Research Article

The implementation of Halal food awareness among undergraduate students

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Abstract

This study is to explore the inter-relationship between Halal attributes (religious belief, attitude, Halal certificate, and Halal logo) and Halal awareness among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Hotel and Management. The aims of this study are supported by the following objectives: (1) To investigate the Halal food awareness attributes among undergraduate students; (2) To examine the direct effect of Halal food awareness attributes among undergraduate students. Following the research, a survey was done to observe Halal awareness among undergraduate students. Conducted via Google form, the data collected 128 responses. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. The study findings primarily indicate religious belief, attitude, Halal certificate, and Halal logo give an impact on awareness.

Keywords

Religious Belief, Attitude, Halal Certificate, Halal Logo, Halal Awareness

1 Introduction

Food and beverages are symbolic in religious consumption rules and sometimes they may be associated with religious rituals of belief. Judaism and Islam have strict rules about how and who should be involved in food preparation and the slaughter of livestock (Heiman et al., 2019). For Muslims, the consumption of halal foods is an important dietary requirement because it impacts personality and individuality development (Baharuddin et al., 2015; Mustaffa, 2019).

The Quran teaches human beings how to articulate in the production and management of high-quality halal food while distancing away from all forms of *syubhah* and haram elements in daily consumption needs. The positive impact of the Halal industry derives from consumer's attitudes and the food industry (Baharuddin et al., 2015; Karahalil, 2020; Mustaffa, 2019). The concept of Halalan-Toyyiban can be interpreted as foods and beverages that are permitted to be consumed (Halal) and can give benefits to the human body. For the food industry to enter the Halal food industry, several biotechnology firms have invested in changing their manufacturing methods to conform with Halal principles and this may also be an issue for them (Karahalil, 2020).

According to Majid et al. (2015) issues such as halal certification and using the logo to rectify Halalness have also been extensively reviewed. Most eatery owners still lack awareness of Halal issues (Wannasupchue et al., 2021). Some premises often brush off the importance of it as they assume customers will always be present even so. The difficulties and strict procedures in applying for the Halal certification are said to be the main problem (Salam & Othman, 2014). The worst-case scenario is fraudulent acts such as counterfeiting the logo. This is corresponding with the study by Salam and Othman (2014) which discovered the abuse of the Halal logo. According to Kassim et al. (2020), the JAKIM Halal logo is one of the standards used to confirm the legality of a commodity in Malaysia. However, some Halal logos on the market are counterfeit. The recent cases of a certified Halal product not complying with the Halal rule, including contamination of non-Halal ingredients in the certified Halal product, have caused outrage among Muslim consumers. Supported by Hassan et al. (2019), it is necessary to examine the effect of honesty, benevolence, and competence on trust. At the same time, as Muslims, it is obligatory to consume halal food and beverage, not only as a duty but also as a means to show obedience to Allah (SWT) (Asa, 2017).

According to Shafiee et al. (2017), it is not difficult to get Halal products in Malaysia, nevertheless, ensuring that the food is truly hygienic and clean is a challenge. Individuals, particularly food street vendors, must understand the idea of Halalan Toyyiban (Shafiee et al., 2017). Furthermore, it is critical to identify their awareness of the Halalan Toyyiban principle in producing their food for sale. When it comes to the principle of Halalan Toyyiban in the foodservice industry, the guarantee of Halalan Toyyiban must be from a farm to fork.

This situation shows that some of the Muslim consumers have not clenched on Halal food awareness in their purchasing behavior because as they merely buy foods with Halal ingredients, and with most Muslims buyers, neglecting the concept of Halalan Toyyiban. Hasan (2016) said that the attitude of the younger generation,

especially the young Muslim generation, will determine the future of the halal industry in the country. The young generation of Malaysia is the future of the country and they will lead the country on the right path to a better future. They are the main consumers of the Halal Industry (Isa & Ismail, 2015). Therefore, it is very important to study the level of halal awareness among the younger people, especially those who will be in the food and beverage industry.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Religious Belief

In the food consumption religious belief expressed as food custom, understanding the reasoning for religious nutritional and dietary habits necessitates a quick overview of the justification for such practices and laws in any faith. Many religious rituals and laws can be traced back to early health and safety concerns about eating foods or liquids (Waibel, 2019). The impact of religious belief on food consumption is determined by the religion and the degree to which individuals adhere to its teachings (Hassan, 2016).

