ESTABLISHING CONSUMER TRUST IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF ISLAMIC BANKS

Tahreem Noor Khan
College of Business Administration
University of Ha'il, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding author: tahrimnoor@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

In recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a vital component and mainstream approach to business, with much attention devoted to the implications of CSR policies and practices. Yet firms still diffuse CSR initiatives without fully understanding the well-being of their stakeholders and the reactions towards the firm. The success of CSR can be determined by understanding consumer behaviours, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences. In the case of Islamic banking, a sceptical attitude and atmosphere of distrust has prevailed because consumers are unable to distinguish between Islamic and conventional banking products and systems, and struggle to find effective CSR outcomes through Islamic banks. In a competitive environment where CSR differentiation and credibility are ongoing challenges, this research poses a fundamental question on what should constitute a CSR strategy of Islamic banks to develop trust. Using a general inductive qualitative approach, pertinent issues

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related to CSR and Islamic banks were extracted from 75 existing articles, to propose a framework using Quranic terms (ikhlas, istiqama, ta'awaun, tazkiya) to construct a favourable image of Islamic banks and CSR initiatives. The research findings suggest that this framework is capable of tackling consumers' negative attitude and scepticism of Islamic banks and CSR activities.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, communication, Islamic banking, corporate image.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays a crucial role in solving society's problems. It transcends maximising corporate profits by fulfilling legal, ethical, or philanthropic responsibilities (Maignan, 2001). Investing in CSR can be considered an opportunity which offers new possibilities to differentiate brands, improve reputation, maintain competitive advantage, increase employee motivation and improve relations with external stakeholders (Argandoña & Hoivik, 2009; Branco & Rodrigues, 2006; Maignan, 2001). Studies have established that CSR has a significant impact on positive word-of-mouth, brand loyalty, customer retention and advocacy behaviour (Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; García et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2001; Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009). Also noted, religious motivation has a positive influence on CSR attitude (Mazereeuw et al., 2014). To design an effective CSR strategy, the organisation will need to comprehend the impact of image building, corporate branding, and overall consumers' emotions and impression associated with the firm's identity and its CSR activities (Bravo et al., 2012: Caruana & Crane, 2008).

In the global competitive environment, Islamic banks cannot depend solely on financial performance to sustain, as they are also anticipated to implement ethical values, social justice and well-being, as mentioned in the Quran and Hadith (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2009). Islamic banks are expected to incorporate three components of wellness in the Islamic paradigm—individual development, human and environmental collectivity, specifically social betterment, as their primary goal (Bennett & Iqbal, 2013). Despite being in the industry

for the last 30 years, Islamic banks are criticised for not internalising the social dimension in their operational functions, which has resulted in reduced levels of confidence among Muslim consumers (Asutay, 2008). Islamic banks face higher levels of expectations to contribute socially and morally to society (Dusuki, 2008; Zubairu et al., 2011). Therefore, to consider the implications of Islamic teachings, Islamic banks require a strategic approach to address the social responsibility of their various stakeholders. They must find a solution to bridge the gap between expectations and reality and design an effective CSR strategy. Having balance and commitment towards various CSR initiatives could be used as a strategic marketing tool to secure stakeholders' commitment and enhance the banks' reputation that can prove to be beneficial and profitable. In order to remove sceptical doubts about Islamic banks' objectives and to meet the Islamic component of wellness, this research suggests that there is a need to focus on alternative strategies to publicise their CSR-based activities and strengthen their internal and external communications (Sujana, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic banking differs from conventional banking as it must ensure that it meets three main elements: (1) shariah principles (riba free, extreme uncertainty free, zakat, fairness, justice and balanced society); (2) offering product structure based on active partnership between bank and customer's profit and loss, mudaraba, and murabaha; and (3) management structure (shariah scholar board). Due to focus on Islamic core ethical values and considerations, Islamic banks are expected to show more proactive CSR practices (Dusuki, 2008).

However, in reference to Islamic banks, the researcher observed that there is a gap in theoretical and empirical literature about the concern factors during CSR strategy planning, CSR implementation and CSR evaluation that can assist in building effective CSR image. Various CSR definitions, numerous theoretical frameworks of CSR and measurement scale on consumer level of CSR awareness or consumer demand for CSR, had led to inconclusive findings (Bloemer & Kasper, 1995; Chomvilailuk & Ken, 2013; Faizah et al., 2014; Galbreath & Shum, 2012; Kamla & Rammal, 2013; Kim et al., 2014;

Sutan & Suliman, 2011; Quazi, 2012; Zubairu et al., 2011). Moreover, literature has identified that CSR attribute can be one of the attributes from various other factors (customer service, product range, location of bank branch or bank marketing, etc.), that a customer uses to make a decision of considering a bank or remaining loyal to an existing bank (Du et al., 2010).

