

Why Buying Halal Labelled Food? Understanding the Spending Behavior of Non-Muslim Consumers in Malaysia

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Abstract: Food plays an important role in the social, cultural and religious life of many communities. Food which is consumed by Muslims must meet the Islamic dietary code and this code is called halal. Halal is derived from the Arabic word meaning lawful or permitted. The demand for Halal products is increasing especially in Muslim country. However, the research on Halal labeled food consumption on non-Muslim market segment has been largely ignored. Objective: To investigate the reasons non-Muslim consumer purchase Halal labeled food and their spending behavior towards Halal labeled food given all the advantages of such products. Results: The results for multiple regressions shows that consumers' spending behavior is influence by the non-Muslim consumers' income level, their understanding towards Halal concept, degree of intention and degree of concern towards animal welfare and fair trade. Conclusion: Future study is needed to examine how non-Muslim consumers with different levels of motivation and halal knowledge and understanding respond to the halal labelled food. It is also interesting in examine how the consumers' needs and wants can be satisfied through developed marketing strategies by marketers.

Key words: *Halal labelled food, non-Muslim consumers, purchasing behavior, spending behavior*

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's expertise as a halal food provider gained worldwide recognition and was cited by the United Nation' Codex Alimentarius Commission as the best global example where halal food is concerned. Halal products should be recognized as a symbol of cleanliness, safety and high quality [1]. As a highly reputed and recognized Islamic country, Malaysia has been one of the pioneers in promoting halal food throughout the globe and is well poised to play a leading role in further expanding the halal food market. Halal food should be continuously monitored and certified in order to protect Muslim consumers, to encourage trade demand and to increase non-Muslim recognition on halal food as a high quality food as well. To capitalize on this lucrative market segment, both domestically and internationally, Malaysia should strengthen the halal food industry trend, awareness, perception and its grant or incentives scheme in a positive way.

The Muslim majority in Malaysia which makes up of 60.4 percent of the population is concerned with the food contents in terms of its halalness. One important aspect that must be considered is the halalness of a deceptively labelled halal food. In many cases these products that are advertised as being halal in order to cheat Muslim consumers both financially and nutritionally. Convenience, freshness, and sophistication have been identified as the principal trends in consumer food demand shaping new food product development. Muslim consumers in general are found to be very particular about the halal level of the foods they purchase and consume. They believe that the halal issue is not to be depicted by just the halal logo that is being labelled by the food producers but it is the total quality management and control measures involved in the monitoring of the slaughtering, handling, and storage processes as well as all the ingredients used in processing, packaging and storage of the food products.

For non-Muslim consumers, the halal concept is not too unfamiliar to them, especially those in Muslim countries including Malaysia. However, the concept has not been a major element in the fabric of life of non-Muslim consumers. Many non-Muslims still perceive the halal labelled food products from only a religious perspective. They have yet to appreciate the underlying advantages that come with halal food products which include a hygienic process before reaching the market. Therefore halal values can be made to be more popular and acceptable among non-Muslim consumers if the society is made to be more aware of issues concerning health, animal rights and safety, the environment, social justice and welfare.

Halal Issues in Malaysia

Malaysia is a country with is multiracial and consists of various ethnic groups and religions. In view of this, the issue of halal or haram is of very important and can be to a certain extent sensitive, as it is possible that many non-Muslims do not understand in totality the Islamic dietary codes and rules. Malaysia currently also imports food and consumer products from non-Muslim countries whose halal status is unknown. These food and consumer products could potentially contain haram substances, as the manufacturers in the foreign originating countries may not understand the concept of halal or haram as required by Muslim countries. As the development in food technology, food processing continue, these processes has become more complex. Consumers now also have a wider variety of processed food to choose from. This situation exposes consumers to various types of food that could contain haram substances. The situation can be worsened when these haram substances cannot be detected even by using scientific methods.