The religious belief prompts a Muslim to do what is commanded and refrain from doing even what is forbidden by God. The decision to buy Halal products also has to do with faith. Fadlullah et al (2019) postulate that consumer buying behavior is influenced by awareness and mediated by religiosity. Several factors influence consumption, race, knowledge, perception, and also religious belief (Mutmainah, 2018). Thus, religious belief is a factor that indicates religion has a strong influence on the consumption of halal food and beverages.

Due to the diversity in Malaysia, different races live in one place. Although Muslims and Non-Muslim hold space for one another in the matter of food and beverage. Muslims are still not allowed to take food containing dubious ingredients, such as gelatine, enzyme, emulsifiers, flavour, swine parts, and alcohol as it can affect their religion. Ali and Suleiman (2018) mentioned that the purity of the food and beverage is the key in the manufacturing process because the wholesomeness of the product is the top priority in the Halal food industry.

2.2 The Attitude of Muslims Towards Halal Food Awareness

Barmby et al. (2008) stated that attitude is defined as individual beliefs and feelings towards a component. Psychology, attitudes refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing or procedures. Attitudes are often the result of experience or upbringing, and can have a strong influence on behavior. While attitudes are enduring, they also face change (Cherry, 2021).

Attitudes are important because they play an important role in judging and observing other people's reactions. In addition, one's behavior is also observed because it is related to attitude. Generally, attitude defines a manner, feeling, position, thinking, opinion, or disposition towards a person or thing. Its positions are assumed by the body in connection with a feeling, mood, and even action. It is highly related to one's belief and knowledge.

Consumers have preferences on the way the food they consume is produced and processed. Beliefs and attitudes about health and the environment affect food purchases and consumption patterns (Heiman et al., 2019). Thus, Muslims tend to choose food that is clean and Halal as long as it meets the requirements of the Quran, which makes it suitable for consumption. According to Nayeem (2018), all cultures have different value systems that shape people's standards and norms on Halal food which influence people's attitudes.

Attitudes toward the usage of halal products can be influenced by views of product safety and health (Vizano et al., 2021). Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavior control can also impact purchase interest in halal food items. The link between attitudes toward utilizing halal goods, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control toward interest in buying halal food items can be strengthened by trust and religion (Vizano et al., 2021). Halal food consumption is a religious obligation, Muslim consumers need to have a good attitude and awareness about it. Consumer attitudes, particularly those of Muslim consumers, will play a role in the Halal industry's future in this country (Khalek, 2014). Xiao et al. (2011) and Awan et al. (2015) mentioned that consumers' attitudes are founded on their beliefs and knowledge about a certain item, which is a result of the information integration process and, in turn, impacts an individual's desire to behave in a specific way. The more positive the attitude toward action, the stronger the individual's intention to do the activity under consideration (Ajzen, 1991; Awan et al., 2015).

For Malaysia, where it is common for Halal products. Exploring the Muslim attitudes towards it in Islamic societies is essential. But, the increasing number of foreign brands in food-related goods can affect the customer's perception (Wang, 2015). In particular, Mukhtar and Butt (2012) has mentioned that consumer products, in general, have changed the perception of blind trust to varying degrees of scepticism against these brands in our society. Thus, maintaining a positive attitude towards Halal products and their corresponding impact would illustrate the importance of resolving this issue, which also relates to the awareness of Halal.