Going through the aisle of literature focusing on CSR communication, the researcher identified that the CSR spectrum is broad, complex, and interconnected. However, in such a massive and diverse literature collection, vital contributions by Bhattacharya and Sen (CSR stakeholders' communication perspective), Pepper and Roger (Trust perspectives), and Asyraf Dusuki and Abdullah (CSR Islamic perspective) have inspired the researcher to investigate CSR communication in depth (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Pepper & Roger, 2012; Dusuki, 2008). Even though the gap was identified within the existing data, not much discussion or literature was found on how Islamic banks can develop trust and communicate effectively among consumers on CSR of Islamic banks.

Despite companies integrating CSR into their business strategies, scepticism and distrust exist regarding CSR claims (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Pérez & Rodríguez, 2013; Pomering et al., 2013). Consumers evaluate CSR efforts negatively and consequently do not endorse CSR messages if they believe that the CSR initiatives are not sincere. Insincerity and non-integrated approaches to CSR are more likely to encounter pressure from relevant stakeholders (Ellen et al., 2000). The literature further revealed that the primary issue with CSR communication was its lack of strategic planning rather than selecting communication channels (Pérez & Rodríguez, 2012).

The literature indicated that CSR engagement was possible by linking the consumer, company, and strategy of CSR communication (Schmeltz, 2017). Although the consumer perspective was embedded in CSR models, it was incorporated either in a singular aspect or a segment of the process. This practice had led to a lower level of CSR consumer awareness/interest, despite active participation from banks (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009). The crucial factor is to identify the gap between customer interest and bank's CSR efforts to survive in the competitive market (Pérez & Rodríguez 2015). Identifying

stakeholder interest, level of expectation, and engagement of CSR are critical determinants for corporate success, which were seldom responded accordingly (Du et al., 2010).

Low CSR awareness and scepticism among internal and external stakeholders were the two common issues identified in the literature. Consistency increases the credibility of CSR activities and induces consumers to expect that companies will continue to pursue similar types of CSR activities in the future. However, inconsistent CSR activities caused consumers to perceive such activities as temporary, unplanned, and random (Tang et al., 2012). Due to the actual versus the marketed impact of CSR, customers had reservations (McDonald & Rundle, 2008). Consumers would be interested to know the outcome and the impact of the causes, such as the number of people who supported the cause or amount of funds raised for a cause (Du et al., 2010). Such information is hardly shared by companies. Selecting the less impactful initiatives will likely reduce the credibility of communicated CSR messages and result in scepticism towards the firm (Ellen et al., 2000). Previous research also identified that consistent information led to positive responses as it reduced consumers' efforts to search for additional information, while inconsistent information affected consumers' thoughts and caused negative reactions to previous information (Sengupta & Johar, 2002).

Research suggests that accountability, transparency, and responsibility need to be increased while designing CSR strategy and programme (Kaptein, 2003). Role of CSR committee (in controlling, monitoring, and promoting), sustainable behaviour, corporate governance structures and stakeholders should be relevant and timely to achieve CSR performance outcomes and manage discrepancies (García et al., 2019). Analysing outcomes from previous experience, improving and integrating the corrective measures are essential for CSR success, even though it may seem diffused due to the lack of clarity between improvement evaluation process and CSR integration (Jamali et al., 2015).

Therefore, this research poses the question: What elements are required to establish/re-establish trust and construct a favourable image of CSR for Islamic banks? To explore factors of the CSR framework for developing trust, the researcher did not rely on the earlier models or existing theories as they might restrain from obtaining a

complete picture of an issue. By using an inductive and qualitative approach, the issue was analysed using 75 existing articles related to CSR communication and CSR Islamic banks and based on these, a framework using Quranic terms was proposed. Inductive approach assisted the researcher in using observations to build an abstraction that was already studied earlier, and from there a new perspective, theory or model was generated. A qualitative method guide was also produced to gain insight on key theoretical issues and to identify gaps in research topic or area.

Considering the unresolved CSR communication paradox, this research contributes to the existing Islamic bank marketing literature on CSR communication and CSR orientation (planning, implementation and evaluation), and offers insights into dealing with consumer trust and scepticism.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CSR

There is a dearth of literature on CSR communication and establishing trust/credibility elements in Islamic banks. Most of the existing Islamic CSR-based research is either from an employee's perspective or in the form of CSR disclosures on websites or in annual reports. The researcher believes that incongruities in the implementation of CSR can be streamlined in the Islamic banking industry by strategically effecting four key terms mentioned in the Quran: *Ikhlas*, *Istiqama*, *Ta'awaun*, *Tazkiya*.

