

MUSLIM CUSTOMERS' COMMITMENT TOWARDS HALAL - LABELLED BRAND

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Abstract

Despite it has been argued on the necessity to brand halal products according to the religious line, this paper argues that the utilization of Islamic elements in brand identity is significant to drive the Muslims' commitment. This study investigates the effect of Islamic brand identity on Muslim customers' commitment towards halal-labelled brand. Data were collected from a convenience sample of 221 Muslim customers, aged 18 and above, using an online questionnaire survey. The multiple regression analysis results reveal that Islamic suggestive brand name, direct brand logo and confrontation brand slogan significantly predict customer commitment towards halal-labelled brand. There is no significant effect of Islamic non-suggestive brand name and indirect brand logo on brand commitment. The results provide the necessity to employ Islamic brand identity in branding halal product. This study adds to the existing literature on the relevancy of Islamic brand identity as the key element to induce Muslims customer commitment towards halal-labelled brand and provide some new insight to assist the operators in the halal industry in designing the future branding direction and strategy.

Keywords customer-brand relationship, Islamic brand identity, commitment, Muslim customers, halal-labelled brand

INTRODUCTION

Due to the huge population (Free World Academy, 2005; Temporal, 2010), Muslims have emerged as a new big customer market, bigger than India or China (Young, 2010), that

is worth explored (Frost, 2007). As the Muslim customer market is new, it opens up a huge opportunity in almost every industry (Al-Harran & Low, 2010; Frost, 2007). With Muslims as target market, the demand for halal product is heightened. Due to its great potential, both Muslim market and halal product have received considerable attention from the academicians as well as practitioners. However, most of halal-based studies have been directed to understand the customer behaviour toward halal products and services, particularly on the intention to purchase (Golnaz, Zainalabidin, Mad Nasir, & Eddie Chiew, 2010), patronage halal restaurants (Md. Tawfik, Ishak, Hasnah, & Md. Aminul, 2008), choose halal product (Lada, Tanakinjal, & Amin, 2009), consume the halal meat (Bonne, Vermeir, Bergeaud-Blackler, & Verbeke, 2007) and search for halal logo (Salehudin & Luthfi, 2010).

Recently, a growing number of halal-based studies have started channelling their research interest in branding aspects. In particular, much of the discussion on halal branding has been focusing on the applicability and necessity of Islamic brand. On one hand, Alserhan (2010) highlights the need to differentiate the concept of Islamic branding from the conventional branding such as by adopting the spiritual need of the Muslims. However, on the other hand, it has been argued on the necessity to brand product according to the religious line, as many of the well-known Muslim products such as Persian carpets and Egyptian cotton have survived globally even without being marketed as Muslim products (Frost, 2007; Raja Nazrin Shah, 2010). Besides, it is also feared that such aggressive attempts will result in more negative effects such as the incident of “halal phobia” in France (Raja Nazrin Shah, 2010). Despite all the arguments, due to massive Muslim population worldwide, the insight on Islamic brand cannot be overlooked (Frost, 2007). Thus, with or without being termed as Islamic brand, a continuous effort to understand the underlying aspects of branding the halal products is clearly warranted. Given that, almost all of the existing studies are conceptual and considering that both the halal product and Muslim market are new, it is much more crucial to undertake a study as to provide empirical evidence on the matter.

To survive in a hyper intense marketplace, companies can no longer compete in terms of price, quality and customer satisfaction, but rather to build, manage and maintain a long-term profitable relationship with the customers (Alqahtani, 2011; Carter, 2008; Circles, 2010; Hess & Story, 2005; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Louis & Lombart, 2010; Schraft & Micu, 2010). To do so, both academicians and practitioners have increasingly embraced the significance of customer-brand relationship (Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010; Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008; Fournier, 1998; Story & Hess, 2010; Sung & Choi, 2010), and further highlighted the significance of brand elements as a tool to create a connection with the customer (Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010; Keller, 1993). While all marketing efforts are directed at attracting, maintaining and enhancing successful connection with the customers, the endeavour to develop a strong brand is certainly something not to be missed (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008; Story & Hess, 2010). Given that companies use brand elements to relate with customers (Eisingerich & Rubera, 2010; Keller, 1993), understanding the customer-brand relationship would require the understanding of how the brand elements affect the customers and how the customers evaluate the effect of the brand elements. Specifically, to determine the firm performance in developing a relationship with customers, it is critical to examine the effect of brand elements on customers’ commitment from the customers’ perspective.

