SPORTSWEAR BRAND EQUITY AND MUSLIM CONSUMERS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Today's sportswear industry is booming in Malaysia. Sportswear items became a common and popular category of consumer goods as it gives young people a more relaxed lifestyle and greater comfort. Consumers wear athletic apparel not only in sports activities alone, but also at home, in school, at work, or at leisure time. Therefore, this study discusses why sportswear brand equity is important for the Malaysian Muslim consumers. This study is also concerned with comparing a range of different brands since a consumer based brand equity measures with the intention to buy and trying to determine how a brand performed in sportswear industry. An important, dimension of this research is highlighted on the existing Muslim consumer behavior and measures the Muslim youth brand loyalty vis-à-vis traditionally used measures in the sportswear market in Malaysia. The purpose of this research is to investigate how the Muslim consumers are influenced by factors of brand equity (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, and *halal* branding) towards sportswear brands in the country. This study also focuses on the study of brand equity in the context of Malaysian environment, followed by the results to obtain accurate use of information based on the research findings and analysis for marketing decisions by the sportswear products.

Keywords: Consumers, Muslim Markets, Brand Equity, Sportswear, Malaysia

Introduction

Malaysia is a multiracial country where more than 28 million people are living side-by-side including Malays, Chinese, Indians and other ethnic communities such as Iban, Baju, Dayaks, and etc. According to the population records of Malaysia, approximately 60 percent

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Malaysians are Muslims, 19 percent Buddhists, 9.1 percent Christians, 6.3 percent Hindus, 2.6 percent Confucians, and remaining 3 percent Malaysians have other religious affiliations, including Sikhism and various forms of animism (Yaacob, 2011). In Malaysia, sportswear brands such as Nike, Adidas, Power, Puma, Umbro and Fila are popular among sportswear consumers. Sportswear has become a common and popular category among young people as it identifies them with a more relaxed lifestyle, greater versatility and comfort. This has prompted manufacturers like Nike and Adidas to start expanding their business in Asia including Malaysia as it has the potential to give them higher volume of sales for their products (Yee and Sidek, 2008). Yee and Sidek (2008) also mentioned that "the sportswear industry is one area which offers vast potential in the consumer market where there is significant increase in sporting activities.

In spite of the growing importance of the Malaysian market in sportswear products, the topic of how a sportswear firm builds brand equity there appears to be under-researched. By retesting the most popularly adopted brand equity dimensions, this study aims to empirically test and operationalize the consumer-based brand equity components and how they interact within the context of sportswear brands in a Malaysian Muslim sample. The end results of this research also lead to a deeper understanding of a sportswear brand equity concept as well as some implications for marketing practitioners working in the sportswear industry. Moreover, this paper discussed about the importance of brand equity of sportswear market in Malaysian. Why brand equity is important for the sportswear market in Malaysia? This is because the brand equity is associated with tangible goods has received a great deal of attention in the literature. This study was concerned with comparing a range of different consumer based brand equity measures with the intention of trying to determine how they performed in sportswear Muslim consumers market.

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of this study are as following:

- To measure the relationship between perceived quality and brand equity regarding the sportswear Muslim consumers market in Malaysia.
- To identify the positive relationship between brand awareness and brand equity about the sportswear Muslim consumers market in Malaysia.
- To examine the significant relationship between brand association and brand equity about the sportswear Muslim consumers market in Malaysia.
- To determine how brand loyalty positively influence to brand equity the sportswear Muslim consumers market in Malaysia.
- To find out the relationship between *halal* branding and brand equity regarding the sportswear Muslim consumers market in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Concept of Brand Equity

