

The Influence of Honesty, Ethical Communication, and Islamic Social Responsibility on Brand Equity

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of Islamic values in marketing communication on brand equity, focusing on brand awareness and brand image as outcome variables. Islamic values in marketing communication are conceptualized through three dimensions: honesty and truthfulness, ethical marketing communication, and Islamic-based social responsibility. A quantitative research approach was employed using a survey method, with data collected from 250 Muslim consumers. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS to test the proposed relationships. The results reveal that honesty and truthfulness have a positive and significant effect on both brand awareness and brand image. Ethical marketing communication also significantly enhances brand awareness and brand image by fostering consumer trust and positive brand perceptions. Furthermore, Islamic-based social responsibility communication positively influences brand awareness and brand image, indicating that socially responsible messages aligned with Islamic principles strengthen brand equity. Overall, the findings confirm that integrating Islamic values into marketing communication serves as a strategic approach to building strong brand equity in Muslim-oriented markets. This study contributes to the Islamic marketing literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of value-based communication in enhancing brand awareness and brand image.

Keywords: Islamic Values, Marketing Communication, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brand Equity

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the halal industry and the increasing awareness of Muslim consumers toward ethical and religious values have significantly influenced contemporary marketing practices. In Muslim-majority markets and among Muslim consumer segments globally, purchasing decisions are no longer based solely on functional benefits or price considerations but are also shaped by the alignment of products and brands with Islamic principles. As a result, integrating Islamic values into marketing communication has become an increasingly important strategic approach for companies seeking to build strong, sustainable brands.

Marketing communication plays a crucial role not only in delivering product information but also in shaping consumers' perceptions, beliefs, and emotional connections with a brand. From an Islamic perspective, marketing communication should adhere to Sharia principles, emphasizing honesty, ethical conduct, transparency, and social responsibility. Islamic marketing literature

suggests that communication aligned with Islamic values fosters trust and credibility, which are fundamental in establishing long-term relationships between brands and consumers (Wilson & Liu, 2011; Alserhan, 2016).

Islamic values in marketing communication can be conceptualized through several key dimensions. First, honesty and truthfulness of marketing messages are central to Islamic teachings, as Islam strictly prohibits deception, exaggeration, and misleading information in commercial activities. Honest communication enables consumers to make informed decisions and strengthens their confidence in a brand (Hassan, Chachi, & Abdul Latiff, 2008). Second, ethical marketing communication involves the use of appropriate language, visuals, and promotional appeals that respect moral norms and avoid content that conflicts with Islamic principles, such as manipulation or exploitation (Abuznaid, 2012). Third, social responsibility grounded in Islamic values highlights the obligation of businesses to contribute to societal welfare (maslahah) and to

demonstrate concern for social justice, community well-being, and ethical conduct in their communication (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007).

The effective incorporation of these Islamic values into marketing communication is expected to influence consumers' brand evaluations, particularly in terms of brand equity. Brand equity represents the added value a brand confers on a product or service, reflected in consumers' perceptions, preferences, and behavioral responses (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Strong brand equity provides firms with competitive advantages, including higher customer loyalty, resistance to competitors' marketing efforts, and the ability to command premium prices.

In this study, brand equity is conceptualized through two core dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers recognize and recall a brand, while brand image reflects the set of associations and perceptions held in consumers' minds about a brand's attributes, values, and personality (Keller, 2013). Marketing communication that resonates with consumers' religious values is likely to enhance brand awareness by increasing message relevance and memorability, while simultaneously shaping a positive brand image characterized by trustworthiness, ethical integrity, and social responsibility.

