

The Adoption of Islamic Banking in Uganda: The Moderating Role of Customer Awareness in the Diffusion of Innovation

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Abstract

Purpose – The aims to examine the factors influencing the adoption of Islamic Banking in Uganda, utilizing the theory of Diffusion of Innovation (DOI). The study investigates the effects of relative advantage, compatibility, and perceived risk on adoption, and evaluates the moderating role of customer awareness in the relationships.

Design/Methodology/Approach

– A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 256 banking customers in Kampala Metropolitan Area. Data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS.

Findings

Findings indicate that relative advantage and compatibility have a significant and positive influence on adoption, whereas perceived risk has an adverse effect. Customer awareness significantly moderates these relationships, enhancing the effects of relative advantage and compatibility and reducing the negative impact of perceived risk.

Originality/Value

– This research is among the first empirical investigation of Islamic Banking adoption in Uganda following the launch of the country's first dedicated Islamic Bank back in 2023. It provides a timely and critical examination of adoption drivers, uniquely introducing and validating customer awareness as a significant moderator within the DOI framework in Ugandan novel context.

Research Limitations/Implications – The study's focus on the Kampala Metropolitan Area may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Future research could expand the geographical scope. This study addresses a notable gap in the empirical literature on Islamic banking within Sub-Saharan Africa and contributes to understanding financial innovation diffusion in emerging Muslim communities.

Practical Implications

– The insights provide strategic value to practitioners aiming to promote Islamic Banking in Uganda. Enhancing customer awareness initiatives can accelerate adoption by showcasing the benefits and alignment of Islamic Banking with customers' financial values. Concurrently, marketing and educational campaigns should explicitly address and mitigate perceived risks to broaden acceptance.

Keywords: Islamic Banking, Uganda, Diffusion of Innovations, Customer Awareness, Perceived Risk, PLS-SEM.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic banking is a business model that adheres strictly to Shariah principles of justice and equity, ensuring that financial activities align with Islamic ethical values (Kahf, 2006). In recent years, strong economies such as Germany, the UK, Russia, Denmark, Switzerland, and the USA, along with developing countries including Nigeria, Guinea, Senegal, and South Africa, have embraced and operationalized Islamic banking systems to

accommodate growing Muslim populations and diversify their financial sectors (Algaoud & Lewis, 2007). The increasing acceptance of Islamic banking globally is primarily attributed to its foundational principles—risk-sharing (participation), prohibition of riba (interest), and ownership before trade (Islam, 2025; Kunhibava, 2015; Norchaeva, 2024). Moreover, Islamic finance also promotes all halal business practices through a structured framework that prioritizes legitimate profit and loss sharing, aiming to reduce exploitation and enhance mutual benefit in financial

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transactions (Asari, 2019). In addition, the system strictly prohibits unethical financial practices, such as charging interest, monopolistic behavior, and speculative activities, including *gharar* (excessive uncertainty), hoarding, and gambling, which are considered detrimental to social justice and economic stability (Djuma, 2023; Nienhaus, 2011).

Globally, the Islamic finance sector has experienced significant growth, evidenced by an 11 percent increase in 2018, resulting in approximately USD 2.4 trillion in total assets. Specifically, the Islamic finance sector accounted for 71 percent of the total assets (Kasule, 2017). Further, the Islamic Financial Services Board Report (2024) documents that the global Islamic financial services industry experienced a year-on-year (YoY) growth of 4 percent, reaching a total asset value of USD 3.38 trillion in 2023, despite facing geopolitical tensions, inflationary pressures, and stresses similar to those faced by the general banking industry. Islamic bonds (Sukuk) contributed 29.08 percent, the Islamic insurance (takaful) segment accounted for 0.71 percent, and the Islamic banking sector led at 70.21 percent. By 2023, on a regional basis, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region held the majority share of global Islamic finance assets, representing 52.50 percent, followed by the East Asia and Pacific region, which accounted for 21.80 percent. The Middle East and North Africa had a 12.70 percent share. In comparison, Europe and Central Asia accounted for 8.30 percent, South Asia for 3.10 percent, Sub-Saharan Africa for 0.70 percent, and other regions collectively for 0.90 percent (International Monetary Fund, 2024; Report, 2024).