Prior studies identify the customers' commitment as the essential component to reflect the company's success in establishing long-term profitable brand-customer relations (Keller, 2001). Recent evidence suggests that the stronger the customers' commitment towards the brand, the greater their willingness to stay with the brand (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000; Desai & Raju, 2007) and exhibit supportive behaviour in order to sustain a valued relationship in the future (Hess, Story, & Danes, 2011; Shuv-Ami, 2010; Story & Hess, 2010). Thus, it is difficult to ignore the customers' brand commitment in the endeavour to investigate the role of brand elements in the customers' engagement process.

In addition, Kotler and Armstrong (2010) explain that in establishing the long term profitable customer connections, the companies need to create value for customers before they can capture commitment from the customers. This suggests that successful brand-customer relationship depends on specific brand elements that not only trigger commitment from the customers towards the brand, but also help the companies to communicate the right message about the brand so that the customers will have a positive evaluation of the brand. Therefore, to ensure the sustainability of the relationship, it is critical for the companies to identify the brand elements that will stimulate favourable evaluation of a brand and eventually initiate the customers' brand commitment.

Aaker (1996) contends that brand identity can identify as well as differentiate a brand from its competitors. Recent evidence has shown that brand identity elements, particularly brand name, logo and slogan play a critical role to communicate what the brand stands for and disseminate the brand promises so that customers may live up favourable perception and expectation of the brand. This view is supported by Schmit (1999), which signify that the brand identity may not only function as identifier by providing the customer with certain indication towards the products, but also as experience provider by providing the customer with favourable emotional experience in consuming the brand. It appears that brand identity elements can be an effective tool in brand value establishment and delivery, which eventually help the company in building a long term profitable relationship with the customers. Thus, in gaining customers' commitment and establishing the sense of attachment towards the brand, companies need to fully acknowledge and utilized the significance of brand identity.

Prior studies have proposed the desirable qualities of effective brand name (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Y. H. Lee & Ang, 2003; Lerman & Garbarino, 2002), logo (Haig, 2006) and slogan (Kohli, Leuthesser, & Suri, 2007) as a guideline for companies to design their brand elements. Nowadays, almost every company has invested lots of effort and money in setting up their brand identity, either in the name, logo or slogan. Some try to be different from its competitors while others try to be slightly the same as their leading counterpart. Despite succeeding in gaining the customer's attention and interest, the role of brand identity to ensure the brand's survival is arguable. This is because, customers are no longer perceive the differentiation in brand identity as the significant driver of their behavioural response towards the brand (Romaniuk, Sharp, & Ehrenberg, 2007). As such, they suggest the new perspective of distinctive qualities, that is, the qualities that most valued by the customer or easily term as the identification triggers.

With respect to branding halal products, there is a trend among companies to employ Islamic elements in their brand name, logo and slogan. For instance, many companies

use a name that related to the Muslim community as their brand name such as Al-Islami, Saudi, Mu'min, Safi, Halaljel and Taharah. As for logo, Islamic calligraphy is frequently employed as in Emirates Airlines, Safwa Health, Etisalat (the telecommunication company) and Arab Bank brand logos. Images that represent Islam, including mosque and the crescent are sometimes used as in logo of Bank Muamalat and Bank Islam. In designing the brand slogan, the Islamic element is also utilized such as “your Islamic travel guide” (Halaltrip), “Fresh, Organic, Halal” (Radix FC), and “Halal, Toyyib, For All” (TaHa).

