

Non-Muslim Customers' Purchase Intention on Halal Food Products in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT: Halal market has been growing tremendously recently. The food products occupies the most share in the Halal market category. The phenomenon could be explained by the increased number of consumer among Halal products. Apart from Muslims, who consumes Halal product due to religious obligations, it is assumed that non-Muslims have also started consuming Halal products, especially food items. Halal food products have been perceived as safer, animal friendly and environmental sustainable. Hence, the awareness of Halal principles, Islamic Brand, moral obligation animal welfare and food safety have been studied in this research in order to investigate the influence of Halal food product purchase intention among non-Muslim consumer using quantitative research method. Food safety has been identified to be the most significant in predicting the purchase intention of Halal food product. Furthermore, future studies are suggested to include additional variables such as habit and self-awareness.

Keywords: halal food, purchase intention, islamic brand, moral obligation

INTRODUCTION

Halal products have been recognised as important items [1]. According to Mahdi [2], Halal is the phrase of Arabic which means lawful or permitted by Islamic law, Haram. For example food and beverage consumed by Muslims are prepared and consumed revolving the concept of Halal, which focuses on safety and sanitation [3]. In addition, the coverage of the Halal concept also includes cosmetic, equipment, clothing, hotel managements, medical industry and other types of businesses. Due to the existing large Halal product's market share, marketers have been referring to Halal context regarding purchase intention [4], perception and evaluation of marketing tools, attitude against certain product and intention to purchase [5,6] and word of mouth (WOM)

[7,8]. In the geographical setting of Malaysia, the role of Halal concept is typically important due to the majority of the nation's population is occupied by Muslims at 61.3%, followed by 19.8% Buddhist, 9.2% Christian, 6.3% Hinduism, 1.3% Chinese traditional religion such as Taoism and Confucianism, 1% unknown, 0.7% free thinkers, and 0.4% of other religions [9]. Halal is no longer just about religion but is a determinant of global economy [10]. Aziz and Chok [11] mentioned the Halal market is evaluated globally and valued for US\$580 billion with a 7% growth rate annually. Moreover, Halal products have significant growth rates because it requires high level of hygiene, food safety, enhance health and taste better. The requirements of product needed be called Halal food product has captured non-Muslim attention [1]. The purpose of this study is to inves-

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tigate the purchase intention of Halal food product among Malaysian non-Muslim consumers. This study directs it interest (1) to investigate the purchase intention of Malaysian non-Muslim towards Halal food product; (2) To identify the relationship between awareness of Halal principle and purchase intention of Halal food product; (3) To investigate the relationship between Islamic brand and purchase intention of Halal food product; (4) To discover the relationship between moral obligation-animal welfare and purchase intention of Halal food product; (5) To identify the relationship between food safety and purchase intention of Halal food product.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Awareness of Halal Principles

Awareness can be defined as the capability to recognize a certain affair, [11]. As Muslims, consuming food is quite common due to religious obligation. Some food can be permitted to be consumed except for the case that has been categorised as Haram in the Islamic law [12]. Awareness is the condition to consciously interpret, identify an object which lead to the determination of intentional behavioural [13,14]. The investigation of relationship between awareness of Halal principles and purchase intention of Halal product has been conducted among non-Muslim [3,11]. Non-Muslims were hypothesized to gain interest toward Halal product if they knew about the benefit of consuming Halal concept at food production. Due to the effect of globalization, the market in Malaysia consist of various types of Halal products, from locally produced to imported, to different types of Halal logos and brands from other countries. In Malaysia, Halal logo certified by the JAKIM is deemed most reputable, which is reasoned by their utilization in Malaysian Halal Standards MS 1500:2009. Muslim in Malaysia would make their food choice decision according to the Halal certification and Halal logo by JAKIM to assure that the food they consumed is within Sharia law.

