

Bukhari, Syeda Nazish Zahra; Syed Asim Ali Bukhari; Salmi Mohd Isa; Goh Yen Nee; Arif, Muhammad

Article

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Islamic Branding and Brand Resonance: A Multi-Group Analysis of Malaysia & Pakistan

Syeda Nazish Zahra Bukhari (Corresponding Author)
Institute of Business & Information Technology, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: nazish.zehra@ibitpu.edu.pk

Syed Asim Ali Bukhari
Head – ESG Unit, The Bank of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Salmi Mohd Isa, Goh Yen Nee
Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Muhammad Arif
Govt. Sadiq Graduate College of Commerce, Bahawalpur, Pakistan

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Abstract

The study examines the underlying heterogeneity within the global Muslim consumer market in connection with Islamic branding and its impact on the brand resonance of an Islamic brand. This comparative study empirically examines the differences existing within the Muslim consumer in Malaysia and Pakistan with respect to the influence of religiosity, Islamic brand knowledge and Islamic corporate social responsibility (ICSR) on Islamic branding perceptions and its subsequent impact on the brand resonance of an Islamic brand. This study uses the Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis in which the constructs scores are calculated according to a composite algorithm. The Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM) was applied before conducting Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) in PLS-SEM. The MICOM procedure consisted of three steps, including measurement of configural invariance, measurement of compositional invariance, and assessment of the equality of a composite's mean value and variance across groups. The study reveals significant differences between the two Muslim consumer markets in terms of Islamic branding antecedents and the influence of this branding ideology on brand resonance of an Islamic brand. It can provide valuable insights to brand managers targeting the global Muslim consumers and policymakers. Currently, limited studies have applied the PLS-SEM, MGA technique through MICOM analysis.

Keywords: Branding, Islamic brand knowledge, brand resonance, Islamic corporate social responsibility, religiosity, multi-group analysis.

1. Introduction

With the advancements in the field of brand management, marketers have realized that ultimately, the power of a brand lies in the minds of consumers. To build a strong brand, the right knowledge structures had to exist in the minds of the consumers. In the heart of all this branding revolution was the consumer. Marketers realized that if the brand held no value or meaning to the consumer, it would be of no value to any of the other stakeholders (Cheng, Tung, Yang, & Chiang, 2019). Brands are developed and exist in the consumer's mind and inculcate all the feelings and emotions that the consumer associates with the offering (Kotler et al., 2017). Due to the multifold benefits of creating brands customized according to various target markets (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2016). A vast repository of concepts, variables, and constructs in the field of branding has been developed (Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017). This led to a much wider and deeper understanding and implementation of branding. Brands evolved to become multi-dimensional and multi-functional entities (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Sarmad & Ali, 2023).

Consumers have been defined as the co-creators of brands. In addition to their brand perceptions, consumers also have the power to influence brand-related perceptions of other consumers (France et al., 2015). The Muslim consumer market has emerged as a substantial target market for brands due to its increasing size and purchasing power. A large number of global brands are targeting Muslim consumers through various product and service offerings. The increasing attractiveness of this consumer market has accelerated both academic and organizational interest in this segment (Iranmanesh et al., 2020). Compared to other consumer segments, the Muslim consumers have distinct characteristics concerning their consumption behaviors and the values and principles guiding their consumption behavior. All the acts of a Muslim consumer are anchored in his/her religious beliefs and values, making Islam the basic premise for their consumption behavior. Muslim consumers do not use brands that they perceive to be against Islamic principles and values. Brands depicting congruence to Islamic values will be favored by the Muslim consumers (Zafar et al., 2024).

The long-term success of any brand is dependent on the creation of brand resonance. Brand resonance refers to the emotional attachment and sense of community developed between the brand and the consumer. The problem addressed in this research is the lack of brand resonance in the brands targeting Muslim consumers (Raut et al., 2020). Past research and various incidents have revealed that Muslim consumers do not feel a self-brand attachment, which triggers anti-consumption behavior when they perceive the brand to be against their religious values and beliefs. Numerous boycotts by Muslim consumers all around the world have cost various global brands a significant amount of monetary losses as well as damage to brand equity. Heterogeneous consumer markets need customized branding strategy (Sungnoi & Soonthonsmai, 2024). The C.B.B.E pyramid of brand development explains that to create brand resonance, a brand should first develop brand salience followed by

brand meaning and afterwards brand response based on the earlier developed strategies. Without the development of these brand-building blocks, the brands targeting Muslim consumers cannot generate brand resonance (Kalliny et al., 2018).