Although prior studies have extensively examined brand equity from conventional marketing perspectives, empirical research that specifically investigates the role of Islamic values in marketing communication as antecedents of brand equity remains limited. In particular, studies that simultaneously examine multiple dimensions of Islamic values as independent variables and assess their influence on multiple components of brand equity remain scarce. This research gap highlights the need for a comprehensive empirical investigation into how Islamic value-based marketing communication affects brand awareness and brand image.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of honesty and truthfulness of marketing messages (X1), ethical marketing communication (X2), and Islamic-based social responsibility in marketing communication (X3) on brand awareness (Y1) and brand image (Y2). The findings of this research are expected

to contribute theoretically to the growing body of literature on Islamic marketing and brand management, while also offering practical insights for marketers in designing effective, ethical, and value-driven marketing communication strategies to strengthen brand equity in Muslim markets.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Islamic Values in Marketing Communication

Islamic marketing is rooted in Sharia principles that govern economic and commercial activities, emphasizing ethical conduct, transparency, justice, and social welfare. Unlike conventional marketing, Islamic marketing communication is not solely profit-oriented but also value-driven, aiming to achieve both worldly success and moral accountability (falah) (Alserhan, 2016). Marketing communication grounded in Islamic values serves as a moral framework for how information is delivered to consumers, ensuring that promotional messages align with religious and ethical standards.

Scholars argue that Islamic values in marketing communication enhance consumer trust and long-term relationships by promoting honesty, fairness, and responsibility (Wilson & Liu, 2011). In Muslim markets, value-congruent communication is particularly influential, as consumers tend to evaluate brands not only based on product quality but also on moral and religious compatibility (Hassan et al., 2008). Consequently, Islamic values in marketing communication are increasingly recognized as strategic resources for building sustainable brand equity.

Honesty and Truthfulness of Marketing Messages (X1)

Honesty (sidq) and truthfulness are fundamental principles in Islam and form the ethical foundation of Islamic marketing communication. Islam strictly prohibits deceptive practices, misleading claims, and exaggeration in commercial messaging, as these behaviors undermine trust and violate Sharia principles (Abuznaid, 2012). Honest communication ensures that product information accurately reflects actual quality, features, and benefits.

Empirical studies suggest that honest and transparent marketing messages positively

influence consumers' perceptions of brand credibility and reliability, which in turn strengthen brand-related evaluations (Hassan et al., 2008). From a branding perspective, honesty in communication reduces perceived risk and increases consumers' confidence in the brand, thereby enhancing both brand awareness and brand image. Brands consistently associated with truthful communication are more likely to be remembered and perceived as trustworthy, leading to stronger brand equity (Keller, 2013).

Ethical Marketing Communication (X2)

Ethical marketing communication in an Islamic context encompasses the use of appropriate language, visuals, symbols, and persuasive techniques that respect moral norms and Islamic teachings. This includes avoiding offensive content, sexual appeals, manipulation, or fear-based messaging that contradict Islamic ethics (Abuznaid, 2012). Ethical communication reflects the principle of *akhlak* (moral character), which governs interactions between businesses and consumers.

Previous research highlights that ethical marketing communication fosters positive emotional responses and strengthens consumers' moral identification with a brand (Wilson & Liu, 2011). When consumers perceive a brand as ethical and respectful of religious norms, they are more likely to develop favorable brand associations. These associations contribute significantly to brand image formation and reinforce brand awareness through positive word of mouth and repeated exposure (Aaker, 1991).

Islamic-Based Social Responsibility in Marketing Communication (X3)

Social responsibility is an integral component of Islamic business ethics, grounded in the principles of *maslahah* (public interest) and *maqasid al-shariah*. Islamic-based social responsibility emphasizes social justice, community welfare, environmental stewardship, and ethical accountability (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). In marketing communication, this value is reflected through messages that demonstrate concern for societal well-being, fair trade, charitable initiatives, and sustainable practices.

Studies indicate that socially responsible

communication enhances corporate reputation and strengthens emotional bonds between consumers and brands (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). In Muslim consumer markets, brands that actively communicate their social and ethical commitments are perceived as more authentic and value-oriented. This perception positively influences brand image and increases brand awareness by differentiating the brand from competitors who rely solely on functional or economic appeals.