When halal logo has already served as a basis for customer halal purchases and the existing brands which adopt the Islamic identity have failed to position a truly Islamic identity (Shikoh, 2010), could the Islamic elements adopted create distinctiveness of the respective halal brands? In particular, may the use of Islamic brand identity significantly stimulate favourable brand evaluation by the Muslim customers and eventually initiate their brand commitment? Thus, an empirical research need to be conducted in order to increase the understanding on how the company can utilize the elements of brand identity to initiate customers' commitment toward the brand and specifically investigate the impact of Islamic brand identity on Muslim customers' commitment towards halal product.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of Islamic brand identity elements on customer commitment towards halal-labelled brand. The results of this study suggest the role of Islamic brand identity (*i.e.* brand name, logo, slogan) to encourage customers' commitment towards halal-labelled brand and provide valuable information for the operators in halal-based industry on how to brand their products as to engage the full commitment from the Muslim customers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite various elements that can be used to identify the brand, three elements have been considered as the integral components of brand identity such as name, logo and slogan (Aaker, 1996; Kohli, Suri, & Thakor, 2002). Brand name is a core identity, an image anchor (Kohli, *et al.*, 2007) and a basic information provider for the brand (Grace & O'Cass, 2005). Much research on brand name has frequently classified the brand name into two categories: *first*, brand name suggestiveness, which relates with a brand name that suggests the product benefits; and *second*, brand name non-suggestiveness, which refers to a brand name that does not suggest the product benefits (Klink, 2003; Y. H. Lee & Ang, 2003).

Brand logo, on the other hand, refers to a graphical identifier for the brand's personality and image (Haig, 2006). It is a symbol, a name set in a distinctive typographical style, or a combination of both that communicates with the purpose of stirring the customers' emotion (Rowden, 2000). According to Wheeler (2003), brand logos can be classified into four different types, namely word-mark (a freestanding word, which including the company's acronym, that is creatively written, either through the use of a distinctive font, abstract or pictorial elements), letterform (a unique single letter or number), pictorial (a literal and recognizable image) and abstract (a visual form without any words or objects attached to it). Furthermore, Jun and Lee (2007) depict that brand logos can be further classified into two broad categories, *i.e.* direct expression of creative design (which portrayed in word-

mark and letterform types of logo) and indirect expression (which portrayed in pictorial and abstract types of logo).

Slogan, which also termed as a tagline or brand signature, relates to a short phrase that depicts the essence, personality and position of a brand (Wheeler, 2003). Besides, it helps to establish an image, identity or position that makes the brand special (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2005; O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2003). Furthermore, Traverso (2000) states that slogan represents and summaries a company's interest. Further, Wheeler (2003) identifies five different types of slogans: imperative, descriptive, superlative, provocative, and specific expressions. The imperative slogan refers to an expression that commands action which usually starts with a verb, descriptive slogan, which describes the product or brand promise; superlative slogan identifies the company's positions as the best in its class; provocative slogan is thought provoking and frequently presented in a form of a question; and specific slogan establishes leadership of a category. In addition, Jun and Lee (2007) state that brand slogans can also be divided into two categories: confrontation (direct speech) and accommodation (indirect speech). Taken into consideration only four classifications of slogan expressions by Wheeler (2003), Jun and Lee (2007) clarify that confrontation slogan is described by Wheeler's imperative, superlative and provocative expression, while the accommodation is represented by the descriptive expression.

In general, commitment can be referred as the psychological attachment that forces an individual to act in order to maintain a relationship (Moorman et al., 1993). Extending this definition in the branding context, there are two major classifications that can be made. The earlier definition relates commitment with the customer inclination to perform a favourable behaviour towards his/her favourite band, particularly in buying the product (Traylor, 1983). This definition highlights the role of brand commitment as an indication of brand preference/choice. The next classification extends the commitment definition by emphasizing its crucial role as the indicator to maintain customer-brand relationship. According to this scheme, brand commitment can be defined as the emotional and psychological attachment that customer has towards a brand based on experience that will subsequently influence their willingness to respond positively to a brand in order to maintain the customer-brand connection (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002; Keller, 2003; Thomson, MacInnis and Park, 2005). Following the latter definition, for the purpose of this study, brand commitment is defined as the psychological attachment to a brand that will influence the customer to act favourably towards a brand.