Muslim and non-Muslim consumers have become more concerned about choosing products that are halal. This is because halal sign and concept has been exploited and abused by some retailers who put up the sign at their premises even when the products sold there are not halal. Because of their commercial value and as a differentiating factor, such halal signs have been proliferating in many business outlets, whether they are exclusive restaurants or street food stalls. Due to the insufficient legislation on the halal or haram issues and poor enforcement of the Trade Descriptions Act 1972, unscrupulous businessmen are abusing the halal logo to promote their business. The frequent cases of abuse of halal logos have made consumers more cautious in trusting products and halal logos. This has created a trend in consumers' behaviors that are concerned with halal products to read the label of every product. Below are a few cases which have been reported in Malaysia.

As reported in 2003, a four-star hotel in Penang was found to be roasting pork, even though it had a halal certificate from the State Religious

Department. Before this, there were incidences of liquor-selling restaurants which displayed the halal logo [2]. In February 2004, a factory that packed instant noodles in Taman Sri Bahtera, Cheras, was raided by Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs as it did not possess a genuine halal certificate from JAKIM. In the raid more than 1,000 boxes of instant noodles of various brands and flavors worth more than RM 37,000 were confiscated [2]. In July 2004, two containers of a famous brand of chewing gum were confiscated by JAKIM and more than 255,000 cans of Tongkat Ali drinks were also detained. These products were found to have used a fake halal logo [3]. In October 2004, JAKIM revoked the halal certificate that was issued to Kam Lun Tai Cake House Sdn Bhd as the company had used a JAKIM halal logo displayed on a moon cake that contained pork lard [4].

In February 2005, a food processing company used a halal logo on cans containing raw escargot (edible snails), which is haram for Muslims. The owner of the factory was found to have copied the halal logo of JAKIM on five of its products without the approval from relevant parties [5]. Also in February 2005, a Muslim man nearly ate smoked pork that had been packed together with chicken products by the producers in a plastic bag that had the halal logo from JAKIM. The company had apparently roasted both the pork and chicken in the same roasting pit [6]. In February 2008, a civil servant sued two companies and a hypermarket for RM5 million after discovering that two out of three black chickens he had purchased were not halal [7].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal refers to that which is permitted by Shyariah (Shyariah is the Arabic meaning for the code of life or law which regulates all aspects of a Muslim life) and halal applies to every activity carried out by man. The examples of halal animals are chickens, cattle and goats that are slaughtered according to Islamic rites. The halal ingredients must not be mixed or come into contact with other haram materials, such as products from pigs or dogs, during the entire process of manufacturer and delivery to consumption, ie storage, transportation, cooking and serving. The definition of halal cannot be complete without haram being mentioned. Haram, the opposite of halal, means unlawful or forbidden for consumption. As according to the Quran, consumption of haram food and drinks will have an undesirable effect on the health, spiritual and physical development of the individual. Several factors determine the halal and haram status of a particular foodstuff. These include the nature of the foodstuff itself, how it is produced, processed, distributed and how it is acquired.

During the first half of the 20th century, most of food researches conducted was focused on identification, prevention and correction of nutrient-deficient diseases; whereas starting from

the second half of the century, the focus switched to the role of a persons' diet in maintaining health. Concerns about dietary inadequacy were largely overshadowed by concerns about excess consumption of fats, cholesterol, and calories. Scientific accounts which linked diet and beliefs first appeared in the early 1960s, and further research showed there were evidence associating particular foods and dietary components with specific health consequences has expanded rapidly [8]. As time progressed, advancements in scientific research has increased, and through this better understanding, the link between diet and beliefs have been translated and disseminated to consumers as practical advice regarding food choices and diet. Besides the contribution of opinions from word of mouth and personal physicians, consumer beliefs have very important roles on their daily diet [9].

