



DETECTING THE FRAMING OF *ISLĀMIC* BANK PRESS RELEASES: ARE THEY CSR FOCUSED?

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a widely known concept in the *Islāmic* banking sector. Because of the lack of disclosure and less visibility of CSR activities, criticism and a lack of trust among stakeholders exist. Trust can be built through CSR, by actively taking part in local communities, health, education, volunteerism, ethical, legal responsibility, and environmental efforts. Positive social contribution and engagement actively improve the organizational image. Framing is a potentially useful paradigm for examining the strategic creation of public relations messages and audience responses. It helps in understanding “what is happening?” in any activity. This research investigates the focus of ten leading *Islāmic* banks’ press releases from corporate websites. The findings of this research show that framing effectiveness can be viewed as a process and an outcome to resolve challenges. Process framing focuses on “how” organizations use particular processes to achieve objectives, while outcome framing focuses on explaining “what” an organization does to achieve specific results. This study makes an important contribution in addressing enhanced CSR communication and CSR initiatives in *Islāmic* banks. The existing knowledge gap indicates future research directions such as a greater focus on the environment, and CSR initiatives.

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Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Website visibility, Framing, Disclosure, Communication

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1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), also known as corporate ethics, sustainable business, social performance, and corporate

citizenship, entails four levels of responsibilities: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (Carroll, 1999). The corporate citizenship concept reflects a particularly more inclusive and holistic view of corporate responsibility and accountability; it assumes greater responsibility for the economic, social, and environmental impacts. Through a built-in self-regulating tool known as CSR policy, businesses can monitor and ensure active compliance with laws and ethical standards (Wood, 1991). By integrating key CSR principles into their core strategy and operations, along with consideration for stakeholders (employees, customers, community, and the environment), business can have positive impact through their activities (Freeman, 2004). Businesses that ignore corporate citizenship show the management's preference for making profit over developing interactions with external stakeholders.

Focus on CSR is considered an integral aspect of *Islāmic* business as it can help ensure understanding of human economic problems besides resolving individual, social, and environmental challenges (Ahmad, 1992; Bennett and Iqbal, 2013). The literature suggests that cooperation, participation, and organization of resources are required to achieve the objectives of *sharī'ah*, social development, and individual wellness (Arif, 1985). Since the establishment of *Islāmic* banks, literature also noted that limited CSR-related projects have been launched, resulting in lack of stakeholder confidence (Ali Aribi and Arun, 2014; Kamla and Rammal, 2013; Hassan and Abdul Lateef, 2009; Dusuki and Nurdianawati, 2007). Consumers remain unimpressed by the unappealing, poorly communicated, and ineffective impact of *Islāmic* banks' CSR. In this respect, Islamic Financial Institutions (IFIs) need to realize that their poor designing of CSR initiatives can affect their reputations and image. A higher level of CSR strategic effort, cooperation, and participation is needed to resolve contemporary societal issues and to foster stakeholder confidence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW- THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Islāmic banks have significant issues with applying CSR efficiently. Disparities exist, as banks are not fully disclosing CSR in their annual reports/bank websites; *Islāmic* banks exhibit a lower level of eagerness to participate in environmental responsibility and disclose less in environmental and energy related CSR activities (Kilic, 2016; Darus et al., 2014). It is also noted that entrepreneurship and employee

development are less practiced by *Islāmic* banks (IB). Literature also identifies that IB lack a significant contribution to poverty alleviation, although CSR programs enable IB to channel human capital and resources for rural social development (Babatunde and Adeyemi, 2015; Anas and Ben Arab, 2009). To alleviate poverty and improve living standards, *Islāmic* banks in Malaysia are encouraged to invest in small and medium-sized businesses. Based on extensive survey findings, along with maximizing profit *Islāmic* banks must play a vital role in addressing socio-economic issues by efficiently channeling financial resources to productive opportunities, hence increasing production, investment, and trade activities (Dusuki, 2008). Governmental and non-governmental institutions can cooperate and help *Islāmic* banks to generate special funds and financial incentives for the suffering population (Anas and Ben Arab, 2009). To avoid resemblance with conventional CSR activities and disclosure, a study suggested that *Islāmic* banks should consider Zakat as it can have a greater impact on society and the community (Zubairu, Sakariyan and Chetubo, 2011).

Another issue related to CSR is low consumer awareness about *Islāmic* bank CSR programs, specifically activities involving the needy, health, education, and collection and distribution of Zakat revenues on behalf of customers or shareholders (Alhur and Hidayat, 2016). In the absence of effective CSR communication, uncertain or negative concerns regarding *Islāmic* CSR will prevail. Thus, to enhance the bank image, focus should shift to improving internal and external communication and identifying alternative strategies for effective CSR application (Alhur and Hidayat, 2016; Adapa, 2015). At the bank level, the absence of an independent CSR department, the absence of autonomy to conduct CSR programs, and lack of clarity in using CSR funds affect IB CSR initiatives (Wan Jusoh and Ibrahim, 2020; Adapa, 2015; Haniffa and Hudaib, 2007). To overcome competitors, the critical step for *Islāmic* banks is in creating distinct and innovative CSR initiatives (Hasan and Chachi, 2005). Through examining IB press releases, this research investigates the focus and framing of *Islāmic* bank CSR activities. Questions addressed include: Are the CSR efforts unique, which category of CSR activities are focused more, and how much is the coverage of CSR news in the press release section overall?