In Africa, Islamic Finance and banking have gained traction in countries like Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa. Factors such as supportive regulatory frameworks and awareness campaigns have played a pivotal role (Bananuka *et al.*, 2019a). However, limited awareness and misconceptions about its principles have hindered progress, especially in Africa (Sulaiman, 2023). Specifically, Uganda entered the Islamic finance industry in 2016 with amendments to its Financial Institutions Act of 2004, paving the way for the establishment of Islamic banking and financial services (Kasule, 2017; Statutory Instrument, 2018). The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has issued comprehensive regulations to govern Islamic banking (MoFED, 2018), and the Bank of Uganda (BoU) has granted a license to one commercial bank to offer Islamic banking services (BoU, 2020). Additionally, the Microfinance Support Centre (MSC), with sponsorship from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), has been implementing Islamic microfinance projects across more than 20 districts (Kasule, 2017).

Despite recent progress, the adoption of Islamic banking in Uganda remains limited. This limitation is influenced by several key factors, including relative advantage, perceived risk, and the compatibility of

Islamic banking products with customers' needs and values (Bananuka *et al.*, 2020). For instance, customers' understanding of the unique benefits of Shariah-compliant financial services—such as risk-sharing and interest-free transactions—significantly shapes their perception of relative advantage (Abdurraheem *et al.*, 2022). Then, concerns regarding operational transparency and regulatory oversight contribute to perceived risk. It may impede adoption (Chronopoulos *et al.*, 2023). The compatibility of Islamic banking principles with Uganda's cultural and economic context also plays a critical role in the diffusion process (Palm, 2022). For Uganda, a nascent participant in the implementation of Islamic banking, there is the issue of customer awareness emerges as a critical priority, particularly given that Muslims constitute a minority religion within the country.

Several Scholarly works by Bananuka *et al.*, (2019b), Bananuka *et al.*, (2020), Yahaya *et al.*, (2016), Nazeer *et al.*, (2023), and Ali *et al.*, (2020) have explored the phenomena of Islamic banking adoption within their respective jurisdictions. However, these studies have not adequately addressed the concept of customer awareness. Thus, this study focuses on how the independent variables, moderated by customer awareness, influence the adoption of Islamic banking in Uganda. Thus, ultimately, the implications of this study provide practical insights for stakeholders seeking to enhance the growth and accessibility of the industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is a review of all previous literature related to the adoption of Islamic banking. It also explains the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DIT), the underlying theory, and identifies further research gaps, while hypotheses are drawn in this section.

Relative Advantage and Adoption of Islamic Banking

According to Lovejoy *et al.*, (2009), relative advantage, a construct of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory introduced by Rogers (1983), refers to the extent to which innovation will increase one's job performance or monetary gain, often thought of as a cost-benefit analysis. Similarly, Yahaya *et al.*, (2016) define it as the degree to which consumers perceive a new product or service as superior to its substitutes, which is referred to as relative advantage. Relative is one of the constructs and variables in the Diffusion of Innovations theory, as proposed by Rogers (1983). In the context of this study, it refers to the perceived importance of Islamic banking over conventional banking. A Study by Imran (2024) highlighted that customers are drawn to Islamic banking due to its ethical principles, transparency, and risk-sharing mechanisms. In Indonesia, for example, the perception of relative advantage significantly influenced the adoption of Islamic finance and banking products (Sudarsono *et al.*, 2021)

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory is a multifaceted theory that cuts across all disciplines, depending on the type and nature of the innovation in question. For instance, Nuseir & Aljumah (2020) conducted a study in the United Arab Emirates on digital marketing adoption in the UAE tourism industry, using Relative Advantage as an influencing factor, and found it to be significantly influencing digital marketing adoption in the UAE tourism industry. Features such as reliability, reduced costs, and the quality of information were highlighted as the advantages users reported. Specifically, El Mallouli & Sassi (2022) conducted a study to establish the determinants of Islamic banking products and services adoption in Morocco. Their proposed conceptual framework demonstrated and justified the relevance and applicability of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation theory to the adoption of Islamic banks' products and services in Morocco. The relative advantage, along with its perceived attributes, was highlighted in the framework. A gap in the above-presented studies on the adoption of Islamic banking is highlighted by their omission of customer awareness as a critical factor influencing adoption.

