

# Does *Halal* image strengthen consumer intention to patronize *Halal* stores?

## Some insights from Malaysia

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of *Halal* image, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on consumer behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores in Malaysia.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A self-administered questionnaire was disseminated to members of the general public in Kuching, the main city of Sarawak, Malaysia, via a convenient sampling technique. In total, 548 valid samples were usable for data analysis. Correlation analysis was used to test the model.

**Findings** – Empirical results revealed that consumers' intention to patronize *Halal* stores is influenced by attitude, perceived behavioural control, subjective norm and *Halal* image. Muslim consumers develop a favourable attitude towards stores that display a *Halal* image, are pleased to know that each item available in these stores is a confirmed *Halal* product and decide to re-patronize those stores in their practice of Islamic teachings.

**Practical implications** – Marketing managers should focus on developing a positive image of their stores to attract Muslim consumers. For foreign companies, this means that managements should be respectful of the *Shariah* law in their business transactions and create an image of their brands which is in accordance with *Halal* requirements to increase the confidence among Muslim customers to patronize their products and stores.

**Originality/value** – The main theoretical contribution relates to the inclusion of the *halal* image dimension as a variable in the matter of consumer intention to patronize *Halal* stores in Malaysia.

**Keywords** Attitude, Subjective norm, *Halal*, Behavioural intention, Perceived behavioural control, *Halal* image

**Paper type** Research paper



### Introduction

Muslim consumers are cautious in their buying behaviour to ensure that the products they purchase are both *Halal* (lawful) and *toyyib* (good) according to their religion (Wilson and Liu, 2011). The *Halal* concept is a part of a belief system and moral code of conduct of Muslim consumers that touches every single facet of Islamic life (Baker, 2011). In relation to purchase behaviour, the process of searching for and choosing

which stores to visit is one of great importance and involvement for Muslim consumers, as they have no choice but to buy *Halal* foods if they wish to comply with the *Shariah* rulings (Shahidan and Md Nor, 2006) and ensure that they do not behave in an unlawful way. It is both appropriate and timely to explore Muslim consumer behaviour (Wilson, 2012), and especially, a study on the concept of *Halal* in this connection is worthwhile (Ahmad Azrin, 2011; Wilson and Liu, 2010). Indeed, the obligations associated with the Muslim religion have implications for manufacturers and retailers who wish to attract Muslim consumers, as the product image conveyed will determine whether these consumers develop favourable attitudes to brands/stores or otherwise (Norazah, 2014).

The Muslim population throughout the world was estimated at 1.588bn in 2010 (Hackett and Grim, 2012), the vast majority of whom (985.53m) live in Asia. In the Middle East and North Africa, there are 317.07m Muslims, making this region the second most populated Muslim region in the world. The third-largest Muslim community lives in sub-Saharan Africa which is home to 248.11m people. As noted by Riaz (2007), Muslim markets are expanding, and it is estimated that the annual world *Halal* food trade exceeds US\$150bn. The global *Halal* food market in the year 2010 was valued at US\$661bn (Berry, 2011), and in 2012, combined with the *Halal* lifestyle, that industry was worth \$1.62 trillion, the prediction being that it will reach \$2.47 trillion by 2018 (State of the Global Islamic Economy, 2013).

In the multi-racial and culturally diverse society found in Malaysia, it is vital for the general public to be aware of the cultural and religious imperatives affecting Muslims, and this requires an emphasis being placed on the *Halal* image based on the *Halal* certification available for products or services. This certification enables Muslims to express their religious faith via their consumption. Many studies have been conducted that have explored the way in which individuals develop and convey their religious identity (Wilson *et al.*, 2013; Wilson and Grant, 2013), but little research exists that considers how *Halal* images and certification influence consumer behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores, and this is particularly true of the developing Islamic countries like Malaysia (Kolkman, 2014; Razzaque and Chaudhry, 2013). The United Nations has acknowledged Malaysia as the best country in manufacturing *Halal* products with a respectable image (Bohari *et al.*, 2013). Hence, Malaysia provides a good context for this study, which aims to examine the correlations between *Halal* image, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on consumer behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores.

In shedding some light on the effect of consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores, the study will provide marketers with information about correlational factors which will enable them to more effectively meet the needs of Muslim markets. The following section presents a review of literature on behavioural intention, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and *Halal* image, followed by a description on the methodology used and analysis of data. Thereafter, the findings are presented and discussed, and a final section provides the conclusion, the implications of the study and directions for future research.

