



Malay Islamic Branding Consistency: Building A University Identity

Fera Indasari ¹⁾; Sepriadi Saputra ²⁾; Ida Anggriani ³⁾; Nur Syafitri ⁴⁾

^{1,2,4)} Department of Communication, Social and Political Science Faculty, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Sumatera Selatan, Indonesia

³⁾ Department of Management, Faculty Of Economics and Business, Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu, Indonesia

Email: ¹⁾ feraindasari_uin@radenfatah.ac.id , ²⁾ sepriadisaputra_uin@radenfatah.ac.id , ³⁾ ida.anggriani26@gmail.com , ⁴⁾ nursyafitri@gmail.com

How to Cite :

Indasari, F., Saputra, S., Anggriani, I., Syafitri, N. (2025). Malay Islamic Branding Consistency: Building A University Identity . EKOMBIS REVIEW: Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis, 13(1).
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.37676/ekombis.v13i1>

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received [02 November 2024]

Revised [04 Desember 2024]

Accepted [06 Desember 2024]

KEYWORDS

Branding Consistency,
Malay-Islamic, Brand
Ambassador, University Identity.

*This is an open access article
under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license*



ABSTRACT

The State Islamic University in Palembang City is an institution that must establish a credible identity and strong reputation to attract high-quality students. To achieve this, it is essential to maintain consistent branding, with a focus on a Malay-Islamic identity. This study, titled Consistency of Malay-Islamic Branding: Building University Identity, aims to explore how consistent branding efforts can help build the university's identity. The theoretical framework for this study is based on branding consistency, derived from Fritz Heider's Balance Theory (1946). The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews. The findings reveal several key challenges: inconsistent branding initiatives, limited resources and organizational structure, a restricted role of public relations in branding, suboptimal engagement of lecturers as brand ambassadors, and a lack of structured evaluations for assessing branding consistency at the State Islamic University in Palembang City.

INTRODUCTION

A university must establish a credible identity and reputation to attract high-quality students. Research by Salman Hamed (2022) suggests that a clear and well-directed brand image can provide strategic advantages for universities, enhancing reputation and building a positive perception among prospective students. Therefore, this identity and reputation should be communicated and ingrained in the public consciousness, especially for those seeking a reputable educational institution. Additionally, each university needs to engage in branding to ensure that its values and strengths are positively received by the public.

A strong identity enables a university to attract both high-quality students and faculty, supporting improvements in academic quality and research (Pinar et al., 2014). Moreover, consistent branding fosters loyalty and pride among students and alumni, who, in turn, become positive representatives of the university within society (Charters, 2009). A positive image can also increase public trust in the quality of education offered, strengthen credibility in the eyes of government bodies and accrediting agencies, and facilitate fundraising and collaboration with various stakeholders (Panda et al., 2019). Amid global competition, universities with solid branding can expand their international reach, attract students and partners from abroad, and establish themselves as respected and influential educational institutions.

University branding should always be conducted consistently to become deeply embedded in the minds of the public, particularly among those seeking reputable and trusted educational institutions (Pinar et al., 2014). Branding consistency is a fundamental aspect of marketing that significantly influences consumer perception, loyalty, and brand equity. In an era where consumers are bombarded with information and choices, maintaining a coherent brand identity across various platforms is crucial for institutions aiming to build strong relationships with their audiences. By upholding brand identity through consistent branding practices (Hasanah et al., 2021), according to the research by (Cox & De-Bortoli, 2020; Xia, 2024) universities can create a stable and reliable image. Branding consistency ensures that the university's messages and values are preserved across platforms and interactions, reinforcing its reputation and making it easier for the public to remember and trust the institution. Without consistency, branding efforts can lose focus, leaving the university's image unclear and less convincing to the public.

When a university applies consistent messaging and visual identity in its branding efforts, it becomes more easily recognized and remembered by the public. This aligns with findings by (Xia, 2024), who highlights that a brand's consistent messaging and visual identity make it easier for the public to identify and recognize, thus enhancing brand awareness. One example of a university implementing branding consistency is the State Islamic University in Palembang City, which seeks to position itself with a strong Malay Islamic identity.

Emphasizing Malay Islamic branding at this Islamic university is a key step in affirming its cultural and authentic Islamic values. By consistently showcasing the Malay Islamic identity through messaging, visual elements, and campus culture, the university strengthens its image as an institution that not only provides quality education but also prioritizes Malay-Islamic cultural values. This consistency involves using various elements that represent the essence of Malay Islam, which are expressed through activities, curriculum, and daily interactions on campus.

Maintaining the Malay Islamic identity across all communication and activities allows the university to establish a strong public image, attract prospective students, and foster a deep emotional connection with its community. Additionally, this consistent branding approach creates an authentic learning environment where Malay-Islamic values can be understood, studied, and preserved by future generations, positioning the university as a symbol of Islamic education with a distinct Malay character.

According to Zami (2018), Islam in Malay society encompasses various aspects of life, from religion, culture, and social structures to economics and politics. This notion is further supported by Afriantoni & Zaini (2021), who emphasize that Malay Islam plays a profound role in the lives of Malay communities across Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei. Islam, as the dominant religion in this region, shapes identities and influences everyday life, becoming an inseparable part of Malay culture and values.