Re-establish Trust of CSR through *Ikhlas* (sincerity in implementing CSR activities)

The Quran refers to *Ikhlas* as a core of Tawhid, serving Allah with pure dedication and utter sincerity. The following verses indicate the alignment of intention and values of commands with devotion*:*

قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّى بِٱلْقِسْطِ وَأَقِيمُوا۟ وُجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَٱدْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ

Meaning: *Say, O Prophet, My Lord has commanded uprightness and dedication 'to Him alone' in worship, calling upon Him with sincere devotion. Just as He first brought you into being, you will be brought to life again* (*Surah al-Araf 7:29*).

Another verse also reflects serving Allah with sincerity by establishing Ibadah (Prayer and Zakat):

وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓاْ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ حُنَفَآءَ وَيُقِيمُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَيُؤْتُواْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَذَٰلِكَ دِينُ ٱلْقَيِّمَةِ

Meaning: *Yet all that they had been commanded was that they serve Allah, with utter sincerity, devoting themselves exclusively to Him, and that they establish Prayer and pay Zakat, that is the right faith (Surah al-Bayyinah 98:5).*

In regard to paying Zakat and charity, the verse below indicates that wealth should be circulated among deserving groups. The second point is to stay away from all those things which Prophet Muhammad has forbidden and the third point in this verse is to fear Allah. The verse below refers to the macroeconomic policy of Islam:

مَآ أَفَآءَ اللهُ عَلَى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى فَلِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ كَىْ لَا يَكُوْنَ دُوْلَةً بَيْنَ الْاَغْنِيَآءِ مِنْكُمْ وَمَآ اٰتٰكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ وَ مَا نَهٰكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا وَاتَّقُوا اللهَ ۘ اِنَّ اللهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۞ ﴾ ۔

Meaning: *As for gains granted by Allah to His Messenger from the people of 'other' lands, they are for Allah and the Messenger, his close relatives, orphans, the poor, and 'needy' travellers so that wealth may not merely circulate among your rich. Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it. And whatever he forbids you from, leave it. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is severe in punishment (Surah al-Hashr 59:7).*

In the case of a business's core planning activities, consistently delivering with sincere intention, competencies and reliability will establish trust. The literature has encapsulated three factors which actively demonstrate trustworthiness: (1) benevolence-genuine care and concern for people's well-being, (2) ability-competencies to meet goals, and (3) integrity-consistently adheres to moral principles (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009).

Research further asserted that, trustability is a key characteristic, ingredient and statement in defining interaction with customers, community, employees, and competitors (Pepper & Roger, 2012), it is to align with 'good intention' (doing the right things). They further stated that to operationalise trust, 'confidence' (doing things in a right

way) and 'honest competence' are needed to be able to display the highest standards of ethical practice in internal and external related tasks, and not to concern about short-term revenues. Trustability can lead to trustworthiness and 'extreme trust' as a competitive response (Pepper & Roger, 2012).

Figure 1

Blocks for Customer Trust
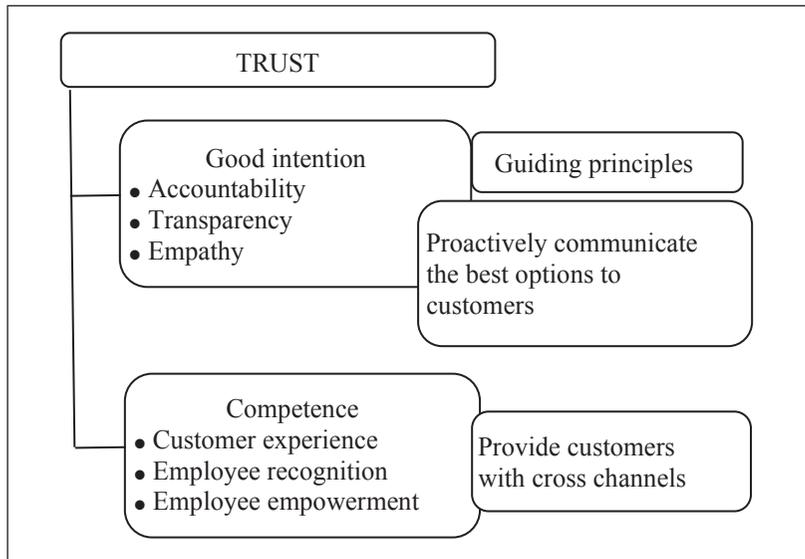
Note: Pepper & Roger, 2012.

In regard to Islamic banks, lack of a clear vision and unstructured planning leads to confusion between charities and CSR. The possible reason for the unclear and confused status could be due to the relative newness of the term CSR, the reluctance to advertise and not taking advantage of social activities (Samia et al., 2013). The literature acknowledges that investing more in Islamic CSR activities will positively impact on a business's reputation and attract more customers (Quazi, 2012; Sutan & Suliman, 2011). However, there is a lack of data about the element of sincerity in designing innovative yet impactful CSR activities by Islamic banks. Therefore, this research proposes some key points for re-establishing the genuineness of Islamic CSR trusted by stakeholders, specifically customers.

