



# Customer Satisfaction and Switching Behavior in Saudi Islamic Banks: An Exploratory Study

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## Abstract

Investigating Islamic banks customer satisfaction and switching behaviour is imperative for the Islamic banking industry because it could assist in explaining the level of relationship between Islamic banks and their customers. Accordingly, the present study is aimed at examining customer satisfaction and switching behaviour of Islamic banks' customers for the case of Saudi Arabia. Data for this study is obtained through survey method that involves the distribution of questionnaire to about 216 Islamic banks' customers in Saudi Arabia. Importance and performance analysis (IPA) method is employed to achieve the objective of this study. The finding of this study indicated that, internet banking, *shariah* compliance, confidentiality, bank's type, accuracy of bank statement, new technology adoption, and frontline friendliness dimensions fall under the quadrant of "keep up the good work" with high level of performance and importance. In contrast, the attributes that are located in quadrant called "concentrate here" are ATM location, clarity in giving explanation, promptness in giving response, staff understanding on Islamic contracts, staff-handling complaints and parking area.

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*Keywords:* Islamic Banking, Saudi Arabia, Customer Satisfaction, Switching Behaviour.

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## 1. Introduction

Being a strong pillar of Islamic financial system, Islamic banking sector has gained unprecedented recognition from both the Muslims and the non-Muslims as well during the last three decades. This perhaps could be attributed to the impressive growth recorded. According to Ernst & Young (2012), Islamic banking sector has witnessed annual growth rate of about 20 percent, with approximate total assets values of \$1.8 trillion in 2013 which is forecasted to exceed \$2 trillion by 2014 (Young, 2012). Another reason that could be attributed to the growing popularity of Islamic banks is the resiliency level demonstrated during the recent financial crisis which led to bankruptcy and financial distress of numerous conventional banks. It is therefore not happenstance seeing the growing adoption rate and support for Islamic finance from both Muslim majority and Western countries. This has thus resulted to the growing number of Islamic windows and subsidiaries rendering *shariah* compliant banking system.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is one of the countries that adopt Islamic banking system. The banking system operating in Saudi is based on dual banking system whereby, both Islamic and conventional banks operate side by side under the regulation of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) (Saud, 2011). SAMA was established in 1952; a year after, the first Saudi bank in the name of National Commercial Bank (NCB) was set up. By 1960, three foreign and two local banks were licensed to render intermediary service in Saudi Arabia. In the following years, more licenses were issued to domestic as well as foreign banks to start operating in the Saudi banking sector (Al-Suhaimi, 2001). Table 1 below shows the list of the banks in KSA that operate a full-fledge system under the Islamic or conventional including those are operate a dual system in which both Islamic and conventional system are

implementing under a single umbrella. The list of those Islamic banks considered as full-fledge Islamic bank are, Al Rajhi Bank, Bank Aljazira, Bank Albilad and Alinma Bank.

Interestingly, Islamic banking industry in Saudi Arabia control market share of more than 50 percent (Young, 2012). In addition to that, the largest Islamic bank in term of total assets and Return on Equity average is Saudi Islamic bank with about \$60 billion representing about 23 percent of the banking industry in 2011 (Melaty, 2008; Young, 2012). These statistics show the significance of Islamic banks and its huge potential in relation to developing a sound stable financial system in KSA.

Table 1: Banks in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Local Banks	Foreign Banks
The National Commercial Bank	Gulf International Bank(Gib)
The Saudi British Bank	Emirates NBD
The Investment Bank	National Bank Of Bahrain (NBB)
Banque Saudi Fransi	National Bank Of Kuwait (NBK)
Alinma Bank	Muscat Bank
Riyadh Bank	Deutsche Bank
Samba Financial Group (Samba)	BnpParibas
Saudi Hollandi Bank	J.P.MorganChase N.A
Al Rajhi Bank	National Bank Of Pakistan (Nbp)
Arab National Bank	State Bank Of India(SBI)
Bank Albilad	T.C.ZiraatBankasi A.S.
Bank Aljazira	

However, the development of Islamic banking industry in KSA is intertwined with the role of their customers. This is because customers' loyalty constitutes one of the main determinants of a sustainable banking sector. When the number of players keep increasing and competition increasingly getting tough, customer satisfaction is indispensable for sustainability and profitability of the bank.

