The E-Marketing Strategy of Hamas

Tomer Mozes [a]; Gabriel Weimann [a]

[a] Department of Communication, University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel

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TOMER MOZES
GABRIEL WEIMANN

Department of Communication
University of Haifa
Haifa, Israel

Given the growth of Internet research in recent years, it is rather surprising that research of online terrorism and countermeasures has been lacking theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The present study suggests applying the concepts and models taken from e-marketing to the study of terrorist websites. This work proves that when Hamas builds an array of sites in the Internet, it complies with the same rules that the Western business world follows. Chaffey et al. (2000) constructed a model comprised of eight decision points in the process of building a business-oriented Internet site. Although the model was developed for commercial purposes, the present study demonstrates how it could be used as an analytic framework to study terrorist websites. As shown, most of the decision points in the model were relevant to the Palestinian Information Center group of websites. Understanding the e-marketing strategy of Hamas will allow the construction of a competing marketing strategy in order to market rival ideological consumer products.

Terrorists fight their wars in cyberspace as well as on the ground. Today, as several studies have revealed, terrorist organizations and their supporters maintain thousands of websites, exploiting the unregulated, anonymous, and easily accessible nature of the Internet to target an array of messages to a variety of audiences. Weimann (2004; 2006a) identified no fewer than eight different ways in which terrorists are using the Internet to advance their cause, ranging from psychological warfare to recruitment, networking to fund-raising (Weimann 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2007; 2008; 2009). Terrorism on the Internet is a very dynamic phenomenon: websites suddenly emerge, frequently modify their formats, and then swiftly disappear—or, in many cases, seem to disappear by changing their online address but retaining much of the same content. Using these websites, online terrorists target three different audiences: current and potential supporters; international public opinion; and enemy publics. Besides websites, modern terrorists rely on e-mail, chatrooms, e-groups, forums, virtual message boards, and resources like YouTube, Facebook, and Google Earth.

Fighting online terrorism raises the issue of countermeasures and their cost. Since the advent of the Internet, counterterrorism and security services all over the world have seen it as both a threat and a useful instrument. Official statements have warned of the ability of modern terrorism to use the Internet for both global communications as well as for cyberattacks on crucial facilities and infrastructure. Recently many security services

and agencies are focusing on monitoring the Net, tracking down the terrorists using it, and learning from their Internet messages. There are numerous attempts, some secret and some not, to apply various systems and defense mechanisms against terrorists on the Internet.

Given the growth of Internet research in recent years, it is rather surprising that research of online terrorism and countermeasures has been relatively slow and lacking theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The present study suggests applying the concepts and models taken from e-marketing to the study of terrorist websites. Since terrorists are following the formats and principles of Western online communications, the models of e-marketing seem to be plausible tools of analysis. Chaffey et al. (2000) constructed a model comprised of eight decision points in the process of building a business-oriented Internet site. This work argues that the sites pertaining to the "Palestinian Information Center" act in a similar manner to that model.

Hamas as a Communicator

The Hamas organization was founded in 1988 with the onset of the First Intifada (Palestinian uprising). The organization did not spring out of nowhere but was actually a part of the "Muslim Brotherhood" movement in Palestine. The popular uprising against the occupation led the leaders of the "Muslim Brotherhood" in Gaza to agree to found a resistance movement against Israel. Establishing the movement did not decrease the importance of actions of a religious nature. These goals built the movement as it is known today—while fighting against Israel the movement is also known on the streets of Palestine as a charity movement that helps the needy and promotes education and Islam. The struggle against the Israeli forces did not wane over the years but rather has intensified. Hamas became the organization that initiated the greatest number of mass terrorist attacks at the time of the Oslo agreements in 1993 and remained the dominant organization on the Israeli terrorist map.

An important turning point for the proceedings of the organization was sending representatives, on behalf of Hamas, to the municipal elections in 2004. The organization's success in those elections was only the start toward winning the 2006 general elections for the Palestinian parliament. Despite being the Palestinian people's chosen organization, Hamas, since being elected, has suffered from isolation and most Western countries have turned their back on the organization. Today, the Hamas organization focuses on a number of different aspects: it approaches the Palestinian public through social and religious charities as well as a political movement. It fights against Israel mainly through acts of terrorism, and it implicates the whole of the Western world as supporters of Israel and as part of the pan Islamic "anti crusade war" and does this through the rhetoric of Hamas leaders on the Arab media and in sermons in mosques. Over the years Hamas has succeeded in becoming a key player in the Palestinian political map, and a dominant entity through acts of terrorism against Israel and attempted attacks outside the Middle East (Abu-Amr 1993; Maqdsi 1993; Metthew 2006).

