**IMPACT OF INTERNAL BRANDING AND CORPORATE CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE BRAND SUPPORT AND THE ROLE OF CORPORATE IDENTITY AS MEDIATOR**

By

**MUHAMMAD NUR FITRI BIN RAZAK**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**June 2022**

**FBMK 2022 68**

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

# IMPACT OF INTERNAL BRANDING AND CORPORATE CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE BRAND SUPPORT AND THE ROLE OF CORPORATE IDENTITY AS MEDIATOR

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**June 2022**

**Chairman** : **Rosmiza Bidin, PhD**
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Corporate identity has played a vital role in the halal industry to create a strong foundation for its reputation in the long run. This paper used two modeling analyses for two different data. The first analysis aimed to predict the relationship between internal brand (antecedent) and corporate culture (antecedent), and employee brand support (consequence), mediated by corporate identity management (CIM) using partial-least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). A total of 206 employees from Malaysia's halal food SMEs took part in the survey. The second analysis identified topic proportions patterns using the topic modeling approach on halal brand identity. Machine learning approach of topic modeling was applied for this analysis. Metadata of 1,091 articles were mined from the Scopus database on halal studies across all social sciences fields. The result of the first analysis revealed that there was a partial relationship between internal brand (antecedent) and employee brand support (consequence) mediated by CIM. The second analysis supported these findings by pointing out a weak topic proportion on the halal brand identity discussion globally. Interestingly, the result also found the halal brand identity discussion involving the halal food industry is almost non-existed in Malaysia's halal food SMEs. The contributions of this paper were apparent in three major areas which are methodology, theoretical and future suggestions. The utilization of two different model analyses was able to confirm the consistency of the discussions of major findings in the literature review, and proposed possible studies for future researchers.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

# KESAN PENJENAMAAN DALAMAN DAN BUDAYA KORPORAT TERHADAP SOKONGAN JENAMA PEKERJA DAN PERANAN IDENTITI KORPORAT SEBAGAI PENGANTARA

Oleh

**MUHAMMAD NUR FITRI BIN RAZAK**

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Identiti korporat telah memainkan peranan penting dalam industri halal untuk mewujudkan asas yang kukuh untuk reputasinya dalam jangka masa panjang. Kertas ini menggunakan dua analisis pemodelan untuk dua data yang berbeza. Analisis pertama bertujuan untuk meramalkan hubungan antara jenama dalaman (anteceden) dan budaya kadar korporat (anteceden), dan sokongan jenama pekerja (akibat), dimediasi oleh pengurusan identiti korporat (CIM) menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktur kuasa dua terkecil separa. (PLS-SEM). Sejumlah 206 pekerja dari PKS makanan halal Malaysia mengambil bahagian dalam tinjauan itu. Analisis kedua mengenal pasti corak perkadaran topik menggunakan pendekatan pemodelan topik mengenai identiti jenama halal. Pendekatan pembelajaran mesin bagi pemodelan topik telah digunakan untuk analisis ini. Metadata 1,091 artikel telah dilombong daripada pangkalan data Scopus mengenai kajian halal merentas semua bidang sains sosial. Keputusan analisis pertama mendedahkan bahawa terdapat hubungan separa antara jenama dalaman (antecedent) dan sokongan jenama pekerja (akibat) yang dimediasi oleh CIM. Analisis kedua menyokong penemuan ini dengan menunjukkan bahagian topik yang lemah mengenai perbincangan identiti jenama halal di peringkat global. Menariknya, hasilnya juga mendapati perbincangan identiti jenama halal yang melibatkan industri makanan halal hampir tidak wujud dalam PKS makanan halal Malaysia. Sumbangan kertas ini jelas dalam tiga bidang utama iaitu metodologi, teori dan cadangan masa hadapan. Penggunaan dua analisis model yang berbeza dapat mengesahkan ketekalan perbincangan penemuan utama dalam kajian literatur, dan mencadangkan kemungkinan kajian untuk penyelidik akan datang.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim Al-Malik Al-Quddus As-Salam,*

*First and foremost, all praise to Almighty Allah S.W.T for his mercy and guidance in giving me strength to strive for the best to complete this research project. There are a lot of ups and downs for me throughout the journey in finalizing this study.*

