Communicating *Shari'ah*-Compliant Brands of Tourism in Malaysia

Faruk Ahmed¹, Ahasanul Haque¹, Kalthom Abdullah¹, Siti Salwani Razali¹

Abstract

Positive customer-based brand equity entices consumers to buy products or service and the vice versa. Integrated marketing communication can play broader roles in developing conventional and Islamic brand. Fundamentally, Islamic value-based brand image and equity development concept is different from the platform of building image and equity from the contemporary ethical marketing because it is not ethically value-free and free from contemporary ethical value. Islamic value has been added to the contemporary brand image and brand equity concepts and theories as Muslim respondents are questioned on factor statements mixed with conventional and shari’ah-compliant views. From the study, it is revealed that consumer-based brand equity for the shari’ah-compliant tourism of Malaysia was strongly influenced by modern channel based marketing communication through a sequence of two mediators: Islamic country image and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image, and side by side through the single mediator, shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image; but conventional channel based marketing communication could not produce any significant effects on shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image, Islamic country image, and even on shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity. Finally, a few effective implications have been identified for building strong customer-based brand equity in terms of advancing shari’ah-compliant tourism of Malaysia, and future research directions are also indicated for the shari’ah-compliant tourism in the Islamic countries according to the scopes of brand equity theory.

Keywords: Integrated marketing communication, shari’ah-compliant tourism, brand Image, Islamic country image, brand equity, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Branding can adequately differentiate one company’s product from its competitors’ branded or unbranded products and provides advantages in the competitive market situations. According to David Aaker (Cited in AIGA, 2016), “a brand strategy can enable, sometimes crucially, the potential for an innovation to be realized. There are times when you literally need to brand it or lose it.” Walter Landor’s (Cited in SAMIT, 2015) popular saying is, “products are made in the factory, but brands are created in the mind.” The Branding of tourism services empowers marketers to get and retain tourists with a premium price for the longtime, i. e., premium value of a brand can be up to several billion dollars, such as Coca-Cola, Sony, Nestle, and McDonalds are topmost powerful brands in the world (Owen and P. Humphrey, 2010). Islamic tourism or Shariah-compliant tourism is a type of tourism that adheres to the values of Islam (Hassan, Walsh, Shiu, Hastings, & Harris, 2007) and faith as a new ethical dimension in tourism (Hassan, 2008). Branding Shariah-compliant tourism with this

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new value is not only for Muslims who like to experience tourism with Islamic principles without perceiving non-Shariah compliant risk but also for non-Muslim tourists. Products, services, destinations, industries, cities, regions, countries which—all fall into strong brand building —can be branded with Islamic principles (Temporal, 20111).

Unlike contemporary brand marketing, it is scarcely perceived that Islamic brands are being broadcasted through countless, sophisticated media around the world. In the less importance is promoting shari'ah-compliant tourism brands of Islamic countries which are potential to be developed for around two billion world Muslims and their bright future though these governments and tourism industries might realize its ultimate value. Only brand image which is the most important element of knowledge is placed in the proposed model as a unique factor, because taking positions with shari’ah-compliant brands into consumers’ mind would yield at least brand equity which dominates consumers in their decision-making processes.

Apparently, this study attempts to indicate the importance of integrated marketing communication and its effects on shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image, and brand equity is the main objective of the current study, which has been translated into a consumer-based brand equity model for shari’ah-compliant tourism from the international Muslim tourist perspective in Malaysia. Different media channels (traditional channel-based and modern channel-based marketing communication) injecting shari’ah-complaint tourism message into international Muslim tourists can create consumer-based shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity.