Hamas carries out its struggle not only in the physical sense but also in the cognitive, psychological sense. Since the start of "Muslim Brotherhood" activities and their charity work throughout Gaza and the West Bank, the organization has given special attention to publicizing its work and ideology. When the Hamas organization was founded, it was not advertised in a publicized press conference, but a manifest calling all Palestinian businesses to strike was signed by the new organization. One of Hamas's most important periodicals is *Filastin al-Muslimah*, an elegant monthly that serves as Hamas's primary mouthpiece since the movement first came into being. The publication is directed from Damascus, printed (or published) in Beirut, and continues to be distributed from the United Kingdom to the

West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Arab world, and even Muslim communities in Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia. It is available both in hard copies and in an Internet edition, also directed from Beirut.

Another important player in Hamas's propaganda is the mosque. Weekly sermons in the mosques are identified with the organization and are an important part of their propaganda. From the start of the First Intifada until the implementation of the Oslo agreements and the founding of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas was under the watchful eye of Israel. Consequently, Hamas's access to modern means of media in the territories under Israeli occupation was rather limited, leading the organization to employ mass media in other countries with large Palestine communities (e.g., Jordan, England, and others).

Under the new rule of the Palestinian Authority, Hamas received in 1995 a license to publish a weekly newspaper, *Al Watan*. Less than two years later, in 1997, another weekly, *A Risala*, was published in Gaza. Both these publications, along with the newspapers of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, were the most prominent opposition voices against the Palestinian Authority (Nossek and Rinnawi 2003).

Ever since the portable radio gained popularity in the Arab world it has been an important tool for countries and sub-national movements for spreading their messages. Hamas, as an ideological activist group, sees the radio as an important method to convey its message. Even though the organization only received its license to operate a radio station in 2003 (from the Palestinian Authority), illegal radio stations recognized with Hamas have been active since the founding of the organization. The establishment of the legal *Sawt al Aksa* radio station was a turning point in the history of Hamas's media activities. Shortly after the station began to transmit it already had broadcasts in sequence for most of the day, quickly gaining popularity throughout Gaza and the West Bank (Salama 2006).

The Palestinian national TV channel was until 2006 the only television channel in the Palestinian territories and since it mainly delivered messages from Arafat and the Fatah authorities, the Hamas voice could not be heard through this medium. Hamas obtained the permit to operate a television channel a short time before the 2006 general elections and therefore it became an important and central tool for winning the elections. Hamas's faithful public, which was used to radio broadcasts, now turned to watch the Hamas television channel, al-Aqsa TV. After winning the elections, Hamas turned to satellite broadcasts, and today al-Aqsa TV broadcasts a variety of television shows aimed at different age groups, from children's programs to shows dealing with religion and daily news.

The Hamas movement conducts an extensive communications infrastructure used to disseminate its messages in the Palestinian Authority–administered territories and across the Arab and Muslim world. This infrastructure includes newspapers, a radio station, a television channel, and a complex of websites. All these media outlets are used toward instilling Islam in the hearts of the Palestinian people, leading the political conflicts inside Palestinian society, and promoting the Palestinian struggle against Israel.

Hamas Online

Hamas relies heavily on the Internet to spread its messages. Hamas operates numerous websites including official websites, forums, chat-rooms, online bulletins, a video clips site, and special websites for children, for youth, and for women. The popular Hamas websites are paltime.net; alresalah.info; palestiniangallery.com; fm-m.com; felesteen.ps; al-fateh.net; mujamaa.org; islamic-block.net; alkotla.com; palestinianforum.com; aqsatv.ps; and tanfithya.com. The most well-known Hamas propaganda website is the Lebanon-based "Palestine-info" network of 20 or more websites. Domains include: Palestine-info-

urdu.com, palestine-persian.info, and palestine-info.net. The operation is run from Beirut by senior Hamas activist Nizar Hussein, with instructions from Damascus-based Hamas chief Khaled Meshal.

The various websites can be divided into three categories. The first and largest category includes media websites. Following the popularity of Hamas's modern channels of communication, most of these channels have an online version too. Among these sites are www.aqsatv.ps (the online Hamas satellite TV station) or www.alresalah.info (the website of its daily newspaper).

The second category contains the websites of the different groups and wings of Hamas. These include the websites of associations and civil organizations such as sabiroon.org (the association of the Palestinian prisoners), or the organization's military wing, the Ezzedeen al-qassam brigades (the official website is www.alqassam.ps). In the third category are the websites used by Hamas for its virtual activity, including file-sharing websites such as paltube.org, forums such as www.paldf.net and the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) website (www.palestine-info.info or www.palestine-info.net). The PIC site is the Hamas's leading gateway site (a main site leading to several secondary sites), operating under the cover name of "Information Center." It first appeared in 1998 and began regular operations in 1999. It provides both basic information and current news and is primarily oriented toward Hamas, its ideology, and history. It posts official announcements and interviews with high-ranking members of the movement, and propaganda aimed at Israel and on occasion at the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the United States. It also encourages acts of terrorism against Israeli targets and praises the terrorists who commit them. In addition, it conducts surveys and "research" and provides propaganda and "information," including videos, music, posters, and pictures. The main site is in Arabic but links to sister sites in English, French, Farsi (Iran), Urdu (Pakistan), Russian, and Malaysian.

