

PUBLIC RELATION ACTIVITIES IN MALAYSIAN ISLAMIC BANKING: THE CASE OF BANK MALAYSIA BERHAD (BIMB)

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Abstract

The public relations concept is a basic concept that must exist in various organizations. The strategy taken might be affected by or affect a cultural image. In the current world, Islamic institutions have emerged and grown rapidly. In particular, in the financial industry, Islamic banking in Malaysia has become a pioneer and evidently survives within the industry. Having said that, the public relations concept supposes to engage within their activities, also. But then, as Islamic values are being their foundation, it might influence their public relations strategy. Hence, the objective of this study is to observe the Islamic values that influence the public relations and the cultural image strategy of the Islamic institution which primarily is Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB). We chose them because Bank Islam is a first and pioneer of Islamic banking in Malaysia that expected to be a very Islamic banking version. By using a case study approach dependent on a circuit of culture (COC) model, this study found that Bank Islam as full-pledge Islamic banking has engaged with Islamic culture in their business activities and well-done in applying public relations strategies. Five elements of the COC framework consist of regulation, production, consumption, representation, and identity have been interlinked with the annual report as well as Bank Islam's website.

Keywords: Public Relations, Circuit of Culture Model, Islamic Banking, Bank Islam, Malaysia

1. Introduction

According to Barnes and Schultz (1999), as cited by Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay (2018) and Thaker and Thaker (2015), public relations is applied to transfer a corporate and brand message by conducting specific activities. This is the extension concept in communication courses. Public relations strategy will enhance public attention and create image and reputation as well due to the used techniques that maintain organization and public connection. This concept can be practiced in various institutions such as companies, governments, non-profit organizations, educations, labor unions, politicians, organized sports and the media.

Previous studies have been done in utilizing cultural elements to know the public relations techniques in an organization. Because public relations will affect or will be affected by culture (Sarabia-panol and Sison 2012). Instead of a global concept of culture, Islamic value is a must in Islamic institutions. The existing of Islamic values is the main character and basically distinguishes it from other institutions. Thus, Islamic banks as one of the companies should present Islamic values incorporating public relations implementation.

Malaysia is one of the countries that adopted Islamic economics and finance since the beginning of its development signed by the establishment of the Islamic banking industry. Currently, it has been more than 30 years since Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad, the pioneer of Malaysian Islamic Banking, built in July 1983. Due to the lengthening of its establishment, the strategies in various aspects to maintain its performance among following Islamic banks and also conventional banks should be adjustable including in public relations campaigns.

Based on this background, the current study attempts to look forward to the public relations techniques applied by Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad as a full-fledged Islamic Banking Institution influenced by the religion aspect (Islamic values), instead of using general cultural approach. This analysis will use the concept of the circuit of culture (COC) as a major methodological framework. This study will be divided into six sections that the background of the study put in section one. Section two and three will explain more about the COC model, the previous studies and the utilized method. A brief introduction about Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad will be presented in section four. Then, the result and discussion arranged in the sub-sections part will be delivered in section five. Section six will be the last part to summarize the whole done study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Circuit of Culture (COC) Model

This framework largely used in the cultural studies and is a foundation in developing a theory regarding public relations that closely related to communication and its influence by the culture (Kelly and Yochim 2011; Ayeni 2018; Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay 2018). Communication and culture are interrelated due to the importance of those understanding of the role of communication within the culture to better understand communication. Their relationship in all its forms is interlinked in which communication is responsible to spread the culture as well.

The circuit of culture (COC) was initiated by Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model and is said to be the pioneer to the later version of the circuit model developed by other cultural theorists (Leve 2012; Scherer and Jackson 2008). Later in the 1980s, Richard Johnson identified four elements of cultural analysis in his circuit model – i) production, ii) texts, iii) readings, and iv) lived cultures (Kelly and Yochim 2011) which indicated to be an 'embryonic model' that "highlight lived experience in favor of social structure which 'preserved the impact of material conditions on textual production'" (Leve, 2012, p. 2). Instead of treating 'production' as a privilege one to investigate cultural practices, du Gay et al. (1997) expanded the model to treat 'production' as one process together with other 'moments'- regulations, consumption, representation, and identity (Figure 1).

These five processes or moments can explain the complex interplay of communication and culture within one cultural situation. Likewise, this paper is trying to discover the role of religion in influencing public relations activity and cultural practices of the Islamic bank. Through the COC model, it is important to take into account all moments in which when considering communication within the cultural context, there are various and multiple factors influencing the production of text and meaning (Schmidt 2016).

