

An Analysis of the Behavior of Malaysian Consumers for Expanding the Export of Food and Agricultural Products*

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the various factors influencing the purchase decisions of Malaysian consumers for halal food and based on this analysis, to present some measures by which Korea's food industry could expand exports to the Malaysian market.

Design/methodology – This research used SPSS 12.0 for descriptive analysis, ANOVA, t-tests, factor analysis, cluster analysis, and reliability analysis based on a total of 571 responses were included as the final data in the 600 surveys administered.

Findings – Malaysian consumers had high trust and confidence in products that had obtained halal certifications. This reflects the cultural situation where 61% of the Malaysian population consist of Muslims. In terms of the consumption of Korean foods, items such as ramyeon, confectionery, and kimchi were found to enjoy high awareness and strong preference among local consumers, thus suggesting their competitiveness.

Originality/value – This paper attempts to examine consumer characteristics – an aspect that had received insufficient treatment in previous studies on halal certifications in Muslim countries. This study found the purchase practices and influencing factors behind Malaysian consumers' purchases of imported foods and Korean foods. Therefore, it is expected that this result can give Korean food industry an insights and strategies for exporting Korean food to Malaysia.

Keywords: Agri-food, Export, Malaysia, Market Entry

JEL Classifications: D12, F23, M52

1. Introduction

The worldwide Muslim population, which stood at 1.9 billion as of 2019, is expected to grow at an annual rate of 1.5% – more than twice the rate in non-Muslim regions – and will grow to 2.2 billion, or 26% of the total world population, by 2030. The pace of growth among the young Muslim population is particularly pronounced, such that by 2030, Muslims are expected to account for 29% of the total world population between the ages of 15 and 29. This highlights their importance in the market for youth consumers. About 80% of the world Muslim population resides in Middle Eastern and Asian regions such as Iran, Indonesia, and Malaysia, where Korean popular culture – or Hallyu – including Korean food, cinema, dramas, and celebrity fashion, saw a rapid growth in popularity since 2010. As such, the positive effects of Hallyu in these regions have led to the consumption of Korean products.

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Meanwhile, the size of the global food and agriculture products market is estimated at 6.4 trillion USD, or about 2~3 times the size of the IT market (3.5 trillion USD) and the automobile market (1.6 trillion USD). Furthermore, the Asia/Pacific region is expected to emerge as the center of the global food and agriculture products market, accounting for 40% of the total. In view of this, the Korean government has established the 'Foodpolis' National Food Cluster in Iksan to promote the efficient growth of Korea's food and agriculture industry and to prepare for the growth of the global food and agriculture products market.

Korea's 10th-largest trade partner, Malaysia, is rich in resources such as petroleum/gas, palm oil, rubber, lumber, and tin. It has also secured a substantial level of competitiveness in manufacturing, with a focus on electrical/electronics, petrochemical, and steel products. Upon the sound foundations of its primary and secondary industries, Malaysia is currently directing its efforts to promoting high-tech and high value-added industries such as IT, Islamic finance, and tourism. Malaysia, with its ample growth potential, is among the countries that have been affected by the Hallyu phenomenon that encompasses K-pop, dramas, fashion, and cinema. This has led to the broadening of the scope of Hallyu to businesses such as foods, distribution, and tourism, in turn leading to greater sales among Korean businesses. In particular, due to the further liberalizations of Korea's free trade agreements (FTA) with ASEAN economies and the acceleration of negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the trade environment with Malaysia is expected to improve further. With its ample future growth potential, Malaysia is expected to become a more important destination for Korean food exports in the future.

As more than 65% of Malaysia's population is Muslim, the most representative halal consumption item, food, is closely interwoven into the lives of consumers. Thus, haram products – products prohibited among Muslims – are a major concern. Consequently, the range of goods that are certified halal has broadened beyond meat and processed meat products to non-meat products such as snacks, confectionery, and dairy products. Among Korean food manufacturers, obtaining halal certification is currently regarded as an indispensable requirement for exporting foods to Malaysia.

Despite the recent expansion of Korea's exports of processed foods in addition to the entry of Korean restaurants, previous studies have only dealt with fresh agri-food preferences and promising export items to Malaysia (Choi Jong-San and Kim Yun-Ho, 2017) and a study on the possibility and perception of export of Korean processed foods is very limited.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine consumer characteristics – an aspect that had received insufficient treatment in previous studies on halal certifications in Muslim countries – in order to discover promising export items and to establish export strategies. As such, this study examined the purchase practices and influencing factors behind Malaysian consumers' purchases of imported foods and Korean foods.

Through Investigation of Malaysian consumers' awareness and preference for Korean processed foods, this study firstly examines the various factors influencing the purchase decisions of Malaysian consumers for halal foods. Based on this analysis, we then present some measures by which Korea's food industry could expand exports to the Malaysian market.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Factors Influencing Food Consumption

The state religion of Malaysia is Islam, and 65% of the Malaysian population is Muslim. The remainder of the population consists of Buddhist or Christian Chinese (23%) and Hindu

Indians (7%). Rather than being mere beliefs, these religions are closely interwoven into everyday lives – diets in particular. Muslims are prohibited from consuming pork and alcohol, and only consume halal-certified meat products. Buddhists and Hindus are prohibited from consuming beef. According to Asma et al. (2010), while there are differences between genders, religion was the most important factor considered during food purchases, followed by health and convenience aspects.

The food consumption tendencies of Malaysian consumers have seen major changes due to rising income levels and the spread of education. Key urban centers, which are characterized by high purchase power and population density, have seen a rise in the number of up-market restaurants and food courts, leading many consumers to visit restaurants for the enjoyment of high-quality cuisine in comfortable settings. This rise of consumption in eating out was accompanied by a rise in consumers' interest in healthy diets. In particular, Malaysia has seen steady growth in the organic foods market (Rizaimy et al., 2010).