There is a research done by Golnaz et al., [10] shows that 94 percent of the consumers agreed that the Halal principle is a religious obligation and non-Muslim consumers think that food safety issues and environmental friendliness are associated with Halal principles. The result also shows that Muslim counterpart has a role to play in promoting and making their non-Muslim friends understand the importance of Halal principles for Muslims. According to Teng and Wan Jamaliah [11], they found that majority of the Malaysian were aware about the halal cosmetics and personal care products in Malaysia. A survey conducted by Bergeaud-Blackler et al., [12] shows that the Halal meat products are chosen by French Muslims not because of religious obligation, but consumers also believe that Halal products were tastier, healthier and the Islamic slaughter method is less painful for the slaughtered animal. According to Golnaz et al., [13] their findings showed that religious belief or religiosity is an important determinant for non-Muslim consumer attitude, and the effect is positive. In the minds of non-Muslims, concerns about food safety positively influence the consumers' attitude on Halal food products. A research done by Yuhanis and Chok [14] provided evidence that halal awareness and halal certification are significant factors in explaining the intention to purchase halal products for non-Muslim consumers in multiracial societies. There is another research done in Malaysia shows that majority of the non-Muslim consumers are aware about Halal labeled food and the JAKIM Halal logo on food products [15]. Additionally, important marketing-related factors also play a significant role in predicting the intention to purchase halal products in non-Muslim societies.

Despite the importance of the Halal market segment as a fast growing revenue contributor [16], research on Halal food consumption on non-Muslims market segment has been largely ignored

[17]. Not much has been done to understand non-Muslim consumers' perception on Halal food and many questions relating to their precise attitude and food choices remain under research [18][19]. Thus, the objective of the study is to investigate the reasons consumer purchase Halal labeled food and their spending behavior towards Halal labeled food given all the advantages of such products.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Conceptual Framework

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is able to adequately explain the relationship between consumers' attitude towards the behavior. According to Luthan [20], consumers will form either a positive or negative attitude towards their intention of forming a specific behavior, in this case, purchasing and spending on Halal labeled food products once the non-Muslim consumers have obtained sufficient information and their learning about Halal labeled food have reached a desired level.

The Theory of Planned Behavior [21] postulates three conceptually independent determinants of non-Muslim consumers' behavioral which are attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. Attitude is the psychological tendency within an individual that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. In this study, non-Muslim consumers' attitudes towards Halal labeled food consumption will influence their spending amount on Halal labeled food products.

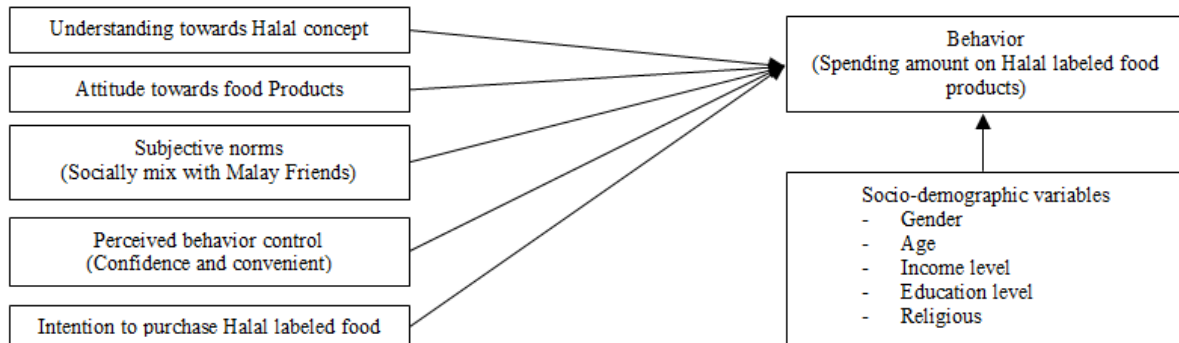
Subjective norm assesses the social pressure on individuals to perform or not to perform certain behavior i.e. the motivation to comply with others' views. In case of non-Muslim consumers, social mixing with Muslims either at work place or society can be pointed out as a strong motivation and subjective norms to be aware of Halal labeled food product and increase their intention to purchase or spending on Halal labeled food products.

Perceived behavioral control is described as people's behavior that they are capable of performing a particular behavior. Control factors such as perceived availability may facilitate or inhibit the performance of behavior [22]. There are many control factors which may facilitate or inhibit the non-Muslim consumers' spending habit towards Halal labeled food products such as non-Muslim consumers' confidence and convenient to purchase Halal labeled food products in Malaysia.