Survey results indicate that the unique character of the State Islamic University in Palembang, as an Islamic institution with a Malay Islamic identity, is not yet fully recognized or understood by students and the local community. As a university rooted in Malay Islam, the State Islamic University in Palembang represents a unique blend of Islamic and Malay values specific to South Sumatra. This uniqueness includes the integration of Malay traditions aligned with Islamic principles in its curriculum, academic traditions, and student activities. Ideally, this

university has the potential to become a center for Malay Islamic studies, focusing not only on Islamic scholarship but also on preserving and developing Malay culture enriched with Islamic values.

Observation shows that one of the primary social media platforms used by the State Islamic University in Palembang for public communication and branding is Instagram. This account showcases various posts on achievements and accomplishments by the university, stakeholders, and students. It also includes posts on collaborations, events, seminars, and other activities.

However, it was observed that branding emphasizing the university's Malay Islamic identity was minimal, with only one post related to "Malay Islamic" branding from January 2023 to May 2024. Furthermore, public knowledge in Palembang City regarding the Islamic Malay branding of the State Islamic University is limited, indicating that branding efforts have yet to achieve widespread recognition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding Consistency

The theory of consistency, primarily emerging from the field of psychology, was first introduced by Fritz Heider in 1946 through the concept known as Balance Theory (Malle, 2008). This theory explores how individuals strive to create balance among their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. Heider emphasized that humans have a tendency to establish harmony between themselves, others, and the objects around them.

Later, this theory was expanded upon by Leon Festinger in 1957 with the introduction of Cognitive Dissonance Theory ((Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018; Trepte, 2013; Wu, 2011). Festinger explained that individuals tend to reduce any dissonance or discord between their beliefs and actions, laying the foundation for many consistency theories in psychology and marketing (Malle, 2008). In the world of branding, the consistency theory is often seen as an evolution of these psychological ideas introduced by Heider and Festinger rather than being attributed to a single researcher.

Extensive research on branding consistency highlights its importance as an essential element in marketing, underscoring the need to maintain an integrated brand identity across every point of interaction with consumers. This theory asserts that a brand should consistently convey the same identity to build a trustworthy and easily recognizable image. Agerup dkk (2022) describe a brand as akin to a person with character; brand consistency requires a brand to exhibit a stable personality in each interaction with customers, creating a cohesive and authentic impression. This perspective aligns with cognitive consistency theory, which states that consumers prefer brands that maintain alignment in their messaging and identity, as evidenced by (Wang et al., 2022) in their findings on the impact of country-of-origin stereotypes and brand positioning on consumer behavior. Consistency in brand concept is also vital in brand alliances.

Research suggests that functional alliances demand a high level of brand concept consistency, while expressive alliances can benefit from broader compatibility, indicating that the nature of brand relationships can influence the importance of consistency (Johan Lanseng & Erling Olsen, 2012).

Further reference is made to Chen dkk (2013), whose research demonstrates that consumers tend to hold more positive attitudes toward brands that strongly maintain their conceptual consistency, supporting the view that consistency can strengthen consumer perceptions of a brand. In brand management, Beverland dkk (2015) introduced the concept of brand ambidexterity, which focuses on a brand's ability to balance between maintaining consistency and staying relevant. This concept enables a brand to retain a stable core identity that remains recognizable and trusted, while also adapting to market shifts and consumer trends.

Consistency builds trust and customer loyalty, while relevance ensures the brand continues to meet evolving needs and preferences. Through brand ambidexterity, companies can flexibly adjust certain aspects of their offerings in response to changes without compromising core brand values. According to (Beverland et al., 2015), this balance helps brands remain appealing and relevant in a dynamic marketplace.

Maintaining this duality is essential for brands seeking to adapt to changing market conditions while preserving their core identity. Additionally, brand consistency has a wide-reaching impact, including on employee engagement and brand image within organizations. Ensuring consistency in branding can increase employee alignment with company values and strengthen positive brand perception internally. Ultimately, maintaining brand consistency is crucial, as it enhances the effectiveness of organizational communication, clarifies messaging, and drives stronger brand performance in the marketplace (de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006; Kenyon et al., 2018).

Brand consistency is a multifaceted concept that plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. This concept spans various dimensions, including visual identity, employee behavior, and brand messaging, all of which collectively contribute to a cohesive brand image across different markets and contexts (Yu et al., 2024).

According to Yu dkk (2024), one main dimension of brand consistency is aligning visual identity with brand values. Research shows that visual identity significantly influences consumer attitudes toward a brand, where consistency in color and design helps build strong brand associations.

Another dimension considers how consumers interpret brand meaning differently across cultural contexts, underscoring the need for an integrated brand strategy that aligns with local perceptions while maintaining global consistency (Skorobogatykh et al., 2014). This study also builds on dimensions explored in research by Smith dkk (2021), which highlights employee behavior as another critical dimension of brand consistency.

