

The Applicability of Prophet Muhammad's Strategies in his Battles and Campaigns in Modern Business

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Abstract

The choice of strategy is prudently done by top managers and business strategists in order to maintain the company's survival, sustainability and achievement of its mission and objectives. This study attempts to examine the applicability of the specific Prophet Muhammad's strategies in his battles and campaigns in modern business. Eight Prophet's strategies were tested that comprise (1) jihad, (2) swiftness, (3) steadfast (al-sabirun) (4) vigorous image, (5) harm prevention, (6) hijrah (migration), (7) peace (al-silmi) and (8) dynamic. Eight respondents consisting of four managing directors, three chief executive officers and one chief operating officer of SMEs in Malaysia who are in the role of strategizing their companies participated in this study. The study found that all of the eight strategies are applicable and being practiced in modern business. This paper opens a new direction of research, discovering the strategic management framework in the of Prophet Muhammad's war strategies.

Keywords: business strategy, Prophet Muhammad, Islamic management

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

This study is concerned with the strategies in battles and struggles of Prophet Muhammad and how they can be applied in the modern business setting. The choice of strategies is considered for survival and achievement of competitive advantage (Porter, 2008) and realization of the companies' mission and objectives (David, 2009).

Consistent with the objective, the research draws on two research literatures that have been rarely integrated, the strategies in strategic management research and biography of the Prophet Muhammad. From Islamic perspective, there is a lot to be learnt from the strategies used by the Prophet in his 23 years of struggle to establish Islam in the Arabian Peninsula. It is, therefore, necessary and important to bridge this gap in order to empirically address the research objectives.

The literature related to campaign and battle strategies of Prophet Muhammad is still sparse. Higher learning institutions are lacking of reference sources. They rely heavily on the Western management research and theories, especially theories and models emerging from the USA and Europe (Ali & Camp, 1995). Thus, this study is undertaken to fill this knowledge gap.

The starting points of strategy stem from ancient military strategy. The term strategy is rooted from 'strategos', a Greek word which stands for 'a general'. The earliest modern authors connecting the notion of military strategy and business were Von Neumann and Morgenstern (2007) who proposed the theory of games and economic behavior. Later on, many other authors followed their footsteps in integrating both fields.

There are many similarities between business competition and military warfare. First, both business and military struggles are to overcome their competitors. Second, both organizations need to be administered properly. Third, both organizations need strategies and tactics. Fourth, the head of both organizations determines the success of the organization. Fifth, both need capability and competitive personnel. Finally, both need information (Chen, 2004; Stokes, 2007).

1.2 The Strategies in the Prophet Muhammad's Battles and Campaigns

An extensive review and content analysis of literature have been conducted to discover Prophet Muhammad's strategies in battles and campaigns. The result suggests eight strategies based on the Prophet's strategic choices.

Table 1. The major battles and campaigns of Prophet Muhammad and their related strategies

No.	Battles and Campaigns	Year	Strategies
1.	Hijrah	1Hijriah (622 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hijrah • Harm prevention • Peace
2.	Badar	2Hijriah (623 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigorous image • Steadfast
3.	Uhud	3Hijriah (624 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Vigorous image • Steadfast • Dynamic
4.	Khandaq	6Hijriah (627 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm prevention • Vigorous image • Peace
5.	Hudaibiyah	6Hijriah (627 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamic • Swiftness
6.	Khaibar	7Hijriah (628 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm prevention • Jihad • Swiftness • Jihad
7.	Mu'tah	8Hijriah (629 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigorous image • Harm prevention • Steadfast • Jihad
8.	The Conquest of Makkah	8Hijriah (629 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swiftness • Dynamic • Harm Prevention
9.	Hunain	8Hijriah (629 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jihad
10.	Thaif	9Hijriah (630 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jihad • Dynamic
11.	Tabuk	9Hijriah (630 A.D.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jihad • Dynamic • Swiftness

Sources: Al-Mubarakpuri (1996), As-Sallaabee (2005), Ahmad (2006)

The study has categorized the eight strategies of the Prophet into three groups. There are three primary or major strategies; namely, engagement, prevention and adaptation. Engagement strategy is face-to-face or bumper-to-bumper type of strategies. It covers three secondary strategies which are jihad, swiftness and steadfastness (al-sabirun). Prevention strategy is the strategy that is intended to alleviate the threats and risks facing the business. It covers two secondary strategies which are vigorous image and harm prevention (daf' al-darar). Adaptation strategy is the strategy to adapt to the changes in internal and external environment. It employs the elements of flexibility and innovation. It covers three secondary strategies which are hijrah (migration), peace (as-silm) and dynamic approach.

1.2.1 Engagement (Jihad) Strategy

The Jihad strategy is most employed by the Prophet in the later stage in Madinah after he accumulated strength. There are evidences of employing this strategy from the biography of Prophet Muhammad, for instance in the Conquest of Mecca (Ramadhan, 8H), the Prophet's fighters entered the city from all four corners. The Prophet entered Makkah from its upper end, at Azkhar, ahead of his green squadron. Khalid bin Al-Zubair bin A-Awwam entered at the left flank, Kudan. Meanwhile, Sa'ad bin Ubadah entered from upper-Makkah, paving the way for the entrance of the Prophet. The only resistance occurred was at the lower end, where Khalid was coming from at al-Khandamah.

