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### The Functions of Advertising in Promoting Islamic Hospitality

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**Abstract:** Islamic hospitality is a service-oriented industry that provides services to customers as well as to satisfy their needs. Generally, the role of advertising in the Islamic hospitality runs on the basis of profit maximisation. As a new concept, it is crucial for the management to introduce Islamic hospitality as the concept has yet to develop. Thus, this paper aims to identify the functions of advertising in promoting Islamic hospitality in Malaysia. The concerns in the Islamic hospitality today are more complicated as the information technology has taken its place in the society and globalisation has taken its place to alter the landscape and the pace of service sector. Discussion on this subject still at an early phase, so this paper aims to discover more through the document search on past and current literature. Islamic hospitality services not only need to incorporate advertising into the profit maximisation but also to ensure the public comprehend the message conveyed. This study contributes to the existing literature and provides an extra knowledge shift so that industrial players and marketers understand the role of effective advertising such as reinforce identity and enhance the image, attract investment, influence opinions and increase sales. In the empirical context, this paper helps to further develop the potential business development of Islamic hospitality services especially in utilizing the functions of advertising.

**Keywords:** Advertising, Islamic hospitality and Muslim-friendly hotel.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic hospitality services such as airlines, hotels and food services are the new fast-developing tourism products in the halal tourism industry. The growing number of Muslim travellers led to the high demand of Islamic hospitality services. Halal tourism is the type of tourism that adheres to the values of Islam hence empower the economy in Malaysia. Since Malaysia is known as halal hub country and the launch of Islamic Tourism Council (ITC), the aspiration to make it growing seems to be impeccable (Ahmad Sahir,

2016). Tourism Malaysia (2014), reported that, in 2014, Malaysia received 27,437,315 international tourists which contribute to RM72 billion; a huge amount of revenue compared to RM56.5 billion in 2010.

In order to make Islamic hospitality growing and secure in the market, advertising is one of the effective ways to help the industry to achieve this target as they serve as a tool to promote goods and services of any organisation. In one hand, it can be said that advertising functions are essential in maximising the profits and its roles in Islamic hospitality has to take into consideration to help the industry survive in the market. Today, there have been many consumer complaints related to hospitality services including misleading advertisement, fraud holiday package, unfair contract terms, non-disclosure of information, low-quality and inefficient services, etc. (Elsherif, 2009). A study conducted by Keenan and Shoreh (2000) in Saudi Arabia has shown that over 70% of their respondents viewed advertising as a threat to Islamic culture. On the contrary, Rice and Al-Mossawi (2002) mentioned that the Quran does not prohibit advertising if it is used to promote products, services and faith. An effective advertising is essential to solve these issues from consumer perspectives to ensure that Islamic hospitality services are Muslim consumer-friendly and free from such problems.

Old ways would not open new doors and same thinking creates the same old results. Therefore, in order to maximise the profits, industries have to be creative and make an extra effort to promote their business. According to Elsherif (2009), marketing Islamic hospitality services is not any different than other marketing services in principal, while the uniqueness of the services offered will require extra caution in the marketing message going out to the market to ensure that the Islamic hospitality is targeting its desired niche market. Based on the importance of advertising roles in an organisation, especially in the growing sector which is Islamic hospitality, this paper aims to identify the functions of advertising in promoting Islamic hospitality. The following sections will explain further on types of Islamic hospitality services, functions of advertising, ways to promote Islamic hospitality services and maximising profit.

## **2. TYPES OF ISLAMIC HOSPITALITY SERVICES**

When it comes to Islam, each trait needs to follow Islamic principles. This can be seen from the halal food, halal tourism, and Muslim friendly hotels that comply with Islamic principle. In general, hospitality is a part of character and manners involving the relationship between humans that are emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Hospitality is a warm welcome and friendly treat towards the visitors. In order to attract more people from all over the world especially Muslim visitors to Malaysia, the Islamic hospitality has been introduced and practiced. The practice of hospitality has shifted from the concept of friendly and generous reception of guests to an industry that is commercial in nature and adheres to an international code of ethics in this modernized era (Mansor, 2005). Today, the hospitality industry is managed much more efficiently by observing at least three general objectives as stated by Harjin (2012). It includes ensuring that guests always feel welcomed by the organisation through commendable service by the staffs, ensuring that all meals are prepared on time in accordance with the menu that has been decided upon, ensuring the cleanliness and comfort of the guest rooms, and maximising profit by ensuring management runs smoothly and systematically, in line with the Islamic law. The hospitality industry has flourished in numerous fields, including the food and beverage industry, lodging industry, and tourism industry. The main profit-oriented businesses in the hospitality industry include hotels, motels, homestays, rest houses, restaurants, snack bars, night clubs, and canteens.

