How Islamic Securities Crowdfunding Platforms Attract Prospective Investors to SMEs: Insights from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the extent to which outbound Islamic brands encourage Muslim and non-Muslim investors to invest in Islamic FinTech securities crowdfunding (SCF) with perceived trust as a mediating variable. This study includes the results of an online survey of two hundred and twenty-five investors. Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis was employed to test the statistical hypothesis. This study shows that outbound Islamic brands are the main drivers for Muslim and non-Muslim investors to invest in Islamic securities crowdfunding platforms using smartphones, and brands that are perceived well by investors can also increase trust in SCF. On the other hand, The mediating effect of perceived trust is proven to have a significant impact on investment interest; thus, this finding provides in-depth insights for investors regarding effective investment strategies and encourages them to have more confidence in the potential of the FinTech market.

Keywords: *Investor; Islamic securities crowdfunding; trust; outbound Islamic brand; and intention to invest.*

INTRODUCTION

The growth of securities crowdfunding (SCF), as Tan et al. (2021) predicted, has been an important innovation in financial technology. It opens up new opportunities for investors and entrepreneurs, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to collaborate in financing businesses in the real sector, which involves many workers. SCF has great potential to become

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an innovative alternative financial market, providing new opportunities for investors as an investment medium and for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to access more flexible and affordable financing (Nguyen & Dang, 2022). In his study, Gupta et al. (2024) argued that SCF has a crucial role, especially in low-income and developing countries, because it can provide access to broader and more affordable financing sources for entrepreneurs and start-ups. In these countries, where formal financial systems are often limited, SCF offers an alternative solution that allows for obtaining funds without relying on traditional financial institutions. Using digital technology, SCF even increases financial inclusion, empowers local communities, and encourages more equitable economic growth in countries with high economic challenges (Baber, 2020).

This is relevant considering the large number of SMEs that are the backbone of the economy in developing countries but are often constrained by financing. Unfortunately, although SCF is an alternative to strengthen SME financing, the fact is that the majority of SME managers do not fully understand, or are not even aware of, the existence of SCF products (Raden Aji Haqqi, 2020). Most business managers are not yet aware of alternative financing that can provide convenience and flexibility compared to traditional financial financing sources. In addition, the public has not yet utilized the SCF marketplace as a platform for investment. This may be due to a lack of education about the benefits of SCF and how its investment mechanism can provide benefits for both entrepreneurs and investors. Optimizing the use of SCF will create a more inclusive and sustainable financing system in developing countries such as Indonesia. Otoritas Jasa Keuangan (2024) noted a positive trend in investment on the SCF platform, with the number of investors increasing from 129,958 in 2022 to 168,068 in 2023 and total funds collected soaring from IDR661.32 billion to IDR1,043.81 billion. However, data from the 2023 Financial Technology Consumer Survey shows that only 29.59% of total Financial Technology users in Indonesia invest in the SCF platform, much lower than other financial investment products (Pernando, 2023). In fact, sharia SCF investments are even smaller in number, reflecting the inequality in the adoption of financial technology in the country. Sharia SCF is one of the investment products that attract attention in Indonesia, a country with the largest Muslim majority in the world, with a collaborative approach to raising funds to finance SMEs through the issuance of shares and sukuk based on sharia principles. Indonesia is expected to be a pioneer and at the forefront in encouraging the growth of the global Sharia economy through this sharia

SCF investment scheme (Pernando, 2023) (FinTech, n.d.). This hope arose in response to the fact that, although Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, it lags behind Malaysia and Saudi Arabia in the development of the sharia economy. Indonesia is also ranked fifth in the world's sharia FinTech market, with a value of US$6.1 billion. However, it remains below Malaysia, which is ranked third largest globally with a sharia FinTech market value of US$11.1 billion. The Global Islamic FinTech Report at the end of 2023 released data that there are several obstacles to the growth of sharia FinTech in Indonesia, including the problem of human resources who are not yet digitally savvy. Furthermore, collaboration between banking and FinTech still needs to be improved to support the growth of sharia FinTech (Ali et al., 2021). For this, cooperation and support are needed from the parties involved, such as the Financial Services Authority (OJK, *Otoritas Jasa Keuangan*), the Indonesian capital market, and the sharia FinTech association.

