

Tourist Perception Towards *Halal* Food Purchasing Intention

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Abstract

Tourism recognizes the growing interest in halal food purchasing intention from both the perspective of industry and research. Halal food can be summarized by any product which is permissible to use or consume in Muslim daily life, according to Islamic dietary laws. Therefore, the success of developing and marketing halal food purchasing intention among the tourists must be guided by the adoption of Islamic teachings and principles in all aspects of halal food preparation. Using a quantitative approach and simple random sampling technique, data were collected from 61 tourists by distributing questionnaires. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software was used to analyse the data, and the results were documented. Most of the tourists were aware and concerned on quality, ingredient, clean as well as safety of halal food especially Muslims. The findings also indicate that halal awareness and halal food concerns have a significant influence on halal food purchasing intention among tourists. Attention given to the availability of halal food of the countries is then considered, which can be a tool to attract more tourists in promoting tourism.

Keywords: *Halal* Food, Purchasing Intention, Tourist, Tourism

1.0 Introduction

The tourism industry is the second largest contributor to Malaysia's economy after the manufacturing sector. In 2017, the country recorded 25.9 million arrivals and tourism contributed RM 82.1 billion (USD 20.2 billion) in revenue. Malaysia was also named the Best Muslim Travel Destination 2017 by Master card and Crescent Rating's 2017 Global Muslim Travel Index and listed as the country with the Best Healthcare in the World 2017 by internationalliving.com. Table 1 and 2 show the percentage of international tourists who visited Malaysia in the year 2017. In addition, the growth of Muslim population is rapid and stable around the globe. The increasing number of Muslim consumers has raised the attention of the global market to shift their commercial interest to *halal* industry in order to meet the demand of the size and growth of Muslim population.

Furthermore, the relationship between Islam and tourism has attracted increasing interest over the last few years, and furthermore Islam is growing faster than any other religion (Carboni & Janati, 2016). According to the authors, Muslims' spending power and mobility for tourism purposes are also increasing that have called industry attention to Muslims' needs and expectations as tourists. The increasing number of Muslim-friendly facilities and availability of *halal* food have contributed to the decision made by Muslim travelers to travel to a specific destination. *Halal* food in Malaysia is an outcome of the ethnic mixes of societies.

Table 1: Percentage of International Arrivals into Malaysia 2017

No	Country	Total Tourists (Person)	Percentage (%)
1	Singapore	14,431	23.3
2	South Korea	11,087	17.9
3	Japan	10,162	16.4
4	Europe	9,035	14.6
5	China	8,196	13.3
6	Australia	2,327	3.8
7	USA	1,628	2.6
8	Indonesia	1,387	2.2
9	Thailand	704	1.1
10	Others	2,889	4.7
Total		61,846	100.0

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia (2017)

Table 2: Percentage of International Tourist in States of Malaysia 2017

No	Country	Total International Tourists	Remarks
1	Sabah	23,129	45.2% from Korea
2	Johor	15,094	60.2% from Singapore
3	Selangor	7,476	31.7% from Japan
4	Melaka	6,143	63.9% from Singapore
5	Sarawak	3,372	35.1% from Europe

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia (2017)

All travellers are compelled to eat and it is a matter of great consequence to many. According to Henderson (2016), food can also incite worry and religious obligations add to anxieties. *Halal* food may apparently be the same as other food, but its nature, technique of its processing involving the ingredients, handling, use of various methods from the beginning to the end, is always the one approved and recommended by Islamic law. In addition, the *halal* food market exists wherever there are Muslim consumers whose tastes and preferences are governed by *halal* rules on food specification.

Malaysia is known as an Islamic country, and it has a minority of Muslim producers in which 80% of *halal* products are manufactured by non-Muslims. Therefore, it has become a huge challenge for Muslim society to produce and contribute more *halal* products in the local economy as well as internationally. Furthermore, some studies have shown that the lack of awareness and understanding of the *halal* concept between Muslim producers of *halal* products may lead to the declining of *halal* values in *halal* food production.

