Strengthening e-Branding Strategy of Sharia Hotel in Indonesian Hotel Industry

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Abstract

Purpose: This research is expected to be able to identify and analyze the strengthening of e-branding strategies of Sharia Hotels in the Indonesian hotel industry.

Research methods: This study uses qualitative research with data collection techniques through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation.

Results and discussions: The results of the research show, firstly, hotel with Islamic nuances according to the MUI Sharia Hotels including Hilal 2 which is a management and operational manner have rigid rules that must comply with Islamic rules, while Muslim Friendly Hotels include Hilal 1; secondly, strengthening the Sharia Hotel e-branding strategy including 1) strengthening domain names, brand identity, and web design; 2) partnership with various online travel agents; 3) installation of advertising and promotion media; 4) strengthening interaction through social media networks; the third is related to the challenges in e-branding of Sharia Hotels, it is the perception of the Indonesian people whose Muslim majority religion does not need differentiation in Sharia Hotels with Muslim Friendly Hotels and the perception that Sharia Hotels only accept Muslim tourists even though Sharia Hotels accept tourists universally like Conventional Hotels.

Conclusion: Effective e-branding through online media in the Sharia hotel industry, it is proven can build a positive image and not only Muslim tourists who have known sharia hotels, but some non-Muslim tourists also have brand awareness in the existence of Sharia Hotel

Keywords: *e-Branding, Sharia Hotel, Muslim Friendly, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is increasingly known for the existence of sharia tourism or halal tourism among foreign tourists. It is proven that Indonesia in 2017 has occupied the third rank as a Muslim tourist destination according to the study of Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) released Mastercard-CrescentRating 2017. In 2015, Indonesia brought 1.3-2 million Muslim tourists. This number is expected to continue to grow up. GMTI estimates the total number of Muslim tourists visiting the various countries reached 117 million people. By 2020, the number of visits is predicted to increase by 10 percent or 168 million Muslim tourists (Tempo.co, 2017).

One of the main elements supporting sharia tourism development is the accommodation infrastructure in the form of the Sharia Hotel. Sharia hotels are interpreted as a hotel that

provides services by following the principles of sharia, which is understood by following the provisions of Islam (Saad, Ali, & Abdel-Ati, 2014: 1). The availability of the number of sharia hotels in every halal tourist destination in Indonesia must be met to support the success of halal tourism. Based on data from the Association of Indonesian Hotels and Sharia Hotels (AHSIN) in 2014, Indonesia currently has 25 hotels with halal-certified restaurants and 12 halal-certified hotels (Republika.co.id, 2016; Kemenpar, 2015). The Shariah Hotel in Indonesia has been recognized by the world through awards at the World Halal Tourism Awards 2016 including The Rhadana Hotel, Trans Luxury Hotel, and Novotel Resort & Villas, and in 2015 there was Hotel Sofyan. (Auliani, 2017). Nevertheless, according to Riyanto, the owner of Hotel Sofyan and the head of the Halal Tourism Development Acceleration Team said that in the development of sharia hotels have obstacles related to the assumption of Indonesian itself which is of 250 million population reach 88% Muslim have the perception that automatically everything is halal. (Muslimah, F. & Zuraya, N, 2016; Sofyan, 2016).

Whereas for sharia hotels must have halal certification standards from Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) with all the requirements that fit the rules of Islam in terms of service and the provision of facilities and food. Meanwhile, more foreign tourists from the Middle East, Europe, and China are interested in visiting Indonesia which is also increasing the need for sharia hotels in Indonesia. The potential visit is a great opportunity for the advancement of the sharia tourism sector in Indonesia itself. The potential of sharia tourism in Indonesia is very large and can be an alternative, only branding and packaging is still not have the right concept. (Kemenpar, 2015). Riyanto, Chairman of the Acceleration of Development of Halal Tourism Development, also added that nowadays halal branding has not been developed to attract the halal tourism market, because it still revolves around the branding of tourism in general. (Muslimah, F. & Zuraya, N, 2016)

By following the development of online technology requires the skill of the hotel is not enough to do branding offline because remembering this time every person is holding their gadgets that they have and tend to make purchases online. It was proven by research results in 2014 by Nielsen Indonesia, consumers who choose hotels online has reached a percentage of 40%. Besides, the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics also mentioned that most Internet users in Indonesia who seek information about goods or services they need are 77.81% and access social media by 61.23%. (Setiawan, 2014). Therefore, branding strategy is also needed online or can be called e-branding sharia hotels to be more powerful in creating brand awareness, brand image up to brand equity in prospective tourists for sharia hotels in Indonesia.