*This journey is for both of my parents, Razak bin Shariff and Zaleha bt Suhaimi. Their sacrifice in monetary, emotion and energy are beyond everything else in this world. My lovely elder sister Noraslamidatul Adawiyah Razak for always there for me. Not to forget my partner Nurul Amera Muhamad Nazmi, thank you for the emotional support given to me in completing this thesis.*

*I owe my supervisor, Dr. Rosmiza Bidin, a huge debt of gratitude for all of her help in guiding me through my academic path and for forever altering my thoughts on life. She is more than simply my supervisor; throughout this incredible journey, she has served as my second mother. Dr. Rosmiza Bidin, I appreciate everything very much.*

*Not to forget, my supervisory committee members, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd Nizam Osman and Dr. Tham Jen Sern. Without a guidance from both of you, it is unimaginable for me in completing this journey with its ebb and flow.*

*Special thanks to the Viva Chairperson and the examiners for their advice to improve the output of this research through their comments during the presentation of the findings.*

*Lastly, thank you so much to all my friends who always there by my side throughout this journey. All supports that have been given made me a greater person today and I shall not forget all kindness for the rest of my life.*

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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**Declaration by graduate student**

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- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
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| | |
|---|---|
| IB | Internal brand |
| CC | Corporate culture |
| CIM | Corporate identity management |
| EBS | Employee brand support |
| ML | Machine learning |

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1    Background of Study

The global Halal market is expected to grow to USD 5.0 trillion globally. At the same time, domestic growth is estimated to reach USD 113.2 billion by 2030. With such a prospect, Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 stated that Malaysia aimed to acquire the competitive advantage in capitalising on this opportunity through the comprehensive Halal ecosystem. This expansion requires a more robust and sophisticated communication process to align the information of the Halal certification by the certification bodies. In Europe, numerous certification bodies for Halal make the certification process confusing and lack information standardisation (Kurth & Glasbergen, 2017). In Malaysia, the findings and past literature suggested that this need to be addressed in the first place, not only at the Halal industry SMEs' level but the significant aligning effort of the environment of the Halal industry. The current environment model cannot be a catalyst for the Halal industry SMEs in understanding the importance of identity management in their organisation that is supposedly championing the philosophy of Halal in its brand identity. The Halal industry is vast and requires many governing bodies to manage it, which is unavoidable (Mohd Shahwahid et al., 2015). Each governing body operates and communicates with SMEs independently. Unclear information on the regulatory function of involved governing bodies creates confusion for business operators in the Halal industry SMEs.

Furthermore, unable to distinguish the right place to acquire information on the latest development in Halal management and certification plus with the numerous requirements and enormous financial investment in the Halal industry really impacting the SMEs' owners to go further in this industry and unable to precisely positioned the values and messages of Halal in their organisation's culture, identity and image portrayal to outside stakeholders (Hardin et al., 2019; Mohd Shahwahid et al., 2015; Punjaisri et al., 2009; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). The latest scandal in Malaysia's Halal industry is impacting the country's reputation as one of the forefronts in the global Halal market.

The confusion amongst business owners and unclear information for them to take appropriate actions has become the headline to many international media agencies such as The Straits Times and Bloomberg (Whitehead, 2021). Thus, it is suggested that one commissioner needs to monitor the Halal management to align the Halal brand values as the first step in advocating the brand's message to the SMEs. The centralised communication channel is fundamental for knowledge transfer. It facilitates SMEs business owners to understand and develop the right strategy to align the organisation's brand identity with the Halal values and eliminate any obscure Halal management and certification. As for the conclusion, Malaysia Halal certification and management procedure has become exemplary globally with the involvement from numerous authority bodies as the support given from the government. However, this creates a brand identity crisis in understanding the philosophy behind the meaning of *Halalan Thoyyiban* to SME business owners.

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Corporate identity has played a vital role in the Halal industry to create a strong foundation for its reputation in the long run. Corporate identity is one of the significant catalysts that contribute to more impactful outcomes for the organisation. It includes promoting transparency in the communication among stakeholders and contributing to positive morale and retention of highly skilled employees (Melewar et al., 2005).

Halal (permissible) and *Thoyyiban* (wholesome) are two fundamental pillars in Islam which the revelation is clearly stated in the Holy Quran (Al-Baqarah, 2:168-174). Halal is derived from an Arabic word that means allowed or permitted according to Sharia (Islamic) law (Noordin et al., 2009b; Saifuddeen & Sobian, 2006; Rahman, 2001). *Thoyyiban*, on the other hand, means top quality, safe, clean, nutritious, and authentic (Mariam, 2006; Saifuddeen & Sobian, 2006).