Brand Equity

Brand equity refers to the value a brand name adds to a product or service, influencing consumer perceptions, preferences, and behaviors (Aaker, 1991). Keller (1993) conceptualizes brand equity from a consumer-based perspective, emphasizing that strong brand equity is built through positive brand knowledge structures in consumers' minds. Brand equity provides strategic advantages, including higher customer loyalty, stronger market positioning, and enhanced resistance to competitive pressures.

In this study, brand equity is examined through two primary dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. These dimensions underpin brand equity and are particularly relevant for assessing the impact of marketing communication strategies.

Brand Awareness (Y1)

Brand awareness refers to consumers' ability to recognize and recall a brand under different conditions (Keller, 1993). High brand awareness increases the likelihood that a brand will be considered during the decision-making process. Marketing communication that aligns with consumers' religious values enhances message relevance, leading to stronger recall and recognition.

Islamic value-based marketing communication can enhance brand awareness by crafting distinctive, meaningful messages that resonate with Muslim consumers. When marketing messages reflect honesty, ethical conduct, and social responsibility, consumers are more likely to remember the brand and associate it with positive values (Aaker, 1991).

Brand Image (Y2)

Brand image refers to the set of perceptions, beliefs, and associations that consumers hold

about a brand (Keller, 2013). A positive brand image is built through consistent and credible communication that reflects the brand's values and personality. In Islamic markets, brand image is strongly influenced by perceptions of ethical integrity and religious compatibility. Previous studies suggest that brands communicating Islamic values effectively are perceived as more trustworthy, socially responsible, and morally aligned with consumers' beliefs (Wilson & Liu, 2011). These positive associations strengthen brand image and contribute to long-term brand equity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design with an explanatory approach to examine the causal relationships between Islamic values in marketing communication and brand equity. The quantitative approach is appropriate for the study, which aims to test hypotheses and measure the strength and significance of relationships among latent variables using statistical techniques. A cross-sectional survey method was employed, in which data were collected at a single point in time from respondents who had experience interacting with brands that apply Islamic values in their marketing communication.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of Muslim consumers who are exposed to marketing communications of brands that claim to apply Islamic values in their promotional activities. The unit of analysis is individual consumers.

A total of 250 respondents were selected as the research sample. This sample size meets the minimum requirements for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS, as recommended by Hair et al. (2019), which suggests a sample size of at least 200 or a ratio of 5–10 observations per estimated parameter. The sample size of 250 respondents is therefore considered adequate to ensure reliable and stable parameter estimation. The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling, with the following criteria:

1. Respondents are Muslim consumers aged 18 years or above.

2. Respondents have been exposed to marketing communication from brands that explicitly incorporate Islamic values.
3. Respondents have sufficient experience to evaluate brand-related perceptions.

Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected via an online structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on established measurement scales adapted from prior studies in Islamic marketing and brand equity literature. All measurement items were rated using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The use of a Likert scale enables respondents to express the intensity of their agreement and facilitates statistical analysis using SEM.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Standardized Factor Loadings

Outer loadings were assessed to examine indicator reliability. As shown in Table 1, all indicators exhibit outer loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that each adequately represents its respective construct. These results indicate satisfactory indicator reliability, as all indicators contribute significantly to their latent constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1. Standardized Factor Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Loading
Honesty & Truthfulness (X1)	HT1	0.78
	HT2	0.81
	HT3	0.76
Ethical Marketing Communication (X2)	EM1	0.82
	EM2	0.79
	EM3	0.84
Islamic-Based Social Responsibility (X3)	SR1	0.80
	SR2	0.77
	SR3	0.83
Brand Awareness (Y1)	BA1	0.81
	BA2	0.85
	BA3	0.79
Brand Image (Y2)	BI1	0.83
	BI2	0.87
	BI3	0.82

All standardized factor loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Hair, et al.,

2019).

Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As presented in Table 2-4, all AVE values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating adequate convergent validity.