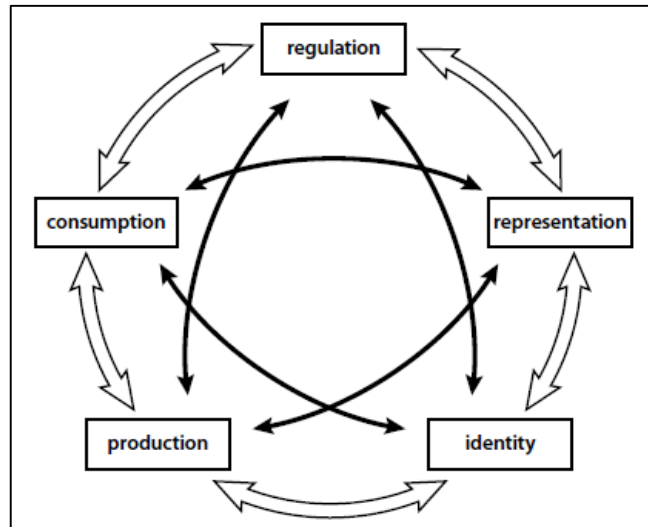


Figure 1. The Circuit of Culture Model (Schmidt, 2016, p. 79)

COC model is a great framework to be used in this study in considering cultural aspects holistically. Through this model, the analysis will show what kind of mechanisms that regulate the distribution, how are they produced and consumed, how cultural artifacts are represented, and what social identities are associated with it. All moments work together in providing a whole meaning of how religion can influence public relations activity in the Islamic bank. The process is intertwined and overlap in complex ways is best to explain how certain cultural practices play its crucial role in all segments, hence, it may have an indirect and direct impact on communications (Ayeni 2018; Schmidt 2016; Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay 2018).

Below is the description for each moment (Sarabia-panol and Sison 2012; Kelly and Yochim 2011; Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay 2018; Ayeni 2018; Scherer and Jackson 2008; Schmidt 2016; Leve 2012):

Regulations: formal and informal policies or orders that govern the economy, political systems, social norms, and institutions. It derives from the entire moments of production, consumption, representation, and identity that could be the objective behind promoting for a cause.

Production: an approach through which ideas are presented. It refers to the production of meaning or more than the basic process which is corresponding to experiences, services, and products for the targeted audience. In addition, without consumption, the production process will not come into reality.

Consumption: refers to the audience's perception and belief for which the product is intended. It also includes observing how the targeted public audience reacts to the designated productions to the representation.

Representation: the process of manufacturing on how *they are* conveyed to the audience. It could be signs or symbols, which making sense of things the way it is represented.

Identity: "particular modes of subjectivity as individuals or groups." (Schmidt, 2016, p. 81). Also associated with meanings that given to a cause through other processes of production, consumption, and representation.

2.2. Literature Review

The analysis of Islamic value or religion base connected with public relations and cultural strategy in Islamic banking, in particular, has been done by only a few kinds of literature (Ahmad 2014; Gaither and Al-kandari 2014; Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay 2018; Thaker and Thaker 2015). Gaither and Al-kandari (2014) employed the COC model in selected Islamic banks in Kuwait. Religious authority, affinity with the past, fatalism, communal kinship, attachment to eternal life and spirituality and idealism are used as a measurement of Islamic values for identifying public relations activities. They indicated that religiosity is an important aspect influencing public relations in the Middle East. Nevertheless, those cultures are likely different with other Islamic banks in different countries including Malaysia.

In Malaysia, Ahmad (2014) surveyed the public relations role in promoting Islamic products involving Islamic banking products to the global market. Her findings showed that advertisement is extremely necessary to be used. Malaysia should introduce the right concept of Islam as well as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities during the promotion.

The study that exclusively uses the COC model has been conducted by Thaker and Thaker (2015). They analyzed the two largest Islamic banks in Malaysia. Those are Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB) as a full-fledged Islamic bank and Maybank Islamic Berhad (MIB) as an Islamic window bank. They found that generally, both banks have a good performance in public relations activities and reflect Islamic values on their websites, although the BIMB's website reflects more than MIB's website. Every aspect such as layout, content link arrangement, navigation, and etc. are influenced by culture.