Another example is in the Ghazwah Bani Qainuqa' (Syawwal, 2H), as the enemy found out that the Prophet was marching towards them, they stayed quiet in their fortresses. The Prophet surrounded and imposed upon them a siege that lasted for 15 nights. Then, they unconditionally surrendered to him (As-Sallaabee, 2005).

In today's harsh reality, the term 'jihad' is more often than not associated with terrorism and extremism committed by Muslims. This phenomena is accentuated by the infamous 9/11 tragedy, which are allegedly carried out by al-Qaeda, a Muslim terrorist group. Majority of the Western community views jihad as a religious holy war among Muslim fundamentalists against anyone who is not a Muslim, which negatively positions the image of Islam (Kalin, 2004). Muslims who are thought to be a jihadists and believe in martyrdom, are often portrayed as extortionist, polygamist, murderer (of 'infidel' Muslims who convert to other religions), and anti-Semitic (Darwish, 2006; Khan, 2008).

Maira (2009) who debated from the western lens argued that 'good' Muslims are public Muslims who can provide information about the oppression of women in Islam, and support the American 'war on terror' policy under the pretext of 'benevolent imperialism'. On the other hand, 'bad' Muslims are the ones who advocate hatred, racism, and anti-Semitism among the Arabs and Muslims. Nevertheless, Khan (2008) highlighted positive statements by academicians across the United States on jihad, which is viewed positively as a struggle to build a society that is fair and practices morally acceptable conduct. It is difficult to completely dispel the commoners' misconception of the true meaning of jihad, as news on offensive jihad military acts are prevalent in the mass media compared to jihad in the social and economic context discussed by academic theorists and advocates that are published in journals.

1.2.2 Swift Strategy

The swift and surprise strategy was frequently employed by Prophet Muhammad in his battles and campaigns. An example of this strategy is in Ghazwah Badr (Ramadhan, 2H), Muslims used difficult a route via mountains to reach Badr faster than their enemy and control the water (resources) and strategic location (Rahman, 1990). In Ghazwah Uhud (Syawwal, 3H), in order to gain time-based competitive advantage or swift, Muslims used difficult route via mountains to reach Uhud faster than their enemy and control the strategic location (Rahman, 1990).

Moreover, in Ghazwah Khaibar (Muharram, 7H), the Prophet and Muslims moved very fast towards Khaibar. Their enemies, the Khaibar Jews were taken by surprise and they screamed, "Muhammad is coming, Muhammad is coming!" The Prophet's supporters moved very fast to cover 160 kilometers within 6 days and the alliance of their enemy; Bani Ghatafan, did not have the opportunity to help them (Rahman, 1990).

The concept of swift is reflected in modern military through the first mover advantage approach. In this regard, first mover advantage refers to development, adoption and sustainability of innovative warfare system against its less-advanced opponents, who will attempt to equalize the level of playing field (Silverstein, 2013). In high-velocity and turbulent business environments, being able to enter the market faster than others is often regarded as an important recipe of success.

The concept of first mover advantage (FMA) was mooted by Lieberman and Montgomery (1988) who defined FMA as benefits gained by firms that enter the market earlier than other businesses. FMA mostly occurs in businesses that market consumer electronics and fast moving consumer goods, in which new technology can rapidly become obsolete in a short period of time. Among the advantages earned for being the pioneer in the field include technological leadership, scarce asset pre-emption and increased buyer switching costs (Woolley, 2013).

More often than not, a good initiative will always be accompanied by other competitors that are seriously attempting to catch up. In this case, a first mover can become a trap if the business is not properly sustained, where the advantage will not last (McGrath, 2013). Lieberman and Montgomery (2013) suggested that the initial advantages possessed by the early movers are not guaranteed and they may not last forever. Being a first mover not necessarily brings advantages as a study among Taiwanese semiconductor players found that the late entrants display better performance and higher productivity than the first movers (He, Hung & Lu, 2013).

1.2.3 Steadfast (al-sabirun) Strategy

This strategy has its origins in Al-Quran as Allah named a group of people (al-sabirun) who were brave enough to challenge a bigger sized enemy army. This characteristic is shared by guerrilla strategy in the Western literature; nevertheless, both strategies are coming from different cultures and worldview. In Islamic perspective, the steadfast strategy is employed only by those who are brave, have tawhid and tawakkul (belief and trust in Allah) in order to achieve Al-Falah (success in this world and the hereafter) and pleasure of Allah. Whereas, in

the Western perspective, the guerrilla strategy is used by anyone who is brave in order to gain worldly profit and success.

In Al-Qur'an, Allah said: "... How often a small group overcame a mighty army by Allah's grace?" And Allah is with As-Sabirun (the patient or steadfast persons) (Al-Quran, 2:249). In another verse, Allah commanded, "O Prophet (Muhammad)! Urge the believers to fight. If there are twenty steadfast persons amongst you, they will overcome two hundred, and if there be a hundred steadfast persons they will overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they (the disbelievers) are people who do not understand (Al-Quran, 8:65).

There is an obvious indication of employment of steadfast strategy especially when the Muslims were not strong when they were in the early phase in Madinah. During that time, they just occupied the new ground. This strategy is well suited for the weaker organization to face the well-equipped organization (Michaelson & Michaelson, 2011).

In Ghazwah Badar (Ramadhan, 2H) and Ghazwah Uhud (3H), the Prophet and his armies fought with a bigger sized enemy army. For Ghazwah Badar, the Prophet's army consisted of 313 fighters who fought 1,000 Quraishy fighters, whereas, in Ghazwah Uhud, 1,000 of the Prophet's supporters fought 3,000 Quraishy fighters.