H1: Relative advantage has a significant influence on customer's adoption of Islamic banking in Uganda.

Compatibility and Adoption of Islamic Banking

In a social system, adopting a new idea, behavior, or product does not happen spontaneously. Instead, it is a process through which some people are more likely to adopt an innovation than others. According to Wang (2022), Compatibility refers to the degree to which an innovation aligns with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of prospective adopters. Contextually, this study views Compatibility as a reflection of the degree to which Islamic finance and banking align with customers' religious beliefs and existing values and practices regarding financial transactions. Ali *et al.*, (2020) contend that cultural and religious Compatibility plays a critical role in fostering adoption. In contexts where Islamic finance and banking align with religious and societal norms, adoption rates tend to be higher. In a study aimed at analyzing factors that influence customers' intention to adopt mobile banking in Phnom Penh City, Cambodia, Norg (2022) utilized the attribute of Compatibility from the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. The study employed a survey questionnaire with 385 mobile banking adopters, and the results show that perceived Compatibility had a significant positive effect on the adoption of mobile banking. In another study, Min *et al.*, (2019) conducted a study in China to investigate consumer adoption of the Uber mobile application through the lens of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory Model. The results suggested that relative advantage, Compatibility, and complexity had a significant influence on consumer attitudes and adoption intentions.

H2: Compatibility has a significant influence on customer's adoption of Islamic banking in Uganda.

Perceived Risks and Adoption of Islamic Banking

The notion of perceived risk, as employed by consumer researchers, is based on consumers' perceptions of potential failure resulting from uncertainty and the negative repercussions of purchasing and engaging with any items or services (Yahaya *et al.*, 2016). Martins *et al.*, (2014) note that perceived is an overall measure of general risk associated with adopting an innovation. According to this study, Perceived risk encompasses uncertainties and concerns related to Islamic finance and banking, including compliance with Shariah principles and financial stability. Research by Wahidullah & Jumaiyah (2024) and Nazeer *et al.*, (2023) highlights that perceived risks, such as fear of financial loss or regulatory challenges, act as barriers to the adoption of Islamic finance and banking. All the reviewed studies concur with the notion that perceived risks, such as economic loss, regulatory ambiguities, uncertainty (*Gharar*), security issues, and non-Sharia compliance, act as detrimental to Islamic banking adoption.

H3: Perceived Risk has a significant influence on customer's adoption of Islamic banking in Uganda.

Customer Awareness as a Moderating Variable

Customer awareness is critical for the adoption of financial innovation. According to Cummings (2017), awareness influences the perception of product benefits and risks, thereby affecting adoption rates. In the context of Islamic finance and banking, awareness encompasses knowledge of Sharia principles, product offerings, and the ethical advantages of Islamic banking over conventional banking (Cheteni, 2014; Kaytancı *et al.*, 2013). In a study by Yolanda *et al.*, (2019), a significant proportion of customers in Pakistan demonstrated awareness of Islamic banking services, particularly regarding commonly offered products such as current and deposit accounts. Nonetheless, a considerable number of customers exhibited limited familiarity with specific products, including Murabaha and Ijarah. In a study conducted to measure the influence of customer awareness and intention to adopt Islamic finance and banking in the United Arab Emirates, Kaakeh *et al.*, (2019) found that customer awareness had a positive influence on the adoption of Islamic banking.

H4: Customer Awareness has a significant influence on the relationship between Relative Advantage, Compatibility, Perceived Risk, and Adoption of Islamic banking in Uganda.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guides the study and provides the basis for the research. The framework is built on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DIT) as the underlying theory while extending it to include customer awareness, as viewed by Kaakeh *et al.*, (2019). It is typically built on the theoretical framework, resulting in the formulation of the research hypotheses as stated above. In the study by Yahaya *et al.*, (2016), it is recommended that theory, rather than methodology,

should act as a focal point and guidance for researchers in developing their framework.