American Internet service providers (ISPs) have been used by Hamas activists on the Internet. Opinions vary on the exact number of American Internet service providers (ISPs) that facilitate Hamas activities on the Web. According to Internet-Haganah.com, an intelligence network dedicated to monitoring Internet activities by terrorists and their supporters, Hamas purchased 18 websites (roughly 60 percent of its sites) from North American providers. An August 2007 report by Dr. Reuven Erlich asserts that Hamas obtained only about 7 (roughly 35 percent) of its estimated 20 websites from North American ISPs. Recently, the Hamas movement has launched its answer to the popular YouTube Internet site. The Hamas version, AqsaTube, shows real-time videos about the Islamist movement. Hamas Internet forums have launched a campaign urging their members to show solidarity and sympathy with AqsaTube in the wake of European reports that accused the website of encouraging terrorism.

E-Marketing

The centrality of the Internet in modern life is unquestioned. Almost all aspects of modern life—communication, entertainment, education, commerce, and many more—are conducted and maintained online. This trend was noted also by marketers and advertisers. Many companies are presenting, selling, promoting, and advertising products and service online, in a trend labeled *e-marketing*. E-marketing can be defined as "Achieving marketing objectives through use of electronic communications technology." Smith and Chaffey (2001) noted that Internet technology can be used to support these aims as follows:

- Identifying—the Internet can be used for marketing research to determine consumers' needs and wants;
- Anticipating—the Internet provides an additional channel by which consumers can access information and make purchases—understanding this demand is key to governing resource allocation in e-marketing;
- Satisfying—a key success factor in e-marketing is achieving customer satisfaction through the electronic channel, raising issues such as is the site easy to use, does it perform adequately, and does it fulfill the consumers' needs?

Numerous studies on e-marketing have yielded practical guidelines and directions for effective online marketing. The importance of developing an effective e-marketing strategy is indicated by Michael Porter (2001) who has argued that the key question is not *whether* to deploy Internet technology—companies have no choice if they want to stay competitive—but *how* to deploy it. There is no evidence to suggest that the approach to developing and implementing strategy should be significantly different for e-marketing than traditional forms. Established frameworks for corporate strategy development or strategic marketing planning should still be followed. These frameworks provided a logical sequence that ensures inclusion of all key activities of strategy development. It can be argued, however, that with e-marketing there is an even greater need for a highly responsive strategy process model where rapid reaction can occur to events in the marketplace. The preferred approach is an emergent e-marketing strategy process that is part of continuous improvements and revisions. Chaffey (2002) noted that e-marketing strategy process models tend to share the following characteristics:

- Continuous internal and external environment-scanning or analysis.
- Clear statement of vision and objectives.
- Strategy development broken down into formulation and selection.
- Strategy implementation.
- Controls to detect problems and adjust the strategy accordingly.
- Response to changes in the marketplace.

One of the leading textbooks in this developing area is "Internet Marketing-Strategy, Implementation and Practice" (Chaffey et al., 2000). The authors suggest a model based on eight decisions when considering or evaluating e-marketing strategy. These are:

- Decision 1. Who are the potential audiences?
- Decision 2. Positioning and differentiation
- Decision 3. Resourcing
- Decision 4. How to "migrate" a company's brand to the Internet
- Decision 5. Outsourcing and strategy partnerships
- Decision 6. Organizational structure
- Decision 7. Building a budget and resource allotment
- Decision 8. Channel structure modifications

Is the strategy of e-marketing applicable to the analysis of terrorist online presence? Can we use the models developed for commercial websites to analyze terrorist websites? This study examines Hamas's websites by the eight decision point model, offered by Chaffey and his colleagues (2000). This attempt will allow one to understand the set of considerations and decisions that guided the design of Hamas websites and to evaluate their fit with e-marketing model. It should be noted that Chaffey's model was conceptualized to direct the decision makers on the strategy of constructing websites and to help them reach

the right decisions at each stage of the process. In this study, the process is in fact reversed. The websites already exist on the Internet, and the model is used to assess the strategic decisions behind their content and format.

Findings

Decision Point 1: Target Audiences

In Chaffey and colleagues' model (2000) the first key decision point concerns the target audience. This decision involves the evaluation and selection of appropriate segments and the development of appropriate offers. In an Internet context, organizations typically target those customer groupings with the highest propensity to access, choose, or buy online. The e-marketing model suggests three different parameters to examine the target audience and to reach a decision about the type of services each target audience will receive. First, Chaffey and his colleagues differentiate between the types of potential audiences: Consumers, personnel, and third parties. They advise companies that a successful website should provide the three types of users with suitable functions in the website. In the next step, they suggest focusing on different types of customers: the most profitable, the largest, those hard to reach using other kinds of media, those that do not have brand loyalty, and strategic decision makers. The last reference point they emphasize is the topic of "Localization," or addressing the needs of different audiences in different countries.