The study is a comparative study conducted in Malaysia and Pakistan. The reason for the selection of these two countries is their strong potential for the development of Islamic branding, but opposite status in the current global halal trade market. Malaysia is considered the world leader in the development of halal standards and halal exports, whereas Pakistan is underperforming in the global halal trade market due to a weak regulatory framework for Islamic branding and low awareness of Islamic branding among the stakeholders. The study fulfills the gaps in the field of Islamic branding by providing various theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. The findings of the study can prove beneficial to both the brand managers and the policymakers in various Muslim countries. The observed heterogeneity in the research findings provides a basis for customization in Islamic branding for different Muslim consumer markets. This study can prove beneficial for expanding the global halal market and increasing halal exports of Muslim countries through the development of Islamic branding. Islamic branding is the key to the development of a long-term relationship between brands and Muslim consumers.

2. Literature Review

With time, the Muslim consumer markets have emerged as a heterogeneous target market for global brands. For Muslims, all of their beliefs and actions are either pleasing or displeasing to Allah (God). Thus, they are very careful about their consumption behavior. This greater inter-connectivity of religion with all aspects of their life makes Muslim consumers a complex consumer market for the brands (Garg & Joshi, 2018; Samidi et al., 2016). Research reveals varying consumer attitudes and behavior due to varying levels of Islamic religious intensity. Consumers' country-of-origin and percentage of Muslim population have been studied as some of the basic predictors of Islamic religious intensity in a number of studies (Hosseini, Mirzaei, & Iranmanesh, 2019; Jumanı & Sukhabot, 2020; Memon, Memon, Pitafi, & Panhwar, 2020).

The global Muslim consumers are similar based on their consumption decisions that are shaped by their religious code of life. They also have a similar lifestyle and dietary requirements and are bound together by a sense of community, welfare, and oneness because of their religion (Floren et al., 2019; Yunus et al., 2010). This creates homogeneity within the Muslim consumer markets in terms of what they deem permissible or non-permissible consumption across various industries. But this homogeneity does not mean that brand managers can apply the same branding strategy for Muslim consumers all over the world (Abuznaid, 2020). Diversity exists within the consumption behaviors of the Muslim consumer markets due to diverse geographic locations, different languages, varying cultures, different levels of religiosity, and demographic profiles (Temporal, 2011). This creates the need for the development of customized Islamic branding elements, resulting in the formation of brand resonance for the Islamic brand (Bukhari & Isa, 2019;

Pasha et al., 2019). Research has revealed that no matter how valuable a brand, it is never completely immune to competitive attack and negative publicity (Ismail et al., 2016). This vulnerability of brands towards external threats and various uncontrollable negative events has caused businesses to invest more proactively in building a brand's reputation, goodwill, and a sense of oneness with the concerned target market and society at large (Amin-Chaudhry, 2016). Brands started looking for diverse business strategies to achieve brand resonance among the target market, including CSR (Teck, Ayadurai, & Chua, 2019).

2.1 Islamic Branding

Islam is a strong brand in itself with strong, favorable, and unique brand associations in the minds of its followers, i.e., the Muslims (Al-Hajla et al., 2018). When a brand associates itself with Islam, it leverages the secondary associations of the religion and uses them to increase its brand equity in the minds of the Muslim consumer. This process of connecting Islamic associations with each aspect of a brand's life cycle, from pre-consumption to post-consumption and during all the elements of the brand's marketing mix, is the basis of Islamic branding. Islam is deeply connected with every aspect of its followers' lives. For this reason, a brand may borrow all the associations of Islam in the Muslim consumer's mind and leverage it as an Islamic brand's associations (Bukhari & Isa, 2021; Samidi et al., 2016; Temporal, 2011). Due to the growing Muslim consumer markets, brands are trying to develop Islamic branding strategies for the Muslim consumers in different parts of the world (Butt et al., 2017; Floren et al., 2019; Jumani & Sukhabot, 2020; Suhartanto et al., 2020).

The presence of Islamic branding elements, such as the halal logo, results in increasing Muslim consumers' repurchase intention and positive word-of-mouth about an Islamic brand (Zafar et al., 2025). The presence of brand elements in a brand that connects a Muslim to the wider community and makes him feel like a devoted follower of his religion will increase his/her emotional attachment to the brand (Alserhan, 2010a; Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016; Wilson & Liu, 2011; Yusof & Jusoh, 2014). Research shows that if two brands have the same attributes, Muslim consumers will prefer the brands that have Islamic branding elements. Islamic branding elements are inculcated by brands because they increase the brand's goodwill, market share, and ultimately the brand's resonance. When a Muslim consumer perceives the brand to be consistent with similar religious associations, the brand resonance of that particular brand increases in his mind (Aziz & Chok, 2013; Butt et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2019).