From an investor's perspective, several obstacles hinder the growth of sharia FinTech, especially sharia SCF. One of the main challenges is investment in sharia SCF, whose funds are channeled to SMEs, considering that SME businesses generally have low liquidity levels, making this investment more long-term and riskier. (Teichmann et al., 2023) revealed the low interest in investing because the majority of people consider the SCF platform to be a high-risk investment platform and has the potential to be used as a place for money laundering and fraud for irresponsible parties. Furthermore, the risks arising from the investment are entirely borne by the investor, and the potential for investors to lose investment funds is very high (Mustafida et al., 2021). Given the low public interest in investing in the sharia SCF platform, strategic steps need to be taken immediately, one of which is improving the brand image attached to sharia SCF investments. This is because Muslims tend to be more interested in brands that reflect the values of their religion (Bastomi & Nurhidayah, 2024); (Majid, 2024). By building the right sharia brand image, an emotional bond can be created between potential investors and the brand, which in turn will strengthen the identity and increase the attractiveness of the sharia brand in the eyes of the public (Bukhari & Isa, 2020). However, sharia brands provide a number of significant benefits for investment products, especially in the FinTech sector, which focuses on sharia principles (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Many Muslim consumers prefer products or services that comply with sharia principles, such as halal, fair, and not detrimental. By building a sharia brand, companies can meet the needs of the growing market in countries with

large Muslim populations, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, or the Middle East, known as the inbound Islamic brand. In order for a business to reach a broad and potential market segment, it is necessary to build a brand that is not only intended for Muslims, but non-Muslims can also participate as investors in sharia investment products known as outbound Islamic sharia (Bukhari & Isa, 2020; Wilson & Liu, 2010). By building a sharia brand, the sharia SCF platform can create a clear differentiation in the FinTech market. In many industries, competition is fierce, and having a sharia certification or label can be a differentiating factor that makes the platform's products or services stand out from competitors who do not focus on sharia principles. Muslim and non-Muslim consumers tend to trust products that are not only halal but also pay attention to aspects of justice, welfare, and social responsibility. In addition, Sharia brands that are proven to be in accordance with sharia principles can increase consumer trust (Jan & Shafiq, 2021). The SCF platform demonstrates its commitment to strong moral principles by building a sharia brand. Building a clear and consistent sharia brand not only strengthens the company's marketing message but also provides a more structured direction in communicating the values adopted by the business platform to potential investors so that they can easily understand the company's commitment to ethical principles and social responsibility. Furthermore, the company can demonstrate its seriousness in implementing business practices in accordance with sharia norms, such as fairness, transparency, and sustainability, which, of course, provides a sense of security and confidence for investors to invest with a trusted Sharia brand. This, in turn, not only expands the market reach but also creates positive synergy between the platform and investors in order to achieve common goals that are sustainable and profitable. Previous studies have shown that trust and intention to use sharia FinTech have a positive and substantial correlation (Saadah & Setiawan, 2024).

This study refers to the opinions of Aziz et al. (2019), who suggested re-examining the role of trust as a mediator in investment decisions. Based on this, this study aims to re-examine the concept that previous researchers have built, that the higher a person's level of trust, the greater the interest in investing in sharia SCF, with the support of effective product branding that reaches all levels of society. The role of trust as a strong mediator in the relationship between sharia brands and investment interests is critical. A good and trusted brand not only attracts attention but also builds public confidence and trust. In the context of investment, people need assurance that their financial decisions are in accordance with trustworthy sharia principles.