Islamic Brand

Islamic brand has been utilized in order to measure the relationship between purchase intentions of

Halal food product [11,15]. Besides certification, brand equity is another common criteria for Halal consumer's decision making. An et al, [16] defined brand as the perceived meaning and thought of consumer about the product and the service that comes along with the product. Moreover, the brand could be the communication of trust between the product and consumers. In the context of Halal food product, brand of certain product would differentiate itself from other similar brand for instance, on the 'Degree of Halalness' of the food product [3]. Halal food is not only consumed by Muslims but other consumers without religious obligation. The rising demand of Halal food have caused intensive competition in Halal market [15]. The branding is demanded to be more clarified and particular. Alserhan [16], had differentiate the Islamic brand into four types. There are the True Islamic Brands, Halal product that produced from Islamic country that targeted on Muslim; Traditional Islamic Brand, assumed Halal product that are produced from Islamic country, targeting on Muslim; Inbound Islamic Brands, Halal product that produced from Islamic country, not only targeting Muslim; Outbound Islamic Brand, Halal product produced from non-Islamic country, not only targeting Muslim. The Halal product produce by Malaysia can be considered as Inbound Islamic Brands [17].

Moral Obligation - Animal Welfare

Moral obligation has a significant relationship among the intentions to perform certain behaviours [18]. Moral obligation has been measured by TPB and found out that thereis a rise of 3% to 6% on each prediction of intentions [19]. In fact, religionis a dominant factors in food choice [20] but due to changes among consumers in term of lifestyle, mind-set and perceptions, variables such as environmental sustainability and care of animal welfare [21] would have certain level of influential power towards purchase intention [22]. Animal welfare is increasingly being highlighted due to the ethical concern on the quality of life of animal [23]. Animal should be living a natural life using their nature intended capabilities, free from distress, fear and pain from the purpose of human activities, and should live well in order to be healthy physically and men-

tally. Animal that are bred under stressful conditions would produce lower quality meat [24]. Based on the Quran, all animals must be slaughtered by 'Dhabiha' method [2]. It requires a long sharp knife to make a swift, deep incision through artery, vein and trachea from the front of the throat without damaging the spinal cord.

Food Safety

The hygiene and cleanliness of Halal food is being guarded strictly by Halal principles and has increasingly become the universal guideline in term of food safety. This was in order to maintain the hygiene and safety of food for consumption, thus stringent steps and procedures in controlling the overall operations is required. Teng, et al, [24] reported that in Malaysia, all JAKIM certified Halal food product are controlled by the Malaysian Halal standard MS 1500:2004, which covers the production, packaging and delivery to the consumer. The guarded areas include food quality, nutrients, food safety and sanitation. Globalization has led to an increased in food products varieties in the market. Issues such as food with forged certification, lack of identity and false documentation always existed and customer are aware of it. Hence, food item with reputable certification would always be the choice for most consumer. Food safety issue is always a concern for consumer to choose the food they want [25]. The infamous incident in term of food safety issue would critically damages the confidence of consumer to the food product [24]. In essence, choosing Halal food product that are certified by reputable certification is becoming the primary choice for customer. The reason is because customers have more confidence on food that are produced under the requirements of Halal food product [11].

Purchase Intention

Intentions can be explained as the inclination of an individual to conduct certain behaviour, and a precursor of the behaviour [26]. Purchase intention is the state of an individual being prepared to purchase certain products [27]. Empirical evidence had proved that religious obligation would influence an individual's attitude and behavioural intention eating habits and guides decision making during pur-

Conceptual Framework

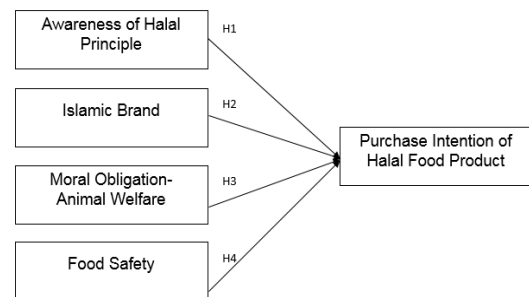


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

chasing [27]. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) could be utilized for the prediction and explanation of the human behaviour [19], especially on food related researches and Halal food choice [28]. Based on the TPB, attitude towards the behavioural, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control have been perceived as the elements to predict and explain the behavioural and intention. From the theory context, attitude towards behaviour could be determined by evaluating the pros and cons of conducting certain behaviour; subjective norm refers to the perceived perception of an individual on the peer or social pressure leading to performing of the behaviour; perceived behavioural control means to an individual's interpretation confidence of ability to perform the behaviour [29].