Furthermore, Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay (2018) widened the scope of the study of public relations in Islamic banks in Malaysia. They took selected banks categorized into fully pledged local Islamic banks (BIMB) and local Islamic subsidiaries (MIB) and international fully-fledged Islamic banks (Ar-Rajhi Banking and Investment Berhad (ARBIB)) and Islamic bank subsidiaries (Standard Chartered Saadiq Berhad (SCSB)). Similar to the previous study using the COC model, this study illustrated the cultural

differences between fully-fledged Islamic banks and Islamic subsidiaries banks. MIB's and ARBIB's websites through their Islamic window do not reflect more an Islamic culture compared to BMB and SCSB. However, the religion aspect still gives a great influence on Islamic banking institutions.

3. Research Methodology

This paper is basically a case study on public relations and culture in the Islamic banking industry in Malaysia. However, our scope of the study is focusing on just one Islamic bank, which is Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB or 'Bank Islam'). An approach of case study is a great method to employ as an in-depth analysis of certain cases (Sarabia-panol and Sison 2012). For this paper, we choose Bank Islam because it is the first Islamic bank established in Malaysia, therefore, one of the longest Islamic banks to present in this country. As the pioneer of Islamic bank based in Malaysia, it is expected that its public relations and cultural practices would be one of the best to be influenced by Islamic culture.

We try to illustrate how such a framework, as discussed above, can be used to interpret one's cultural practices through a critical inquiry. The study draws a circuit to explore the multiple interlinked and interrelated processes involved in the Islamic banking industry by employing those five elements; 'regulation', 'production', 'consumption', 'representation', and 'identity' as its theoretical framework. Similarly, Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay (2018) also adopted the COC model to investigate public relations activities in the Islamic banking industry in Malaysia.

As this framework is known to be a flexible and useful method in exploring the significance and possibilities of complex modes and relationships of each moment, this study is trying to examine and further explore the influence of religions in public relations and cultural practices of Bank Islam through this COC model. By exploring their website and annual report of 2017, we try to bring out each of the moments into critical inquiry and analyze its influence and impact on the public relations activities of the bank.

Noted that this paper is a duplicate of Sarabia-Panol and Sison's (2012) study. Thus, we follow the exact format as in the paper. Therefore, this present study is attempting to provide a comprehensive analysis and critical review of the impact of religions in influencing the cultural practices and public relations activity of Bank Islam through the COC model. Hence, through this case study, it helps us in making a decision to draw the conclusion about the significance of religions' impact in playing its role to influence Bank Islam's public relations and cultural practices.

4. CASE STUDY OF BANK ISLAM MALAYSIA BERHAD

5.1. Early Days and the Emergence of the Islamic Banking Industry

Bank Islam was established in 1983, thus, named to be the first Islamic bank in Malaysia. The establishment of Bank Islam was seen to be a major kick in the development of Islamic banking and Islamic finance in Malaysia and beyond. Bank Islam lived up to its name starting to be the first full-fledged Islamic bank to finance the needy Malaysians by offering various Shari'ah-compliant products. Its establishment was initiated to fulfill the needs of the majority of Muslim people in Malaysia to meet other alternatives from banking and finance that are strongly driven by the Shari'ah principles. Therefore, the initial consumers of Bank Islam predominantly by the Muslim and slowly it was grown to others as well (Azmi & Madden, 2014; Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB), n.d.)

As the pioneer of Islamic bank that offers various Shari'ah-compliant products, they dominated the Islamic banking industry until 1993 until three commercial banks; Maybank, United Malayan Banking Corporation, and Bank Bumiputera – were allowed to open Islamic windows under Islamic Banking Scheme. Later, in the late 1990s, Bank Muamalat Malaysia was introduced as the second full-fledged Islamic bank, hence, end the monopoly of Bank Islam in the Islamic banking industry. With that, it triggered the competitive pressure in the Islamic banking industry but at the same time, it also influenced the emergence of the Islamic banking industry and Islamic finance not only in Malaysia but worldwide. Currently, Bank Islam has emerged and channels with 147 branches around Malaysia with more than 1000 self-service terminals.