## Literature review

### *Theory of planned behaviour*

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is an extensively recognized model for enlightening volitional human behaviour and which includes dominant variables such

as behavioural intention, attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2005).

### *Behavioural intention*

Behavioural intention is defined as “[...] a person’s location on a subjective probability dimension involving a relation between himself and some action that he will perform some behavior” (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 288). Wall *et al.* (2007, p. 733) considers behavioural intention as the “immediate psychological antecedent to one’s actual behavior”. Intentions are said to “represent a person’s motivation in the sense of her or his conscious plan or decision to exert effort to enact the behaviour” (Conner and Armitage, 1998, p. 1430). The behavioural intention so-called motivational factor is an indicator of how keen or how much determination individuals use to execute a certain behaviour (Armitage and Conner, 2001). Ajzen (1985, 2005) noted that actual behaviour is performed in a condition where complete control over the behaviour is present. It is developed from the collective elements of consumers’ attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1985, 2005). In addition to these variables, this study includes another variable called *Halal* image in the research model.

### *Attitude*

Attitude is defined as “the degree to which a person has a favorable or an unfavourable evaluation of a behavior in question” (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188), and essentially, it envisages a person’s behavioural intentions. Prior studies like those of Azmawani *et al.* (2015), Mukhtar and Butt (2012), Norazah (2014) and Shah Alam and Nazura (2011) have disclosed that greater intention to purchase *Halal* food products is drawn from consumers’ positive attitude toward *Halal* food. Al-Nahdi (2008) noted a positive and significant link between attitude and behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* restaurants. Likewise, Bonne and Verbeke (2006) discovered that most Muslim consumers favour local shops or *Halal* butchers when buying *Halal* meat, as they consider authenticity to be the most essential factor. Similarly, Bonne *et al.* (2007) affirmed that the intention to buy *Halal* meat is significantly related to a positive attitude towards the consumption of *Halal* meat. It is expected in this study that consumers’ behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores is influenced by their attitude. Accordingly, the study hypothesizes that:

H1. Attitude positively correlates with consumers’ behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores.

### *Subjective norm*

Subjective norm is related to consumers’ perception of the social normative push (Ajzen, 2005). Family members, friends, colleagues, teachers and communities are examples of parties that may possibly produce such forces. The determination to enact or not to enact a particular behaviour is dependent upon the approval from these groups of people (Ajzen, 1991). Prior research by Bonne *et al.* (2007), Sukato (2008), Webster (2000) and Yoh *et al.* (2003) has argued that friends and family members do indeed influence consumers’ decision-making on product choice and buying patterns. This contention has received further support from Mukhtar and Butt (2012) and Norazah (2014), who have found subjective norms to be the most influential predictor of consumers’

behavioural intention. In a study by Al-Nahdi (2008), it was shown that consumers' intention to patronize food-service premises was significantly associated with the subjective norm. The same conception was further confirmed by Shah Alam and Nazura (2011), who found that social pressure remained a powerful influencer of consumers' intention to purchase *Halal* food. From this discussion, consumers are anticipated to take the views of family members, friends, colleagues, teachers and communities into account when forming their intention to patronize *Halal* stores. In light of these statements, it is proposed that:

H2. Subjective norm positively correlates with consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores.

#### *Perceived behavioural control*

Perceived behavioural control refers to "people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 183). Perceived behavioural control relates to decisions regarding, for example, food safety, whether a product is environmentally friendly and whether fair trading has been observed in its manufacture and dealing; this control also embodies the behavioural intention to purchase *Halal* food products (Golzaz *et al.*, 2010). Existing research has noted that perceived behavioural control affects consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food and re-patronize such food service premises (Al-Nahdi, 2008; Shah Alam and Nazura, 2011). Indeed, Bonne *et al.* (2007) found that consumers' perceived control in respect of consuming meat is significantly related to their intention to consume *Halal* meat. It is predicted in this study that consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores is affected by their perceived control. Following on from this discussion, the third hypothesis is postulated:

H3. Perceived behavioural control positively correlates with consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores.