2.2. Perceptions and Attitudes regarding Halal Foods

Research on halal food in Malaysia began to appear during the mid-2000s. The topic attracted the attention of researchers after it was designated as a national project by the government. Sungkar (2010) confirmed that there were factors influencing the purchase decision and behavior regarding halal foods, the most prominent among these being religious beliefs, the halal logo, confidence and trust in labels, income level, education level, availability / ease of access to information, and nutritional value. In general, most Malaysians purchased halal foods on a mandatory basis, as well as due to the influence of environmental factors (Ahmad et al. 2013). Ahmad et al. (2013) found that Malaysian consumers took it as given that all food produced and sold locally would be halal – due to this, they might place more weight on taste and price rather than the halal logo when making food purchase decisions.

However, with the recent rise of imported foods and the Malaysian government's broadening of halal certification, Muslim consumers came to take a greater interest in product information so as to verify whether they are halal (Anderson, 1994). Rezai et al. (2012) found that Malaysia's Muslim consumers consider halal an important quality of food, and that consumers with stronger religious beliefs were less confident about foods' halal status. Consequently, Muslim consumers collect information about various products in order to establish confidence about the halal status of their food.

Mohamed et al. (2013) stated that Malaysian consumers were very sensitive regarding information on halal or haram status, suggesting that their food purchases could be determined by halal information such as logos and labels. In particular, regarding halal logos, consumers were found to have strong trust in goods labeled with Malaysia's JAKIM certification or foods imported from Muslim countries, while they were less trusting of certifications issued by other countries (Rezai et al., 2012; Said and Elangkovan, 2013).

In addition to halal logos, consumers seeking to purchase halal foods also expressed interested in information on the raw ingredients (Dail et al., 2017; Abdul et al., 2009), food brands, quality, corporate image, and information from acquaintances when making purchase decisions (Mahiah et al., 2013; Abu et al., 2017).

2.3. Recent Korean Studies

Ever since the Korean president voiced, at the 2015 Korea-UAE business forum, the need to combine elements of Korean food into Middle Eastern cuisine so that Korea could take a leading role in the culinary culture of the global market, research projects have been pursued

to study the food and agricultural markets of Muslim-majority regions. Due to the inextricable relationship between Middle Eastern food and halal certification, early studies into the food and agricultural markets of Muslim regions mainly focused on halal foods.

The spread of Korean food can be seen in the study by Cho Een-Sun, Lee Jin-Myong and Rha Jong-Youn (2017), which shows that Malaysian consumers' emotional national image of Korea has a significant static impact on the Korean product evaluation and intention to purchase Korean products. As a result, it is believed that Malaysian consumers' friendly attitude toward Korea has led to product purchases. According to study by Cho Chul-Ho (2010), Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, has shown a growing preference for food, along with favorable views and interests of Malaysian consumers toward Korea. A survey of the perceptions of local consumers of Korean food by Choi Jong-San and Kim Yun-Ho (2017) showed that more than half of consumers responded positively to Korean food products.

In a study on Korea and Japan's responses to halal foods, Park Ki-Hwan (2015) forecasted rapid growth in the Muslim market and the steady rise in the influx of Muslims to Korea and Japan. Also, this study pointed out that both countries were interested in expanding exports in halal food and agricultural products, as well as stimulating domestic demand for halal foods. Kang Ja-Een and Na Hee-Ryang (2016) conducted an empirical study using a gravity model to examine how the obtainment of halal certification influenced exports to Malaysia, finding that food and agriculture exports to Malaysia grew by up to 3.8 times after the obtainment of halal certification, thus highlighting the importance of obtaining halal certifications. Park Ji-Hyun (2016) stated that comprehensive halal certification, with strict mandatory requirements and coverage of all food and agriculture, represented a technical regulation as defined in Article 2, Clause 1 of the TBT (Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade).

3. Research Method

3.1. Overview

To capture the characteristics of the Malaysia market, online surveys were administered to 600 local Malaysian consumers from Sep 9th to 15th, 2017. The questionnaire was constructed so as to collect information on the behavior of Malaysian consumers, as well as purchase propensities and current practices in the consumption of imported foods and Korean foods. Of the 600 surveys administered, a total of 571 responses were included as the final data, which was analyzed using SPSS 12.0 for descriptive analysis, ANOVA, t-tests, factor analysis, cluster analysis, and reliability analysis. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for variables with food purchase decisions of three or more for Korean food and the mean separations were analyzed by the Duncan's multiple range tests.

3.2. Respondent Status

For the purpose of this study, we selected an adult Malaysian consumer with experience in Korean food purchases and conducted an online survey by recruiting survey targets through a local survey company in Malaysia. Before the start of the survey, participants were asked to explain the purpose of the research and the contents of the survey, and to ask for consent to use the information. Participants were 281 males (49.2%) and 290 females (50.8%). The age group was 170 (29.8%) for 20s, 169 (29.6%) for 30s, 173 (30.3%) for 40s, and 59 (10.3%) for 50s. The population consisted of 173 people (30.3%) and 59 people (10.3%). More than half of these consumers lived in the Klang Valley region, with 82 in Penang (14.4%) and 68 in

Johor (11.9%). The ethnicity consisted of 361 Malay (63.2%), 179 Chinese (31.3%), 20 Indian (3.5%), and one other (1.9%). Religion is followed by 231 Islam (40.5%), 202 Buddhists (35.4%), 95 Christians (16.6%), and 19 Hinduism (3.3%). Among the surveyed, singles were 244 (42.7%) and Marrieds were 327 (57.3%). Household members was 20 (3.5%) for single households, 152 (26.6%) for 2-3 people, 267 (46.8) for 4-5 people, and 123 (21.5%) for 6-9 people.