E-Branding (online branding) is the use of domain names to promote and protect brands online. (Murphy, Raffa, & Mizerski, 2003). Brands in the modern marketing era are concerned with offering value-added that suits customer needs. (Hudson, 2008: 160). When hotels use the brand is expected to reap bigger profits. The use of corporate brands has a wider impact on hotel profits per space when corporate brands are more valuable to customers and difficult to duplicate by other hotels. (Silva, Gerwe, & Becerra, 2017: 23) Branding is identified as a significant element for tourism and hospitality organizations in communicating the quality of its products, organization, services, and place to create a positive image and close relationship between potential customers (McCabe, 2009: 287). In the online sphere, branding becomes the marketer's primary goal to position their hotel so that guests can recall their brand at a later stage when they need to book a room (Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2016, 189). Customer experience about a particular brand will be more related to the customer's emotions to be more familiar with the person or place. Therefore, hotels should be able to create meaningful and valuable brand associations by understanding and knowing their target customers, their values, and their service orientation focus. (McCabe, 2009: 287). Branding is needed so that customers can distinguish between sharia hotels and conventional and know the uniqueness and specials of sharia hotels for Muslim tourists. Related to these problems, there is no research on how far the readiness of the online branding of Sharia hotels in Indonesia. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing sharia hotels in Indonesia that reinforce their e-branding strategy in the tourist market and its bargaining position in attracting Muslim and non-Muslim tourists so that they create strong brand awareness, positive brand image,

up to brand equity. The existence of an effective e-branding strategy is expected to make the Sharia Hotel be able to compete with conventional hotels.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses qualitative research with data collection techniques through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation. Primary data were collected through interviews and observations, while secondary data were collected through relevant documents from reference journals, books, magazines, and relevant articles. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with the purpose of information not limited to guidelines interviews to reveal other supporting information about the e-branding strategy of the Sharia Hotel in Indonesia. This research focuses on some sharia hotels in Indonesia that have proven their credibility with obtaining a halal certificate from MUI. Among them is Sofyan Hotel Betawi as the pioneer of the first Sharia Hotel in Indonesia; The Radhana Kuta Bali Hotel, a winner of the World's Best Family Friendly in UNWTO 2016; Hotel Syariah Solo; and Hotel Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo. Among the four hotels, only Hotel Aziza Syariah Solo can be interviewed through the General Manager, while other hotels reviewed through observation and documentation.

Observation is done by gathering various information about the e-branding strategy on the content of online sites owned by Sharia Hotel starting from a website, Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, Youtube, Instagram, and mobile application specially owned by the hotel. Observation of content includes visuals and text from photos, advertisements, logos, slogans, tagline, menu facilities, hyperlinks, hotel information, photo gallery, booking room details, price lists, contact details, virtual tours, diaries, social media, and hotel promo. The selection of e-branding platforms is based on the review literature that has been described on the most widely used online branding platform in the hospitality industry including hotels. This research is also conducted using the exploratory study with its analysis unit is a general picture of the sharia hotel industry in Indonesia, the e-branding strategy of each sharia hotel, a challenge faced by sharia hotels in e-branding, the impact of e-branding to sharia hotels. Data analysis was done in two ways: the result of interviews, observations, and documentation categorized on several related themes in accordance with the unit of analysis that has been determined, then interpreted based on literature review.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Sharia Hotel in Indonesia

