

Balancing Religion and Profit in a Christian Church of Malaysia

Jeffery HO Vui Shing¹, Dr.LEE Kar Ling²

¹Lecturer, Department of Business and Financial Programmes, Sunway College Johor Bahru, Malaysia

²Associate Professor, Faculty of Business, Communication and Law, INTI International University, Malaysia

Abstract: This research study focuses on the Strategic Management Theory especially in Resource Based View (VRIO) theory for selected organization- Jabez Café. The core objective this research study is to study the application of Strategic Management Theory, especially Resource Based View (RBV) in religion owned businesses and find out the performance of religion based owned businesses that had applied Strategic Management theories especially Resource Based View (RBV) in a café as well as to study the balance between religion and profit in religion owned business that had implemented Strategic Management theory especially in Resource Based View (RBV) theory. Therefore, researcher will review the selected company in the context of RBV-VRIO context. Next, researcher had conducted semi-structured interview and the result shows RBV theory is applicable in religion owned businesses. In addition, religion owned business is practicable to balance between religion and profit if the organization had implemented Strategic Management theory especially in Resource Based View (RBV) theory.

Keyword: Case Study, Strategic Management, Resource Based View (RBV) theory, Sabah, Religion owned business

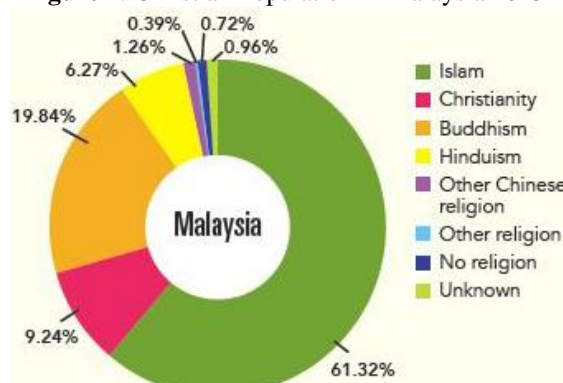
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I. Introduction

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society and as such, it has a variety of major religions such as Islam, Christian, Buddha, and Hindu. The Constitution of Malaysia 1957, Part 1, Article 3, clearly stated that, Islam is the religions for federal however others religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in part of the Federation (Commonlii.org, 2016). Pike (2016) also supported that, Islam is the officially religions for Malaysia as Malaysia is an Islamic country nevertheless other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity are allow to be practiced freely in many parts of Malaysia. Next, Williams (2014) defines Christian as a person who has received Christian baptism or is a believer in Jesus Christ and his teachings. According to Malaysia Government Statistics Department (2015), 9.2 percent of the Malaysian is Christian which is approximately 2.6 million people. Indexmundi.com (2015) also agreed that the percent of Christian in Malaysia is 9.2 percent which is the third larger religions group after Muslin and Buddhist. To add on, Penang Monthly (2015) stated that, the number of Christian in Peninsular Malaysia is 3.1 percent and 33.6 percent in East Malaysia, it means more than a third of population in Sabah and Sarawak are Christians.

Figure 1: Christian Population in Malaysia 2015



Source: Malaysia Government Statistics (2015)

Based on the record of Ccmalaysia.org (2016), Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM), The Anglican Diocese of Sabah, Sabah Provisional Annual Conference (Methodist Church) are the three largest Christian group in Sabah. Each church has at least 40,000 baptized church members. As Basel Christian Church

of Malaysia is one of large Christian group in East Malaysia, it had around 112 congregations in Sabah which includes the area of Kota Kinabalu, Tawau and Sandakan. Lutherworld.org (2016) also supported that, the number of baptized members in Basel Christian church of Malaysia is almost 60,000 people. With the huge numbers of members, Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (BCCM) decided to grow in outreach ministry by serving or providing services such as accommodation services, food and beverages services, outbound activities and organizing camps (Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, 2015).