Al-Sabirun appears 13 times in the Holy Quran. In general, it refers to a person who is patient, loyal, faithful and devoted to the cause or belief that the person succumbs to. Specifically, Muslims are bound to be patient with calamities that may befall them while they are committed to God's cause. In relation to modern management practices, the Al-Sabirun concept relates to an organization's firm belief in its corporate mission and values that explain its reason for existence in the first place. A steadfast organization shall portray unwavering commitment, determined support and unswerving position of their anticipated goals.

The term Al-Sabirun also closely synonyms with 'Istiqamah', which means to go straight into the direction, acting rightly whilst allowing no deviation. Abu 'Amrah Sufyan bin 'Abdullah, who said:

I said: "O Messenger of Allah, tell me something about Islam which I could not ask anyone to save you." He answered: "Say: 'I believe in Allah', and then 'istiqam' (stand firm and steadfast)."

Ibn Qayyim (1292-1350 A.D.), an Islamic theologian, outlined five conditions to achieve 'Istiqamah' which are sincere in doing things for the sake of Allah (God) alone, doing things on the basis of knowledge, obedience to Allah in the correct manner, perform one's best, and restricting oneself to what is lawful while performing those deeds.

The ability to portray such devotion and fixed perception towards a particular goal can be associated with end values upheld by people concerning other people, things or ideas. Values are fundamental beliefs that a person regards to be important, that are relatively stable over time and have impact on attitudes, perception and behavior (Ravlin & Melino, 1987). End values are beliefs on the types of outcomes that are worth trying to pursue (Rokeach, 1973). Muslims strongly hold to the belief that paradise awaits those who patiently withstand the tests and challenges that they face in life. These challenges involve avoiding misdeeds and sins, and upholding moral principles through righteous behavior. According to the Al-Quran, "Do you think that you will enter Paradise before Allah tests those of you who fought (in His Cause) and (also) tests those who are As-Sabirun (those who are patient)?" (Al-Quran, 3:142).

Regardless of religion, people are striving for things that they consider very important in life. Values are shaped and learned through family upbringing and education. Although there are limited work that directly link religion with values, people who value certainty, self-restraint and submission to the external verity are inclined to be more religious, while those who value openness to change and self-expression are inclined to become less religious (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). Being steadfast in performing a task and being steady towards achieving goals can be considered as a part of work-related values. This type of work-related values helps employees to make steadfast decisions and determine necessary actions at work (Ravari, Bazargan-Hejazi, Ebadi, Mirzaei & Oshvandi, 2013).

Steadfast strategy is sometimes regarded as the opposite of innovation and change. In a qualitative and comparative study of two giant e-commerce businesses in China, it is found that each culture can prosper in its specific context of environment and time (Ye, Hu, & Li, 2008). However, steadfastness does not necessarily prohibit innovation and change, as the main idea of being steadfast revolves around the ability of oneself to stay on track according to the original established mission and remain committed to complete the goals.

1.2.4 Vigorous Image Strategy

This strategy is meant to show a strong image in front of the enemy. Allah commanded Prophet Muhammad and

Muslims to prepare and show their strength, “And muster against them (the transgressing enemy) whatever force and war mounts at your disposal so that you may strike terror into the enemies of Allah and your enemy, and others besides them whom you do not know, but Allah does...” (Al-Quran 8:60).

In Ghazwah Bani Sulaim (Syawwal, 2H), as the report came of the gathering of the tribes of Bani Sulaim and Bani Ghatafan with intent to attack Madinah, Prophet Muhammad proceeded with a force of 200 men to stop them. When he reached their watering place, called Al-Kudr, he found that the place was empty as the enemy had fled upon hearing the arrival of Muslim force.

In another case when leaving Uhud (Sya’ban, 4H) the leader of the enemies, Abu Sufyan, had challenged the Prophet and promised him another encounter at Badr. At the promised time, the Prophet stayed at Badr for eight days. However, Abu Sufyan went back to Makkah from Al-Zahran. He said to his people that it was a year of famine, so they should return. Surely, a year of plenty and prosperity would suit them better. The Prophet also returned without fighting.

The vigorous image strategy applied during Prophet's battles has many similarities with strong corporate image when viewed through the lens of modern business practices, despite not involving any element of intimidation towards competitors. Reputation and brand image of a company are vital tools for competitive advantage when competing in turbulent business environment. Strong corporate reputation and brand image bring credibility, create trust and add value to product offerings by eliminating uncertainty among the consumers and stakeholders.

There are many beneficial outcomes from the implementation of strong corporate image and reputation. According to Aaker (1997), strong corporate and brand image enable efficient communication between the company and the customers, especially if the newly entered market is not within the current market scope of the company. In order to create a strong corporate brand, three ‘strategic stars’ ought to be aligned. These interdependent elements are vision, culture and image (Hatch & Schultz, 2001).

Customers will also progressively build positive perceptions about the services offered by companies which possess strong corporate image (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Even if these companies are losing customers to other competitors, the customers shall not view the company negatively with regard to its image and reputation. Nevertheless, Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) found that there is a strong relationship between customer loyalty and corporate image and reputation. Positive corporate reputation is also able to deter competitors' entry when a sturdy stance is adopted (Weigelt & Camerer, 1988).