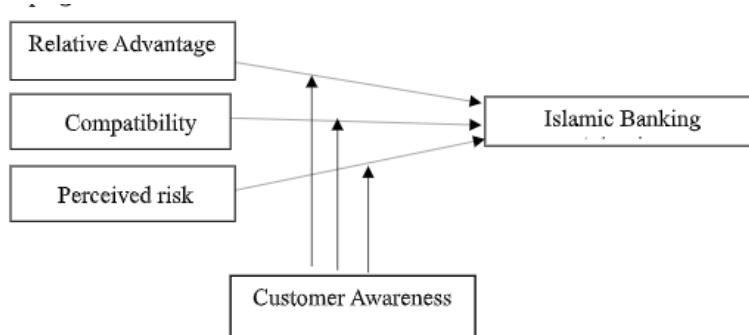


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Based on DOI Theory

METHODOLOGY

This study examined the moderating effect of customer awareness on the relationship between relative advantage, compatibility, Perceived Risk, and the adoption of Islamic Finance and Banking in Uganda. This study uses a cross-sectional survey design to address the research questions and objectives. This approach is associated with quantitative (Hamzah & Haji-Othman, 2020). The population of the study, or unit of analysis, consists of Ugandans involved in the banking sector. According to Taherdoost (2021), survey research enables the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. A sample of 285 was selected for the study. The sample determination was based on Krejci and Morgan (1970), who argued that such a sample is sufficient when the population ranges between 1,000 and 1,100. The research instrument was developed in the form of a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The items

used in the questionnaire were adopted and adapted from previous studies conducted (Chen, 2013; Norg, 2022; and Abdul-Wahab *et al.*, (2019)). A stratified random sampling technique has been used to select participants from the target population (Hamzah *et al.*, 2023). Out of the target sample, a total of 256 responses were received as valid, representing 90% of the sample. The study employed Smart PLS-SEM to analyze the collected data. Smart PLS-SEM is significant for such studies because it emphasizes predictive power and the relationships between variables, particularly in complex modeling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents respondents' profiles, analysis results, and research findings. Furthermore, the assessment of the structural model is further explained, including the significance of the structural relationship, the coefficient of determination, and the results of the hypothesized relationships.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity Results

Latent Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Adoption of Islamic Banking	0.833	0.839	0.750
Compatibility	0.819	0.835	0.645
Customer Awareness	0.802	0.835	0.715
Perceived Risk	0.772	0.780	0.814
Relative Advantage	0.845	0.848	0.619

Source: analysis by SmartPLS. (2025)

The reliability and validity results from the structural equation modeling analysis demonstrate that all latent variables exhibit acceptable levels of internal consistency and construct validity. Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating strong internal reliability. The composite reliability (CR) values are also above the recommended minimum of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2019), further confirming the consistency of the constructs. The highest Cronbach's alpha (CR) is observed for "Relative Advantage" (0.848), indicating a high degree of reliability. At the same time, the lowest CR is recorded for "Perceived

Risk" (0.780), which still meets the required standard. These findings suggest that the measurement model is reliable, ensuring that the constructs used in the study produce consistent and dependable results over repeated applications.

Regarding validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values provide strong evidence of convergent validity, as all constructs meet or exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). "Perceived Risk" exhibits the highest AVE (0.814), indicating that a significant portion of variance is explained by the construct itself rather than by

measurement error. Meanwhile, "Relative Advantage" has the lowest AVE (0.619), which is still above the acceptable limit, signifying an adequate level of convergent validity. The AVE results confirm that each latent variable effectively captures the underlying

theoretical construct it intends to measure. Thus, the findings suggest that the measurement model is both reliable and valid, supporting its suitability for further structural equation modeling analysis.