Though the factors affecting developing image of Islamic tourism websites were explored (Hashim & Murphy, 2007), it captured not much information about Malaysia’s Islamic country image, Islamic tourism brand image, and Islamic tourism brand equity. After the policy development of attracting tourist destinations in Malaysia, economic and physical development of few destinations were taken up (Henderson, 2015b). As a result, tourist arrivals from Islamic countries are rowing heavily as a study upholds the information (Ghani, 2016), where number of Muslim arrivals from Islamic countries increased a lot more than that of non-Muslims from non-Islamic countries. Still after that, it is potential to gain further development of Islamic tourism through marketing communication as another evidence suggests that one of the drawbacks of the Malaysian Islamic tourism development is that it could not apply image and marketing theories that maximize its potential developments (Bhuiyan, Siwar, Ismail, & Islam, 2011). So, measuring Malaysian Islamic country image and Islamic tourism brand image including brand equity should be preferential to be determined through the antecedents of integrated marketing communications because this is a driving force that can enhance brand image and brand equity of Islamic tourism. It is generally believed that Muslims tend to behave in an Islamic way and they face or may face difficulties and dangers if tourism offerings other than shari’ah-compliance are received. Islam is remarkable for its features in controlling human behavior, so it is assumed that almost all of Muslims feel discomfort in receiving what is given other than shari’ah-compliance. Aim of studying Islamic behavior of international Muslim tourists is to identify and measure the effect of IMC on Islamic equity through shari’ah-compliant brand image and Islamic country image, which might give an insight to the development of Islamic tourism not only in Malaysia but also in any Islamic countries.
LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

1. Consumer Involvement Theory (CIT) as a Theoretical Support

Krugman (1965, 1966, 1971, 1977, 1979), and Krugman and Hartley (1970) first developed the idea of "involvement" to consumer behavior, which is alternatively involvement theory. Involvement is still important in recent years to those studying the consumer decision process. Consumer involvement theory helps understand the psychology and behavior of target consumers. The idea behind consumer involvement theory has two main forces - time and energy of an individual, and emotion or reason - that drive most purchase decisions. The High / Low involvement scale refers to how much time, thought, energy and other resources people devote to the purchase process, from a lot to a little. The Emotional or rational scale is a measure of reason vs. impulse, desire vs. logic, passion vs. prudence. There are four general CIT categories: High involvement in emotional or rational states, and low involvement in emotional or rational. In consumer involvement theory or brain-split theory, the right hemisphere produces images of objects or pictorial together with emotion, and left hemisphere yields concepts or ideas as verbal together with logic. High involvement or much important products and low involvement or little important products are perceived by consumers in their right and left hemisphere, and produce information with emotions and logics which aid consumers in purchase decision. Shari‘ah-compliant tourism messages passing through promotional tools and communication channels enable consumers to create imagery and rational states in their mind to think of and make decision to purchasing this type of tourism services according to involvement theory: high involvement and low involvement.

2. Shari‘ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity

Beside conceptual research on the relational intangible asset, investing the consumer-brand relationship (e.g. Fournier, 1995, 1998) and customer equity (e.g., Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2004; Zeithaml, Lemon, & Rust, 2001) has been important for longer than a decade. Brand equity study is based on information economics which is probably suitable for the imperfect and asymmetrical nature of markets. Brand names act as signals to consumers (Erdem & Swait., 2006), which reflects the sum of that brand's past and present marketing activities, and reduce perceived risk, search costs and time for favorable attribute perceptions (Erdem & Swait, 1998). This is also the value of a brand signal to consumers (Erdem & Swait, 1998). As fo CBBE, Chatzipanagiotou, Veloutsou and Cristodoulides (2016) qualititatively develop a sequential pocess of building consumer-based brand equity among branding building, brand understanding and brand relationships based on complexity theory.

From previous literature, it is observed that consumer-based brand equity was studied mainly on measurement. Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) thought brand awareness is the same as associations. Martin and Brown (1990) showed five CBBE dimensions: performance, value, social image, trustworthiness, and commitment. In addition, Yoo and Donthu (2001) studied on an individual-level measure of consumer-based brand equity that is reliable, valid, and parsimonious. Another study, conducted on dairy firms in Iran, shows evidence that effective factors are promtable in creating brand equity from consumers' perspective (Drabjerdi, Arabi, & Haghighikhah, 2016).
As consumers, international Muslim tourists receive tourism information from different channels and decide to travel to Malaysia, where service quality message in shari’ah-compliant tourism is imperative as found in a recent investigation conducted by Jahanzeb, Fatima, and Butt (2013). As consumer-based brand equity, they develop shari’ah-compliant or Islamic tourism image and equity which entice them for future travel there as loyal consumers. CBBE of shari’ah-compliant tourism is measured through studying the perception of Islamic tourism message. CBBE measurement is an indirect approach by which consumers’ impression is measured about a brand—an Islamic or a conventional brand.