Islamic Brand Identity and Brand Commitment

A brand identity, which also term as a brand element (Keller, 1993), represents all the elements associated to a product including the name, term, sign, symbol and design (Armstrong, Kotler, & da Silva, 2005; Kerin, Hartley, & Rudelius, 2007). Specifically, Aaker (1996) defines brand identity as a compilation of unique brand associations which signify what the brand really stands for and imply a promise to the customers. Kapferer (2004) then describes the brand identity as a component which specifies the brand's uniqueness and value. Thus, in brief, brand identity can be referred as all the elements that will address

meaning, qualities and associations around the brand and serve as a mechanism for the customers to identify and differentiate a product from any other products in the market. With such roles, it is obvious that brand identity can serve as a great tool to develop a connection with the customers.

To date, greater attention has been devoted to research on the integral components of brand identity. A review of previous studies shows that brand name has been studied extensively as compared to brand logo and slogan, while the effectiveness of the brand element design has become the main aim for the studies as compared to understanding the possible effect of the brand identity (Keller and Lehman, 2006). So far, prior studies have proven the significant relationship between brand identity element and the customer response variables. Pertaining to brand name, previous studies demonstrate that brand name correlate significantly with the brand awareness (Y. H. Lee & Ang, 2003; Lerman & Garbarino, 2002; Pinero, Lockshin, Kennedy, & Corsi, 2010; Rahman & Rahaman, 2008; Samu & Krishnan, 2010) and the brand attitude (Kocher & Czellar, 2007; Y. H. Lee & Ang, 2003). Furthermore, the different attributes of a brand name would create differences on how the customers evaluate the brand and consequently affect their response behaviour towards the brand (Klink, 2003; Y. H. Lee & Ang, 2003; Lerman & Garbarino, 2002). In specific, Lee and Ang(2003) support the existing belief by pointing out that brand name suggestiveness has a more positive association with the brand recall and attitude than the brand name non-suggestiveness. However, the earlier study by Lerman and Garbarino (2002) shows a contradict result, that is the irrelevant word names (non-suggestive brand name) outweigh the effect of the relevant word names (suggestive brand name) on the brand awareness constructs including brand recall and brand recognition.

In the context of brand logo, previous studies reveal that brand logo is significantly related to brand awareness (Rahman & Rahaman, 2008), brand identification (Gaillard, Romaniuk, & Sharp, 2005); and brand attitude (Jun & Lee, 2007; Kocher & Czellar, 2007; Walsh, Winterich, & Mittal, 2010). More importantly, these works suggest that brand name-logo consistency would enhance their ability in communicating the brand meaning and affecting the customer attitude towards the brand (Klink, 2003; Kocher & Czellar, 2007). Furthermore, significant difference between different logo categories has been reported (Jun & Lee, 2007). In particular, Jun and Lee (2007) point out that generally most companies use brand logos that are expressed in a direct way, particularly using a letter form, either in the alphabet or number, which indicating that this type of logo is favoured by the customers to drive their positive responses. However, little research to date has attempted to test the different effect of those categories so far.

Prior research reveals a significant relationship between brand slogan and the brand awareness (Kohli, et al., 2007; Rahman & Rahaman, 2008; Romaniuk, Nenycz-Thiel, Harnett, & Corsi, 2010) and brand attitude (Jun & Lee, 2007). In addition, Jun and Lee (2007) identify that confrontational brand slogan as the mostly used. Supporting the finding, Kohli et al.(2007) emphasize that effective slogan should highlight the brand's main strengths in a clear manner, employ a long term view and embrace tomorrow's business. Apparently, the confrontation brand slogan is valued more by the customer than the accommodation brand slogan. However, similar to brand logo, studies on the effect of different types of brand slogan have been scarce.