Food is spotted in many useful ways to promote health, nutrition, well-being, and physical fitness. *Halal* food which is eaten by Muslims must meet Islamic dietary law. The issues pertaining to the authenticity of *halal* food are particularly concerned by Muslim consumers and queries about the state of *halal* food products produced by food manufacturer have become more intense (Yusaini et al., 2016). Thus, the value of *halal* aspects is one of the main properties and unique feature of *halal* food products.

In summary, the main objective of the current research is to investigate the impact of *halal* awareness and *halal* concern on *halal* food purchasing intention among international tourists. This study is guided by significant research questions as follows:

1. Does the *halal* awareness perceived differently between different religion?
2. Do the *halal* concerns play a role in purchasing intention among the tourists?

2.0 Literature Review

Nowadays, Muslim consumers are provided with a broad selection of products and services with different product category and brands that can be either locally or internationally recognized. The concept of *halal* is an absolute basis of consumption in Muslim majority countries. As such, food industries have become more sensitive and concerned about the manufacturing and sourcing of *halal* products.

2.1 Halal Food Products

Halal is an Arabic term that means “permissible” or “allowed” which refers to things and activities permitted by *Shariah*. A product refers to a physical collection, services, and symbolic features that yield satisfaction or benefit to the consumers. According to Yusaini et al. (2016), a product consists of three main components namely; physical products, product packages, and auxiliary services. Since *halal* food product is attached to the values of Islam, the development of the product must be guided by the Islamic dietary law.

In Malaysia, *halal* food products are food permitted under the Islamic dietary law that meet the following criteria;

- Does not contain any parts or products of animals that are non-*halal* to Muslims or products of animals which are not slaughtered according to *Shariah* law;
- Does not contain any ingredients that are Najs according to *Shariah* law;
- Is safe and not harmful;
- Is not prepared, processed or manufactured using equipment that is contaminated with things that are Najs (filth or unclean) according to *Shariah* law;
- The food or its ingredients do not contain any human parts or its derivatives that are not permitted by *Shariah* law;
- During its preparation, processing, packaging, storage or transportation, the food is physically separated from any other food that does not meet the requirements stated in items a., b., c., d., or e., or any other things that have been decreed as Najs (filth or unclean) by *Shariah* law.

2.2 Halal Awareness

Awareness of *halal* food is growing worldwide particularly in non-Muslim countries such as Africa, Japan and Korea. There has been greater awareness among hotels, guesthouses, and corporate venues and in fact *halal* food has been included in their menus. Furthermore, the success of the *halal* food industry depends on the awareness of *halal* concerns by consumers or users (Mohamed, Shamsudin, & Rezai, 2013). Research done by Golnaz, Zainalabidin and Mad Nasir (2012) indicated that at least 79 per cent of non-Muslim consumers are aware of the existence of *halal* principles and 40 per cent of the respondents really understood the *halal* principle concept.

In the context of *halal*, the word ‘awareness’ refers to the knowledge or understanding of particular subject or situation of what is happening at the present time with regards to *halal* foods, drinks and products (Azam, 2016). In addition, religious concerns and religious identity can also be factors in purchasing and consuming of *halal* products (Abu-Hussin, Johari, Hehsan, & Mohd Nawawi, 2017). According to Hasan (2016), an awareness among consumers could be a major determinant factor in the purchasing decision process. The study shows that the degree of awareness towards *halal* foods among the respondents is very high where in many cases consumers will avoid non-*halal* foods and also the *syubhah* foods. Yuhanis and Chok (2013) also found that *halal* awareness have significant effect on purchase intentions.

2.3 *Halal* Concerns

Halal products broadly receive recognition as a scale for food safety and quality assurance (Majid et al., 2015). Currently, the concern for consuming *halal* food products is not only prevailing among Muslim consumers but also has extended to non-Muslims. Food safety and quality assurance are among the important things to many people around the world and such issues are considered above everything else primarily because of changes in their eating habits, values, and beliefs (Yusaini et al., 2016). According to Hasan (2016), consumers with a strong religious background, will also take care and concern about what they eat and consume. Generally, in Islam the consumers consider two things to be *haram* (a) pork and related products and (b) alcohol and alcoholic beverages.

