

Halal Food: Study on Non-Muslim Acceptance

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Abstract Halal food industries are one of the huge industries in our countries. It is one of the industries that influence the level of economic in Malaysia. Halal food is the food handled according to the Islamic Sharia Law and food has been subjected by approved certification systems which guarantee to consumers that nothing in the food has any forbidden components. Perceive that halal food is suitable for Muslim, but Halal food also suitable for non-Muslim. The purpose of this research is to identify the perceptions and knowledge of people about halal food. This can be influenced by many reasons on how Non-Muslim can accept Halal Food in their everyday diet. Existing literature is reviewed and discussed in order to know the relationship between the halal foods and explore to non-Muslim. This study will help to know the level of knowledge of people towards halal product and food. This finding helps to generate revenues and enhance personal and firm income.

Keywords Halal food, Non-Muslim, Food Safety, Food Quality, Animal Welfare

1. Introduction

Halal is literally means permissible or in other words it is all the actions that follow all the rules or regulations by the law of syariah. Consuming Halal product is one of the responsibilities for Muslim. As per the Islamic tenets, it is the responsibility of every Muslim to follow norms and values as provided by the Holy Quran and Hadiths as best as they can in their daily life, even though it is challenging to assimilate Islamic norms to a non-Muslim majority surrounding. Esfahani, & Shahnazari, (2013). It is compulsory as a Muslim to follow all the rules and regulations according to the law of Al Quran and as sunnah.

Malaysia is both developing and multiracial country. There are many race and culture that has been practicing in Malaysia. Developing country like Malaysia must have established economic condition in order to maintain their performance throughout time. In this context, Malaysia has established the halal hub on 2006 as a response to the significant growth of the global Halal business (Ambali and Bakar, 2013). The Halal business has growth from time to time and in Malaysia, this kind of industry is helping the economy to maintain. Halal certificate for producer in Malaysia are manage and can be obtain by applying to JAKIM (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia). Abd Latif et al. (2014) suggest that Halal certification requirements by Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (JAKIM) are

the strictest among nine Halal certification bodies worldwide in their study. Thus, halal food are considered as one of the clean and healthy food in the market.

Ambali and Bakar (2014) were stated that according to the Third Industrial Master Plan (IMP3), Malaysian government has taken many efforts in order to makes sure that Malaysia is succeed in becoming the Halal Hub. Government has started efforts from 2006 in order to make people more aware of the advantages of considering halal food product in their daily diet. This including the non-Muslim are in Malaysia, a multiracial country, there are about 39.7 % non-Muslim living here. The growth of Halal food industry in the market has caused the curiosity regarding the level of knowledge of non-Muslim towards halal product.

A profound setback for materializing and achieving the dream of Malaysia becoming a halal hub country lies inside the issues of halal certificates and logos for products manufactured outside Malaysia which are being sold locally (Ambali and Bakar, 2014). The aim of this paper is to recognize the perceptions of non-Muslim towards halal product regarding the food safety, food quality and animal welfare in order to generate revenue and enhance personal and firm income. In order to increase the awareness of non-Muslim towards halal food, some question that might be arise is how well the knowledge and understanding of non-Muslim towards halal product and how the information about halal product will influence their buying decision to choose halal product in their daily life. In attempt to answer these questions, the following objectives are aimed such as to find out the level of perceptions of non-Muslim towards halal product, to find out the relationship between the information and their purchase decision on halal product and

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to find out the dominant factors that can increase the awareness of non-Muslim towards halal product and food.

2. Literature Review

Halal from an Arabic word means food permitted under the Islamic Law. The concept of Halal suggests that the word 'Halal' is associated with the word 'good' and does not consist of or contain anything which is considered to be unlawful according to Islamic Law. According to Marzuki, Hall and Ballentine (2011), Muslims must adhere to the Halal food standards and abstain from taking the prohibited food (haram). These foods may contain harmful substances that are disguised as healthy. Recent years, Halal food issues becoming booming among consumers demand in Malaysia, especially to non-Muslim acceptance. They seek for cleanliness that keeping the dirt away, to maintain good health, following both personal and environmental hygiene practices. Thus, Halal food is often associated with healthy food. Understanding the factors influencing market acceptance on Halal food is crucial to further describe the reasons behind the acceptance.