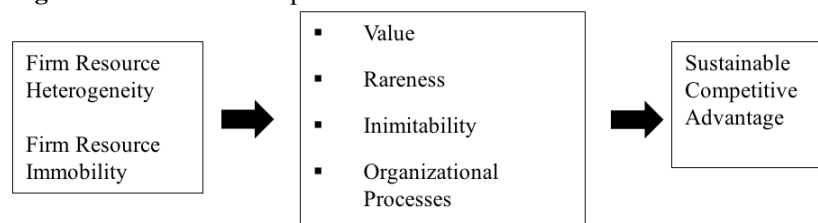
Jabez Resort, Jabez café, Shittim Camp-Outbound Activities and Life Impact Ministry are the Outreach Ministries that operate as Outreach Ministry of Basel Christian Church of Malaysia Chinese General Council Department. All the Outreach Ministries are operating as normal businesses with the mission of sharing gospel while providing services to non-believers. However, it is a challenge for the church to balance religions and profit as the objectives for the business are differences between normal businesses to maximize profit than religion orientation. Hence the need for this study to provide an insight into how the Church could strengthen its believer base, while simultaneously balance the income generating activities needed to continue to support the religious sharing. This research is aim to review from the religion owned based businesses' perspective of their use of strategic management theory especially management theory and management process, either knowingly or unknowingly, during the normal operation of all the outreach ministries especially Jabez café through their effort to maintain the balance between religions and profit. Therefore, to achieve the aim of this research, the objectives of this research are as followed:

- To study the application of Strategic Management Theory, especially Resource Based View (RBV) in religion owned businesses.
- To find out the performance of religion based owned businesses that had applied Strategic Management theories especially Resource Based View (RBV) in a café.
- To study the balance between religion and profit in religion owned business that had implemented Strategic Management theory especially in Resource Based View (RBV) theory.

II. Literature Review

According Ireland, Hoskisson and Hitt (2013), every organization will perform differently as each of the organization have different availability of unique resources (either tangible or intangible) and capabilities. This is supported by El Shafeey and Trott (2014), whereby firms persistently outperform than others by proactively maintained and created by firms through accumulating and/or acquiring their strategic resources. Based on the Resource Based View VRIN framework, organization must be able to possess resources that are immobile and heterogeneous in the form of valuable resources, rare to the market, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991) by confirming the importance of company's physical, human, organizational, intellectual and financial resources for company to be sustainable in competitive advantages (Talaja, 2012). In 1995, Barney changed from the VRIN framework to VRIO framework with the O (organization) as he realizes organization must be make full use of its resources and capabilities to be sustainable to be competitive advantage. To add on, the key idea of Resource Based View (RBV) is that performance is caused by internal environment, mainly by resources available for the organization to create sustainable competitive advantages (Bogdan, 2014). Which also agreed by Arend and Lévesque (2010) that Resource Based View theory is a practical theory for an organization.

Figure 2: The Relationship of Resource-Based View and VRIO framework.



Source: Barney (1991)

Figure 3: The VRIO framework by Barney (1991)

Is a resource or capability ...				Competitive implication	Economic performance
Valuable?	Rare?	Costly to imitate?	Exploited by the organization?		
No	-	-	No	Competitive disadvantage	Below normal
Yes	No	-	↑ ↓	Competitive parity	Normal
Yes	Yes	No		Temporary competitive advantage	Above normal
Yes	Yes	Yes		Sustained competitive advantage	Above normal

Source: Barney and Clark (2007)

Although Resource Based View is one of the major strategic management theories that widely been accepted, it is still never free from any criticism (Shafeey and Trott, 2014) such as the value (V) does not provide a systematic, clear, consistent and generally applicable conceptual basic for characterizing strategically valuable resources (Kraaijenbrink, Spender and Groen, 2010). Next, RBV and IO are the ground theory for management as Yin refers to the organization operates to identify those markets in which your company’s capabilities can yield competitive advantage and Yang refers to the organization that identify distinctive capabilities and surround them with a collection of reproducible capabilities or complementary assets, which enable the organization to sells its distinctive capabilities in the market it operates (Mou, 2003). As selected company is more related to Yin to gain competitive advantage, therefore RBV is selected for this study. However, there is no any management theories that can perfectly suitable to explain any business management performs as business is always operate in unknown and uncertainty environment (Otley, 2012).