Table 1. General Characteristics of Respondents

Item		Freq.	%
Sex	Male	281	49.2
	Female	290	50.8
Age group	20~29	170	29.8
	30~39	169	29.6
	40~49	173	30.3
	50~59	59	10.3
Residence	Klang Valley	310	54.3
	Johor	68	11.9
	Penang	82	14.4
	Ipho	18	3.2
	Others	93	16.3
Ethnicity	Malay	361	63.2
	Chinese	179	31.3
	Indian	20	3.5
	Other	11	1.9
Religion	Islam	231	40.5
	Buddhism	202	35.4
	Hinduism	19	3.3
	Christianity	95	16.6
	Other	7	1.2
	None	17	3.0
Marital status	Single	244	42.7
	Married	327	57.3
Family members	1	20	3.5
	2-3	152	26.6
	4-5	267	46.8
	6-9	123	21.5
	10 of more	9	1.6

Note: N=571.

4. Research Results

4.1. General Food Consumption Propensities

Analyses of differences across age groups showed that there were significance differences in terms of taste, freshness, spices, brand, and recommendations by acquaintances. Taste and spices was found to have significantly higher importance among consumers in their 20s ($p < 0.05$) while freshness had high importance among those in their 50s ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2. Determinants of Food Purchase Decisions, by Age Group

Item	Total	Ages 20-29	Ages 30-39	Ages 40-49	Ages 50-59	F-value
Taste	4.47±0.61	4.58±0.52 ^a	4.47±0.62 ^{ab}	4.39±0.68 ^b	4.42±0.62 ^{ab}	2.941 [†]
Spices	4.13±0.76	4.26±0.71 ^a	4.11±0.76 ^{ab}	4.03±0.78 ^b	4.07±0.83 ^{ab}	2.700 [†]
Freshness	4.55±0.58	4.50±0.63 ^b	4.56±0.55 ^b	4.53±0.60 ^b	4.75±0.44 ^a	2.742 [†]
Nutrition	4.32±0.70	4.26±0.72	4.33±0.70	4.32±0.71	4.47±0.65	1.392
Cleanliness	4.67±0.56	4.67±0.57	4.61±0.59	4.66±0.56	4.80±0.41	1.535
Price	4.31±0.73	4.29±0.77	4.28±0.74	4.28±0.72	4.49±0.63	1.397
Health benefits	4.15±0.78	4.22±0.74	4.13±0.83	4.17±0.76	3.98±0.80	1.470
Novelty	3.81±0.90	3.85±0.95	3.76±0.89	3.83±0.82	3.78±0.97	0.324
Packaging (listing of ingredients)	3.45±1.12	3.40±1.15	3.46±1.08	3.50±1.12	3.44±1.13	0.248
Country of origin	3.74±0.93	3.79±0.97	3.72±0.91	3.78±0.89	3.54±1.01	1.204
Ease of purchase	3.40±1.00	3.48±1.04	3.44±0.97	3.39±0.96	3.19±1.06	1.058
Brand	3.72±0.99	3.76±1.04 ^a	3.77±0.93 ^a	3.82±0.93 ^a	3.19±1.06 ^b	6.733 ^{***}
Promotion	3.38±1.11	3.43±1.10	3.40±1.09	3.34±1.06	3.34±1.31	0.255
Recommendations by acquaintances	3.51±1.03	3.69±1.03 ^a	3.53±1.02 ^a	3.45±0.98 ^a	3.12±1.08 ^b	4.849 ^{**}
Previous purchase experience	3.96±0.86	4.12±0.87	3.96±0.90	3.87±0.79	3.78±0.83	3.517

Notes: 1. ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$, †: $p < 0.05$.

2. ^{abc} denotes Duncan's multiple comparison.

3. Note: N=571, M±SD.

4.1.1. Results by Religion

Analysis of the determinants of food purchase decisions by religion showed that most consumers, such as Muslims and Buddhists, placed greatest importance on cleanliness, followed by freshness, taste, and price. Also, while Muslims rated ease of purchase as being the least important, Buddhist consumers rated promotion as being the least important.

Table 3. Determinants of Food Purchase Decisions, by Religion

Item	Total	Muslims	Buddhists	Other	F-value
Taste	4.48±0.60	4.53±0.54 ^a	4.31±0.63 ^c	4.46±0.63 ^b	15.079 ^{***}
Spices	4.23±0.71	4.19±0.85 ^a	4.00±0.68 ^b	4.20±0.71 ^a	3.794 [†]
Freshness	4.52±0.58	4.59±0.56	4.52±0.60	4.54±0.59	.730
Nutrition	4.22±0.69	4.46±0.65 ^a	4.20±0.71 ^b	4.26±0.74 ^b	8.253 ^{***}
Cleanliness	4.55±0.61	4.81±0.49 ^a	4.55±0.59 ^b	4.60±0.59 ^b	12.917 ^{***}
Price	4.25±0.71	4.48±0.69 ^a	4.17±0.73 ^b	4.22±0.76 ^b	10.872 ^{***}
Health benefits	3.97±0.76	4.39±0.72 ^a	3.97±0.78 ^b	3.04±0.78 ^b	18.407 ^{***}
Novelty	3.77±0.80	4.02±0.89 ^a	3.63±0.89 ^b	3.72±0.85 ^b	11.503 ^{***}
Packaging (listing of ingredients)	3.37±1.03	3.79±1.12 ^a	3.14±1.01 ^b	3.35±1.11 ^b	20.640 ^{***}
Country of origin	3.64±0.81	4.02±0.90 ^a	3.51±0.94 ^b	3.61±0.86 ^b	18.928 ^{***}
Ease of purchase	3.36±0.87	2.52±1.08	3.32±0.93	3.32±0.94	2.705
Brand	3.32±1.16	3.79±1.04	3.72±0.90	3.61±1.03	1.417
Promotion	3.65±0.91	3.57±1.11 ^a	3.27±1.03 ^b	3.25±1.16 ^b	5.443 ^{**}
Recommendations by acquaintances	3.97±0.74	3.61±1.09	3.47±0.90	3.41±1.10	1.960
Previous purchase experience	3.28±0.82	4.05±0.93	3.91±0.79	3.88±0.81	2.325

Notes: 1. ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$, †: $p < 0.05$.