2.2 Theory of Self-congruity

The theory of self-congruity examines the consumer's identification with the brand. The brand personality is evaluated positively by a consumer if it matches his/her self-image. It is based on the assumption that perceived congruity between the consumer and the brand influences the consumer's pre-purchase and post-purchase behavior. It also has a profound

effect on the consumer's behavioral and attitudinal attachment towards the brand (Frias-Jamilena et al., 2019; Sirgy, 2018; Willems & Brengman, 2019). Islamic branding should create congruence between the Muslim consumer's self-concept and Islam's functional, hedonic, and symbolic associations regarding that product category. Islamic brands should be developed to achieve brand-consumer congruence through Islamic branding. Thus, the brand elements required for an Islamic brand will be different from those required for conventional brands. Islamic branding requires strategies that serve as antecedents to the formation of Islamic brand resonance. The Islamic branding antecedents perceived as important for the development of an Islamic brand by Muslim consumers result in the creation of an Islamic brand with brand resonance. This study proposes Religiosity, Brand Knowledge, and Islamic Corporate Social Responsibility (ICSR) as the antecedents or the building blocks of Islamic branding.

2.3 Islamic Branding and Brand Resonance

This study proposes that if a Muslim consumer perceives higher importance of Islamic branding, he/she will have a greater level of brand resonance for an Islamic brand. Varying perceptions of Islamic branding may result in varying brand resonance for Islamic brands. Previous research has supported that consumers' involvement with a brand is positively related to brand affection and brand engagement (Algharabat et al., 2020). Based upon the above discussion, it can be inferred that the brand resonance within the minds of different consumers may vary based upon the strength of the brand-self congruity perceived by the consumers. Research has shown a positive relationship between emotional attachment and brand resonance, but the strength of the relationship may vary among different consumers. The perceived importance of various brand elements can also influence the level of brand resonance (Boateng et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2018; Japutra et al., 2019; Muhamed et al., 2015). Thus, different Muslim consumer segments may depict a varying relationship between Islamic branding and the brand resonance of Islamic brands. The discussion leads to the development of the following comparative hypothesis:

- H1 There is a significant difference between the influence of Islamic branding on the brand resonance of Islamic brands in Malaysia and Pakistan.

2.4 Islamic Branding and Religiosity

Islamic branding is based on religion and has a strong connection with the religiosity existing within the Muslim consumer market. High religious intensity acts as a predictor of Muslim consumers' preference for halal products and the importance given to halal logos and symbols. Muslim consumers with a high level of religious commitment will place high importance on Islamic branding. Highly religious Muslim consumers tend to have a greater positive attitude towards halal products and services (Ahmadova & Aliyev, 2019; Al-Hajla et al., 2018; Butt et al., 2017). They have greater connectivity with their religion and are more sensitive towards various aspects of Islamic branding, such as halal transportation and storage, and halal labels (Iranmanesh et al., 2020b; Islam & Chandrasekaran, 2020; Maison et al., 2019). Muslims across the globe vary in terms of

religiosity (Temporal, 2011). The magnitude of the religion's impact varies from one Muslim to another all over the world. Muslims cannot be categorized as experiencing the same level of religious influence. It is the level of religiosity rather than being a follower of that religion that influences a Muslim consumer's decision-making (Abuznaid, 2020). Consumers with different levels of religiosity comprehend and react towards various religious brand associations differently (Anam et al., 2018; Liu & Minton, 2018). Islamic branding will be more important to Muslim consumers who have a high level of religiosity as opposed to those consumers who do not have a strong religious intensity (Floren et al., 2019). This leads to the development of the following comparative hypothesis:

- H2 There is a significant difference between the influence of religiosity on Islamic branding in Malaysia and Pakistan.

2.5 Islamic Branding and Brand Knowledge

The key to creating successful brands lies in the creation and representation of the desired brand knowledge (Keller, 2003). A brand can't achieve brand resonance without creating and establishing the appropriate knowledge structures in the consumer's mind (Keller, 2016). Islamic branding is based on leveraging religious brand associations to form secondary associations for the Islamic brand. If consumers do not have sufficient knowledge about Islamic principles relevant to the product category, then a brand will not benefit from leveraging secondary brand associations of Islam (Bukhari & Bukhari, 2025). Brand knowledge about Islamic branding includes the awareness of Islamic teachings relating to the lawful and prohibited consumption habits. It influences the Muslim consumer's consciousness in consuming products produced and delivered through permissible practices. The halal knowledge of Muslim consumers has a positive influence on their purchase decisions (Hartani et al., 2020; Muslichah et al., 2019; Pasha et al., 2019). The presence of greater awareness and knowledge about various halal issues makes the Muslim consumers more sensitive towards the Shariah compliance by brands. Muslim consumers who had prior knowledge of a brand's religious guidelines were more sensitive towards the presence of those requirements in the brands they consume (Jaiyeoba et al., 2019; Sunaryo, 2018). The following comparative hypothesis is proposed.