5.2. Hit Bottom

In 2005, Bank Islam faced a significant loss amounting to RM480 million and the first time ever the bank had experienced in 22 years of its run. It was reported that the loss largely resulted from 'non-performing finance' (NPF) from its Labuan offshore unit (Wikipedia). As reported by Wan Azmi and Madden (2014) in their case study, bad credit management of RM774 million has caused bad losses to the bank. Again in the next year, it was reported that heavy provisions for bad financings of RM1.5 billion have caused the loss amounting to RM1.277 billion. As a result, Bank Islam's NPF reached as high as 20 percent on a gross basis, thus, declared with RM1.4 billion deficit for its financial year ended 30th June 2006, which technically has gone under.

Later, through post-mortem, it was revealed that Labuan offshore unit has given out financings to firms outside Malaysia like Sri Lanka, Bosnia, and South Africa openhandedly without taking into account a full understanding and political environment of these countries. Thus, it proved that the losses were mostly from these

bad financings disbursed by the Labuan unit without proper investigated the project risks involved. However, this is not only the case. The loss suffered also came from consumer financing due to a huge delinquent portfolio, especially through the vehicle hire-purchase program. This was happened due to poor credit evaluation as well as a lack of robust risk management. This news later shocks the public and directly consumers had lost their confidence towards Islamic bank because Bank Islam still carry the name of 'the pioneer of Islamic bank' in Malaysia.

5.3. Revival

Dato' Zukri Samat was succeeded to be the new Managing Director of Bank Islam in 2006 and was responsible to revive Bank Islam from the hit bottom. The decision to hand over the office to Zukri Samat was a great choice because he was able to revive the bank from nearly bankrupt. He set up a new team in which some members were from his previous office (Danaharta), to restructure the bank and restore its financial health. Under his supervision, an extensive study was made on the strengths and weaknesses of the bank to firstly identify factors contributing to the huge losses. As a result, a three-year Turnaround Plan (2006-2009) was introduced which held two major aims - i) return to profitability and ii) banks' sustainable growth. In addition to that, there were five elements under this plan to be focused on - i) recapitalization and balance sheet restructuring, ii) IT infrastructure revamp, iii) organizational transformation program, iv) cost rationalization exercise and v) human capital development (Wan Azmi and Madden, 2014, p. 5).

With regard to the NPF, the asset management unit team was established and led by members from Danaharta. Due to their quick and aggressive recovery effort especially on liquidation of non-yielding assets, the bank balance sheet quickly strengthened. The ample of IT infrastructure revamp was initiated to replace the existing IT system in Bank Islam that was considered to be obsolete. Their main focus was to rebuild the critical consumer touchpoints through the enhancement of its system.

Just within six months of the implementation of Turnaround Plan, Bank Islam has shown improvement in its profit before zakat and tax (PBZT) to RM165.8 million and by the end of 2007, bank's PBZT reported to be RM255.5 million, therefore, recorded to be the highest in its 24 years operation.

5.4. New Image and Culture

Not only that, but Bank Islam also exercised for rebranding to better connect with the customers by redesigning their logo. It was revealed that their previous logo and brand were not appealing enough to the non-Muslims due to its strong impression that Bank Islam was exclusively designed for the Muslim community. Their brand new identity

was launched in 2007, is more appealing which reflects the universal image of the bank. Besides that, Bank Islam also took an initiative to advertise Islamic banking services in the Chinese newspaper to inform the community that the services and products offered by Islamic banks are for everyone regardless of the religions and ethnicity. Bank Islam also took a leap forward by refurbishing all the bank branches with a fresh and modern look to enhance the customer brand experience, besides relocating branches were deemed to be not strategic to the attracted commercial centers.

Risk management, product development, and credit recovery were re-established to further improve the banks' management. To better achieve its objective on 'customer-focused', Bank Islam also re-established The Sale and Marketing Department which responsible for product innovation. In order to attract non-Muslim consumers, they started to employ non-Muslims into their management team to promote cross-cultural learning within the organization. It is especially to change the mindset of society that Bank Islam is only for Muslims.

Bank Islam also faced the most challenges hurdle which was to change the employees' mindset and their work culture. Zukri recalled as reported by Wan Azmi and Madden (2014), that their employees adopted 'a public sector culture in a private bank'. In order to implement the cultural change, they need to convey the idea of transformations to every employee through the 'communication strategy program'. It also said that staff engagement is the main theme behind this program even the top directors of the bank were involved to ensure the overall turnaround strategy is successfully delivered. In building up the confidence towards banks' performance, continuous engagement with stakeholders was also conducted to deliver the bank's plan for future building.