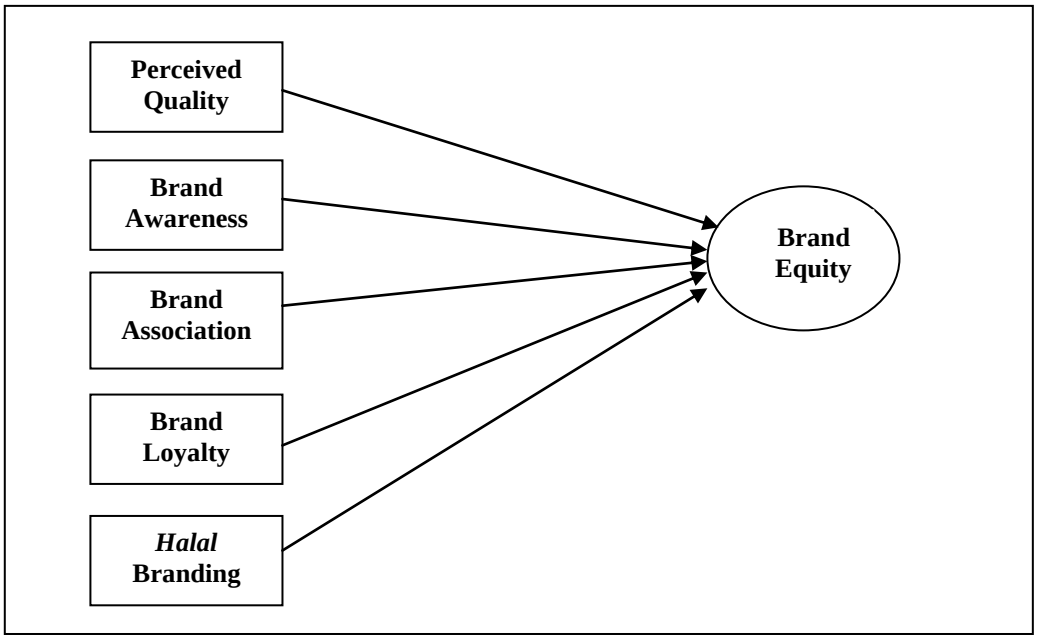
The concept of brand equity means the added value of the product. Researchers tend to define brand equity differently from marketers, with the concept being defined both in terms of the relationship between customer and brand or as something that accrues to the brand owner (Wood, 2000). The brand equity represents a condition in which the consumer is familiar with the brand and recalls some favorable, strong and unique brand associations (Keller, 1993). According to Sloot *et al.* (2005), consumers generally prefer high-equity brands and they are willing to exercise more effort to obtain their favorite high-equity brand. Moreover, high-equity brands tend to have a greater distribution level than low equity brands, which often consist of private labels, regional brands, and price brands.

Keller (2002) stated that there are two different of brand equity, one is high brand equity and another is low brand equity. High brand equity refers more consumers favorably react to a product and low brand equity refers less consumers favorably react to a product. According to Anselmsson *et al*. (2007), the concept of brand equity provides additional aspects which helps to explain how price premium is driven for the consumer products. They also mentioned that quality, awareness, associations, and loyalty need to be considered when the business will influence to the consumers' willingness to pay more for the certain brands.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses of Brand Equity

In this section authors discussed the relationships between brand equity and five dimensions of brand equity (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty and *halal* branding) in term of consumer-based brand equity (shown in figure 2.1). These relationships of brand equity conceptualized in accordance with Aaker (1991) and Keller (2003) which are discussed below.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework of brand equity



Source: Aaker, 1991; Tong and Halwey, 2009

Perceived Quality

Zeithaml (1988) defined the perceived quality as the consumer's judgment regarding a product/service overall excellence or superiority which different from the objective of quality. This objective of quality refers to the measurable, technical and verifiable nature of products/services processes that controls the quality of product/service. However, high objective quality product/service does not necessarily contribute to the brand equity (Anselmsson et al. 2007). Perceived quality only explains a considerable portion of the variance in the price premium which influence to the consumers willingness to pay for a brand (Sethuraman and Cole, 1997). They also mentioned that perceived quality of a product/service is central of the theory which added value to consumers' purchase evaluations.