Re-establish Trust of CSR through *Ta'awaun* (Cooperate, Collaborate and Empower)

Ta'awun is regarded as a basic principle of economic enterprise in Islam, which encourages mutual cooperation and provides mutual assistance to deal with problems and issues which arise. The Quran mentioned *Ta'awaun* as helping one another in the following verse as a righteous deed.

$$وَتَعَاوَنُواْ عَلَى ٱلْبِرِّ وَٱلتَّقْوَىٰ$$

Meaning: *And help one another in righteous and piety* (*Surah al-Mai'dah 5:2*).

CSR does not relate to a single department. Value should be added to the understanding of CSR through a process of active responsive engagement with a broad range of stakeholder groups. Therefore, managers need to 'involve' employees and customers rather than just 'informing' about CSR communication activities (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Branco and Rodrigues (2006) also averred that CSR success is primarily related to qualitative factors, such as knowledgeable and motivated employees can possibly establish more reliable connections with customers and foster higher levels of engagement.

Although all CSR initiatives are not necessarily perceived as the same by firms and customers, perhaps due to the difference in the area of interest and worth of CSR (Munro, 2013), opening a channel of communication and integration options can help in understanding each other's perspectives. Tata and Prasad (2014) suggest that organisations should take measures to inform audiences about their CSR intentions and also detect noise in the communication/feedback loop. Ruiz de Maya et al. (2016) highlighted the fact that participatory CSR campaigns lead to higher consumer perceptions, which, in turn, results in more favourable attitudes towards the company.

In the context of Islamic banks, there is limited research exploring ways and methods of CSR engagement and its effect on consumer trust. Therefore, to establish or, re-establish trust, this research proposed a framework to optimise customer engagement with the range of Islamic CSR initiatives.

Re-establish Trust of CSR through *Istiqama* (firmness and consistent approach lead to long-term relationship)

The Quran signifies *Istiqama* as the attitude of being firm and consistent – especially for obtaining Allah's blessing. Due to an element of uprightness and firmness, it gravitates to establishing the long-term orientation of a relationship. The verses below indicate that those who remain consistent and firm will have no fear or grieve, and they will be blessed by Allah.

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ قَالُوا۟ رَبُّنَا ٱللَّهُ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَقَٰمُوا۟ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ....

Meaning: *Our Lord is Allah and then stay firm, they will have no fear, nor shall they grieve (Surah al-Ahqaf 46:13).*

وَأَلَّوِ ٱسْتَقَٰمُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقَيْنَٰهُم مَّآءً غَدَقًا

Meaning: *And 'Allah revealed' that if they had remained straight on the way, We would have given them abundant provision (rain) (Surah al-Jinn 72:16).*

In an organisation, ethical bank managers and senior management should take into account not only the effectiveness and attractiveness of their decisions but also CSR consistency (ability to make good decisions now and in the future) and its effect on the company. This requires a systematic approach and commitment to CSR initiatives (Argando*ñ*a & Hoivik, 2009; Tang et al., 2012). To integrate a CSR vision and commitment to CSR activities, the issues that are salient to various stakeholders should be taken into consideration (Polonsky & Jevons, 2009; Porter & Miles, 2013).

Since credibility and scepticism correlate with brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), firms should assure that the receiving end gets the right message, generate favourable CSR attribution, and overcome scepticism (Du et al., 2010). For CSR contents through communication channels, the literature further asserts that two questions should be evaluated: 1) Interactivity: how much interpersonal communication do consumers get and how much of their CSR efforts should businesses communicate (Du et al., 2010), and 2) Accessibility: how easily or how often do consumers receive CSR-related information (Kim et

al., 2014). "History of CSR", "more information about CSR" "CSR impact and benefit" or "alternative message contents" is expected to result in changed consumer perception of the CSR image (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2017; Pérez & Rodríguez, 2012). Companies that promote their CSR initiatives loudly are treated with a high degree of scepticism. Excessive self-promotional CSR messages can receive a backlash from customers, where activities are perceived as PR stunts, marketing gimmicks, spin or hypocrisy, tactical manoeuvres, window dressing or blowing their own horn (Coombs & Holladay, 2010; Ellen et al., 2006; Fassin et al., 2011; Öberseder et al., 2013; Podnar, 2008;). On the contrary, consumers might interpret CSR as being ignored by the firm if corporate communication of CSR was either discrete or silent (Xu, 2014). With that, consumer reactions depend on the message appeal (rational or emotional) used in CSR communication; emotional appeals are more effective with employee-based initiatives whereas rational appeals are more effective with environmental CSR initiatives (Andreu et al., 2015). It is unclear how websites and interactive media add value to firms' CSR communication strategies, other than an annual report (Eberle et al., 2013). So far, companies have not fully explored the potential of online social platforms as a way to improve dialogue, engage with their stakeholders and transform customers to CSR advocates (Du et al., 2010; Francisco et al., 2016). With a note of caution, Eberle et al. (2013) indicated that, despite the effectiveness of interactive communication channels and perceived credibility by consumers, firms need to monitor and strategically manage social communication channels carefully.