Employees act as brand ambassadors, and their alignment with brand values can enhance brand equity. Smith dkk (2021) emphasize that consistent brand-aligned behavior, combined with brand loyalty and support, offers a more comprehensive measure of brand ambassadorship, suggesting that organizations should focus on recruiting and developing employees who embody the brand ethos, thereby reinforcing brand consistency through internal culture.

The role of brand messaging cannot be overstated, as well-defined brand messaging facilitates effective communication of values and offerings to consumers. Consistent branding across advertising channels, social media, and packaging strengthens brand presence in the market and fosters consumer trust (Tarannum Jahan et al., 2024).

Consistency is especially crucial during crises, where a strong pre-crisis reputation can mitigate negative impacts on brand equity. Consumers are more forgiving toward brands that have built a reliable and consistent image, highlighting the importance of maintaining brand integrity over time. Furthermore, brand authenticity is closely linked to brand consistency.

Authentic brands are perceived as genuine and true to their values, fostering stronger consumer relationships (Rosado-Pinto & Loureiro, 2024). Authenticity is often reflected in consistent brand behavior and messaging, which align with consumer expectations and enhance brand loyalty. In summary, brand consistency is a multidimensional construct encompassing visual identity, employee behavior, and messaging. It is essential for building strong consumer relationships and enhancing brand equity. Organizations should prioritize these dimensions to ensure their branding efforts resonate with consumers across contexts and markets.

Universities

The concept of a university has evolved significantly over time, reflecting broader societal changes and the growing complexity of educational needs. At its core, a university serves as an

institution of higher education, research, and community engagement Balibar, 2020). In Indonesia, competition among public and private universities is intense, with universities constantly striving to improve their strategic approach to attracting new students (Evans, 2015). Strategic efforts consistently emphasize image and reputation to foster brand trust and establish a recognizable presence (Foley, 2013).

Universities are expected to articulate clear mission and vision statements that align with educational practices and societal expectations. These statements are vital in defining a university's identity and purpose, serving as philosophical templates that summarize the institution's goals, priorities, and the type of educated individuals it aims to nurture (Abelman & Dalessandro, 2008a, 2008b).

These statements reflect an institution's commitment to fostering a learning community that emphasizes academic excellence while addressing social, cultural, and environmental challenges (Bedoya-Dorado et al., 2022; İzlem Gözükara, 2015). Aligning the university's mission with its educational practices is essential to ensure that it effectively meets its stated objectives and makes a positive contribution to society.

Additionally, contemporary universities are increasingly seen as social actors that must engage with sustainability and global challenges. This integration highlights the evolving perception of universities as not only centers of knowledge but also as vital contributors to societal progress and environmental stewardship.

Malay Islamic Identity

The fusion of Islam and Malay culture has long been a central element in the social and cultural landscape of Malaysia, Indonesia, and surrounding regions. This integration not only shapes Malay identity but also influences various areas such as education, social practices, and economics. The strong influence of Islam on Malay culture is particularly evident in educational curricula. Recent studies reveal that the curriculum in Islamic universities in Indonesia, especially at the State Islamic University in Palembang, is designed to integrate local cultural values with Islamic teachings. This approach aims to prevent the erosion of moral values among students while promoting development aligned with Islamic principles and Malay cultural identity (Abdurrahmansyah, 2021).

The Malay Islamic curriculum serves as a vehicle for transmitting values, ensuring that future generations not only gain academic knowledge but also develop a strong awareness of Malay culture. Furthermore, integrating Malay identity with Islamic values is essential to support harmonious interactions among diverse groups and ethnicities living together. Solihin (2017) observes that Islamic teachings, which emphasize truth and justice, resonate within Malay society and guide their daily behavior. This integration is key to fostering mutual respect and understanding between Malay and non-Malay individuals, presenting Islamic values as universal principles of compassion and kindness (Solihin, 2017).

The historical context of Islam's arrival in the Malay Archipelago further illustrates its transformative role. In regions like Riau, for example, Islam has become so deeply interwoven with Malay identity that non-Muslims are not recognized as Malay under local conventions. This demonstrates the extent to which Islamic teachings have permeated cultural norms and practices, defining the essence of what it means to be Malay (Afandi et al., 2023).

Additionally, rites of passage in Malay culture, as explored by Rehayati, reveal how religious rituals are intricately intertwined with cultural practices, marking significant life transitions as sacred events that honor Islamic beliefs and local traditions (Rehayati et al., 2023).

The economic implications of this integration are also noteworthy, particularly in the context of Islamic banking. (Abdul Rahman et al (2013). provide empirical evidence that Islamic banks in Malaysia have developed efficient risk management practices aligned with Islamic ethical standards. This reflects a broader trend where Islamic principles guide financial practices,

promoting ethical behavior and social responsibility within the banking sector (Abdul Rahman et al., 2013).

The emphasis on ethical practices in Islamic finance indicates a larger movement towards integrating Islamic values into various aspects of economic life, thereby reinforcing the connection between faith and everyday living. In conclusion, the interaction between Islam and Malay culture is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing education, social interactions, cultural practices.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore branding consistency at the State Islamic University in Palembang City. The qualitative method aims to capture an understanding of social phenomena or human experiences from the perspective of individuals directly involved. Unlike quantitative approaches that focus on numerical data, this method emphasizes the collection of descriptive and interpretive data (Harahap, 2020).