Islamic tourism in Islamic countries is developing, and these countries invest a huge amount of money and efforts to attract Muslims around the globe to travel to their countries in an Islamic environment by pushing diverse messages as information into world Muslim people. In an exploratory study, some themes were traced on branding Islamic spiritual tourism (Haq & Wong, 2013). In the context of international Muslim tourists in Malaysian, Islamic tourism has started around longer than a decade by creating an impression like countries of Middle East in it. Malaysia has brighter historical spots as an Islamic country, so it is mainly focusing on shari’ah-compliant tourism around it with panoramic view of nature and geography and world-class hospitality. Islamic tourism brand is developing in Malaysia with a greatest success compared to different industries. Islamic brand concepts can be applicable in Islamic tourism, and it can be phrased as Islamic tourism brand. Therefore, shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity can be developed in consumers’ mind from several dimensions in the light of Shariah law compliance. Shariah-compliant tourism equity has been assumed as a second order construct based on seven dimensions: performance, value, trust, loyalty, engagement and attachment, and community developed by Keller (2001).

3. Traditional Channel-Based Marketing Communication

Traditional marketing communication involves traditional communication channels. The promotional tools such as personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and publicity are functioning in traditional marketing communication channels or modern marketing communication channels. Therefore, promotional tools require traditional marketing communication channels or in modern marketing communication channels. However, communicational channel can be defined as traditional or modern. Traditional channels are those that have limited network functions, such as radio, TV, printing (Akyildiz, Brunetti, & Blázquez, 2008; Westerman, Van Der Heide, Klein, & Walther, 2008). Promotional tools are focused in reviewing literature, and some concepts on both type channels are discussed herewith. The recent study implied more elements or tools due to the advent of modern technology. Promotional tools should not be limited to advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling, and public relations (Kotler & Keller, 2008). Ahmed and Butt (2012) revealed in their study that sales service generates band Equity, which is an important tool in IMC. However, Rahmani, Salmani, Mojaveri, & Allahbakhsh (2012) reviewed that the impact of advertising is more than sales promotion on brand equity. It is also revealed that advertising and promotion impact brand equity (Nikabadi, Safui, & NiceAgheshlouel, 2015).
H1: There is significant positive relationship between Traditional Channel Based Marketing Communication and Shari'ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image
H2: There is significant positive relationship between Traditional Channel Based Marketing Communication and Shari'ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity
H3: There is significant positive relationship between Traditional Channel Based Marketing Communication and Islamic Country Image

4. Modern Channel-Based Marketing Communication

Internet is a new communication paradigm in the communication system which possesses comprehensive network capability (Akyildiz, Brunetti, & Blázquez, 2008). Otherwise, internet falls into modern communication system according to modern communication principles (Couch & Leon, 1994). The website design and Internet site marketing practices are huge for upscale and luxury hotels in Turkey (Baloglu & Pekcan, 2006). Tourism services are recently being offered through websites more conveniently than ever before (Lu, Lu, & Zhang, 2002; Rayman-Bacchus & Molina, 2001). Websites are appropriate as a promotional tool in direct marketing. In shari'ah-compliant tourism, several kinds of booking such as hotel booking, air ticket booking, bus-train ticket booking and purchasing are possible through websites. Potential Muslims observe website information about shari'ah-compliant brand and have the freedom to build shari'ah-compliant tourism and hospitality brand image and equity. Karamin, Nadoushan, and Nadoushan (2015) shown that social Media marketing activities increase brand equity through perceived quality, brand awareness and brand loyalty. It is also found that there is a significant impact of brand communication on brand equity through Facebook (Schivinski, & Dabrowski, 2015).

H4: There is significant positive relationship between Modern Channel Based Marketing Communication and Shari'ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image
H5: There is significant positive relationship between Modern Channel Based Marketing Communication and Islamic Country Image

5. Shari'ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image

Prior product knowledge eases the consumers to search and understand product information about brand name, logo, product function etc. (Awasthy, 2012). It was observed that different brand terminologies affect attitudes which again force consumers to see advertisements and purchase brands, and moderation effects also play through consumer product knowledge (Chuang, Tsai, Cheng, & Sun, 2009). As a part of shari'ah-compliant tourism, shari'ah-compliant hotels in Malaysia have huge potential (Omar, 2013; Sahida, Rahman, Awang, & Man, 2011). Muslims realize halal market, so it is promising for growing day by day (Battour, Battour, & Ismail, 2012; Battour, Ismail, & Battor, 2010; Syazwan Ab Talib and Bakar Abdul Hamid, 2014). Muslims are experiencing Shariah-compliant tourism in Malaysia. Muslims believe in shari'ah, therefore, they are most probably to have intention to observe shari'ah-compliant message and create image in their minds. Thus, Muslims can observe shari'ah-compliant tourism message and create its image in their minds. Shafeei (2017) put contribution to the development of Islamic band equity on the
phenomenon ‘the relationship between involvement with travelling to Islamic destinations and Islamic band equity’, which indicates that band image is mediatoy in developing Islamic tourism bands. Marketing communication impacts brand equity through brand image, which was examined from the perspective of Malaysian higher education (Momen, 2013).