#### *Halal image*

Brand image is related to the consumer's association of the brand name with other brand traits (Keller, 1993). This study treats *Halal* image as the consumer's perception of a brand characteristic that he/she retains in his/her memory as a religious concept which guides his/her fundamental purchasing pattern. Being founded on Islamic teachings, this purchasing pattern is central to the day-to-day lives of Muslims (Ahmad Azrin, 2011; Baker, 2011; Barbara *et al.*, 2003; Bonne and Verbeke, 2006). In a study by Nguyen and Leblanc (2001), it was revealed that when consumer perceptions towards an organization are very favourable, there is a tendency for those consumers to show a high degree of loyalty to that organization. Muslims are keen to be associated with *Halal* images and simultaneously to avoid any attachment to non-*Halal* images; hence, they want to patronize *Halal* stores. Indeed, the influence of Islamic teachings in Muslim societies is strong, dictating social etiquette and consumption behaviour (Khraim, 2010). Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is developed:

H4. *Halal* image positively correlates with consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores.

Figure 1 models the proposed relationships as advanced in the above-mentioned literature.

**Methodology**

The target respondents in the study were Muslim consumers with responsibility for frequent retail shopping. A self-administered questionnaire was disseminated to members of the public recruited from Kuching, the main city of Sarawak, Malaysia. This was done via a convenience sampling technique. A total of 548 valid samples were obtained for analysis out of 580 questionnaires returned, thereby giving a valid response rate of 94.5 per cent. This figure is considered adequate for statistical analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). The questionnaire was designed in three sections. Section A concerns the respondent’s demographic information (gender, age and education level); Section B considers aspects of the *Halal* image; and Section C deals with variables such as attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores.

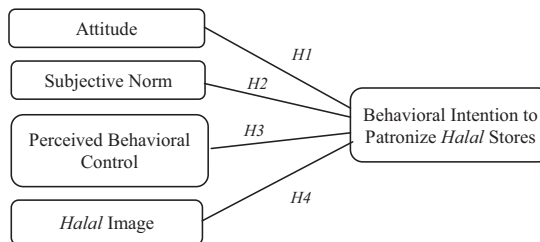
The measuring instrument comprised 66 items: ten items for attitude, seven items for subjective norm, ten items for perceived behavioural control and seven items for behavioural intention, which were all adapted from Francis *et al.* (2004); next, 32 items were designed for *Halal* images and adapted from the study by Al-Mubarakpuri (2003), Al-Qaradawi (2010) and Bakr (2010) with some modifications to accommodate the consumption behaviour of Muslims. All items were presented on a five-point Likert scale extending from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Completed data were analyzed using statistical methods such as descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and correlation analysis via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 21.

*Data analysis*

The demographic characteristics of the 548 respondents are shown in Table I. This indicates that the sample was comprised 28.6 per cent males and 71.4 per cent females, and over half the respondents (65.3 per cent) were aged between 26 and 45 years. In terms of educational background, 43.6 per cent held a degree, 32.3 per cent held the Malaysian Higher Education Certificate level and 21.4 per cent held a diploma. Only 2.5 per cent held a Master’s degree and 0.2 per cent held a PhD.

*Reliability analysis*

Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient was used to measure the internal reliability of the questionnaire, and the values obtained for each variable are illustrated in Table II, which shows that all variables had reliability values of more than 0.7 (ranging from 0.703 to 0.947), thereby suggesting that the questionnaire items are reliable on their ability to consistently measure the respective constructs.



**Figure 1.**  
Proposed theoretical framework

Variable	Frequency	(%)	<i>Halal</i> image strengthen consumer intention
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	157	28.6	
Female	391	71.4	
<i>Age (years)</i>			
≤25	87	15.9	<b>125</b>
26-30	84	15.3	
31-35	81	14.8	
36-40	90	16.4	
41-45	103	18.8	
46-50	53	9.7	
≥51	50	9.1	
<i>Highest level of education</i>			
Malaysian Higher Education Certificate	177	32.3	<b>Table I.</b> Demographic profile of respondents
Diploma	117	21.4	
Bachelor's degree	239	43.6	
Master's degree	14	2.5	
PhD	1	0.2	

Variable	No. of item	No. of item deleted	Cronbach's alpha	<b>Table II.</b> Reliability analysis
Attitude	10	–	0.944	
Subjective norm	7	–	0.851	
Perceived behavioural control	10	–	0.796	
<i>Halal</i> image	32	–	0.934	
Behavioural intention	7	1	0.854	

### Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation analysis presents the degree of association between two matrix variables. The correlation coefficient's values hit the maximum association strength at both scores of  $-1$  and  $1$ . According to Hair *et al.* (2010), scores up to  $0.6$  indicate moderate correlation, those between  $0.6$  and  $0.8$  indicate strong correlation and those over  $0.8$  indicate very strong correlation. Directions of the relationship are shown by the negative or positive sign attached to every coefficient value in the matrix. Negative values imply negative correlation, while positive values indicate positive correlation. Table III shows that all correlations between all variables were less than  $1$  and significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level, denoting a positive correlation pattern among constructs. The results infer that no multicollinearity problem is detected in this research.