According to Aaker (1996), perceived quality provides a surrogate variable for other more specific elements of brand equity. Perceived quality also has the important attribute of being applicable across product classes which can be measured with scales such as the following:

- In comparison to alternative brand, this brand has high quality vs. average quality vs. inferior quality
- In comparison to alternative brand, this brand is the best vs. one of the best vs. one of the worst vs. the worst
- In comparison to alternative brand, this brand has consistent quality vs. inconsistent quality

Moreover, perceived quality lends value to a brand in several ways: high quality gives consumers a good reason to buy the brand and allows the brand to differentiate itself from its

competitors, to charge a premium price, and to have a strong basis for the brand extension (Aaker, 1991). Thus, the following hypothesis is posited:

H1: Perceived quality has a significant impact on brand equity.

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is an important element of brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). It refers to the strength of a brand's presence in consumers' minds. Rossiter and Percy (1987) defined brand awareness as the consumers' ability to identify or recognize the brand, whereas Keller conceptualized brand awareness as consisting of both brand recognition and brand recall. According to Burmann *et al.* (2009), brand awareness falls into the class of knowledge-oriented measures and as such forms the measurement basis of external brand strength. This concept reflects the ability of the buyer to identify and correctly classify a brand to a product category. Also, from an internal perspective, brand awareness is highly relevant for establishing brand strength. A high level of brand awareness may have a positive impact on consumers' commitment to a brand, as a well-known brand is likely to be perceived more positively than an unknown brand. They also mentioned that brand awareness might leverage the influence of internal brand strength on external brand strength. Nevertheless, brand awareness itself is not sufficient to create internal or external brand strength. Rather brand awareness represents a necessary condition for brand strength since the positive or negative quality of brand strength is determined by the other dimensions. Based on the above definition and the suggested relationship of brand awareness and brand equity in the literature, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Brand awareness has a positive influence on brand equity.

Brand Association

According to Kotler and Keller (2006) brand associations refers all brand-related thoughts of the consumers such as feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes. It is the core asset for the building strong brand equity compared to three other assets of Aaker's – brand awareness, brand loyalty, and perceived quality to (Chen, 2001). Chen argued that brand awareness is a necessary asset but not sufficient for building strong brand equity and other brand equity dimensions enhance brand loyalty. The perceived quality, the association, and the well-known name can provide reasons to buy and affect user satisfaction, which results to brand loyalty. Nevertheless, brand loyalty is sometimes excluded from the conceptualization of brand equity because of consumers may be in the habit of buying a particular brand without really thinking much about why. He also mentioned that the perceived quality is one kind of brand association. Therefore, brand associations are believed to contain "the meaning of the brand for consumers" (Keller, 1993).

According to Chen (2001), brand associations can be categorized into two types, one is product associations and another is organizational associations. Product associations consist of functional attribute associations and non-functional attribute associations. Functional attribute associations refers tangible features of a product such as product design, packaging and non-functional attribute associations refers intangible features of product which meet consumers needs for social approval, personal expression or self-esteem (Keller, 1993; Chieng and Lee, 2011). On the other hand, organizational associations include corporate ability associations which are related to the company's expertise for producing and delivering its outputs to the consumers (Chen, 2001).

Brand associations also create value for the firm and its customers by helping to process/retrieve information, differentiate the brand, create positive attitudes or feelings provide a reason to buy, and provide a basis for extensions (Aaker, 1991). As a result, consumer-based brand equity occurs when consumers have a high level of awareness and hold some strong, favorable, and unique brand associations in their memories (Tong and Hawley, 2009). Based on this, then, the following hypothesis is posited:

H3. Brand association has positive impact on brand equity

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is the key dimension of brand equity (Chieng and Lee, 2011). Oliver (1997) defined brand loyalty as: "a deeply held commitment to repurchase a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having potential to cause switching behavior". Oliver's definition emphasizes the behavioral dimension of brand loyalty, whereas Rossiter and Percy (1987) argued that brand loyalty is often characterized by a favorable attitude towards a brand and repeated purchases of the same brand over time. Brand loyalty is also conceptualized based on an attitudinal perspective.