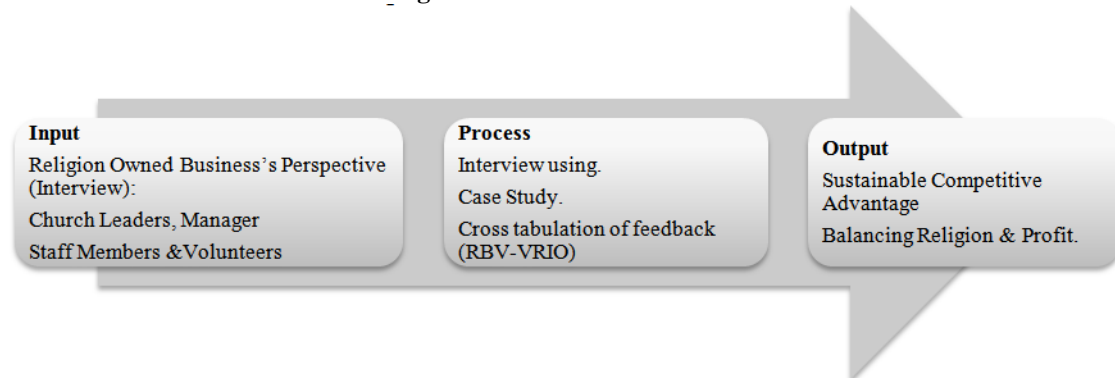
III. Research Methodology

According to Zikmund et. al. (2013), there is no best research design for any research; however, a good research design must be able to identify the methods and procedures for the data collection and analyzing process. With this purpose, this study will adopt qualitative research methods as qualitative research methods will enable the researchers to understand the organization better based on what the participants say and what the organization did (Myers, 2013). According to Yin (2013), the purpose of this study is basically exploratory in nature and to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. In this study, RBV-VRIO theory is the business intervention as it is a business model adopted for achieving business sustainable competitive advantage, but, there is no clear, single set of outcomes in terms of the application of the Strategic Management theory (RBV-VRIO) within the Religion Based business. Therefore, it is rationale for adopting the case study method as the research design for this study.

Cooper and Schindler (2011) argued that, case study approach may be somewhat controversial as far as data collection methods are concerned due to the qualitative nature. However, Sekaran and Bougie (2013) argued that research methodology case study is widely used for the purpose of in-depth explanation of specific processes or system and its applicability under specific circumstance. Hence, the purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth analysis of how a religion based business in Malaysia can balance religion and profit, therefore, the use of case study is most appropriate approach. The main objective of this research is to explore into a religion owned business in Malaysia, comparing the elements of the theory researched with the actual implementation of such theory in the actual business operation. This research will focus on the Resource-based View (RBV) theory that emphasized on the importance of four elements (Valuable, Rare, Inimitable and Organizational Process) (Shafeey and Trott, 2014).

Based on this theory, the following research framework was developed:

Figure 4: Research Framework



Unit of analysis refers to who or what should provide the data for the research and at which level of aggregation (Zikmund et. al, 2013). For this research, the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia will be the unit of analysis via interviews with the key personnel. Therefore, the unit of analysis is deemed to be the organization. Cooper and Schindler (2011) mentioned that, many personnel are involved in the conduct of the research, these personnel serve as representative for the organization and the unit of analysis remained as the organization as the phenomenon under study is focused on the organization's outcomes. Hence, the participants of this study will consist of the church leaders who are the top management of BCCM and Jabez Café, the managers who runs and monitors the Jabez Café and staff members who executes the café daily as well as volunteers who helps out in once per week form. To add on, all these four groups of participants are either pastor or normal church members of BCCM. However, as this research focus only focus on one business entity, the research outcome may not be representative to the overall religion owned business industry in Malaysia.

For this research, only one organization will be chosen to conduct in this case study. Therefore, the church leaders of Jabez cafe, who are in the top management of this organization, which also the pastor of BCCM will be one of the sampling unit. As the research questions require the verification from the religion owned business's perspective. Therefore, the manager of Jabez Café (who plan and monitor the café), staff members (who operates daily) and volunteers also others group of sampling unit. Zikmund et. al. (2013) also highlighted that, convenient sampling allows the researcher to conduct sampling by approaching people that are conveniently available, whereby for this instance, the respondent will limit to those volunteers in Kota Kinabalu. However, in consideration of time limitation due to time consuming interview process and time taken to travel to interviewees' offices, the sample size of the sampling unit will be limited to seven respondents, of which two Pastor, one manager, two of Jabez Café's employees and two volunteers.