1.2.5 Harm Prevention Strategy

This strategy was applied by the Prophet in Ghazwah Bani Mustaliq (Zul Qa’idah, 5H). The leader of the Banu Mustaliq or al-Muraisi influenced the people of his tribe and other Arab tribes to fight against Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet set out with a small force of his companions; they marched and reached the spring of Muraishi. Whereas, in Ghazwah Al-Hudaibiyah (Zul Qa’idah, 6H), an Al-Hudaibiyah peace treaty was made by Muslims and Quraishy (As-Sallaabee, 2005; Ahmad, 2006). This was to prevent Muslims from harm.

Another example of harm prevention is in Ghazwah Khandaq in Muharram, 7H, risk management is taken into account, the Prophet instructed the digging of a ditch as it was the best option to protect the Muslims against an enemy army that outnumbered his army by about three times. In the case of Jews of Khaibar, Khaibar fortresses were used as the place to plan and to launch attacks on Muslims. The Prophet employed the harm prevention strategy through pre-emptive strikes to launch an attack to counter the threats of Khaibar Jews.

A company struggling in a competitive business landscape is analogous to a helpless victim who is stranded in the ocean where the person has the option of either to swim or sink. The challenges become more accentuated when these companies expand into new markets where potential returns are always accompanied by risks. These risks can either be related to predictable business risks such as market, capital, labor, legal, raw material supplies, foreign exchange or uncontrollable risks such as deceased leaders (managerial succession planning) and natural disasters.

Venturing into a new and unfamiliar market without proper risk management strategy is akin to a hunter who arbitrarily explores into the uncharted jungle in search of wild deer yet unaware that dangerous predators are always on the lookout to scavenge their next victim. The analogy is applicable to established brands which are too dependable on customers’ loyalty and brand image to an extent that they ignore the threats of potential substitutes which may fulfill certain customers’ needs that the brands are unable to satisfy. While harm prevention in the medieval ages is all about suppression of physical intimidations, harm prevention in the knowledge era deals with mitigation of the external threats that seek to reduce a company’s performance.

In the context of business rivalry, harm prevention strategy is exemplified through Michael Porter's (1980) five forces model of environmental threats, which recognize the threat of entry, threat of rivalry, threat of substitutes, threat of suppliers and threat of buyers as external forces that promote businesses to become more competitive and productive. The most attractive segment is one in which entry barriers are high and exit barriers are low. This means that few new companies can successfully enter the industry and non-performing companies can exit easily. If the threats in a particular industry is powerful enough to appropriate most of the profits that companies in that industry might generate, then the anticipated average level of performance will be low, and vice versa (Barney & Hesterly, 2010).

1.2.6 Hijrah Strategy

In Prophet Muhammad's war context, hijrah strategy means to migrate and transfer the dakwah (calling) centre from Makkah to Madinah. The Islamic scholars extend the meaning of hijrah as changing from anything bad to better, and from anything better to the best. Hijrah strategy can be seen clearly when the Prophet and his companions migrated to Madinah. The people of Madinah welcomed him, unlike the other places such as Makkah, so the opportunity and market for his dakwah (calling) was available. In addition, Madinah was not easy to be attacked by the rivals, as two sides of Madinah were hilly and full of lava blocks in the south and the west side, plus there were gated gardens in the south area. In the east side, there was lava plain. Only the north side had a clear space that was open to be attacked by the enemies (Rahman, 1980). Furthermore, the Prophet gave Madinah its name; from its former name Yathrib to Madinah Al-Munawwarah which means the 'the enlightened city', which was also a type of hijrah (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996).

The underlying principle behind the Hijrah strategy is effective change management. The Prophet managed to adapt well to the changes in the external environment. Islam may not have spread all over the globe if the Prophet decided to stay and preach in Mecca where hostility and dissent among the inhabitants were at its peak and life-threatening. The Prophet had earlier anticipated that Madinah was a land of opportunity and the migration proved to be rewarding as the first mosque was built there once the Muslims arrived and welcomed at the city.

The prophet's hijrah strategy was very much similar to current organizational change practices. The lesson to be learnt is that a company should move away from the markets which are not environmentally favorable, and settle in at markets that provide better opportunities. Despite being linked with organizational improvement, change is difficult to implement as people and organization often resist the idea of change (Trader-Leigh, 2002). Thus, change does not happen easily and it requires leaders to play active roles through guidance, alliance building, empowerment, communication, celebration of short-term milestones and continuous encouragement (Kotter, 1996). Motivating for change is an arduous task for the management as people do not support change unless there are compelling reasons convincing them to do so in the face of uncertain future benefits (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Therefore, understanding employees' reaction and responses are crucial in assessing the readiness for change and overcoming resistance to change.

Vakola, Armenakis and Oreg (2013) developed a model that depicts the different types of reaction to change which directly influence the change outcomes. These types of reaction are categorized into affective, cognitive and behavioral. Affective reaction is present when the people involved provide positive reactions to change (that are shown in the form of satisfaction or positive emotions) and negative reactions to change (stress, anxiety and negative emotions). The cognitive aspect of reaction relates to the views and thoughts about the change from the change recipients. It involves decision on satisfaction, strategic commitment, attitudes meant to support the change, openness to the change and readiness for change. Behavioral reaction is categorized as active and explicit behaviors in the change process (to be actively involved or to withdraw), behavioral intentions (to resist or to support) and coping behavior (confronting or avoiding the stress).