Although the "The Palestinian Information Center" (PIC) website is designed to target all three potential audiences, it addresses mainly the first type of users—customers. The first page of the PIC site offers services to users in eight different languages. A comparison of the site pages in the different languages reveals differences across the websites, despite the fact that visually they appear very similar (see Figure 1). This comparative approach is based on two parameters:

- *The affinity of the site to the Hamas organization*—appearance of the affiliations motifs and themes that connect the site to the Hamas organization and how visible and dominant they are on the home page.
- *The degree of visual extremism*—Photos that are shown on all the sites range from neutral pictures of people going about their daily lives to images of casualties, people covered in blood, and corpses.

The English-language site. There is no connection between the website and the Hamas organization or its factions. The links shown on the site send the user to Western news websites or to Palestinian human rights websites. Furthermore, a search for the word "Hamas" in the English website will reveal only news headlines where Hamas spokesmen express their opinions about current affairs. The entire website does not include any information about the organization, its activities, or its casualties. The degree of visual extremism is very low. Figure 1

The Russian-language site. It is hard to find a clear connection to the Hamas organization, except for one picture where the Dome of the Rock is clearly shown and against the background, on the sky, is a barely visible photo of the founder of the organization, Sheikh Yassin. The amount of visual extremism is very low and is limited to pictures and cartoons with anti-Semitic undertones.
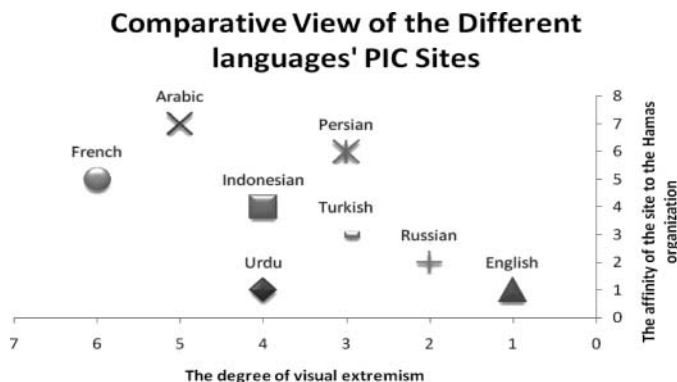
Comparative View of the Different languages' PIC Sites

Figure 1. Classification of PIC Sites

The Urdu-language site (Pakistan). No visual connection between the site and Hamas was found, yet the degree of visual extremism was high. For example: A cartoon shows a dove of peace with its throat slit and blood spilling from it. The site has a banner that calls for a boycott of Israeli products and features a young girl crying.

The Turkish-language site. Its affinity to the Hamas organization is high and this is expressed through a short flash animation where different sentences appear on a clear background picture of Sheikh Yassin's face. The degree of visual extremism is slightly higher than the English, Russian, or Urdu sites—there is one banner of a crying girl, and another one that commemorates 60 years since the Palestinian Nakba (meaning "day of the catastrophe," the annual day of remembrance for the Palestinian people of the "anniversary of the creation of Israel" in May 1948).

The Indonesian site. The site shows a clear connection to the Hamas organization using a propaganda poster for the operational division of Hamas—"Iz A Din Al Kassam." In addition, clicking on the photo will lead users to the website of the operational division. The degree of visual extremism is moderate.

The French site. This site presents more extreme visual content and there is a clear connection to Hamas. The affinity of the site to the Hamas organization is clear from the fact that the Hamas logo is visible on the homepage. Pictures of Sheikh Yassin and Abed al Aziz al Rantisi, labeled as "Martyrs," are presented. The high visual extremism of the site is expressed through pictures of bloody bodies of young men, corpses, and a picture of a crying baby with her face covered in blood.

The Persian site. In this site the connection to Hamas is accentuated. The Hamas logo is shown and in addition the operational division logo is shown as well, with a link to another Hamas site—"Palestine in voices and pictures." The Persian homepage does not show extreme photos, except for anti-Semitic, anti-Western cartoons. It should be noted that Iran is a state-sponsor of Hamas.

The Arabic-language site. This is in fact the main site among the numerous PIC websites. In this site the connection to the Hamas organization is the clearest. The Hamas logo and the operational division logo are both shown clearly. There is a link to the "Al Fateh" children's

online magazine, and links to Hamas's numerous forums. The degree of visual extremism is not especially high, and except for some blatant cartoons, there are no photos that evoke strong emotions.