METHODOLOGY

Among the 400 questionnaires distributed, a minimum return of usable respondents was aimed to approximately meet 300. Narins [30] justified that, the 300 sample sizes fall within the 95% confidence interval (acceptable range in social science) of the population parameter. In order to check whether the sampling is enough, KMO was utilized. The value outcome should be more than and at least less than 0.5 to prove the validity. The reason supermarket have been chosen as a place to distribute questionnaire is because supermarket contains varieties of food product and wide range of consumers [3]. Based on the research setting, only non-Muslim Malaysian consumers would be chosen as respondent. Furthermore, the questionnaire was done in

the Halal food section whereby only non-Muslim consumers were approached in order to meet the research objective. The measurements of the awareness of Halal principle were been adopted and adapted from Ahmad, Abaidah and Yahya [31], Yunus, et al, [15] and Shahijan, Rezaei, Preece and Ismail [32]. The questionnaire measured the perception of the respondents' perception and understanding of Halal principle in term of food safety and animal friendly, which would further leads to purchase intention of Halal food product. The testing of Islamic Brand questionnaire were adopted and adapted from Aziz and Vui [11] and Yunus, et al, [15]. In addition, the questionnaire also measured the perception of the respondents' perception of Islamic Brand in term of food quality, popularity, reliability and influence on the purchase intention. The measurements of moral obligation- animal welfare were adopted from Lindeman and Väänänen [33]. Furthermore, the questionnaire was also utilised to measure respondents' perception regarding Halal food on animal friendliness. The measuring of the perception of the respondents about Halal food product on food safety, questionnaire were adopted from Chen [34] as well as Nooh, Nawai, Dali, Mohammad, Nilai and Sembilan [35]. The purchase intention of Halal product due to the positive attitude towards Halal food product were measured by adopting the questionnaire from Aziz and Vui [11], Yunus, et al, [15] and Michaelidou and Hassan [36]. All the variables of Cronbach's Alpha value fall between 0.847 and 0.748, which indicates that the internal consistency is considered to be satisfactory [37].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics of Sample

The study was conducted within Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The reason of conducting the research in Malaysia is because of the accessibility of Halal product towards non-Muslim consumer. Furthermore, the designation of Selangor as the research context is because it contains the highest density population at the statistical result of 526 people per square kilometre [9]. The population is enough to represent the whole Malaysia population because people from

different places of Malaysia urbanizes to Selangor to seek job opportunities, educations and marriage. During the data collection process, 400 questionnaires were distributed. 30 questionnaires in which were initially distributed to qualified respondents as pilot test to find out whether there are any unclear or confusing questions [38]. The result of the pilot test shown that the questionnaire can be distributed out without further correction. Among the 370 questionnaires, 40 questionnaires had been identified to be unusable due to errors such as straight lining and incomplete answering. Out of the 330 questionnaires, 53.3% were male (n=176) and 46.4% were female (n=153). The respondents were categorised into 5 age groups, which range from equal or less than 20 years old to more or equal than 51 years old. 57% of the respondents fall within the age of 21-30, (n=188), followed by 20.9% respondents at the age of 31-40, (n=69), 17% respondents (n=56) less or equal to 20 years old, 4.5% respondents (n=15) at the age of 41-50 and 4.5% respondents (n=2) are more than or equal to 51 years old. Out of 330 respondents, 56.4 % of the respondents (n=186) were Chinese, 32.4% respondents (n=107) were Indian and 11.2% respondents (n=37) were other minority races in Malaysia. Furthermore, 55.2% of the respondents (n=182) were married, 30% respondents (n=99) were single and the rest 14.8% (n=49) were under other status such as engaged. According to the data, majority of the respondents were students 35.8% (n=118), 21.8% (n=72) were working in private sector, 21.5% (n=71) were self-employed, 9.7% (n=32) were unemployed, 7.3% (n=24) were from government sector and 3.9% (n=13) were other which referred to more than one occupations. Regarding the monthly household income or allowance, majority 34.2% (n=113) were under the category ranged from RM2001~RM3000, 21.5% (n=71) were at RM3001~RM4000, 19.1% (n=63) were at the range of less than or equal to RM2000 and RM4001~RM5000, and 6.1% (n=20) were equal to or more than RM5001. At the education level category, 39.7% (n=131) were at diploma level, 36.1% (n=119) were at degree level, 11.5% (n=30) were at SPM level, 11.2% (n=37) were at master level, 0.9% (n=3) were from other professional paper such as ACCA and only 0.6% (n=2) were at PhD level. In religious, 52.1% (n=

