

Consumer attitude toward Halal food in the case of the United Kingdom: the role of product attributes and marketing stimuli

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Abstract

The Halal market in the United Kingdom is worth \$4.5 billion and is anticipated to grow at a rate of 5% each year. In the United Kingdom, there is a growing demand for Halal food, which has resulted in the formation of various unregulated Halal Certification Bodies. In the halal food market, the problem of halal authenticity has recently become a serious concern. The purpose of the paper was to determine the effect of product attributes and marketing stimuli on customer attitudes toward halal food among Muslim customers in the U.K. A cross-sectional study was adopted for this study. The sample of the study included the Muslim customers who have consumed halal food in the U.K. The authors used a survey method to collect the quantitative data. A total of 384 responses were received and data were analysed using SPSS. The findings of the study revealed that product attributes such as country of origin have a significantly greater influence on the customer attitude towards halal food compared to other product attributes. The findings further showed that marketing stimuli such as sales' location impact on customer attitude however advertisement did not have any impact on customer attitude towards halal food. The finding held perspectives from Muslim customers in the U.K and contributes to the stimulus-organism-response theory by incorporating product attributes and marketing as stimulus factors that affect the internal psychological state i.e., customer's attitude in the case of the U.K. The implication of this study was to recommend Halal enterprises import halal food from Islamic countries for U.K customers, research the strategic location and select the hypermarkets, that handle halal food with care.

1. Introduction

Consumers today are looking for items that are healthier, higher in quality, and safer (Cheng and Low, 2008). Because of these characteristics, halal products have seen increased growth and demand in recent years among Muslims and non-Muslims who are unfamiliar with the notion of halal (Rezai *et al.*, 2010). In 2019, the global Muslim market consumed more than \$1.17 trillion on food and beverages. This is expected to rise to 1.38 trillion dollars by 2024 (Blazquez, 2021). Halal is a comprehensive concept that urges Muslims to accept goods that are nutritious to consume and produced in a clean environment. Islam is the world's fastest-growing religion, with Muslim's accounting for a quarter of the world's population. As a result, the Muslim customer market is also the world's fastest-growing market. Europe is also a major centre for halal options. As the Muslim population grows, so does the demand for halal products. Halal cuisine has become one of the most rapidly growing divisions of the food industry. The

market is expected to be worth between €40 billion and €100 billion (Euromonitor and Global partner, 2020).

While Muslims account for only 4.5% of the UK population, the expanding Muslim community and the halal food sector that has resulted have become entrenched aspects of society. With the remarkable emergence of UK brands, Halal has a substantial presence in the UK supply chain (Evans, 2015). Halal items cover a wide range of industries, including food, health, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals (Rarick *et al.*, 2012). Food presently holds the majority of the market share, at 67% (Kassim, 2010). To distinguish halal foods from non-halal foods, halal items must bear a label indicating the Halal certificate to avoid consumers from being misled (Naina Mohamed and Mohd Daud, 2010). However, manufacturers normally use unusual terms for the ingredients, the terminology for reporting non-chemical additives input might be confusing (Davies and Len, 1994). As a result, those unknown ingredients are

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questioned by the buyer (Ahmed *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, country of origin which represents countries of manufacture is an important aspect in how consumers perceive the product (Halim and Zulkarnain, 2017). Halal companies should be mindful of the causes of customer attitude and behaviour toward halal food in order to build the global halal food market. The majority of studies on customer attitudes about halal products have been conducted mostly in Asia, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia. Several studies in other countries on the effects of marketing stimuli on customer attitudes about halal cuisine drew the researcher's attention to include in the setting of the United Kingdom. While there is a lack of understanding of customer attitudes and product attributes such as halal logos, ingredients, and country origin exists, experts are still debating on marketing techniques that foster a positive attitude about halal food among customers. Hence, this study will look at the impact of product attributes (halal-certified logo, ingredients, country of origin) and marketing stimuli (advertising and sales location) on customer attitude in the U.K context.

2. Materials and methods

The expansion of halal meals and consideration of halal as a part of the brand in recent years has provided opportunities for food producers. This expanding market may be seen not only in Muslim countries but also in Western countries where the Muslim population is growing rapidly. Europe is one of the most significant markets for halal products mostly relying on high purchasing power rather than population. The lack of global halal set standards is one of the industry's problems. Little did customers know that there are fake logos and recognizing the official halal logo could be quite challenging (Sumpin *et al.*, 2019). The purpose of this article is to investigate how and why halal consumers form attitudes towards halal food to make purchasing decisions.