According to Rezai, Mohamed, and Shamsudin (2012), nowadays people become more health-conscious and changed their style of eating to eating healthy and hygienic food items. It means that health consciousness plays an important role in the buying and consumption of food. Hussain et al. (2016) asserted that Muslim consumers demand healthy and quality products that meet Islamic dietary laws. Thus, those products that comply with the requirements must be healthy to be offered to consumers.

In addition, concerns about food safety of consumers are one of the essential factors that trigger consumer's mind to consider the importance and safety of the products to their health. Hussain et al. (2016) found that there is a positive relationship between food safety concern and the intention to purchase *halal* products. *Halal* products such as cakes, biscuits, drinks, cosmetics, and other consumer products should be free from ingredients, materials, and preservatives that are regarded as anti-shariah qualities such as prohibited tastes and aromas like alcohol, gelatine, and pig contents (Zakaria & Abdul-Talib, 2010). Marzuki et al. (2012) reveal that product ingredients have a significant influence on consumers' purchase intention. It indicates that the ingredients of products become a major concern and consumers are driven to contemplate before choosing any product.

2.4 *Halal* Food Purchasing Intention

Ajzen (1985) defined intention as the state of a person's willingness to perform a behaviour. The intention is considered a precursor to and best predictor of behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). Various scholars have tested and validated Fishbein and Ajzen's model in different settings, including health behaviours, organic food, alcohol use etc. (Paul, Modi, & Patel, 2016). Having excellent predictability, theory of reasoned action (TRA) has been quite useful to predict behavioural intentions. According to Hussain et al. (2016), there is significant attention to TRA in *halal* consumer behaviour research such as Lada, Tanakinjal, and Amin (2009), Amin (2012), and Mukhtar and Butt (2012). Tuu and Olsen (2012) emphasized that TRA is an essential theory to predict the buying expectation and probability of consumers and their sensible efforts to purchase any product.

Consumer intention to buy products is widely discussed in previous literature in both *halal* and non-*halal* contexts (Ozgen & Kurt, 2013). By using the TRA as a foundation, several researchers agreed that the intention to purchase indicates that a Muslim consumer has the intention to buy *halal* food product which is present at the point of purchase displays (Aziz & Vui, 2012). This direct measure provides a guideline to predict human social behaviour. However, there has been a lack of genuine knowledge about the relationship between *halal* awareness and *halal* concern with purchase intention of *halal* product (Yuhanis & Chok, 2013). Therefore, it is worthy to test the relationship and influence of *halal* awareness and *halal* concern with the *halal* purchase intention.

2.5 Research Framework

Based on the above argument, Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study. The purpose of the framework is to examine the relationship between *halal* awareness and *halal* concern with the intention to purchase *halal* products. Each component of the model was selected on the basis of the literature review. It is hoped that the findings derived from the model will serve as the basis for the development of *halal* product strategies, especially in the context of *halal* food.

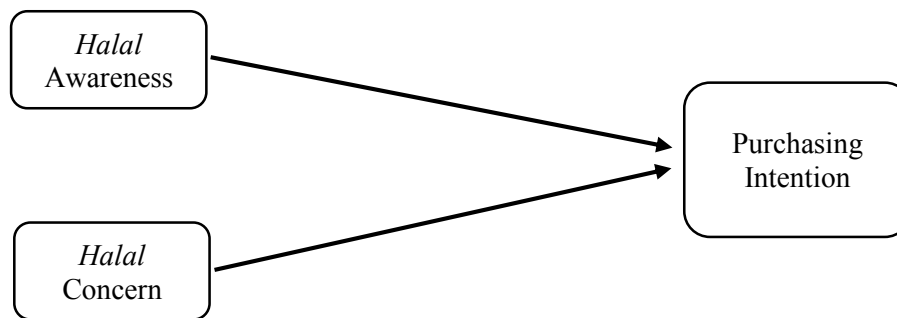


Figure 1: The Proposed Research Framework

3.0 Method

This study utilises a quantitative research approach, which is a descriptive and cross-sectional study. According to Regoniel (2015), quantitative methods are those research methods that use numbers as its basis for making generalisations about a phenomenon. In addition, data collection methods are an integral part of the research design (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). This study uses primary and secondary data collection. Primary data is gathered and assembled data use for the project in hand (Zikmund et al., 2012). On the other hand, secondary data is the data that already exists and enable researchers to make reference concerning their studies which include both raw data and published summaries (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