Corporate identity management (CIM) in businesses has been extensively explored and recognised in the literature as an important field of research (Melewar et al., 2017; Simes & Sebastiani, 2017; Simes et al., 2005). Malaysia Halal Sector Master Plan 2030 outlined four major goals to be met: a strong and diverse local Halal industry; simplifying the business model; competitive business participation; and globalisation of the Halal Malaysia brand. This study investigates the links between CIM in the Halal sector and employee brand support (EBS) alongside the related underlying processes, in the Malaysian Halal industry environment. This researcher implemented a quantitative approach. The survey was carried out to put the research hypotheses and proposed conceptual model to the test.

Internal brand communication is one of the vital essences in improving the corporate identity in a big organisation with multiple operational functions that require a very discreet communication strategy to ensure the corporate identity can be built from a strong foundation (Bidin et al., 2014). Furthermore, understanding intangible factors such as internal brand communication is crucial in building the organisation's corporate identity. Employees' emotional attachment and sense of belonging to the organisation directly contribute to a strong corporate identity by integrating the organisation's human resource management in creating corporate identity (Jain, Paul, & Chauhan, 2016). This is explained by the influence it has on stakeholders' perceptions, which impacts the company's image. The importance of corporate brand identification to a company's market survival cannot be underestimated (Buil et al., 2016) as employees' attitudes and behaviour are essential in achieving a high level of performance in creating customer satisfaction. The organisation must focus on the physical aspects of the brand identity as well as the employees' demands.

The internal branding exercise has been seen as a significant factor that contributes to the EBS. The effective internal communication system can improve the employees' understanding of the elements of a good brand practice in CIM (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, & Wilson, 2009; Aurand, Gorchels & Bishop, 2005). Internal branding enhances the likelihood that individuals will be more content with their professions and with the organisation. Internal branding activities have a direct influence on EBS since they foster empowering communication flow among workers through their involvement. Consequently, increasing work happiness is critical to enhancing their performance

(Kulachai et al., 2018). Coordination of internal and external branding activities may result in a full grasp of the firm vision, culture, and image, ultimately producing a strong corporate brand (Vallaster, 2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Tosti & Stotz, 2001;).

The concept of interdepartmental communication aims to develop an excellent corporate culture in employee-organisation relationships, resulting in more robust organisational performance (Gondal & Shahbaz, 2012). The role of an effective internal communication system is to develop and maintain an excellent corporate culture in the organisation in its relationship with employees. In order to maintain organisational communication transparency, internal communication channels should serve as a catalyst for two-way interaction, information exchange, and sharing (Dardis & Haigh, 2009). This shows the level of accountability that members of the organisation should have in terms of the repercussions of exposing positive and poor organisational conduct.

Face-to-face communication and the interactivity characteristic of an internal communication system fulfil such requirements for more organised information sharing and system capability to channel and transmit information from the sender to the designated receiver (Dardis & Haigh, 2009). A strong organisation-employee relationship in its corporate culture impacts the performance. Knowledge sharing is the key through the systematic and comprehensive system that can facilitate the process (Kuzu & Özilhan, 2014). This indicates that, from an organisation's strategic management point of view, companies should promote such transparency in their corporate culture to clearly communicate their goals and objectives to the employees. It can motivate them to contribute to the overall organisational performance.

EBS becomes more crucial nowadays since the organisation needs to ensure that its employees deliver a top level of service promised by its brand. This ability can be achieved through well-structured internal brand communication exercises, which is quintessential for good EBS (Aurand et al., 2005). A communicated brand identity positively impacts the organisation's identification among employees through their attachment to the brand (Bravo et al., 2017).

To encourage their employees, organisations with EBS planning should ensure that the CIM is heading in the right direction, with a sensible environment and beliefs. Based on marketing control theory (Jaworski, 1988) and social learning theory, a suggested conceptual model was developed (Bandura, 1977). This study will include theoretical, managerial, and policy contributions. Moreover, this study is intended to assist business executives and public officials who wish to boost staff performance growth through effective brand support, along with the extension of available information about CIM in the Halal sector.