Table 1. Pearson's correlation coefficients and *p*-values of variables

		Halal food product purchase intention	Awareness of Halal principles	Islamic brand	Moral obligation-animal welfare	Food safety
Pearson correlation	Halal food product purchase intention	1.000				
	Awareness of Halal principles	.322	1.000			
	Islamic brand	.366	.385	1.000		
	Moral obligation-animal welfare	.422	.357	.420	1.000	
	Food safety	.324	.209	-.009	.106	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Halal food product purchase intention	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Awareness of Halal principles	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	Islamic brand	.000	.000	.	.000	.436
	Moral obligation-animal welfare	.000	.000	.000	.	.028
	Food safety	.000	.000	.436	.028	.

172) were Buddhist, 33.9% (n=112) were Christian and only 13.9% (n=46) were from other believes (1 USD =RM 4.2 as of January 6, 2016).

Based on Table 1, correlation between dependent variable, Halal food product Purchase Intention and independent variables awareness of Halal principle, Islamic brand, moral obligation-animal welfare, Food Safety had been shown. From the data collected from 330 respondents sample size, Halal food product purchase intention is ($r=.322$, $n=330$, $p<0.05$) correlated with awareness of Halal principle, ($r=.366$, $n=330$, $p<0.05$) correlated with Islamic brand, ($r=.422$, $n=330$, $p<0.05$) correlated with moral obligation- animal welfare, ($r=.324$, $n=330$, $p<0.05$) correlated with food safety. Furthermore, regarding the correlation score above, correlation between independent variables had been evaluate to diagnose Multicollinearity. According to Pallant [39], the correlation between independent variables should be ≤ 0.9 as an assumption of absence of Multicollinearity. The maximum correlation between the independent variables were .422. Hence, Multicollinearity had been proven to be absent among independent variables.

From Table 2, Unstandardized Coefficient, Beta, the independent variables were converted to the

same scale for comparison. After comparing, food safety had the highest coefficient score (.413) among the independent variables. Hence, by assuming all the independent variables were being controlled, food safety had the most significant influence to predict Halal food product purchase intention, whereby awareness of Halal principles(.128) had been determined to be least influential factor to predict Halal food product purchase intention. This means that food safety will increase the prediction rate of Halal food product purchase intention by 41.3%, Islamic brand will increase the prediction rate of Halal food product purchase intention by 31.9%, moral obligation- animal welfare will increase the prediction rate of Halal food product purchase intention by 37.1 % and awareness of Halal principles will increase the prediction rate of Halal food product purchase intention by 12.8%.