In line with this, the present study is aimed at evaluating Islamic banks' customer satisfaction towards the quality of services and products provided. More so, the study seeks to investigate the attributes that may likely influence customers to switch to other Banks. Hence, the remainder of this paper is organized as follow. Section two will discuss about the literature and previous studies in the area of satisfaction and switching behavior of customer in the banking sector, particularly Islamic banking sector. In section three, statistical methods utilized as well as the main findings will be presented and discussed while the last section will discuss the conclusion, limitation and suggestions for future studies.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Islamic Banking

In conventional banking industry, study on service quality dimensions in the financial service sector has been extensively discussed and various dimensions have been found and identified. For instance, Parasuraman et.al. (1985) identifies eleven dimensions of service quality, which are reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, competence, understanding the customer, and tangibles. On the other hand, Berry et.al. (1985) and Zeithaml and Bitner (1996) reveal that service quality dimensions consist of five dimensions which are tangibles (appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and written materials), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence), and empathy (caring and individual attention the firm provides its customers).

In the case of Islamic banking, Customers of Islamic bank show considerable degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards various Islamic banks' products, services and facilities (Abduh, 2011). For instance, studies done by Naser et al (1999), Al-Tamimi and Al-Amiri (2003), Okumuş (2005), Abdul Kader and Norizan (2009), Osman et al (2009), Hossain and Leo (2009), and Golmohammadi and Jahandideh (2010), Abduh (2011), Abduh, et.al. (2012), and Bashir (2013) in different countries confirm that various dimensions exist in Islamic banking service quality. Some of the identified dimension are profitability, security, competence, bank-customer relationship, accessibility, costs, and tangible.

Interestingly, service quality dimensions identified by those studies are almost similar with what have been discovered within the conventional banking framework with the exception of the studies done by Abduh (2011) and Bashir (2013) who identified an additional dimension which is shariah compliance.

Studies done by Oliver (1989) and Taylor (1994) had shown that customer satisfaction is positively associated with customer's loyalty and intention to purchase in future. According to Hill and Alexander (2006), customer satisfaction is a measure of how the whole product of an organization performs in relation to a set of customer requirements. In banking sector where the competition level is relatively high, it is onus on the banks to pay more attention to customer satisfaction and custom retention by improving the service quality level in order to enhance their profitability (Goode, 1996).

In retail banking, Levesque and McDougall (1996) argue that customer satisfaction is an important element which affects the organization's profit. Considering the nature of intense competitive in today's business environment, provision of quality service is a significant strategy for success and survival (Liang, 2004). Other studies have also found a direct and positive relationship between customer loyalty and profitability in retail banks (Trubik, 2000; Garland, 2002). In a related study, Wisskirchen et.al (2006) indicated that, the long-term banks' profitability and growth depend on the ability of the banks to attract and maintain loyal customers.

## 2.2 Customer Switching Behavior in Islamic Banking

Switching behavior of banks customers is usually modeled together with the perceived value and customer satisfaction in conventional banking framework. According to Woodruff (1997), perceived value represents customers' cognition of the nature of relational exchanges with their service providers, and satisfaction reflects customers' overall feeling resulting from the perceived value. Furthermore, Varki and Colgate (2001) indicated that customers' perceived value influences customer satisfaction and there is an inter-linkage between perceived service-value, customer satisfaction evaluation and intention to switch to other service providers. In support for this finding, Oh (1999) and Wang et.al (2004) find a direct impact of customer perceived value upon customer loyalty and satisfaction in the industry of financial services.