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore in depth the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of the study's subjects (Sugiyono, 2018).

The research uses observation and interviews to understand branding consistency, with criteria for selecting informants related to branding consistency at the State Islamic University in Palembang City based on several key aspects as follows:

1. Lecturers
 - Active Teaching: Must be current lecturers at the State Islamic University in Palembang City, from various faculties and departments.
 - Experience: At least two years of teaching experience to provide comprehensive insights into branding practices in an academic context.
 - Branding Awareness: Lecturers with knowledge of branding concepts and its impact on the learning process and university identity.
2. Students
 - Currently Enrolled: Students currently enrolled at the State Islamic University in Palembang City, in either undergraduate or postgraduate programs.
 - Diverse Majors: Preference for students from various majors and levels to obtain a wide range of perspectives on university branding.
 - Engagement: Students actively involved in campus activities, both academic and non-academic, who can offer views on the university's image among their peers.
3. Administrative Staff :
 - Work Across Divisions: Particularly those in public relations who can provide insight into branding practices within administrative processes.
 - Branding Knowledge: Staff who understand the role of branding in supporting student services and experiences and its contribution to the university's image.

These criteria are designed to ensure that selected informants can offer comprehensive and diverse information on branding consistency at the State Islamic University in Palembang City, facilitating a more in-depth and meaningful analysis. This research focuses on the issue of branding consistency at the State Islamic University in Palembang City, using the theory of branding consistency as its analytical framework.

Branding consistency is a critical aspect of building a strong, recognizable identity with the public. Within the context of the State Islamic University in Palembang City, branding consistency encompasses various elements, such as messaging, visual imagery, and core values conveyed across multiple communication channels.

By adopting branding consistency theory, this study will explore how the State Islamic University in Palembang City can maintain alignment between its desired brand identity and

public perception. This includes analyzing whether the university is able to sustain a consistent message across various platforms, such as social media, its website, and promotional materials. Additionally, the research will identify challenges the university faces in creating and maintaining branding consistency, as well as the impact on public loyalty and perception toward the institution.

Through this approach, the study aims to provide in-depth insights into the importance of branding consistency within the context of the State Islamic University in Palembang City and offer recommendations to enhance branding strategies, making them more effective and relevant in the public's view.

RESULTS

This study explores the branding consistency of Malay Islamic identity implemented by the State Islamic University in Palembang City, using branding consistency theory, derived from Fritz Heider's consistency theory, introduced in 1946 through the concept known as Balance Theory (Malle, 2008). The researcher categorizes specific dimensions distilled from various studies on branding consistency theory.

The key dimensions chosen to illustrate the branding consistency at the State Islamic University in Palembang City include:

1. Demonstrating a consistent personality in every interaction with the public, creating a cohesive and authentic impression (Agerup dkk., 2022; Wang dkk., 2022).
2. The role of branding consistency in brand alliances, both functional and expressive (Johan Lanseng & Erling Olsen, 2012)
3. Reinforcing brand perception through brand ambidexterity, a concept that balances consistency with relevance, enabling a brand to maintain a stable core identity that is recognizable and trustworthy while adapting to market changes and consumer trends (Beverland et al., 2015).
4. Illustrating how consumers interpret brand meaning differently across cultural contexts, emphasizing the need for an integrated brand strategy that aligns with local perceptions while maintaining global consistency (Skorobogatykh et al., 2014).
5. Recognizing employees as brand ambassadors whose alignment with brand values enhances brand equity (Smith et al., 2021).

The State Islamic University in Palembang has begun to incorporate Malay Islamic branding into its institutional identity, facilitated by the university's public relations department. In practice, the university aims to blend elements of Malay culture and Islamic values into various aspects, ranging from the educational curriculum to academic and non-academic activities.

In an interview on July 12, 2024, a faculty member at the State Islamic University in Palembang noted that the university targets becoming an internationally recognized institution by 2024, adopting Malay Islamic identity as its core concept. According to the lecturer, this identity was chosen not only to reflect the local Palembang culture, largely influenced by the Malay ethnic group, but also to expand its appeal within ASEAN countries, where Malay culture has a considerable presence. By adopting this identity, the State Islamic University in Palembang aspires to establish a unique presence internationally and to strengthen its image as an institution rooted in Malay and Islamic cultural values. The lecturer added that this Malay Islamic identity is also intended to attract international students and reinforce the university's standing within the global educational community.

In a subsequent interview, a lecturer specializing in Malay Islamic Civilization from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication explained that elements of Malay Islamic identity have been integrated into every course offered at the State Islamic University in Palembang.

Additionally, various student, faculty, and university-wide activities are designed with a Malay Islamic theme, including a dedicated journal for publications related to Islam and Malay civilization.

Even in community service programs, such as student internships and practical work experiences, Malay values are consistently integrated, both in local and international internships in culturally similar countries like Malaysia. The lecturer highlighted that events like the ISSHMIC conference, with parallel sessions dedicated to Malay Islamic civilization, reinforce the university's Malay identity within academic activities. This overall implementation of the university's three pillars—education, research, and community service—showcases the presence of Malay Islamic identity as a unique characteristic of the institution.