People will hesitate to invest without having strong trust in the brand, even if it has a good reputation. Therefore, trust is the key that connects brand quality with investment decisions taken.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Behavioral Intention to Invest

The Theory of Planned Behavior or TPB explains that a person's actions are directly influenced by behavioral intentions, which are influenced by three main components: attitudes toward a particular behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2020). The approach used is the TPB because it emphasizes the aspects of individual behavior in making purchase decisions (Hasyim & Purnasari, 2021). In the financial context, various behavioral studies have used this theory as a framework to predict individual financial decision-making (Thanki et al., 2024), and the study confirmed its effectiveness as a comprehensive conceptual framework, including in the FinTech scheme (Hwang & Lee, 2020). Thus, TPB is an effective medium for understanding individual behavior in the financial context, especially decision-making related to investment. Next, intention plays a significant role in a person's decision-making, including in the context of investment and technology use. Individual intentions are influenced by various factors, especially technology-related ones (Dawood et al., 2022). In addition, Nainggolan and Handayani (2023) proposed a hypothetical model to understand individual intentions to use Online Capital Market Investment Platforms, including SCF as a capital market organizer other than the Indonesian Capital Market or IDX. This study shows that brand sharia and perceived trust are key interrelated factors, forming dimensions that have a major influence on user intentions to engage in financial technology SCF, as in sharia brands that affect investment interest.

Outbound Islamic Brand

The concept of Islamic branding is now increasingly developing in the academic world. Initially, Islamic marketing was used as a general term that encompassed the entire life cycle and product strategy for Muslim consumers (Alharbi et al., 2022). However, as academic attention increased, Islamic branding was considered a separate concept from Islamic marketing and was adopted by academics in the financial field to enrich studies related to investment product brands. In order to reach non-Muslim investors, the

term outbound Islamic brand has been developed to brand sharia investment products (Baehaqi et al., 2023). The term outbound Islamic brand was first introduced by Wilson et al. (2010), and it illustrates that creating a brand attached to a product must be based on the target market. After all, a person prefers a brand that reflects their perceived self-image. They buy a brand not only for its functional benefits but also to fulfill their self-image needs through the fulfillment of symbolic benefits through the brand. Investors' interest in sharia

brands or halal has created a need to understand how sharia brand image contributes to the emotional bond between investors and the chosen brand (Bawono & Saputra, 2021). This, in turn, strengthens the influence of sharia brands on individual behavior (Bukhari & Isa, 2020). A strong brand can influence investor behavior by reminding them of the brand's qualities, leading to better evaluation and increasing their interest. In the context of investing in the capital market, the higher the investor's trust in a brand, the greater its influence on the investor's attitude toward investing in that brand (Kok, 2020). Based on this description, the first hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

H1: Outbound Islamic brands have a positive effect on the intention to invest.

The impact of sharia brands on trust felt by investors is very significant (Husin et al., 2023) because the more often investors interact with a brand, the higher their level of recognition and comfort with the brand. This brand familiarity can build a positive perception, which in turn increases the level of investor trust in the integrity, quality, and compliance of the brand with sharia principles. In sharia financial, trust is a key factor (Ahmed et al., 2022). A well-known and proven investment product brand can provide investors with a sense of security and confidence. High trust is driven by investor familiarity with a particular brand. Sharia brand refers to the identity of a brand that adheres to Islamic values so that investor trust in sharia brands is formed because they believe that the brand not only offers profitable products but also complies with Islamic moral and ethical principles.

H2: Outbound Islamic brands have a positive effect on perceived trust.

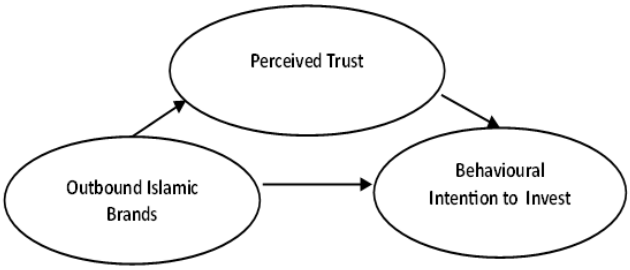
Perceived Trust

The concept of trust has been applied in various business fields to understand various investor behavior patterns in depth, such as trust in financial institutions (Cruijsen et al., 2023). For example, how trust in pension institutions can increase the perception of the adequacy of pension savings. Thus, the likelihood of investors to invest is positively related to their level of trust, indicating that trust has a significant impact on investment decisions (Rahardja et al., 2023). The literature also shows that trust also shapes behavioral intentions (Fanea-Ivanovici & Baber, 2021). However, (Lai et al., 2022) found that perceived trust has an insignificant relationship with investors' investment decisions. The insignificant relationship between perceived trust and investors' investment decisions suggests the possibility of other constructs that may distort the direct relationship. Therefore, trust alone is insufficient for investors to invest in the stock market. The insignificant relationship may be due to the direct relationship between trust and investment decisions; thus, this study examines the role of perceived trust as a mediator between the relationship between outbound Islamic brands and investment decisions.