1.2.7 Peace Strategy

In the Prophet's war and Qur'anic context, peace strategy materialized when two or more fighting parties were willing to stop fighting, whether to have peace with co-operation or just peace without co-operation. Its application in business context is when two or more competing businesses are willing to give up the competition and collaborate among themselves. They may or may not form a joint-venture, partnership or strategic alliance. The example of this strategy is in the very early years after migration to Madinah, the Prophet and Muslims had peace with Jews through the Madinah constitution. In Ghazwah Ghatafan (Rabi'ulAwwal, 3H), the Prophet stayed in Nadj and made some peace treaties with local tribes concerning the blocking of commercial routes by the Quraish.

The Prophet's act towards peace is compatible with the win-win approach that is frequently applied in modern

businesses. The concept of win-win collaboration is one of the hallmarks of relationship marketing. Gummesson (2002) emphasizes that collaboration can only be effective when there is a win-win relationship, be it with the customers (external) or the employees (internal). In this case, a party should view the customer as (1) a partner and a co-producer rather than as an adversary, (2) knowledgeable instead of amateur, (3) revenue compared to cost, and (4) having individual needs as opposed to sharing common needs with the masses.

Furthermore, Hunt, Lambe and Wittmann (2002) argued that resource-advantage theory can be used effectively to measure business alliance success as the model integrates several well-established views namely (1) Resource-based view, which is the availability of organizational resources to produce valuable market offerings, (2) Competence-based view, which is the organizational capability for securing, developing and managing alliances, (3) Relational factors view which is the adoption of positive relationship exchanges (cooperation, trust, shared values, and absence of opportunistic behavior), and (4) Competitive advantage view, which is gaining advantage in terms of generating a relatively higher product value or incurring a relatively lower resource costs when compared to the competitors.

The main motive underpinning strategic business alliances can be attributed to organizational adaptation, which can be classified as either exploitation or exploration (March, 1991). Exploitation refers to the enhancement of already available assets and capabilities to increase a company's efficiency while exploration refers to experimentation of new assets and capabilities that may have the potential to increase a company's performance. Based on March's (1991) exploration-exploitation theory, Koza and Lewin (2000) introduced three types of strategic alliances which are learning alliances, business alliances and hybrid alliances.

Learning alliances happen when companies jointly share strong exploration intents with the aim of reducing information asymmetry between the alliance partners and have joint creation of new knowledge (Koza & Lewin, 2000). Contrary to learning alliances, companies linked through business alliances have strong exploitation intents and these alliances focus on utilization of merged assets to achieve increase in revenues. Lastly, hybrid alliances tie-up companies with strong exploration and exploitation intents which result in costs savings derived from efficient utilization of capabilities and assets (exploitation) and increase in profits due to the assimilation of knowledge or best practices as a result of joint learning activities (exploration).

1.2.8 Dynamic Strategy

The analysis of various strategies has shown that dynamic strategy and its principle became the integral part of Prophet Muhammad's military organization. The dynamic strategy is also essential in current companies as the business environments are constantly changing.

There are a few cases where the Prophet adopted the dynamic strategy such as in Ghazwah Uhud (Syawwal, 3H). The Prophet gave consent to a companion who just converted to Islam to threaten the rivals who were going to attack the Muslims. In Ghazwah Ahzab (Syawwal, 3H), the Prophet gave consent to companions to disturb the unity of rival alliances. Besides, in Ghazwah Al-Hudaibiyah (Zul Qa'idah, 6H), the Prophet discarded his prior strategy and goal in order to adapt with the environment. His prior goal was to perform the Umrah. Whereas, during the siege of Taif (Syawwal, 9H), the Prophet learnt that Taif was a very rich city, with many resources. It was not easy and costly to defeat them. The Prophet changed his strategy and called upon his army to retreat (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996; As-Sallaabee, 2005; Ahmad, 2006).

Through the lens of non-muslims, it is often believed that Islam is dominated with rigidity, rigor and tight compliance with regards to shariah-related rules and laws (Shehada, 2009) and an apparent lack of religious freedom and rights for democracy (Rowley & Smith, 2009). However, the Prophet was known as a dynamic leader who respected the rights of his people, especially during the establishment of the Madinah charter and the treaty of Hudaibiyah. During the prophet's reign of Mecca and Madinah, it was agreed that Muslims, Jews and Christians should live together in peace and harmony with freedom to practice their religions. Through Shura (consultation or mutual consent), the Prophet also sought advice of his people, exchanged views and opinions with his followers, and open to round-table negotiations when it comes to major issues (Othman, 2004).

Quinn's (1988) four-quadrant model of competitive values framework (CVF) describes an organization's culture through the dimensions of control orientation (flexible versus stability) and function (internal or external). The quadrants of adhocracy culture and clan culture are symbolized through minimal levels of control and conformity which give freedom to the employees to be creative (adhocracy) and also people-friendly (clan). Cultural change is difficult to achieve considering that it involves change in values and belief among people who earlier developed and remained faithful to the current culture (Hooijberg & Petrock, 1993).

Organizational culture, from the Islamic perspective may address the issue of lack of understanding towards the

fundamental nature of human beings and total reality from the conventional perspective (Kazmi, 2004).