Hashim and Latifah (2010) investigate the relationship between customer perceived value, relationship quality and switching intention among Islamic banking customers in Malaysia. The findings show that there is a significant impact of customer perceived value on the customer satisfaction, which consequently affect on the intention to switch. This relationship, between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction, is found to be positive, while the relationship between the level of customer satisfaction and switching behavior is negative. By using logistic regression, Abduh et.al. (2013) evidences that customers' religiosity, type of account, and whether or not they have account in conventional bank are the significant factors that influence their switching behavior when they notice non-shariah compliant products and practices in their Islamic bank in the context of Malaysia.

In the case of Indonesia, Suryani and Chaniago (2011) adopts exploratory factor analysis and identified five underlying factors that influence customer switching behavior in Islamic banking services, namely bank-customer relationship, shariah compliance issues, service quality, switching cost and risk perceived by customers. Abduh et.al. (2012) equally revealed that bank staff, bank physical appearance, accessibility, and costs are the main determinants of customers' switching behavior in Islamic banks.

## 3. Data and Methodology

### 3.1 Data

Data for this study are obtained via a direct survey carried out on respondents residing in Riyadh, Makkah, and Al-Qassim in Saudi Arabia. The respondents are all Islamic bank customers. The formulae use in selecting the sample size from large unknown population in this study is adapted from Israel (1992):

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where:

$n_0$  = Sample size

$z$  = Z-value of  $\alpha$  ( $\alpha$  in this study is 5%)

$p$  = Variability (variability used in this study is 0.5)

$q = 1 - p$

$e$  = Level of precision or sampling error (sampling error tolerated in this study is 5%)

therefore, sample size is equal to;

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = 385$$

Hence, the total numbers of respondents should not be less than 385. However in this paper, after doing the necessary screening regarding the information availability, only 260 questionnaires are usable out of 450 questionnaires distributed.

### 3.2 Importance and Performance Analysis

Importance and performance analysis (IPA) method is used in this study in order to provide a visual analysis regarding customers' assessment of Islamic banks services in Saudi. Customers' views are plotted onto importance-performance grids which present banking strategists in a straightforward way with graphical illustration of service dimension that patrons considered to be salient and well-addressed by the current implementation of Islamic banking services. The points is expected to fall into one of the four quadrants labelled "keep up the good work", "possible overkill", "low priority", and "concentrate here" (Fig. 1). For instance, the quadrant "keep up the good work" could be explained when one point is plotted within the area of high importance and high performance. When one point is viewed less important but too good in performance, it will fall in "possible overkill" quadrant, while "low priority" quadrant signifies area with low importance and low performance. Finally, items rated high in importance but low in performance in "concentrate here" quadrant implies that overkill has occurred and therefore, improvement must be done regarding such an items.

In order to identify the attributes that are important and those considered as non-important, we firstly computed the mean importance rating for each attributes. Thereafter, the mean for all attributes, all mean scores were summed across dimensions and divided by the total number of the attributes to get the grand mean. Those attributes whose averages exceeded the grand mean were considered as 'high importance' and those that had lower means compared with the grand mean were labeled as 'low importance' attributes. Similar procedures are applied to determine the higher and the lower performance of the attributes.