With regard to the association between consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores and other constructs, attitude ( $r = 0.748, p < 0.01$ ) turned out to have the strongest correlation, inferring that *H1* was supported. Next, subjective norm ( $r = 0.727, p < 0.01$ ) as posited in *H2*, and perceived behavioural control ( $r = 0.738, p < 0.01$ ) as postulated in *H3* were significantly correlated with consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores. Thus, *H2* and *H3* were reinforced. Likewise, *Halal*

**Table III.**  
Correlation  
coefficient matrix

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Attitude	1				
(2) Subjective norm	0.709**	1			
(3) Perceived behavioural control	0.670**	0.744**	1		
(4) <i>Halal</i> image	0.776**	0.709**	0.710**	1	
(5) Behavioural intention	0.748**	0.727**	0.738**	0.716**	1
Mean	6.826	6.619	6.515	6.493	6.548
SD	0.424	0.572	0.549	0.542	0.669
Skewness	-4.293	-2.472	-1.846	-3.232	-3.263
Kurtosis	25.632	8.719	5.766	21.993	17.050

**Note:** \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

image ( $r = 0.716, p < 0.01$ ) had a significant and positive association with consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores, meaning that *H4* was also retained.

Skewness was checked for signs of asymmetry and deviation from a normal distribution. Table III shows that the skewness of all the items ranges from  $-1.846$  to  $-5.220$ , all below  $\pm 2.0$ , with all constructs having negative skewness values, implying that the variables have a left skewed distribution. Next, kurtosis was performed to check for signs of flat or peaked distribution. The values for kurtosis range from 5.766 to 47.674, far beyond the threshold value of  $\pm 10$ . Respondents' attitude toward patronizing *Halal* stores was read as highly positive, given the mean score of 6.826. Its standard deviation was recorded at 0.424. Other variables that attained good mean scores were subjective norm (6.619), perceived behavioural control (6.515) and behavioural intention (6.548). The mean score for *Halal* images was 6.493 and the standard deviation was 0.542, signifying quite a high recognition of *Halal* images.

### Discussion

This study examined the correlations between *Halal* image, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control in respect of consumer behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores in Malaysia. The empirical results revealed that attitude has a significant effect on consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores, thus supporting *H1*. Indeed, attitude scored the highest in respect of the correlation coefficients and is thus the largest contributor in explaining respondents' intention to behave in this way. Muslim consumers develop favourable attitudes towards stores that show high *Halal* credentials, they are confident when they know that each item available in the store is confirmed as *Halal* and they decide to re-patronize those stores more frequently as their support for Islamic-based retail shops amounts to the effective practice of their Muslim faith. Similar significant results have been obtained in previous research. For instance, Pan and Zinkhan (2006) stated that consumers' attitudes toward retail stores are an important antecedent of shopping frequency and are positively related to the overall attitude toward shopping programmes (Eastlick and Liu, 1997). And in another study on the determinants of retail patronage, Korgaonkar *et al.* (1985) agreed that consumers' attitude towards the store is a significant influence.

*H2* tested the correlations between subjective norm and consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores. The strength of the association between the two

constructs provided evidence that subjective norm has a positive and significant impact on consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores. This finding coincides with prior studies, such as those of Bearden *et al.* (1989), Childers and Rao (1992), Kropp *et al.* (2005), Mangleburg *et al.* (2004) and Mourali *et al.* (2005). Muslim consumers are likely to ask for information from others such as friends, neighbours, family members, colleagues, teachers, communities and the like when making decisions about shopping, and this is likely to steer them towards stores that display a high volume of *Halal* images. Sukato (2008) showed that family members and friends had the most impact in changing men's buying patterns, while in Sweeney and Soutar (2001), social value was identified as one of the factors that drives consumers' purchase attitude and behaviour.

