

For Company 2, the setting up of their e-commerce platform is one of their strategic responses towards technological developments to become more competitive in the market. In explaining about their e-commerce platform, the company's Chief Operating Officer states that, the setting up of the platform gives another option to the customers to get their favourite books, because they are offering new titles as well as backlisted titles in the platform. Currently, the e-commerce platform of Company 2 is only offering their own contents, books, and magazines published under the company, with all the books being given a 15 per cent discounts. Besides e-commerce, the company also uses drop-shipping as one of the channels to increase their sales, which is one of their strategies to enhance their direct-to-consumer channels in order to be more competitive. For this, 30 per cent discounts is given to their

registered drop-shipping agents with no limit of purchase. All the transactions and orders are done using the company's e-commerce platform, which is similar to Company 1.

Apart from e-commerce, Company 2 is also offering book buying through WhatsApp. The process of using this application is rather simple, and the related information, such as bank account number and telephone number, is advertised in the company's websites and social media. All customers need to do is to send a message to the telephone number through WhatsApp application to provide the information of the books they wanted to purchase. Once payment is made, customers need to inform the publisher by attaching together the payment slip as a proof of purchase. After receiving the messages, the staff of Company 2 will process and package the books to be couriered to the customers. According to the Chief Operating Officer, the buying trend from WhatsApp application is higher than other online platforms. The reason, according to him, might due to the fact that, it is simpler where customers do not need to sign up or fill up any details, except for their names and addresses, before buying. Currently, their online sales including e-commerce and WhatsApp application are contributing around 10 per cent to their total sales.

As for Company 3, the e-commerce service that they offer through their official website is also a part of their strategies to increase their book sales. Although the company's main contribution of sales is still depending on brick-and-mortar bookstores, which is contributing around 80 per cent to their overall sales, online sales (e-commerce) is seen to be increasing significantly. Those who are using this channel are given the options of using either credit cards, online banking or gift voucher when purchasing their books.

In addition, Company 3 is also utilizing the mobile application, WhatsApp, to provide services related to book purchasing. According to the company's Executive Director, the book buying trend through WhatsApp application is currently increasing, with almost 90 per cent of those who contacted to enquire about books would definitely make the purchase. According to the company's Executive Director, customers are usually having an intention to purchase a particular book when they enquire about it through WhatsApp. It is different from e-commerce website, where most people are simply browsing around to obtain the information of books and would proceed to a physical bookstore to purchase what they wanted.

For Company 4, they realized that they are not supposed to depend on only one sales channel as the industry is becoming more competitive. In order for them to survive and sustain, they need to look for other ways to increase their sales and profit. Therefore, Company 4 is utilizing multiple online channels rather progressively for book distribution. Since 2011, their sales through these channels have increased consistently and now, it is contributing around 20 per cent to the overall sales. According to the founder of the company, customers are getting more comfortable to buy books through online platforms such as website (e-commerce) and WhatsApp application.

As for Company 5, the finding also reveals that they are offering online book buying through the Internet, social media and networking sites. These channels have been developed to facilitate their customers so that the purchase of books could be easily accessed. All of their online book buying sites are coordinated and handled by the Distribution and Marketing Department of the company. Apart from that, they also noticed the potential of bookselling through mobile application (WhatsApp), social media and networking sites. Even though

sales from these channels would not contribute much to their overall income, they are at least putting in efforts of widening the options for book purchasing channels.

For Company 6, the finding of the case study shows that they have also been intensively utilizing multiple online channels for sales for the past few years. One of these channels is e-commerce. As explained by the Chief Executive Officer of Company 6,

E-commerce gives a positive return to the company because, bookselling through physical bookstore is having certain constraints. First, many bookstores are selective on the titles and would only choose titles that they preferred. Secondly, we are not having bookstore in each and every corner of Malaysia. Therefore, I personally see e-commerce as an aid to a company's sales. The first reason is that, it can cover a wide area. Secondly, we have a very good postal system. It means that, our postal system is manageable in handling the public's demand. Therefore, I think e-commerce is really helpful....

At the same time, the company is also making available book buying through WhatsApp application. The offering of buying through these channels are among the company's innovation and strategies to adapt to the current trend of the younger generations. At the moment, e-commerce, including WhatsApp channel have contributed around 30 per cent of the company's overall sales.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the finding, it is apparent that all the six trade publishing companies studied are adopting the multi-platform strategy in almost every aspect of their business practices, especially in marketing and distributing of their content. In marketing, the use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube have definitely help them in promoting their books. It has always been a common practice among local publishers to allocate a small budget for marketing. This budget was used mainly for the printing of printed materials such as catalogues, brochures, and posters, for either the purpose of promoting their books to target readers or for booksellers. However, with the availability of the social media and networking sites, it gives leverage to publisher's costs for marketing and promotion as having these sites does not require much costs.

As for the distribution of books, the emergence of online channels such as e-commerce have opened up an opportunity for the publishers to enhance their sales. As discussed, the industry has been affected by the declining of book sales in the bookstores for the past few years. Therefore, enhancing their direct-to-consumer channels through multi-platform strategy is definitely helping them. Not only through e-commerce, some companies are even utilizing WhatsApp, the social media platform for instant messaging, to provide services related to book purchasing. Through these channels, the company is getting sales directly from the customers, without relying on any intermediaries. Based on the discussion, it is important to distinguish the potential and opportunities brought by technological development in today's digital age in order to stay relevant and competitive in the market.

According to van der Weel (2014), the effects brought in by the technological development to the book publishing industry have caused hybrid conditions that needs specific attentions. As books are now migrating into a diverse world of media, the industry is encountering

challenges that they have never faced. This new condition of books requires a total different way to handle the matters economically, legally, as well as culturally. Therefore, having to be able to manage these challenges, he suggests that, the industry players need to acquire both paper-based and digital ways of thinking.

Apart from that, the economics of the media has also becoming more complex due to the emergence of online channels for distribution as well as new forms (digital) of content delivery to consumers. These developments, as stated by Antonio Cordón-García et al. (2014) and Hetherington (2014), have created a new set of market along with the existed ones. Therefore, the question of how these conventional and new ways of content delivery and distribution channels co-exist in the market, as well as the level of competition that might be brought into the existing markets by the new form of products are among the pertinent issues that needs consideration.

Overall, from the analysis of the six local publishers, it is evident that technological developments have greatly impacted their business practices in the industry. The impact is apparent, but not solely on the end-product of the production, which is the switch from printed format to e-book format. Instead, the impact is obvious in other parts of book production, such as content planning and development, marketing, and distribution. And the Internet, computer technology, and social media are becoming rather important in these companies' book publishing practices. Current developments, especially those involving in the digitization of contents, is forcing publishing companies to adapt and change into adopting the current trends. The innovations of technologies such as digital devices, computer systems and applications as well as the platforms for digital books are among the matters that have changed the book culture environment within the society. As the potential brought by technological developments are vibrant, it is imperative for the industry to rethink and reconsider on how they will be able to integrate with the emergence of new media technologies as well as to manage challenges and issues emerged.

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