2. ^{abc} denotes Duncan's multiple comparison.

3. Note: N=571, M±SD.

Looking at differences across religions in the determinants of food purchase decisions, Muslim consumers were found to place greater importance on all aspects compared to consumers in Buddhist or other groups. Significant differences were found in terms of taste, spices, nutrition, cleanliness, price, health benefits, novelty, packaging, country of origin, and promotion ($p < 0.001$, $p < 0.05$).

4.1.2. Consumption Practices of Imported Foods

Of the 571 respondents surveyed, 92.5% ($n=528$) reported having purchased imported foods, with the highest frequency of purchase being once per month (40.3%), followed by once per week (19.4%), and 2~3 times per week (18.9%).

Most of the purchases of imported foods took place at hypermarkets and supermarkets, with many purchases also being made at convenience stores and premium outlets. Compared to females, males made more purchases at grocery shops and traditional markets, while females made more purchases online.

Across all age groups, hypermarkets and supermarkets were the places where most purchases took place, followed by convenience stores and premium outlets. Hypermarkets and supermarkets showed the highest frequency among consumers in their 50s, while grocery shops and traditional markets showed the highest frequency among those in their 30s. Meanwhile, convenience stores, online shopping, and duty-free shops had the most responses among consumers in their 20s.

Table 4. Place of Purchase of Imported Foods, by Sex and Age Group

(Unit: Freq. of Response (%))

Item	Sex		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	20s	30s	40s	50s	
Hypermarket	234 (29.0)	243 (30.8)	142 (27.8)	138 (29.0)	143 (30.9)	54 (36.7)	477 (29.9)
Supermarket	187 (23.2)	179 (22.7)	115 (22.5)	101 (21.2)	109 (23.5)	41 (27.9)	366 (22.9)
Convenience store	103 (12.8)	90 (11.4)	70 (13.7)	55 (11.6)	57 (12.3)	11 (7.5)	193 (12.1)
Premium outlet	85 (10.5)	94 (11.9)	58 (11.4)	54 (11.3)	50 (10.8)	17 (11.6)	179 (11.2)
Traditional market	74 (9.2)	54 (6.8)	37 (7.3)	40 (8.4)	41 (8.9)	10 (6.8)	128 (8.0)
Grocery store	69 (8.6)	42 (5.3)	37 (7.3)	40 (8.4)	30 (6.5)	4 (2.7)	111 (7.0)
Online shopping	23 (2.9)	53 (6.7)	31 (6.1)	26 (5.5)	13 (2.8)	6 (4.1)	76 (4.8)
Duty-free shop	30 (3.7)	33 (4.2)	20 (3.9)	21 (4.1)	19 (4.1)	3 (2.0)	63 (3.9)
Other	1 (0.1)	2 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.7)	3 (0.2)

Note: N=572.

4.1.3. Determinants of Purchase Decision by Religion

Analysis of the determinants of purchase decisions of imported foods among consumers of different religious groups showed that Buddhist consumers placed the greatest importance on nutrition, while the other groups placed the greatest importance on cleanliness. Furthermore, taste and freshness were also shown to be important to similar degrees. Among

Muslim consumers, the least important factor was ease of purchase while among other groups (including Christians and Hindus) promotion was the least important factor.

Analysis of inter-group differences revealed that Muslim consumers rated the factors at higher levels compared to the two other groups – such that there were significant differences in terms of taste, spices, nutrition, cleanliness, price, health benefits, novelty, packaging, country of origin, and promotion ($p<0.001$, $p<0.01$, $p<0.05$).

Differences in importance were particularly marked in the case of country of origin and packaging (listing of ingredients), a finding that may be attributable to the Muslim prohibition of alcohol and pork.

Table 5. Determinants of Imported Food Purchase Decisions, by Religion

Item	Total	Muslims	Buddhists	Other	F-value
Taste	4.44±0.64	4.59±0.54 ^a	4.31±0.70 ^b	4.38±0.66 ^b	10.504 ^{***}
Spices	4.20±0.73	4.30±0.71 ^a	4.09±0.68 ^b	4.21±0.71 ^{ab}	4.173 [*]
Freshness	4.49±0.64	4.50±0.67	4.54±0.61	4.45±0.66	.341
Nutrition	4.46±0.69	4.47±0.60 ^a	4.24±0.71 ^b	4.19±0.77 ^b	8.664 ^{***}
Cleanliness	4.63±0.58	4.79±0.45 ^a	4.52±0.62 ^b	4.54±0.52 ^b	14.130 ^{***}
Price	4.26±0.77	4.47±0.69 ^a	4.11±0.78 ^b	4.15±0.81 ^b	12.945 ^{***}
Health benefits	4.17±0.78	4.36±0.71 ^a	4.02±0.80 ^b	4.10±0.78 ^b	10.833 ^{***}
Novelty	3.82±0.93	4.04±0.95 ^a	3.65±0.94 ^b	3.74±0.83 ^b	9.582 ^{***}
Packaging (listing of ingredients)	3.90±1.04	3.96±1.03 ^a	3.40±1.03 ^b	3.73±0.94 ^b	14.892 ^{***}
Country of origin	3.78±0.92	4.06±0.89 ^a	3.55±0.90 ^b	3.68±0.88 ^b	17.425 ^{***}
Ease of purchase	3.52±1.00	3.64±1.08	3.41±0.94	3.49±0.94	2.614
Brand	3.91±1.06	3.97±0.95	3.92±0.91	3.80±0.99	1.288
Promotion	3.54±1.06	3.76±1.10 ^a	3.39±0.99 ^b	3.43±1.03 ^b	7.257 ^{**}
Recommendations by acquaintances	3.69±0.84	3.79±1.03	3.67±0.90	3.56±1.02	2.220
Previous purchase experience	3.97±0.84	4.09±3.88 ^a	3.88±0.79 ^b	3.90±0.78 ^b	3.548 [*]

Notes: 1. ^{***}: $p<0.001$, ^{**}: $p<0.01$, ^{*}: $p<0.05$.