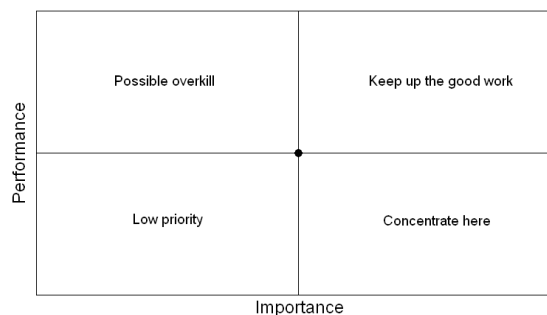


Figure 1. Importance and Performance Analysis Matrix

## 4. Findings and Discussion

#### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Out of 260 respondents considered in the analysis of the present study, 230 (88.5%) are male respondents and 30 (11.5%) are female respondents. Moreover, in term of the age of the respondent, 136 (52.3%) fall in the age group of 25-35, and 71 respondents (27.3%) are less than 25 years old; while those who are more than 36 years old constitute about 50 (20%). Most of the respondent are married (65%). In the case of the education level of the respondents, 66.2 percent of the respondents hold bachelor degrees, and those with high school qualification are about 8%; while postgraduates and diploma degree holders are approximately 25%. In addition, about 155 of the respondents are government employees, while 55 work in private sector and 15 are entrepreneurs. There are about 66 percent of the respondents identified as customers for the Islamic banks for more than five years, while those that have Islamic bank customer for less than a year are about 8 percent. As such, the data collected is believed to represent educated, mature, and responsible customers with long experience and frequency dealing with the Islamic banks in KSA.

Table 2. Demography of the Respondents

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	230	88.5
	Female	30	11.5
Age	< 25 Years	71	27.3
	25 – 35 Years	136	52.3
	36 – 45 Years	40	15.4
	46 – 55 Years	11	4.2
	> 55 Years	2	0.8
Marital Status	Married	169	65
	Single	91	35
Education	Elementary – High School	22	8.5
	Diploma	40	15.4
	Undergraduate Degree	172	66.2
Job Type	Postgraduate	26	10
	Entrepreneur	15	5.8
	Government Employee	65	25
	Private Sectors	55	21.2
	Lecturer	8	3.1
	Teacher	94	36.2
	Others	23	8.8
Duration Of Being IBs Customer	< 1 Year	20	7.7
	1 – 3 Year	29	11.2
	3 – 5 Year	38	14.6
	> 5 Year	173	66.5
Account Type	Current Acc	243	93.1
	Saving Acc	10	3.8
	Investment Acc	7	2.7
Status Of IBs	Full-Fledged Islamic Bank	222	85.4
	Islamic Subs/Window	38	14.6
Ownership Of IBs	Local Bank	246	94.6
	Foreign Bank	14	5.4

Moreover, about 93 percent of the respondents are operating various types of current account with their respective Islamic banks. Also the figures show that most of the respondent representing 85 percent of the respondents deal with full-fledge Islamic bank. Finally, about 95 percent of the respondents prefer to transact and deal with local Islamic banks.

We will now proceed to test customer satisfaction level by examining the level of importance and performance of each attributes in service quality. In addition to that, we will also examine the likelihood of switching to other banks when customers experience bad quality of service attributes. This part contains 24 variables to be tested using 5-interval Likert scale. Under the importance column, number 1 represents “not important” and 5 represents “very important”. Meanwhile, in the performance column, number 1 represents “extremely not satisfied” and 5 represents “extremely satisfied”.

In term of importance level of the attributes, Table 3 demonstrates that most of the variables have mean equal to 4 which is considered as important. This is a normal situation since everybody is indifference in

term of the importance level, particularly when it is offered without any cost to be spent. As shown in Table 3, the highest mean amongst the attributes is the shariah compliance and the rate of return represents the lowest concerned attribute for Islamic bank customers in Saudi.

With regard to service performance, all the attributes' averages are less than 4 with the exception of "staff attire". Meanwhile, one attribute namely "parking" has average less than 3. This result shows a lower degree of satisfaction as compared to the perceived importance. It thus suggests that, Islamic banks could consider improving their service quality to meet the expectation of the customers.

For the level of likelihood to switch, attributes were tested using 5-interval Likert scale whereby 1 represents "extremely unlikely to switch" and 5 represents "extremely likely to switch". In general, the means of the twenty four attributes fall between 2 and 4. There are attributes with average of more than 3 which suggest the possibility to switch when customers experience low performance of them during certain period. These attributes are "ATM location", "internet banking", attributes related to staff's ability to handle issues from customers, and "cost of services". This result supports the findings from previous studies; notable among them are Parasuraman et.al (1985), Berry et al. (1985), Zeithaml and Bitner(1996), Abduh (2011), and Abduh, et.al. (2012).