5.5. Moving Forward

After they successfully regain profitability trail, their next objectives were to ensure high growth, sustainability and strengthen its domestic anchorage. With its mission to be the global leader in Islamic banking, they set a course in the pursuit of Sustainable Growth Plan (2009-2012) to achieve financing growth and a bigger share of consumers. They made various efforts including innovative services like Transact at Palm or TAP Mobile Banking Service-i that launched in 2010, was specifically target the youth. Bank Islam also is known to be the pioneer that offered a floating rate for personal financing besides the first one to offer a multi-purpose university debit card in 2012. In addition to that, the bank also ventured into microfinance activities to expand their consumers' segment to the underprivileged communities. Their partnership with Tabung Haji also

has been successful and expand further their share of consumers among Muslims.

Through a platform like Financial Technology (FinTech), they further aimed to expand its market presence not only in the domestic market but outside the country as well. It was developed to enable them closely connected with the customers through a modern and new era of banking experience and services. Bank Islam's strict adherence to Shari'ah principles leads them to be recognized as an excellent Islamic bank in Malaysia with a good reputation in ensuring the social well-being of consumers and the natural environment. They also are the first Islamic bank that promotes integrity, good governance and transparency in all its operations aspects through the signing of the Corporate Integrity Pledge in 2012. Bank Islam's brand has been recognized worldwide and positioned itself to be the leader of the Islamic banking industry. In the single year of 2013, Bank Islam has been awarded many achievements including Islamic Bank of the Year (Malaysia) by the Banker and the Fifth Strongest Banks in Malaysia by Asian Banker. Zukri Samat's outstanding performance in leading Bank Islam also has been recognized and was awarded as the Islamic Banker of the Year 2013 at the Global Islamic Finance Award.

Currently, Bank Islam is taking the initiative by adopting Value-Based Intermediation (VBI) introduced by the Central Bank of Malaysia (CBM) to deliver the intended outcomes of Shari'ah in strengthening the sustainable impact of Islamic finance to the economy, community, and environment. As mentioned by Zukri Samat, customer service still remains to be the bank's priority as they continue to strive for the bank's excellence.

The application of the COC model would be good at analyzing Bank Islam's cultural values and communication strategies. It is important to analyze their public relations and cultural practices through all the strategic plans mentioned above. While Bank Islam was started as the first Islamic bank established to fulfill the need of Muslim communities in Malaysia, now it evolves into national and global Islamic finance that offer products and services regardless of religions, cultures, and communities.

5. Result And Discussion

The analysis below will be categorized in the five sub-section based on five moments of COC consisted of regulation, production, consumption, representation, and identity in which it is analyzed from the website and annual report 2017 provided by Bank Islam.

5.1. Regulation

As an Islamic bank, each of the banks should ensure their business activities comply with Shari'ah. This compulsory obligates them to have their own Shari'ah Boards (SBs). In

Malaysia, this particular board called Shari'ah Supervisory Council (SSC).

In the website as well as in the integrated annual report 2017, Bank Islam mentioned name of members (Professor Dato' Dr. Ahmad Hidayat Buang, Dr. Ahmad Shahbari, Assistant Professor Dr. Uzaimah Ibrahim, Dr. Yasmin Hanani Mohd Sapian, and Sahibus Samahah Dato' Dr. Haji Anhar Haji Opir) of the SSC structure consisting of 5 members that in line with Shari'ah Governance Framework (SGF) requirement. In the report, Bank Islam also affords the various background of each member required. They should come from specialized fields such as Islamic law, Islamic banking, Islamic capital market, takaful, waqf, zakat, halal industry, fatwa and also an expert in Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic commercial law. They supposed to also have experience in academics and industry. Moreover, Bank Islam also detailed explained the general and specific duties and responsibilities of SSC members. The main role that stated there is to advise and ensure Bank Islam's whole business activities to always comply with Shari'ah.

Another thing looked from the regulation view is the highlighting of Value-Based Intermediation that currently imposed by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). Because Bank Islam is one of the pioneers involved in adopting VBI together with other eight Islamic banks. Thus, Bank Islam stated that

"Our 2017 annual report is an integrated report that allows us to demonstrate our commitment to realize value for our stakeholders and provide details of our opportunities and challenges in doing so, as well as our strategies for the future"(Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB) 2017).