The preceding discussion on the eight Prophet strategies is summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2. The Eight Prophet Muhammad's Strategies

Prophet Strategies	Detailed Strategies	Meaning	Business Interpretation
Engagement	<i>Jihad</i>	A type of offensive strategy plus <i>beliefin Allah</i>	Aggressively attack the market and competitors
	Swiftness	Speed	In product development, decision, responding to customers etc.
	Steadfast	A type of guerrilla strategy plus <i>tawakkul (trust in Allah)</i>	Small company attacks and competes with the bigger companies while trusting Allah
Prevention	Vigorous image	Appear or show the strong image	Reputation and brand image
	Harm prevention	Preventing from harm	Prevent the companies from environmental and competition threats
Adaptation	<i>Hijrah</i>	Migrate or transfer or changing from anything bad to better, and from anything better to the best.	i. Moving business location, establish new type of business ii. Business, introduce new product or repositioning
	Peace	Stop fighting	Peace and co-operation with competitors
	Dynamic	Flexibility	Flexible and progress towards company's goals

Source: Al-Mubarakpuri (1996), As-Sallaabee (2005), Ahmad (2006)

1.3 Research Objectives

There are two objectives of this study. First, the study is meant to examine whether the specific strategies of Prophet Muhammad in his campaigns and battles are applicable and implemented by owners, chief executives and senior managers of SMEs in strategizing their organizations. Second, the study is intended to provide a foundation for developing Islamic strategic management in future studies.

2. Method

In achieving these objectives, the study employs qualitative method by interviewing subject matter experts to explore and share their viewpoints and experience. In obtaining comprehensive data, the researchers administered face-to-face interviews. The interviews used a set of questions as a guide. These were given to them before their interviews. Additional questions were asked to clarify the terms or support the main set of questions. This procedure allows both the interviewer and interviewee the flexibility to explore the details of the issues under discussion. Nevertheless, respondents have the option to not respond to any of the questions given to them.

2.1 Research Participants

The respondents consist of eight Malaysian Muslim practitioners, five men and three women. The number of respondents was determined based on the responses received. When the responses achieved saturation (the same answers were given by the additional respondent) the process of data collection was put into a halt, resulting in only eight respondents. Seven of them were owners or chief executive of manufacturing firms and one of them is a senior manager from a retail firm. The selection of companies for this study was based on small and medium businesses (SMEs) registered with Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation Malaysia (SME Corp. Malaysia), which are based in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Only business organizations which have been in operation for more than 5 years were selected for the study.

The respondents were selected using non-probability purposive (judgment) sampling as the information was obtained from the specific target groups, which are owners, chief executives or senior managers who are involved in the process of strategizing their companies and the ones who have the adequate information required by the study. Judgment sampling was thought to be the most appropriate sampling design for the study for the reason that the judgment sampling involves the choice of subjects who are in the best position to provide the information required (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Table 3. Profile of participants

Respondent	Gender	Title and Organization	Age	Working Experience
Respondent 1	Male	Managing Director (Medical supplies manufacturer)	46	24 years
Respondent 2	Male	Managing Director (Medical supplies manufacturer)	51	27 years
Respondent 3	Female	Chief Executive Officer (Electrical cables manufacturer)	44	20 years
Respondent 4	Female	Managing Director (Cooking oil manufacturer)	58	35 years
Respondent 5	Male	Chief Executive Officer (Sugar refinery manufacturer)	61	38 years
Respondent 6	Male	Chief Executive Officer (Oil lubricant manufacturer)	51	22 years
Respondent 7	Male	Chief Executive Officer (Plastic manufacturer)	66	45 years
Respondent 8	Female	Chief Operating Officer (music album and book publisher)	33	10 years

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers administered face-to-face interviews with the participants. The in-depth interviews were administered in agreement with the participants following a qualitative interview format. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to 80 minutes and were administered at the convenience of the participants. Most of the participants prefer not to review a brief copy of questionnaire before the interview was conducted; nevertheless, two of them received the copy of questionnaire through e-mail. All the interviews were recorded by audio tape, transcribed and coded into a set of themes. Before each interview, concepts contained in the questionnaire were explained to the respondents, aided by Table 2.

3. Results

This part presents the results of the exploratory interviews on the views of the top managers regarding the Prophet Muhammad's strategies in the modern business.

3.1 Jihad Strategy

Respondent 1 highlighted that in competing with the rivals; the company needs to have better products, better technology and has to educate the customers that it is better than its rivals. Respondent 2 agreed with the implementation of the jihad strategy which has the element of offensiveness provided that the company has to follow the Islamic rulings. Respondent 3 mentioned that the nature of her company is not suited to implement this strategy, but it is applicable to other types of businesses. Respondent 4 stressed the importance of this strategy as the nature of the strategy itself is part of Muslim responsibilities.

Respondent 5 affirmed the implementation of this strategy, stating that the business has to compete with the rivals' strengths, not their weaknesses. Respondent 6 said that in real competition, "we have to kill others or otherwise we will be killed", provided that the competition must be fair. Respondent 7 mentioned by using this strategy, companies have to deliver their promises to customers, better quality of product, on time delivery and competitive price. Respondent 8 reiterated that her company always applied this strategy especially to the closest rival.

All of the respondents agreed that jihad strategy is applicable and even most of them view it as an important strategy in modern businesses. In applying this strategy, the respondents mentioned about certain conditions that need to be fulfilled such as it should follow the Islamic rulings, suitability of the strategy to the nature of business, competition must be fair, attack the strengths and not the weaknesses and attack the weaknesses without mentioning bad things about the competitor products.

3.2 Swiftsness Strategy

Respondent 1 used swiftsness strategy by having in house research, collaborating with the competitors and acquiring the ready product licenses. Respondent 2 listed the important elements of swiftsness strategy. Among them are being fast in decision making, fast in replying the customer enquiries and fast in delivering the product. Respondent 3 mentioned another element of swiftsness strategy, which is, the business should recognize

customers' complaint, product problems and customer choice faster than its competitors.