Table 3. The Descriptive Statistic of the Response

Variable	Importance		Performance		Likelihood to switch	
	Mean	Std.dev	Mean	Std.dev	Mean	Std.dev
Shariah-Compliance	4.65	0.74	3.79	1.07	2.99	1.46
Staff attire	3.95	1.17	4.00	0.91	2.76	1.49
Thursday banking (weekend)	3.94	1.25	3.30	1.31	2.92	1.83
Bank's type (full-fledge or not)	4.34	1.01	3.77	1.07	2.89	1.47
ATM location	4.58	0.85	3.40	1.25	3.03	1.46
Internet banking	4.44	0.96	3.92	1.04	3.03	1.44
Parking	4.32	0.99	2.85	1.29	2.92	1.45
Building appearance	4.19	0.98	3.77	1.04	2.82	1.39
Access to bank location	4.25	0.98	3.50	1.07	2.74	1.33
Banking hours	4.17	1.02	3.53	1.04	2.87	1.34
Routinely offering new products/services	3.97	1.12	3.29	1.06	2.90	1.37
Frontline friendliness	4.38	0.97	3.53	1.13	3.13	1.39
Staff handling complaint	4.33	1.09	3.18	1.21	3.13	1.43
Staff clarity in giving explanation	4.32	1.09	3.41	1.08	3.08	1.38
Promptness in clarifying problems	4.26	1.06	3.26	1.14	3.14	1.42
Promptness in giving response to customer's need	4.37	0.99	3.33	1.12	3.15	1.43
Staff understanding in Islamic contract	4.47	0.99	3.25	1.17	3.05	1.44
Accuracy of bank statement	4.37	1.15	3.70	1.09	2.97	1.48
Social responsibility	4.07	1.27	3.32	1.23	2.83	1.45
Confidentiality	4.48	0.99	3.82	1.09	3.07	1.55
Using new technology	4.46	0.98	3.63	1.05	3.01	1.46
Bank reputation	4.26	1.12	3.72	1.02	2.99	1.50
Rate of return	3.88	1.28	3.19	1.15	2.92	1.42
Cost of Services	3.96	1.28	3.17	1.29	3.10	1.48

#### 4.2 Importance and Performance Analysis

The importance and performance analysis allows this study to visually analyzes the position of every attributes tested from the perspective of the respondents (Figure 2). Based on the calculation of each attribute's average and the grand average of all attributes, "internet banking", "shariah compliance", "confidentiality", "bank's type", "accuracy of bank statement", "new technology adoption", and "frontline friendliness" are considered high in term of importance level and able to meet the customers' expectation. Those attributes are located in first quadrant of "keep up the good work".

For the second quadrant "possible overkill", five of the dimensions fall under it. These five dimensions are "staff-attire", "building appearance", "bank reputation", "access to bank" and "banking hours". This shows that five dimensions are perceived to be high in their performance but low importance level by Saudi Islamic banks customers.

Meanwhile, in term of “low priority” quadrant, “Thursday banking”, “CSR info”, “promptness in clarifying problems”, “new products/services”, “and rate of return” and “cost of service” are found to be located in this part. These dimensions seem to fail meeting the expectation of the customers, while the customers are not interested about them at the same time. Therefore, there is no significant impact of these dimensions regarding the relationship between Saudi Islamic banks and their customers.

Finally, the fourth quadrant indicated the following six dimensions and factors, located in it, “concentrate here”. These factors are “ATM location”, “clarity in giving explanation”, “promptness in giving response”, “staff understanding on Islamic contracts”, “staff-handling complaints” and “parking area”. Based on this quadrant, the dimensions need to be given more concern and attention since they are considered to be high important to the customers. However there is no performance in the same level from the side of Islamic banks in Saudi. Thus, Islamic banks in Saudi need to concentrate more on improving their performance in relation to these six factors in order to gain customers’ satisfaction and meet their expectation. Moreover, it is suggested that, improving in these factors need to be done as soon as possible and accorded higher priority. The reason is that, customers are not satisfied with the performance of the services regarding these factors provided by Islamic banks in Saudi, which ultimately could potentially negatively affect the profitability and stability of the Islamic banks.