From the overall view, it is apparent that brand identity elements do affect the customers' responses towards the brand, particularly the brand awareness and attitude. Thus, it is appropriate to argue that the brand identity elements can also affect any other customer responses, including the brand commitment. Up to now, there are numerous studies examining the customers' commitment towards the brand. In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the antecedent of brand commitment. For example, brand commitment has been associated with corporate image (Fiedler, Kastner, & Kirchgeorg, 2008); customer satisfaction, investment and alternatives (Sung & Choi, 2010) and; personality traits (Louis & Lombart, 2010). In addition, Lee, Knight and Kim (2008), which studied the customers' different perception between local and global brands, shows that country and brand types would have a significant effect on brand commitment. From the finding, it can be concluded that customers in different countries would commit differently towards different types of brands. Hence, in understanding the brand commitment, the matter of customers' location needs to be considered. As most of the brand commitment's research has been conducted in western countries, such as US (M. Y. Lee, et al., 2008; Sung & Choi, 2010), France (Louis & Lombart, 2010) and German (Fiedler, et al., 2008), it would be useful to have the insight of the brand commitment of the customers in developing countries, particularly Malaysia.

Though, brand identity and brand commitment are the key players in relationship building with customers (Campbell, 1999; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010), relatively little research has been carried out to investigate the role of brand identity in affecting the commitment. Preliminary work to link the brand identity with the commitment undertaken by Coop (2005b) has been able to demonstrate a significant relationship between brand identity constructs and the customers' commitment towards brand. However, Coop (2005b) adopted a more complex construct of brand identity, which consist of five major constructs, namely brand performance, relevance, reputation, relationship and personality. Thus, although the relationship between the two constructs has been empirically proven, due to different definition used, it is insufficient to simply assume that brand name, logo and slogan correlate with the brand commitment. Nevertheless, given that there is a significant positive connection between the brand identity elements (i.e. brand name, logo and slogan) and brand attitude (Grace & O'Cass, 2005; Kocher & Czellar, 2007; Y. H. Lee & Ang, 2003; Rahman & Rahaman, 2008; Shuv-Ami, 2010), and commitment is one of the brand attitude dimensions (Ahluwalia, et al., 2000), it provides the initial basis to predict that the antecedents of the brand attitude can also serve as the antecedents of brand commitment. Thus, it is appropriate to assume that the relationship exists between brand identity elements and brand commitment.

Considering the finding by Rehman and Shabbir (2010) that religious dictations affect the Muslim customers' attitude towards the adoption of new product, it could be expected that the endeavours of many companies embed the Islamic element in the brand name, logo and slogan would attract the interest and commitment of the Muslim customers. Thus, in line with the above arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Muslim customers' evaluation of Islamic brand name, i.e. (a) suggestive and (b) non-suggestive; and their brand commitment.

H2: There is a significant relationship between Muslim customers' evaluation of Islamic logo, i.e. (a) direct and (b) indirect expression; and their brand commitment.

H3: There is a significant relationship between Muslim customers' evaluation of Islamic slogan (a) accommodation and (b) confrontation; and their brand commitment.

Based on the preceding hypotheses developed, a framework for this study is proposed and illustrated in Figure 1.

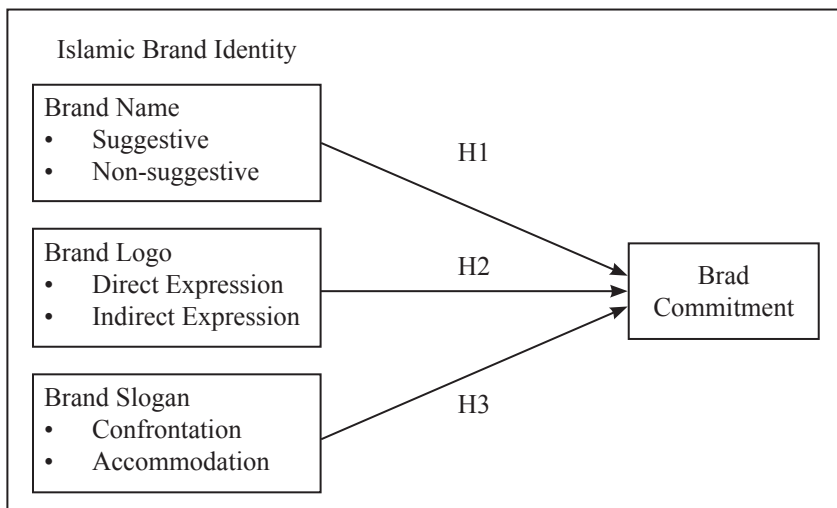


Figure 1 Research framework

METHODOLOGY

The target population for this study consists of Malaysian Muslim at the age of 18 years old and above. The respondents to make up a sample for this study were selected using the convenience sampling method. In total, 300 e-mail invitations were sent, resulting in 221 completed questionnaires, representing a 73.67 percent of response rate.