- H3 There is a significant difference between the influence of brand knowledge on Islamic branding in Malaysia and Pakistan.

2.6 Islamic Branding and Islamic Corporate Social Responsibility (ICSR)

Islamic branding has a direct connection with religiosity; the increase in the demand for Islamic brands has also increased the researchers' focus on ICSR (Alfakhri et al., 2018b). The concept of ICSR integrates the consumer's spirituality and religiosity into his/her brand expectations (Alshammary, 2014; S. A. A. Bukhari et al., 2020c). Islam requires similar principles of responsibility and accountability to be followed by both organizations and individuals. For this reason, Muslim consumers expect the brands they consume to

adopt ICSR practices (Issalih et al., 2015). Muslim consumers, who hold high ICSR expectations from the brands they consume, consider the brand's Shariah compliance and God-consciousness brand associations as important to the purchase decision (Maulan et al., 2016). Consumers, who are more knowledgeable about ICSR practices, perceive greater importance of ICSR as an antecedent to an acceptable business ideology (S. A. A. Bukhari et al., 2020a; Darus et al., 2015). It is proposed that Muslim consumers' perception about the importance of ICSR practices will be translated into his/her perception of Islamic branding. Different groups of Muslim consumers may have varying ICSR perceptions.

- H4 There is a significant difference between the influence of ICSR on Islamic branding in Malaysia and Pakistan.

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

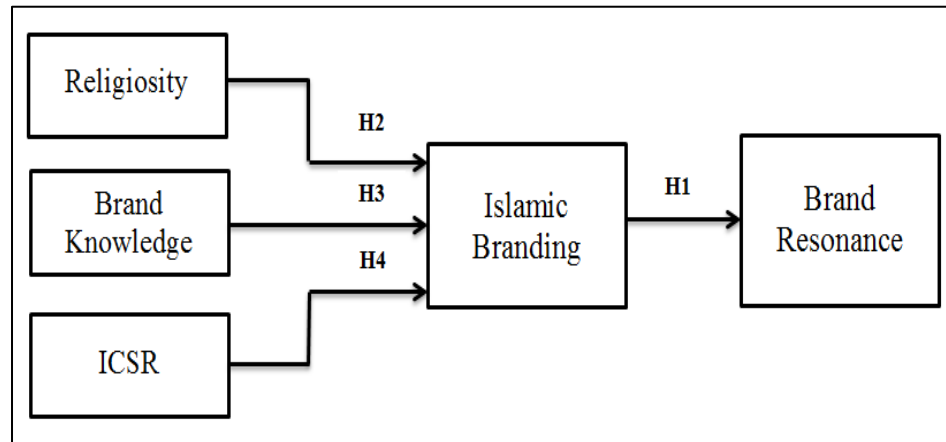


Figure 1: Research Framework

3. Methodology

In view of the heterogeneity existing within the Muslim consumers residing in different parts of the world, this study conducts a comparative analysis to examine the antecedents of Islamic branding in Malaysia and Pakistan. Malaysia is a multi-racial country with approximately. 61% Muslim, and Pakistan is a Muslim majority country with approximately. 96% Muslim population (CIA, 2020). The Muslim consumers in both countries display high levels of religious sensitivity, but varying degree of knowledge exists concerning Islamic branding in the two consumer markets. Malaysia is the current leader and pioneer in the development of the global halal economy. The various areas of Islamic branding, such as halal certification, are regulated by the country's government (Tieman & Ghazali, 2014). In contrast, Pakistan has a significant untapped Islamic branding potential but suffers from low stakeholder knowledge and insufficient regulatory mechanisms for the development of the country's halal economy (Ahmad, 2019; Qureshi,

2017). A comparative study between the two countries aimed to highlight the heterogeneity within the Muslim consumer markets and identify the implicit homogeneity.

The study applied purposive sampling under the non-probability sampling technique. The sample was collected from three cities in Malaysia, i.e. Kuala Lumpur, George Town, and Johor Bahru and three cities in Pakistan, i.e. Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore. The cities were selected based on having the highest GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per Capita in the respective country. The criterion of high GDP was applied because high GDP is an indicator of the high level of economic activity and purchasing power of the consumers in that area. The unit of analysis was individual, i.e. Muslim consumer of halal products. A total sample of 649 was collected through self-administered questionnaires, 326 from Malaysia and 323 from Pakistan. Quantitative research methodology was used in this study. This research methodology is in congruence with the deductive approach of research. Quantitative methodology assists in the objective and deductive reasoning of assumptions and generalizes the findings. Furthermore, the study adopted the survey method to collect data from the sampling frame. The survey method is considered the best option available in social science research when direct observation is almost impossible because of the larger population (Babbie, 2016). The Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) test was performed to test if pre-defined data groups have significant differences in their group-specific parameter estimates. The Measurement Invariance of Composite Models (MICOM) was conducted as a precondition to MGA. Permutation analysis was conducted to analyze whether the model has partial or full measurement invariance (Murshid et al., 2023). Once the MICOM was passed, comparative hypotheses were assessed using the Henseler's MGA, Permutation test, and the Welch-Satterthwait test. The results of the MGA were further explained through the f^2 and q^2 values calculated in the measurement and structural model analysis.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The data analysis technique of Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used in the study. Data analysis was conducted through SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2024) and IBM SPSS. It consisted of three steps, i.e. measurement model analysis and Multi-Group Analysis (MGA).

