

Role of Halaal Logo in Product Quality Perceptions of Consumers: A Literature Perspective

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Abstract—

The Halaal logo given on food packages provides consumer with significant information but not well utilized by the consumers. This article examined that literature perspective of Halaal logo and its impact on perceived product quality putting consumers in a better position to understand the salient information and make food choices in compliance with Shari'ah. The reviewed studies revealed that Muslim as well as non-Muslim consumers consider the Halaal logo as one of the major quality indicators. There exists limited understanding regarding the role of Halaal logo label and the future investigations should be directed to provide wider understanding in variety of shopping environments. Moreover, researches have an open avenue for investigation of variety of dimensions. The upcoming researches have an opportunity to investigate the critical dimensions of Halaal logo which cast an impact on the perceived food quality in variety of markets to increase the generalizability.

Keywords— Halaal Logo; Shari'ah; Food Choice; Perceived Product Quality

I. INTRODUCTION

The meaning of the word “Halaal” is approved or permissible by Islam and Islamic laws. The foods which are permissible and prohibited in Islam are clearly stated in Islam. The Halaal symbol when associated with any food product, trade or a business creates a perception in the minds of consumer that it is lawful by Islam^[50]. The symbol of Halaal creates perception that no non-Halaal ingredient even a part of such an ingredient is present in the food which makes it unsuitable for Muslim buyers to consumer. If the food is any animal, by the presence of Halaal symbol it is expected by the consumer that the slaughter process is in accordance with the Islamic laws^[53]. If the product is any packaged food item consumers perceive that this product prepared and processed with all lawful instruments and permissible ingredients^[31]. It is perceive that it is free from any impurity and has more quality and safety. In Islam all foods are permissible to eat with the exception of few, which are pork and all its derivatives and by products, animals which are not slaughtered in the name of Allah and intoxicant drinks like alcohol.

The animals which are carnivorous do not have external ears, blood and the products any remains of blood are not allowed in Islam. The food product containing any trace of such items is not allowed for consumption in Shariah^[42]. The concept of Halaal encompasses all aspects of life. It gives Muslims a code of consumption about daily life. A Muslim's food is supposed to be Halaal and the symbol of Halaal is associated with health, safety and quality^[24]. The Halaal food is permissible by Islam only hence this is an obligation for serving Allah. According to the research conducted in Malaysia, it is perceived that the food product is only Halaal if all the raw materials used for manufacturing are also lawful. If these conditions are fulfilled then it is considered to be compatible for consumption^[53]. For the Muslims halal consumption is being recommended in many verses of Holy Quran and non-halal is being forbidden. Halal consumption is considered to have a spiritual connection in Islam^[24]. Religion is an aspect which determines the food avoidance and consumption rules and regulations^[35].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Muslim consumer in modern days confronts a wide range of the products to select from^[7]. Due to increasing sense of religiosity the manufacturers and marketers are bound to display Halaal certification logo in order to provide information to consumer that the food item is in compliance with the Shriah laws^[6]. In past, on the duties of manufacturers towards labelling reported that the consumers rely and trust heavily on the information provided by them on the packages. It is liability of the manufacturers to provide with the authentic information regarding the Halaal status of the packaged food^[5]. Educational exposure of the consumer results in better level of knowledge. Having higher educational level makes consumer aware of the choices they make. The aim of Halaal is also to educate the consumers about they are taking the lawful food which is compliant with Islamic laws^[36].

It is responsibility of the in charge agency for delivering Halaal food and provide the consumers with necessary education regarding the Halaal status of the food items^[36]. The efforts of education and awareness of Halaal eating must be directed towards consumers with advertising means but also to the schools aged children. The advertising methods include electronic means, newspaper, radio and internet. These means can provide education and alerts regarding the Halaal exposure. As the knowledge level of consumer has increased as compared to the past, they are becoming health cautious, cleanliness cautious and savvy^[26]. They want to know what they are consuming. Health, safety and cleanliness

are the major aims of Halaal and for this reason the demand of Halaal products is not only increasing in Muslims but also in non-Muslim consumers^[25]. The Halaal is not only a religious symbol but it has now become a symbol of quality assurance and quality lifestyle as well. The symbol of Halaal casts a positive impact on the religious knowledge of the consumers^[47].