In addition, Jacoby (1971) defines brand loyalty as repeat purchase but clearly points out that this behavior is a function of psychological processes. Based on a purely stochastic approach, brand loyalty is considered tantamount to repeat purchasing and grounded on no manifest factors determining the behavior. Jensen and Hansen (2006) stated that loyal customers are likely to be resistant to the machinations of competitors. They are likely to tell family, friends and colleagues of the wonders the products perform. When they need what is on offer they are very likely to come back and buy it again. According to Aaker (1991), brand loyalty adds considerable value to a brand and/or its firm because it provides a set of habitual buyers for a

long period of time. In addition, brand loyalty develops when the brand fits the personality or self-image of the consumer or when the brand offers gratifying and unique benefits that the consumer seeks (Qyester and Lim, 2003). Therefore, the following hypothesis of the relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity is proposed:

H4. Brand loyalty has a significant relationship with brand equity.

Halal Branding

Halal is an Arabic word which means permissible or allow to do it and opposite of this word is *haram* which means not allowed or prohibited to do it. The nature of *halal* exists within both product and brand theory, but a question is whether *halal* can be successfully as a commercial product or a brand, or a combination of both? If any company or organization is treated *halal* as a brand, then unlikely *halal* name could be adopted outright, which it positions as an ingredient brand or compound word, almost assuming the role of a co-brand such as *halal* other world (Wilson and Liu, 2010). Apart from these issues, Hanzaee and Ramezani (2011) defined the *halal* branding as:

> "*Hala*l products are those that are *Shariah* compliant, i.e. do not involve the use of *haram* (prohibited) ingredients, exploitation of labor or environment, and are not harmful or intended for harmful use. The realm of halal may extend to all consumables such as toiletries, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and services including finance. *Halal* is a typical credence process attribute, i.e. a quality characteristic that can hardly be evaluated or ascertained by the individual consumer, even upon or after consuming the food" (p. 1).

Nowadays *halal* branding is becoming an important issue in the fast growing market especially in the Muslim countries. It is rapidly becoming a new market force which moving into the mainstream market for changing the perception of business according to the marketing point of view. It is not only religious issue, it is in the realm of goods and services business which becoming a global symbol for quality assurance and lifestyle choice (Hanzaee

and Ramezani, 2011). Therefore, Muslim and other religions consumers are seeking *halal* certified products and services to ensure their quality life.

According to Muhamad and Mizerski (2010), Muslim consumers' behaviour is affected by the Islamic rules and regulations which are based on the Islamic affiliation, commitment, knowledge, orientation and commitment. These rules and regulations should be followed by according to the Quran and *Sunnah.* Prophet Muhammad said that:

> "All actions are judged by intention and whoever commits an act, or introduces a matter into our religion (Islam), which is not part of it, will have it rejected" (Hadith related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

As a result, Muslim consumers are making their decision to get *halal* certified products to avoid the *haram* (prohibited) items. *Halal* certified products added the value of assurance that encourage to the Muslim consumers to buy that particular product without anxiousness. Once consumers have high perception based on the quality of the product, then it increases the brand equity. Thus, this research investigated to explore the relationship between *halal* branding and brand equity, and research hypothesis is proposed as:

H5. *Halal* branding has positive impact on brand equity.

Methodology

Research Design

The research instruments are developed for this study comprised seven sections. First section pertains to the respondents' demographic information such as gender, age, highest level of educational qualification, occupation, and sportswear brand. Second section is based on perceived quality of sportswear brand, which consisted of six items. Third section of the questionnaire is brand awareness, which consisted of five items. Fourth section is consisted of six items, which is based on brand associations. Fifth section is brand loyalty, which

consisted of six items. Sixth section is about *halal* branding which consisted of four items, and last but not the least, section seven is brand equity, which consisted of three items. From section two to section seven, all items of the questionnaire evaluated based on 5-points likert scale, and measurement of items was adapted from Aakar (1991); Pappu *et al*. (2006); Tong and Halwey (2009); Lee *et al*. (2011). The collected data of the questionnaires were analyzed to test the reliability analysis (cronbach alpha), and regression analysis by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0 to find out the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Sampling and Data Collection

In this research, we surveyed only Muslim consumers in Kuala Lumpur based on convenient sampling, and 516 self administrative research questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, who have past experienced about sportswear brand in Malaysia. Out of 516 responses, 371 of the responses are useable (approximately 72 percent useable rate). The research questionnaires were distributed to the respondents via multiple methods: hand to hand, email, fax, and by post mail.