4.1 Measurement Model Analysis

The research model in this study was a reflective measurement model consisting of reflective measurement items. Measurement model analysis was conducted on the data through assessing convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity. The results are shown in Tables I & II, showing the results of measurement model analysis on three data sets, i.e. data collected from Malaysia (326), data collected from Pakistan (323) and combined data from both Malaysia and Pakistan (649). Analysis was run on all three data sets to ensure measurement items and constructs' reliability and validity for the next analysis steps. The results displayed in Table 1 show values between

0.70-0.95 are regarded as depicting satisfactory indicator reliability. Data reveals adequate convergent validity of the measurement items and constructs, with all the loadings > 0.60 and AVE \geq 0.50 shown in Table 2 (Hair et al., 2019; Hulland, 1999; Ramayah et al., 2018).

Table 1: Internal Consistency Reliability Analysis

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha			Composite Reliability (CR)		
	Malaysia	Pakistan	Combined	Malaysia	Pakistan	Combined
Brand Knowledge	0.830	0.881	0.857	0.880	0.913	0.897
Brand Resonance	0.938	0.940	0.939	0.946	0.948	0.947
Islamic Branding	0.941	0.938	0.939	0.948	0.945	0.947
ICSR	0.819	0.877	0.849	0.869	0.907	0.888
Religiosity	0.942	0.941	0.942	0.948	0.947	0.948

Table 2: Measurement Model Results

Constructs	Item Code	Loadings			AVE		
		Malaysia	Pakistan	Combined	Malaysia	Pakistan	Combined
Brand Knowledge	BK1	0.784	0.875	0.832	0.594	0.677	0.636
	BK2	0.705	0.806	0.757			
	BK3	0.776	0.786	0.782			
	BK4	0.796	0.806	0.804			
	BK5	0.789	0.838	0.810			
Brand Resonance	BR1	0.756	0.794	0.775	0.593	0.601	0.598
	BR10	0.750	0.782	0.768			
	BR11	0.760	0.815	0.788			
	BR12	0.799	0.752	0.776			
	BR2	0.793	0.796	0.795			
	BR3	0.766	0.770	0.769			
	BR4	0.767	0.768	0.768			
	BR5	0.775	0.779	0.774			
	BR6	0.752	0.733	0.744			
	BR7	0.780	0.804	0.792			
	BR8	0.774	0.771	0.774			
	BR9	0.766	0.738	0.752			
Islamic Branding	IB1	0.795	0.824	0.808	0.565	0.553	0.560
	IB10	0.732	0.671	0.704			
	IB11	0.799	0.757	0.778			
	IB12	0.709	0.663	0.689			
	IB13	0.739	0.743	0.741			
	IB14	0.766	0.763	0.764			
	IB2	0.740	0.715	0.728			
	IB3	0.803	0.768	0.788			

	IB4	0.714	0.755	0.732			
	IB5	0.755	0.736	0.747			
	IB6	0.739	0.743	0.741			
	IB7	0.766	0.747	0.757			
	IB8	0.718	0.745	0.730			
	IB9	0.743	0.772	0.757			
ICSR	ICSR1	0.819	0.82	0.817	0.526	0.620	0.570
	ICSR2	0.712	0.745	0.722			
	ICSR3	0.680	0.763	0.721			
	ICSR4	0.677	0.788	0.735			
	ICSR5	0.717	0.795	0.755			
	ICSR6	0.739	0.811	0.775			
Religiosity	R1	0.763	0.725	0.748	0.504	0.501	0.502
	R10	0.689	0.720	0.701			
	R11	0.672	0.719	0.695			
	R12	0.679	0.665	0.670			
	R13	0.710	0.693	0.704			
	R14	0.703	0.745	0.719			
	R15	0.697	0.700	0.702			
	R16	0.687	0.786	0.729			
	R17	0.661	0.623	0.651			
	R18	0.740	0.678	0.705			
	R2	0.700	0.673	0.685			
	R3	0.753	0.726	0.746			
	R4	0.699	0.730	0.707			
	R5	0.703	0.636	0.678			
	R6	0.716	0.747	0.727			
	R7	0.751	0.705	0.734			
	R8	0.683	0.716	0.695			
	R9	0.764	0.726	0.749			

After the measurement model analysis, the hypotheses testing is conducted through structural model analysis and MGA.