H3: Perceived trust has a significant positive effect on the desire to invest.

The Mediator Perceived Trust in Behaviour Intention to Invest

Trust in using financial business models through mobile technology is a crucial factor in the context of FinTech because this trust acts as a mediator that influences the intention to adopt various FinTech business models (Dawood et al., 2022). Without strong trust, a person will hesitate to adopt digital financial services, even if the technology offered is very innovative, so the mediating role of trust will greatly determine a person's behavior (Singh & Sinha, 2020). Therefore, building trust in the security, transparency, and reliability of FinTech services is very important to increase interest in investing in the sharia SCF FinTech platform; therefore, it will create a digital ecosystem. The power of trust as a mediator has also been proven by Handayani et al. (2023), that cryptocurrencies supported by blockchain technology with all the features that guarantee investor security so that they are able to build strong trust in the technology so that cryptocurrency transactions remain stable even though investors are still worried about regulation and volatility of cryptocurrencies whose legal status is unclear. Thus, this study proposes a new hypothesis.



H4: Perceived trust acts as a mediator between outbound Islamic brands and behavior intention to invest.

Figure 1 *Schematic Diagram of the Study*

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a quantitative study with outbound Islamic branding as an exogenous variable, perceived trust as a mediating variable, and behavioral intention to invest as an endogenous variable. The outbound Islamic brand variable is measured using five items modified from the outbound Islamic brand concept of Wilson et al. (2010) and Alharbi et al. (2022). The perceived trust variable is measured using six items modified from the findings of (Almaiah et al., 2023). Finally, the intention to invest is measured by two items, which are a development of the concept of Ahn et al. (2007) and Alsmadi et al. (2024) by measuring how much investor interest is in investing in the sharia SCF platform in the future. This item is the most recent item compared to previous research. Thirteen items are arranged based on investors' views on investment interest, as seen from the effectiveness of brand delivery and investor psychology, namely investor trust in the sharia SCF investment platform. Each variable is assessed using a Likert scale of 1-5, namely 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The higher the number shown, the higher the score of the variable.

Data were collected through a survey by distributing online questionnaires on platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, using the snowball sampling method to reach more respondents. Data were collected from prospective investors in Indonesia for one month using self-completed questionnaires, and 225 questionnaires were used for SmartPLS data analysis.

Outer Model Test or Measurement Models

The outer model or measurement model functions to evaluate the level of validity and reliability of the instrument. The validity test aims to ensure that each respondent understands each item used in the instrument. The test is analyzed using two approaches, namely discriminant validity and convergent validity. Discriminant validity will be valid if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is more than 0.5 and can be evaluated with a cross-loading factor Hair et al. (2010); Usakli & Kucukergin, 2018). Convergent validity can be measured through the loading factor value and is declared valid if it has a loading value of more than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). Next, reliability measures the reliability of the instrument being studied, and it is said to be reliable if Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.5 and Composite reliability is more than 0.7. Thus, with the analysis of validity and reliability, it can be ensured that each instrument being studied functions properly and reliably.

Inner Model Test

There are three statistical tests used to evaluate the strength of the proposed model, namely the R-square test (R2), prediction relevance (Q2), and goodness of fit (GoF) to obtain insight into the effectiveness of the model in explaining the variables studied. After conducting the analysis, the next step is to conduct a hypothesis test to determine the extent to which the proposed model is able to explain the relationship between variables with a high level of accuracy.