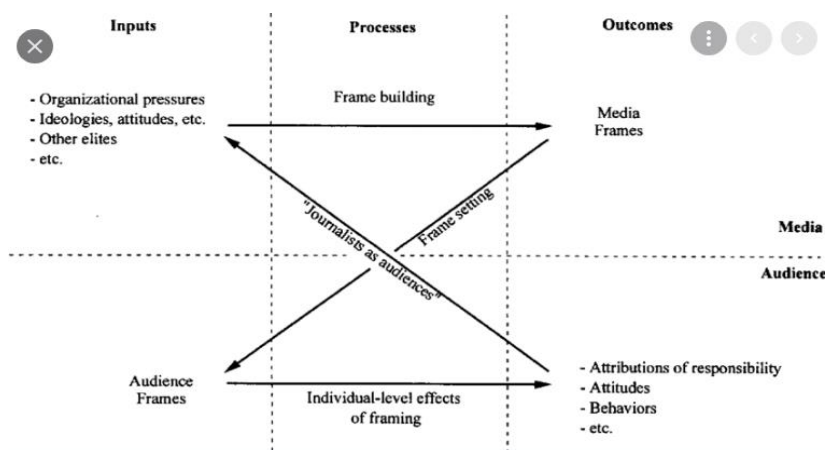
3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Press releases are one of the key instruments for distributing information to the community (Moody, 2011). Statements of organizational leaders that appear in press releases frame the organization's direction and have become an essential "information subsidy" for all mass media (Taylor and Perry, 2005). Therefore, organizations need to participate in the framing process (Entman, 1993), as specific aspects can be emphasized in a way that receivers classify information and handle information efficiently (Scheufele, 1999). An engaging press release captures audience attention and educates the audience about a company, its products and services (Moody, 2011). Through repeatedly covering, certain attributes (e.g., waste disposal issues) of an object (e.g., environmental pollution) media can alter receiver cognition (Hallahan, 1999). Even in a crisis, along with other internal and external sources, news/press releases can be used as a common source to state the stance to the media and the public (Caldiero, Taylor, and Ungureanu, 2010).

The framing process model developed by Scheufele (1999) is a continuous process that includes inputs (organization ideology, culture, beliefs, attitude), processes (frame building and setting), and outcomes (media frame) (Figure 1). To influence the news media, organizations use press releases as a means of information subsidy (Lee and Riffe, 2017). Using media frames, organizations can highlight particular aspects and, based on individual attitudes and cognitive understanding, the audience constructs their own frames. Frame building concerns a process that is rather strategic and purposeful, while the media effect on users is key in frame setting (Peng et al., 2017).

A frame can be constructed in two ways: explicit or implicit. Explicit frames are directly observable sets of words that deliberately promote a particular perspective on an issue (Van der Meer et al., 2014; Hellsten et al., 2009). Such explicit frames can be recognized in the words and tone, which makes it possible to investigate them with manual content analysis (Hellsten et al., 2009). Implicit frames of communication are not directly visible in a text; they necessitate underlying contexts that provide meaning to words, which are difficult to detect using manual content analysis (Hellsten et al., 2009). This research focuses on explicit frames of CSR and bank activities, clear-cut presented perspectives rather than implicit ones, since the dimension of communication is embedded and not observable.

FIGURE 1
Scheufele (1999) Framing Process Model



Since press releases function as information subsidies that increase the likelihood that the information will become news (Gandy, 1982), this research attempts to observe the press release/news section of the best *Islāmic* banks. The list of ten best *Islāmic* banks in 2021, by country, was obtained from Global Finance Magazine (Table 1). Global Finance Magazine named the best *Islāmic* banks in each country, based on financial performance, technology investment, product portfolio, service, and increased market reach. Bank Syariah Indonesia’s website was having accessibility issue; therefore, we included Bank Muamalat Indonesia, the winner of the previous year’s competition.

TABLE 1
Best Islamic Financial Institutions 2021-Country Wise

No.	Countries	List of Banks
1	Bahrain	Al Baraka Bank (ABB)
2	Indonesia	Bank Muamalat Indonesia (BMI)
3	Kuwait	Boubyan Bank (BB)
4	Malaysia	Maybank Islamic (MI)
5	Pakistan	Meezan Bank (MB)
6	Palestine	Palestine Islamic Bank (PIB)
7	Qatar	Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB)
8	Saudi Arabia	Al Rajhi Bank (ARB)
9	Turkey	Kuveyt Türk Katilim Bankasi(KTKB)
10	United Arab Emirates	Emirate Islamic Bank (EIB)

The respective bank's website press release/news/media release section was accessed at the end of August 2021. All news and press releases published from January 2021 to August 2021 were categorized by keyword/theme (Table 2). The descriptive analysis of the keyword/theme is summarized in the findings section and the quantification of each category is displayed in Table 2. Coding revealed that some articles fit into the health category as well as the tech digital app, so we considered it only for one category, health since the main purpose of the app is to promote health. In addition, some bank website media releases were in other languages (Arabic, Malay, Bahasa Indonesia), so Google translate was used to extract the meaning of the content and main headings.

List of Themes of Press Release/News on *Islāmic* Bank Websites.