2.1 Stimulus-organism-response theory

The theory was developed by Woodworth (1929) and Skinner (1935) defined stimulus and reaction as components of behaviour and environment, and rapid variations in the environment might affect an individual's psychological and emotional stability, driving behaviour changes (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). In the context of this study, stimuli reflect product attributes and marketing stimuli that affect the internal psychological state i.e., customer's attitude. Researchers have widely accepted and used the stimulus-organism-response paradigm (S-O-R) to investigate behaviour in the setting of retail buying behaviour (Chang *et al.*, 2011).

2.2 Customer attitude towards halal food

In general, an attitude denotes a person's level of approval or disapproval of conduct (Ajzen, 1991). A person's attitude toward Halal cuisine is based on the belief that the food is halal, and perception can lead to positive feelings such as a desire to purchase the goods. Product attributes and information about the food are critical in understanding customer attitudes toward halal eating (Kamarulzaman and Tarmizi, 2020). The absence of information and understanding of the halal concept among Muslims may result in a loss of enthusiasm for the halal idea. This study investigates the effects of two determinants on customer attitude in the United Kingdom; product attributes such as the halal logo, ingredients, and place of origin, and marketing stimuli such as advertising and location.

2.3 Relationship between customer attitude and product attributes

Product attributes are categorised into tangible and intangible. Intangible attributes are country of origin and tangible attributes are logo and ingredients. Several scholars such as Wee *et al.* (2016) confirmed that product attributes have a positive relationship with customers' attitudes. People are driven to acquire various things based on a variety of criteria, including whether the products are easily accessible and whether sufficient factual information about the products is available (Ghadikolaei, 2016). Abdul *et al.* (2009) demanded that halal certification is vital for Muslim customers because it is the sole way to know if a product meets the halal requirements. Hence, the most significant element of halal products is the halal logo (Ismail *et al.*, 2016). For some Muslim consumers, knowing where a product is made, is a significant factor in making a purchase. Adityo and Hati (2019) investigated how customers' attitudes and intentions to halal food are influenced by country of origin (COO) and the finding reported that country of origin has less effect on customer attitude in Indonesia. On the other hand, a study done by Hong and Kamaruddin (2020) has discovered that the COO of halal items is a major concern, with other selection variables influencing purchase decisions among Chinese Muslims. Hence, this study tested whether the country of origin plays a critical role in affecting consumer attitude in the U.K context.

The term halal ingredients allude to a consumer's knowledge of the elements and their quality, besides the food's safety. The study found that knowing about the ingredients used in a product influences one's desire to buy halal meals (Azam, 2016). This is confirmed by Flamboyant *et al.* (2017), which indicated that halal ingredients had a significant impact on consumers'

behaviour. However, research that was undertaken by Hussain (2016) on Muslim consumers' purchasing interest in halal items, revealed different results. Hence, this study looked at the effect of halal ingredients on customer attitude. Following of proposed hypothesis was developed based on past research limitations.

H1: Halal-certified logo has a positive impact on customer attitude towards halal food.

H2: Country of origin of halal food has a positive impact on customer attitude towards halal food.

H3: Ingredients in halal food have a positive impact on customer attitude towards halal food.

2.4 Relationship between customer attitude and marketing stimuli

The importance of marketing in raising awareness and developing a brand name cannot be overstated. Hence, effective marketing is very important for success in creating awareness and informing about halal products (Fahmi *et al.*, 2019). Research findings from Chun *et al.* (2020) showed that advertising has a strongly favourable upshot on brand recognition. Similarly, Teng and Wang (2015) also found that marketing communication was positively related to customer behaviour. Yet, ineffective marketing communication approaches can create confusion among consumers and negatively affected consumers' attitudes (Henryks and Pearson, 2010). Furthermore, Siddiquei *et al.* (2013) highlighted that when there is a lack of communication on the availability of the halal product, it influences customers' decisions on where to buy the products. Similarly, Masudin *et al.* (2020) found that halal logistics has a greater impact on customer decision to purchase decision on halal food. Indeed, Xiong and Zhang (2021) supported that one of the most important considerations for Muslims to consider when it comes to halal food intake is the availability of halal cuisine in trusted locations. Hence, this study proposed that advertising and sales location impact customer attitude towards halal food.

H4: Advertising of halal food has a positive impact on customer attitude towards halal food.

H5: Sales location has a positive impact on customer attitude towards halal food.