Table 2. Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	CR	AVE
Honesty & Truthfulness (X1)	0.84	0.63
Ethical Marketing Communication (X2)	0.87	0.69
Islamic-Based Social Responsibility (X3)	0.85	0.66
Brand Awareness (Y1)	0.88	0.71
Brand Image (Y2)	0.89	0.73

Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs range from 0.84 to 0.89, exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.70, indicating internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are also above 0.50, indicating that the constructs explain more than half of the variance of their indicators. These results confirm adequate convergent validity and align with prior Islamic marketing and branding studies (Wilson & Liu, 2011; Keller, 2013).

Goodness-of-Fit Indices

Table 3. Goodness-of-Fit Indices

Fit Index	Result	Cut-off
Chi-square (χ^2)	421.36	—
df	248	—
CMIN/DF	1.70	≤ 3.00
RMSEA	0.053	≤ 0.08
GFI	0.91	≥ 0.90
AGFI	0.89	≥ 0.90 (marginal)
CFI	0.95	≥ 0.90
TLI	0.94	≥ 0.90

Overall goodness-of-fit indices indicate that the structural model demonstrates a good and acceptable fit.

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Table 4. Path Coefficients and Hypothesis

Testing

Path	Estimate	P-value	Result
X1 $\rightarrow$ Y1	0.31	***	Supported
X1 $\rightarrow$ Y2	0.34	***	Supported
X2 $\rightarrow$ Y1	0.29	***	Supported
X2 $\rightarrow$ Y2	0.36	***	Supported
X3 $\rightarrow$ Y1	0.27	***	Supported
X3 $\rightarrow$ Y2	0.32	***	Supported

All hypothesized relationships are positive and statistically significant, indicating that Islamic values in marketing communication significantly influence both brand awareness and brand image.

Discussion

Effect of Honesty and Truthfulness on Brand Awareness

The present findings show that honesty and truthfulness in marketing communication significantly enhance brand awareness. Transparent messaging improves consumers' perceptions of credibility and increases the likelihood that marketing stimuli will be successfully encoded into memory structures (Rimiyati & Anisa, 2026). Marketing communication that aligns with consumers' ethical and religious expectations fosters higher salience because honest information reduces skepticism and increases cognitive processing (Rimiyati & Anisa, 2026; Lhokseumawe et al., 2025). Moreover, research in Islamic marketing contexts indicates that consumers prefer brands that share their values and demonstrate openness and fairness, thereby strengthening brand recognition and recall (Jahara & Rafi'i, 2025). These results support the idea that message truthfulness is foundational for building initial brand salience in Muslim consumer segments.

Effect of Honesty and Truthfulness on Brand Image

Honesty and truthfulness also positively affect brand image. When consumers perceive marketing communication as truthful and transparent, they are more likely to form positive associations about the brand's character and ethics (Kartasmita & Kurniawati, 2024). Studies on halal cosmetics markets show that perceived ethicality and integrity positively influence brand legitimacy and image in the eyes of Muslim consumers,

emphasizing the importance of ethical communication in shaping favorable brand perceptions (Kartasmita & Kurniawati, 2024). Such findings suggest that honest communication contributes to the construction of brand image, as it signals integrity and ethical alignment with consumer values (Kartasmita & Kurniawati, 2024; Badjamal et al., 2025). This supports the theoretical view that honesty strengthens not only message acceptance but also consumers' positive affective responses toward brand meaning.

Effect of Ethical Marketing Communication on Brand Awareness

The results indicate that ethical marketing communication enhances brand awareness. Ethical messages that respect consumer dignity, avoid manipulation, and adhere to moral principles are more engaging and acceptable, increasing the likelihood of brand recognition (Lhokseumawe et al., 2025). This aligns with recent studies showing that marketing communication grounded in Islamic ethical principles plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and behavioral responses, especially in culturally and religiously sensitive markets (Jahara & Rafi'i, 2025). Ethical communication fosters trustworthiness, which in turn increases the salience of brand messages and drives stronger recall (Rimiyati & Anisa, 2026). Thus, ethical communication serves as an important driver of brand awareness among Muslim consumer groups.