According to Quinton and Smallbone (2006), qualitative research is different from quantitative research in many aspects. One of the different is the study of fewer people but explore more deeply with these individual, which therefore the right sample size is depends on the available resources and the weight carried by the person of interest (Sachdeva, 2009). Therefore, this research only focus on seven sampling units to support the information provided by the sampling is deem appropriate based on the limited time of the researcher and the sample size that was acceptable by the sampling unit as not to affect Jabez Café's business operation. Furthermore, no questionnaires will be distributed for this research, as this research will be conducted in the manner of conversational interview with the respondents. Face-to-face personal interview will be the form of communication to gather relevant information and data. Two-way communication between the interviewer and the respondents are vital and approximately 45-60 minutes for each interview session to gain more information and therefore contribute to a more in-depth review on the research topic. With the collected data from the interview, thematic analysis is the data analysis measurement by transcript, clear up, coding and analysis with the cross tabulation of feedback. By using cross tabulation, researcher will be able to figure out the similar and different point of view form each respondents.

IV. Findings and Discussion

The valuable qualitative data were collected from the four groups of interviewees. First, church leaders of Jabez cafe, Rev. Chung Hee Min and Rev. Chong Shun Khen. Both of them are the top management of Jabez Café as well as the church's pastors for Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (CGC). Second, the manager of Jabez Café, who is responsible for the planning and monitoring of the Café, Miss Kerry Chung Jia Sin also involved in the interview. Third and Fourth are the staff members, (Miss Tina Frances Kong and Mr. Clement Foo) and the volunteers (Miss Sophia Chung and Mr. Anthony Chong Chun Hen) also contributed to the data

collection for this study. For this research, total number of 7 personnel were interviewed. Valuable business views, success stories and nevertheless interviewees' personal experience with the use of research theory in the business venture as well as business approach has been discussed in depth.

Next, researcher would like to highlight that, all the collected information is purely based on the interviewees' personal opinion and experience. Therefore, the output of the data from the interviewees may potentially favoritism. Cooper and Schindler (2011) stated that, data collected from a case study research is often analyzed only in the context of use or the event in which the activity takes place. Whereby, the researcher had observed the interviewees in the natural environment to get a clear, objective and authentic result, which may or may not be bias based on the respective perception of the interviewees.

Sekaran and Bougie (2011) mentioned that, case study approach has more advantageous compared with correlation research methods as correlation approach is isolate the subject from the environment and focus only on some of the variables. Throughout the interview sessions, the researcher observed that interviewees may have different perception and point of view towards the same issues or incidents that occur to them. However, for research purpose, the researcher is therefore assuming that all the interviewee are free from the influence of any other past experience other than all 40 questionnaires were asked in semi-structured interview.

According to Barney (1991), the Resource Based View theory include of the organization able to possess resources that are immobile and heterogeneous in the form of valuable resources, rare to the market, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable to make full use of its resources and capabilities to be sustainable to be competitive advantage. From the interviews, the researcher found out, Resource Based View theory is applicable to religion owned business, especially in Jabez Café. Each of the key elements of RBV-VRIO theory is applicable to Jabez Café as it were highlighted by all the respondents directly and indirectly. The following are the discussion of each element:

a) Valuable resources

From the interviews, all the interviewees mentioned, Jabez Café value all the resources as all the resources were funded by the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia (Chinese General Council) and churches as well as some personal church members. Basically, all the resources can be divided into two types, the 'hard side' and the 'soft side'. The 'hard side' mainly focus on the hard facilities such like board games, music instruments, PA systems, projector, coffee machine and Television set. The 'soft sides' are the financial resources, human resource and support (prayer). The café manager, Miss Kerry continues explained about how Jabez Café valuable the 'hard side' of maximizing the usage of the resource to gain competitive advantage. Jabez Cafe organized board game competition and 'point collect system' to attract more youth to use and involved in the board game services. To add on, the 'live band night' also been highlighted to maximizing the usage of music instruments, PA system and etc.