- a) Winning cash prize
- b) Discounts, rewards and special services for members and account holders
- c) Alert message
- d) Donation
- e) Educational activities/ collaboration with university or other non-tech firms
- f) Social activity and contribution
- g) Environment
- h) Health / COVID vaccine for employers and consumers
- i) Financial Growth/ Result/Profit
- j) Claim the best bank/award/appreciation from government
- k) Tech/Digital/App/Fintech agreement and collaboration
- l) Housing Financing/Real Estate
- m) Employee Training
- n) Launch of new products or service
- o) Sukuk/Capital Market/Shariah Compliant debt securities

In the analysis section, we answered the following research questions.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the primary focus of *Islāmic* banks' press releases and news from January 2021 to August 2021? (Highest overall number of press releases, highest activity covered by the press release by each bank, highest overall score by category).

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How can *Islāmic* banks use framing through press releases and news to affect users and consumers?

4. KEY FINDINGS

Table 2 revealed the bank activities and CSR communication of selected ten *Islāmic* banks, covered in the press release section of bank websites:

1. Accessibility and navigation of 'Media center, News or Press Release' information: Out of ten top global *Islāmic* banks, five bank websites showed the 'Media center, News or Press Release' tab at the bottom left of the main webpage. Only one bank has placed the 'News' tab in the middle of the bank webpage.
2. Overall three dominant focus of *Islāmic* banks press releases during Jan 2021 – August 2021: While categorizing the *Islāmic* bank posts we found that the highest numbers of news items involved three categories: claiming the best bank/award/appreciation from the government (22 posts), Tech/Digital/App/Fintech agreements and collaborations (21 posts), and winning cash prizes (18 posts).
 - a. Claim the best bank/award/appreciation from the government: Out of ten *Islāmic* banks, four (4) banks exhibit their awards and post appreciation notes received from the government or other institutes.
 - 1) BMI posted three posts concerning appreciation and awards for the best *Islāmic* bank.
 - a) Jakarta Provincial Government Appreciates Bank Muamalat Vaccination Program,
 - b) Bank Muamalat receives Award- Boss Thanks to Public Trust,
 - c) Forbes World's Best Bank Rankings.
 - 2) EIB posted three posts: a) MEA Finance recognizes Emirates Islamic for 'Best Digital Innovation in Islamic Banking;' b) won the 'Best Credit Card' award at the 2021 International Finance Awards for its Emarati Visa Signature credit card; and c) won global awards for 'Best Credit Card' and 'Best Islamic Bank in Customer Experience.'
 - 3) ARB: a total of four posts related to the award: a) ISO certification; b) first place in the Kingdom for the Best Investor Relations Program Award; c) honor and appreciation by the Center of Excellence for Autism with a painting of children's creativity; and d) first place in the Saudi Stock Market Award for best investor relations program.

- 4) QIB posted the most (12 posts) about winning the award for a best *Islāmic* bank.
 - a) Best *Islāmic* bank award (5 posts)
 - b) The best digital, mobile, and innovation platforms (5 posts)
 - c) Two posts related to rankings (ranked # 18 out of Top 100 Companies in the Middle East by Forbes Middle East Magazine and top 20 in the Middle East by The Banker's Top 1000 World Banks Ranking 2021).
- b. Tech/Digital/App/Fintech agreement and collaboration: Out of ten *Islāmic* banks, nine (9) banks emphasize digital collaboration or App related news (21 posts). The following five banks posted a single post.
 - 1) ABB: biometric switch for financial transactions.
 - 2) BB: opening an account through the bank's App.
 - 3) PIB signed a cooperation agreement with Palpay Electronic Payment Services Company for distinguished electronic services.
 - 4) EIB: collaborates with IDEMIA on new Smart Metal Art cards to enhance the payment experience.
 - 5) ARB launched mobile point-of-sale app.
 - 6) BMI published two posts: a) collaborating with Flip to provide free money transfers to other banks, and b) launching the QR Quick Response Code feature in the mobile banking App.
 - 7) KTKB posted two posts: a) transferring money instantly and free of charge, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and b) a new online finance service enabling its corporate customers to benefit from financing support without visiting a branch.
 - 8) MB made four posts: a) collaboration with Payfast for digital payment, b) collaboration with Tufail for digital collection payment automation, and c) agreement with clothing retailer and Foam Company for digital transaction service (2 posts).
 - 9) QIB posted the highest number of updates (8 posts) related to tech/digital, applications, or fintech:
 - a) Vodafone collaboration with fintech service providers
 - b) When receiving parcels, the partnership with Qatar Post and QPay allows for cashless payment on delivery.
 - c) Online Payment Management solution for corporate customers (2 posts).

- d) Encouraging using the Bank's digital channels in Ramadan and during COVID.
 - e) Awareness of the importance of financial inclusion by digital transformation.
 - f) Conversational virtual assistant 'Zaki'.
 - g) The Mobile App features easy-to-use interfaces, secure and smart biometric login, and self-registration.
- c. Winning cash prizes: Out of ten *Islāmic* banks, seven banks covered news related to announcements of attractive savings accounts, investment visa deals, and winners of cash prizes. Three banks (EIB, ABB, and QIB) had press releases on winning prizes for saving, investment, and credit cards.
- 1) EIB posted four news items related to announcements of winners and their cash prizes.
 - a) Benefit from special rates on personal, auto, and home financing, besides the chance to continue winning as they save with a savings account offering the chance to win three apartments and a AED1 million grand cash prize..
 - b) The campaign offers three apartments and a grand cash prize of AED1 million with a savings account.
 - c) It announces the lucky winners of the savings account promotion campaign.
 - d) As part of Huawei's promotional campaign, awarded AED100,000 in cash and other prizes.
 - 2) ABB posted five news items related to announcing winners and cash prizes.
 - a) Announcements of the winners of the *AlBarakat* account prizes for January.
 - b) Announcement of a new scheme with cash prizes totaling more than BD1 million.
 - c) Launching the "Shop Online and Win BD200" campaign for credit card customers.
 - d) Announcing the grand prize winner of BD300,000 and unveiling *AlBarakat Prizes*' new scheme.
 - e) As part of its Mazaya Campaign, it offers cash prizes of up to BD2,000.
 - 3) QIB also posted five news items related to announcing winners and their cash prizes.
 - a) More than 200 winners were awarded cash prizes for their savings accounts.