Consumer protection in halal tourism is always guaranteed by the Halal certification shown by service providers obtained from local government agencies or authoritative government agencies. The institution of authority for Halal certification in Indonesia is The Assessment Institute for Foods, Drugs, and Cosmetics Majelis Ulama Indonesia or it is known as LPPOM MUI. The institution is responsible for the decision-making process related to Halal certification on products and services, more widely certified on food, medicine, and cosmetic products. In addition to being responsible for providing certification, the institution also provides guidelines or guidance and consulting services to companies on the various types of measurements that Muslim service providers need to provide. (Mohsin, Ramli, & Alkhulayfi, 2016: 139). Sofyan Hotel is a pioneer of the Sharia Hotel in Indonesia that is a certified halal from MUI. The hotel is also awarded as the Best Family Halal Hotel in the World Halal Travel Awards event (COMCEC[a], 2016: 74). There is such recognition, other sharia hotels are starting to emerge and are encouraged to get halal certification to further reinforce their branding and credibility as Sharia Hotels in the tourist market.

The Ministry of Tourism of Indonesia has drafted the Guidelines for the Implementation of Sharia Hotel Efforts through the Regulation of Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Number 2 the Year 2014. The PERMEN (ministerial decree) contains the criteria of sharia hotels with the Hilal 1 and Hilal 2 categories assessed from product, service, and management aspects. Hilal 1 is a sharia hotel that still has leniency in sharia rules, for example, in this hotel every food and restaurant is halal-confirmed. That is, restaurant or kitchen already has halal certification from MUI, there is the ease of sacred and worship so there must be toilet shower not only tissue, halal food, but no guest selection, the kitchen is halal-certified, but only the

kitchen, the beverage can still have the type of alcohol like wine. Meanwhile, in Hilal 2, everything that is not allowed in sharia rules already applied in this sharia hotel. For the classification of sharia hotel hilal, one (Hilal 1) minimum meets 49 points of provision, to rise level to the hilal two must meet 74 points. (Kemenpar, 2015).

Sharia hotels in the tourism industry have different concepts with Muslim friendly hotels. Muslim friendly hotels are hotels that lack the standard of certification and more to adopt their own rules more in Muslim friendly hotels. (COMCEC[b], 2016: 39). Sharia hotel is a hotel that meets the needs of Muslim tourists in accordance with sharia rules. Sharia hotels usually have a benchmark and adopt standards laws and the laws that must be certified sharia. (Jais, 2016: 7). Sharia-based accommodation should have Qiblah direction, the provision of the Qur'an in every room, and the provision of halal food. (COMCEC[a], 2016) The five essential components for a hotel to classify a sharia hotel usually have the following components (Stephenson, 2014):

    a. Human Resources: relating to hotel staff and staff uniforms or dress codes, worship time policy for Muslim employees, limited working hours for staff during Ramadan: codes of conduct for staff and guests, and guest delivery service system.

    b. Private Rooms (bedrooms and bathrooms): separate floors for women and families, Kiblah direction, prayer equipment, and Al-Quran, conservative television channels, Islamic decoration (calligraphy), rooms, and toilets not facing Kiblah direction, toilet facilities in accordance with Islamic rules.

    c. Dining and Banqueting Facilities: halal-certified food with no pork and alcohol, separate dining room between women and family, plus public area stipulations, no statues or decorations showing human or animal forms, no controversial music content and seductive.

    d. Other Public Facilities: there are no casinos or gambling machines, separate entertainment facilities (including swimming pools and spas) for both women and men, separate worship rooms between women and men equipped with Al-Quran, ablution is located outside the prayer room, the toilet is not facing the direction of Kiblah, and there is no art in the form of human and animal.

    e. Business Operations: ethics in marketing and promotion, CSR strategies (related to Islamic values) and philanthropic contributions, transactions and investments in accordance with principles and practices related to calculations and institutions consistent with Islamic principles, where hotels should contribute the proportion of their income to charity (known as "zakat"). This "Zakat" emphasizes the importance of sharing the same benefits and helping others especially those in need.

The principles in Islam interpret how specific business processes are like how marketing and advertising are supposed to be. Promotional strategies should be based on honest information, which is institutionally a challenge to the hotel industry that is often identified with deceptive advertising. If a hotel aims to reflect on Sharia principles, then the hotel should seriously show its offer of products and services in an Islamic way. (Stephenson, 2014: 158). Based on the government's rules, Islamic concept hotels in Indonesia can be categorized into two types; Muslim Friendly Hotel (Hilal 1) and Sharia Compliance Hotel (Hilal 2).