For the 'soft side', majority of the interviewees'highlighted, human resource is the most important resources of Jabez Café, followed by financial support and physically support. Staff members, volunteers and café manager gathering is one of the way to manage the human resources problem in Jabez Café. Financial supports are normally funded by BCCM CGC, which include pay wages. However, the weakest part in 'soft side' is the physical support from church members. Clement, the staff member of Jabez Café stated that, the main customer was from other churches rather than our own BCCM's church members. To add on, Jabez Café management manage the key resources totally depend on the café manager, herself. In short, Jabez Café consider as valuable resources. As it maximizes the usage of the 'hard side' and 'soft side' of the resources which also agreed by all the interviewees.

b) Rare to the market

From the combined interviewees transcripts, it shows all the interviewees agreed Jabez Café do have products and services that are rare to the Kota Kinabalu market. However, most of them focused on the service such as the Board Game services and the Live Band services. As it seems Jabez Café is the only café that provided both services in Kota Kinabalu market. To add on, both services (board game and live bands) were aligned with the church's philosophy. As selection of board game was conducted before bringing into Jabez Café, Rev. Chong, the Church Leader, also known as the pastor said that. Communication, Networking and building up relationship were done throughout the board game. Personal relationships build between the staff members or volunteers and customers. This also helps Jabez Café be rare to the market. As Jabez Café focus on personal life rather than just board game, mentioned by Miss Kerry. Both volunteers also agreed that, the board games service did help Jabez Café to retain customer as personal relationship were formed.

Next, the Kota Kinabalu market view Jabez Café in two different point of views. As Jabez Café owned by church, Christian customer view it at surplus as they do understand the purpose of Jabez Café is share

gospel and they take Jabez Café as a platform for sharing gospel towards non-Christian friends. For non-Christian, they view Jabez Café as a normal café with unique service especially in communication and attitude. In general, Rev. Chong stated Jabez Café do have non-Christian customers even they know Jabez Café is under church (Appendix B). Which also supported by Miss Tina, the staff member of Jabez Café, the Board Game service and the live bands are the unique service that attract customer to Jabez Café.

c) Imitable & non-substitutable

Based on the interviews, all of the interviewees stated that, Jabez Café provided an inimitable service. All of them agreed that the board game service and live band facilities are easy to be imitate by commercial café. As today technology, board games can be purchased directly from online, Rev. Chong said. However, the process of conducting the board game are totally different from commercial café. As Jabez Café focus on personal life connecting and commercial café focus on profit. Therefore, it is inimitable for the services that provided by Jabez Café as the purpose are different.

As mentioned, the purpose of all the products and services in Jabez Café serves with a purpose of share gospel and lead people to Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is inimitable in commercial market. However, Ms. Sophia, the volunteer of Jabez Café also highlighted that, other church might be the competitor for Jabez Café. However, Jabez Café encourage churches use this approach to reach people in today's generation. In addition, Ms. Kerry, the manager of Jabez Café stated that, the activities and events also the reason for Jabez Café inimitable in Kota Kinabalu café market. Jabez Café have strong network with others international churches and Christianity Organizations. That leads Jabez café inimitable in Kota Kinabalu café market. As the events such as Logos Day (International Day) and Taiwanese Day were collaborate organized by Jabez Café. Therefore, it is inimitable in Kota Kinabalu commercial café market.

d) Organization process

Rev. Chung, the church leader also known as pastor of Jabez Café mentioned that, the organization process such as management control system and quality control system should be implemented in Jabez Café. Next, the interviews show Jabez Café does not have an established organizational process which agreed by all the interviewees. To continue, Rev. Chong also agreed that, the organization process especially in management point of view is the weakness of Jabez Café. As no professional people in this area available in Jabez Café. To add on, long hierarchy in management of BCCM CGC also lead the quality of Jabez Café affected, as the decision making normally required board of directors to decide. The director will be change every two years (based on election) as well as the meeting only held twice a year.

Although, all of the interviewees mentioned Jabez Café does not have an organizational process, but it should be carry out for a better management in future (Appendix B). Miss Tina, the staff member of Jabez Café said the common sense skills and meeting are the normal activities that functions as an organizational process in Jabez Café. She continued said, it is not a best way for Jabez Café to manage a café based on these. However, the top management (board of directors) normally carry out meeting twice a year.

In short, all the interviewees did highlight that a religion owned business, especially Jabez Café able to possess its resources and immobile and heterogeneous in the form of valuable resources and how did the resources impact Jabez Café to grow in the past. The uniqueness of the process in conducting services such as board game and live band services are rare in the Kota Kinabalu market and it is inimitable by other commercial café in Kota Kinabalu. However, the organizational process such as management control system should be implemented by Jabez Café to make full use of its resources and capabilities to be sustainable and be competitive advantage.