4.2 Structural Model Analysis and MGA

The comparative analysis is conducted using the MGA in SMART PLS. The study applies the MICOM before conducting MGA (Henseler et al., 2016). In the MGA, Henseler's MGA (Garson, 2016; Ghazali et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017), the Permutation test and the Welch-Satterthwait Test (Chin & Dibbern, 2009) were used to interpret the significant differences in hypothesis testing across the two groups, i.e., Malaysia and Pakistan. The first step in MGA was assessing the measurement invariance in the measurement model through the MICOM technique. It is used to determine whether the differences observed between the data sets are not due to the difference in respondents' understanding of the measurement items (Cheah et al., 2020).

The configural invariance was established since the requirements of identical indicators, coding and algorithms were fulfilled in the two data sets to be compared. The next steps were the assessment of compositional invariance and equivalence of group means and variance. For this purpose, the permutation analysis was conducted. Results of the Permutation analysis are displayed in Tables 3 and 4 and show that Full Measurement Invariance is established for the measurement model. Full measurement invariance reveals that the measurement model and structural model analysis can be run and examined for the combined data set as well. It shows that the research model can be generalized across different Muslim countries with varying degrees of the Muslim population. MGA hypotheses testing shown in Table 5 display significant differences between Malaysia and Pakistan, therefore supporting hypotheses H1, H3 and H4. The Muslim consumers in Malaysia and Pakistan show significant differences with respect to the influence of Islamic branding on the brand resonance and the influence of brand knowledge and ICSR on Islamic branding perceptions. For the hypotheses H1 and H4, the p-value < 0.05 is observed and thus, the presence of significant differences between Malaysia and Pakistan is reported.

Table 3: MICOM Step 2

Constructs	Configural Invariance (Step 1)	Compositional Invariance (Correlation = 1)		Partial Measurement Invariance Established
		C = 1	Confidence Interval (CIs)	
Brand Knowledge	<i>Yes</i>	0.999	[0.996, 1.000]	<i>Yes</i>
Brand Resonance	<i>Yes</i>	1.000	[0.999, 1.000]	<i>Yes</i>
ICSR	<i>Yes</i>	0.999	[0.997, 1.000]	<i>Yes</i>
Islamic Branding	<i>Yes</i>	1.000	[0.999, 1.000]	<i>Yes</i>
Religiosity	<i>Yes</i>	0.998	[0.997, 1.000]	<i>Yes</i>

Table 4: MICOM Step 3

Constructs	Equal Mean Value		Equal Variance		Full Measurement Invariance Established
	Differences	Confidence Interval (CIs)	Differences	Confidence Interval (CIs)	
Brand Knowledge	0.025	[-0.125, 0.133]	-0.164	[-0.388, 0.369]	Yes
Brand Resonance	0.124	[-0.128, 0.131]	-0.109	[-0.403, 0.392]	Yes
ICSR	-0.032	[-0.126, 0.129]	-0.069	[-0.490, 0.506]	Yes
Islamic Branding	-0.106	[-0.125, 0.133]	0.228	[-0.496, 0.472]	Yes
Religiosity	-0.128	[-0.130, 0.133]	0.250	[-0.559, 0.545]	Yes

Table 5: MGA Hypotheses Testing

Hypoth.	Relationships (Malaysia Vs. Pakistan)	Path Coefficient Difference	Confidence Interval 95%		p-value Differences (one-tailed)			
			Malaysia	Pakistan	Henseler's MGA	Permutation Test	Welch-Satterthwaite test	Supported
H1	Islamic Branding → Brand Resonance	0.19	0.663	0.331	0.034	0.035	0.036	Yes/Yes/Yes
H2	Religiosity → Islamic Branding	0.068	0.361	0.700	0.304	0.310	0.311	No/No/No
H3	Brand Knowledge → Islamic Branding	0.324	0.785	0.619	0.009	0.009	0.009	Yes/Yes/Yes
H4	ICSR → Islamic Branding	-0.294	0.447	0.385	0.021	0.017	0.017	Yes/Yes/Yes