Thus, the comparison reveals significant variance in the websites' contents, in accordance with the Chaffey model. The various languages used indicate different target audiences and the variance in style, text, appeals, and visuals demonstrate the communicator's awareness of the different audiences. Moreover, based on the marketing model, one can further divide the different audiences targeted by the PIC websites:

- *Audiences that are Hamas-oriented*. People who openly support Hamas and who look for information about the organization as a social organization, as a Palestinian political movement, or as an active militant unit.
- *Audiences that are generally interested in the Palestinian issue*. This audience shows interest in Palestinian history or politics and seeks information about Palestinians, their conflict with Israel, and their background.
- *Audiences that are anti-Western*. People who are opposed to the West; anti-Americans and very often also anti-Semites.
- *Audiences that are interested in Human Rights*. This audience shows an interest in human rights violations.

The PIC sites are directing specific messages to the aforementioned groups. There are some common elements in all the sites: All the sites feature contents that present Palestinian issues such as articles about inter-Palestinian political issues and articles about the Palestinian struggle against Israel and its supporters. However, there are differences across the sites in terms of the degree to which they pander to an anti-West audience or to a human rights constituency. Targeting an anti-West audience can utilize human rights issues, but appealing to the human rights audience cannot involve anti-West messages. This stems from the understanding that Western human rights activists will be deterred from the message of websites that have a strong anti-West orientation.

Additional comparison across target audiences involved the analysis of the same website in two languages—English and Arabic. Such comparison reveals interesting differences: All the sites of the PIC offer "A Look at History" where a visitor can enter a date and receive a detailed list of events, over the years, relating to Palestinian issues. The authors compared the information provided when specific dates were entered. Thus, when the date 30 March was entered, the English version presented three events that occurred on that day: In the year 1989 "Israel bars UNRWA from running an informal educational program in the West Bank for kids that were left idle after the military closure of schools." In the year 1987 "On a television interview the Israeli minister of war, Rabin, exposes the fact that 1000–4400 Palestinians are imprisoned in Israeli jails." In the year 1976 "Israeli police forces and soldiers kill 6 Palestinians living in the occupied territories since 1948 during a demonstration against the occupation of the lands by Israel." However, in the Arabic version five different events are presented: In 2003 "A sacred suicide attack in Netanya, Israel" (the name and hometown of the attacker are mentioned). In 2002 "The Zionist occupation acts in Ramallah, Bethlehem and other cities." In 2002 "A sacred suicide attack in Tel Aviv" (the name and hometown of the attacker are again mentioned). In 2001 "the Zionist occupation forces injured demonstrators on 'Land Day' in Nablus." In 1976 "Proclamation of Land Day on the lands of occupied Palestine."

Another comparison between the English and Arabic versions of the websites examined the articles posted on these sites. This comparison revealed that both sites presented articles dealing with inter-Palestinian political issues, Israeli attacks in the Palestinian territories,

and the vulnerability of Palestinian President Abbas in the Palestinian territories. However, only the English site posted articles on "Zionist Terrorism," "Palestinian Suffering," and "The Injustices Made by the Government of Mahmud Abbas." The Arabic site posted articles missing in the English version such as those on the resistance in Lebanon and on Israel's weak position in the world.

These and other comparisons between the English and Arabic versions lead to the conclusion that the English site appeals more to human rights audiences and to global audiences interested in Palestinian issues. The numerous articles about injured civilians and the presentation of inter-Palestinian issues, criticizing the Fatah government, support this conclusion. In the English site, Hamas's anti-West messages are completely absent. The main message conveyed to this audience is "exposing the truth" about what is going on in Palestine, while emphasizing issues that are in contrast to accepted Western notions of "the good side" and "the bad side," all while concealing any affiliation with the Hamas movement. In contrast, the Arabic version is clearly targeting Palestinian audiences: it focuses on social and economic issues of Palestinians and posts many references to Hamas social and welfare activities. In addition, the site targets a Hamas-oriented audience by emphasizing Hamas spokesmen and leaders in its articles, and by linking to other websites of the organization. The site allows easy access to a list of all prisoners and casualties of Hamas (and only Hamas). The site also devotes a special section to detailed descriptions of the Hamas movement, its values, and functions. However, the Arabic version does not refer to human rights issues: it appears that the Hamas communicators assume that these issues will be less effective among Palestinian audiences.

The differentiation according to target audiences is revealed also in the other versions (languages) of the PIC websites. The Russian language site, for example, highlights anti-Western messages and also caters to anti-Semitism. Similarly, the Turkish site criticizes the involvement of Israel and the United States in Turkish politics, expressed in the empower-ment of the Turkish military—the strongest secular power in the country. In a more extreme way, the French site clearly targets a Muslim audience with a strong anti-West orientation. The site emphasizes graphic pictures that accompany written accounts of Israeli military actions, underlines the French president's opinions against Muslims and Palestinians, and emphasizes the Israeli–French connection through French Jews.

Decision Point 2: Positioning and Differentiation

Deise et al. (2000) have suggested that, in an online marketing context, retailers can position their products relative to competitor offerings according to four main variables: product quality, service quality, price, and fulfillment time. They suggest it is useful to review these as an equation of how they combine to influence customer perceptions of value or brand. Chaffey et al. (2000) present three levels of positioning information that can be promoted on a website: "Brochureware," "Interaction," and "Representation" (Web self-service).