2. ^{abc} denotes Duncan's multiple comparison.

3. Note: N=571, M±SD.

Of the 528 consumers who had purchased imported foods, 222 (42%) respondents, most of whom were Malay Muslims, stated that they only purchase halal-certified products. Looking at the perception of halal certification among this group, all items were rated very highly, with scores of at least 4. Meanwhile, the most-preferred halal certification bodies among respondents were Malaysia's JAKIM, UAE's ESMA, and Indonesia's LPPOM MUI

4.2. Consumption Practices of Korean Foods

4.2.1. Ensuring the Scale of Government Procurement

Of the consumers surveyed, 76.3% (n=435) responded having purchased Korean foods. The most common frequency of purchase of Korean food was 1~2 times per month (34.7%), followed by 1~2 times per 3 months (22.5%) and 1~2 times per 2 weeks (13.3%).

Information was collected on the place of purchase and source of purchase information regarding Korean foods using multiple-choice response items. Results showed that most purchases of Korean foods took place at hypermarkets and supermarkets, followed by premium outlets. Women were more likely to make purchases via premium outlets and online shopping, while mostly similar distributions were seen among the other groups.

Across all age groups, the most purchases had occurred at hypermarkets and supermarkets. For consumers in their 20s to 40s, this was followed by convenience stores or premium outlets. Very few consumers in their 50s made purchases at convenience stores, while online shopping was most prevalent among consumers in their 20s.

Table 6. Place of Purchase of Imported Korea foods, by Sex and Age Group

(Unit: Freq. of Response (%))

Item	Sex		Age group				Total
	Male	Female	20s	30s	40s	50s	
Hypermarket	191 (37.2)	192 (37.2)	128 (35.6)	108 (35.6)	109 (38.0)	38 (43.7)	383 (37.2)
Supermarket	130 (25.3)	123 (23.8)	77 (21.9)	75 (24.8)	74 (25.8)	27 (31.0)	253 (24.6)
Convenience store	66 (12.9)	2 (14.0)	49 (13.9)	40 (13.2)	38 (13.2)	11 (12.6)	138 (13.4)
Premium outlet	49 (9.6)	42 (8.1)	37 (10.5)	25 (8.3)	26 (9.1)	3 (3.4)	91 (8.8)
Traditional market	27 (5.3)	21 (4.1)	12 (3.4)	18 (5.9)	16 (5.6)	2 (2.3)	48 (4.7)
Grocery store	27 (5.3)	19 (3.7)	19 (5.4)	16 (5.3)	10 (3.5)	1 (1.1)	46 (4.5)
Online shopping	12 (2.3)	35 (6.8)	23 (6.5)	15 (5.0)	7 (2.4)	2 (2.3)	47 (4.6)
Duty-free shop	9 (1.8)	9 (1.7)	6 (1.7)	6 (2.0)	5 (1.7)	1 (1.1)	18 (1.7)
Other	20 (0.4)	2 (0.4)	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.7)	2 (2.3)	5 (0.5)

Note: N=435.

The most frequent places of purchase among Malay and Chinese consumers were hypermarkets and supermarkets. While the relative frequency of responses was similar across all groups Malay consumers made relatively more frequent use of convenience stores while Chinese consumers made more frequent use of premium outlets. While group of other consumers (including Indians) showed similar results, they made very little use of premium outlets and had a high proportion of purchases made via online shopping.

In terms of religion, Muslim consumers had a relatively higher frequency of purchases made via convenience stores compared to Buddhists, while the latter reported making more use of premium outlets. Among the other group (including Christians and Hindus), there was a very high frequency of purchases made in supermarkets.

Table 7. Place of Purchase of Korean Foods, by Ethnicity and Religion

(Unit: Freq. of Response (%))

	Ethnicity			Religion			Total
	Malay	Chinese	Other	Muslim	Buddhist	Other	
Hypermarket	236 (37.8)	130 (36.5)	17 (38.6)	141 (38.4)	154 (37.4)	88 (35.6)	383 (37.2)
Supermarket	151 (24.2)	92 (25.5)	10 (22.7)	84 (22.9)	104 (25.1)	65 (26.3)	253 (24.6)
Convenience store	76 (12.2)	58 (16.1)	4 (9.1)	42 (11.4)	63 (15.2)	33 (13.4)	138 (13.4)
Premium outlet	60 (9.6)	28 (7.8)	3 (6.8)	36 (9.8)	31 (7.5)	24 (9.7)	91 (8.8)

Table 7. (Continued)

	<u>Ethnicity</u>			<u>Religion</u>			Total
	Malay	Chinese	Other	Muslim	Buddhist	Other	
Traditional market	26 (4.2)	18 (5.0)	4 (9.1)	15 (4.1)	22 (5.3)	11 (4.5)	48 (4.7)
Grocery store	31 (5.0)	12 (3.3)	4 (9.1)	22 (6.5)	15 (3.6)	10 (4.0)	47 (4.6)
Online shopping	32 (5.1)	47 (3.9)	0 (0.0)	19 (5.2)	19 (4.6)	8 (3.2)	46 (4.5)
Duty-free shop	9 (1.4)	7 (1.9)	2 (4.5)	7 (1.9)	7 (1.7)	4 (1.6)	18 (1.7)
Other	3 (0.5)	2 (0.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.3)	0 (0.0)	4 (1.6)	5 (0.5)

Note: N=435.