Respondent 4 was in agreement with this strategy when she accentuated the importance of speed in servicing the customer and the speed in identifying the changes in the industry and adapting to the new requirements. Respondent 5 prioritized this strategy in his business; he emphasized the necessity of speed in decision making and team work. He further made the connection between the concept of speed and the need to perform prayer on time, if one needs to qadha' (perform the undone) a prayer, he or she has to do it immediately.

Respondent 6 agreed on the call for speed in terms of decision making; responding to customers and developing new products. Respondent 7 used the analogy on the importance of speed in business with car racing; those who arrive first will win the market. Respondent 8 thought that it is important to have this strategy. With speed, the company is able to introduce new products at the right time. However, in the case of a company that could not afford to become the first to introduce the product in the market, it should introduce a better product compared to the existing one.

All of the respondents agreed that swiftness or speed strategy was applicable and viewed it as an important strategy in modern businesses. The respondents viewed the elements that create swiftness are: having own research centre, collaborating with competitors, acquiring ready product licenses, being fast in decision making, responding speedily to customers' enquiries and complaints, being quick in delivering the product, gaining faster information about products and customers than competitors, being fast in developing new products and servicing them, being prompt in identifying the changes in the industry and adapting to its new requirement, and being sharp in thinking and having good team work.

Moreover, through swiftness strategy, the company is able to introduce new products at the right time. If the company could not afford to become the first to introduce a product in the market, it should introduce a better product compared to the existing one.

3.3 Steadfast (al-sabirun) Strategy

Respondent 1 cautioned that a small company has to make a maximum effort before tawakkul. Similar to respondent 1, respondents 2 and 7 reminded that effort should come first before tawakkul. Respondent 2 further added that in applying steadfast strategy, the business should have fair competition and not become enemies with rivals. Respondent 3 mentioned that "we have to try first to compete with the bigger companies because we do not know our sustenance as it comes from Allah".

Respondent 4 affirmed that supplicating to Allah and tawakkul are crucial in competing with bigger companies. Respondent 5 warned that a small company has to evaluate itself before competing with the bigger rivals. If it is not capable to compete then it has not to do so. Respondent 6 agreed with the strategy and suggested that in applying this strategy, the business has to become a niche whether in products or services. Respondent 8 asserted that patience strategy is applicable in business provided that it has a factor or few factors that would give advantage to the company such as the market demand and opportunity to collaborate with other small rivals.

All of the respondents agreed that jihad strategy is applicable in modern businesses. In relation to steadfast strategy and tawakkul, there are a few points taken such as effort should come first before tawakkul, the need to put the best effort before tawakkul and supplicating to Allah and tawakkul are crucial in competing with bigger companies. A small company has to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses before competing with the bigger rivals. In applying this strategy, the business has to be niche whether in products or services. Furthermore, this strategy is applicable in business provided that it has a factor or a few factors that would give advantage to the company such as the market demand and opportunity to collaborate with other small rivals.

3.4 Vigorous Image Strategy

Respondent 1 opined that this is an important strategy in business especially for marketing purposes. He viewed that a business should not show that it is small and weak. He further stated that Islam asks Muslim to be 'Qawiy' (strong) and show strength which makes rivals fear, and not to show weakness. Respondent 2 mentioned that certain businesses need this strategy in order to convince the customers. He said that the customers are always required to evaluate the business, if the appearance of a business is not convincing, they should not do business with it. He gave an example, "if the customer intends to grant a RM10 million project, but the businessman came to the customer on a motorbike, he would not trust him or her, even though there is a funder who would back him or her up".

Respondent 3 affirmed the suitability of this strategy for certain industries. She herself prefers to show the strength to the customer but not to the competitor. In fact, she pretends to be weak to the competitor. Respondent 4 affirmed that this strategy is important to gain customers' confidence but it should not be overused and

deceiving to the customers. Respondent 5 affirmed the need to be able to make their strength known to others.

Respondent 6 mentioned the need to show a vigorous image while building that image concurrently. In other words, the business needs to have a vision of a strong image while building it. It is unethical when a business projects a strong image without the effort to achieve it. He added, "The people will know later that you are telling lies". Respondent 7 also asserted this strategy and mentioned that small players should show that they are big; otherwise they will be wiped out from the market. He insisted that small companies should try to do something that has not been done before to know their real capabilities. He further stated that the strength of small companies like his company is that they are more focused than the bigger companies.

Majority of the respondents (seven out of eight) agreed that vigorous image strategy is applicable in modern businesses. One of the respondents did not give clear opinion about this strategy. According to the respondents, the advantages of this strategy are to attain a bigger market share, to convince the customers, to make their strength known to others. The other two respondents cautioned that a business that has the intention to apply this strategy needs to think about its suitability for the business and not to deceive the customers by not making the effort to achieve the projected strong image.

3.5 Harm Prevention Strategy

Respondent 1 mentioned the requirements of this strategy. In preventing harm, he suggested, "to understand the environment, know the environment, know competitors and meet the surroundings requirements, and not go against them". Respondent 2 highlighted the importance of monitoring the environment, keeping updated on product information from manufacturers and attending international expositions, exhibitions and seminars.

Respondent 3 asserted that dealing with harm prevention using information management is by collaborating with universities and customer's research and development department. Respondent 4 insisted on the involvement of networking in applying this strategy. She argued, "Through networking, you obtain the information to strategize your business" and "when you have networking, a direct attack on you would be lesser".