Next, *H3* tested the linkage between perceived behavioural control and consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores. The findings indicate that perceived behavioural control has a significant influence on consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores, maintaining *H3* as expected. Consumers' perceived behavioural control very much depends on past experiences associated with that same behaviour and whether it can be facilitated. This includes experience of selecting retail formats (Arধানari *et al.*, 2013). A high number of Muslim consumers within a store and the presence of Islamic-friendly workers/staff are indications of *Halal* compliance by those stores. Indeed, *Halal* stores carry items labelled with genuine *Halal* logos. This result is comparable to that of Ajzen (2005), Astuti and Martdianty (2012) and Patney (2010).

A closer examination discovered that *H4* is also retained, as *Halal* image is significantly and positively correlated with consumers' behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores. Muslim consumers place more emphasis on *Halal* image, preferring to patronize stores that preserve Islamic names, logos and mottos, abide by *Shariah* rules and regulations and offer certified *Halal* items. Furthermore, they are more comfortable patronizing stores which are located in Muslim residential areas. *Shariah* compliance, as seen in the style of dress worn by staff and workers, is also an influence that encourages Muslim consumers to patronize *Halal* stores. These findings are coherent with those of previous researchers who established a positive association between *Halal* image and behavioural intention (Ahmad Azrin, 2011; Baker, 2011; Barbara *et al.*, 2003; Bonne and Verbeke, 2006; Khraim, 2010).

### *Conclusion and recommendations*

The contribution of this research study to the existing consumer behaviour literature is in its provision of empirical research results that confirm associations between *Halal* image, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control on consumer behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores in Malaysia. This research shows a strong support for an adapted theory of planned behaviour which includes the *Halal* image as a construct, which can illuminate Muslim consumers' behavioural intention process. In the context of *Halal* stores, this research found that *Halal* images portrayed by the retailers favourably affected Muslim consumers' intention to patronize those stores, as the *Halal* images serve to attract consumers' attention in their purchase decision-making.

This research study may generate a new body of knowledge related to Muslim consumers' buying behaviour in respect of their patronization of *Halal* stores. The results disclosed that these consumers' buying behaviour is influenced by the *Halal* images displayed by a stores, as well as by their attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. It is well understood that all Muslims follow a unique



consumption law which is stipulated in the Quran and the Hadith and that their buying behaviour must strictly adhere to this law and knowledge. As their sets of values and beliefs are accurately developed, Muslims associate consumption laws with the stores they intend to patronize. Prior research has affirmed that knowledge has a positive effect on consumer attitudes towards the foods they purchase (Abdul Aziz and Chok, 2013; Azmawani *et al.*, 2015; Hamdan *et al.*, 2013).

As for managerial implications, marketing managers should appropriately address the need to build a strong and positive attitude towards *Halal* products in the Muslim market such that their organizations can help in meeting the needs of Muslim consumers as they are patronizing *Halal* stores. It is recommended that foreign companies show due respect for the *Shariah* law, which entails their just and fair participation in all their business transactions and that in building their foreign brands, they are fully compliant with *Halal* requirements, as this strategy will increase the confidence of Muslim consumers in purchasing their products and ultimately increase demand. It is not advisable to ignore consumers' belief in the *Halal* principle, as this will undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on any potential for sales. On the other hand, it is advisable to promote companies' activities towards their production of *Halal* goods, as communities will be alert to such efforts and may patronize the products and stores involved.

Research on the *Halal* concept should be broadened to include other areas of marketing, such as the Muslim consumer market segmentation, and Muslim consumption behaviour. Furthermore, the issue of *Halal* images is an important one for discussion in respect of the creation of opportunities for innovative business thinking and the relevant marketing approaches (Wilson, 2012). Images of *Halal* in retail premises should be advantageous to retailers who have proactively adopted the *Halal* concept, as their reputation would be boosted among the Muslim community. Hence, in future research, it should be appreciated that *Halal* variables may be extremely relevant. Moreover, issues of religion, religiosity, culture and self-identify should also be explored in future studies to further enlighten the acceptance pattern among Muslims consumers of conspicuous consumption (Al-Hyari *et al.*, 2012; Alam *et al.*, 2011).

It is also recommended that in future studies, research samples should be drawn from different nationalities, as it might be the case that differing attributes of *Halal* image, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores emerge. The results could be used for comparative purposes and to overcome the limits of generalizability in the sample coverage in this study. Future research could also include other variables, such as social strata, religious factions, type of employment and religious knowledge as moderating variables in examining consumer behavioural intention to patronize *Halal* stores, and the relationships between variables could be investigated using multivariate data analysis, such as the structural equation modelling technique via AMOS computer program.

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### Further reading

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