## 1.2     Problem Statement

CIM plays a vital role in the organisation, and many studies have been done on it. Unfortunately, few studies show the impact of the CIM in the Halal industry. Most of the Halal food manufacturing industry studies focus on supply chain management and

Halal certification as a process (Masrom, Rasi, & Daut, 2017; Noordin, Noor, & Samicho, 2014; Noordin et al., 2009). Academic and business organisations recognize that establishing a powerful identity helps them integrate with the marketplace, attract investment, empower employees, and provide a competitive upper hand in their goods and services. Consequently, interest in corporate identity grew substantially in recent years as it is now hailed as an impactful strategic tool and a leading factor of competitive advantage (Rao et al., 2015; Schmidt, 1995). Many organisations are attempting to create a distinct and distinctive brand to represent them in the marketplace.

According to corporate identity theory, corporate identity has been identified as a strategic asset and source of competitive advantage. Effective management of corporate identity can serve to fulfill the needs of a company's key stakeholders by, generating loyalty in the organization among all target groups and encouraging personnel. However, corporate identity academic research is still closely tied to practice (Van Riel, 1997). Moreover, there is an increasing demand for halal products, which probably fuels the halal identity phenomena (Devereux, Melewar, Dinnie & Lange, 2020). The halal image of a product is created and advertised to affect consumer preference for these products (Fachrurazi, Silalahi, Hariyadi, & Fahham, 2022). However, it is discovered that there is no substantial research on the correlation between internal brand and corporate culture (antecedents), as well as workers' brand support (consequences) in the Malaysian Halal food industry.

Moreover, this study tries to fill the void where social identity theory has not been used as a lens to comprehend and assess the correlation between internal brand and corporate culture, as well as workers' brand support in the Malaysian Halal food industry. This void must be filled due to the social-centric nature of Halal food. As such, this study aims to contribute to global branding strategy literature by exploring a social antecedent in the Malaysian Halal marketplace from a social identity theory perspective.

Identification of the research problem in this study started with a reported issue that aligned with the interest of the study. Before the interest in the study is confirmed, the preliminary reading of materials such as newspaper segments, annual reports, and academic journal articles are crucial in determining an issue or problem that is worth exploring aligned with the context chosen. According to the State of the Global Islamic Economy Report (2018/2019), the Halal identity is crucial to be understood as a core value for the company's brand identity. A strong brand identity is critical to upholding the global Halal industry and its aim to become one of the biggest industries in the world. However, the under-par performance of organisations, especially SMEs, is the biggest obstacle that needs to be focused on to achieve the aim itself.

Poor utilisation of communication technologies, misunderstanding in Halal information, and obscurity in the knowledge of the Halal management process among SMEs are some of the challenges in developing healthy brand identity in Malaysia's Halal industrial context (Pauzi & Man, 2018; Mohd Shahwahid et al., 2015). A strong corporate brand encompasses a reputation for high-quality goods and services, solid financial performance, cohesion, a pleasant workplace climate, and social and environmental accountability (Erkmen & Hancer, 2015; Einwiller & Will, 2002). The production of

Halal-compliant goods and services is now in high demand (Safiullin et al., 2016) and the key cause for this is due to the Halal standards. The process of globalisation of trade in separate segments of commodity markets shows table development. That segment is the product made following the requirements of Halal. As a result, competition is no longer restricted to national borders.

In addition, the emergence of a Halal lifestyle by Muslims and non-Muslims has provided this industry with further growth possibilities. Halal is not just associated with Islamic doctrine, but also with product quality.

A healthy bond with internal stakeholders is the foundation of successful identity management. Internal stakeholders have a significant influence in shaping the organization's corporate identity. According to Rutitis et al. (2014), in their study on a conceptual model for CIM in the healthcare industry, a significant focus is now given to the management of corporate identity details pertaining to the use of visual identity systems, active implementation and the use of guidelines as a part of health service culture, and active use of multiple communication guidelines. This shows that internal communication significantly impacts disseminating information through a communication channel in daily operation.

This evolution of the Halal industry in Malaysia sees a new role in brand communication and identity management. It contributes to forming a catalyst to develop and maintain the momentum of Malaysia's Halal SMEs' industry in the country's effort to become a forefront player in the global Halal market. Fischer (2015) also mentioned that communication is quintessential for expanding and strengthening the Halal industry. It is essential to strategically identify the niches market value chains for Malaysian entrepreneurs to exploit to expand their Halal brand to the highest level. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) plays a vital role in Islamic tourism, finance, and the Halal industry.