- b) Announcements of Winners of the Lexus LX 570 as part of the Bank's Salary Transfer (2 posts).
 - c) Visa cardholders' chance to win an apartment at The Pearl-Qatar.
 - d) 'Cards Summer Spends' promotion, Mastercard awards a total of 13 lucky winners with QAR 25,000 in cash prizes, with one winner each week.
3. Environment: least focus of *Islāmic* bank press releases and news posts during January 2021 – August 2021: The pattern of *Islāmic* bank posts showed that out of ten banks, only four (4) banks posted a single news item about environmental related activity.
- 1) ABB: news post focused on providing funds to its clients who wish to purchase solar energy.
 - 2) KTKB: initiated a financing project for easy access to a rooftop solar power plant intended for self-consumption.
 - 3) BB: develop a digital printing system to reduce paper waste.
 - 4) MB: agreement with energy automation to reduce the bank's carbon footprint.
4. Social activity and contribution: Out of ten banks, five (5) banks posted about social related activity.
- 1) The EIB press release reflected their differentiated effort to advance workplace inclusion of people with disabilities and transform their branch network to support people with disabilities. They have installed sliding doors, ramps with handrails, and accessible low-height ATMs, teller desks /cheque writing counters, tactile floor indicators, and disability signage, including Braille signage.
 - 2) BB: two engaging activities were posted in the news section: the online LEGO challenge for kids 5 to 12 and the Quran memorization and recitation competition, which announced 500 Kuwaiti Dinar for first place.
 - 3) PIB: a bank and security forces agreed to support less privileged groups across the country and participated in the community campaign "# We Will Beautify It", which aimed at removing war debris.
 - 4) ARB: provides 20,000 umbrellas to Hajj pilgrims.
 - 5) KTKB: advertising campaign with the motto "SMEs are robust thanks to their bank". The commercial spot refers to emotions such as love, perseverance, knowledge, experience, and friendship that make SMEs in different sectors robust and surviving.

5. BMI and QIB placed the highest news/post discounts, rewards, and special services for members and account holders: Out of ten *Islāmic* banks, four bank press releases highlighted discounts and offers for customers. Two banks (BMI and QIB) news sections were more enthusiastic about announcing extra credit offers and discount offers. BMI promo offers extra quota when purchasing Indosat credit 250K, discounts up to 15% at hospitals, priority program for bank members, and those using an e-debit card receive a 10% subsidy up to a maximum of IDR 100K and airport lounge service. QIB: focuses on *Absher* reward and extra bonus points for saving account holders, shopping or dining at all mall stores, restaurants, and cafés; *Absher* reward points for fashion retailers; *Absher* reward points redeemed for gift cards. *Absher* reward points for transportation services such as Uber, *Careem*, *Talabat*, and food delivery services.
6. Saudi Bank placed the highest number of press releases/news related to donation: Out of ten, five banks press releases emphasized donations. QIB distributed Iftar projects for industrial area workers. ABB donated 250 thousand Bahraini Dinar to tackle COVID-19. BB donated to support diabetes when a person downloads the Boubyan Steps App. They also initiated a reading marathon campaign focused on donating KD 1 for every 10 pages read to help financially strapped students. MBI contributed food packs to relief COVID-19 affected in 11 countries, including single mothers, people with disabilities, fishermen, farmers, and those laid off. They also donated *Zakāt* worth 688,419.40 Ringgit Malaysia to the religious council to support education and donated 26 sacrificial cows nationwide during Eid Al-Adha considering supporting COVID-19 affected people.

ARB placed the highest number of posts (7) related to donating food and money to needy families, patients, prisoners, and COVID affected persons.

- a) Contributed 230 thousand riyals to sponsoring 20 families of needy prisoners.
- b) Employees contribute to covering the cost of dialysis for 50 patients through the "*WĀQFY*" platform.
- c) Contributed seven million Saudi Riyals to the national charitable campaign.
- d) Handed out 2,000 food baskets in ten different locations.
- e) Signed an agreement with *Wareef* charity, affiliated with King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center, whereby it

pledged to purchase and equip two blood donation vehicles worth 6 million Saudi riyals.

- f) Supported the renovation and operation of the integrated clinic at the Disabled Children's Association.
 - g) Distributed 50 thousand meals in a month to the beneficiaries registered with the association who were affected by the pandemic.
7. PIB posted the most about health general/COVID vaccine for employers and consumers: Out of ten, six banks posted items on health-related news and updates. PIB: posted the most news (5 posts) related to health:
- a) Assistance to the Red Crescent Society.
 - b) Ongoing assistance with blood bank transfusion services.
 - c) Assisting hospitals in purchasing mobile devices for measuring patients' vital signs.
 - d) Acquiring specialized medical supplies.
 - e) Assisted 11 hospitals by providing 11 oxygen generation devices with capacities of 10 and five liters for COVID-19 patients.