Data Analysis

Basically there are four parts in the data analysis. First part is descriptive analysis which is based on demography information of the respondents, and second part is reliability analysis to see whether this research instruments are consisted or not. Third part is Pearson correlation analysis and hypotheses testing and last but not the least, part four is a comparison analysis of Muslim consumers brand equity through the independent samples t-test and ANOVA.

Descriptive Analysis

Table I illustrated that male respondents comprised 45.3 percent while female respondents 54.7 percent. Age groups of the respondents were 21-30 years (45.8 percent), 31-40 years (36.4 percent), and 41- 50 years (17.8 percent). In this study 46.6 percent of the respondent's educational background was bachelor degree and 15.1 percent was postgraduate degree. This study also shows that 37.7 percent of the respondents would like to buy Nike sportswear brand, whereas 11.1 percent respondents like to buy Adidas brand.

Table I: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	168	45.3
Female	203	54.7
Age		
21 - 30 years	170	45.8
31 - 40 years	135	36.4
41 - 50 years	66	17.8
Educational Background		
Diploma	105	28.3
Bachelor degree	173	46.6
Postgraduate degree	56	15.1
Others	37	10.0
Occupation		
Professional	20	5.4
Manager/Executive	45	12.1
Clerical staff	38	10.2
Technical staff	94	25.3
Full time student	174	46.9
Sportswear Brand		
Nike	89	24.0
Power	140	37.7
Adidas	41	11.1
New Balance	37	10.0
Puma	45	12.1
Others	19	5.1

Reliability Analysis

This research instruments were tested for reliability by using Cronbach's alpha value. According to Hair *et al*. (2010), Cronbach's alpha refers consistency and reliability of the

research instruments. Greater Cronbach's alpha value means greater reliability and consistency of research instruments (research items). In this study all dimensions ranges from 0.68 to 0.86 (see Table II), exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.70 Cronbach's alpha except *halal* branding (0.68) which is very close to the requirement. Therefore, all the instruments measures are highly reliable.

Table II: Reliability Analysis

Variable	No. of item	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived quality	6	0.74
Brand awareness	5	0.76
Brand associations	6	0.79
Brand loyalty	6	0.86
Halal branding	4	0.68
Brand equity	3	0.78

Pearson Correlation Analysis

In this study Pearson correlations were calculated to identify the correlations between the two variables. According to Cohen (1988), there are three strengths of coefficient correlation, which are small or weak, medium, and large or strong. Cohen (1988) also mentioned that if the Pearson correlation value (r) range from 0.10 to 0.29 or -0.10 to -0.29 then it considered as small or weak relation, from 0.30 to 0.49 or -0.29 to -0.49 is considered as medium relation and from 0.50 to 1.0 or -0.50 to -1.0 is considered as large or strong relation. However, Field (2005) suggested that the correlation coefficient value should not be above 0.8 to avoid multicollinearity. Based on the Pearson correlation test, the highest correlation coefficient value is 0.772, which is less than 0.8. Thus, there is no multicollinearity problem in this research (see Table III). However, correlation coefficient results shows that brand loyalty and *halal* branding have weak relationship with brand awareness and *halal* branding has negative correlation with brand awareness. The reason could be Malaysian Muslim consumers are not sure whether foreign sportswear brands are *halal* or not and therefore,

brand awareness has negative and insignificant correlation with *halal* branding. The majority of the correlations are significant at the 0.01 level.