Respondent 6 agreed with this strategy. Respondent 7 affirmed the strategy, nevertheless, he stated that the threat is not a big challenge to him as long as his company is kept updated and fulfills the environmental change requirements. Respondent 8 mentioned that in applying this strategy in her company, the legal and technological threats are to be tackled efficiently.

The majority of the respondents (seven out of eight) agreed that harm prevention strategy is applicable in modern businesses. One of the respondents did not give clear opinion about this strategy. The respondents suggested a few ways to prevent harm to the company such as understanding the environment, understanding the competitors, monitoring the environment and keeping updated on the product information, managing the information by collaborating with universities and customer's research and development department, meeting the surroundings requirement and being involved with networking.

3.6 Hijrah (Migration) Strategy

Respondent 1 agreed that the hijrah strategy is not necessarily migration of location and mentioned that the spirit of hijrah is similar to Kaizen concept that is continuous improvement. He reminded that a Mu'min should make today better than yesterday, and tomorrow better than today.

Respondent 2 agreed with this strategy but warned that in order to migrate to another type of business the company should have the necessary capabilities. Respondent 3 asserted that hijrah covers migration to new location, changing to new and profitable products and repositioning. She has repositioned her company from trading to manufacturing company and now heading towards becoming a servicing company. Her company has gained the right staff, knowledge, experience and capabilities. Respondents 4 and 6 opined the need for this strategy as the business is not static. Respondent 5 stated that hijrah strategy would open up new opportunities to the business.

Respondent 7 claimed that this strategy is needed at certain times but not most of the time as it involves high costs. He gave the example of when he himself needed to migrate because his current factory did not have enough space for new machines and not enough infrastructures to expand his business. Respondent 8 highlighted the need of the hijrah strategy when developing new products for company survival. In developing new products, the company welcomed new ideas from apprentices and new staff as it believed they had fresh ideas, and were more brave and willing to make a change.

All of the respondents agreed that hijrah or migration strategy is applicable and viewed it as an important strategy in modern businesses. According to the respondents, the reasons for this strategy are the business is not

static, to facilitate the continuous improvement as in Kaizen concept, to open up new opportunities to the business, to develop new products for business survival and sustainability. A respondent cautioned that the migration of business location applies in certain time only as it involves high cost. Another respondent reprimanded that in order to migrate to another type of business a company should have the necessary capabilities.

3.7 Dynamic Strategy

Respondents 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 asserted the applicability of dynamic strategy in the business. Respondent 3 stated, "The environment always changes, and it does not wait for us". Respondent 4 agreed with the requirement of this strategy, "Because business environment is never static". Respondent 6 mentioned, "A lot of things need to be flexible", while respondent 7 stated that the business needs to be flexible in order to achieve the company's goal. Respondent 8 claimed that as they are in the creative industry, the element of flexibility is crucial.

All of the respondents agreed that dynamic strategy is applicable and viewed it as an important strategy in modern businesses. Respondent 1 quoted the words of Prophet Muhammad in hijrah strategy with the dynamic strategy that the business has to improve every day. He asserted that there is a strong relationship between hijrah and dynamic strategies through this Prophet's saying. The improvement may come in terms of technology, process, packaging, product presentation, product offering, product outlook, and product material.

3.8 Peace Strategy

Respondent 1 believed in the strategy of peace and cooperation with competitors but stated that some competitors are not interested in collaboration, so they have to keep of track of their competitors. Respondent 2 maintained that it is a good strategy. He claimed that he never makes enemies with the competitors. Respondent 3 accepted it and expressed, "If you can't beat them, you join them". Respondent 4 stated, "It is an important strategy but we build network and co-operate through a number of associations". Respondent 5 agreed with the peace strategy by saying, "...as long as it does not bring negative impact to the company". Respondent 6 admitted that he is applying this strategy. He added, "every week I see (meet) my competitor". Respondent 7 believed in the advantage of this strategy although he himself was having difficulty in getting a suitable competitor to collaborate with. Respondent 8 held that she encouraged her staff to apply this strategy especially in acquiring information and sharing information with the industry players.

All of the respondents agreed that peace strategy is applicable and view it as an important strategy in modern businesses. Even though all of the respondents viewed the peace strategy as a good strategy, the constraint is to find a suitable competitor or competitors who are interested to co-operate and collaborate.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this study through the content analysis identified eight categories or themes representing the strategies that emerged in the biography (Seerah) of the Prophet. They were employed by the Prophet in his battles and campaigns. The strategies are (1) jihad, (2) swiftness, (3) steadfast (al-sabirun), (4) vigorous image, (5) harm prevention, (6) hijrah (migration), (7) peace, and (8) dynamic. These eight strategies were later categorized into three groups of strategies, which are engagement, prevention and adaptation.

The current study tested all of the eight strategies of Prophet Muhammad with the practices of several Muslim top managers. The results indicate that all of the eight Prophet Muhammad's strategies are applicable and are being implemented by top management of modern businesses. Specifically, all of the respondents agreed that jihad, swiftness, steadfast, hijrah, peace and dynamic strategies are applicable and being implemented by modern businesses. Moreover, 7 out of 8 respondents agreed that vigorous image and harm prevention strategies are applicable and are being implemented by modern businesses.

This work has initiated a new direction of research, discovering strategic management in the framework of Prophet Muhammad's war strategies. The findings of this study indicate that contemporary business has a lot to learn from Prophet Muhammad. It is important to note that the present work has just scratched the surface of the subject. We believe that there are a lot more strategic management principles that can be discovered in this new and unexplored field.

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