Table 1 *Construct and Measurement Items*

Construct	Code	Items
Outbound Islamic Brands (OIB) (Wilson et al., 2010)	OIB1	Small and medium entreprises listed on the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform communicate messages consistent with sharia values.
	OIB2	The names of small and medium enterprises listed on the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform are easy to remember
	OIB3	The visual design of the values displayed by small and medium entreprises listed on the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform is very clear
	OIB4	Small and medium entreprises listed on the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform have a positive image

	OIB5	Although the MSME brands listed on the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform follow sharia principles, the platform remains open to all religious groups
Perceived Trust (PT) (Hayashi & Bradford, 2014)	PT1	I believe that small and medium entreprises business listed on the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform have complied with sharia principles
	PT2	I believe the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform is very user-friendly
	PT3	I believe the security system of the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform is very well maintained
	PT4	I believe that small and medium enterprises business performance information is easily accessible on the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform
	PT5	I believe the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform will make it easier to monitor the use of funds invested in small and medium enterprises
	PT6	I believe that investing thorough the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform contributes to the development of small and medium enterprises
Behavioral Intention to Invest (BII) (Ahn et al., 2007)	BII1	I am interested in investing in the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform in the future
	BII2	In the next wekk, I am commitment opportunities in the the Islamic securities crowdfunding platform

RESULTS

Outer Model

The outer model test is an important step in assessing the validity and reliability of the research instrument, as in Table 2. The factor loading of all indicators shows a value greater than 0.7, which means that all indicators have met the requirements for convergent validity. Next, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of all latent variables has a value greater than 0.5, indicating that these indicators are able to explain the latent variables well. The factor loading for each indicator in the latent construct has a value greater than the indicator value when assessing other latent constructs.

This confirms that the AVE measurement and factor cross-loading meet the requirements for discriminant validity.

Tabel 2. *Validity and Reliability*

Latent variable	Indicators	Loading	Discriminant Validity	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
OIB	OIB 1	0.811	Ya (0,869)	0,918	0, 939	0,754
	OIB 2	0.878				
	OIB 3	0.908				
	OIB 4	0.844				
	OIB 5	0.898				
PT	PT1	0.900	Ya (0,854)	0,875	0,915	0,729
	PT2	0.881				
	PT4	0.778				
	PT6	0.852				
BII	BII1	0.863	Ya (0,863)	0,886	0,921	0,745
	BII 2	0.876				
	BII 3	0.827				
	BII 4	0.884				

Inner Model

Model testing is used to determine whether the model proposed in this study matches or is suitable for the model and data. The model test results are as follows:

Tabel 3. R^2 Q^2 and GOF

	R^2	Q^2	GoF
Behavioural Intention to Invest	0.722	0.945	0.753
Perceived Trust	0.803		

Predictive relevance (Q2) = 1-(1-0.722) (1-0.803) = 0.945
Goodness of Fit (GoF) = √ (0.743 x 0.763 = 0.753

The research model shows strong results with a predictive relevance value or Q2 of 0.945> 0.35, indicating that each independent variable has significant predictive power on the dependent variable. In addition, the Goodness of Fit (GoF) value of 0.753, which exceeds 0.38, confirms a good match between the observation data and the expected frequency. Thus, the

inner model analysis shows that this model is worthy of use in further studies. Figures and tables of analysis results with SmartPLS 2.0 with bootstrapping are as follows:

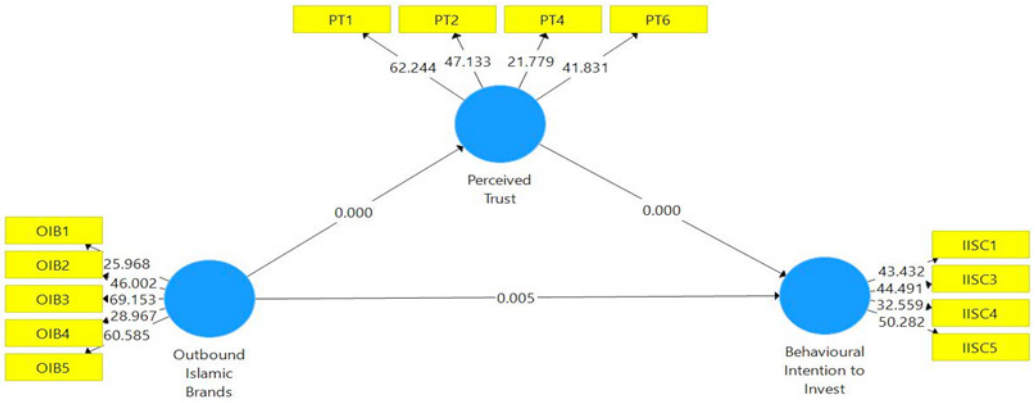


Figure 2 *Hypothesis Model Framework*

The results presented in Table 4 show a statistically significant relationship between outbound Islamic brands, perceived trust, and behavioral intention to invest. Outbound Islamic brands and behavioral intention to invest show a positive relationship, with a p-value of less than 0.05 (0.005). In addition, perceived trust has a significant relationship with the intention to invest, with a p-value of 0.000. Next, a significant relationship also occurs between perceived trust and intention to invest. Thus, all hypotheses formulated in this study receive strong support. This finding indicates that the visual design that displays the values of SMEs registered on the sharia SCF platform is very attractive and clear so that it is easy to understand; this is the main driver for prospective investors to immediately invest in one of the sharia SCF platforms (H1). In addition, H2 H3 was also confirmed because it showed that the sharia principles increased interest in immediately investing in sharia SCF. H3 was also accepted because prospective investors strongly believe that the values of the visual design displayed are in accordance with sharia principles. The significant results of the indirect effect test represented by H4 further confirm that perceived trust functions as a mediating factor in the relationship between outbound Islamic brands and intention to invest. Thus, perceived trust has an important role in mediating the influence of outbound Islamic Brands on intention to invest.

Tabel 4. *Direct and Indirect Effect*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Direct Effect					
Outbound Islamic Brands -> Behavioural Intention to Invest	0.278	0.276	0.099	2.809	0.005
Outbound Islamic Brands -> Perceived Trust	0.896	0.896	0.014	64.109	0.000
Perceived Trust -> Behavioural Intention to Invest	0.592	0.593	0.097	0.081	0.000
Indirect Effect					
Outbound Islamic Brands -> Behavioural Intention to Invest	0.530	0.532	0.090	5.891	0.000

DISCUSSION

The results presented in Table 4 show a statistically significant relationship between outbound Islamic brands, perceived trust, and behavioral intention to invest. Outbound Islamic brands and behavioral intention to invest show a positive relationship, with a p-value of less than 0.05 (0.005). In addition, perceived trust has a significant relationship with the intention to invest, with a p-value of 0.000. Next, a significant relationship also occurs between perceived trust and intention to invest. Thus, all hypotheses formulated in this study receive strong support. This finding indicates that the visual design that displays the values of SMEs registered on the sharia SCF platform is very attractive and clear so that it is easy to understand; this is the main driver for prospective investors to immediately invest in one of the sharia SCF platforms (H1). In addition, H2 H3 was also confirmed because it showed that the sharia principles increased interest in immediately investing in sharia SCF. H3 was also accepted because prospective investors strongly believe that the values of the visual design displayed are in accordance with sharia principles. The significant results of the indirect effect test represented by H4 further confirm that perceived trust functions as a mediating factor in the relationship between outbound Islamic brands and intention to invest. Thus, perceived trust has an important role in mediating the influence of outbound Islamic brands on intention to invest.

Outbound Islamic brands have a significant influence on investment intention, indicating that a memorable SCF platform with a clear message and positive image can increase the interest of potential investors. The strong visual design of small and medium enterprises registered on the SCF platform is a key factor in attracting potential investors. This finding is in line with the Islamic brand theory, which emphasizes that Islamic brands have a close relationship with individual behavior. However, the role of Islamic brands in investment growth on the sharia SCF platform is crucial, considering the risks inherent in SCF instruments, so strategic steps are needed, such as providing more affordable investment value offers for novice investors (Majid, 2024). Thus, the power of narrative and proper representation can encourage more people to engage in investments based on sharia principles. Islamic brands are a reality because Islamic brands not only offer products but also create truths that guide a person's behavior and invite them to a better life. Meanwhile, investors involved in the investment process will feel that the actions taken are part of worship (Bukhari & Isa, 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of companies invest in building brands as a medium to communicate messages to the public, especially the younger generation as the user base of financial investment platforms (Santos et al., 2023).