Table III: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Brand Equity	Perceived Quality	Brand Awareness	Brand Associations	Brand Loyalty	*Halal* Branding
Brand Equity	3.8877	.74875	1					
Perceived Quality	4.0921	.45617	.248**	1				
Brand Awareness	3.9418	.53912	.375**	.115*	1			
Brand Associations	3.8661	.55782	.269**	.540**	.109*	1		
Brand Loyalty	3.7731	.73274	.273**	.455**	.049	.772**	1	
Halal Branding	3.6590	.72479	.383**	.369**	-.016	.496**	.522**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Hypotheses Testing

The research hypotheses were tested by the multiple regression analysis. In this study, multiple regression analysis was done to examine the simultaneous effects of several independent variables on a dependant variable that is interval scaled. According to (Sekaran, 2006), multiple regression is able to provide the information about the model as a whole (all subscales) and the relative contribution of each of the variables that make up the model (individual subscales). Based on the results of multiple regression analysis, it has been found that the R-squared value for the model is 0.595. Although, the empirical data and statistical tests of this study do not provide enough support for the brand loyalty and *halal* branding to get the significant relationship with Muslim consumer-based brand equity on the sportswear market in Malaysia, but the overall analysis coefficients model fit shows that all the five independent variables (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, *halal* branding) combined, represents around 60% of the dependent variable (see Table IV). As a result, the model is fit for hypotheses testing by using t-value and p-value of the multiple regression analysis.

Table IV: Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Relationships	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Results
H1	Perceived quality → Brand equity	0.174	2.422	0.016	Supported
H2	Brand awareness → Brand equity	0.350	7.495	0.000	Supported
H3	Brand association → Brand equity	0.181	2.476	0.014	Supported
H4	Brand loyalty → Brand equity	0.090	1.569	0.118	Unsupported
H5	*Halal* branding → Brand equity	0.062	1.178	0.240	Unsupported

Note: Explained variance (R^2) = 0.595

The Table IV results show that H1 is strongly supported, which means perceived quality has positive and significant influences on Muslim consumers brand equity (β = 0.174, t-value = 2.422, p-value = 0.016). This finding is in line with previous study by Lee *et al.* (2011) regarding the mergers acquisitions market in Taiwan. On the other hand, Tong and Hawley (2009) found negative significant relationship between perceived quality and brand equity in the Chinese sportswear market. As for H2, the result showed strong support for brand awareness influencing brand equity (β = 0.350, t-value = 7.495, p-value = 0.000) as also supported by the past study of Huang and Sarigöllü (2012) which indicated brand awareness has positive impact on brand equity regarding the consumer package goods company in the United States.

Next is H3, which means the relationship between brand association and brand equity, the result shows that there is strong support that brand association has direct influence on brand equity (β = 0.181, t-value = 2.476, p-value = 0.014), as also supported this finding by Tong and Hawley (2009). However, H4 result indicated that there is no significant relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity (β = 0.090, t-value = 1.569, p-value = 0.118). This finding is supported by the study done by (Kim *et al*., 2008), but it contradicts with the study

of Tong and Hawley (2009) where they found brand loyalty has significant influence on brand equity. Similarly, H5 result shows that *halal* branding is not significantly supporting to the brand equity (β = 0.062, t-value = 1.178, p-value = 0.240) in the Muslim consumer sportswear market in Malaysia. This relationship is not supporting in this study because of all sportswear brands (Nike, Power, Adidas, Puma, and New Balance) are foreign and they are not certified by the Malaysian *Halal* corporation. As a result, Malaysian Muslim consumers do not have significant perception or positive impact on *halal* branding and as well as brand loyalty of the sportswear market in Malaysia.

Apart from the hypotheses testing, this paper also shows the significant differences and conformance of the Muslim consumers brand equity (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, *halal* branding, and brand equity) through the independent samples t-test and ANOVA. The analysis of independent samples t-test and ANOVA are given below.