However, the performance of Halal SMEs in Malaysia is still below par in terms of brand communication and CIM, which is not getting much attention from the industry players. In other words, holistic Halal brand identity and values management in the Malaysian Halal industry's SMEs is still a far-fetched idea since its current managerial structure is weak in numerous fundamental aspects. Most business owners in Halal SMEs failed to realise the importance of having good governance on the organisation's identity (Hardin et al., 2019). The most significant weaknesses can be seen starting from the very top hierarchy in the industry, which is scarce and unclear delegation of the portfolio in law enforcement in authority bodies.

The chance to develop the Halal industry is a favorable one since Halal products are in high demand internationally and nationally (Razak et al., 2022). Consequently, expanding corporate identity theory seems essential in the context of the Halal food industry in Malaysia. Relationship marketing literature recognizes the importance of Corporate Identity (CI) and corporate brand recognition in determining customer outcomes. However, there is a lack of investigation of company identity as a crucial element in fostering brand support among employees. Consequently, this thesis will fill

this gap to investigate employee-company identification by expanding corporate identity theory in the halal food industry.

Good internal communication strives to give access to privileges such as employee self-service, which is especially crucial for quality perceptions. Managers benefit from the usage of electronic service delivery channels in employee self-service arrangements. Employees are also expected to have clear and instant self-directed access to their benefits and pay information. This is likely to lead to increased levels of satisfaction, which will translate into major motivation, performance, and job duration gains for the company. A communication system is meant to maintain employees' continuous and inspired adherence to the organisational objective by providing required support services and benefits products directly (Yang et al., 2011).

As Halal standards have to become a global standard, a good identity must be constructed and become a Halal marketing strategy for the standard akin to all Muslims and non-Muslims. However, there are several challenges for the Halal industry, such as developing a globalised identity and promotional strategies. For instance, hotels and destinations that cater to Muslim tourists in the tourism industry certainly do not want to attract the Muslim traveller segment only whilst abandoning the other market segments. As a result, one conundrum is determining their brand's identity and marketing approach (Elasrag, 2016). This motivates the Halal business to create an efficient structure, such as internal communication, to assist employees in improving their marketing effectiveness. As a result, this would strengthen the standard and reliability of their goods and services (Tooley et al., 2003). Alongside that, study findings demonstrated that consumers' opinions of Halal logistics, their Halal worries, and media exposure all had a favourable and significant influence on customers' willingness to invest in its logistics.

There is a positive correlation between willingness to pay and the level of demand for Halal logistics certification (Fathi et al., 2016). Conversely, while Halal logistics plays an important role in ensuring the Halal certification of food, they emphasised that demand for these services is minimal. This presents a challenge to the Halal business in terms of setting goals for strategic planning, assessing performance, and supporting stakeholders (Hazelkorn, 2007). In Malaysia, the Halal sector is projected to grow, estimated to reach USD 113.2 billion by 2030. It is fundamental to have conducive infrastructures and a strong support base. This is due to Malaysia's aims to become the world's leading Halal hub as outlined in the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030. A well-trained workforce of cultivating knowledge and expertise is essential to fast entry into the global Halal market.

Due to this, Malaysia has begun to invest substantially in programmes to strengthen its turf in Halal branding. A strategically organised corporate identity will aid a business in gaining an edge over its competitors (Olins, 2017), increasing the number of organisations developing and utilising CIM as part of their strategic growth and expansion (Baker & Balmer, 1997). Many experts believe that one of CIM's most important roles is to go deeper into business roots, such as company culture and internal brand. Corporate culture, employee values, and internal brand are undefinable traits that may help an organisation's health by attracting and retaining exceptional personnel and

providing a major competitive advantage (Goodman & Loh, 2011). (Sadri & Lees, 2001) in an organisational hierarchy, as shown in previous research on those characteristics.

Communication is paramount to building strong EBS, and CIM acts as a catalyst to touch the determinant factors. The industry has invested millions in developing the brand. Despite the favourable conclusion stated above, the most visible concern in the Halal business is the lack of attention paid to building and improving the CIM in the Halal manufacturing industry. This is due to employees' unwillingness to adapt to the system in internal communication (Ab Talib et al., 2015).