H7: There is significant positive relationship between shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image and shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity

6. Islamic Country Image

A ‘Muslim country’ is considered as a country which has at least 55 per cent Muslims of population; organization of the Islamic Conference has 57 member states among them 41 or roughly three quarters meet the said definition; and The politico-legal philosophies of the governments of these countries arrays from ‘puritan’ to ‘moderate’ to ‘secularist’ (Otto, 2010). The country image dimensions can be the main source of the Islamic country image dimensions. The country image dimensions discuss a picture of a country’s good sides and bad sides derived by observing a country’s politics, constitutions, international relations, products and its technologies, research, books, tourism places, panoramic views, films, infrastructure, per capita income, social bonding, humanity, quality of life and some other important aspects. If these things are good in a country it can be said that that county has a positive or good image; if the reverse, it has a negative or bad image. The positive or negative image of a country partially influences customers whether they should purchase a product originated from that country or not. Hence,

H8: There is significant positive relationship between Islamic Country Image and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image
H9: There is significant positive relationship between Islamic Country Image and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity

7. Dual Mediating Roles of Brand Image and Country Image in Islamic Tourism

Traditional channel-based integrated marketing communication impacts brand equity through brand image, which was examined from the Malaysian higher education perspective (Momen, 2013). Integrated marketing communication (IMC) creates brand identity which influences brand equity strategy (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005), where customers observe brand identities in the commercials and create an image as mediator. It is assumed that traditional channel-based marketing communication and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity are mediated through shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image because a few evidences from previous studies has established mediation effect on that two constructs.

H10a: Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image mediates the relationship between Traditional Channel Based Marketing Communication and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity
Integrated marketing communication (IMC) creates brand identity which influences brand equity strategy (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005). In creating an attractive image of a country, promotion is the most important element in the marketing mix (Wells & Wint, 2000). Mediating effect between traditional channel-based marketing communication and Shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity through Islamic country image can be assumed based on the conventional brand image mediator construct between the paths of traditional channel-based marketing communication and brand equity.

H10b: Islamic Country Image mediates the relationship between Traditional Channel Based Marketing Communication and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image

From a previous literature, Cheng-Hsui Chen (2001) identified two types of brand associations: product associations and organizational associations. Chen (2010) revealed three factors: green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust which positively affect green brand equity, which was separated from brand equity. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) creates brand identity which influences brand equity strategy (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005), where customers observe brand identities in the commercials and create an image as mediator.

Modern channel-based integrated marketing communication impacts brand equity through brand image (Momen, 2013), which was examined from the Malaysian higher education perspective. It is assumed that modern channel based marketing communication and Shariah-compliant tourism brand equity are mediated through Shariah-compliant tourism brand image because some evidence from previous studies has provided mediation relationship among that two constructs.

H10c: Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Image mediates the relationship between Modern Channel Based Marketing Communication and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity

The relationships between consumers’ country-level and product-level images of a country affect the equity of a brand of that country (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2007). In creating an attractive image of a country, promotion is the most important element in the marketing mix (Wells & Wint, 2000). Mediating effect between modern channel-based marketing communication and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity through Islamic country image can be assumed based on brand image mediator construct between the path modern channel-based marketing communication and brand equity in conventional marketing communication.

H10d: Islamic Country Image mediates the relationship between Modern Channel Based Marketing Communication and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity
H10e: Islamic Country Image and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity mediate the relationship between Modern Channel Based Marketing Communication and shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity

H10e: Islamic Country Image and Shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity mediate the relationship between Modern Channel Based Marketing Communication and shari’ah-Compliant Tourism Brand Equity

METHODOLOGY

Contrary to “random sampling”, many researchers use the “convenience or judgment sampling technique.” However, the convenience sampling technique was employed this for sample selection. The sample units were selected randomly from different tourist spots in Malaysia. This technique provides an opportunity to reduce sampling error, and helps obtain an incremental confidence in pertinent sample characteristics that is probably a mirror of the population. This study has espoused a sample size of 412 that has given a normal distribution for running structural equation modelling (SEM) for data analysis. This survey is conducted on a Likert-scale based self-administered questionnaire which has appeared to be the most popular and best method in the business and social science research field. In studying shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity, a survey offers the researcher to pick common beliefs and values through a questionnaire that force international Muslim tourists to visit Malaysia or other Islamic country.