Despite the fact that the definition of hospitality is more inclined towards the way one should treat guests based on certain ethics or manners, this study focused on Islamic hospitality services with special reference to the roles of advertising. According to Habib (2015), there are a few business premises that integrate elements of Islamic hospitality in Malaysia, including Muslim-friendly hotel management which advances change on the physical design of buildings, interior design and equipment, among others, in line with the *shariah* compliance. This, in turn, changes the society's perception towards the hospitality industry. For instance, the Adya Hotel in Langkawi Island integrated Arabic architecture in its building design and used wall patterns that are commonly found in mosques. Besides, there are also a few date trees in front of the hotel's main entrance to create an Arabian mood. Hence, it is not surprising that Adya Hotel Langkawi receives the most number of guests from Saudi Arabia due to the emphasis on the Islamic concepts. Meanwhile on every Friday, the hotel provides shuttle services for Muslim guests to attend the mosque nearby. This is particularly convenient for those who do not have their own transportation. In addition, at the swimming pool section, the hotel also provides a separate swimming pool for Muslim women. Likewise, the food is halal and no alcoholic beverages are sold there. Other hospitality services include providing mosque and rooms to be used as a prayer room for Muslims (musolla), complete with an ablution space at strategic location which are easy to access.

During fasting month, the Muslim-friendly hotel will provide *sahur* package and a breaking fast package. Each hotel room also provided al-Quran, *kiblat* (the direction to face when performing prayers), and prayer mat for the convenience of Muslim guests (Mohd Zarin, 2015). On the other hand, other hospitality services provided by most of the lodging houses in Malaysia including the position of washroom that is not in the direction of the *kiblat*, bathing necessities such as sarongs, toiletries such as toothbrush and halal toothpaste, facilities to perform ablution such as a bidet, and room decorations which are free from pictures of animals, dolls, or indecent paintings. Supplementary facilities that should be considered in line with the Islamic law include Islamic information channels and beneficial channels on television. Clubs, entertainment centres, massage centres, swimming pool and others to be segregated according to gender. In addition to that, swimming pool users should be reminded to follow the dress code in accordance with the Islamic law.

As for the restaurants management in Malaysia, the majority of entrepreneurs had been providing Islamic hospitality, such as an adequate restaurant or eating space in seminar room corridors or a hall that has enough chairs for the customers to avoid customers having to stand while eating or drinking (Mustaffa, 2016). This certainly contrasts with some hotels which employ a cocktail concept, that is, eating freely while standing, which is against the concept of politeness in the Malay community, particularly Muslims. Furthermore, business premises which focus on factory buildings also emphasize Islamic hospitality by ensuring that the food ingredients are halal and not contaminated. The same goes for the factory equipment that is used for preparation, processing, manufacturing, and other food processes. Similarly, it is important during the food handling processes, whether transporting, storage, or serving, by means the food is not contaminated by non-halal things.

For business premises in the form of suppliers of consumer goods such as supermarkets, Islamic-oriented hospitality is also strengthened. For instance, Eonsave, Giant, and Tesco provide a separate section for halal and non-halal food. In fact, some supermarkets provide separate payment counters whereby the non-halal food is handled by a non-Muslim cashier. Clearly, the concept of Islamic hospitality in Malaysia

is emphasized in various sectors in line with the image of Malaysia which upholds Islam as the official religion and respects the pluralistic values of multicultural Malaysians.

### **3. THE FUNCTIONS OF ADVERTISING**

Advertising in Malaysia is focusing on a process of disseminating information to public, to display, to sponsor and to encourage the purchase or receipt of product, ideas or services on the sponsorship of an organisation (Mansor et al., 1984). Essentially, there are two general types of advertising; product advertising and corporate advertising. Product advertising can be defined as a marketing tool to promote goods and services of any organisation. Meanwhile, corporate advertising is promoting the firm by enhancing its image, assuming a position on a social issue, or seeking involvement from the market. Argenti (2016) defined corporate advertising as the paid use of media that seeks to benefit the image of the corporation as a whole rather than its products and services alone. In this competitive business era, channels such as mass media, brochure, and sponsorship are useful to attract the public attention (Chin Pey, 2005). Advertising is being practiced for the purpose of influencing targeted social behavior and being used commercially to sell goods to the consumers. According to Rahim (1997), this happens because these days, people are extremely being influenced by the advertisements especially in terms of their desires and buying motivations.