The questionnaire used in this study consists of four major parts:

Part A: Evaluation of brand identity elements

This part contains questions to measure six independent variables, i.e. suggestive brand name, non-suggestive brand name, direct expression logo, indirect expression logo, accommodation brand slogan and confrontation brand slogan. There are 15 same items used to measure all constructs using 9-point semantic differential scale. The items used in this study were either specifically developed for this study, or adopted/adapted from the existing scales that demonstrate a high reliability and validity. Among the sources of the scale items are Henderson and Cote (1998), Pillai and Goldsmith (2008), Ahluwalia, Burnkrant and Unnava (2000) and Shimp, Stuart and Engle (1991).

Part B: Consumer's Brand Commitment

This part contains 10 items to measure the dependent variable, which is brand commitment. For this part, respondents are required to rate their agreement with the statements given using 9-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). All the items used were adapted from several sources including Beatty, Homer and Kahle (1988), Eisingerich and Rubera (2010), Shuv-Ami (2010) and Fullerton (2005).

Part C: Respondent Profile

This part contains questions to determine a respondent's gender, age, ethnicity, religion, education level, occupation, income level and state of origin.

Part D: Opinion

This part offers the opportunity for respondent to state his/her view concerning the utilization of Islamic element in branding halal product through one short open-ended question.

Initially, a pilot study was conducted with a convenience sample of 43 Muslims to test the reliability of the items and to ensure whether the respondents can really understand the questions or not. Based on the comments from the respondents, the questionnaire was modified, particularly to the scale and the word used. The reliability test results show that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all constructs are greater than 0.6 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), which implies that all the constructs are reliable for use in this study.

Upon finalizing on the questionnaire, the actual data collection was carried out via online for four weeks, starting from April 4, 2011 to May 2, 2011. Questionnaires were emailed to 300 selected Muslim customers through Google Docs form.

RESULTS**Profile of Respondents and Reliability Test**

A total of 221 responses was collected from Muslims respondents, which majority of them are female 141 (63.8%) and 80 are male (36.2%). In terms of age, the majority of the respondents are in the range of 30 to 39 years old 125 (56.6%). The remaining are 54 (20 – 29 years old), 32 (40 – 49 years old) and 10 (50 years old and above). Further, 119 (53.8%) have obtained postgraduate education and 58 undergraduate education. Another 25 have at least Diploma or Certificate education; while 19 are school leavers. In terms of occupation, more than 50 percent of the respondents hold professional position 127 (57.5%), 30 are students, 23 are the technical and support staffs, 16 are middle managers while the remaining are either top managers (2), businessmen (2) or others. With regards to monthly income level, 72 (32.6%) earn between RM3000 to RM4999 and 58 between RM2000 to RM3999. The remaining are 37, which earn between RM4000 to RM4999, 29 earn less than RM2000, 17 earn RM6000 or more and, 8 earn RM5000 to RM5999. As shown in

Table 1, the reliability test on the seven variables has resulted in the Cronbach's alpha values that are greater than the cutoff value of 0.7 (Hair, et al., 2010). As such, all items are reliable measurement of their respective constructs.

Table 1 Reliability Test Results

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Brand identity evaluation		
Suggestive brand name	0.899	6
Non-suggestive brand name	0.945	10
Direct expression brand logo	0.951	6
Indirect expression brand logo	0.917	6
Accommodation brand slogan	0.906	3
Confrontation brand slogan	0.953	8
Brand commitment	0.934	7

Results of Multiple Linear Regression

In order to check whether the assumptions of Multiple Regression are met, preliminary assumption testing for normality, outliers and multicollinearity are conducted. The skewness and kurtosis values are in the range of ± 2 (Garson, 2012), which satisfy the normality assumption. The boxplots show no extreme cases and the Mahalanobis distance values are less than the critical chi-square values of 22.46 at an alpha level of 0.001, which indicating no univariate as well as multivariate outliers (Coakes & Steed, 2003). Further, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for independent variables are less than 3.0, which is well below the recommended upper limit of 10 (Hair, et al., 2010) with a tolerance above 0.2 (Garson, 2012). Therefore, multicollinearity problem does not appear to influence the results. As no significant violation is found, the data is suitable for further analysis.