DATA ANALYSIS

1. Demographic Profiles

Demographic analysis explains the respondents for additional information covering all types of nominal variables. Primary data are raw and the researcher needs demographic analysis to understand and interpret the data. Age structure was displayed based on the class and frequency. Frequency of visiting Malaysia in the age structure, 20 and below age group were little portion of respondents figuring 10 with exactly 2.7 percent of the sample. Afterwards, the far biggest part of respondents is 21-30 age group which holds 298 respondents with around 72 percent of the sample. However, 31-40 aged people were second largest part of the sample figuring 66 with 16 percent. 41-50 aged respondents were 37 in figure with 9 percent. In gender distribution, female respondents were very close to male counterpart, where figures were 191 and 221 with the percentage of 46.4 and 53.6 respectively. It was found that the majority of the respondents were single with the figure of 288, which represented 68% of the sample size, and around less than half of the respondents were married with the figure of 123. Respondents’ graduate level of formal education constituted the highest frequency with 43.4%; higher secondary school and master levels were almost half of the graduate level with the figures of 76 and 93 which were 18.4 and 22.6 percent respectively; the lowest number of respondents was 13 in a PhD level with the percentage of 3.2. The job distribution of the respondents explained that most of the respondents belong to student, of which percentage is 59 with the figure of 243 of the total sample size. Officers, clerk, teachers, businessmen and bankers were far lower than students making very close figures of 36, 26, 31, 34 and 33 with the percentage of 8.7, 6.3, 7.5, 8.3, and 8.0
respectively. Afterwards, Engineers, journalists and doctors were very little in figures of 5, 2, and 2.

Asian people were far larger than any other regions in the world with the figure of 356 in the percentage of 86.4, whereas African region was only 43 with 10.4 percent. But, surprisingly America and Europe Muslims were not in mentionable figures of 6 and 7. And from Australia, no Muslims were possible to catch in the entire survey period., the number of Muslim travelers visiting one time were far larger than any other frequencies with the figure of 156 in the percentage of 37.9, whereas two times with figure 130 were double the three times with figure 70 and half the one time with figure 156. The number of more than three times visits in Malaysia was 56 with the percentage of 13.6, which is very less than onetime visits. Psychological characteristics that vary from person to person affect human beings with different magnitudes. The psychological profiles of international Muslims visiting Malaysia were captured based on five purposes. The number of visit for education was 222 in the highest frequency with 58.9 percent; only visit purpose was second highest with figure 141 and with percentage 34.2; other three purposes: treatment, conference and business were very close in very little numbers:16, 21 and 12 with the percentage of 3.9, 5.1 and 2.9 respectively.

2. **Assessment of Measurement Model**

In the specified 2nd order measurement model, every correlation was found consistent. The coefficients of constructs with second order specified model were found significant. The correlation between traditional channel based marketing communication and modern channel based marketing communication was 0.72, which was below cut-off value criteria. The correlation between modern channel based marketing communication and Islamic country image was 0.43. The correlation between modern channel based marketing communication and *shari'ah*-compliant tourism brand image was 0.41. The correlation between modern channel based marketing communication and *shari'ah*-compliant tourism brand equity was 0.32. The correlation between traditional channel based marketing communication and *shari'ah*-compliant tourism brand image was 0.24. The correlation between traditional channel based marketing communication and *shari'ah*-compliant tourism brand equity was 0.20. The correlation between traditional channel based marketing communication and Islamic country image was 0.25. The correlation between Islamic country image and *shari'ah*-compliant tourism brand image was 0.66. The correlation between Islamic country image and *shari'ah*-compliant tourism brand equity was 0.16. The correlation between *Shariah*-compliant tourism brand image and *shari'ah*-compliant tourism brand equity was 0.24. The correlations between the variables indicated that this model evidently found unidimensionality. The two-step procedure was made and found sufficient correlations between each pair of variables for acknowledgement of unidimensionality for every model, which indicates the achievement of divergent validity because no correlation value exceeded 0.85.