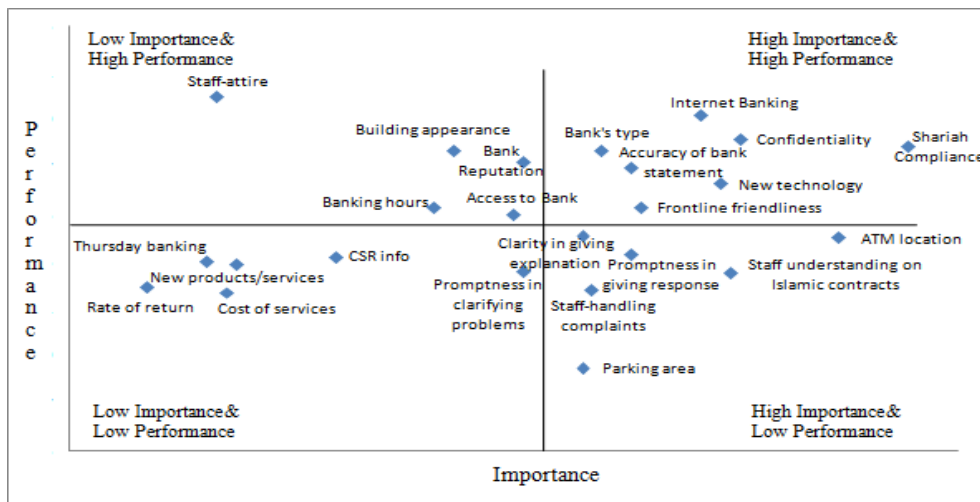


Figure 2. Result of Importance and Performance Analysis

Investigating customer satisfaction in Islamic banking field is vital and significant since it has high impacts upon most economic sectors. In line with this, Islamic banking is also playing key roles. Moreover, being the largest country oil producers and 100 percent Muslim country, Saudi Arabia could serve as a benchmark in term of rendering Islamic banking service that would meet the expectation of the customers. As such, exploring the important elements and factors that influence the relationship between Islamic bank and its customers would contribute towards better services and products render by Islamic bank while ensuring stronger relationship with its customers. Accordingly, the findings of this study could reveal a clearer picture about the dimensions and factors that require more attention by the Islamic banks particularly in Saudi regarding satisfying their customers. It is therefore expected to improve Islamic bank industry as a whole, since it shows the expectations of customers of these banks, the weakness and strengths elements affecting the relationship between these two parties. In addition, it is expected that, the finding of this paper to have a positive impact on knowledge especially for the area that relate to economic and banking cycle.

**5. Conclusion**

This study examined customer satisfaction and switching behavior of the customers of Islamic banks in Saudi Arabia by distributing questionnaires and adopting descriptive analysis as well as importance and performance analysis (IPA). The result of this research indicated that those factors under the first quadrant called “keep up the good work” are internet banking, shariah compliance, confidentiality, bank’s type, accuracy of bank statement, new technology adoption, and frontline friendliness. On the other hand, ATM location, clarity in giving explanation, promptness in giving response, staff understanding of Islamic contracts, staff-handling complaints and parking area and it is revealed that Islamic banks performance in these attributes is low. Since these are very important to customers, it is therefore advisable for Islamic banks in Saudi should to pay more attention and give high priority to these factors.

In order to improve the discussion and to test the strength of the findings in this present study, the following further researches are recommended: (i) replicate similar study in other countries and (ii) use different approach and methods to see whether the approach used and the model proposed in this study are robust and applicable.

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