BB encourages customers to get vaccinations for a chance to win valuable and attractive prizes through a lucky draw using the bank App. First prize was a London trip for two people, covering travel tickets, accommodation for three days, attendance at a football game, and shopping.

Three banks announced free COVID vaccinations for employees (BMI, MB, and EIB) and drive-through vaccination centers (MB).

QIB posted three news items covering health and COVID related information. To promote active sport activity, mention the name of an "inactive" friend in the bank social media comment section for a chance to win QAR 2,000 sports gear vouchers. The MyBook App allows customers to enjoy a "buy one and get one free" offer on purchases from 365 dedicated health and fitness retailers in Qatar. During the COVID-19 pandemic initial phase, QIB offered online fitness classes for employees and their family members.

8. KTKB initiated a differentiated and novelty employee-training program: Out of ten *Islāmic* banks, five banks specifically posted on employee training and professional development. Among all the training programs, KTKB initiated a differentiated and novel finance sector training program with its Career Development Kitchen, a new career model that eliminates job titles, enabling employees to write their own career descriptions and gain

experience in different areas, preparing them for future competencies.

According to the MB press release, the bank was the first to receive an authorization certificate from the Institute of Chartered Accountants for training staff and students. MBI arranged a forum (accelerating *sharī'ah* economy and finance in the digital era) and a webinar on 'Chapra's towards a just monetary system'. EIB and BB both seem highly keen on contributing to employee professional and personal development through certification and training programs. EIB specifically empowers high-potential UAE national employees with an exclusive leadership program and an exclusive coaching program for leadership roles, in association with Hult Ashridge Executive Education. BB developed the Sales Academy to upgrade direct sales department employee skills and uses the Business School to train employees in creativity, technology, and leadership. They also signed an agreement with America's Duke University to train employees.

9. Educational activities/ collaboration with a university or other non-tech firms: Out of ten banks, seven banks posted an overview of the activities related to educational activities/ collaboration.
 - 1) BMI collaborated with insurance companies and hospitals in an educational webinar themed "Efforts to Survive from COVID-19 and the ins and outs of Vaccination".
 - 2) BB signed an agreement with Kuwait University to train nationals. They also organized a training course for Shariah Auditor Certificate for trainees.
 - 3) MB hosted a research challenge for university students, and the bank signed an agreement offering consultancy in import/export-trade/insurance/SMEs.
 - 4) PIB signed an agreement with Al-Azhar University to help students pay their tuition fees via installments.
 - 5) QIB participated in the Arab Digital Banks Summit 2021 and conducted a financial literacy online session for over 500 students.
 - 6) ARB arranged a financial awareness program titled "A Small Step Towards Great Success and a Secure Future" for students, small traders, and young merchants. They also support young talents and local companies with written, visual, and audio content creation.
 - 7) KTKB provided a variety of services to 10 new entrepreneurs, including training, mentoring, and grants of up to 40,000 TL.

10. Overall, out of ten, seven banks posted in the press release/news section about their financial results. However, among all, QIB posted the most about financial growth/disclosure of financial statements (QIB- two posts), the chairman's announcement of net profit to shareholders (QIB-one post), announced a profit for 2021 (QIB-two posts), and meetings to discuss and approve the bank activities report (QIB-one post).

MBI posted the most about the launch of new or advertising existing products or services: Out of ten banks, six posted news about the launch of new advertising for existing products or services.

BMI: an e-debit card for cashless online shopping and Hajj funds.

BB: re-opened bank branches with the most up-to-date banking services and expanded e-pay services for SMEs.

QIB: *Islāmic* trade facility and auto finance promotion.

ARB: Corporate business solution offices offering services, products, and banking solutions.

EIB a) introduced preferential pricing on the issuance of trade guarantees for its existing SME clients who are bidding or working on projects related to UAE government institutions and entities; and b) launched new business banking centers to provide exclusive services to SMEs.

MBI posted the most news about the launch of new or advertising existing products or services compared with other banks.

- a) An online gold investment account that allows owning physical gold
- b) Multi-Asset Investment Account-Global Healthcare, which invests equally in the Bank's stable financing assets and global *sharī'ah* healthcare equities
- c) The *halal* path to market program
- d) Provide a platform for SMEs- service advisory and training to market their products in Singapore-cash flow assistance to SMEs during challenging times.

TABLE 2
Findings of Ten *Islāmic* Bank Press Releases /News

Placement of Tab about Press Release /News on Website	ABB	BMI	BB	MBI	MB	PIB	QIB	ARB	KTKB	EIB	Total number of press release/news	Out of ten banks score
	Bahrain	Indone-sia	Kuwait	Malay-sia	Pakis-tan	Pales-tine	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	UAE		
	Bottom left	Top right	Bottom left	Bottom right	Bottom left	Bottom right also in top right	Bottom left	Bottom Right	Middle top right of the main webpage	Bottom left-		
	Media Centre >'Press releases'	'News'	'News and Press releases' > 'Social responsibility'>	'News and High-light'	'New and Press re-leases'	Media Centre >'CSR news'+ 'News'	'News'	Media center > 'Press Releases'	'News'	'Latest News'		
Winning Cash prize	5	1	-	1	-	1	5	1	-	4	18	07-Oct
Discounts and special services for members and account holders	-	5	1	-	-	-	5	-	-	1	12	04-Oct
Alert message	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	03-Oct
Donation	1	-	2	3	-	-	1	7	-	-	14	05-Oct
Educational activities/ collaboration with a university or other non-tech firms	-	2	3	-	2	2	2	3	1	-	15	07-Oct
Social activity and contribution	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	1	1	2	8	05-Oct