It is that the marketers and policy makers should pay keen attention to the composition of the food items in the country and reinforce the regulatory policies of the Halaal compliance in the food consumption^[25]. The consumer has a right to know about the food he is consuming or purchasing comply with the laws of Halaal or not. The presence of Halaal logo on the food package creates a positive perception about the product and it makes the buyer well informed about the status of the product they intend to purchase^[15]. As the Muslims are making their position to be felt strongly both socially and politically all around the globe, hence the Halaal certification is becoming increasingly important which could prevent them from any misleading choices and deceptive practices^[22]. Globally, the trends of consumer's socio cultural variables, attitudes and food preferences have changed vastly because of inter cultural mingling (Mohd et al., 2011). As the population of the Muslims is increasing around the globe, Halaal symbol has also trended in not only among the Muslims all around the world but also non-Muslim consumers^[14].

There are some previous attempts in literature regarding Halaal logo on the food packaging. Halaal symbol is perceived to be the logo of quality and safety and the Halaal food is also perceived to be much better in taste as compared to the non- Halaal items^[39]. The studies which have considered the variable of religion have focused on the impact of religion on behaviour, attitudes, communication, level of trust, quality assurance and risk reduction^[20]. Religions mostly have guidelines for certain behaviors including consumption behavior. Islam and Jewish religions have explicit guidelines regarding eating habits. The research conducted on religious identities and purchase patterns reported that people affiliated with different religious identities purchase accordingly and their shopping patterns are a reflection of their religious identity^[43]. Religion as a belief pattern according to which the followers of that religion respond^[19]. The relation between the Islamic faith and consumption pattern and reported a positive significant relationship^[20].

Muslim consumers consider the factor of Halaal (lawful) in every aspect of life like source of income, status of relationships and particularly when purchasing for the foods and drinks. Foods and drinks according to Islamic faith must be prepared from permissible ingredients free from all traces of non- Halaal ingredients^[20]. Consumer knowledge and consumption of Halaal labelled foods. He reported that Muslim consumer with more knowledge about the religion as well as the products become evidently more careful in purchasing Halaal labelled products. As the awareness regarding health and religion is increasing, the consumers demand proper informative labelling to fulfill their demands^[18].

In order to ensure the consumer right for the information the Halaal regulating authorities display a certified logo of Halaal^[4]. The food labels and symbols provide consumers with wider range of information specific and general (brand name, ingredients, nutritional fact pane, health claims, expiry date, usage method religious and ethical symbols etc). These information labels have been proven to help the consumers make better food preferences^[21]. On product differentiation reported that the Halaal symbolization is considered to be point of difference in the retail environment. This symbol has brought positive perceptions regarding the product and serves as a positive attribute which leads to Halaal food preferences^[51]. The Halaal symbol is considered as a quality management symbol, which makes it one of the actively sought attribute by the consumer in their buying process^[18]. The increasing acceptance of Halaal products in non-Muslim countries has also been confirmed by the studies of^[9]. The fast growing Halaal trend in the non-Muslim countries are that Halaal labelled products are perceived to be the better, safer, cleaner, tastier and quality option. Secondly, due to cultural mingling and assimilation the acceptance and usage of Halaal symbol has been increased^[10].