Next, the following are the proposition 1 and 2:

P1: Resource Based View theory is applicable to the religion owned businesses, especially Jabez café.

P2: Jabez Café has product or service that is valuable, rare and inimitable in the market as well as has organized processes to exploit its resources and capabilities.

Therefore, the Proposition 1 is accepted and the Proposition 2 is rejected. As Jabez Café does not has organized process to exploit its resources and capabilities.

Furthermore, the interview shows, majority of the interviewees were agreed that, Jabez Café able to balance between religion and profit. Interviewees did suggest some suggestion to balance for both such as hiring the right people for the position, having two different management team, one is focus on the ministries (religion) and other focus on the business (profit). To add on, interviewees agreed that, it is possible to balance religion and profit as they define 'profit' for Jabez café is able to self-sustainability. In other words, financial

independent is one of the profit definition that defined by interviewees. However, Miss Tina, the staff member disagreed Jabez Café able to balance between both religion and profit as the management of Jabez Café did not have the right people till this moment. As she mentioned, previously Jabez Café did able to balance both religion and profit. However, the café manager who did managed balance both religion and profit had continued in future study, which lead Jabez Café unable to balance religion and profit till today. She strongly believes, right people in right position is the way for Jabez café to balance between religion and profit, without the right people, it seems unable to balance both as lack of management knowledge.

Next, Mr. Antony, the volunteers of Jabez Café do have different point of view towards this the topic of balance between religion and profit in Jabez Cafe. He mentioned Jabez Café able to balance between religion and profit if the church members are willing to involved and the person in charge has ministries mind set, then, it is able to balance. The meaning of church members willing to involved is in terms of visit and consume in Jabez Café. As it serves as the profit and income flow in to Jabez Café and the religion side is what the café is on going doing such as board game services to share gospel and others. In short, Jabez Café is possible to balance between religion and profit if Jabez Café adopted the Strategic Management theories especially RBV-VRIO model. Therefore, Proposition 3 is accepted. The following is the Proposition 3:

P3: Jabez Café is possible to balance between religion and profit if Jabez Café adopted the Strategic Management theories especially RBV-VRIO model.

Based on the proposition testing, researcher concluded that Resource Based View theory is not only applicable in profit orientated company (Shafeey and Trott, 2014; Otley, 2012) but also applicable in religion owned business as this was supported by all the interviewees. Next, the selected case study of religion owned business, Jabez Café has product and service that is valuable, rare and inimitable in the local Kota Kinabalu market. However, the selected religion owned business, Jabez Café does not have an organized process to exploit its resources and capabilities. Lastly, religion owned business is able to balance between religion and profit especially if the organizations had adopted RBV-VRIO mode.

V. Conclusion

Resource Based View-VRIO theory is a practical theory for any organization (Arend and Lévesque, 2010; Shafeey and Trott, 2014). Resource Based View-VRIO theory is applicable in any profit orientated company (normal business) as well as applicable in religion owned business. It also supported by the result of proposition testing in proposition 2. Although Jabez Café able to apply RBV-VRIO theory into it, it does not mean all others religion owned business able to apply RBV-VRIO theory.

Next, religion owned business such as Jabez café faced challenges in ‘Yang’ compare with normal business in term of Strategic Management especially in Resource Based View (RBV). The challenges faced by religion owned business normally towards ‘Yang’ such as human resources management, employees and organization process management. Mou (2003) mentioned that ‘Yin’ refers to the organization operates to identify those markets in which your company’s capabilities can yield competitive advantage and ‘Yang’ refers to the organization that identify distinctive capabilities and surround them with a collection of reproducible capabilities or complementary assets, which enable the organization to sells its distinctive capabilities in the market it operates. It clearly shows that Jabez Café faced ‘Yang’ challenges compare with ‘Yin’. However, all the challenges can be solved by adopting RBV-VRIO model, with balancing the religion and profit on going.

In conclusion, there is some room of improvement which can be done by future researcher on this research. Future researcher could extend the research to find out the challenges that faced in religion owned business and the solutions for it. Another area that is worth to find out would be the customers’ perception towards religion owned business as the number of religion owned business growth in Malaysia. The findings would provide insights to religion leaders to understand what do customers’ needs and wants in religion owned business.

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