Due to the lack of fit indices in the default model, the measurement model was proceeded to modify. After modification by looping two headed arrows on these pair of covariance of residual errors (which were larger than 15): e1-e8, e2-e9, e2-e10, e6-e9, e9-e16, e31-e34, e31-e33, e32-e35 and e33-e35, recommended fit indices were found. The chi-square was significant ($\chi^2 = 2545.668$, df =502, $p = .000$, $R^2 = 0.322$).
N = 412). The RMSEA was .084, CFI .903, and \( \chi^2 / df \) 5.071. Moreover, CFA results highlight that the inter-correlations were found among the correlations among the variables namely: traditional channel based marketing communication, modern channel based marketing communication, Islamic country image, shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image, and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity.

3. Assessment of Structural Model

Results of the default structural model required researchers to be modified. After modification by looping two headed arrows on these pair of covariance of residual errors (which were larger than 15): e1-e8, e2-e9, e2-e10, e6-e9, e9-e16, e31-e34, e31-e33, e32-e35 and e33-e35, recommended fit indices were found. The chi-square was significant (\( \chi^2 = 2545.668, df =502, p =.000, N= 421 \)). The RMSEA = .084, CFI =.903, and \( \chi^2 / df =5.071 \), which indicates that the specified model is appropriately fit after the performing the several modification indices.

The complete model inclusive of the seven hypothesised paths is illustrated in Figure 1 as standardized estimates and table 1 as unstandardized estimates. For the overall model as a whole, the statistical results indicate a good fit. In addition, most of the paths produced positive significant effect.

Table 1: Results of the structural model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research variables</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICI</td>
<td>&lt;--- MCMC</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>4.889 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCTBI</td>
<td>&lt;--- MCMC</td>
<td>.400</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>2.315 .021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCTBE</td>
<td>&lt;--- MCMC</td>
<td>.314</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>2.083 .041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCTBI</td>
<td>&lt;--- TCMC</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>-.639 .523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCTBE</td>
<td>&lt;--- TCMC</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.076 .939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICI</td>
<td>&lt;--- TCMC</td>
<td>-.145</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>-1.311 .190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCTBI</td>
<td>&lt;--- ICI</td>
<td>.695</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>12.487 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCTBE</td>
<td>&lt;--- ICI</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>-1.555 .12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCTBE</td>
<td>&lt;--- SCTBI</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>5.464 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The complete model inclusive of the seven hypothesised paths is illustrated in Figure 1 as standardized estimates and table 1 as unstandardized estimates. For the overall model as a whole, the statistical results indicate a good fit. In addition, most of the paths produced positive significant effect.
4. Validity of the Structural Model

Convergent Validity

High factor loadings were considered to be such an item of a construct that would be retained to precede the subsequent process of the effect measurement. Threshold value of factor loading usually is different based on sample size, type of scale: new or old; this study followed an established 5-point Likert scale, and all items belong to far higher than 0.30 value—where almost all factor loadings minimum were larger 0.81. As a result, all items were considered to be absolutely retainable. Reliability analysis helps us to step ahead for valid analysis. As all values of AVE (average variance extraction) and CR (Composite Reliability) appeared larger than cut-off values 0.50 and 0.60 respectively. That is, convergent validity was achieved with AVE and CR values. It was found that average variance extracted (AVE) were also greater than .50, which were 0.70, 0.59, 0.75, .0.62, 0.75, 0.73, 0.77 and 0.91, and CR values were 0.92, 0.95 0.92, 0.87, 0.90, 0.91, 0.78 and 0.91. The factor loading values that were depicted were satisfactory since almost all values of items exceeded .90.
Divergent Validity

To examine the discriminant or divergent validity, the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion was magnificent, where the square root of each construct’s average variance extracted (AVE) is compared to its bi-variate correlations among all constructs (Hulland, 1999). For discriminant validity of constructs, it was observed that the square root of AVE values were greater than the variance shared among all latent variables or square root of correlations shown in upper diagonal. Therefore, discriminant validity was achieved because all values of squared correlations were produced below the value of average variance extracted (AVE). In addition, multi-collinerity issue was not too much problematic and did not let the multivariate regression sensitive in producing correlation results. Such relationships among constructs obviously led the research objective valid way and provided us to make valid predictions of international Muslim tourists’ perception towards shari’ah-compliant tourism service brand image and equity through integrated marketing communication in the tourism industry in Malaysia. Thus, predicting shari’ah-compliant brand image and equity was not questionable through ensuring convergent validity and discriminant validity among constructs.