The Halaal logo is considered to be the benchmark for safety and quality assurance by the consumers according to^[1]. Halal food consumption is an undeniable requirement of the Islam and this symbol is worldwide accepted as quality assurance and attracts both Muslims and non-Muslims^[3]. In the field of consumer behaviour, the marketers use the religious cue on the product packs to market their products and for quality perception^[2]. The food consumption patterns are determined by Quran and by Sunnah (the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad). Islam has laid down solid foundations which remain unaltered. Besides the basic sources of the Islamic laws are Holy Quran and Sunnah, the two other sources are Ijmah (Consensus of religious scholars) and Qiyas which is the process of finding logic behind the situation^[6]. The basic motto behind the Halal concept is that everything has been created by Allah and he has permitted to consumer everything with a few exceptions like pork, blood, any animal died of any disease or illness, food which has been sacrificed to any false God other than Allah, alcohol, intoxicants and misuse of drugs^[6].

As proportionate to the world population, the Muslim population is increasing rapidly and developing strong market potential for Halal food. The number of Muslim population has exceeded more than 1.3 billion and the Halal trade has boomed above 150 billion Dollars^[5]. In US alone in past 30 years, the Halal and ethical market has boosted a lot and many new stores with Halal food assurance have opened up^[4]. Although Muslim population in India is 14.2 % but it makes the second largest Muslim population of the world after Indonesia and the Halal logo stamping has been made compulsory on all the imported products and export quality products. These cues are utilized by consumers while shopping for the goods and they are used for the formation of the perception about the quality^[10]. Although it is a topic of high importance but little work has been done where religious symbols are considered to be marketing cues which consumer's black box utilizes for the information seeking^[15]. In the modern world Halal is considered to be the quality and safety benchmark.

The halal slaughtering, unmodified growing of fruits and vegetables and packaging without any debatable preservative is crucial important for Muslim consumers while buying for the food items^[15]. The study conducted reported that Muslim consumers go for Halal food item even though the brand is unknown or unfamiliar to them^[14]. As

it has been guided by Islamic code of consumption, the Muslim consumers are required to eat the Halal products. Females are more strongly in favor of Halal symbol as a quality cue and consult specifically for this logo when going for purchase decisions. Halaal as a quality logos decrease the discrepancy in minds of consumers regarding the quality and healthfulness of the food product^[20]. The food circulation globally is a subject of ethical issues now- a- days. These ethical problems globally have given a greater and wider range of the products^[18]. Muslims all over the globe are struggling to get the religious food products. Such products are considered to be the religious identity of Muslims. Such products are considered to be the safety benchmark and high in quality^[17].

The influence of the values moral and religious are not only related to just high involvement products but also to comparatively less involvement field like packaged and natural food^[19]. The growing trend of non- Muslim consumers in the Halaal food products has been investigated by several researchers^{[47][35][20]}. Non- Muslim consumers also prefer to buy halal food items because they are suitable for everyone's consumption and it is considered to be hygienic and tasteful as well^[49]. Non-Muslim consumers view halal labelled products not only from quality perspective but also as religious identity of Muslims. It was explored in Malaysia which is a multi- racial country including 62% Muslims, 24% Chinese and 8% Indians consider food products with halal symbol on them as more hygienic and quality wise superior. Halal symbol is treated as an external cue for quality perception^[44]. A strong relationship between diet, food culture and religion. For many religions certain type of foods, ingredients and any derivatives from them are prohibited. The dietary habits which are followed are a reflection of the religious persuasion^[50].

The impact of Halaal food logo on the quality perception of packaged among non-Muslims is being studied in several markets^[11]. Choice of the packaged food items with Islamic symbols by non- Muslims depend on the factors of age, education level, religiosity, healthfulness and animal welfare. A research conducted on French non-Muslim consumers revealed that many of them strongly those packaged foods with Halal symbol on them are much tastier and hygienic^[12]. A study on Russian non- Muslim consumers found out that they believed food items with Islamic symbols on them are more hygienic and have been prepared with complete quality assurance and these foods are pathogen free^[13].