E-branding Strategy of Sharia Hotel in Indonesia
Sharia hotels have different strategies for online branding. The first strategy is selecting the types of effective online media suitable for the hotels' needs. The dominant social media platform in the hotel branding strategy and its continued use are Facebook, Tripadvisor, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Pinterest. The platform facilitates brand awareness, is effective for marketing campaigns, enables direct communication, helps brand exposure, promotes brand awareness, encourages traffic, creates a positive image, and brings brand loyalty. (Debono, 2013; COMCEC[b], 2016) Besides, it is mentioned that the website is an effective digital tool for the tourism business. Websites can attract visits through inspirational content, information, and e-commerce. The website is also a major container for branding and engagement with potential travelers. (COMCEC[b], 2016). Branding through the website can be with brochures and advertisements on the website. (Hudson, 2008). Besides, tourists prefer

to download mobile applications to get detailed information such as their plans. Therefore, the hotel must have a mobile application to increase the opportunity to communicate with potential customers. Customers in this digital era greatly contribute to the promotion of hotels with various comments about their experiences and give ideas to other customers about recommended hotels for them. (Sezgin, 2016: 25). Based on the online media used, the differences can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1. Online Media of Sharia Hotels in Indonesia

No.	Hotel	Website	Instagram	Youtube	Twitter	Facebook	Lainnya
1.	Sofyan Hotel Betawi (Three-Stars Hotel)	http://sofyanhotel.com/sofyan-hotel-betawi-halal-hotel-jakarta/	Sofyanhotelbetawi_jakarta	-	Sofyan Hotel Betawi (@betawihotel)	Sofyan Hotel Betawi	Line Whatsapp Website Sofyan Group (sofyanhotels.com)
2.	The Rhadana Kuta Bali (Three-Stars Hotel)	http://www.rhadana.com/	Rhadana_kuta	Rhadana Kuta Bali	Rhadana Kuta Bali (@RhadanaKutaBali)	The Rhadana Kuta, Bali	- http://www.the-ohm.com/ - https://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-A7K8-the-rhadana-kuta-bali/index.shtml
3.	Syariah Hotel Solo (Four-Stars Hotel)	http://www.syariahhotelsolo.com/	syariahhotelsolo	Public Relation Syariahhotelsolo	Syariah Hotel Solo (@syariahsolo)	Syariah Hotel Solo	Lorinhotel.com
4.	Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo (Three-Stars Hotel)	Aziza.horison-group.com	Aziza_hotel_solo	-	AzizaHotelSolo (@AzizaHotelSolo)	Aziza Hotel Solo by Horison	Myhorison.com

Source: Data processed by researchers

Based on Table 1, sharia hotels have a variety of online media that have been used for e-branding. The four hotels have various types of online media that are favored for branding, but only Sofyan Hotel Betawi has mobile applications, Line, and Whatsapp while using Youtube only in Rhadana and Syariah Hotel Solo. All sharia hotels are the same in terms of branding that not only uses its website but also the group that shelters it. It is also revealed by General Manager of Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo that for branding they remain attached to the hotel group, that such a way will be more easily recognized by the customer because the level of customer brand awareness is higher in the hotel group than its hotel.

The second branding strategy based on website design and social networking. An e-branding strategy must have an interactivity website dimension that is interactivity system (user control) and social interactivity (two-way communication) to create positive brand awareness and brand image online in the context of online media. User control describes that the important component is hotel website design. (Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2016,

189-190) Branding is commonly obtained through naming, trademark, packaging, product design, and promotion. Successful branding is to provide a unique identity for the product. The identity generates a consistent image of the perception of tourists that facilitates credible quality assurance. (Hudson, 2008). There are two factors in building a sharia brand. First, it is tangible factors such as halal certification, which is important to recognize as an Islamic brand. Brand logo and brand name are also able to shape customer perception. The use of the Halal logo is important in sharia labeling. Muslim customers are more interested when they see halal logos on their products. Halal accreditation in brand Islamic from authoritative institutions is very important to show to gain consumer trust. Halal certification is a major factor recognized in Islam so halal certification is recommended to be installed on the hotel's online media platform. Halal certification is a document that the organization needs to certify that its products comply with Islamic guidelines in terms of content, process, transportation, storage, and distribution. (Maamoun, 2016; Yusof & Jusoh, 2014)