Large brand investments are made so that brands are easily recognized and get a positive image from the public (Oc et al., 2023). in the majority of Muslim-majority countries, brands are important considering the existence of sharia law that regulates whether or not a Muslim can interact with certain products, including investing. In most countries with Muslim populations, brands become something important considering the existence of sharia law that regulates whether a Muslim is allowed to interact with certain products, including investing. Even now, Islamic brands attached to products are closely related to everyday lifestyles. However, in some non-Muslim majority countries, Muslim communities pay less attention to Islamic brand products, so they focus on benefits (Singkheeprapha et al., 2022). While in Muslim-majority countries, awareness of sharia labels on investment products is a major concern. This finding indicates differences in lifestyle patterns of Muslim communities in several countries.

On the other hand, Islamic investment brands, especially SCF, are very open to non-Muslims or outbound Islamic brands. This can be seen from the strength of the Islamic brand, the higher the individual's interest in investing. In other words, if a brand based on sharia principles is able to build a good image and communicate these values effectively in the marketplace application, investors will

be more interested in investing their capital in the brand. Investors who tend to choose products or brands that are in accordance with Islamic principles, such as halal, ethics, and transparency, tend to be more trustful in investing in these brands because they consider these brands not only to bring material benefits but also to contribute to the spread of the values they believe in (Aji & Muslichah, 2023).

In addition to increasing investment interest, the outbound Islamic brand is also able to increase investor trust in investing in the SCF marketplace. In addition to increasing investment demand, the outbound Islamic brand is also able to increase investor confidence in investing in the SCF marketplace because it offers transparency, ethics, and compliance with Islamic principles that are the basis for every sharia investment transaction. The next thing that is the basis of public trust is the belief that investment in sharia SCF can help SMEs as a manifestation of crowdfunding to help the community's economy (Kautonen et al., 2020). In addition to technical aspects, such as performance information and ease in monitoring the use of funds, the Islamic Securities Crowdfunding platform makes it easier for SMEs to access this data more efficiently. The information contained in the SCF brand is an attraction for investors because they feel safe spending a certain amount of funds to finance SMEs, the majority of which are growing businesses and face several obstacles, especially those related to funding, human resources, unprofessional financial management, unclear organizational structures so that trust becomes the primary foundation for investors. This is in line with the findings of Gama and Pedroso (2024) that trust in spending a certain amount of funds for long-term funding requires high trust from individuals.

However, investors want clear and easy-to-understand information related to SME business performance data, risks, revenue projections, or guarantees that can be provided. This attraction comes from how the information is conveyed so that investors feel more confident and interested in investing their funds because they are used appropriately by the funded business (Ali et al., 2021; Dowling et al., 2019). The meaning contained in the explanation is that investors, especially Muslims, choose to invest in instruments that comply with sharia principles because it provides certainty that their funds are managed in accordance with their religious values. This reduces concerns about the moral and ethical aspects of their investments (Sudaryanti & Bastomi, 2023). Trust is also influenced by the guarantee of transparency and stricter supervision of Islamic-based investment products or platforms, providing investors with a sense of security. Trust is a crucial element in the investment world. Investors tend to invest more in products or platforms that they trust. In this case, this study shows that if a

brand can identify itself based on sharia principles, it will attract more investors, including non-Muslims who will believe in the security and compliance with sharia and prioritize ethical and moral aspects in investing (Baehaqi et al., 2023).