4.2.2. Awareness

While the average levels of awareness for Korean food items were unremarkable, there were very large discrepancies in awareness depending on the item. Items with the highest level of awareness included ramyeon (4.25) and cabbage kimchi (4.22). Noodles (3.97) also had high levels of awareness, while above-average levels of awareness were found for items such as confectionery, chocolate, naengmyeon (cold noodles), dangmyeon (starch noodles), fruit / vegetable drinks, ginseng / hongsam (red ginseng) drinks, sauces, ganjang (soy sauce), doenjang (soy bean paste), and gochujang (red pepper paste). The items with the lowest level of awareness included chewing gum, plain bread, and cereals.

Analysis by age group revealed that ramyeon and cabbage kimchi enjoyed high awareness levels among all age groups. The awareness for other items was relatively higher among consumers in their 20s and 30s compared to those in their 40s and 50s, but the difference was not significant. Significant inter-age differences were found in the case of certain items – awareness for items such as donuts / pies, naengmyeon / dangmyeon, fruit / vegetable drinks, carbonated drinks, yogurts, sauces, tomato ketchup, and gochujang was highest among consumers in their 20s and lowest among those in their 50s, with the differences being significant ($p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 8. Differences in Awareness of Korean Food Items, by Age Group

Item	Total	20s	30s	40s	50s	F-value
Breads / pies	2.69±1.22	2.84±1.28 ^a	2.82±1.16 ^a	2.48±1.19 ^{ab}	2.43±1.19 ^b	3.120 [*]
Noodles						
Naengmyeon	3.45±1.13	3.60±1.07 ^a	3.55±1.12 ^a	3.28±1.15 ^{ab}	3.14±1.19 ^b	3.310 [*]
Dangmyeon	3.17±1.21	3.27±1.18 ^a	3.34±1.14 ^{ab}	2.97±1.16 ^{ab}	2.93±1.30 ^b	2.946 [*]
Drinks						
Fruit / vegetable	3.32±1.14	3.59±1.10 ^a	3.42±1.04 ^a	3.04±1.24 ^b	3.00±1.03 ^b	6.730 ^{***}
Carbonated	3.11±1.21	3.45±1.15 ^a	3.19±1.13 ^{ab}	2.86±1.23 ^{bc}	2.61±1.26 ^c	8.161 ^{***}
Yogurt	2.29±1.26	3.13±1.22 ^a	3.83±1.23 ^{ab}	2.82±1.29 ^{ab}	2.57±1.32 ^b	2.735 [*]
Seasoning						
Sauces	3.36±1.15	3.59±1.14 ^a	3.42±1.10 ^{ab}	3.15±1.18 ^b	3.09±1.14 ^b	4.280 ^{**}
Tomato ketchup	2.90±1.22	3.07±1.25 ^a	3.03±1.15 ^{ab}	2.67±1.85 ^{bc}	2.64±1.33 ^c	3.575 [*]
Jang / Pastes						
Gochujang	3.22±1.26	3.36±1.36 ^a	3.36±1.11 ^a	3.02±1.25 ^{ab}	2.95±1.29 ^b	2.910 [*]

Notes: 1. ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$, *: $p < 0.05$.

2. ^{abc} denotes Duncan's multiple comparison.

3. N=435, M±SD.

Analysis of the inter-ethnicity differences in the level of awareness for Korean food items showed that, for all items, consumers of Chinese ethnicity had lower awareness compared to the two other groups. The group of other ethnicities (including Indians) exhibited similar or higher levels of awareness compared to consumers of Malay ethnicity. Significant inter-group differences were found in the case of certain items – awareness for breads, cereals, and jang / pastes such as doenjang was significantly lower among consumers of Malay and Chinese ethnicity

Table 9. Differences in Awareness of Korean Food Items, by Ethnicity

	Item	Total	Malay	Chinese	Other	F-value
Breads	Plain bread	2.63±1.20	2.68±1.22 ^b	2.47±1.12 ^b	3.26±1.33 ^a	4.254 [*]
	Cakes / sponge cakes	2.82±1.21	2.84±1.25 ^b	2.71±1.14 ^b	3.42±1.12 ^a	3.029 [*]
	Donuts / pies	2.69±1.22	2.79±1.28 ^{ab}	2.48±1.10 ^b	3.05±1.08 ^a	3.972 [*]
Cereals	Cereals	2.65±1.21	2.67±1.25 ^b	2.51±1.12 ^b	3.37±1.21 ^a	4.525 [*]
Jang / Pastes	Doenjang	3.18±1.23	2.68±1.22 ^b	2.47±1.12 ^b	3.26±1.33 ^a	3.031 [*]

Note: N=435, M±SD.

Looking at inter-religion differences in awareness showed overall similar levels across the three groups for all items. Significant inter-group differences were found in the case of ramyeon and ginseng / hongsam drinks. Among all groups, ramyeon had an awareness score of at least 4, with the awareness level being significantly higher among Muslim consumers in particular. However, this group also had a significantly lower level of awareness for ginseng / hongsam drinks.

Table 10. Differences in Awareness of Korean Food Items, by Religion

	Item	Total	Muslims	Buddhists	Other	F-value
Noodles	Ramyeon	4.25±0.90	4.45±0.83 ^a	4.10±0.92 ^b	4.22±0.92 ^b	6.311 ^{**}
Drinks	Ginseng / hongsam drinks	3.24±1.22	2.96±1.40 ^b	3.35±1.12 ^a	3.46±1.04 ^a	6.686 ^{**}

Notes: 1. ^{*}p<0.01

2. ^{abc} denotes Duncan's multiple comparison.