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion: Discriminant Validity

Latent Variables	Adoption of IB	Compatibility	Customer Awareness	Perceived Risk	Relative Advantage
Adoption of IF&B	0.866				
Compatibility	0.501	0.803			
Customer Awareness	0.571	0.400	0.845		
Perceived Risk	0.791	0.481	0.677	0.902	
Relative Advantage	0.591	0.397	0.464	0.574	0.787

Source: analysis by SmartPLS. (2025)

The Fornell-Larcker criterion results indicate that discriminant validity has been established for the constructs in the structural equation modeling analysis. Discriminant validity assesses whether a latent construct is distinct from other constructs within a model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to this criterion, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent variable should be greater than the correlations between that variable and all other constructs in the model. The diagonal values in the table represent the square root of AVE for each latent variable, while the off-diagonal values represent correlations between constructs. The results show that the diagonal values for all constructs are higher than their respective correlation coefficients, confirming adequate discriminant validity. For instance, the square root of AVE for "Perceived Risk" is 0.902, which is greater than its highest correlation with another construct (0.791 with "Adoption of Islamic Banking"). This suggests that the constructs are empirically distinct, supporting the validity of the measurement model.

Furthermore, the results indicate moderate to strong correlations between some constructs, which is expected in research involving related concepts (Hair et al., 2019). The highest correlation is observed between "Adoption of Islamic Banking" and "Perceived Risk" ($r=0.791$), suggesting that perceived risk has a significant influence on the adoption of Islamic banking services. Similarly, "Customer Awareness" and "Adoption of Islamic Banking" are positively correlated ($r=0.571$), indicating that greater awareness may enhance the likelihood of adoption. Despite these relationships, the Fornell-Larcker criterion confirms that each construct captures a unique aspect of the model. This finding reinforces the robustness of the measurement framework, ensuring that the structural relationships tested in further analyses are based on distinct theoretical constructs. Thus, the study's discriminant validity is adequately supported, allowing for a more accurate interpretation of the relationships between the variables.

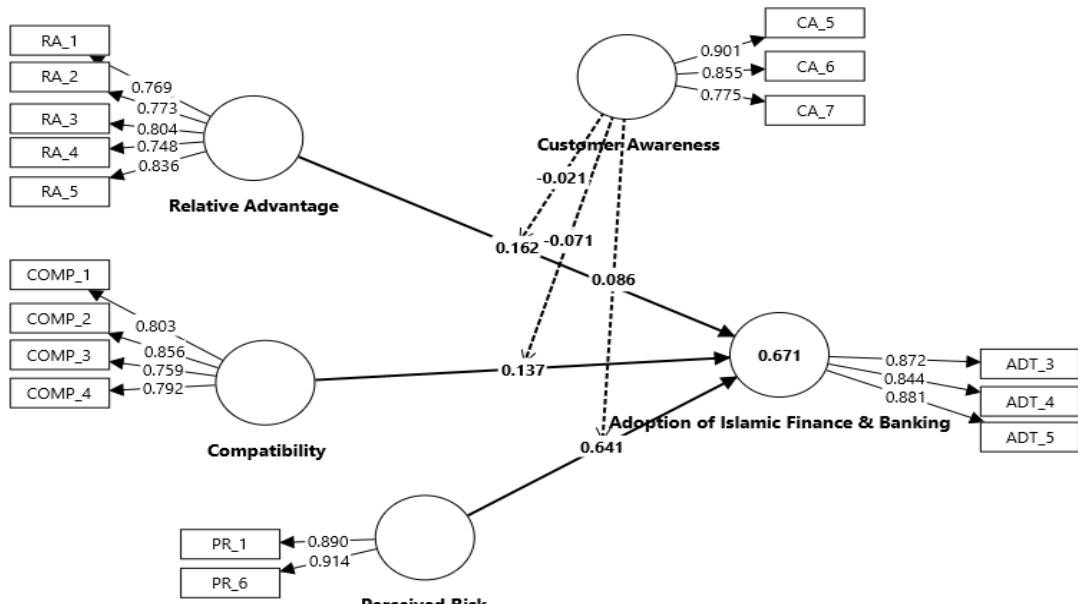


Figure 2: Measurement Model

The structural equation model (SEM) presented in Figure 2 provides insights into the factors influencing the adoption of Islamic banking. The model demonstrates the relationships between latent variables, including relative advantage, compatibility, perceived risk, and customer awareness, with the adoption of Islamic banking as the dependent variable. The path coefficients indicate that perceived risk has the most substantial impact on adoption ($\beta = 0.641$), suggesting that individuals' concerns about uncertainty and potential financial risks significantly influence their decision to adopt Islamic banking. Compatibility ($\beta = 0.137$) and relative advantage ($\beta = 0.162$) also show significant positive relationships with adoption, reinforcing the notion that when Islamic banking aligns with customer values and provides clear benefits, its adoption increases. The high R-square value (0.671) suggests that these variables collectively explain 67.1% of the variance in adoption, which is substantial in behavioral research (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