2.5 Methodology

A cross-sectional study was adopted for this study. The sample of the study were Muslim customers who have consumed halal food in the U.K. The convenience sampling method was used to collect the data. The reason for selecting this group as a sample of the study is to have a clear understanding of customers' attitudes towards halal food. The questionnaire was pre-tested by

30 respondents. A survey questionnaire was used to collect the data and a total of 384 samples were used for this study. The sample size for this investigation is thought to be adequate. For most studies, the rules of thumb for selecting a sample size larger than 30 but less than 500 are sufficient (Roscoe, 1975), as referenced in Sekaran and Bougie (2016). Two independent variables are product attributes and marketing stimuli. Measurements for elements of product attributes such as the halal-certified logo were adapted from Muhamad Yunus *et al.* (2014), the country of origin was adapted from Tuan Putra Nasution and Rossanty (2018), ingredients were adapted from Fahmi (2017). Whereas measurement for elements of marketing stimuli such as advertising was adapted from Shaari and Mohd Arifin (2009), and sales location was adapted from Chandra and Lukmanul (2015) and Nugroho and Irena (2017). One dependent variable is customer attitude and its measurement was adapted from Shah Mohd Dali *et al.* (2007), Fahmi (2017) and Alhazmi (2013). All items were measured by a five-point Likert scale. Based on theory and past literature, the conceptual framework on customers' attitudes towards halal food was developed as shown in Figure 1.

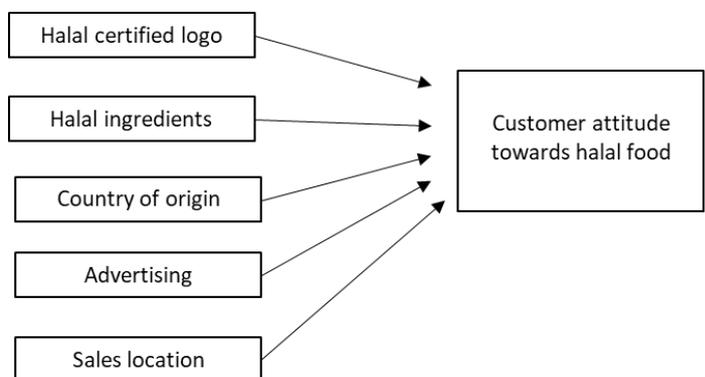


Figure 1. Diagram of the conceptual framework on customers' attitude towards halal food

3. Results

Based on the findings of descriptive analysis, the gender of respondents revealed that female respondents have a higher number (57.5%) than male respondents (42.4%). Based on age statistics, the majority of respondents are in the age category 36-45 years with 35%, 46-55 years with 28%, and followed by 25-35 years old with 26%. The majority of respondents have a strong educational background, with 60% having a university education.

3.1 Reliability analysis

The Cronbach alpha is the value from the analysis that is used to determine the internal consistency of a research instrument. The results of the reliability study discovered that all of the variables are greater than 0.7, indicating adequate reliability. Table 1 shows the

reliability analysis of each of the variables in the framework as attached in the appendix.

2 shows the model summary of regression analysis as attached in the appendix.

Table 1. Reliability analysis

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Halal certified logo	0.823	4
Country of origin	0.827	3
Halal ingredients	0.815	3
Advertising	0.760	5
Sales location	0.875	4
Customer attitude	0.842	6

3.2 Pearson correlation analysis

Pearson Correlation analysis is the analysis used when the strengths between all the variables are determined. From the value ranges from 0 to 1, 0.50 is considered as the medium-strength value of the relationships, and the higher the value from 0.50 and close to the value 1 is considered as a much stronger relationship (Agunbiade and Ogunyinka, 2013). Findings showed that customer attitude has a positive and significant relationship with halal-certified logo ($r = 0.487, p < 0.05$), country of origin ($r = 0.365, p < 0.05$), halal ingredients ($r = 0.512, p < 0.05$), and sales location ($r = 0.426, p < 0.05$). However, customer attitude has a negative and insignificant relationship with advertising ($r = -0.167, p > 0.05$),

3.3 Multiple regression analysis

The objective of the research is to determine the significant impact of independent variables (product attributes and marketing stimuli) on the dependent variable (customer attitude). The value of the adjusted determination coefficient indicates that 61% of all changes in consumer attitudes depend on 3 elements of product attributes (halal-certified logo, halal ingredients, and country of origin) and 2 elements of marketing stimuli (advertising and sales location). Regarding the value of F obtained 48.209, which is significant at 0.000, the model shows that the set of independent variables is able to explain the changes in consumer attitudes. Table

The standardised regression coefficients obtained from Table 3, show that the country of origin ($\beta = 0.518, P < 0.05$) followed by halal-certified logo ($\beta = 0.436, P < 0.05$) and ingredients ($\beta = 0.397, P < 0.05$) has a positive and significant impact on customer attitude. Although sales location ($\beta = 0.288, P < 0.05$) has a positive and significant impact on customer attitude, advertising ($\beta = -0.168, P > 0.05$) has a negative and insignificant impact on customer attitude. Table 3 shows the regression coefficient as attached in the appendix.