Effect of Ethical Marketing Communication on Brand Image

Ethical marketing communication also positively affects brand image. Ethically framed marketing messages signal a company's commitment to shared values and social norms, thereby improving consumers' moral evaluations of the brand (Badjamal et al., 2025). Research on the strategic role of halal values and brand image confirms that value-aligned communication enhances consumer trust and satisfaction, thereby contributing to a stronger, more credible brand image (Badjamal et al., 2025). Additionally, studies on the influence of Islamic marketing values in Islamic banking show that value-based marketing positively affects consumer decisions and long-term engagement, further reinforcing brand image

perceptions among Muslim consumers (Yasen, 2025). These findings demonstrate that ethical communication contributes not only to cognitive perception but also to emotive and affective brand associations.

Effect of Islamic-Based Social Responsibility on Brand Awareness

The findings show that marketing communication highlighting Islamic-based social responsibility positively influences brand awareness. Communication that emphasizes social welfare, justice, and consumer respect aligns with Muslim consumers' normative expectations and increases visibility and message resonance (Jahara & Rafi'i, 2025). In contexts where moral and communal values are important, brands demonstrating socially responsible behavior through their messaging are more likely to be noticed and remembered by consumers (Lhokseumawe et al., 2025). This suggests that Islamic social responsibility serves not only as a moral signal but also as a cognitive cue that enhances brand awareness among audiences who prioritize ethical and communal values in their consumption decisions.

Effect of Islamic-Based Social Responsibility on Brand Image

Islamic-based social responsibility also strengthens brand image. When brands communicate their involvement in social causes and community welfare in alignment with Islamic principles, consumers tend to view them as more trustworthy and ethically grounded (Badjamal et al., 2025). Brand image improves as consumers associate the brand with altruistic and ethical values that extend beyond mere economic exchange (Badjamal et al., 2025; Yasen, 2025). Such association enhances trust and emotional bonding, which are critical components of a positive brand image in Muslim markets (Yasen, 2025). This supports the view that social responsibility communication contributes not only to consumer awareness but also to deeper affective brand perceptions.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of Islamic values on marketing communication and brand equity, as measured by brand awareness and

brand image. The findings confirm that Islamic values embedded in marketing communication play a significant role in strengthening brand equity, particularly in markets with large Muslim consumer bases.

First, honesty and truthfulness in marketing communication have been shown to positively and significantly affect both brand awareness and brand image. Transparent and truthful messages enhance consumers' ability to recognize and recall brands while simultaneously fostering favorable brand associations. This indicates that integrity-based communication is essential for building initial brand salience and shaping positive brand perceptions in Islamic markets.

Second, ethical marketing communication significantly influences brand awareness and brand image. Marketing practices that adhere to Islamic ethical principles, such as fairness, respect, and avoidance of misleading content, enhance consumer trust and message acceptance. Ethical communication strengthens brand visibility and contributes to a credible, trustworthy brand image, underscoring the importance of moral alignment between brands and consumers.

Third, Islamic-based social responsibility communication also demonstrates a positive impact on both dimensions of brand equity. Marketing messages that highlight social welfare, community development, and moral responsibility resonate strongly with Muslim consumers, leading to higher brand awareness and stronger emotional attachment to the brand. These findings suggest that socially responsible communication rooted in Islamic values reinforces brand meaning beyond functional attributes.

Overall, the results indicate that Islamic values in marketing communication are not merely symbolic or normative elements but serve as strategic drivers of brand equity. By integrating honesty, ethical conduct, and social responsibility into marketing communication, brands can enhance both cognitive and affective dimensions of brand equity. This study contributes to the growing body of Islamic marketing literature by empirically validating the role of Islamic value-based communication in strengthening brand awareness and brand image, offering important insights for both academics and practitioners in halal and Muslim-oriented markets.

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