An interview with a Political Science lecturer from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences emphasized the critical role faculty can play as brand ambassadors in strengthening the Malay Islamic branding. As the public face of the university, faculty members represent the core values of Malay Islamic culture that form the university's primary identity. Their alignment with Malay Islamic values allows them not only to teach these principles but also to embody them in daily interactions, both on and off-campus.

By promoting Malay culture across platforms, including social media, lecturers can significantly enhance the university's brand equity. They contribute by sharing insights into Malay heritage, introducing cultural studies, or disseminating research findings that reflect the Malay Islamic identity. When faculty consistently communicate Malay Islamic values, the university's image as an institution that teaches, represents, and brings Malay-Islamic culture to life is further solidified. As authentic brand ambassadors, faculty can elevate the university's value and appeal, especially by expanding a consistent and profound brand presence.

The initial objectives to achieve Malay Islamic branding consistency, however, contrast with the current reality. Based on observations and interviews regarding Malay Islamic branding at the State Islamic University in Palembang, it is clear that branding efforts have not yet reached their full potential. Although initiatives have been taken to strengthen the university's image, such as through public relations functions, branding consistency has yet to be fully realized. This is evidenced by the interview with the Head of Public Relations at the university, who emphasized that the role of public relations is not to make policy decisions or act as the main implementer but to communicate basic information to the public.

The PR team only relays surface-level information or general details without delving deeply into more sensitive policy or university activities. In this way, public relations acts as a bridge but is not responsible for the details or core of university policies and implementation. Consequently, information related to Malay Islamic identity has not been widely disseminated, and the consistency of Malay Islamic branding has not yet fully aligned with expectations. Branding efforts still require further development to align with the desired Malay Islamic identity and to strengthen its implementation in daily operations and public perception.

A shortcoming of the approach described in the interview is that public relations primarily focuses on communicating basic information without delving into deeper details. This can lead to a lack of comprehensive understanding for the public or stakeholders regarding university activities or policies. By only presenting a "surface level" of information, PR might not fully address the need for transparency or explain complex aspects.

This approach risks creating a limited and closed image, potentially suggesting that certain information is withheld. Additionally, without a thorough explanation, the public may find it difficult to understand the real impact of university policies or programs, leading to misunderstandings or a lack of public engagement in supporting the institution's vision.

An interview with the Head of Public Relations at the State Islamic University in Palembang highlighted various steps and challenges in designing and managing Malay Islamic branding across media and digital platforms. The Head of Public Relations explained that the main strategy is to maximize the use of official accounts managed by faculties, study programs, and

student organizations (UKM) to broaden the reach and strengthen the concept of Malay Islamic branding within university activities.

However, a significant challenge lies in limited human resources, especially since the university has not yet established a structured team of professional journalists, photographers, videographers, or video editors. Many creative tasks, such as photography, videography, and content management, are still handled by individuals taking on multiple roles. The Head of Public Relations expressed a desire to build a more solid journalism and creative team to produce engaging, high-quality content in response to students' preference for visual media.

This challenge suggests potential obstacles in implementing a brand ambidexterity strategy, balancing consistency and relevance. In this context, the challenge for public relations and the university community lies in ensuring that Malay Islamic messaging remains both consistent and relevant, despite limited resources and suboptimal organizational structure. Consequently, the messages delivered may lack consistency or may not fully engage the public. Branding consistency is crucial for strengthening public associations with the Malay Islamic identity as a unique university characteristic. Failure to achieve consistency risks that this identity will not be effectively recognized or remembered by the audience.

This, in turn, could threaten long-term goals to establish Malay Islamic identity as the university's defining feature, potentially weakening its appeal and distinctiveness in an increasingly competitive landscape. Therefore, public relations must find effective ways to manage brand ambidexterity by maintaining balanced message alignment and relevance, enabling branding efforts to build a robust and sustainable Malay Islamic identity.

The limited branding consistency for Malay Islamic identity is reinforced by feedback from a student, Vidya, who noted that while the Malay Islamic concept has begun to influence the campus environment at the State Islamic University in Palembang, its application has not been uniformly implemented or fully internalized across campus.

This observation aligns with the branding dimension suggesting that consumers—here, students and campus staff—interpret brand meaning differently based on cultural context. Within the Malay-Islamic cultural context, values such as respect, ethics, and morality form the core of the Malay Islamic concept, and ideally, these values should be thoroughly reflected in the campus environment. However, to achieve consistent acceptance of Malay Islamic branding throughout the campus, several improvements are needed. A more integrated branding strategy is essential to ensure that the entire academic community, from students to staff, shares a uniform understanding of Malay Islamic identity.

This includes practical steps such as internal training to foster understanding and the application of Malay Islamic values, as well as heightened awareness through every campus activity and symbol that can reinforce this identity.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings underscore the critical role of consistent Malay Islamic branding in shaping the identity and competitive edge of the State Islamic University in Palembang. Analyzing branding efforts through dimensions such as core brand identity, brand alliances, ambidexterity, cultural relevance, and faculty engagement, this research highlights both accomplishments and areas for development, which are essential for solidifying the university's unique CULTURAL identity and elevating its status within the regional education sector.