4. Discussion

The results indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between product characteristics and consumer attitudes toward Halal food in the case of the UK. Among three product attributes, country of origin has the significant greatest influence on customer attitude. The findings further detailed that there is a significant relationship between customer attitude and ingredients in halal food. The result of this finding is consistent with the results of Rajagopal *et al.* (2011) and Shaari *et al.* (2019). Hence, it can conclude that Muslims are concerned about the ingredients that are used to prepare halal foods in the market. In addition, the results further revealed that the halal-certified logo is crucial in customer attitude towards halal food. This finding is aligned with the past findings such as Rajagopal *et al.* (2011) and Bashir (2019). However, this finding is not consistent with Zacharia *et al.* (2017) and he commented that the Halal label may not be enough to persuade Muslim customers to make a purchase due to a number of reported false Halal certifications.

The findings also revealed that the halal food's country of origin is the most crucial for customers. The result of this finding was consistent with the results of Kusnandar and Afiff (2020) who stated that the country of origin of Halal foods is important to the customers,

Table 2. Model summary of regression analysis

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	F-statistics	Significance level
1	0.795	0.619 ^a	48.209	0.000

^aPredictors: (Constant), halal-certified logo, ingredients, country of origin, advertising and sales location

Table 3. Regression coefficients

Model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t- statistic	Significance level
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Intercept	0.272	0.328		10.827	0.015
Ingredients	0.243	0.089	0.397	20.729	0.007
Halal certified logo	0.368	0.108	0.436	30.409	0.001
Country of origin	0.458	0.096	0.518	40.780	0.000
Advertising	0.022	0.094	0.168	10.231	0.154
Sales' location	0.178	0.072	0.288	20.462	0.015

Dependent variable: consumer attitudes

and it affects the customer attitudes towards Halal foods. Halal food enterprises can establish effective strategies and meet consumers' demands and needs by understanding the most important determinants that impact customer attitudes towards halal food. In this case, the country of origin is the most important for customers in the U.K., companies should import halal food from Islamic countries such as middle east countries like Saudi Arabia and Asia countries like Malaysia and Brunei.

The findings further clarified that advertisement of halal food does not affect the customer attitude towards the halal food. This finding is similar to the previous finding revealed by Fadlullah (2021). Lastly, the results revealed that sales' location affect the customer attitude towards halal food and it is aligned with past finding from Xiong and Zhang (2021) who supported that one of the most important factors for Muslims to consider when it comes to halal food intake is the availability of halal cuisine in trustworthy locations. In this instance, Halal enterprises should research the strategic location and select hypermarkets that handle halal food with care.

5. Conclusion

The paper's findings revealed that product attributes and marketing stimuli are important criteria in customer decision-making when purchasing Halal food in the United Kingdom. Muslims in the United Kingdom believed that the country of origin of halal food was the most important because it adds value to the customer's decision to purchase a halal product and convinces him/her that it meets the standard requirements and guidelines of halal. Furthermore, Muslims want to ensure that the halal logo is present on the packaging to ensure that it is certified as halal food and that it is easier for them to distinguish between halal food brands and others. Furthermore, the ingredients in halal food must be clearly written in understandable language so that customers can identify them. Finally, the location of halal food sales has a greater influence on customer decision-making because customers prefer to shop at local stores and have less trust in supermarkets.

The growth of the Muslim population contributes to the market for halal food products in Muslim minority countries. The Muslim community, both in the UK and abroad, is growing faster than the general population, so the relative importance of this market is only likely to grow. Manufacturers in the United Kingdom who want to enter the halal market must first understand their Muslim customers and respect their values and preferences. Meanwhile, the challenge is that the growing demand for halal products has not been met in its entirety due to a lack of relevant halal certification

institutions in the country that are fully recognised globally. In order to meet the continuous halal demand, U.K firms should look into either importing more halal food from Islamic countries or collaborating with halal certification institutions to ensure that ingredients in the food are clearly indicated as halal and certified with halal logo.

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