In this study, a survey questionnaire is developed for data collection. The questionnaires have been distributed to 61 tourists, which have been chosen randomly in the Klang Valley area. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part contains demographic background including gender, religion, age and marital status. The second part consists of 11 items of *halal* awareness, *halal* concerns and purchasing intention of *halal* food. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure all the variables. The respondents of this study were requested to indicate their level of perceptions on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Many previous studies have used the 5-point Likert Scale to measure the purchasing intention of *halal* food (Hasan, 2016). Thus, it is considered as a valid and appropriate measurement.

The collected data were analysed using SPSS version 22, and descriptive analyses were conducted to analyse the demographic. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the two groups in terms of tourists' *halal* awareness and the tourists' religion. Finally, correlation analysis was run to determine which factors could lead to purchasing intention of *halal* food.

4.0 Results

4.1 Demographic Analysis

The respondents were males and females in the range of 20 to 50 years old. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents in which 91.8% of them is male, and 8.2% are female. The respondents include tourists that are from age 20-30 (80.3%), 30-40 (13.1%) and 40-50 (6.6%). The respondents that participated in this research are 85.2% Islam, 4.9% Christian and 9.8% others. Most of the respondents are 78.69% single, 19.67% of them are married and 1.64% divorced.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristic of Respondent (N=61)

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	91.8
	Female	5	8.2
Age	20 - 30	49	80.3
	30 - 40	8	13.1
	40 - 50	4	6.6
Religion	Islam	52	85.2
	Christian	3	4.9
	Others	6	9.8
Marital	Single	48	78.69
	Married	12	19.67
	Divorced	1	1.64

4.2 Tourists' *Halal* Awareness Between Religion

Questions were asked on 5-point Likert scales to measure the *halal* awareness. Five questions regarding *halal* food awareness were asked. ANOVA analysis has been done. There was a significant effect of *halal* awareness between religion at the $p < 0.05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2, 58) = 11.697, p = 0.000$] as shown in Table 2. Because the study found a statistically significant result in this study, post hoc multiple comparison has been done. We selected the Tukey post hoc test. This test is designed to compare each of our conditions to every other conditions. This test compares Islam and Christian. It will also compare Islam and Others as well as Christian and Other.

Table 4: ANOVA Analysis

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.857	2	5.428	11.697	0.000
Within Groups	26.918	58	0.464		
Total	37.774	60			

From the results so far, the study found that there are statistically significant and insignificant differences between the groups as a whole. Table 4 shows which groups differed from each other. Table 5 below indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of *halal* awareness between the group that took Islam and Christian ($p = 0.000$), as well as between Islam and others ($p = 0.003$). However, there were no differences between the groups that took Christian and Other religion ($p = 0.152$). The results revealed that Muslim tourists were more aware to choose and buy *halal* foods.

Table 5: Post Hoc Multiple Comparison

(I) Religions	(J) Religions	Mean Difference (I - J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Islam	Christian	1.60128*	0.40451	0.000
	Others	0.90128*	0.29373	0.003
Christian	Islam	-1.601228*	0.40451	0.000
	Others	-0.70000	0.48171	0.152
Others	Islam	-0.90128*	0.29373	0.003
	Christian	0.70000	0.48171	0.152

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

4.3 Tourists' *Halal* Concern

Table 6 shows the items of *halal* concern on purchasing intention of *halal* food. The tourists were asked on 5-point Likert scales while four questions of *halal* concern were asked. The overall items indicate that 60.5% of the tourists were really concerned about the quality of the *halal* food. 55.8% of the tourists were concerned about *halal* food ingredients and 77.1% of them were more concerned about the cleanliness and safety of the products. Thus, cleanliness, safety, quality and ingredients of the *halal* food play crucial elements for the tourists in purchasing intention.