Core Brand Identity And Cultural Relevance

The university has made strides in establishing the Malay Islamic identity as its core brand, aligning with the cultural and Islamic values of the local Malay community. This alignment is seen in academic programs, student activities, and curricular integration. However, the study reveals that these values are not consistently reflected across all university interactions. While some

programs successfully incorporate the Malay Islamic concept, the lack of uniform application creates gaps in student and staff engagement.

To achieve cohesive cultural representation, it is essential for the university to adopt a structured approach that embeds this identity in both academic and non-academic facets of campus life.

Brand Ambidexterity And Public Relations Limitations

Balancing brand consistency with adaptability, or “brand ambidexterity,” has presented significant challenges. While the university’s public relations team attempts to communicate the Malay Islamic brand, their role is limited to basic information dissemination, lacking depth and detailed engagement. This restricted approach limits public understanding of the university’s distinct cultural identity.

The university’s brand message, therefore, risks appearing superficial or incomplete, underscoring the need for resources that support a more comprehensive, audience-centered communication strategy.

Faculty As Key Brand Ambassadors

The study identifies faculty as vital brand ambassadors who personify the university’s core values. Professors, especially those specializing in Malay Islamic Civilization, are seen as essential in conveying the university’s identity both inside and outside the classroom. By promoting Malay Islamic principles across public and academic platforms, faculty can significantly reinforce the brand’s equity and authenticity.

However, not all faculty members are fully aligned with this role, indicating a need for formal support and training that enables them to represent Malay Islamic values consistently and effectively.

Resource And Structural Challenges In Branding Consistency

A recurring obstacle in implementing consistent branding lies in limited human and material resources within the university’s public relations and communications departments. Without a dedicated team of media and content professionals, essential tasks such as photography, videography, and content management are handled by staff juggling multiple roles, which compromises the quality and consistency of branding materials.

The absence of a specialized media team hinders the university’s ability to produce high-quality, engaging content that resonates with diverse audiences. Establishing a well-supported, professional communications team would allow the university to enhance its public image, particularly with younger, visually-driven audiences.

Incomplete Public And Internal Perception Of Malay Islamic Identity

Although efforts to integrate Malay Islamic values into university life are visible, their impact on both internal and public perception is still inconsistent. The study reveals that students, faculty, and staff often have varied understandings of the university’s brand identity, with limited engagement in actively embodying or promoting these values.

This fragmentation suggests a pressing need for stronger internal communication strategies, such as campus-wide programs and initiatives that reinforce Malay Islamic identity across all levels of university life, ensuring that all community members are aligned with and committed to the university’s cultural values.

Implications For Brand Equity And Market Positioning

The study confirms that achieving consistent Malay Islamic branding is crucial to building long-term brand equity and establishing a distinctive position within a competitive education market. The lack of consistency risks diluting the university’s unique appeal and undermining its

potential as a leading institution grounded in Malay Islamic identity within the ASEAN region. Strengthening this brand identity requires concerted alignment across all university touchpoints—from faculty roles to student experiences, administrative processes, and public communications—ensuring the university is recognized as a culturally rooted yet globally relevant institution.

Recommendations For Enhancing Brand Consistency

To build a more effective and coherent brand identity, several strategic improvements are recommended:

1. **Unified Training and Development:** Introduce programs that foster a shared understanding of Malay Islamic identity among faculty, staff, and students, equipping them to consistently represent these values.
2. **Enhanced Public Relations and Media Capacity:** Invest in specialized content creation teams to produce engaging, consistent branding materials that resonate with the university's audience.
3. **Strengthened Internal Communication:** Implement regular, inclusive activities and messaging that emphasize Malay Islamic values across campus, embedding this identity in the daily lives of students and faculty alike.
4. **Balancing Consistency with Relevance:** Allow for a flexible approach that adapts Malay Islamic branding to changing educational and cultural needs without compromising core values.
5. **Broadened Digital Engagement:** Expand the use of social media and other digital platforms to highlight Malay Islamic-themed events, stories, and research, reinforcing the university's brand identity as culturally significant and accessible.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the State Islamic University in Palembang faces significant challenges in establishing Malay Islamic branding as an institutional identity. Although the university is committed to reinforcing this image by integrating Malay culture and Islamic values into its academic programs and campus activities, the implementation of this branding has yet to achieve full consistency. Key obstacles include limited resources, a lack of a well-structured team, and a public relations department focused only on basic communications, without providing in-depth information about university policies or activities.

This lack of consistency is further affected by a low level of internalization of the Malay Islamic concept within the campus community, including both students and staff. This fragmented understanding hinders the ability of Malay Islamic identity to be fully reflected in daily campus activities, potentially blurring the unique image the university aims to project.

To achieve its long-term goal of becoming an internationally recognized university with a distinct Malay Islamic identity, a comprehensive strategy is essential. This strategy should encompass internal training, the formation of a strong creative team, and public relations efforts that deliver engaging and meaningful messages.