5. Discussion

The homogeneity of the Muslim consumer market is verified since all the hypotheses regarding the relationship between exogenous and endogenous variables are supported in Malaysia, Pakistan, and the combined data sets. MGA shows the difference in the influence of Islamic branding on brand resonance in Malaysia and Pakistan. The influence is greater in Malaysia as opposed to Pakistan. The second substantial difference detected in MGA is in the relationship between brand knowledge and Islamic branding. In the research

framework, three antecedents influence the endogenous variable Islamic branding. The R^2 value reveals the collective predictive accuracy of the three antecedents of Islamic branding, but in order to compare the influence of a single antecedent across two different data groups, the effect size (f^2) value of the individual construct is analyzed. Hypothesis H3 proposes a substantial difference in the influence of brand knowledge on Islamic branding in Malaysia and Pakistan. The effect size of brand knowledge in Malaysia is 0.497, which shows a strong influence of this predictor variable. In comparison, the f^2 value of brand knowledge in Pakistan is 0.055, which is a weak effect size value. These values show that Muslim consumers in Malaysia display a higher level of Islamic branding importance due to brand knowledge as compared to Muslim consumers in Pakistan. Hypothesis H4 results show substantial differences between ICSR and Islamic branding in Malaysia and Pakistan. This is analyzed by observing the differences in the f^2 value of the exogenous construct (ICSR) on the endogenous construct (Islamic branding). In Malaysia, ICSR has a small effect size on Islamic branding that is shown by the f^2 value of 0.126. But in Pakistan, the effect size of ICSR on Islamic branding is 0.439. This is a strong level effect size and is substantially stronger than the f^2 value of the construct in the Malaysian data group. Thus, MGA shows that Pakistan's Muslim consumers consider ICSR as a more important part of Islamic branding as compared to Malaysia's Muslim consumers.

The results of the study are in congruence with the theory of self-congruity, proving the need for customization of brand building blocks for different consumer markets. It shows Islamic branding as a solution to the problem of a lack of brand resonance in Islamic brands. The comparative analysis through MGA further proves the inherent heterogeneity of the Muslim consumer market. The study's findings revealed that the presence of multiple races in a Muslim country, i.e., Malaysia, can create increased importance of Islamic branding in the minds of the Muslim consumers residing in that country. In the case of Pakistan, adequate brand knowledge is lacking with respect to Islamic branding. Even in the absence of a halal logo on the product packaging the consumers assume the halal status of the brands. This causes them to pay less attention towards various elements of Islamic branding. Although both Malaysia and Pakistan are Muslim majority countries, Malaysia is the world leader in halal certification, and Pakistan is at the initial stages of the development of a credible halal certification system. The majority of the brands in Pakistan either does not have an explicit halal certificate or have halal certifications from authorities of other countries (Butt et al., 2017). The results of this study support the existing literature (Alserhan, 2010b; Alserhan & Alserhan, 2012; Floren et al., 2019) by showing that the Muslim consumers in Malaysia and Pakistan have inherent heterogeneity with varying perceptions of Islamic branding.

Results reveal significant differences in the influence of brand knowledge on Islamic branding. This is supported by existing literature since lack of knowledge exists among Pakistani Muslim consumers about Islamic branding elements such as halal logistics, halal manufacturing, and halal retail. A need has been identified for the creation of brand knowledge which can act as an antecedent towards the development of Islamic branding in

Pakistan (Khan et al., 2019). The majority of the Muslim consumers in Pakistan have a low level of awareness and knowledge about the various processes involved in halal certification and the creation of halal products and services (Haleem et al., 2020). As opposed to Pakistan research conducted on the halal certification standards of various halal certifying organizations across the globe revealed that Muslim consumers place the highest level of trust on Malaysian halal certification. The central halal certifying organization of Malaysia, i.e., JAKIM, is considered a leader in halal certification standards globally. Unlike Pakistan, the enforcement of halal certification and application of various Shariah principles in food brand life cycle is handled and supervised by the government (Latif et al., 2014; Zafat et al. 2025). With the presence of religious sensitivity among Malaysian Muslim consumers, there is an increase in the level of awareness amongst the stakeholders about the concept of Islamic branding (Hashim & Shariff, 2016). Over time, the Malay Muslim consumers have become more aware and concerned about whether the brands they use and consume are being prepared, stored, and transported according to Islamic standards (Zainuddin & Shariff, 2016).