The corporate identity theory contributed to the development of the literature, drew attention to corporate identity, and clarified its meaning. Moreover, the model failed to account for enterprises' understanding of the employee perceptions toward their identity. Therefore, this study will attempt to address these issues to enhance a deeper understanding of the concept of CIM in halal context. This is intended to deconstruct corporations' perceptions of their corporate identities specifically for the employee percpective, which are frequently concealed in corporate literatures. Together, these approaches will enhance comprehension of what corporate identity entails.

## 1.3        Research Questions

Population/ Problem, Interest and Context (PICo) originated from the medical science field as a tool used for formulating structured, directed and focused research questions and objectives (Stern, Jordan & McArthur, 2014). As represented by its name, population/ problem, interest, and context are three fundamental elements described by PICo. Thus, this study adapted the PICo concept in constructing research questions and objectives. Table 1.1 explains PICo aspects, and this study derived the research questions based on these aspects.

**Table 1.1 : Identification of Population/ Problem, Interest and Context (PICo) for Research Questions**

| PICo | Explanation | Components |
|------|-------------|------------|
| Population/ Problem | What are the characteristics of the population and/ or interesting problems in this study? | SMEs' employees in the halal industry |
| Interest | Interest relates to a defined event, activity, experience or process | Prediction on the relationship between antecedents and consequence mediated by CIM model |
| Context | The setting or distinct characteristics | Malaysia |

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Then, based on identified PICo above, the constructed research questions for this study are as follow:

(i) What is the relationship between the internal branding and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'?

(ii) What is the relationship between corporate culture and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'?

(iii) What is the relationship between corporate identity management (CIM) and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'?

(iv) Does corporate identity management mediate the relationship between the internal branding and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'??

(v) Does corporate identity management mediate the relationship between corporate culture and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'?

## 1.4 Research Objectives

The overall goal of this study is to statistically test the correlation between internal brand and corporate culture (antecedents), as well as workers' brand support (consequences) in Malaysian Halal food SMEs using corporate identity management (CIM) as a moderator. The specific objectives of this study are as below.

(i) To test the relationship between the internal branding and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'.

(ii) To examine the relationship between corporate culture and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'.

(iii) To investigate the relationship between corporate identity management (CIM) and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'.

(iv) To examine the moderating effect of corporate identity management on the relationship between the internal branding and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'.

(v) To examine the moderating effect of corporate identity management on the relationship between corporate culture and employees' brand support in Malaysia's Halal SMEs'.

## 1.5 Scopes of Study

The first scope is the focus of study: the Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The primary significance of focusing on SMEs is due to their contribution to the development of the economy. The development of SMEs has received much attention from various entities, particularly the government (Khalique et al., 2011). Given the importance of SMEs in advancing the country's objective of becoming a high-income country, various factors, including brand management, must be enhanced to boost SMEs' prospects. SMEs must improve in many areas to continuously compete in the market. As a result, contribute in

terms of career opportunities and public products/services. While Malaysia consists of 3 federal territories and 13 states, this study delimits the location of the study in five states only: Penang, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang. According to Winship (1992), selection bias must be avoided to provide each state with an equal chance of being picked as this study's data collection site. As a result, this study used Microsoft Excel's "Randomised Between" function ("RANDBETWEEN") to choose a state at random. This initiative assures that all states have an equal chance of being selected.

## 1.6        Significance of Study

There are three significant contributions that this study will contribute to. The first one is adding value to the brand development and creation for the SMEs in Malaysia's Halal industry. The study helps to underline and provide data for the Halal food manufacturer in Malaysia on the effect on the CIM. This ultimately has significance on the EBS. This study also assists policymaking in the organisation for the institutional understanding factors and their relevance to its corporate identity.

The second significance of this study is adding to the practical outcome by helping the organisation to understand the importance of having good CIM in ensuring strong brand support to the employees. This study also helps construct holistic information channelling for CIM improvement and implement a progressive platform that can be a catalyst for EBS.