Table 2 gives the regression results for the model with brand commitment as the dependent variable. Notice that the R square (R^2) for the model is 0.335. With 33.5 percent, the six independent variables, namely suggestive brand name, non-suggestive brand name, direct expression brand logo, indirect expression brand logo, confrontation brand slogan and accommodation brand slogan, are reasonably good at explaining the variation in the brand commitment. Despite the regression model is significant, the predictive power of the variables is weak, as indicated by the low F value. An examination of the coefficients clarifies that only the direct expression logo, suggestive brand name and confrontation brand slogan significantly predict the brand commitment, which the relationships are all positive. Comparing the standardized coefficients, the direct expression logo is the most significant predictor of the brand commitment with a beta coefficient of 0.377. Additionally, paired sample T-test analysis is conducted to examine the significant difference of customer evaluation between suggestive and non-suggestive brand name, direct and indirect brand logo and confrontation and accommodation brand slogan. Based on Table 3, the result shows

that there is a significant difference in the Muslim customers' evaluation of the brand name, logo and slogan, which suggestive brand name, indirect logo and accommodation slogan are more favoured by the Muslim customers rather than non-suggestive brand name, direct logo and confrontation slogan, respectively. Overall, H1a, H2a and H3b are supported (Table 4).

Table 2 Factors affect brand commitment

Dependent Variable	Brand Commitment	
R	0.579	
R Square	0.335	
Adjusted R Square	0.316	
Std. Error of the Estimate	1.154	
F	17.958	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients
Suggestive brand name	0.263	0.218**
Non-suggestive brand name	-0.120	-0.108
Direct expression brand logo	0.438	0.377***
Indirect expression brand logo	-0.115	-0.096
Accommodation brand slogan	0.038	0.033
Confrontation brand slogan	0.253	0.220*

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed)

Table 3 Paired samples test

	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 suggestivename – non-suggestivename	7.673	.000**
Pair 2 directlogo – indirectlogo	-1.726	.086*
Pair 3 confrontationslogan - accommodation slogan	- 8.889	.000**

Note: * $p < .1$, ** $p < .01$

Table 4 Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypotheses	Result
H1a: Suggestive brand name → brand commitment	Supported
H1b: Non-suggestive brand name → brand commitment	Not supported
H2a: Direct expression logo → brand commitment	Supported
H2b: Indirect expression logo → brand commitment	Not supported
H3a: Accommodation slogan → brand commitment	Not supported
H3b: Confrontation slogan → brand commitment	Supported

DISCUSSION

This study sets out to investigate the effect of Islamic brand name, logo and slogan on the Muslim customers' commitment towards halal brand. This study contributes to the customer-brand relationship literatures by demonstrating the importance of brand identity elements, particularly on the Islamic attributes, in affecting the customers' commitment towards the halal brand. Following outcomes from the literatures relating to brand identity elements (brand name, logo and slogan) and brand commitment, six hypotheses were generated.

In total, 221 responses are collected to test the research model. Despite that Muslim customers prefer the suggestive brand name, indirect brand logo and accommodation brand slogan, only only suggestive brand name, direct expression logo and confrontation brand slogan have been found as the significant predictors of the brand commitment. Thus, the results reveal that Muslim customer preferences of Islamic attributes as the brand identity does not have much influence to drive their commitment towards the brand. Somehow, the results support the assumption of the significant relationship between the brand identity elements and the brand commitment (Coop, 2005a, 2005b; Walsh, et al., 2010), which consequently proves Islamic brand name, logo and slogan do affect the Muslim customers' brand commitment.