Inevitably, the usage of advertising is an essence strategy to an organisation, especially in the business world. Generally, advertising is used to promote products and services to increase the awareness as well as the consumers' knowledge regarding the product. Mass media such as newspapers, radio, television and internet are the examples of advertising channels, they have alleviated the way of advertising as the consumers regularly access and utilize all of those mentioned channels to gain information. According to Argenti (2016), advertising comprises the most important communication function for the organisation such as to reinforce identity and enhance the image, to attract investment, to influence opinions and to increase sales.

Most organisations use advertising to strengthen their identities especially when there is any merge or entering the new business. They have to explain their vision, organisation, and strategies to stakeholders who may know them well since the establishment but struggling to understand the whole new structure. As we know, Islamic hospitality is a new growing sector that cater Muslim's needs. Consumers deserve detail explanation concerning the implementation of new concepts such as the standard of procedures, daily operations, shariah compliance issues and the like. The next function of advertising is to attract investors as this kind of advertising can stimulate interest in company's stock among potential investors. Many advertisers believe that a strong, financially oriented corporate advertising campaign can actually boost the profits of the organisation. In the occasion of Islamic hospitality services, this function can have direct effect on sales in the long run. Furthermore, advertising also plays a huge part in influencing opinion as an effective advertisement will nurture and enhance the interest of the audiences towards the existing products. The customers will remember the products more including the visual, colours and illustrations. Thus, advertising will lead the organisation to be highly estimated, outstanding, and superior compared to the competitors' offers.

Another function of advertising is to increase sales. Through advertising, organisations can draw out features about themselves that they think appeal to the public. As a result, consumers want to buy their products and use their services. Islamic hospitality service providers can take this opportunity to advertise their services to the public by illustrating the attractive photographs and flowery words to catch the consumer's

eye. Moreover, advertising is also being said as a marketing communication. Effective communication strategy needs to understand and expound the needs, desires, custom, weakness, and hope as well as users' demand. Hence, advertising needs to be referred to the frame of customer's situation which is social system and the cultural practices of the consumer (Abdul Rahim, 2004). As we can see, Islam as a way of life requires the implementation of shariah-compliant services. In the vibrant situation that we can picture is by looking at the Islamic hospitality.

Undeniably, an effective advertising will impel the consumer in making the right decision according to their essentials and desires since advertisement is not only giving out information to the consumers but at the same time, advertising can persuade and has excessive influence over the consumer's buying decision.

#### **4. PROMOTING ISLAMIC HOSPITALITY**

In order to create and deliver effective messages, marketers should consider several factors. These factors include, but not limited to, restrictions on the type of media used, the ability to promote certain products, advertising images, social groups, and government restrictions (Waller and Fam, 2000). Simultaneously, the influence of religious beliefs on individual and social behaviour is unavoidable (Greeley, 1977; Hirschman, 1983; Luqmani *et al.*, 1987; Michell and Al-Mossawi, 1999; Waller and Fam, 2000; Brich *et al.*, 2001 in Waller *et al.*, 2004). As a result, elements of the advertisement might be seen as inconsistent with the religious beliefs of certain groups of people (Haque, Ahmed, & Jahan, 2010).

Undoubtedly, when implementing Islamic hospitality services and products, religious identity appears to play an important role in shaping consumption experiences, including hospitality and tourism choices among Muslim customers. Tourism and hospitality institutions can improve the chance of their selection by identifying and marketing their ability to meet the Muslim tourist needs. As an example, for Islamic advertisements to be *shariah* compliant, they must reflect true and fair communication to the public and all facts about the service and product are disclosed. Advertisers must not resort to any form of deception to promote their services products. To implement this, practitioners of Islamic advertisements need to convert the Islamic ethical guides and codes into precise screening steps that ensure advertising campaigns adhere the shariah principles (Haque *et al.*, 2010). Muslims in tourism activities requires acceptable goods, services, and environments. This has substantial implications for marketing strategies. For example, tourism and hospitality companies should develop a hospitality and tourism market that represents *shariah* compliance tourism products. Such initiatives illustrate the potential tourism companies have in establishing and developing forms of hospitality and tourism grounded in principles and behavioural codes that represent national society and culture (Riyad Eid and Hatem El-Gohary, 2014).