Second, intangible factors, such as brand values, brand authenticity, and brand tagline. Slogans or taglines affect perceptions of a brand and are needed to preserve brand identity. Using foreign languages such as Arabic or using Islamic terms can maintain feelings on the brand of Islamic nuances. (Maamoun, 2016: 427). According to Bandyopadhyay (2016: 9-12), there are key factors in the success of building a brand online (e-branding) include; creating brand recognition by creating unique, memorable, and spelled names to attract customers and are different from others. It can also be added in the form of mascot or Jingle Company on the website. And the presence of advertising features, customer service quickly, and other special or unique services are different from other products; and distinguishing brands by providing good navigation tools for users, having easy-to-remember domain names (simple but attractive websites), offering a variety of products that are relevant to the customer's target needs, providing relevant gifts or promotions

Each sharia hotel has a unique domain while still giving sharia atmosphere. Sofyan Hotel Betawi takes the name of "Sofyan" which is typical with Muslim people. Through its website is the "Halal" logo of MUI, halal certification, and there is a privacy policy that guarantees its users about the security of personal data. Through its Facebook also Sofyan Hotel Betawi uses branding through profile pictures with female employees who use the hijab. Rhadana, Kuta, Bali branding through its website by stating on its profile about the halal certification that it has from MUI for its food and service, pictures for the service menu, and its facilities that show the prayer room and also have a privacy policy. The two hotels are the achievements of awards from UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) displayed on the website page to make customers believe in the concept of their sharia hotels.

Meanwhile, Syariah Hotel Solo has a strong branding through its website with the domain name "Syariah" which must show the concept of sharia, hotel logo in the form of domes mosque and picture profile on the page "Home" shows hotel facilities in accordance with the rules of sharia mosques, prayer gear and pictures of female hotel employees wearing a hijab. Besides, Syariah Hotel Solo performs e-branding also through the YouTube platform with the account ID "PublicRelationSyariahHotelSolo" by uploading various hotel profile video showing starting from its employees who wear closed clothes and hijab, praying facilities, up to halal food provided. As for Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo's branding through online media by using the word "Syariah" and in its tagline "Islamic Boutique Hotel" which reinforce the concept of sharia it offers and various profile pictures shown by Islamic nuance like other hotels featuring the image of her female employee using the hijab. Similarly, Syariah Hotel Solo and Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo's branding also through the promotion of halal food brochures and video profile on their official Instagram account whose content that shows the concept of sharia.

The third strategy is about the partnership. According to Ibeh (2005) explained that a successful e-branding strategy is a collaborative strategy such as by starting strategic partnerships and partnerships with web portals and distributors; making information about resources or financial statements; promote and manage the website by registering it on the search engine system, displaying banner ads and adopting attractive web designs; customer relationship management with licensed e-mail marketing; ensuring superior messaging in

various marketing areas. The four hotels are the same in branding by partnering with several online travel agents (OTA) both nationally and internationally. Their partnership mapping is based on observations as follows in Table 2.

Table 2. E-Branding Partnership of Shariah Hotels in Indonesia

No.	Hotel	Partnership
1.	Sofyan Hotel Betawi (Hotel Bintang 3)	Tripadvisor, booking.com, agoda.com, traveloka.com, pegi-pegi.com, misteraladin.com, klikhotel.com
2.	The Rhadana Kuta Bali (Hotel Bintang 3)	Tripadvisor, booking.com, agoda.com,expedia.com, hotels.com, traveloka.com, pegi-pegi.com, trivago.com, hotelscombined.com , wotif.com , hotels.jetstar.com
3.	Hotel Syariah Solo (Hotel Bintang 4)	Tripadvisor, booking.com, agoda.com, traveloka, pegi-pegi.com, id.hotels.com, misteraladin.com
4.	Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo (Hotel Bintang 3)	Tripadvisor, booking.com, agoda.com, traveloka.com, pegi-pegi.com, misteraladin.com