With these improvements, the university can create a consistent and sustainable branding presence, ensuring that the Malay Islamic identity is genuinely recognized and valued by both domestic and international audiences.

SUGGESTION

The study on Malay Islamic branding consistency at the State Islamic University in Palembang City has a few notable limitations, particularly when examining the theoretical and practical dimensions chosen to represent the university's branding consistency. These limitations affect the depth and applicability of the findings:

1. **Reliance on Theoretical Dimensions for Practical Branding:** The research uses abstract theoretical dimensions of branding consistency, such as brand personality, brand alliances, and brand ambidexterity. While these frameworks provide valuable insights, they may not fully capture the practical, on-the-ground challenges the university faces in applying Malay Islamic branding, which requires more localized, specific actions.
2. **Generalized Brand Personality without Local Adaptation:** The concept of "demonstrating a consistent personality in every interaction" (Agerup et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022) may lack specificity for a university with such a distinct cultural brand identity. This dimension is often used in commercial branding and might not completely account for the unique sociocultural values inherent to Malay Islamic identity, which include not just consistency but also nuanced cultural expressions tied to heritage and Islamic values.
3. **Limited Relevance of Brand Alliances for University Context:** The dimension of brand alliances (Lanseng & Olsen, 2012) generally applies to corporate partnerships or product co-branding. In a university setting, partnerships might include academic collaborations or student exchange programs, but the theory doesn't directly address these educational contexts, limiting its relevance in fully explaining or guiding the branding efforts specific to the university's mission.
4. **Ambidexterity's Complexity in a Public Institution:** Brand ambidexterity (Beverland et al., 2015), or balancing consistency with adaptability, is conceptually sound but complex to implement in a public university setting, where resources and institutional policies may restrict flexibility. The theory doesn't address the specific challenges of maintaining relevance in a culturally driven brand like Malay Islamic identity while adhering to fixed academic and governmental standards.
5. **Cultural Interpretation and Brand Ambassadorship in Practice:** Recognizing employees as brand ambassadors (Smith et al., 2021) and understanding how cultural contexts influence brand perception (Skorobogatykh et al., 2014) are theoretically valuable, yet difficult to measure. This study might struggle to evaluate how deeply staff and faculty embody Malay Islamic values in their roles, as it requires detailed internal assessments that are often challenging to conduct comprehensively.

In summary, while the theoretical dimensions offer a structured framework, they do not fully encompass the practical realities and cultural complexities of implementing Malay Islamic branding in a university setting. Future research might need to adapt these theories more closely to educational institutions unique branding needs, perhaps by developing more culturally specific metrics and practical strategies for measuring and enhancing brand consistency within this context.

REFERENCES

- Agerup, U., Andersson, S., & Awuah, G. B. (2022). Building a warm and competent B2B brand personality. *European Journal of Marketing*, 56(13), 167–193. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-06-2019-0528>
- Abdul Rahman, R., Balqis, S., & Dean, F. (2013). Assessing the Risk Management Practices of Islamic Banks: Empirical Evidence from Malaysia and Pakistan. *Journal of Islamic Economics Banking and Finance*, 9(4), 11–29. <https://doi.org/10.12816/0031373>
- Abdurrahmansyah. (2021). Design and Curriculum Implementation Based on Malay Culture in Islamic University. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210715.102>
- Abelman, R., & Dalessandro, A. (2008a). An Assessment of the Institutional Vision of Catholic Colleges and Universities. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.1202082013>