5. Testing hypotheses and Discussion

Direct and Indirect Effects

This research confirms that the relationship between traditional channel based marketing communication and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image was insignificant (the value of the path coefficient is far less than 0.15) and H1 is not supported. The result is not identical with the past literature relating to the effect of traditional marketing communication on brand image and financial performance (Luxton, Reid, & Mavondo, 2014). This study did not support H2 since there was an insignificant relationship between traditional channel based marketing communication and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity. The finding is not identical with past findings because advertising has a profound effect on brand knowledge development of consumers (Chan, 2011. This study also did not support H3 since there was an insignificant relationship between traditional channel based marketing communication and Islamic country image. The finding of the study is not consistent with past findings whilst conventional IMC is helpful for branding less quickly than non-internet way (Hashim & Murphy, 2007; Nworah, 2005; Winter, 2009). This study supported H4 that there was a significant relationship between modern channel based marketing communication and Shariah-compliant tourism brand image. The finding is identical with past findings. Internet offers a country for its branding more quickly than non-internet way (Hashim & Murphy, 2007; Winter, 2009). The study supported H5 because there was a significant relationship between modern channel based marketing communication and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity. The finding is identical with past findings (Rowley, 2001). This study also supported H6 because there was a significant relationship between modern channel based marketing communication and Islamic country Image. The finding is consistent with past findings (Hashim & Murphy, 2007). This study also supported H7 because there was a significant relationship between Islamic country image and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image. The finding is identical with past findings Country-of-origin image help build strong brand image (Balabanis &
Diamantopoulos, 2011). Coefficient value in the past findings was found moderate effect of country image on brand image.

This study did not support hypothesis H8 that there was an insignificant relationship between Islamic country image and *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand equity. The finding is not identical with past findings (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2011), because there was a dominant effect of Islamic country image on *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand image, which made the effect of Islamic country image on *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand equity was insignificant. This study, on the other hand, supported H9 that there was a significant relationship between *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand image and *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand equity. The finding is identical with past findings. Hsieh et al. (2004) studied on multi-countries that product image, corporate image and country-image dimensions stimulates customers’ purchase.

**MEDIATING EFFECT**

No indirect effect of traditional channel based marketing communication on brand image or Islamic country image; so, there is no mediation effect in the path. Figure 1 shows the significant direct effect of modern channel based marketing communication on *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand equity. In addition, there are significant indirect effect of modern channel based marketing communication on *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand image and indirect significant effect of *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand image on Shariah-compliant tourism brand equity. In this part of the model, direct and indirect effects were positively significant with the regression coefficients of 0.400, 0.314 and 0.278 respectively. Thus, according to rule (significant indirect and direct effect are partial mediation), the partial mediating effect of *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand image occurred. So, H10c was supported. In the same way, according to rule (insignificant indirect effect and significant direct effect indicate no mediation), the mediating effect of Islamic country image did not appear. H10d is not supported. According to the rule (significant indirect and direct effect are partial mediation), the mediating effects of Islamic country image and *shari’ah*-compliant tourism brand image were found. If all the relationships are statistically significant, then it can be assumed that there is a partial mediation occurs. However, if direct the relationship is not statistically significant, then it can be assumed that there is a full mediation. Therefore, no further tests are required and apparently, H10e is supported.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Branding can be done with Islamic signs of hotels, such as dress, greeting, foods, freedom, generosity, hospitality, problem solving, integrity and honesty, love and affection, friendship, communication, relationship, morality, crisis and disaster, and a few others have been considered as concepts of Islamic hospitality for Islamic its development. Similarly, conventional branding is developed on different company’s and product’s signs as Kotler and Keller (2011) suggested. Islamic hospitality marketing concepts like making idea and doing anything on basis of information traditionally and technologically are important for every human place to gain the standard quality, and exception is not considered as standard knowledge or standard
life. The concepts that are caught to pursue a study of Islamic hospitality marketing are certainly a guide to attain the research purpose and objectives.