In Pakistan, consumers practice high levels of philanthropy and also expect their brands to step up whenever the country faces any social challenge or natural disaster. Philanthropy is a part of ICSR, most widely practiced in Pakistan (S. A. A. Bukhari et al., 2020b), since it is a collectivist society and follows the teachings of Islam by practicing ICSR for societal welfare (Mostafa & ElSahn, 2016). This can be the cause of the high level of importance placed by consumers on the need for Islamic brands to inculcate ICSR practices in their business operations. The situation is different in Malaysia, where in 2017 the Malaysian Stock Exchange issued a regulation for mandatory disclosure of the CSR activities of public-listed organizations (Sadou et al., 2017). In recent times, an increase in CSR performance has been witnessed by organizations operating in Malaysia (Alfakhri et al., 2018a). The Malaysian government has laid down a number of frameworks and policies regarding the disclosure of an organization's socially responsible activities. Previous studies have shown a greater tendency of CSR disclosure among foreign Islamic brands in Malaysia as opposed to local brands. However, the majority of these brands disclose CSR practices, not ICSR, meaning that the socially responsible activities are not promoted to the Muslim consumer as part of the brand's Shariah compliance (Arsad et al., 2020). The developed CSR implementation and reporting mechanism in the country may be the cause of the Malaysian Muslim consumers' lesser perceived influence of ICSR on Islamic branding. Consumers already consider CSR an integral part of an organization's business practices and may not strongly attribute it solely to Islamic branding.

5.1 Conclusion

This is a comparative study between Pakistan and Malaysia to identify significant differences in Islamic branding antecedents and the influence of Islamic branding on brand resonance. Based on the findings of the study discussed in the previous sections,

heterogeneity between Muslims residing in countries with varying percentages of Muslim population has been observed. Both Pakistan and Malaysia are Muslim majority countries, but unlike Pakistan, Malaysia has a substantial representation of other religious groups in its total population. The difference in the effect of Islamic branding on the brand resonance in different countries is explained by the varying level of brand-self connection among the Muslim consumers. High religious sensitivity increases the importance of Islamic branding in the minds of Muslim consumers. This, in turn, causes them to be more emotionally attached to Islamic brands. The lesser impact of Islamic branding on the brand resonance in Pakistan is explained by the lack of knowledge among Muslim consumers regarding Islamic branding. A variation in the ICSR perceptions and importance of Islamic branding reveals that ICSR can be used as a brand-building strategy in some Muslim consumer markets like Pakistan. This supports the need for a customized branding strategy, i.e., Islamic branding for the global Muslim consumer markets. The proposed antecedents prove the strong connections between the Islamic brand building blocks and Islamic principles and values.

5.2 Implications of the Study

This study has significant theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. The research framework explores the use of Islamic branding as a tool for increasing the brand resonance of an Islamic brand based on the Theory of self-congruity. This theoretical foundation has not been extensively applied in the area of brand customization for Muslim consumers. The development of brand resonance has been stated as a branding strategy for promoting positive consumer behavior as well as minimizing or eliminating anti-consumption behavior against the brand. The research examines the brand building blocks for Islamic branding and proves the need for customization of branding strategy according to the differences existing in the consumer markets. Results of MGA show that the same branding strategy cannot be applied to two groups of Muslim consumers with varying levels of the Muslim population. The brand manager should develop the Islamic branding strategy according to the level of religiosity, brand knowledge, and ICSR expectations of the Muslim consumer market. The study can also have significant regulatory and policy implications for the global Islamic consumer markets in different countries. Malaysia and Pakistan consumer markets differ significantly based on the advancement in the regulatory and policy framework for Islamic branding. This difference is that the regulatory and policy structure of the two countries was also mirrored in the findings of the study, which reveals a stronger Islamic branding influence on brand resonance in Malaysia as compared to Pakistan. A stronger Islamic branding policy framework in Malaysia also created a greater influence of brand knowledge on Muslim consumers' Islamic branding perceptions in Malaysia. Thus, the study highlights the importance of the formation of regulation and sector-specific guidelines for the development of various Islamic branding elements by the country's government. Stronger regulations for the development of Islamic branding will create greater consumer knowledge and result in the creation of Islamic brands having high brand resonance. The research framework can also benefit the governments of the Muslim

countries as they can capture the halal export markets through the development of Islamic brands that have a high level of brand resonance. Despite the large potential, Pakistan has a minimal share in the various global halal industries. Through the development of Islamic branding, the country can produce local Islamic brands that can capture the lucrative halal export markets. The study holds important implications for brand managers by providing them with a customized brand-building framework for different Muslim consumer markets.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The study was conducted in selected cities of both countries due to time and financial constraints. It is currently empirically examining a limited number of Islamic branding antecedents, which may be expanded in future research. This study provides many avenues for future research in the area of Islamic branding. The research framework can be applied to other Muslim minorities, Muslim majorities, or multi-racial countries to gauge the effectiveness of the proposed antecedents and Islamic branding in creating brand resonance. The research framework can be applied to various Islamic brands to examine, modify or develop Islamic branding strategies. Furthermore, the brand resonance of Islamic brands can be examined through the research framework. The study can be extended by the application of the framework on various halal products or service industries. Comparative studies can be done on the existing framework by running MGA on various demographic bases or between conventional and Islamic brands.

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