When examining the PIC websites according to this dimension, it is possible to see that most of the PIC websites put an emphasis on information presentation according to the Brochureware style. The information shown on the websites attempts to be of a journalistic nature and to distance itself from propaganda material, in accordance with the differential targeting as explained in the first decision point. Moreover, the PIC websites are also following the "Interactive" mode: on all of the websites there are options to register and receive information from the site by e-mail or by using the RSS service ("Really Simple Syndication"—a format for distributing and gathering content from sources across the Web, including newspapers, magazines, and blogs). The contact created by registration and

exchange of messages follows the interactive dimension as suggested by the model. In the Arabic PIC site there are links to Hamas forums and chat-rooms, adding one more dimension of interactivity. Hamas supporters use numerous online forums, some of which are operated or monitored by Hamas operatives. Weimann (2007; 2008) describes the process of online radicalization, especially of youth, by Internet-savvy terrorists. The creation of virtual communities, the social bonding online, and the radicalization process are all instruments of ideological recruitment. These, in fact, are the terrorist version of the last positioning measure—"representation."

Decision Point 3: Resourcing: Integrating "the Nets"

Chaffey and his colleagues (2000) emphasize the need of an organization to decide on the connection between the Internet presence and the other marketing divisions that the organization operates. Kumar (1999) suggests that a company should decide whether the Internet will primarily complement the company's other channels or replace other channels. Clearly, if it is believed that the Internet will primarily replace other channels, then it is important to invest in the resources, promotion, and infrastructure to achieve this. This is a key decision as the company is essentially deciding whether the Internet is "just another communications and/or sales channel" or whether it will fundamentally change the way it interacts with its customers and channel partners.

Hamas presents and markets its ideas to the Palestinian audience through a rich variety of platforms including sermons in mosques, distributing books, manifests, and brochures and operating a variety of electronic media including radio and television. It is clear that Hamas attempts to integrate all these media, conventional, traditional, and modern, into one multimedia platform. Most of the Hamas websites are linked to other media outlets operated by the organization. This is evident in the Arabic version, where links to other sites, references to other media, and posting of other Hamas publications are frequently highlighted. In contrast, in the English version where the affiliation with Hamas is downplayed, such "networking" is absent.

Decision Point 4—How to Migrate the Company's Brand to the Internet?

Chaffey and his colleagues (2000) suggest four options to migrate the brand to the Internet: Migrate the traditional brand online, extend the traditional brand, partner with an existing digital brand, and create a new digital brand. The Hamas organization, in expanding its activities to the Internet, has chosen two of these options. Regarding the existing media platforms of the organization, its associations, and its operational division, the first option of the model was chosen—the brands of the organization were shifted to the Internet as they were, including the website address as the chosen brand name. However, while this is true for most of the Hamas websites, the PIC websites are an exception: here Hamas clearly preferred the fourth option of the model. A new brand was created and, as we have seen, the organization went further and even concealed the connection between the new brand and the traditional brand in various language sites, except for those in Arabic.

The new branding of the website in various languages contributes to its "innocence." At first glance it would be very hard for a naïve user to notice the difference across the sites. Moreover, even those users who will compare websites in different languages are very likely to find more uniformity than differences. Thus, Hamas uses different migration-of-brand tactics according to different target audiences.

Decision Point 5—Outsourcing and Strategy Partnerships

According to the e-marketing model, this decision is relevant to several dimensions of online presence: Design or technology partnerships, promotion partnerships, reciprocal promotion, distribution partnerships, supplier partnerships, and legal advice. Hamas online has clearly used outsourcing, especially concerning servers that store its websites in different languages. Each of the sites uses a different IP address; maintenance is done by a different company and the site itself is located on a different server. Hamas goes further in safekeeping its Arabic Internet sites by posting them on three different servers.

Hamas's websites are being hosted in mostly Western countries. The main provider is the United States, whose companies maintain 14 Hamas domains and provide network access to two domains despite the fact that Hamas has long been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. government. Likewise, Canadian Internet service providers are used by Hamas even though the militant group is banned from operating in Canada. Russia and Malaysia are the second largest access providers to Hamas. Each country hosts five domains for Hamas. Another Hamas website, the online children's magazine *Alfateh*, just published the 139th edition on its website at http://alfatehmag.net, hosted on U.S. servers in Scottsdale, Arizona. The magazine has been published online since 2002, originally using the domain al-fateh.net, which is currently hosted in Moscow and redirects to the alfatehmag.net URL. In addition, Hamas operates a network of online operatives: paid and volunteer members of the Pro-Hamas Internet support group whose purpose is to infiltrate blogs, forums, and chat rooms with pro-Hamas propaganda.