The moderating effect of customer awareness on these relationships provides additional insights. The path coefficient for customer awareness moderating perceived risk ($\beta = 0.086$, $p = 0.036$) indicates that increased awareness reduces the negative impact of perceived risk, making consumers more likely to adopt Islamic banking. However, the non-significant moderation effects on compatibility ($\beta = -0.071$, $p = 0.080$) and relative advantage ($\beta = -0.021$, $p = 0.490$) suggest that customer awareness does not significantly alter these relationships. This aligns with previous findings that awareness primarily affects risk perception rather than directly influencing compatibility or perceived benefits (Ramos-de-Luna *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, Islamic banking institutions should prioritize educational campaigns to mitigate risk perceptions and enhance customer trust, ultimately facilitating greater adoption of Islamic financial services.

Table 3: Path Coefficients

Hypothesized Relationships	Coefficient	T stat.	P values	Decision
Compatibility -> Adoption of IB	0.137	4.465	0.000	Accepted
Perceived Risk -> Adoption of IB	0.641	11.537	0.000	Accepted
Relative Advantage -> Adoption of Islamic Banking	0.162	4.397	0.000	Accepted
Customer Aware. x Relative Adv. -> Adoption of IB	-0.021	0.691	0.490	Rejected
Customer Aware. x Compatibility -> Adoption of IB	-0.071	1.752	0.080	Rejected
Customer Aware. x Perceived Risk -> Adoption of IB	0.086	2.097	0.036	Accepted

IB: Islamic Banking

The path coefficient analysis in the structural model provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the adoption of Islamic banking. The results indicate that perceived risk has the strongest impact on adoption ($\beta = 0.641$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that individuals' risk perceptions play a crucial role in their decision-making process. This aligns with previous studies that highlight how a higher perceived risk negatively affects consumers' willingness to adopt financial innovations (Amin, 2017). Compatibility ($\beta = 0.137$, $p = 0.000$) and relative advantage ($\beta = 0.162$, $p = 0.000$) also significantly influence adoption, implying that when Islamic banking aligns with users' financial values and offers superior benefits, the likelihood of adoption increases. The statistical significance of these relationships, as indicated by high t-values (above 1.96), confirms their reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

The moderating role of customer awareness presents a more nuanced picture. While customer awareness moderates the relationship between perceived risk and adoption positively ($\beta=0.086$, $p=0.036$), it does not significantly influence the relationship between compatibility and adoption ($\beta=-0.071$, $p=0.080$) or relative advantage and adoption ($\beta=-0.021$, $p=0.490$). This suggests that awareness helps reduce the negative impact of perceived risk, making consumers more confident in adopting Islamic banking services. However, awareness alone does not appear to enhance the effects of compatibility or relative advantage, possibly because consumers need direct experience or credible endorsements to appreciate these factors (Ramos-de-Luna *et al.*, 2019). These findings suggest that financial institutions should focus on targeted awareness campaigns that specifically address consumer concerns about risk while also highlighting the practical benefits and compatibility of Islamic banking services.