For constructing suitable and effective CSR initiatives, firms need to increase their innovative competitiveness and capabilities (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). The literature insists that CSR innovation requires CSR project content, CSR processes, CSR positioning and CSR paradigm (Preuss, 2011).

Regarding Islamic banks, consumers have higher expectations for the application of Islamic values in all services and products, such as authentic products, efficient customer service, low service charges, honest marketing, the inclusion of non-catered segments, and proactive contributions to society. Failing to differentiate between Islamic and conventional banking services, products, and a productive outcome

through CSR strategy could result in the possibility of sceptical attitude and concerns which raises the question of whether 'Islamic banks are really Islamic.'

In reference to Islamic banking, there is a gap between actual CSR initiatives and implementation from management (Haniffa & Hudaib, 2007). Studies have identified that senior bank executives of Islamic banks are less aware of effective practical implementations, though they possess thorough knowledge and understanding of CSR (Samia et al., 2013; Aribi & Arun, 2014; Beverly & Jawad, 2015). To resolve this issue, Dusuki (2009) suggested that Islamic banks train and educate executives about shariah dimensions and CSR practice for business viability and long-term sustainability. Innovative CSR suggestions, ideas or campaigns by Islamic banks should be encouraged. Such practice can uplift the motivation of bank employees and will also create a positive image for customers (Hassan et al., 2008).

Customers typically demonstrate additional loyalty to brands that demonstrate a commitment to societal and environmental issues, but it has been noted that the lowest disclosures for 'environment' are by Islamic banks (Mahani, 2014; Faizah et al., 2014). Thus, serious attention and substantial CSR disclosures are required by Islamic banks, as differences have been found in the level of CSR disclosures (Farook & Lanis, 2007). Gaps exist between ideal ethical identities and communicated content and due to that the religious and spiritual dimensions of banks are perceived as being superficial (Kamla & Rammal, 2013). CSR disclosure practices are the same as conventional banks (Zubairu et al., 2011).

Based on the above concerns, consumer evaluations will be positive when CSR activities are consistent because it reduces the efforts of consumers in searching for additional information. Word-of-mouth and word of mouse play a significant role in influencing the image compared to the Islamic bank communication (Hamid et al., 2020). How CSR can become a technique to establish trust, redress name and restore brand reputation have not been adequately explored. Thus, this research suggests it is essential to deliver consistent CSR outcomes so that consumers can believe that the CSR of Islamic banks is serious in serving communities and not simply using CSR as a marketing trick.

Re-establish Trust of CSR through *Tazkiya* (purification plus growth):

Tazkiya refers to rectifying action and behaviour from all negativity, immorality and unfavourable elements for success and growth. For example, charitable deeds inwardly inspire the self towards good, while ignorance results in loss and disappointment.

The following verses of the Quran refer to the result of *Tazkiya* as success and prosperity in this world and the hereafter by purifying one's heart and soul for Allah:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّىٰهَا *He has succeeded who purifies it* (*Surah al-Shams 91:9*), in a similar context, another verse the command to purify, قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّىٰ *He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself* (*Surah al-A'la 87:14*).

Contextualising the Islamic economic approach, Ahmad (1994; 1980) believes that *Tazkiya* is one of the four principles, along with the axiom of Tawhid (Allah sovereignty), Rabubiyyah (Divine arrangements for nourishment and sustenance) and Khalifah (man's role as God's representative on earth). The *Tazkiya* axiom is directed towards self-development and human development, which lead to utilising economic resources optimally and benefitting social community in a more balanced way.

To discern elements of *Tazkiya*, organisations are required to evaluate and assess their contribution to the realisation of the Islamic goal of social development. Islamic banking literature identifies that CSR activities performed by Islamic banks are more of a strategic tool rather than consideration for social welfare (Abdul Kaium & Humayun, 2016).