Food Safety

The general guidelines in Islam state the specific motives behind Halal concept. Apart from religious value, the motives also include to preserve life, to safeguard future generations, and to maintain self-respect and integrity (Muhammad, Norhaziah, Nuradli and Hartini, 2007). With Malaysia's population, primary food safety practice is necessary due to rises in expectation and demand by health community. In 2012, approximately 56.6 incidents of foodborne diseases from 100,000 populations have been reported in Malaysia (Ministry of Health, 2012). The rising concern on health among consumers today is the reason why concept of Halal today is beyond religious value, simply because health concern in food consumption basically shares the same value with Halal concept. Nity, Matthew, Raudah, and Nurazizah (2012) has stated that the concept of being healthy means being watchful over what is taken into the body, on the cleanliness of the food, the source of the food and also the method of handling and preparing the food. The main reason is to minimize any harmful effects to the body. Rezai, Mohamed and Shamsuddin (2011) stressed that the benefits of halal food are explained from other contexts including food safety.

Food Quality

Lampila and Lähteenmäki (2007) agreed that consumer acceptance is often the key of success as far as food processing method is concerned. It is believed that consumers accepted a product when they have the intention to use, have used the product and continue using it. Non-Muslim acceptance on Halal food could be due to several factors. Food quality is one of an important factor in consumer decision making. According to Nity, Matthew,

Raudah, and Nurazizah (2012), consumers respond positively and accept products with high quality. In terms of food, quality is defined by its cleanliness and freshness. In order to achieve this, food processing methods are vital in sustaining the cleanliness and freshness of the food and directly affect the nutritional quality of food consumed. Grunert, Hartvig, Larsen, Madsen and Baadsgaard (1996) divided quality dimensions for food into four classifications which are hedonic, health-related, and convenience related and process-related. They added, "Hedonic quality is related to sensory pleasure and is therefore mainly linked to taste, smell, and appearance. Health-related quality is concerned with ways in which consumption of the product will affect consumers' physical health. Convenience-related quality is related to the time and effort which has to be expended while buying, storing, preparing and consuming the product". The facts discussed automatically relate food quality with the acceptance from non-Muslim towards Halal food generally.

Animal Welfare

Therefore, this study was seeks to examine the relationship between animal welfare towards non-Muslim acceptance on Halal food matters. Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment. Islamic Law teaches zero-tolerance to all forms of animal abuse throughout the halal meat production supply chain and demands that when animals are slaughtered, they must be slaughtered in the mindful and attentive way espoused by the Prophet Muhammad. A large volume of red meat is produced using industrial Halal methods and traded globally (Farouk, 2013; Farouk et al., 2014). The spiritual quality of this meat is foundationally important for Halal consumers (Farouk et al., 2014), and therefore all spiritual aspects must be met including animal welfare standards of the meat production (Aidaros, 2014). Rahman and Aidaros (2011, 2012) detailed some of these unacceptable practices. They include "cruel" handling of animals before and during transportation. Some animals are herded for several days to slaughter. During this process animals may lose weight and may be beaten unnecessarily. According to M.M. Farouk, K.M. Pufpaff, M. Amir (2016), many animals are also not fed and watered. Animals – young and old, big or small – may be tied in twos and fours in order to reduce the number of animal minders or personnel required for herding. Such tying results in injury and fatigue to the animals. Some animals are beaten and forced to move quickly in order to reach markets and abattoirs on time. Those that fall down may be whipped to force them to rise. Similarly, needless suffering is inflicted on animals that are transported three or four days together in overcrowded, ill-ventilated, trucks, especially in hot, humid weather. These unhealthy animals may cause bad quality of the raw food, thus, increase of disease among consumer such as stomach-ache, food poisoning, and etc.

3. Methodology

This research, we use secondary data by Nity Mathew, Raudah, and Nurazizah, 2016. Non-Muslim acceptance toward Halal food has long debated, for which using a descriptive research method as it is relevant to explain it detailed (Nity Mathew, Raudah, and Nurazizah, 2016). Survey method is used to collect primary data from the respondents. Questionnaires were structured based on the factors identified to have influenced the consumers in accepting the products. The questionnaire was divided into three sections; the respondents demographic background, market acceptance variable questions and open ended question. Demographic variables include gender, age group, income level, religion, and education background. The relevant demographic variables were used as explanatory variables in determining underlying factors of the study. The second section of the questionnaire was variables on market acceptance. This section consists of fourteen statements derived from the four market acceptance variables identified through the literature. Variables were evaluated using a 7 point Likert-scale to illustrate their degree of agreement. Scale point "7" indicated "Strongly Agree", and follows other remaining scale point until point "1" for "Strongly Disagree". The last section was an open ended question on the overall general acceptance on halal food concept. A pilot test was conducted and tested on 10% of the actual total respondents. Cronbach's alpha value of 0.891 indicated that the instruments prepared were reliable to measure market acceptance. The questionnaire was distributed to 250 respondents in the north area of Kuching Sarawak. Data collected were checked immediately to ensure high usable rate and valid for further analysis.