- Abelman, R., & Dalessandro, A. (2008b). The Institutional Vision of Community Colleges. *Community College Review*, 35(4), 306–335. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552108315604>
- Afandi, S. Agung, Afandi, M., & Erdayani, R. (2023). A Literature Analysis on Riau Malay Identity Politics. *Jurnal Administrasi Publik Dan Bisnis*, 5(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.36917/japabis.v5i1.77>
- Afriantoni, A., & Zaini, H. Z. (2021). Evaluation of the Implementation of the “Islam Melayu Nusantara” Policy As a Distinguishing of Uin Raden Fatah. . *Journal of Malay Islamic Studies*, 04(01), 1–16.
- Bedoya-Dorado, C., Murillo-Vargas, G., & Gonzalez-Campo, C. H. (2022). Sustainability in the mission and vision statements of Colombian Universities. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 23(1), 67–86. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-08-2020-0284>
- Beverland, M. B., Wilner, S. J. S., & Micheli, P. (2015). Reconciling the tension between consistency and relevance: design thinking as a mechanism for brand ambidexterity. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(5), 589–609. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0443-8>
- Chakraborty, U., & Bhat, S. (2018). Credibility of online reviews and its impact on brand image. *Management Research Review*, 41(1), 148–164. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-06-2017-0173>
- Charters, S. (2009). Does a brand have to be consistent? *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 18(4), 284–291. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420910972800>
- Chen, A. C.-H., Chang, R. Y.-H., Besharat, A., & Baack, D. W. (2013). Who Benefits from Multiple Brand Celebrity Endorsements? An Experimental Investigation. *Psychology & Marketing*, 30(10), 850–860. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20650>
- Cox, K., & De-Bortoli, R. (2020). Academic Process Oriented to the Reputational Capital of Brazilian HEI Brands. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research*, 8(12), 238–261. <https://doi.org/10.31686/ijer.vol8.iss12.2836>
- de Chernatony, L., & Cottam, S. (2006). Internal brand factors driving successful financial services brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(5/6), 611–633. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560610657868>
- Evans, R. A. (2015). The Culture of Business Education and its Place in the Modern University. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 45(4), 229–243. <https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.v45i4.184727>
- Foley, J. (2013). Developing Academic Writing in A Business Oriented University. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(2), 168. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v2i2.163>
- Harahap, N. (2020). Penelitian Kualitatif (H. Sazali, Ed.). Wal Ashri. <http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/9105/1/BUKU%20METODOLOGI%20PENELITIAN%20KUALITATIF%20DR.%20NURSAPIA%20HARAHAP,%20M.HUM.pdf>
- Hasanah, S. M., Faizah, M., & Bisriyah, M. (2021). Brand Strategy in Higher Education; Before and During Pandemic COVID-19. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210421.008>
- İzlem Gözükar. (2015). Mission and Vision Statements of Foundation Universities in the Context of University Roles: A Content Analysis. *China-USA Business Review*, 14(9). <https://doi.org/10.17265/1537-1514/2015.09.005>
- Johan Lanseng, E., & Erling Olsen, L. (2012). Brand alliances: the role of brand concept consistency. *European Journal of Marketing*, 46(9), 1108–1126. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561211247874>
- Kenyon, J. A., Manoli, A. E., & Bodet, G. (2018). Brand consistency and coherency at the London 2012 Olympic Games. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 26(1), 6–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2017.1293139>
- Malle, B. F. (2008). Fritz Heider's Legacy. *Social Psychology*, 39(3), 163–173. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335.39.3.163>

- Panda, S., Pandey, S. C., Bennett, A., & Tian, X. (2019). University brand image as competitive advantage: a two-country study. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(2), 234–251. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-12-2017-0374>
- Pinar, M., Trapp, P., Girard, T., & E. Boyt, T. (2014). University brand equity: an empirical investigation of its dimensions. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 28(6), 616–634. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-04-2013-0051>
- Rehayati, R., Hasbi, M. R., & Martius, M. (2023). An Exploration of Local Wisdom: Rites of Passage in Malay Culture in Riau and Palembang. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 6(9), 106–117. <https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v6i9.1476>
- Rosado-Pinto, F., & Loureiro, S. M. C. (2024). Authenticity: shedding light on the branding context. *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 19(3), 544–570. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EMJB-08-2021-0115>
- Salman Hamed, S. J. H. A. R. (2022). UNIVERSITY BRANDING AND STUDENT SATISFACTION: THE EMERGING LANDSCAPE OF UNIVERSITIES IN PAKISTAN. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjer.v5i2.547>
- Skorobogatykh, I. I., Saginova, O., & Musatova, Z. (2014). Comparison of Luxury Brand Perception: Old (UK) vs. Modern (Russia) consumers' perception toward Burberry Brand. *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research (JEECAR)*, 1(1), 7. <https://doi.org/10.15549/jeecar.v1i1.47>
- Smith, D., Jacobson, J., & Rudkowski, J. L. (2021). Employees as influencers: measuring employee brand equity in a social media age. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 30(6), 834–853. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-03-2020-2821>
- Solihin, S. M. (2017). Integration Of Malay Culture Identity With Islamic Religion. *Journal of Malay Islamic Studies*, 1(2), 121–128. <https://doi.org/10.19109/jmis.v1i2.3841>
- Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Tarannum Jahan, Arfath Jahan, Madnoor Pallavi, M Alekhya, & Maltumkar Sri Lakshmi. (2024). A Study on Importance of Branding and Its Effects on Products in Business. *International Research Journal on Advanced Engineering and Management (IRJAEM)*, 2(04), 656–661. <https://doi.org/10.47392/IRJAEM.2024.0091>
- Trepte, S. (2013). Consistency Theories. In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecc125.pub2>
- Wang, A., Lyu, D., Liu, Y., Liu, J., Gao, L., & Jin, J. (2022). Country-Brand Fit: The Effect of COO Stereotypes and Brand Positioning Consistency on Consumer Behavior: Evidence From EEG Theta-Band Oscillation. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2022.901123>
- Wu, J. (2011). An Investigation and Analysis of Attribution Preference and Gender Difference of Non-English Majors' English Learning—Based on Investigation of Non-English Majors in Tianjin Polytechnic University. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.2.2.332-337>
- Xia, X. (2024). Brand Reputation Management in a Chinese Higher Educational Institution. *Pacific International Journal*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.55014/pij.v6i4.487>
- Yu, M., Abidin, S. B. Z., & Shaari, N. (2024). Effects of Brand Visual Identity on Consumer Attitude: A Systematic Literature Review. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202405.1109.v1>
- Zami, R. (2018). Orang Melayu Pasti Islam : Analisis Perkembangan Peradaban Melayu. *ISLAMIKA*, 2(1), 66–81.