The Halaal logo serves as a quality cue for the consumers who are seeking for this logo on the packaged food items. Halaal logo is a cue embedded by marketers and practitioners in food packages and advertising strategies to gain a positive evaluation of the product^[14]. Presence of the logo of choice on the food packaging has an impact on the dietary intake of consumers^[16]. The symbol of Halaal is perceived differently by different consumers. Halal is considered as symbol of wholesomeness not only by Muslims but also by non-Muslims^[18]. Malaysian consumer market revealed that Malaysia is not only always debating on the aspect of nutritional information and value labelling but the consideration that either the food is fit for consumption or not. Malaysian Muslims are always seeking for the religious symbol on their packaged food item^[21]. The Islamic symbol of Halal has gained popularity all around the globe^[23].

As the number of Muslim majority is increasing hence the governmental authorities' emphasis to list the ingredients in detail so that any non- halal item could be recognized easily. Halal is in the realm of business and trade, and it is becoming a global symbol for quality assurance and lifestyle choice^[24]. The cue utilization theory provides a concept that how the Halaal labelling can be used as an extrinsic cue. According to this theory, the consumers utilize the informative cues which assist them in their perception formation and then decision making^[26]. In accordance with the study conducted on British Muslims reported that Halaal labelled food products are considered to be the signal of quality assurance and by using products labelled as Halaal the identity of Muslims is conformed^[39].

A. Consequences of Halaal Logo

Regenstein et al. (2003) reported that Halaal foods are permissible in Islam as they have a high quality^[36]. The study in UK market and found that Muslims and non-Muslims residing in UK consider Halaal food as of higher quality^[38]. Established that Halaal food consumption has a strong impact on the family traditions^[32]. Halaal food is intrinsically safe and has a superior quality. Halaal labels play a role of marketing stimuli (cue) which can provoke the perceptions about the quality of the food. Presence of these symbols on the food can evoke positive or negative perception effects^[49]. Similar results have been reported that putting religious logos on the packaging casts an impact on minds of consumers^[5]. The halal symbol on the food package minimizes the inconsistency in the minds of consumers^[46]. Along with Muslims non-Muslim consumers also consume food by searching halal-logo because to them Halaal stands for healthfulness and quality. The market for the halal products is increasing internationally^[7].

A significant finding is that Halaal symbolized foods are considered to be superior in quality as compared to non-Halaal^[11]. In Malaysian context and reported that Malaysian consumers consider Halaal logo issued by JAKIM to be the quality indicator^[51]. Muslim consumers value the products with Halaal logo than any other certification^[50]. The logo of Halaal is vital for the consumers to evaluate the quality of the packaged food^[48]. The consumption of Halaal is not because of religious obligation but also due to the hygiene, cleanliness and superior quality^[52]. Superior quality is the consequence of Halaal symbolized products^[1].

III. CONCLUSION

It is evident that with new technologies and changes in consumer trends will keep on reshaping in the 21st century. The modern day consumer is impressed only by exceptional cues. The Halal logo is one of the innovative marketing cues for the modern days which possess a potential to attract and convince the consumer in terms of health, safety and quality. The question of the present and future status of the Halal labelled food products must be assessed in both traditional and emerging marketing domains. The ongoing debate on the Halal logo and Halal labelled food products is primarily based on theoretical basis rather than empirical basis due to the scarcity of the empirical evidences.

This study could be further tested in various cultures and different religions to determine its cross cultural generalizability. A comparative cross cultural and cross religious study could also be done by future researchers by taking this study into consideration. A longitudinal study can also be carried out by the future researchers to examine whether the role of consumer knowledge alter over the time.

The research on the debate of Halal logo as quality indicating cue should be encouraged further. Further, the marketers need to focus their attention further on getting deeper insights and understanding on the constantly changing dynamics of the consumer behaviour in 21st century. Instead of sticking to the out dated cues, they should adapt to innovative and sentimental cues. The findings of the study propose that Halal logo and Halal labelled products are perceived to be of superior quality.

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