To configure CSR *Tazkiya* at a strategic level, Islamic banks need to self-assess, self-evaluate, and self-recognise their efforts and resolve issues which can lead to negative connotation and experiences. This may involve compensating customers for negative experiences, as well as making internal organisational changes to make sure mistakes are fixed and future errors can be mitigated. This research proposes several key questions which can be considered during the evaluation stage to identify the gaps and achieve CSR success for Islamic banks.
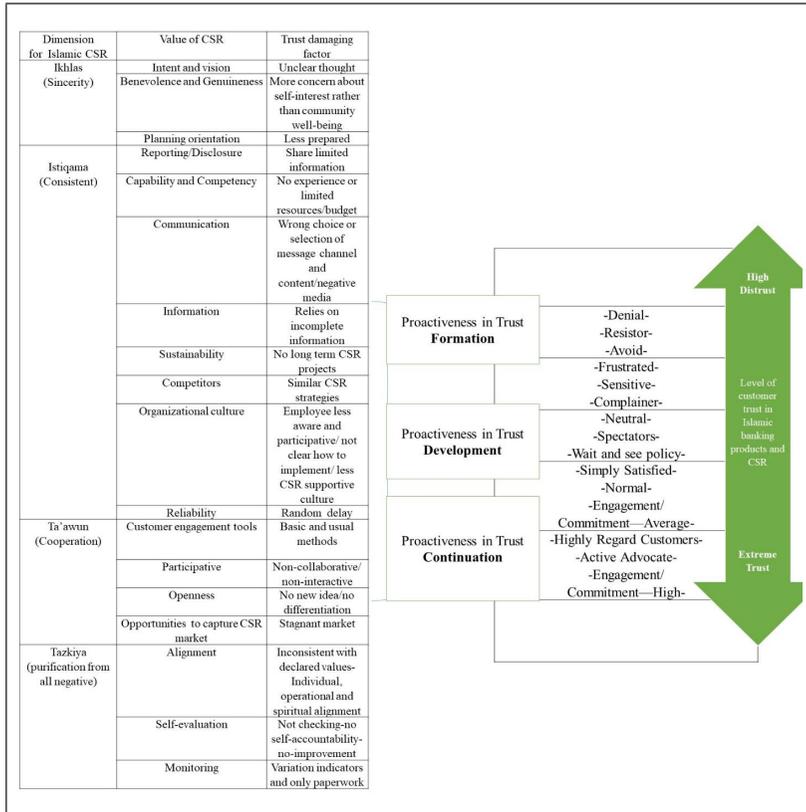
PROPOSED FRAMEWORK AND DISCUSSIONS

After reviewing 75 articles related to CSR communication and Islamic banks, the researcher believes that the inconsistencies in the implementation of CSR communication for the Islamic banking industry can be streamlined by adopting four Quranic elements: *Ikhlas (sincere intention at planning stage), Istiqama, Ta'awaun (consistent approach in implementation stage), Tazkiya (monitoring and purification at evaluation stage)*. We deduced that these factors can reduce the negative and sceptical attitude of consumers as well. By incorporating Quranic elements in CSR at the strategic level (planning, implementing and evaluating), it will be possible for Islamic banks to identify consumers' existing level of trust in CSR initiatives, level of involvement, the information they received through content and channel(s), and the effect of CSR outcomes on their perception. The presence and absence of these factors can be explored in future research.

In summarising the above discussion, we can determine that for creating trust, Islamic banks should realise the dimension of *Ikhlas* - their motives and intention of CSR activities during the planning and visioning stages. They need to set realistic and reasonable expectations at the start of their journey as opposed to ambitious high cost CSR solutions to achieve in a short time. Islamic banks should not be reluctant to refocus their planning efforts around long-term goals due to a lot of effort and time. Furthermore, Islamic banks need to be honest and transparent about their CSR plans and communicate with stakeholders regarding planning for new projects that will be implemented in the future. They need to formulate, analyse existing competencies and monitor strategies for dealing with stakeholders (specifically different types of customers) by developing new expertise and processes.

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Figure 2

Quranic Elements of CSR at the Strategic Level to Develop CSR Consumer Trust (Framework Created for this Research)

Dimension for Islamic CSR	Value of CSR	Trust damaging factor
Ikhlas (Sincerity)	Intent and vision	Unclear thought
	Benevolence and Genuineness	More concern about self-interest rather than community well-being
	Planning orientation	Less prepared
Istiqama (Consistent)	Reporting/Disclosure	Share limited information
	Capability and Competency	No experience or limited resources/budget
	Communication	Wrong choice or selection of message channel and content/negative media
	Information	Relies on incomplete information
	Sustainability	No long term CSR projects
	Competitors	Similar CSR strategies
	Organizational culture	Employee less aware and participative/ not clear how to implement/ less CSR supportive culture
	Reliability	Random delay
Ta'awun (Cooperation)	Customer engagement tools	Basic and usual methods
	Participative	Non-collaborative/ non-interactive
	Openness	No new idea/no differentiation
	Opportunities to capture CSR market	Stagnant market
Tazkiya (purification from all negative)	Alignment	Inconsistent with declared values- Individual, operational and spiritual alignment
	Self-evaluation	Not checking-no self-accountability- no-improvement
	Monitoring	Variation indicators and only paperwork

Proactiveness in Trust **Formation**

Proactiveness in Trust **Development**

Proactiveness in Trust **Continuation**

-Denial-
-Resistor-
-Avoid-
-Frustrated-
-Sensitive-
-Complainer-
-Neutral-
-Spectators-
-Wait and see policy-
-Simply Satisfied-
-Normal-
-Engagement/ Commitment—Average-
-Highly Regard Customers-
-Active Advocate-
-Engagement/ Commitment—High-

High Distrust

Level of customer trust in Islamic banking products and CSR

Extreme Trust

goals due to a lot of effort and time. Furthermore, Islamic banks need to be honest and transparent about their CSR plans and communicate with stakeholders regarding planning for new projects that will be implemented in the future. They need to formulate, analyse existing competencies and monitor strategies for dealing with stakeholders (specifically different types of customers) by developing new expertise and processes.