Intention is described as the consumers' willingness to try or effort he or she put in to performed a particular behavior. In this case, consumers' purchase intention will influence the consumers spending amount on Halal labeled food products.

Furthermore, few researchers have addressed socio-demographic profiles have a great impact on consumer attitude and behavior [23]. Therefore, socio-demographic profile such as gender, age, education level and income level are used in this study to determine the relationship

between non-Muslim consumers' attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and intention of consuming Halal labeled food products (Figure 1).



Source: Adapted model from Ajzen [21]

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with application towards spending behavior towards Halal labeled food products among the non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia

Sample and questionnaire

A quantitative method and a survey questionnaire were used. Simple random sampling method was used and the survey was done in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A total of 176 non-Muslim consumers were interviewed using structured questionnaire. A Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 represent strongly disagree and 5 represent strongly agree) was used to measure the consumers' spending behavior on 50 statements formulated in relation to Halal labelled food products

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics, reliability test and multiple regression were used to analyze the information gathered from the questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the population in this study. Reliability analysis was carried out to provide an overall index of the repeatability or internal consistency of a measure [24]. Multiple regression analysis is conduct to test the consumers' spending habit towards Halal labeled food products which can be explained in term of the consumers' behavior towards purchase intention. Therefore, to accomplish the main purpose of this study, a model was employed:

RESULTS

The Cronbach's alpha value which gets from reliability analysis was 0.937 and this showed that there was consistency among the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) items and therefore the model is fit for this study.

Socio-demographic Information

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The result showed that 30.1 percent of the respondents were male and 69.9 percent of the respondents were females. As can be seen in Table 1 majority of the respondents were Chinese (87.5 percent) followed by Indians (12.5 percent). However, 28.4 percent of the respondents were Christian, 59.7 percent were Buddhist, 8.5 percent were Hindu and 3.4 percent were others such as free thinker, I'Kuan Tao and agnostics. In terms of income distribution, this result shows that 24.4 percent earned less than RM 1500, 33 percent of the respondents earned between RM 1501 – RM 3000 per month, 23.9 percent of the respondents earned RM 3001 – RM 4500 per month and a smaller percentage of respondents (18.8 percent) had monthly income above RM 4501. The numbers of respondents from urban and rural area were 34.1 percent and 65.9 percent respectively. In term of marital status, 30.1 percent of the respondents were single and 69.9 percent of the respondents were married. With regards to age, the result showed that most of the respondents were between 26 to 35 years (45.5 percent), while 34.7 percent was less than 25 and 19.9 percent were more than 36 years. The education level of the respondents is categorized into six categories where 0.6 percent are primary school, 9.1 percent are secondary school graduates, 18.2 percent of respondents complete diploma, 54.5 percent of the respondents graduate from bachelor, 13.6 percent had complete master and only 4.0 respondents complete PhD.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=176)

Characteristic	Percentage	Characteristic	Percentage
Gender		Religious	
Male	30.1	Christian	28.4
Female	69.9	Buddhist	59.7
		Hindu	8.5
Race		Others	3.4
Chinese	87.5		
Indian	12.5	Area	
		Urban	34.1
Age		Rural	65.9
Below 25	34.7		
26-35	45.5	Marital Status	
More than 36	19.9	Single	30.1
		Married	69.9
Education level			
Primary school	0.6	Income	
Secondary school	9.1	Less than 1500	24.4
Diploma	18.2	1501-3000	33.0
Bachelor	54.5	3001-4500	23.9
Master	13.6	Above 4501	18.8
PhD	4.0		

Dimensions of consumers’ purchasing behavior towards Halal labelled foods

Table 2 shows the non-Muslim consumers spending behavior towards Halal labeled food products. The results shows that fifty six percent of the non-Muslim consumers have purchase Halal labeled food and 43.2 percent of respondents never purchase Halal labeled food. However, twelve respondents always buy Halal labeled food (6.8 percent), 36 respondents often purchase it (20.5 percent), 46 respondents sometimes purchase Halal labeled food (26.1 percent) and 52 respondents never purchase Halal labeled foods (29.5 percent). Approximately, 25.6 percent of the respondents

spend less than Rm20 on Halal labeled food each week, 9.7 percent of the respondents spend Rm21–Rm 40 each week, 11.4 percent of the respondents spend Rm41- Rm 60 each week and 10.2 percent of the respondents spend more than Rm 61 on Halal labeled food each week.