On their website, Bank Islam pointed that by committing with this VBI, Banks Islam wants to strengthen its role in generating benefits and impact on the economy, society, and also environment that in line with Shari'ah. In addition, to reach the next level and disclose the great potential in the Malaysian Islamic financial industry.

Besides SSC, Bank Islam currently moves under the Islamic Financial Services Act (IFSA) 2013 that regulates all products under the Shari'ah framework. Their report showed another part of Bank Islam which is BIMB Holding Berhad (BHB) listed in Bursa Malaysia. It was the first Islamic Financial Holding Company approved by BNM under IFSA 2013.

Furthermore, on the website, Bank Islam has the Islamic/Shari'ah Info that provides much information related to Shari'ah to give knowledge for the customer or anyone curious about that. The latest information shared is "Tatacara Solat dan Wuduk", "Panduan Berkaitan Puasa Ramadhan dan Syawal" and about Islamic Financial Services Act 2013. However, the author found a blank document related to terminologies provided on its website.

The findings above explained that authority plays a prominent role to fortify Islamic banking business activities to always contain Islamic values based on Quranic verses and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

5.2. Production

In terms of production view, that is how to deliver the company's message associated with products, experiences, and services to its customer as stated by Curtin and Gaither(2007). In the report, Bank Islam showed their achievements and presented the certificates and trophies' picture. The lists could also see on its website in the "News Room" page. There were awards and recognition as well as milestones roster since their establishment in 1983. From the best knowledge of the author, this presentation made is actually to attract customers' trust in their products and performance. Bank Islam's best experiences will indirectly influence customer preference to use their product.

On the website, Bank Islam also highlights "our commitment to our customer" in the Customer Service Charter page wherein in that message, Bank Islam committee to the easy customer to access their products and services. Together with VBI that is also resounded currently, Bank Islam pledge to consider customer suggestions and critics through a customer satisfaction survey.

Related to products, the customers or future customers have been well-served to get more information about Bank Islam's products and services. It is because the homepage website of Bank Islam directly shows personal banking lists, business banking lists, promotions, unit trust, internet banking, e-Banker, virtual account opening, as well as other project announcements and advertisements that presently existed.

Engaging with VBI, the target impact project is being broader. Not only for the community, but it also cares about the environment. The report detailed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and their outcomes consisted of shareholders, industry, customers, employees, environment, and community as well that becoming Bank Islam's priorities dedicated from pages 50 to 64. Furthermore, corporate responsibility (CR) named AMAL Bank Islam programs also exhibit on the website and the report. The key priorities of this program are "Projek Bantuan Rumah", community, education, and environment that obtain total contribution from zakat and CR fund. This part stated in the particular report page 65-72. In addition, on the website, waqf services are also established called my Wakaf MAIPs projecting the Hospital Tuanku Fauziah (HTF) Hemodialysis Centre, Perlis. Other than that, FAQ of zakat includes zakat calculation also involves in its website.

5.3. Consumption

According to the Corporate Annual Report of Bank Islam 2017, on the first page,

there is the term "Realizing Values" expressing main services that focus on core ethical values. To regain more attraction, the report also stressed the "ethical practices and reporting" which reflected its business operations based on core values of social and environmental considerations. Not only that, but Bank Islam also emphasized themselves a pioneer among the first Islamic banks that adopted VBI initiatives advocates by CBM to especially strengthen the Islamic financial industry with the aim of giving a big impact not only to the economy but also community and environment.

To further serve their consumers and shareholders, under the Chairman's overview, Bank Islam, again, stressed on VBI which not merely concern about Shari'ah aspects but also the consequences of their financing to society and future generations by embracing the customer-focused culture to preserve long-term relationships. As mentioned before, in the report, it stated about their ventured into microfinance by serving the real economy through their participation in financing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector. Bank Islam expect to contribute to creating more job opportunities and a multiplier effect on the economy.

Besides emphasizing how Bank Islam build value in business operations, it also mentioned how they initially started to serve and fulfill the needs of Muslim society, now expand their scope to strengthen the Islamic banking industry as well. In the respective report, Bank Islam thoroughly dedicated with a long of four pages descriptions to explain their main focus and strategic plans with the targeted segment of consumers, stakeholders, government and regulators, and employees.

Besides that, Bank Islam also took the initiative to promote low-cost deposit and investment accounts, current and savings accounts (CASA), and Al-Awfar. As reported, the Al-Awfar account especially achieved impressive growth of 30.9 percent through extensive campaigns and strategic promotions. One of the campaigns is named "Al-Awfar Go Umrah Campaign". Thus, we can see how the Islamic culture of "Umrah" mentioned in the campaign has attracted more consumers.