Next, high trust from investors in the sharia principles applied in SCF will be a key factor in encouraging increased interest in investing because this trust creates confidence that the invested funds will be managed with high transparency, comply with sharia rules, and avoid elements that are considered *haram*. In addition, transparency in fund management and compliance with ethics based on Islamic law provides a sense of security for investors; thus, they are more confident in investing their funds on the SCF platform because it can provide fair returns in accordance with the principles of justice (Bastomi & Sudaryanti, 2024). The growth of FinTech has urged FinTech platforms, especially Islamic SCF platforms, to better understand investor perceptions and behavior in choosing investment platforms. We explore how investor perceptions of trust in Islamic SCF platforms affect investment interest (Xia et al., 2023), considering the risks inherent in Islamic SCF are borne by investors because the Islamic SCF financing mechanism channeled to SMEs is full of liquidity problems so that investors must carefully assess investment opportunities offered by Islamic SCF platforms to ensure compliance with their investment objectives. In addition, investors must also consider compliance with sharia principles, which require compliance with Islamic law. However, according to Ali et al. (2021), the increasing level of trust in the use of technology, driven by the progress of innovation and evidence of its successful implementation in various sectors, especially the FinTech sector, has great potential to change people's behavior and perceptions towards digital investment, because it offers ease in investing. The central role of trust in the relationship between outbound Islamic brands and investment interest is very important because a high level of trust from potential investors in the values and principles of sharia applied by the brand can form a strong foundation for their investment decisions (Thanki et al., 2024). This trust ensures that investors feel confident that their investments will not only provide financial benefits but also be in line with Islamic ethics and rules that prioritize justice, transparency, and social responsibility, thus increasing interest in investing in brands consistent with these principles.

Mediation will help to provide a clear explanation of the operations and business strategies carried out by the sharia SCF platform. This explanation can include the financing process, security guarantees, and transparency of investment profit sharing, all of which must be aligned with sharia principles. If investors feel that the sharia SCF platform is truly implementing the principles

they believe in, trust will grow and strengthen (Bae & Kim, 2023). Sharia SCF platforms that use mediation as a way to build trust will gain greater recognition in the market. The platform's reputation will increase because investors feel that the platform is trustworthy and adheres to sharia principles. In addition, Aloqool and Alsmairat (2022) explained that this good reputation will ultimately attract more investors to join, increase the flow of funds, and optimize the development of the platform.

CONCLUSION

Islamic brands have a strong connection with individual behavior, in accordance with Islamic brand theory. The power of narrative and proper representation can encourage more people to engage in sharia investment, making Islamic brands not only product providers but also as guides to a better life. For investors, investing through this brand is felt as part of worship, contributing to a positive view of the brand. Therefore, the role of Islamic brands is crucial in driving investment growth on the sharia SCF platform.

Trust plays a vital role in enhancing investors' sense of security and confidence, creating an environment that supports more positive investment decisions. Therefore, developing a strong and transparent Islamic brand is essential to drive investment growth in SCFs that are compliant with sharia principles. This study shows that a positive brand can significantly influence investors' intention to invest in SCF platforms, highlighting the importance of building trust in the context of sharia-compliant investment by exploring how trust functions as a mediator.

It is also recommended that the sharia SCF platform build brands through Islamic brand associations because the presence of a halal logo or halal ingredients is not enough to create a strong Islamic brand; a holistic combination of various brand elements is needed to be adjusted to market conditions to win the hearts and minds of Muslim and non-Muslim investors.

LIMITATION

Due to the lack of prior research on similar topics, comparing the results of this study with those of previous studies is challenging. The selection of research variables is based on a theoretical framework that is generally accepted and often used to predict investor behavior. Therefore, both the theory used, and the selected research variables still have the potential to be further developed by subsequent researchers.

The approach adopted in this study, which introduces new antecedents to build an appropriate acceptance model for Muslim and non-Muslim investors, is highly relevant and can be a significant step forward in this line of research. Several variables exhibit significant potential to be investigated in order to ensure that the sharia brand developed can appeal to people of all religions. It includes social capital, the adoption of a halal lifestyle, consumer involvement in selecting halal products, and digital financial literacy. For further research, it is recommended to use a larger sample size; thus, the results are more representative of the target population. The limited number of participants in this study was due to time and cost factors that limited the implementation of the study.

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