The most important factors for the consumers in determining the foods and beverages are price (79.5 percent), nutritional or health benefits (76.1 percent), ingredient (56.2 percent), promotion (53.4 percent), brand (51.7 percent), convenient to buy (47.7 percent), environmental friendly (38.6 percent), fair trade (24.4 percent) and animal welfare (22.7 percent).

Table 2. Non-Muslim Consumers Spending Behaviour towards Halal Labelled Food Products

Statement	Percentage (%)
How often do you buy Halal labelled food?	
Always	6.8
Often	20.5
Sometimes	26.1
Rarely	17.0
Never	29.5
Approximately, how much you spend on Halal labelled food each week?	
Rm0	43.2
Rm1 - Rm20	25.6
Rm21 – Rm40	9.7
Rm41-Rm60	11.4
More than Rm61	10.2
How important are the following factors in determining the foods and beverages you want to buy?	
Brand	51.7
Price	79.5

Ingredient	56.2
Nutritional or health benefits	76.1
Convenience to buy	47.7
Promotion	53.4
Environmental friendly	38.6
Fair trade	24.4
Animal welfare	22.7

Reasons of consumers purchase and not purchasing Halal labelled foods

Table 3 shows the reasons non-Muslim consumers purchase and not purchase Halal labeled food products. The most three important reasons consumer purchase Halal labeled food is due to stay healthy (18.8 percent), followed by concern about food safety (18.2 percent) and animal welfare (11.4 percent). Other reasons that consumers stated were they want to try a different food choice, they only purchase Halal labeled food when they were

together with Muslim friends, most of the products is Halal in Malaysia and they don't have a choice to chose, they don't care about whether the food products they purchase is Halal or not, they have no reasons to exclude this food products and the products that they want and need is coincidently is Halal. The three most important reasons for the consumers not buying Halal labeled food because it is Halal labeled food is only for Muslim consumer (25 percent), not effective (21.6 percent) and too expensive (15.9 percent).

Table 3. Reasons purchase and not purchasing Halal labelled food products

Why do you buy Halal labelled food? (Can choose more than one)	Percentage (%)
To stay healthy	18.8
To stay attractive	9.7
Halal labelled foods are concern about fair trade	9.1
Halal labelled foods are concern about animal welfare	11.4
Halal labelled foods are concern about food safety	18.2
Halal labelled foods are concern about environment	9.1
Good taste	5.1
Other	14.2
What are the reasons for not buying Halal labelled food? (Can choose more than one)	
Too expensive	15.9
Not effective	21.6
Halal labelled food is only for Muslim consumers	25.0
Bad smell	6.8
Do not recognize which is Halal labelled food	13.1
Bad taste	9.1
There are not many Halal labelled food in the market	11.9

Multiple Regression analysis

Multiple regressions are used in this study to explain the dependent variable (Y) is estimated from several independent variables (X). The dependent variable that use in this study is consumers' spending amount per week on Halal labelled food products. As highlighted in Table 4, the regression model is statistically sufficient with F-value of 6.355 (p-value= 0.000). It indicated that all the eleven independent variables that used in this study are simultaneously significant to the dependent variable. From the adjusted R square value, the eleven factors contributed 25.2 percent of the variation in "spending amount on Halal labelled food products". The value of Durbin-Watson is 2.099 which are very

close to 2 that the assumption of the independent has almost certainly been met.