Table 4: R-Square & R-Square Adjusted

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Adoption of Islamic Finance & Banking	0.671	0.667

Source: PLS-SEM Output

Table 4 presents an R-squared value of 0.671 for the adoption of Islamic finance and banking, indicating that 67.1% of the variance in the dependent

variable (adoption of Islamic banking) is explained by the independent variables included in the model. This suggests a strong explanatory power, as values above

0.60 are generally considered substantial in behavioral and financial studies (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The adjusted R-squared value of 0.667 further confirms the model's robustness, considering the number of predictors and indicating that the model maintains high explanatory power even after accounting for complexity. This level of variance explanation implies that factors such as perceived risk, compatibility, and relative advantage significantly contribute to consumers' decisions to adopt Islamic banking, supporting previous research that emphasizes these constructs as key determinants in financial service adoption (Amin *et al.*, 2013). A high R² value also signifies that external factors not included in the model have a relatively lower impact on adoption, though they may still be relevant. However, while 67.1% is a strong indicator, it also means that approximately 32.9% of the variance remains unexplained, leaving room for additional factors such as trust, religious commitment, and financial literacy to influence adoption (Ghalandari, 2012). Future research could refine the model by integrating these additional variables to improve predictive accuracy. Overall, the model's R² value suggests a well-structured and theoretically sound framework, reinforcing the validity of the research findings in the context of Islamic banking adoption.

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the factors that influence the adoption of Islamic banking in Uganda. The structural equation modeling results indicate that perceived risk ($\beta = 0.641$, $p = 0.000$) is the most significant determinant of adoption. This suggests that customers' concerns about financial security, regulatory frameworks, and uncertainty substantially influence their decision-making process. The result is consistent with earlier research that identifies perceived risk as a key barrier to adopting financial innovations, particularly in Islamic banking, where compliance with Shariah principles is an additional consideration (Amin, 2017).

Given this strong negative effect, Islamic banking institutions are advised to implement trust-building measures, including greater transparency, enhanced consumer education, and well-communicated risk-mitigation strategies. Additionally, relative advantage ($\beta = 0.162$, $p < 0.001$) and compatibility ($\beta = 0.137$, $p < 0.001$) were found to positively and significantly influence adoption. These results suggest that consumers are more likely to adopt Islamic banking services when they perceive distinct benefits over conventional banking options and when these services align with their values, particularly religious and financial principles. This aligns well with the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory (Rogers, 1983), which posits that innovations are more likely to be adopted when perceived as advantageous and compatible with existing values and experiences. Prior studies, e.g., Abdullahi *et al.*, (2021), support this link between compatibility and Islamic banking adoption.

Furthermore, the moderating role of customer awareness reveals that it significantly weakens the negative effect of perceived risk on adoption ($\beta = 0.086$, $p = 0.036$). This implies that informed customers are less sensitive to risk perceptions, supporting prior research on the role of financial literacy in reducing uncertainty (Ramos-de-Luna *et al.*, 2019). However, customer awareness does not significantly moderate the effects of compatibility ($\beta = -0.071$, $p = 0.080$) or relative advantage ($\beta = -0.021$, $p = 0.490$), suggesting that awareness alone may not be sufficient to strengthen perceived benefits or alignment. Therefore, Islamic banking providers should focus not only on educating consumers about risk, but also actively promote the unique value propositions of Islamic financial services.

The model's R-square value of 0.671 indicates strong explanatory power, with the three independent variables accounting for 67.1% of the variance in adoption behavior. While this confirms the robustness of the model, the remaining unexplained variance (32.9%) suggests that additional factors—such as trust, religious commitment, and service quality (Echchabi & Aziz, 2012)—should be explored in future research to enhance the model's accuracy further.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of perceived risk, relative advantage, and compatibility in influencing the adoption of Islamic banking services in Uganda. Among these, perceived risk emerged as the most impactful factor, underscoring the importance of addressing consumer concerns related to security, regulation, and uncertainty. The study also confirms that while customer awareness plays a meaningful role in reducing risk perceptions, it has a limited effect on enhancing perceived benefits or alignment. These insights have practical implications for Islamic banking institutions and policymakers. Efforts should focus on building trust, improving consumer education, and communicating the distinct advantages of Islamic banking offerings. In parallel, product development should ensure alignment with customers' religious and financial values to improve compatibility. Ultimately, enhancing customer awareness, mitigating perceived risks, and emphasizing relative benefits are key to accelerating the adoption of Islamic banking. These strategies can facilitate deeper market penetration and long-term sustainability, especially within emerging Muslim communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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