TABLE 2 (continued)

Placement of Tab about Press Release /News on Website	ABB	BMI	BB	MBI	MB	PIB	QIB	ARB	KTKB	EIB	Total number of press release/news	Out of ten banks score
	Bahrain	Indone-sia	Kuwait	Malay-sia	Pakis-tan	Pales-tine	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	UAE		
	Bottom left	Top right	Bottom left	Bottom right	Bottom left	Bottom right also in top right	Bottom left	Bottom Right	Middle top right of the main webpage	Bottom left-		
Media Centre >'Press releases'	'News'	'News and Press releases' > 'Social responsibility'>	'News and High-light'	'New and Press releases'	Media Centre >'CSR news'+ 'News'	'News'	Media center > 'Press Releases'	'News'	'Latest News'			
Environment	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	4	04-Oct
Health general/ COVID vaccine for employers and consumers	-	1	1	-	3	5	3	-	-	1	14	06-Oct
Financial Growth/ Result/Profit	1	-	2	-	-	1	6	3	1	4	18	07-Oct
Claim the best bank/award/appreciation from government	-	3	-	-	-	-	12	4	-	3	22	04-Oct
Tech/Digital/App/ Fin-tech agreement and collaboration	1	2	1	-	4	1	8	1	2	1	21	09-Oct
Housing Financing/ Real Estate	2	-	-	-	3	-	2	4	-	-	11	04-Oct

TABLE 2 (continued)

Placement of Tab about Press Release /News on Website	ABB	BMI	BB	MBI	MB	PIB	QIB	ARB	KTKB	EIB	Total number of press release/news	Out of ten banks score
	Bahrain	Indonesia	Kuwait	Malaysia	Pakistan	Palestine	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Turkey	UAE		
	Bottom left	Top right	Bottom left	Bottom right	Bottom left	Bottom right also in top right	Bottom left	Bottom Right	Middle top right of the main webpage	Bottom left-		
Media Centre >'Press releases'	'News'	'News and Press releases' > 'Social responsibility'>	'News and Highlight'	'New and Press releases'	Media Centre >'CSR news'+ 'News'	'News'	Media center > 'Press Releases'	'News'	'Latest News'			
Employee Training	-	-	3	2	1	-	-	-	1	3	10	05-Oct
Launch of new or advertising existing products or service	-	3	2	4	-	-	2	1	-	2	14	06-Oct
Sukuk/Capital Market/ <i>Shari'ah</i> Debt Securities	1	-	-	-	4	-	3	-	-	-	8	04-Oct
Total	12	19	19	10	18	12	49	27	7	21	194	-

5. DISCUSSION

The research suggested banks gain legitimacy by engaging in CSR activities and reporting on their websites through web advertisements, press releases, and news. In analysis, we focused on the Scheufele (1999) framing model (Figure 1), the process of frame building, frame setting for *Islāmic* banks, and link to possible output to effect user/consumer framing.

5.1 FRAME BUILDING - CSR CONFORMANCE AND SALIENCE

Framing concerns the level of attention given to an issue, and the framing 'salience' attempts to incorporate the values, by making them meaningful and important to the audience (Entman, 1993). *Islāmic* banks' prime objective is to focus on the betterment of society; therefore, they are expected to portray a higher level of corporate social responsibility (Zubairu et al., 2011). Existing research, however, has identified a significant gap between the CSR theoretical and practical implementation: *Islāmic* banks' CSR focus bank CSR activities on their bank's interests rather than on social welfare (Abdul Kaium and Humayun, 2016; Ali et al., 2014; Kamla and Rammal, 2013). Despite the *Islāmic* bank managers having a clear understanding of CSR, they attest that CSR strategies have not been fully applied (Ali et al., 2014). Furthermore, the gap exists due to reluctance to advertise CSR activities and to disclose significantly less than expected (Baghallab and Char, 2021; Wan Jusoh and Ibrahim, 2020). If banking institutions underestimate the strategic importance of CSR reporting and communication, banks can risk their CSR activities going unnoticed, resulting in a loss of time and investment (del Mar Garcia et al., 2009). Providing detailed information in CSR advertisements can be more helpful for gaining a competitive advantage than offering fewer details (Pomering, Lester, and Noble, 2013; Bravo et al., 2011). Moreover, bank CSR activities can improve market positioning and brand reputation (Assiouras et al., 2011; Soana, 2011). If customer trust develops with bank CSR activities, then it will help in retaining existing customers and increase possibility of attracting new customers (del Mar Garcia et al., 2009).

This research also suggests that sharing the outcome of economic, social, and environmental CSR activities of *Islāmic* banks, transmitted through reports and PR campaigns, will definitely add value. To deter skepticism and enhance credibility, research suggested that three CSR variables (social topic information, long-term CSR

commitment, and CSR impact specificity) are critical (Pomeroy et al., 2013). Further research can be conducted to identify why some banks choose to keep a low profile by sharing the least amount of CSR information (minimal-low key); and why some banks remain unassertive (take the humble approach). Although, the media covers banks that use exaggerated promotion, over-showcasing activities, products, or services, traditional customers did not believe exaggerated CSR related marketing (Du et al., 2007). Customers' negative attitude can increase skepticism, and lead to perceived corporate hypocrisy (Bartikowski and Berens, 2021). Therefore, banks should demonstrate sincere motivation to serve society while marketing their CSR campaign or activity. For a comprehensive CSR framework and best practice, greater transparency and a high level of monitoring are required in their social disclosure and CSR reporting to build customer and stakeholder trust (Wan Jusoh and Ibrahim, 2020).