Table 6: *Halal* Concern Items

Items	N	Level of Agree	
		Frequency	Percentage
1. Quality	61	37	60.5
2. Ingredient	61	34	55.8
3. Clean and safety	61	47	77.1

4.4 Relationship Between *Halal* Awareness, *Halal* Concern and Purchasing Intention

The findings in Table 7 shows the Pearson Correlation analysis. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the purchasing intention of *halal* food and *halal* awareness. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.376$, $n = 61$, $p = 0.003$. The findings also indicate that there was a significant relationship between the purchasing intention of *halal* food and *halal* concern ($r = 0.443$, $n = 61$, $p = 0.000$).

Overall, there was a moderate positive correlation between purchasing intention of *halal* food and *halal* awareness. Increases in *halal* food purchasing intention were correlated with increases in *halal* awareness of *halal* food. Consequently, there was a strong positive correlation between purchasing intention of *halal* food and *halal* concerns.

Table 7: Correlation Analysis

		Purchasing	Awareness	Concern
Purchasing	Pearson Correlation	1	.376**	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.000
	N	61	61	61
Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.376**	1	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.000
	N	61	61	61
Concern	Pearson Correlation	.443**	.645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	61	61	61

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

5.0 Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that there is a significant difference between religion on *halal* awareness of *halal* food. The researchers believe that Muslim tourists were more aware of the purchasing intention *halal* products that they tend to buy and consume as compared to other religions. Due to religious beliefs, Muslim tourist was well aware of the requirement of Islamic dietary laws with regards to *halal* food. Considering that they are equipped with the full of knowledge about the *halal* matters, they would think wisely before buying the products. Thus, these findings support the previous studies conducted by Abu-Hussin et al. (2017), Hasan (2016) and Yuhanis and Chok (2013).

Our study shows that there is a significantly higher level of concern of *halal* food, and this is consistent with certain previous studies (Rezai, Mohamed, & Shamsudin, 2012; Majid et al., 2015; Yusaini et al., 2016). The *halal* concerns on clean, safety, quality and ingredients were major worries among tourists. It is consistent with study done by Hussain et al. (2016) and Marzuki et al. (2012). Therefore, the providers of *halal* food must fulfil the need of tourists by taking care of the quality, ingredients, clean and safety of the products.

The purchasing intention of *halal* food is influenced by the *halal* awareness and *halal* concerns among tourists especially the Muslims. The results of this study indicate that there were significant relationships between those variables. It is consistent with the previous studies by Yuhanis & Chok (2013) and Hussain et al. (2016). This behaviour was explained by the theory of reasoned action. This research focused on the ways that reasoned action measures could predict *halal* food purchasing intentions. In accordance with the reasoned action approach, *halal* awareness and *halal* concerns are the reason to purchase the products. Consequently, the reasoned action approach provides the best explanation for the food purchasing intention in this sample and serves as a strong foundation for explaining the needs of awareness and concerns (i.e. quality, ingredients, cleanliness and safety) in general.

6.0 Conclusion

Different tourists have different beliefs about *halal* products, where awareness and concerns of *halal* food play an important role to form their intention. However, it can be seen that there are various other factors that influence the purchasing intention of *halal* food by tourists. Although this paper provides a better understanding of the purchasing intention of *halal* food, more empirical research is needed in *halal* purchasing intention to better understand the challenges and solutions surrounding the sourcing practices of *halal*-certified companies in providing the *halal* products. Research efforts in this area should distinguish among factors influencing purchases of different classes of *halal* products. Based on these findings, it would be fruitful to undertake long-term studies on the purchasing behaviour of *halal* food among tourists and inclusive of all regions in Malaysia.

Although this research has generated new understanding and appears to be useful to the practitioners, two main limitations of the study should be considered. First, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader community based on this study alone. This is due to the relatively small sample size and with the majority of the respondent are Muslim. Second, this study is covered only on tourists at Klang Valley, and therefore the results cannot be expected to explain the overall behaviour of Malaysian tourists toward *halal* products.

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