The third relevance of this research is that it adds to the collection of understanding about the role of premises in building and managing corporate identity, as well as its contribution to EBS. Based on previous research, the theoretical growth of knowledge is described by spreading three factors in the CIM: mission and values sharing, implementation of a coherent image, and application of visual identity through internal communication (Simões et al., 2005). This study is also an attempt to apply the model in the Halal industry SMEs in Malaysia. In line with prior research, which suggests looking at the Halal business from a different angle than supply chain and logistics management (Ya et al., 2017), this study goes further than the previous ones by investigating the correlation between these variables in Halal SMEs internal brand-building framework's elements.

## 1.7        Definition of Terminologies

The terminologies in a study play an important role in anchoring interpretation similarities of key terms used in the current study with interpretations made in the past literature to prevent any misinterpretation. Hermundsdottir and Aspelund (2021) stated that operationalization of the key terminologies in academic research is the fundamental aspect in enabling systematic analysis of the past literature methodology that ultimately may lead to new knowledge as the conclusion from the review. Pacheco and Herrera (2021) also stated defining key terminologies is an approach to a higher level of cognitive ability in constructing empirical interpretation from the cognitive sciences and proposing

a conceptual model based on the definition of the key terms. Thus, this section presents the conceptual definitions of five key terminologies used in this study.

(i) Corporate identity management (CIM): CIM is the knowledge and understanding on identifying physical aspects that form and represent a corporate image. It is a vital part that must be incorporated into organisational symbols so that it can be delivered and understood by internal and external stakeholders (Simões et al., 2005). CIM is divided into three sub-concepts namely:

    a. Mission and Values Dissemination (MVD)

    b. Consistent Image Implementation (CII)

    c. Visual Identity Implementation (VII)

(ii) Internal branding refers to employees' understanding of the brand and the basic principles of the organisation to carry the brand's visions to clients in day-to-day operations (Mohamad, 2016). The sub-concepts of internal branding are:

    a. Internal brand communication

    b. Brand training and development

(iii) Corporate culture: The corporate culture envisions another corporate culture's identification towards the first organisation (Balmer, 2008).

(iv) Employee brand support (EBS): The notion that when employees grasp and adhere to the brand beliefs embedded in the brand promise, they will work in ways that meet or exceed the brand expectations from customers (Punjaisri et al., 2009).

## 1.8 Thesis Outline

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. As the introductory chapter, Chapter One provides a basic review of the research. This chapter's presentation begins with the study's history, followed by the issue statement. The chapter then outlines created research topics and goals before examining the study's scope and limits. This chapter concludes by emphasising the importance and conceptual meanings of five essential terminologies employed throughout this research.

Chapter Two presents the literature review concerning the focus of the study. This chapter begins its review with the Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and the Halal industry in Malaysia. This chapter moves forward by reviewing the main focus (key terminologies) of the study. The review starts with the employee brand support as a consequence (dependent variable), followed by the internal brand and corporate culture as the antecedents (independent variables). Then, this chapter also reviews corporate identity management as the mediating variable in this study. This chapter also reviews

two underpinning theories: Marketing Control Theory and Social Learning Theory. This chapter ends by presenting the research framework of the study.

Chapter Three emphasises the methodology used in attaining the results of the study. The presentation of this chapter starts with the research design followed by the location, sampling procedure and sampling calculation. Then, this chapter focuses on the development of the research instruments and the operationalisation of variables. Later, this chapter emphasises the data collection procedure before ending the discussion with the data analysis, statistical significance, and utilisation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in machine learning for data knowledge mining.

Chapter Four presents the results of this study. The presentation of this chapter begins with the descriptive statistical analysis on the demographic information of the respondents, followed by the descriptive analysis on the level of internal branding, acceptance of the corporate culture and brand values support. Later in the chapter, the data analysis is presented, which includes four major aspects: communalities, Eigenvalue, scree plot, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Finally, this chapter discusses data analysis using Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). This section discusses the measurement model, normality assessment, Common Method Variance (CMV), structural model evaluation, and Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA).

The study's comments, recommendations, and conclusion are presented in Chapter Five. This chapter begins with a recapitulation of the investigation, followed by a discussion of the findings based on the research questions, research objectives, and hypothesis. This chapter also discusses the study's findings in regard to two underlying theories. As mentioned earlier, these two theories are Marketing Control Theory and Social Learning Theory. This chapter moves forward by presenting five contributions of the study in terms of theoretical, literature, practical, methodology and research implications. This chapter also provides recommendations for future research. The last section of this chapter concludes the study.

11

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