Advertisers have to ensure their advertising campaign does not violate any social or legal norms although many advertising campaigns in Muslim countries or outside reflects the free values of western society, which affects the social norms of other societies. As stated by Haque *et al.* (2010), Unilever's ad for Pond's skin lightening moisturizer in Malaysia showed a Malay college student using the product for a fairer complexion to attract boys' attention. The ad is deemed offensive to the Muslim ethnic culture. At the same time, the young generations of Malay Muslims are more likely to be impressed by this kind of advertising, which holds the risk that they may be diverted from their religious prohibitions, sentiments, established norms, and values. The Quran does not prohibit advertising and, indeed, advertising is used to promote the Islamic faith (Al-Makaty *et al.*, 1996). However, advertising containing excessive exaggeration

is regarded as a form of lying, whether it is an exaggeration of description by metaphor or by an embellishment (Haque *et al.*, 2010).

Din (1989) in Stephenson (2014) revealed, promotional strategies must be based on honest information, which is institutionally challenging for the hospitality industry as it is often vulnerable to false advertising. A UK study, for instance, inferred that it is not scarce for hotel brochures to produce false claims concerning hotel facilities (Caterer and Hotelkeeper, 2005). The US-based inquiry noted that hotel photographs and marketing descriptions of various classifications of hotels were misleading because they were not consistently realistic and were prone to exaggeration (Stoller, 2011). Kavoossi and Frank's (1990) comparative observations indicated that advertising campaigns in the West (notably the US) often overstate matters in contrast to the marketing activities of Persian Gulf states, which traditionally focus on the authenticity of the product. However, in occurrences where deception does occur in Islamic states, such cases are often taken seriously. In Qatar, for instance, it was reported that eight seafood restaurants were closed down by the authorities because they misled customers with the wrong information, such as the type of fish consumed (Stephenson, 2014).

According to Haque *et al.*, (2010), the religious terminology is proven to be successful and always being used in advertisements to reassure consumers of the Islamic integrity on products and services. For example, in a television advertisement, a Saudi Investment bank in Egypt had used religious terms to show that it had no unlawful transactions and that all of its financial products were shariah compliance. The use of selected Quranic injunctions and words can enhance the mood of the advertising communication to make it more appealing to Muslim consumers. Examples are the words "Bismillah" (in the name of Allah) or "Allahu akbar" (Allah is almighty) or "Assalamu Alaikum" (peace be upon you). Luqmani *et al.* (1989) provide an example of a manufactured water pump that uses a verse from the Quran in advertising: A Spring 2000 advertising campaign targeted at the Gulf market for the Ford excursion sports utility vehicles uses the words "Mashallah". These words are commonly used by Muslims when they see something beautiful such as a small child, someone's achievement such as obtaining a degree or a new job, or someone's acquisition of new goods or property (Rice and Al-Mossawi, (2002) in Haque *et al.*, (2010). Although it is obviously welcome to keep in mind that the Islamic regulations related to business and marketing, appropriate implementation of precise Islamic terms is crucial. Contrary to this, a business may face unexpected troubles in gaining markets in Muslim populous areas if somehow its advertisements create feelings that are inconsistent with religious sensitivities (Haque *et al.*, 2010).

The management of Islamic hospitality has to be creative if their intention is to maximise the profits. Ayowaralaba (2015) explained the initial step that they can do is to add production. However, the increase in sales should be in line with the marketing strategy which means the sales and marketing department have to work together to achieve the target. The possible way to advertise Islamic hospitality services is by using social networking sites as David (2015) reported that there are 10.4 million Facebook users in Malaysia. According to Ab Rashid, A. Rahman, and Abdul Rahman (2016), Facebook and Twitter, which have opened up new opportunities for all purposes including advertising, which contributes Facebook's main revenue stream since its origin (Sasitharan *et al.*, 2015). Added up to this, Miranda (2010) enlightened that, these social media users create a "media" network that could garner more reach and engagement, which offer brighter perspectives in the advertising industry. In order to promote Islamic hospitality, marketers need to fully understand that religion as stressed by Fam *et al.*, (2004) plays an important role to the

consumer where it influences how consumer utilizes certain products and services. Furthermore, improving service quality is also a way of increasing profits because customers tend to be loyal to those services. Marketers should ensure the quality of the services offered equivalent with the content of advertising shown to the publics to gain public's trust.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper offers advertising as an important tool to reach various public of the Islamic hospitality. The power of advertising cannot be denied especially in introducing new concepts such as Islamic hospitality. An advertisement is a tool that can be used to educate, to preach and to build a community with good characters based on Islamic perspective and can cultivate the interest among the public toward Islam. More in-depth theoretical and empirical study are needed on advertising in Islamic hospitality in order to make the finding more reliable. By looking at the development of Islamic hospitality globally, this sector is gaining its popularity and turns into one of the lucrative industry in supporting the economic development growth in Malaysia.

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