4. Research Finding

Based on the review on the existing literature and the research done by previous researcher, we have summarized the findings on the acceptance of non-Muslim towards halal food. There are three types of survey that has been conducted which are reliability test, respondent's demographic background, and respondent's acceptance level. For the reliability test it is run to ensure the instruments are reliable enough to measure the variables. Though the test has been conducted earlier in the pilot test, different result could be obtained based from higher number of responses to the survey (Nity Mathew, Raudah, and Nurazizah, 2016). There are four market acceptance variables such as voluntary, food quality, food safety and purchase intention. The result for all the items are satisfactory and reliable to be used in measuring market acceptance. After that, respondent's demographic background is conducted to know the percentage of which gender, religion, ethnic and age that become the active respondents. More female respondents answered the questionnaire than male (52.8 percent and 47.2 percent respectively). Respondents aged between 21 to 30 years were the highest in percentage (65.6 percent) and those aged

20 years and below were the lowest in percentage (4.4 percent). In terms of ethnic background, half of the respondents were Iban (50 percent) while the rest were Chinese (13.2 percent), Bidayuh (13.2 percent), Melanau (22.8 percent), and others (8 percent). As for religion, majority of them were Christians (86 percent) and the least were Hindus (8 percent) (Nity Mathew, Raudah, and Nurazizah, 2016).

Table 1. Respondents demographic background

Demographic Variables	Frequency (t)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	132	52.8
Male	118	47.2
Age		
20 years and below	11	4.4
21 to 30 years	164	65.6
31 to 40 years	56	22.4
41 and above	19	7.6
Race		
Chinese	33	13.2
Iban	125	50
Bidayuh	33	13.2
Melanau	57	22.8
Others	2	8
Religion		
Buddha	33	13.2
Hindu	2	8
Christian	215	86
Others	0	0
Education Level		
Undergraduate	185	74
Post graduate	0	0
Others	65	26
Monthly income		
1000 and less	58	23.2
1001-2000	148	71.2
2001-3000	14	5.6
3001-4000	0	0
4001 and above	0	0

Then the next survey is to measure the level of acceptance of the respondent and resulting that the food safety variables become the most reason why the respondent accept halal food and follow by the food quality reason. Voluntary actions are the least reason of acceptance of halal food by the respondent. Voluntary was included in the measurement to check on individual evaluation rather than other environmental influence over the acceptance (Nity Mathew, Raudah, and Nurazizah, 2016). The last survey is regarding the overall acceptance of non-Muslim respondents towards halal product and food. The result has shown that based on

the 250 respondents, 232 respondent give positive feedback and the other 18 vice versa. The result has proven that non-Muslim has understands the concept of halal food and can accept it with an open heart.

Table 2. Mean score of market acceptance variable

Market Acceptance Variables	Mean Score
Voluntary	4.55
Purchase Intention	4.60
Food Quality	4.68
Food Safety	5.32

5. Conclusions

This research study, aim to identify the perceptions and knowledge of people about halal food. Existing literature is reviewed and discussed in order to know the relationship between the halal foods and explore to non-Muslim. For Muslim consumers, choosing Halal food is a must and it is a religious requirement based on the Islamic teachings. Non-Muslim consumers on the other hand, value halal because of health benefits it provides which is purely voluntary on an individual decision rather than because to obey religion requirement. Hence this study will help to know the level of knowledge of people towards halal product and food. As halal certified food products guarantee the hygiene and cleanliness, the concept is parallel to fulfill the need of health conscious consumers on how they want their food to be produced or prepared. Furthermore, the results of this research study have been established between these factors and level of awareness on halal. Given the fact that Malaysia consists of different races with multi religion that lead to different beliefs, custom and tradition, these differences may influence their way of living especially in eating habit, perception and attitude toward foods and product items for consumption. In order to increase the awareness of non-Muslim towards halal food, some question that might be arise is how well the knowledge and understanding of non-Muslim towards halal product and how the information about halal product will influence their buying decision to choose halal product in their daily life. Additionally, Islam teaches zero tolerance to all forms of animal abuse throughout the halal meat production supply chain and demands that when animals are slaughtered, they must be slaughtered in the mindful and attentive way. This approach to considering animal welfare uses largely accepted, externally measureable factors to evaluate animal welfare. In conclusion, this research is also not exempted from its limitations. Future research is recommended to explore the factors further and to increase the number of samples to come out with stronger research implications.

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