Launched on 8 June 2008 was a new and improved version of the website of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military-terrorist wing. The newly upgraded website was widely covered on many websites operated by Hamas and its supporters. According to an article published in the updated version of the website, more than half a million users accessed it the day the new version went live. The upgraded website in both Arabic and English versions obtains its technical services from DataForce Contacts, a company based in Moscow, Russia.

Recently, Hamas has launched its answer to the popular YouTube Internet site. The Hamas version, AqsaTube, shows real-time videos about the Islamist movement and is, the website announced in its introduction, "the first Palestinian website specializing in Islamic and jihad audio-visual productions. This site shows the latest Palestinian and Arab audios and videos about the politics, sport, jihad and many things that it would take so long to list here," the "About Us" section of the site says. In addition, the site features the popular Syrian television drama, Bab al-Hara, or The Neighborhood Gate, and videos of former Palestinian president Yasser Arafat, whose Fatah movement has been locked in a bitter, and sometimes violent, struggle with Hamas. There is a link between AqsaTube and Hamas's Gaza-based satellite channel, al-Aqsa TV, which increases the number of viewers and enables it to bypass restrictions on its broadcasts.

Hamas has also launched new websites called PaluTube and TubeZik, a new version of AqsaTube. The file-sharing website AqsaTube was taken offline twice after a French company and a Russian company stopped providing it with technical services. PaluTube and TubeZik are also file-sharing websites, like YouTube, in which users can upload video clips. The featured videos include incitement against Israel, preaching terrorism, and glorification of Hamas. Also found on the websites are posters and clips pertaining mostly to Operation Cast Lead (the Israeli operation in Gaza, 2008, aimed against Hamas), portrayed as a "holocaust." These websites are other constituents in the extensive Internet infrastructure of Hamas and its outreach efforts.

Decision Point 6—Organizational Support

Chaffey and his colleagues (2000) emphasize that the decision over organizational support accompanies online marketing at all times. A special organizational system should provide steady support to the website and online marketing. The company can decide at any point to increase or decrease organizational support.

The Hamas organization today gives the PIC full support. The ideological and administrative regulation of the site is done from the organization's offices in Damascus, where Hamas's political leadership resides. From there Hamas controls the PIC websites, relaying orders through its Lebanese branch, to the head Hamas activist Nizar Hasan Saliman Hassin. Hassin is listed as a contact on a number of the PIC websites, including the Arabic site. There is not sufficient information to make a clear picture of the organizational structure that Hamas built in order to support the PIC but it is obvious that the organization has and does channel many resources to the operation of the PIC websites. This conclusion is drawn from the constant updating of the numerous websites, uploading visual, audio, and print material, upgrading their technology, and applying up-to-date Internet platforms including Facebook, YouTube, GoogleEarth, and more.

The sophistication of a multitude of websites in different languages, each catering to different target audiences with distinctive messages, reveals the existence and operation of production teams that speak different languages and translate and write articles. As was shown in previous parts of the study, the importance of the differences between the sites and the lucidity of the message they convey may suggest a regulation function for each site and maybe even a central regulation system that continuously controls the ideas shown in each site, according to a clear structured plan.

Decision Point 7—Building a Budget and Resource Allotment

The e-marketing model proposes two reference points for building a budget. The first reference point is the initial funding, taking into account expenditure factors and the cost of building and running the site. In the second point, different parameters are considered, such as: last year's Internet marketing budget, the percentage of company sales online, the percentage of total marketing budget, reallocation of marketing expenses, what other companies in the industry are spending, creating an effective online presence, a graduated plan tied into measurable results, and the combination of these approaches. After examining the Hamas websites through this model it is possible to understand how each of the expenditure components has an influence on the PIC websites:

- *Investing in establishing the website.* The PIC website went on the Internet in Arabic on December 1997 and shortly afterward, in January 1998, the English version went online as well. By 2002 the other languages sites were up and running on the Internet. It is safe to assume that establishing the website, supplying the necessary electronic tools, and putting it on the Internet, were done with considerable financial investment approved by the Hamas leadership.
- *Continuous maintenance of the website*. The PIC websites operate like a news network. As was pointed out in the previous decision point, the structure and role of each language website requires an investment in skilled manpower in different capacities and operating such manpower requires budgets. Another section of maintenance of the websites is the protection of the sites against attacks from hostile groups and the financial cost if a website collapses.

- *Relaunching the website.* Every addition of a language to the site presents an additional cost. Furthermore, at the end of 2006 the PIC websites were enhanced; the entrance portal of all the sites was updated and all the sites became uniform in their appearance. A Fatah executive said that for the different marketing activities the organization initiated, including the renewing of the PIC websites, millions of dollars were raised in different Islamic countries.