2.3 Halal Certification and Halal Logo

JAKIM (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia) is the main regulatory body overseeing Malaysia's Halal Certification for Halal goods, which includes the evaluation, issuance, and control of Halal Certification (Shariff & Abd Lah, 2014). Rosnan et al. (2015), concise that the concept of Halal Certification by JAKIM is the examination of food processes, from preparing, slaughtering, use of ingredients, cleaning, handling, processing, and right through to transport and distribution. According to JAKIM, a Halal Certification is an official form that refers to the Halal standardization of products and/or services per the Malaysian Halal Certification Scheme issued by the competent authority. In Malaysia, the only Halal Certification that can be recognized is the certification issued by JAKIM.

Halal certification in Malaysia offers the food industry a competitive advantage and consumer quality assurance. The introduction and implementation of this certification typically enhance Muslims' awareness of Islamic compliance goods and food consumption in Malaysia (Muhammad et al., 2020). As mentioned by Talib and

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Johan (2012), the certificate would have an effect on customer's buying decisions for Halal food items. Not only it ensures the food sold or cooked is in line with Sharia law but also shows that the product is clean, safe, and healthy. According to Yusuf et al. (2016), it helps to promote Muslim nations' development in the global market as consumers and producers. Interestingly, the Halal sector impacts not only Muslims but also non-Muslim consumers since it represents a global symbol of quality assurance and choice of lifestyles (Ambali & Bakar, 2014; Majid et al., 2015; Wirakurnia et al., 2022). The Halal certificate and branding offer advantages to the wider market in Malaysia since 60 percent of the overall people are Muslim people. It helps the company to have stronger market signals, Islamic characteristics, and marketing by obtaining a Halal certificate. The qualities of a Halal certificate in an enterprise have a larger appeal beyond religion and also contribute to the status of Malaysia as a tourism destination and a center for the world market for Halal targeted by the government (Ambali & Bakar, 2014; Majid et al., 2015).

Malaysia is entering an era of Halal development as the country's Halal Certificate is globally recognized. The certification plays an important role in maintaining a reliable position on the international market and functions to assist the consumer in the procurement of the right products. Apart from JAKIM, the State Islamic Religious Department (Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri, hereafter termed as JAIN) or State Islamic Religious Councils (Majlis Agama Islam Negeri, hereafter termed as MAIN) are also recognized bodies for Halal certification at the respective states in Malaysia.

Another significance of Halal Certification stated in the study conducted by Rezai et al. (2012) explained the process performed by JAKIM takes a long time to assure the Halal requirements of the food produced. This involves the inspection of buildings, staff, raw materials, and ingredients used in the production of food. Manufactured food products compliant with the specifications must be licensed by JAKIM with its Halal accredited logo. These licensed products are acknowledged as compliant with Islamic standards so that Muslims can eat such products without any hesitation.

According to Mustaffa (2019), the Halal Certification System was established to assess the extent to which the industrial community was able to meet and comply with the requirements set out in the Halal Standards. It also prevents any party from issuing Halal certificates to other parties. It is laid down in the enactment that only JAKIM, JAIN, or MAIN are authorized and recognized bodies to issue the Halal Certificate.

Shariff and Abd Lah (2014) noted that the key purpose of Halal certification by a recognized certification body is to assess if the substance is Halal or not by Muslims. Halal certification gives assurance to all Muslim consumers following the rules of the Syariah as with non-Muslims, Halal products are quality products based on Halalan Toyyiban (Halal and wholesome) principles as they incorporate the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and HACCP.

2.4 Halal Awareness

Awareness is a fundamental aspect of human existence. Wherefore, 'awareness' in the context of Halal is defined as the process of informing Muslims about what is permissible for them to eat, drink, and use. The understanding of the Halal industry can be enlightened by first grasping the concept of Halal. According to Islamic Law, any entity or act that is permitted to be purchased or implied to the body is referred to as Halal (Lestari, 2017). By the same token, Vizano et al. (2021) mentioned that Halal awareness refers to Muslims' level of understanding of issues linked to the definition of Halal. Understanding what goods may be ingested and how the manufacturing process works are examples of such understanding. Halal awareness of a product according to Islamic Halal criteria might be a necessity for consumers and producers to eat and manufacture food. Adhering to the regulations is viewed as a subjective norm that Muslim consumers must consider when selecting a food product from an extensive variety.