5.2 FRAME SETTING - CSR TRACKING PERFORMANCE, IMPACT OF ACTIVITY, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CSR and corporate reputation are related to the awareness or knowledge of business activity (Bartikowski and Berens, 2021). Frame formation by organizations is moderated by variables such as ideology, attitudes, and behavioral, cognitive, and professional norms. Journalists and media houses frame news coverage according to their understanding; if they find some unique activity they will highlight it, and consumers construct perception based on that information. Conservative consumers tend to limit their analysis while innovative customers would like to trust the information received from bank sources (Pérez and del Bosque, 2013). This research also suggests to analyze the social-demographic and psychological characteristics in forming CSR perception.

This research suggests that higher visibility of CSR content on *Islāmic* bank websites should be part of the communication plan. If the CSR content or heading is hidden under 'About us' or other tabs, users will require conscious effort to access the specific information. The top of the main webpage is the first thing users see and glance at (Nielsen, 2017), so the CSR heading should be located or placed there. Furthermore, *Islāmic* banks should consider web analytics to extract key information for effective CSR communication through press releases. The following questions can assist further:

- Press release section on the corporate website: Is the press release tab / CSR information tab accessible easily on the bank website?
- Press release topic hit or a miss on social media: Which news or press release audiences, media, or users share on social media pages Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn?
- Press release analytics: Are banks using analytics programs to track all of their web activity to identify whether their press releases are bringing any traffic?
- Press release and frequency of posts: What is the frequency of updates on the website's press release/news section?
- Press release users' characterization: What are the demographics and segmentation profiles of bank website visitors?
- Press release content: Is the text frame of news using numbers and statistics to underline the importance of a charity or social activity goal more effective than visual frames?

While categorizing the posts of *Islāmic* banks (Table 2), we found that the total highest number of news/press releases were posted in three categories: claiming the best bank, award, or appreciation from the government (22 posts), Tech/Digital/App/Fintech agreement and collaboration (21 posts), and Winning cash prizes (18 posts).

Table 2 shows that the highest scores of *Islāmic* bank press releases cover the news related to tech/digital/App/Fintech (9/10), winning cash prizes (7/10), educational activities/collaboration with universities or other non-tech firms (7/10), financial growth (7/10), advertising new or existing products (6/10) and general health /COVID vaccine (6/10).

Most *Islāmic* bank product advertisements focus on the 'gain' and 'positive' potential of reward framing, along with attractive winning cash, rewards, benefits, and incentives. However, they could use 'loss' or 'negative' framing. If customers use a saving, investment, or credit card, they should know about credit card surcharges, late fees, and card limits. Without incentive, is it possible for *Islāmic* banks to attract their customers to use credit cards and savings accounts? This is a question needed to explore in future research. We also noticed that *Islāmic* banks collaborate with other companies or charity institutions for their CSR activities (social, donation, education, and training). Hassan and Abdul Lateef (2009) also suggested that a collective approach model (charity organizations, businesses, and IFIs) could develop long-term partnerships and increase the flow of corporate

resources into the Our analysis of ten *Islāmic* banks also identified that environmental-related CSR activities are areas of minimum focus of *Islāmic* banks (Table 2). For effective outcomes in CSR projects, *Islāmic* banks require specialized human resources in different key sectors (such as child labor, global warming, renewable energy, waste/water management, forestry, biodiversity/agriculture, low-cost housing program, inclusive financial products/services) (Dinar Standard, 2010). Only the EIB initiated the workplace inclusion of people with disabilities. It was noted that the UAE and Kuwait banks focused more on training their national employees in leadership roles, while inclusion and diversity could add more value to banks. Most banks have similar types of employee training except for the KTKB career development program. Wan Jusoh and Ibrahim (2020) also identified a lack of enthusiastic, clear and comprehensive CSR policy in *Islāmic* banks; efficient and systemic approach was needed to strategize the CSR activities.

Considering the levels of CSR obligation identified by Carroll (1979) ranging from the minimum to highest level: ‘reactive’, ‘defensive’, ‘accommodative’ and ‘proactive’, *Islāmic* banks are expected to initiate distinctive and proactive inclusive strategies for consumers and stakeholders. *Islāmic* banks need to identify the stakeholders’ framing on the issues, and they could compose their CSR messages on similar framing approaches and address those expectations (Figure. 2). In financial communication, the news media are seen as powerful active agents as they select and interpret corporate information from press releases into news reports. To identify the loopholes or issues in the process, *Islāmic* banks can seek answers to some basic questions:

1. How do stakeholders perceive *Islāmic* bank CSR endeavors?
2. Do *Islāmic* banks measure stakeholder enthusiasm, comprehension, and involvement?
3. How do *Islāmic* banks deal with any negative reactions and criticism from consumers or the media?
4. Do *Islāmic* banks evaluate their rhetorical claims, affecting their organizational authenticity?
5. How do *Islāmic* banks optimize CSR communication framing strategies in alignment with stakeholder expectations?
6. Do incentives and announcing winners on financial products really help to engage more participants?