The Council on Foreign Relations estimates Hamas's annual budget at $70 million.[1] The largest backer of Hamas is Saudi Arabia, with over 50 percent of its funds coming from that country, mainly through Islamic charity organizations. The funding by Saudi Arabia continues despite Saudi pledges to stop funding groups such as Hamas that have used violence and its denouncements of Hamas's lack of unity with Fatah. According to the U.S. State Department, Hamas is funded by Iran, Palestinian expatriates, and "private benefactors in Saudi Arabia and other Arab states."[2] Hamas maintains a strict separation of funds used for military operations and those used for political, social, or other activities. The majority of funds for military activities, around $3 million annually, comes from Iran while funds from charity organizations or from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States are used only for political and social activities.

It is almost impossible to estimate the detailed budgeting strategies used by Hamas. However, there is a correspondence between the size of the budget and the benefits gained by the company through e-marketing. According to the model, these benefits are expressed mainly through the percentage of sales through the website compared to general company sales. As a terror organization, the product being sold is an extreme ideology that is expressed through acts of terror that are almost completely planned, organized, and executed offline, in the real world. Furthermore, in the PIC websites there is no active recruitment of activists, and registration is not required to read contents. These facts complicate the task of examining the benefits of the website, and thus for Hamas the options and strategies are completely dependent on the organization's decision, without concrete feedback such as product sales. However, Hamas's continuous support of its online presence, its growing use of the Internet, and several statements made by Hamas's leaders on the importance of their websites are indicators of the organization's assessment of this platform's effectiveness.

Decision Point 8—Channel Structure Modifications

Chaffey's model presents various strategies designed to take advantage of changes in marketplace structure. These options are: Disintermediation (sell-direct); creating a new online intermediary (countermediation); and partnering with new online or existing intermediaries. To achieve strategic Internet marketing goals, organizations also have to plan for technology integration with customers and suppliers systems. However, an even more vexing questions is how to manage the channel conflicts involved with new developments and new environement.

The PIC websites are certainly demonstrating changes and modifications based on flexibility of online messaging. Hamas is reacting rapidly to events, posting online announcements and references to occurring developments and processes. The websites change contents mostly on a daily basis and are referring not only to local events but also to global developments (e.g., Obama's election). Moreover, as described earlier, Hamas websites change their formats and design, adding new features, posting new links, applying new online technologies, and adopting recent innovations in cyberspace—from Facebook to

YouTube. However, it should be noted that all these changes are not original innovations but are based on a "copycat" approach.

Conclusion

The application of the e-marketing model developed by Chaffey and his colleagues to the case of Hamas websites is an illustrative attempt to test the usefulness of a commercial, business-world-based model to the case on online terrorism. The model, based on eight decision points, was designed to outline a strategy for businesses that want to use the Internet as a marketing platform. They claim that e-marketing is becoming a major apparatus for modern promotion of goods and services. The main function of the proposed model is its systematic outline of key stages in building, maintaining, and changing marketing-oriented websites.

While the model was developed for commercial purposes, our study demonstrates how it could be used as an analytic framework to study terrorist websites. As shown, most of the decision points in the model were relevant to the PIC websites. Obviously these findings do not in any way suggest that the model was the guiding manual for the decision makers in Hamas, but revealing the usefulness of the model to understand Hamas's presence on the Internet may tell us how the group's decision makers perceive their functions in the virtual world.

The PIC website was clearly based on the format of Western news websites such as the online *New York Times*. However, the marketing on Hamas websites is not oriented toward sales, promotion, and commercial profits; it is based on "ideological marketing." Ideological marketing is the confluence of two worlds that were not associated until the past few years. With the development of Western economy the number of products competing for the same market share has risen sharply. Therefore the need to make a product stand out in comparison to other products was paramount and led to the development of sophisticated marketing techniques. More recently, ideology is challenged by the same factors as consumer products. There is a wide variety of competing ideologies on the market and the fundamentals of most of these ideologies, especially terror organizations, are unique in that they are not fully covered by the Western media and thus do not reach large parts of the world. Without presenting their point of view, terror organizations cannot attract support, funding, new recruits, or general sympathy with their struggle. Thus, it is easier to understand the "ideological marketing" that Hamas engages in as a way of showing people the reality from the organization's perspective it and thus instilling its ideology into a more accepting and ready audience.

These reasons led Hamas to launch its websites and channel funds and resources to these online platforms of propaganda and incitement. As demonstrated by this study, Hamas's online presence is following the patterns and innovations originating from the West, which makes e-marketing conceptualizations and models quite useful in analyzing the organization's communications. The present study should encourage further research that may use other up-to-date models and concepts from the marketing world and to apply them to the study of terrorist websites. Finally, counterterrorism agencies and services, desperately seeking online countermeasures (Weimann and von Knop 2008), may find the e-marketing framework as a useful tool. After all, competitive strategies and tactics from the e-commerce world may be used not only by cyber-savvy terrorists but also by those who fight them.

Notes

1. "Hamas: Background Q&A." Council on Foreign Relations. 16 March 2006. Available at http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/hamas.html

2. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2005," United States Department of State. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. US Department of State Publication 11324. April 2006, p. 196.

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