To implement, *Ikhlas* is a coherent element in CSR, addressing the points will assist Islamic banks to organise CSR in a manner that bridges the gap between planning and practical implementation. At

the planning stage, Islamic banks should realise their CSR positioning and their expectation to be recognised in the market. Islamic banks need to plan ways to become competent in terms of CSR empathy, integrity, reliability, initiative, and communication, cooperation to earn and keep the trust of society. They need to further analyse either to meet CSR compliances at the standard level or higher; short-term versus long-term and profit versus service.

Istiqama in CSR initiatives as well as policies, strategies, and objectives can lead to developing credibility, and if the momentum continues, it will lead to success and long-term relationships. Delivering promises and performances can foster consumers' trust and eliminate scepticism. However, a cynical attitude will prevail, if external CSR initiatives (excessive claims about helping needy segments) prove to be inconsistent with its internal practices (underpaid low-level employees). There should be comprehensive alignment between internal and external communication and practices. Another key problem in the relationship between CSR and competitiveness is the integration and embedding of CSR from vision into core business activities. Focusing largely on results rather than on processes makes CSR competitiveness difficult.

Not surprisingly, consumers are aware that firms engage in CSR for promoting their image. Therefore, consumers focus on how serious banks are about CSR (Yoon et al., 2006). In considering this, to evaluate CSR as a strategic investment, Islamic banks need to determine the level of consumer awareness and accordingly decide 'how' and 'what' to communicate: information, message, and tone related to CSR through external communication. Islamic banks' CSR advertising can use persuasive (influence consumers on products with CSR attributes) or informative CSR advertising (information about CSR characteristics or CSR managerial practices). CSR attributes or features need to be explicitly determined so that customers can value and choose from other Islamic financial products. Instead of abstract and more general CSR claims or statements, Islamic banks can specify CSR beneficiaries and outcomes of CSR initiatives. Since CSR positive development is short-lived, it decreases trust significantly if consumers are exposed to negative information (Bögel, 2015). To develop trust, it signals that Islamic banks need to build a sense of proactiveness in forming, developing and pursuing 'extreme' trust among customers.

In manifesting *Istiqama* in an implementation process to establish trust, Islamic banks can review their CSR claims and programmes to determine whether these really 'do' what they 'say', with genuineness for the well-being of society. Since different consumers perceive CSR initiatives differently, Islamic banks should measure consumer commitment to CSR initiatives and its effects via message type, CSR content appeals and consumer evaluation about CSR attributes. For reliable message information, Islamic banks can use targeted CSR communication approaches, and tailor CSR communication channels that could stimulate effect on the attitude of consumers related to CSR. If consumers maintain and place their trust, then banks can use verification of Islamic CSR claims and messages by a third party (such as ranking websites, and partnering with non-profit organisations). In regard, to mitigate the issues related to inconsistent CSR information and its effects, justify or accept the mistake instead of defending. More allocation should be on research and development for new innovative CSR projects rather than on advertising expenditure. Any inconsistencies in bank internal operations and external CSR claims can detract or cause distrust among stakeholders. Therefore, banks should be cautious about their alignment in internal practices and external claims. For alignment, Islamic bank employees can be advocates and ambassadors of their bank's CSR strategy. Furthermore, to have firm performance as well as social performance, Islamic banks should set an example for other financial institutions.

Ta'awun approaches can be established by engaging consumers in dialogues about the topic of CSR or co-creating CSR campaigns. To develop the factor of differentiation and construct favourable CSR image, Islamic banks can determine consumer trust propensity (inclination to trust others), by considering individual characteristics (demographic factors, developmental experiences, personality types, and cultural backgrounds). It will be a challenge to connect with high distrust customers (i.e. those in denial, frustrated or neutral). For that, banks can devise a method to listen to their concerns. By 'auditing trust', Islamic banks will be able to prescribe remedies for damaging behaviour.

To reciprocate trust, Islamic banks need to assess and acknowledge the engagement process and show genuine appreciation for customer patronage. Islamic banks need to ensure that they have competencies and capacities to engage all parties. Further follow up on the legitimate

requests and outputs of engagement with stakeholders can give deeper insights. Using eye tracking and emotion detection technology, banks can measure the response of less active consumers to CSR initiatives. For idea-generating space, interactive sessions, and co-creative engagement approaches, constraints related to resources and organisational factors should be identified. To anchor and embed CSR into its overall policy, bank employees from different departments need to be active contributors in the CSR implementation process (by way of awareness meeting sessions, training in CSR competency management, related articles on the intranet, customer–employee collaborative sessions, and rewarding new ideas from employees). For better ideas and solutions, CSR engagement could exist between the Islamic banking industry and academia.