Instead of using similar CSR strategies as competitors or delaying launching CSR programs, *Islāmic* banks should adopt a participatory approach (dialog, interaction, and collaboration). To

distinguish from competitors and create strong CSR brand identification, banks can initiate staff volunteerism or payroll donation activities. This research found that only one bank (ARB) employee contributed to covering the cost of dialysis for 50 patients. Bank employees can act as CSR ambassadors for their bank and communicate the value of CSR to business and society. *Islāmic* banks should also examine their press releases on CSR activities during the COVID pandemic, as companies that have well communicated their urgent CSR programs indicate a willingness for deeper engagement with CSR and consumers, besides showing company flexibility to adjust to uncertain situations (Panagiotopoulos, 2021). *Islāmic* bank initiatives during the COVID pandemic are medical supplies during COVID (PIB), a London trip for two people if they get COVID vaccination (BB), food donations to the COVID affected (ARB and MBI), and an education webinar about COVID (BMI). Also, we found *Islāmic* banks are keen on showing support to SMEs (MBI and KTKB), offering consulting services for SMEs (MB and EIB), arranging financial awareness programs, and supporting young talent for content creation (ARB). It seems that education related activities are also mainly covered, such as:

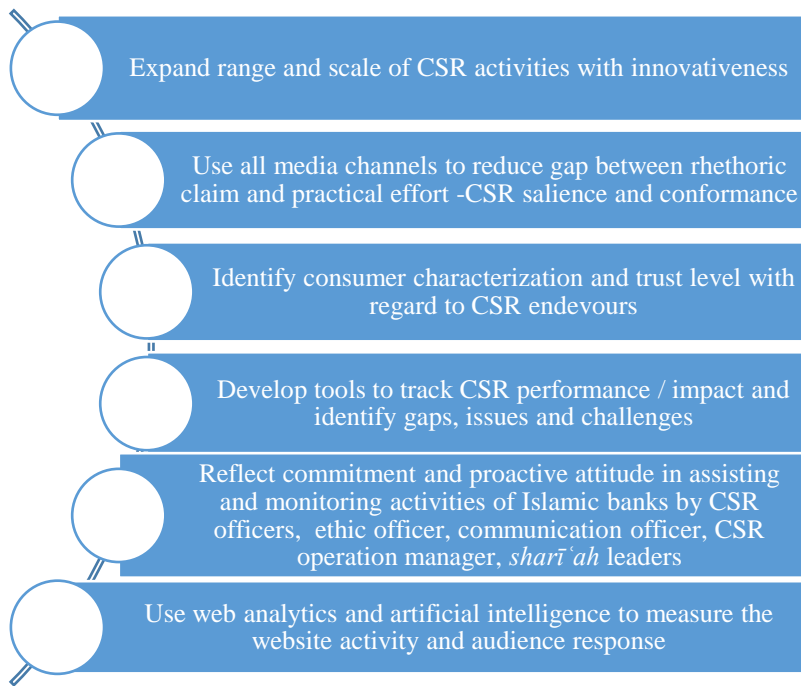
- collaboration with educational or non-educational institutes on webinars (BMI and QIB)
- seminars/ research challenges (MB)
- training sessions (BB)
- financial assistance programs for students (PIB)
- financial awareness programs for graduates and young entrepreneurs (QIB, ARB, and KTKB)

As for technology and digital related press releases, QIB Bank posted the highest number of news items (biometrics, cashless payment, fintech service provider, online solution for corporate customers, digital channels, mobile app). Among all, QIB offered a unique service using Artificial Intelligence (AI) service involving the conversational virtual assistant, "Zaki" that handles transactions and answers questions in both English and Arabic.

Literature shows that a lack of clarity regarding bank CSR practices will exist due to variance in reporting CSR activities (Dahlsrud, 2008). To implement CSR commitment, monitoring mechanisms and active involvement of CSR officers, communication officers, CSR operation officers, and *Islāmic* bank regulators are required. *Shari'ah* scholars should also review and instruct on the precise disclosure of financial investments and expenditures (Bennett

and Iqbal, 2013). *Islāmic* banks need tools for measuring CSR self-assessment, integration processes, CSR improvement plans, and data collection methods. Zhao (2018) proposed that Artificial Intelligence for considering sustainable development projects and reducing human bias in value measurement. *Islāmic* banks can consider using AI technology to configure and optimize their CSR programs by measuring, monitoring and tracking performance against local regulatory and global standards (refer Figure 2).

FIGURE 2
 Frame Building and Setting for CSR *Islāmic* Banking



Source: The researcher created for this research

6. CONCLUSION

Academic researchers have not used press releases related to CSR in research on *Islāmic* banks; hence a gap exists in the literature on press release usage by *Islāmic* banks. By evaluating press releases of ten *Islāmic* banks, this research concludes that *Islāmic* banks require analytical tools to track audience and media reaction. By analyzing frame building and frame setting, IBs can determine the relationship

between media frames and audiences, journalists and the news media. They can also monitor how much of a CSR issue is being reported and generating awareness of certain activities. Constant CSR evaluation can identify gaps. Activities reported in press releases ten *Islāmic* banks are somehow the same (product advertising with attractive incentives, donation, housing, employee training, and education). More environmental, community, and social activities should be exposed. Further research may include empirical studies with qualitative and quantitative research methodology. CSR activity visibility and CSR initiatives and the link between CSR initiatives' impact on frame building and frame setting process and other outcomes are still unexplored aspects in *Islāmic* banks. Further research may identify differences and similarities in using CSR press releases between *Islāmic* and conventional banks. *Islāmic* bank CSR manager perspective can be considered for designing responsive CSR communication and framing strategies.

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