3. N=435, M±SD.

4.2.3. Preference for Korean Foods

While overall, the preferences for Korean foods were fairly high – with a score of 3.5 on average, there were also very large differences depending on the item. The subcategories with the highest preference, with scores of over 4, included ramyeon (4.30), cabbage kimchi (4.06), and noodles (4.03). Items enjoying high levels of awareness were also found to be strongly preferred. Most other items, with the exception of gum, were found to have higher-than-average levels of preferences.

Table 11. Preference for Korean Foods

Item	Subcategory	M±SD
Confectionery	Confectionery (biscuits, cookies, crackers, snacks, etc.)	3.64±0.84
	Candies (candies, caramel, yokan / yang-gaeng, jellies)	3.31±0.87
	Chewing gum	2.98±0.88
	Ice cream	3.53±0.89
Breads	Plain bread	3.24±0.81
	Cakes, sponge cakes, etc.	3.42±0.81
	Donuts, pies, etc.	3.32±0.84
Chocolates	Chocolates and chocolate confectionery	3.60±0.90
Jams	(fruit, vegetable, berry) Jams	3.21±0.82
Noodles	Noodles	4.03±0.85
	Naengmyeon	3.53±0.97
	Dangmyeon	3.47±0.90
	Ramyeon	4.30±0.81
Drinks	(fruit, vegetable) Drinks	3.56±0.86
	Carbonated drinks	3.30±0.91
	Soy milk	3.42±0.89
	Yogurts, yakult	3.43±0.93
	(ginseng, hongsam) drinks	3.34±1.09
Dressings	Salad dressings	3.28±0.92
Cereals	Cereals	3.23±0.89
Seasonings	(ganjang, bulgogi sauce, ddeok-bokki sauce, curries)	3.57±0.91
Jang / Pastes	Tomato ketchup	3.29±0.87
	Ganjang	3.55±0.89
	Doenjang	3.49±0.95
	Gochujang	3.56±0.99
Kimchis	Cabbage kimchi	4.06±0.94
Average		3.49±0.60

Note: N=435, M±SD.

Looking at the differences in preference for Korean foods across age groups, items such as noodles, ramyeon, and cabbage kimchi were found to be strongly preferred by consumers of all ages. Confectioneries were relatively more strongly preferred among consumers in their 20s and 30s compared to those in their 40s and 50s. While consumers in their 20s and 30s had a relatively weaker preference for jangs and pastes, these differences in preference were significant only in the case of certain items.

Table 12. Differences in Preference for Korean Foods, by Age Group

Item	Total	20s	30s	40s	50s	F-value	
Confectionery	Confectionery	3.64±0.84	3.77±0.88 ^a	3.69±0.86 ^{ab}	3.50±0.83 ^b	3.52±0.63 ^{ab}	2.766*
	Ice cream	3.53±0.89	3.78±0.89 ^a	3.42±0.92 ^b	3.37±0.83 ^b	3.59±0.79 ^{ab}	6.098***
Breads	Donuts / pies	3.32±0.84	3.49±0.86 ^a	3.29±0.86 ^{ab}	3.20±0.82 ^b	3.27±0.69 ^{ab}	2.844*
Noodles	ramyeon	4.30±0.81	4.45±0.71 ^a	4.18±0.86 ^b	4.28±0.80 ^{ab}	4.20±0.95 ^{ab}	2.699*
Drinks	Carbonated drinks	3.30±0.91	3.45±0.92 ^a	3.38±0.95 ^{ab}	3.11±0.91 ^b	3.14±0.70 ^b	3.878**

Notes: 1. ***: $p < 0.001$, **: $p < 0.01$, *: $p < 0.05$.

2. ^{abc} denotes Duncan's multiple comparison.

3. N=435, M±SD.

Items that were associated with significant inter-age differences in preference included confectionery, ice cream, donuts / pies, ramyeon, and carbonated drinks. All of these were more preferred among consumers in their 20s and were least preferred by consumers in their 40s.

Looking at how the preference for Korean foods differed across ethnicities, we found that consumers of Chinese ethnicity had lower preference compared to the two other groups. The 'other' group (including Indians) was found to have similar or higher levels of preference compared to Malay consumers.

Significant inter-group differences were found in the case of certain items – the 'other' group (including Indians) had a significantly higher preference for breads (plain bread), salad dressings, and tomato ketchup ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$). Also, Malay consumers were found to have stronger preference for all items compared to consumers of Chinese ethnicity.

Table 13. Differences in Preference for Korean Foods, by Ethnicity

	Item	Total	Malay	Chinese	Indian	F-value
Breads	Plain bread	3.24±0.81	3.28±0.82 ^b	3.12±0.75 ^b	3.74±0.93 ^a	5.655**
Dressings	Salad dressing	3.28±0.92	3.28±0.93 ^b	3.22±0.88 ^b	3.84±0.90 ^a	3.965*
Seasonings	Tomato ketchup	3.29±0.87	3.28±0.91 ^b	3.24±0.77 ^b	3.84±0.90 ^a	4.125*

Notes: 1. ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.01$.

2. ^{abc} denotes Duncan's multiple comparison.