Results of Independent Samples t-Test

Table V illustrated the results of independent samples t-test, where the results shows that male and female respondents have significant differences on brand associations (p = 0.039) and brand equity (p = 0.048). The test mean value shows that female respondents (μ = 3.9204) prefer brand associations of sportswear more than male respondents (μ = 3.8006). On the other hand, male respondents (μ = 3.9722) have higher perception on brand equity rather than female respondents (μ = 3.8177).

Table V: Independent samples t-test of gender

	Mean			
Dimension	Male	Female	t-value	p-value
Perceived quality	4.0595	4.1190	-1.252	0.211
Brand awareness	3.9655	3.9222	0.770	0.442
Brand associations	3.8006	3.9204	-2.068	0.039
Brand loyalty	3.7560	3.7874	-0.410	0.682
Halal branding	3.6399	3.6749	-0.462	0.664
Brand equity	3.9722	3.8177	1.986	0.048

Note: * variable is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed).

Results of ANOVA Test

This research used one-way ANOVA test to find out the significant differences on three different groups (age, education, and sportswear brand) regarding the perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, *halal* branding, and brand equity (see Table VI). Based on the results of one-way ANOVA test, the age groups of the respondents have significant differences on brand equity (p = 0.03) and more specifically Tukey test indicated that between 21 – 30 years and 31 – 40 years age groups of respondents have significant differences on brand equity (p = 0.05).

Table VI: One-way ANOVA test for age, education and sportswear brand

Variables	**Groups**	**F-value**	**p-value**
Perceived Quality	Age	0.634	0.531
	Education	4.816	0.003**
	Sportswear Brand	2.702	0.021*
Brand Awareness	Age	1.223	0.295
	Education	1.308	0.271
	Sportswear Brand	0.832	0.527
Brand Associations	Age	0.881	0.415
	Education	2.560	0.055
	Sportswear Brand	1.303	0.262
Brand Loyalty	Age	0.271	0.763
	Education	0.578	0.630
	Sportswear Brand	0.704	0.621
*Hala*l Branding	Age	0.376	0.687
	Education	0.436	0.727
	Sportswear Brand	0.484	0.788
Brand Equity	Age	3.529	0.030*
	Education	0.465	0.707
	Sportswear Brand	0.714	0.613

Note: * variable is significant at the 0.05 level and ** variable is 0.01 significant level (2-tailed).

Moreover, the results of one-way ANOVA test also shows that the different groups of education ($p = 0.003$) and sportswear brand ($p = 0.021$) have significant differences on perceived quality. However, the one-way ANOVA test could not find any significant differences on brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, and *halal* branding based on these three different groups of the respondents.

Managerial Implications, Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of this research, perceived quality, brand awareness and brand associations have significant influence on Muslim consumer based brand equity of sportswear market in Malaysia. The reasons could be Malaysian Muslim consumers are satisfied about the quality of the sportswear brands and they have sufficient knowledge about the sportswear brand market and also familiar with sportswear brand attributes, intangible benefits, brand class, user application, customer benefits for using the sportswear brand, and relative price of the brand. Nevertheless, this research results also shows that brand loyalty and *halal* branding have negative influence on the brand equity of sportswear market in Malaysia. This maybe because Malaysian culture is different from other countries and Malaysian Muslim consumers have different expectations regarding price, brand design, store environment in the sportswear shop, and service quality of the sportswear center.

This research also shows the significant differences between male and female regarding the brand associations and brand equity (see Table V). The ANOVA results show that different educational level and sportswear brand of the consumers have significant differences on perceived quality. The reason could be different educational background of the consumers have different expectation about the quality of the sportswear brand and each sportswear brand quality is different from one to another. The ANOVA results also indicated that different age groups of the consumers have significant differences on sportswear brand

equity, which means different age of the consumers have different perception on brand equity (see Table VI).