Source: Data processed by researchers

Based on the research results, each hotel has a partnership with various online travel agents both domestic online travel agents and international online travel agents. Domestic travel agents consist of traveloka.com, pegi-pegi.com, misteraladin.com, and klikhotel.com. Meanwhile, international online travel agents consist of Tripadvisor, booking.com, agoda.com, exppedia.com, hotels.com, trivago.com, hotelscombined.com, wotif.com, hotels.jetstar.com, and id.hotels.com. In addition to the partnership, they have their website that provides their customers with booking services. Rhadana through the Accor Group website, Syariah Hotel Solo through Lor in International, and Azizah Syariah Hotel Solo through myhorison.com, while Sofyan Hotel Betawi through Sofyan Group. Each of the sharia hotels is back to their company group. Through these websites groups, the customer could compare the price with other hotel members either sharia hotels or conventional hotels.

The fourth strategy, related to display advertising and the promotion content, the four sharia hotels more use their Instagram to be more up-to-date in addition to its website. It is supported by the statement of General Manager of Hotel Aziza Solo that the current era of Instagram becomes the favorite media for branding and promotion. The reason for using this Instagram is that it is easier to use for the user through the smartphone and more interesting in terms of visual and messaging services more interactive. Based on observation, the four hotels indeed use Instagram as the most up-to-date online media for branding. Meanwhile, Twitter is considering the limitations of characters and Facebook that is too broad (difficult to be specialized) which then it was felt not quite effective in online branding. E-Branding through promotions is made through brochures and advertisements shared through websites and social media networks that are more visible on halal food and beverage as well as stay packages with Islamic nuances. Related to hotel promo is also more emphasized on its OTA with the aim of customers can comparing the various prices of sharia hotels with other hotels in a group of companies.

The last strategy is related to the interactivity dimension in branding to create two-way communication and user control. The hotel website design needs to provide a two-way interaction system for its users so that when they use the website it will recognize the brand and accept its brand positively. The existence of interactivity helps build a positive opinion on the brand as well as will affect the individual who can assume the website is valuable. (Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2016, 189-190). Hoteliers and brand managers should recognize the significance of interactivity-linked website features such as chat rooms, bulletin

boards, online shopping, feedback mechanisms, navigation tools, search options, and location maps. (Barreda, 2014: 175). Interactivity system built more hotels on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, twitter, youtube, and mobile application that does provide interactive columns between corporate users with its potential customer. Sofyan Hotel Betawi provides mobile application Line and Whatsapp, it will facilitate the customer in getting to know the hotel with all products and facilities personally without the term pending. Through mobile applications, customers can also freely communicate directly with the hotel, asking about various things related to the hotel according to their needs without being limited by space and time. In contrast to Facebook, Instagram, and twitter which the form of interaction tends not to be like a chatroom. The given feedback will be longer than Whatsapp and Line.

This interactive system is also visible from the hyperlink which is provided on the hotel's website; it is connected with twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Especially Sofyan Hotel Betawi website provides google maps links that provide navigation of hotel locations and TripAdvisor. Meanwhile, The Rhadana provides hotel newsletter delivery facilities via personal email customers for promotional updates or exclusive offers from the hotel. Based on the results of the discussion, the framework of e-branding strategy undertaken by Sharia hotels can be formed as the below figure 1:

Figure 1. E-Branding Strategy of Sharia Hotel
(Source: Data processed by Researcher)

The Challenges of Sharia Hotels in e-Branding

The challenges faced by Halal Tourism especially the hotel itself is how they serve non-Muslim tourists and meet their needs without clashing with the Islamic rules. Besides, some hotels said that if on their website they display sharia contents will make it unattractive to non-Muslim tourists. However, it can be a business opportunity to use their creativity and flexibility in serving the diverse needs of Muslims and non-Muslims. Moreover, in the proper use of social networking and marketing programs geographically it is a challenge in this market. Geographic marketing programs should be designed and distributed to the targets where the majority of Muslims are located, both in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. (Battour & Ismail, 2016: 153)

Although the government provides halal certification rules for hotels and restaurants, the industry is still hesitant to implement it because they assume it is Halal and there is no need for certification. (COMCEC[a], 2016: 55) There is still a constraint in implementing sharia tourism that needs to be addressed; it is the aspect of halal certification on their products. The number

of restaurants and hotels that guarantee halal food is still rare. Many suggestions in the hotel kitchen there is should provide a separation between halal and non-halal food. (Kemenpar, 2015). Therefore, the perception and commitment of the sharia hotel itself becomes a big challenge for destination marketers and planning halal tourism.