5.4. Representation

According to Curtin and Gaither (2007), as cited by Gaither and Al-kandari (2014), representation is "the 'texts' of public relations campaign" (p 35) or "the meaning entrenched in a particular form of an object" (Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay 2018, p286). Thus, in Islamic banking practice, the meanings that will be transferred is incorporating with Shari'ah principles.

First, the message can be presented in a logo. Bank Islam uses a "crescent" as a symbol of Islam and commitment of engaging all products, services, and businesses in line with Shari'ah. The rationalization of utilizing this logo is described in BIMB's website.

Bank Islam stated that this symbol is "...reinforcing our vision to be a global leader and to be recognized as the ultimate guidance and source of reference for Islamic banking" (BIMB's website). Bank Islam also mentioned the chosen color applied in the logo which is red maroon and dark grey. Maroon depicts "... leadership, care and dynamism" and dark grey shows "... professionalism and trustworthiness" (BIMB's website). Besides, the web page background of them utilizes dome mosque architecture. As the dome represents the greatness of Islam, it might be said that this symbolizes the Islamic value that unwavering held by BIMB.

In the annual report 2017, Bank Islam spotlighted "realizing values, integrated annual report 2017" as a tag line. Previous annual report which was the 2016 annual report, Bank Islam used the word "preserving values". The reason behind of particular themes is

" ... conveys the importance we continue to place on our core values, Islamic values and the real value we intend to generate for our economy and society" (Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB) 2017, p cover)

Because of VBI implementation, realizing the value (Islamic values) for all stakeholders become a commitment. Bank Islam has to be ready for possible opportunities and challenges that will potentially appear.

Other than that, the current Bank Islam's vision expressed in the report is "to be a global leader in Islamic banking". Meaning that Bank Islam wants to be "... the ultimate guidance and source of reference for innovative Shari'ah-based products and services" (p 7). Thus, Bank Islam has been started to include values concept in its whole organizational activities in terms of a leader, dynamic, professional, caring and trustworthy.

5.5. Identity

The most important part of recognizing Bank Islam's identity is shown in their annual reports and website. However, the most obvious element in recognizing the "Islamic culture" in the bank is only by looking into the name which is "Bank Islam". As already mentioned, Bank Islam lived up to its name by carrying the word "Islam" through full-fledged Shari'ah compliant financing. The identity of an "Islamic bank" can be seen on the website in which they reveal not only the "regular worldwide used date" but also the Islamic date and month at the left top. Meanwhile, at the right top of the website, they also disclose prayer time for Muslims. These two elements are fair enough to show the "Islamic culture" adopted by the bank as their core values.

In the annual report, we can see the "PBZT" term, which reflected the bank's value in adopting one of the Pillars of Islam by contributing to Zakat payment. Throughout the whole report, they repeatedly mentioned "Shari'ah" and "values" which again

reflected their identity as an "Islamic bank". In addition, both website and report also include the organization chart of the Shari'ah Supervisory Council. This could easily differentiate an Islamic bank with a conventional one because this body is responsible to ensure the products and services are in line with the Shari'ah principles. Similarly, all products and services as aforementioned in section 6.0, are mostly in Arabic terms. The website also provides Shari'ah information and terminologies to educate the consumers regarding their products. The report also stated an Islamic greeting in the chairman's overview which is "In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful" along with "Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh". This kind of greeting is absent in any conventional bank report. Therefore, with all of these "identity", Bank Islam can easily be recognized as an "Islamic bank".

6. Conclusions

This present study demonstrates the Islamic value concept in the public relations activities of Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad. By using the circuit of culture framework comprising of regulation, production, consumption, representation, and identity, the authors summarize that Bank Islam as full-pledge Islamic banking has engaged with Islamic culture in their business activities and well-done in applying public relations strategies.

However, this study has a limitation wherein the authors only focus on one Islamic Bank in one country that causing less comprehensive analysis. Thus, further study is expected to extend the scope. It may be the comparison study between full-pledge Islamic banks and Islamic banks subsidiaries in one country as done by Thaker, Thaker, and Pitchay (2018) or it can be between full-pledge Islamic banks in different countries. Thus, we can look forward to their activities in engaging the religion aspect of their marketing strategy.

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