According to Pallant [39], the contribution of the independent variable can also be justified from the Sig. value. Independent variables with Sig. value that was less than .05 can be assumed to have specifically contributed at the prediction of dependent variable. Based on Table 2, all of the independent variables' Sig. value were less than .05 except awareness of Halal principles. Hence, it is again proven

Table 2. Results of a multiple regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity statistics	
	B	Std. error	Beta			Lower bound	Upper bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-1.563	.380		-4.116	.000	-2.311	-.816					
Awareness of Halal principles	.128	.083	.081	1.553	.121	-.034	.291	.322	.086	.071	.770	1.298
1 Islamic brand	.319	.076	.224	4.216	.000	.170	.468	.366	.228	.194	.750	1.334
Moral obligation-animal welfare	.371	.072	.269	5.156	.000	.229	.512	.422	.275	.237	.775	1.291
Food safety	.413	.070	.280	5.916	.000	.276	.550	.324	.312	.272	.942	1.061

Dependent variable: Purchase intention of Halal food product.

that awareness of Halal principles is not effective in predicting Halal food product purchase intention.

On top of that, testing of hypothesis can be analysed from Table 2. Regarding the *t* statistic shown, except awareness of Halal principles ($t=1.553$), independent variables Islamic brand ($t=4.216$), moral obligation-animal welfare ($t=5.156$), food safety ($t=5.916$) at the *b* coefficient is $<.001$, level of significance is less or equal to 0.05, null hypothesis which the independent variables is not significantly related to dependent variable had been rejected. Furthermore, among the independent variables, only independent variable awareness of Halal principles ($t=1.553$) at the *b* coefficient is $>.001$, level of significant less or equal to 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis of independent awareness of Halal principles had been accepted where the independent variable is not significantly related to the dependent variable.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research was to identify, evaluate and justify the purchase intentions of non-Muslims towards Halal food product among Malaysian non-Muslim consumers. Independent variables such as Awareness of Halal principle, Islamic brand, Moral obligation- Animal Welfare and Food Safety were utilised to measure the correlation with Halal food product purchase intention. Food safety has

been identified to be the most significantly related in predicting Halal food product purchase intention. The reason of non-Muslim in Malaysia to consume Halal food is because of reliable Halal certification, as non-Muslim consumers were relying on the guaranteed food safety. The lack of understanding on Halal principle were identified among consumers. Hence, it is suggested to educate consumer regarding the advantage of consuming Halal product. From the perspective of food provider, it is important to have Halal licence in order to capture more market share. Future studies are suggested to include additional factors such as habit and self-awareness, which were commonly being utilised in predicting food purchase intention. Besides that, duplication studies should also be done in different geographical settings to obtain more sophisticated information for Malaysia to become Halal product supplier.

Food safety has been identified to be most significant factor for Halal food product purchase intention among non-Muslim in Malaysia. Food safety awareness has raised due to the incidents of several infamous food scandals happened across the globe. Analysing from the perspective of food manufacturers, gaining consumer credence should be recognised as one of the attributes to increase competitive advantage. In the context of Malaysia, it was suggested to gain consumer credence through Halal

recognition from prominent Halal certification such as JAKIM. Halal logo's primary objective was to guide Muslim consumer to purchase and consume the right product regarding their religion. But due to the increase of food safety awareness, non-Muslims in Malaysia were only relying on prominent Halal certification in order to ensure they were consuming safe food. Furthermore, food manufacturers are also suggested to work with media in order to communicate with consumer about the effort put in to maintain the quality in terms of food safety. Malaysian non-Muslim consumers have very limited understanding on the overall Halal principle based on the research findings. The reason behind non-Muslims to purchase Halal food product were because of the Halal certification, which perceived to have a strict auditing on food safety. However, there were several Halal certifications available in the market [40]. Challenges aroused whereby the fabricated Halal certification would jeopardize the consumer trust toward Halal certification. Hence, government agencies are suggested to protect the creditability of Halal certification by monitoring Halal food providers. Constant auditing should be done for the renewal of Halal licence in order to ensure the quality was being met all the time. In addition, government should also announce the latest list of certified Halal food provider for consumer as reference. Regarding the objective of Malaysia establishing itself as one of the major players in Halal market, the sample size of current study is still insufficient in term of racial perspective to represent the whole nation. Furthermore, future studies are suggested to consider factor such as habit and self-awareness in order further the study from different perspectives. It is suggested to further the exploration of Halal concept in order to extend the implementation.

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