Islamizing tourism is possible for almost the whole entity of hospitality industry in Malaysia. It is hard for someone to believe that tourism can be an industry because of having lent different industries-transportation, hotels, and so on for its own industrial shape like garment industry. Islamizing tourism may face challenges for some people, in a country, who are practicing secularism in conceptualizing western political culture which has abandoned religion to attract people from different religions. A question comes to our minds how all people can accept Islamization. The answer is easy with this concept that Islamization is for Muslims, and for all, and can be based on needs only. Reaction from secularized people as Muslim to tourism management would be difficult and challenging in answering that in any form.

Marketing communication messages for building shari’ah-compliant tourism image and equity should be developed by hotel and restaurant industry very carefully because irritating messages might confuse international Muslim and non-Muslims. The most difficult challenge is to serve both conventional and shari’ah-compliant tourism services in a same hotel. Majority of religious and racial people have some extra influence in a society—which often happens in some situations in hotels like society—whereas minority, or female are weaker, but it is recognized as a sensitive issue in any community of the world because multicultural society is not easy for managers to understand sufficiently.

Though leadership in the multicultural settings is full of challenges organizational people can be well-managed if leaders are able to understand multicultural work environment. Moran, Abramson and Moran (2014) found that cross boarder management practices based on Islamic principles are better than conventional management practices. Promoting tourism management from different communities’ perspectives in Palestine is a way to solve a leadership Issue (Isaac, 2010). Management training is also essential to produce global leadership in different functional areas of an organisation (Clark, & Arbel, 1993). So, global Islamic leadership developments could ease the Islamic tourism industries in managing tourists from different religions.

For tackling this issue, hotel managers should apply Islamic concepts very cautiously. Skeptic and religious people are growing while people of the world are getting bigger in size. Skeptic people have been growing more and more for the last few decades, and the number is just a little below the number of theist people. They prefer secularism like some of theist people and may have an attempt not to let them apply the concepts to the hotel sector. To trace out tolerance between secular and Muslim people is one of few related challenges. At the operation level, Islamic concepts may be misinterpreted by non-Muslims or Muslims, and severity may be devastating. So, government should develop clear policies and strategies for applying Islamic concepts in developing countries so that people can receive right information regarding Islamic country and its shari’ah-compliant tourism services. Non-Muslim boarders often found as a big ratio to Muslim people in a hotel can pose a threat against Islamization. Knowledge of managers should have the ability to predict results before applying any Islamic concept. Secular ratio to religious and their reaction is also a challenge. If secular people ratio to religious people is bigger, then the hotel authority should trace out where it is possible to apply Islamic aspect
in secular dominant environment. What managers need to understand about non-Muslims, Muslims and secular people is what boarders should really like in hotel environment. Muslim and non-Muslim people may try to be liberal or conservative with believers, but secular people are always liberal. If an interaction between liberal and conservative people exists there may be uncomfortable situation in hotels, but managing charisma can smoothen many unexpected events by using their skills and talents. If community people are non-Muslim or secular they try to refuel the internal hotel clashes into a bigger or more dangerous form of severity.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that consumer-based brand equity for the shari’ah-compliant tourism of Malaysia was significantly influenced by modern channel based marketing communication through the sequentially two mediating factors of Islamic country image and shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image; but conventional channel based marketing communication could not produce any significant effects on shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image, Islamic country image, and even on shari’ah-compliant tourism brand equity. It is mentioned in Qur’an and Sunn’ah that Muslims have obligations to behave based on Islamic codes and conducts. So, Muslims might be dissatisfied if tourism offerings are deviated from shari’ah-compliance. Enhancing Shariah-compliant tourism brand image and brand equity in international Muslims’ minds through integrated marketing communication is considerable enough to develop shari’ah-compliant tourism not only in Malaysia but also in any Islamic country.

The study plays a significant role for adding the body of knowledge to brand theory applicable to the realm of Islamic tourism industries around the Islamic and contemporary world. Managing consumer-based brand equity through band experience enables marketers to understand consumers more clearly (Altaf, Iqbal, Sanuy, Mokhta, & Sial, 2017), which might provide insightful ideas for communicating effective Islamic tourism bands. Theoretically, this effort could verify brand theories developed in different contexts, and would provide a valuable literature on brand theories. Practically, managerial policies and strategies on integrated marketing communications could be developed based on the empirical results, which is likely to have the highest gain in building and enhancing shari’ah-compliant tourism brand image and equity because it was found that consumer equity drives future sales (Voget, Evanschitzky, & Ramaseshan, 2008).

REFERENCES