The result of unstandardized coefficient (beta) revealed that non-Muslim consumers who are more understand towards the Halal concept was the important variable that contributed to the dependent variable (beta=10.197) followed by non-Muslim consumers who have higher intention to purchase Halal labelled food products (beta=7.844) and consumers who concern about the animal welfare and fair trade (beta= 5.025). From table 5, only one socio-demographic of the non-Muslim consumers such as income level contributed significantly to the dependent variable with the significance values of 0.000. It indicates that the non-Muslim consumers who have higher income spend more than the non-

Muslim consumers who have lower income. Each factors tested in different dimensions and without any multi-collinearity with the tolerance rate is more

than 0.1 and variance inflation factor (VIF) is less than 10.

Table 4. Multiple regression of Consumers Spending Behaviour towards Halal labelled Foods

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients (b)	t value	p value	Collinearity Statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Constant	3.297	0.180	0.857		
Perceived behavioural control	-1.622	-0.405	0.686	0.359	2.788
Animal welfare and fair trade	5.025	1.747	0.083*	0.695	1.439
Attitude towards foods	-0.899	-0.354	0.724	0.890	1.123
Religious belief	0.751	0.266	0.791	0.720	1.388
Gender	7.758	1.428	0.155	0.920	1.087
Education level	-2.218	-0.761	0.448	0.778	1.286
Age	0.122	0.399	0.690	0.584	1.713
Income level	0.007	4.939	0.000***	0.664	1.505
Intention	7.844	1.853	0.066*	0.321	3.118
Understanding towards Halal concept	10.197	1.722	0.087*	0.792	1.263
Subjective norm	-5.144	-1.007	0.315	0.935	1.070
R ²	0.299				
Adjusted R ²	0.252				
Durbin Watson	2.099				
F value	6.355***				

***Statistically significant at the 0.01 level, **at the 0.05 level and *at the 0.10 level

DISCUSSION

Nowadays, non-Muslim consumer are concerned about choosing food product. From the research. It shows that majority of the consumer are aware about Halal logo but a quarter of the respondent never purchase Halal labelled food at all. This segment of consumer are lack of understanding about the Halal concept as they perceived Halal labelled food is just for Muslim consumer. On the other hand, the reasons why non-Muslim consumer purchase Halal labelled food because they perceived it as a healthy food product and is concern about the food safety. To have a deeper understanding about the non-Muslim behavior towards Halal labelled foods, a few factors had been consider in this study but the result shows that consumer who are concern about animal welfare, fair trade and consumer who understand the concept of Halal are the one who willing to purchase Halal labelled foods.

CONCLUSION

Understanding non-Muslim consumer response to halal logo and halal labelled food is necessary when designing food labelling regulations. This is because recognized and certified halal logos like JAKIM are likely to have significant impacts on the market for foods with additional health benefits, animal welfare, the environment and fair trade. Without halal logos, the market for halal labelled food is limited because not only non-Muslim consumers can not

differentiate the manufactured food product is halal or not but also the Muslim consumers will confused about the Halalness of the food products. The policy should encourage manufacturers to market more halal products with qualified and certified halal logos especially certified by JAKIM to increase the consumers' intention to purchase Halal labelled foods so that the consumers able to make informed choices about the halalness of the food they eat and better understand how halal food can impact their health, fair trade, animal welfare and environment.

Halal values can be very popular among non-Muslim consumers if the society is made to be more aware of issues concerning health, fair trade, animal welfare and food safety, the environment issues, social justice and welfare. Therefore improving the non-Muslim consumers awareness and developing the standard control measures to ensure correct Halal labeling, which is intended on the producers, will increase confident intention purchasing behavior for halal labeled food. In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that non-Muslim consumer spending behavior is associated with some demographic factors such as income level and attitudinal characteristics which related to fair trade, animal welfare, understand towards Halal concept and intention thus, the combination of these issues need to be considered by policy makers in order to make halal business and industry successful.

Future study is needed to examine how non-Muslim consumers with different levels of motivation and halal knowledge and understanding respond to the halal labelled food. It is also

interesting in examine how the consumers' needs and wants can be satisfied through developed marketing strategies by marketers. Willingness to pay for the Halal labelled food is needed to identify how much non-Muslim consumers are willing to pay for Halal labelled food in Malaysia.

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