In detail, the result confirms that the suggestive brand name has a greater effect over non-suggestive brand name (Y. H. Lee & Ang, 2003) and the premise that effective brand name should suggest the product benefit is still relevant, though it has been argued by Lerman and Garbarino (2002). Furthermore, the positive effect on the brand commitment explain that the use of the Islamic brand name that suggest the product benefit will significantly influence the Muslim customers' commitment than the Islamic brand name that does not suggest the product benefit. Thus, this study demonstrates that the Muslim customers evaluate the indirect expression logo more favourably than the direct expression logo, indicating that the use of Islamic symbol or image such as mosque or crescent is preferred by the Muslim customers. However, only direct brand logo significantly influences the brand commitment, highlighting the importance of direct over indirect brand logo. As such, the finding provides evidence that to be effective, brand logo should be expressed in a direct way (Jun & Lee, 2007). As for the slogan, the study reveals that accommodation is evaluated more favourably than accommodation slogan, but confrontation slogan significantly predicts the brand commitment. To a certain extent, the finding conforms the prior research findings that effective brand slogan should command action, identify the brand as the best in its class or provoke the customer's interest than just describe the product/brand and brand promise (Jun & Lee, 2007; Kohli, et al., 2007). Thus, similar with the general customers, the Muslims also look for the brand quality and strength, particularly on the halalness of product, since halal is a mandatory aspect for Muslims to consider before purchasing (Rehman & Shabbir, 2010).

Thus, to reinforce the Muslim customers' commitment to halal brand, Islamic identity can be adopted. In particular, the emphasis should be given on the use of the suggestive brand name, direct expression brand logo and confrontation brand slogan. Probably, the Islamic calligraphy is uncommonly used to brand non halal product that the Muslim

customers perceive them as the key factor in their decision to commit. Other than that, the Muslim customers also value the use of an Islamic brand name that highlight the product benefits and Islamic slogan that provokes the importance to consume halal product and practice the Islamic way of life.

IMPLICATION

The result of the current research adds to the understanding of the role of brand identity i.e. name, logo and slogan in influencing the brand commitment, particularly the Islamic identity to affect the Muslims commitment toward halal brand. Specifically, the results of this study reveal that the Islamic elements in the suggestive brand name, indirect brand logo and accommodation brand slogan are preferable by the customers. That is, the Muslim customers favour a brand that uses an Islamic brand name that describes the product benefit, Islamic brand logo that utilizes an Islamic symbol or image such as mosque or crescent, and Islamic brand slogan that describes the product or brand promise.

However, only Islamic elements utilized in the suggestive brand name, direct expression brand logo and confrontation brand slogan significantly predict the customers' commitment toward halal-labelled brand. In other words, customers are more willing to purchase and stay loyal to a halal-labelled brand when the brand uses Islamic brand name that describes the product benefit, Islamic brand logo that utilizes an Islamic calligraphy, and Islamic brand slogan that commands action or identifies the brand as the best in its class or provokes the interest. Therefore, in branding the halal products, the operators in the halal industry should consider utilizing the Islamic elements as the basic components of brand identity. To establish and reinforce the Muslims' commitment towards halal-labelled brand, they should consider adopting Islamic word that may suggest the product benefit as the brand name, using Islamic calligraphy to form the brand logo and emphasizing the elements of Syariah compliance or halalness in the brand slogan.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of important limitations need to be noted regarding the present study. Firstly, the study omitted some other important variables that could be the possible antecedents of brand commitment such as brand personality, trust, satisfaction and attachment. Thus, the future work should examine other potential factors that might influence the brand commitment. Secondly, this study has a limitation in terms of the generalization of the research outcome. Although, the sample size represents a reasonable response rate, in relative to the Muslim population in Malaysia, the sample size used is considered small. Hence, a larger sample would be better to generalize the finding.

In addition, the non-probability sampling method that was used in selecting the respondents would also lead to a result that cannot be generalized to a larger population. Moreover, as this study conducted in the context of Malaysian Muslims and halal product,

the result cannot be necessarily generalized to any other context. Finally, this study has a restriction that relates to data collection. As the data for the study was collected online, the potential shortcoming would be the unknown respondents. That is, it could not be verified whether the one being emailed is the one that answering the questionnaire and more importantly who the respondent really is. As this study interested in getting the Muslims evaluation, the religion of the respondent matters significantly.

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