Tazkiya of Islamic banks can enhance the attitude of CSR as being transparent, self-accountable and responsible. For that, Islamic banks need to make sure that there should be a CSR governance process to assess and evaluate performance, and it requires a strong basis for an effective chain of CSR accountability within the bank. *Tazkiya* will encourage towards righteousness and eliminating processes that deviate from the right path, intention and effort. To consider this, Islamic banks need to critically evaluate the responsibilities and accountabilities that arise from their decisions, actions and behaviours to determine whether they are a cause of the CSR outcome or do they judge it fairly and feel responsible for failure of outcome; what initiatives have been taken to be accountable? If Islamic banks are unwilling to accept responsibility and exercise self-accountability, but instead they return to business as usual, there is a high possiblity for them to face harsh criticisms from customers.

To manifest *Tazkiya* in CSR initiatives and in comprehensive information through an all-embracing reporting process, Islamic banks' CSR committee and top management should self-evaluate and respond if targets are not met in the areas of CSR priorities and CSR inclusivity-stakeholders strategy (planning, implementation, evaluation). Islamic banks can align CSR with *Tazkiya* at three levels: 1) *Tazkiya* knowledge (considering prerequisites of *Tazkiya* theoretical understanding), 2) *Tazkiya* relation with Allah and society (ability to fulfil commands as a representative of Allah and obligations towards the community), 3) *Tazkiya* actions and motives (resources utilisation, decision-making, self-development, CSR spirit striving to please Allah).

Based on the points mentioned, Islamic banks require constant review of their CSR formulation, CSR implementation and CSR evaluation of emerging strategies to establish and foster consumers' trust. By internalising elements of *Ikhlas, Istiqama, Ta'awaun, Tazkiya*, the CSR strategies and policies of Islamic banks can be reoriented and streamlined. Furthermore, to form trust, develop trust and continue to preserve trust, a proactive approach is needed for low levels of consumer CSR trust (denial, frustrated, neutral, and simply satisfied). Trust and 'extreme trust' can be established/re-established if sincere attitude and commitment are reiterated through all communication channels and CSR strategies. This research believes that further empirical research can be conducted to identify situations in which these four factors can be considered critical for Islamic banks in developing trust with consumers.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this research paper is to seek an answer to the question of what elements are required to re-establish trust and how Islamic banks can construct a favourable image of CSR. In order to answer this question, a review of the literature was carried out. Based on the issues extracted, a framework was proposed consisting of four Quranic terms to establish trust and credibility with Islamic banks (*Ikhlas*, *Istiqama*, *Ta'awaun, Tazkiya)* and CSR, thereby contribute significantly to theoretical and managerial implications.

Despite the substantial commitment to CSR activities, there is limited research on consumer perceptions of CSR activities and valid scales to measure CSR communication in the context of the Islamic banking industry. None of the studies seem to identify the effect of CSR participatory practice and the co-creation marketing approach in Islamic banks. Considering CSR's broad and self-regulating mechanism, this research believes that Islamic banks need to be concerned with factors that can influence consumer trust, such as aligning activities with Islamic values and emitting it through their core business activities. Further for strengthening CSR credentials, mechanisms should be embedded to measure and evaluate the results of CSR policies, effort from employees from idea generation to implementation, and detecting noises during customer engagement activities. The process

needs to be revitalised by evaluating competitive context, learning orientation, augmenting CSR innovativeness, spending internal resources effectively (research and development), and ascertaining competency to address society's expectations.

Trust and CSR are interconnected terms that should be explored in future empirical studies in order to understand CSR integration at the strategic, operational and tactical level and its impact on society and on consumer trust: sincerity, coherence and/or credibility.

Although this research can be used as an initial source for future studies, it lacks the practical approach. Due to the diverse perspectives of CSR, further theoretical-empirical research can be conducted to identify how banks are making attempts to establish trust and credibility with consumers and other stakeholders. Islamic banks operating in different countries have their own culture; thus it will be beneficial to identify institutional differences in CSR across countries and their respective competitive contexts, to determine consumer trust for CSR and the seriousness of management in assessing expectations and the effects of CSR on stakeholders. Furthermore, CSR topic cannot be analysed through the lens of a single disciplinary perspective. Further exploration requires a multidisciplinary approach; psychology, sociology, religious studies, and neuro-marketing. These factors should be addressed and pursued in future endeavours in seeking to understand the influence of trust propensity, corporate communication, and Islamic corporate social responsibility.

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