Besides, the challenge also comes from its public perception that identifies that the Sharia Hotel is only willing to accept Muslim tourists only. Based on the results of research, sharia hotels are not only segmented in the Muslim tourist market but more universal. As stated by General Manager of Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo that the segment of sharia hotels not only on the Muslims but also open to non-Muslims, it's just for the service facility will still be served according to Islamic rules or halal standards. However, for now, there are still few people who can accept the existence of sharia hotels because, with the word "sharia", customers are sometimes still afraid to choose it with the thought that hotel rules will be so strict. This challenge encourages Sharia hotels to be stronger in sharing brand knowledge related to sharia hotel market segmentation.

The Influence of e-Branding in Indonesia's Sharia Hotel Industry

The results showed that e-branding will be known as brand awareness and brand image of the hotel. Brand image can be viewed through the social media platform and OTA which becomes the hotel partner. Through the rate of partnership owned OTA, the four hotels have a rate ranging from 7.6 / 10 to 8.6 / 10. The rate indicates that the majority of tourists who have used the sharia hotels provide good reviews. Despite the concept of sharia, it appears that through Instagram photos which are not only Muslim tourists who stay but also non-Muslim tourists, especially foreign tourists, many of them choose sharia hotels such as The Rhadana, Sofyan Hotel Betawi and Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo as their accommodation choice.

In fact, for its uniqueness of Rhadana, despite having the halal label, the hotel guests are mostly foreign tourists from non-Muslim countries like South Korea, Australia, Netherlands, and Russia (mendunia.id, 2017). Brand awareness has been created not only on Muslim tourists in Indonesia but also has come to foreign tourists who are non-Muslims. The implementation of e-branding sharia hotels is also different from conventional hotels. The e-Branding of Sharia hotels is done from an Islamic perspective, so it must conform to Islamic rules. The practice is while e-branding, promotion carried by da'wah (carry out with devotion of Islamic teachings). As stated by General Manager of Aziza Syariah Hotel, foreign tourists choose sharia hotels because they like the serenity given by the Hotel Sharia. This is indeed remembering the Islamic rules every time praying time is heard, they are not doing activities that provide peace and provide a clean and comfortable environment in accordance with Islamic Sharia.

CONCLUSION

This research can be concluded that e-branding strategy of Sharia Hotel in Indonesia consists of effective online media selecting; brand identity management through the website and social media network starting from the logo, domain name, tagline, image gallery; partnerships with web portals and online travel agents; displaying advertising and promotion content; and online interaction space management through social media networks. As a sharia-based hotel has challenges that must be faced, ranging from the lack of brand awareness related to the sharia hotel segmentation that is universal not only on Muslim tourists only. And, the assumption of the hotel itself by showing the concept of hotel sharia will be difficult to attract tourists because of the mind-set that still exists in the public that sharia hotels are full of strict Islamic rules. Nevertheless, effective e-branding through online media in the Sharia hotel industry is proven can build a positive image, and not only Muslim tourists who have known sharia hotels, but some non-Muslim tourists also have brand awareness in the existence of Sharia Hotel.

This study has a limitation in interview data only from Aziza Syariah Hotel Solo so that less exploring the point of view of sharia hotels. Besides, the e-branding effect on the hospitality industry is still not too deep data obtained. Therefore, further research is expected to make mapping of Sharia hotels in Indonesia as a whole. Further research can also be added by conducting a deeper analysis specifically related to brand awareness, brand image, and

brand equity of domestic and foreign tourists, Muslim and non-Muslim tourists. Research can be done with qualitative and quantitative with a large number of respondents to get valid results.

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