Based on the study by Mutmainah (2018), the growth of the Halal industry is not only noticeable in Muslim countries but also non-Muslim countries. In particular, it promotes an increased awareness of Muslim consumers to a Halal product as the enhancement of Muslim communities and the rising of Muslim population lead to the needs of the Halal industry.

3 Methodology

This study employed a causal research design, a type of conclusive research in which the main objective is to provide evidence for the cause-effect relationships established in the research framework. Self-administered surveys were used for the data collection process. The scope of this study is all full-time undergraduate students in the Faculty of Hotel and Management at UiTM Puncak Alam. The sampling frame in this research are the lists of programs in the Faculty of Hotel and Management at UiTM Puncak Alam, which include a total of four (4) programs: Hotel Management, Tourism Management, Food Service Management, and Culinary Arts Management

For sampling, researchers use non-probability with convenience sampling. Convenience Sampling is affordable, simple, and subjects are available. Taherdoost (2016) said that the term convenience sampling refers to the practice of selecting participants based on their availability. Many of the limitations associated with analysis can be solved by using this term.

The purpose of pretesting the survey is to get comments and feedback from the respondents on the credibility of the questionnaire used, to ensure clarity, ease of use, or comprehension of the questionnaire, and to ensure that the measurements of what is to be measured are challenged. Next, the questionnaires for the pilot test were distributed to achieve adequate detection of problems. A total of twenty (20) instruments were adopted from previous studies (Ahmad et al., 2013; Ariffin, 2017; Handriana et al., 2020). The five-point Likert measures were used to give respondents more refinement options. The results of the pilot test confirmed a satisfactory level of reliability, with an independent value greater than 0.70, but the

value is considered excellent, indicating that the scales used in this analysis are accurate. For the dependent variable, which is Halal food, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.499, indicating that the inter-item reliability is lower, which means that some of the questions in the questionnaire are not reliable and so adjusted or changed the question.

Based on the previous proposition by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), a formula was created to calculate the required sample size given the intended sample size. The minimum sample size is 5x (number of variables observed). This is the appropriate sample size for studies using factor analysis Comrey and Lee (2013) and Roger (2006) and Tuan and Rajagopal (2018), n=5 * m, where m is the total number of questions. According to Hair et al (2010), the minimum sample size should be 100. The target minimum sample size for this study was n=100 based on a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error in the number of samples. Data collection and distribution for the study were conducted via the Internet using a Google survey. The survey link for this study was distributed through social media to ensure reliable distribution and participation of respondents. The questionnaire was written in English. The data of the study were analyzed using the latest Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 26.

4 Findings

4.1 Demographic Analysis

Frequency analysis was used to analyze the demographic statistics of the respondents. All of the respondents are full-time undergraduate students aged 18 to 29 years old. Out of 128 respondents, 55 respondents are from Culinary Art Management, 34 respondents are from Hotel Management, 24 are from Tourism Management and 15 are from Foodservice Management. 96 of the total respondents are female and the remaining balance is male with the frequency of 32 respondents.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the mean score and standard deviation of the variables. Table 1 shows the mean scores for dependent and independent variables of Halal Food Awareness. Among all variables, the highest mean score is Attitude with a value of 4.3391 and a standard deviation of .77462. The mean score for Religious Belief is the second highest followed by Halal Certificate and Logo and Halal Food Awareness with the mean score of 4.1469, 3.8844, and 3.7984 respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Variables

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Religious Belief	128	4.1469	0.75649
Attitude	128	4.3391	0.77462
Halal Certificate and Logo	128	3.8844	0.79550
Halal Food Awareness	128	3.7984	0.65328