3. N=435, M±SD.

Looking at differences in preference across consumers' religions, we found that Buddhist consumers had weaker preference for most of the Korean food items. Specifically, donuts and pies were strongly preferred among Muslim consumers, and this group exhibited significant preference for ginseng / hongsam drinks, ganjang, and doenjang ($p < 0.001$, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 14. Differences in Preference for Korean Foods, by Religion

	Item	Total	Muslim	Buddhist	Other	F-value
Breads	Donuts, pies, etc.	3.32±0.84	3.49±0.87 ^a	3.22±0.84 ^b	3.25±0.75 ^{ab}	4.974**
Drinks	Ginseng / hongsam drinks	3.34±1.09	3.07±1.13 ^b	3.45±1.03 ^a	3.56±1.04 ^a	7.861***
Jang	/ Ganjang	3.55±0.89	3.53±0.95 ^b	3.46±0.86 ^b	3.74±0.87 ^a	3.337*
Pastes	Doenjang	3.49±0.95	3.33±1.00 ^b	3.50±0.90 ^{ab}	3.70±0.95 ^a	4.744**

Note: N=435, M±SD.

4.3. Discussion

According to the results of awareness and preference of Korean foods by age group showed that ramyeon, cabbage kimchi, and noodles items were high in all ages, especially ramyeon in 20s. In addition, chocolates in the 20s, soy sauce and doenjang in the 30s, ginseng, hongsam in the 50s showed different results from other ages. Items with less than average awareness, but relatively high preference, were ice cream in their 20s, chocolate in their 30s and 40s, and ice cream and chocolate in their 50s. Conversely, items with high awareness but low preference were found to be carbonated drinks in their 20s, ginseng, hongsam drinks in their 30s, and naengmayeon in their 50s. Regarding the awareness and preferences of Korean foods according to religion, ramyeon, cabbage kimchi and noodle items showed high awareness and preference among all religious groups. especially for Muslim consumers. Regarding the awareness and preference of Korean foods by religion, ramen, cabbage kimchi and noodle items showed high recognition and preference among all religious groups. In particular, ramyeon was much higher awareness for Muslim consumers. Items with low awareness but

relatively high preference are yogurt for Muslim consumers and chocolate for Buddhist consumers.

Therefore, the overall items that enjoyed high awareness and strong preference among Malaysian consumers included ramyeon, cabbage kimchi, and noodles, followed by favorable reception in the case of confectionery, fruit / vegetable drinks, sauces, gochujang, and ganjang. Items that had lower-than-average awareness but strong preference included chocolates and ice cream, while ginseng / hongsam drinks were representative of the most weakly preferred items. Hence, if halal certification is obtained first, focusing on items that are highly recognized and favored by Malaysian consumers, domestic agri-food companies are expected to boost exports to Malaysia.

5. Conclusion

In the previous section, this study examined Malaysian consumers' food purchase practices and the determinants of purchase decisions for imported / Korean foods, with the goal of discovering promising export items and presenting strategies for exports to Malaysia. Results indicated that Malaysian consumers had high trust and confidence in products that had obtained halal certifications. This reflects the cultural situation where 61% of the Malaysian population consist of Muslims. In terms of the consumption of Korean foods, items such as ramyeon, confectionery, and kimchi were found to enjoy high awareness and strong preference among local consumers, thus suggesting their competitiveness. In fact, these items have consistently shown strong export performance. Promising items, which have maintained a certain level of exports and enjoyed high awareness and strong preference among select groups of consumers, were found to include fruit / vegetable drinks, gochujang, sauces, noodles, ginseng / hongsam drinks, and ice cream. Potentially competitive items, which underperformed in terms of exports and also had low levels of awareness and preference, included cakes, chocolates, and ganjang.

Taking account of the above findings along with the fact that 61% of the Malaysian population is Muslim, Korea's food and agricultural product businesses must pursue the following efforts in order to expand exports to Malaysia. First, obtaining halal certification is imperative in order for Korean food and agricultural products to gain a foothold in the mass market in Malaysia. Halal certifications are regarded as indicative of food safety among consumers, and are perceived as a guarantee of quality. Considering the fact that a large part of Korean exports currently consists of agricultural products, the diversification of items through the obtainment of halal certification would contribute to the boosting of exports. Furthermore, because halal certification influences product sales, the obtainment of halal certification must be also be pursued as a part of marketing efforts for the purpose of establishing a presence in local markets. Second, Korea's food and agricultural businesses must take account of the diverse nature of Malaysia's culinary culture – where Malay (62%), Chinese (22%), and Indian (7%) cultures coexist – to pursue product development and localization of tastes. Third, since awareness of Korean cuisine and Korean foods still lags behind those of Chinese, Western, or Japanese foods, Korean food and agricultural businesses should promote Korean cuisine and Korean foods to Malaysian consumers in order to further boost their interests that have been stimulated as a result of the Hallyu wave.

In addition to efforts on the part of food and agricultural businesses, the Korean government should enact the following measures to expand exports not only to Malaysia but all Muslim regions (Park, 2015). First, it must conduct a basic study to collect information on halal certification-related matters for each country and item, thereby providing a basis for the effective penetration of halal markets. Second, the Korean government should train experts in halal-related matters while providing support for the establishment of substance analysis

and testing, thereby helping the Korea Muslim Federation become officially recognized as a halal certification body among key Muslim countries. Presently in Japan, there are already six organizations – including the Japan Muslim Association, the Japan Halal Association, the Japan-Asia Halal Association, etc. – that have been officially recognized as certification bodies by key Muslim countries. On the other hand, the Korea Muslim Federation has only been designated as a certification body by Malaysia's JAKIM and has not been recognized in other key Muslim countries such as the UAE or Indonesia. Third, there is a need to hold halal expos in Korea and to encourage the participation of Korean businesses in various conventions overseas, in order to lay the domestic foundations of the halal agriculture / food industry.

Therefore, on the basis of the above-mentioned middle to long-term strategies, the government should work with businesses and make the fullest effort to respond to growth in the global food market while effectively promoting the growth of Korea's food industry, so that it may secure a central role among Korea's export industries.

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