Even though this research finding do not completely support all dimensions of Aaker's brand equity model, however, this research found that perceived quality, brand awareness and brand associations have significant impact on band equity. This research results are different from the Chinese market as found by Tong and Hawley (2009), where their results showed that brand association and brand loyalty had significant relationships with brand equity, but perceived quality and brand awareness had insignificant relationship. To improve to the Muslim consumer based brand equity, managers should concentrate their efforts primarily on brand loyalty and *halal* branding, which have high importance in the construct of brand equity. In the highly competitive sportswear industry, the company need to create a unique, favorable, and strong brand image to provide consumers with a reason to buy the brand, then work to keep their loyalty and gain their repeat business (Aaker, 1991; Tepeci, 1999). Managers also need to make effective marketing strategies to improve brand loyalty and *halal* branding through sports event sponsorships, *halal* logo/certification, advertising across different media, and non-price promotion. Managers also need to continuously communicate with their consumers' via media or survey to assure them that we are still the same (Lee *et al*., 2011).

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Appendix I: Research Questionnaire

Sportswear Brand Equity and Muslim Consumers in Malaysia

Section 1: Personal Details

Instruction: *Please mark (X) for an appropriate answer in the column provided*

1. Gender

Male	Female

2. Age (years)

below 20 or 20 years	41-50 years
21 - 30 years	51-60 years
31 - 40 years	above 60 years

3. Highest level of Education

Secondary School	Post Graduate Degree
Diploma	Others (Please specify): _____
Bachelor Degree	

4. Occupation

Professional	Full time student
Manager/Executive	Currently not working/ Retiree
Clerical Staff	Others (Please specify): _____
Technical Staff	

5. Which sportswear brand do you like to buy for yourself?

Nike	New Balance
Power	Puma
Adidas	Others (Please specify): _____

Section 2: Perceived Quality

Please **circle** the numerical value which best describes your perception of the following statements		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	I trust the quality of product from the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
2	The chosen brand would be of very good quality	1	2	3	4	5
3	The chosen brand offers products of consistent quality	1	2	3	4	5
4	The chosen brand offers very durable products	1	2	3	4	5
5	The chosen brand offers very reliable products	1	2	3	4	5
6	The chosen brand offers excellent features	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Brand awareness

Please **circle** the numerical value which best describes your perception of the following statements		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	Some characteristics of the chosen brand come to my mind quickly	1	2	3	4	5
2	I can recognize the chosen brand quickly among other competing brands	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am familiar with the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have enough knowledge about the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
5	The chosen is more popular than competing brands	1	2	3	4	5

Section 4: Brand association

Please **circle** the numerical value which best describes your perception of the following statements		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	The chosen brand has very unique brand image, compared to competing brands	1	2	3	4	5
2	I respect and admire people who wear the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
3	It is appropriate to describe the products offered by the chosen brand as up-market	1	2	3	4	5
4	I like the brand image of the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
5	I like the company which makes the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
6	I like and trust the company, which makes the chosen brand products	1	2	3	4	5

Section 5: Brand loyalty

Please **circle** the numerical value which best describes your perception of the following statements		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	I consider myself to be loyal to the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
2	The chosen brand would be my first choice	1	2	3	4	5
3	When buying athletic shoes, the chosen brand would be my first choice	1	2	3	4	5
4	I will keep on buying the chosen brand as long as it provides me satisfied products	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am still willing to buy the chosen brand even if its price is a little higher than that of its competitors	1	2	3	4	5
6	I would love to recommend the chosen brand to my friends	1	2	3	4	5

Section 6: *Halal* Branding

Please **circle** the numerical value which best describes your perception of the following statements		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	The chosen brand is not an Islamic *Shariah* compliant product	1	2	3	4	5
2	The chosen brand do not use *hala*l (permissible) logo	1	2	3	4	5
3	The chosen brand do not use *haram* (prohibited) ingredients	1	2	3	4	5
4	The chosen brand affects my religious faith	1	2	3	4	5

Section 7: Overall brand equity

Please **circle** the numerical value which best describes your perception of the following statements		**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	Even if another brand has the same features as the chosen brand, I would prefer to buy the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
2	If another brand is not different from the chosen brand in any way, it seems smarter to purchase the chosen brand	1	2	3	4	5
3	The chosen brand is more than a product to me	1	2	3	4	5