4.3 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Parsons correlation analysis was used to describe the strength and direction of linear relationship between all variables. The results in the summary Pearson correlation analysis table (Table 2) show that, among all independent variables (religious belief, attitude, and Halal certification logo), Halal certification logo has a strong positive relationship with Halal food awareness with an R-value of 0.541. However, religious belief and attitude have a medium positive relationship with the Halal certification logo with R-values of 0.470 and 0.399 respectively. The results also show that the relationship between religious belief and attitude is the strongest and positive among all variables.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Correlation Analysis for Halal Food Awareness

	Religious	Attitude	Halal	Halal Food
	Belief		Certificate	Awareness
			and Logo	
Religious Belief	1.000			
Attitude	0.706**	1.000		
Halal Certificate and Logo	0.481**	0.478**	1.000	
Halal Food Awareness	0.470**	0.399**	0.541**	1.000

^{**} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple Regression analysis was utilized to identify which predictor variables can best explain the dependent variable and to test the hypothesis of the study. The findings of multiple regression can be used to determine the three objectives of this study.

The multiple regression results in Table 3 show adjusted R^2 for the model is 0.397, indicating that 39.7% of the dependent variable (Halal food awareness) can be explained by the predictors (religious belief, attitude, and Halal certification logo). F value for the model is 28.878. Among all variables, the Halal certification logo is the main contributing factor to halal food awareness with a β value of 0.423 followed by religious belief with a β value of 0.276. The results also show that there is no significant relationship between attitude and Halal food awareness.

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regression

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable
Religious Belief	0.276*
Attitude	0.015
Halal Certification Logo	0.423*
F value	28.878
Adjusted R ²	0.397

Note: p< 0.05

Based on the multiple regression analysis and correlation analysis results, Table 4 shows the summary of hypothesis testing for the study. Correlation analysis results show that all variables positively influence Halal awareness among undergraduate student means that the individual relationship between independent variables (religious belief, attitude, and Halal certification logo) and Halal food awareness is significant. However, the relationship as a group shows that only religious belief and Halal certification logo has a positive significant relationship with Halal food awareness. In conclusion, the attitude variables do not influence the Halal food awareness in the whole model but in direct relationship to the dependent variable, attitude positively influences the Halal food awareness among undergraduate students. Hence, the H₂ was accepted.

Table 4: Summary of hypotheses results

Hypotheses	Hypothesis Statement	Results
H ₁	Religious belief positively influences halal awareness among undergraduate students.	Accepted
H_2	Attitude positively influences halal awareness among undergraduate students.	Accepted
H ₃	Halal certification Logo positively influences halal awareness among undergraduate students.	Accepted

5 Conclusion

It can be concluded that most undergraduate students in the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management are very conscious about Halal food. Therefore, the three variables (religious belief, attitude towards halal food and halal certificate, and Halal logo) are the dependent variables. The awareness of the concept of Halal food varies among the respondents. Most of them are aware of the halal concept and attach great importance to consuming only products with halal logos. Consistent with the study's findings by Bashir (2019), there was proof that the halal logo influences on foreign consumers' intention towards purchasing halal food products. This is because halal logo has become a keyword and increasingly plays an important role in the global markets (Bashir, 2019; Fischer, 2019). Some of the respondents also have a strong religious conviction to buy only halal food products. This shows that most of the respondents have good awareness by only purchasing and consuming only Halal food products. It can also be concluded that the level of Halal awareness affects the attitude of a person towards their purchasing behavior.

The recommendation for the future researcher, the study needs to expand the number of participants and geographical areas to different states in Malaysia to obtain sufficient results and ensure that the analysis is as accurate as possible. It could conduct a comparative study with international Muslim students to find out if there is a difference between Muslim students in Malaysia and students from other countries in terms of their awareness of Halal food. The Halal concept could be interesting not only for Muslims but also for non-Muslim students in other

universities in Malaysia so that some of them can know about Halal food and thus learn and respect the religious beliefs of others.

6 About the author

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