

AWARENESS OF HALAL FOOD SELECTION AMONG THE COMMUNITY

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Abstract	<p><i>The Muslim community needs to be halal-aware while selecting food items to avoid falling into the trap of purchasing goods whose halal status is syubhah. The argument among academics is also intense when it comes to topics like gelatin, blood, fat, and animal slaughter. In fact, there are also Muslim communities that are willing to follow the trend of eating food whose halal status may not be known. By conducting a survey of the awareness of halal food selection among the community, we can identify the level of knowledge of the community in choosing halal food products. This paper only focuses on the concept of halal in terms of food. This study has been using electronic Google Forms to collect the data. The methodology of this paper is quantitative, and using a questionnaire, the survey was conducted among the community. As a matter of fact, there are Muslim groups that are prepared to adopt the practice of consuming food whose halal status may not be known. By performing a case study survey on the community's awareness of halal food selection, we can determine the degree of understanding.</i></p> <p><i>Keywords: Food, Selection, Understanding, Halal, Awareness.</i></p>
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INTRODUCTION

The eating of halal cuisine has drawn a lot of attention in a globe where there are many different cultural, religious, and dietary traditions. The word "halal" comes from Islamic dietary regulations that list the acceptable foods and cooking techniques for Muslims. The idea encompasses aspects of community, ethics, and spirituality in addition to basic nutrition. Understanding the awareness of halal food selection develops as a crucial field of study, influencing consumer choices, food sectors, cultural exchanges, and policy issues as globalization continues to entwine many groups.

Since Malaysia has a mixture of different races and religious practices, it makes the food sector need to produce a variety of food products to meet the needs of consumers, especially people of different races and religions. Thus, the result has made the food products produced in Malaysia divided into two parts, namely halal food products and non-halal food products. The issue of sweets produced by China since the 1940s has gained popularity among Muslim consumers in the Malaysian market (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017). Thus, the candy producers have never made any claims to the halal status of the product and the application for halal status has never been made. Therefore, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) emphasizes the halal status of the candy. It turns out that, according to laboratory analysis, the candy is sourced from pigs

which is a prohibited substance according to Islam. However, the manufacturer cannot be blame for not displaying the halal label on the product but instead the awareness level of Muslim consumers regarding halal food is still low (Mohd Anuar Ramli, 2020).

The awareness of halal food choices among the community is a significant topic that has garnered attention in recent years. With the increasing diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds within various communities, understanding the awareness of halal food choices has become crucial. The significance of this issue has been highlighted in scholarly works by Billah et al., (2020), Secinara & Calandra (2020), and Wibowo et al., (2020), who have all emphasized the implications and key factors influencing the awareness of halal food choices. As such, there is a growing realization of the need for further research to deepen our comprehension of the awareness of halal food choices among different communities. This literature review aims to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by examining and synthesizing existing research on the awareness of halal food choices within diverse cultural contexts.

Recent research reveals that street vendors in UNISBA believe their processed products are halal, despite not having halal certificates for raw materials. Bandung Islamic University (UNISBA) is required to educate the public and academic community about halal food, and socialization and training on halal awareness, guarantee systems, and certification are needed (Hirawati Oemar et al., 2020). Also, this study surveyed fifty non-Halal restaurant owners in Manila City, focusing on their awareness of the twelve Halal certification standards and their willingness to be certified. Results showed a weak positive relationship between awareness and willingness to be Halal certified (Liba et al., 2018). Additionally, fifty non-Halal restaurant owners in Manila City were polled for this study with an emphasis on their knowledge of the twelve Halal certification standards and their readiness to obtain certification. The willingness to become Halal certified and awareness were found to have a weakly positive association (Liba et al., 2018).

An additional study was carried out to evaluate students at Hulu Langat Community College, Kajang (KKHL), Selangor, Malaysia, on their knowledge of halal certification, awareness, food composition, and interest in purchasing halal items. The findings indicated a high desire to purchase halal products, a moderate understanding of halal certification, and a moderate knowledge of halal. Nonetheless, there is a need to educate KKHL students on the significance of halal products (Nor et al., 2022). This study examines the variables influencing Muslims in Thailand and Indonesia's purchase intentions for halal packaged food items made by non-Muslim producers. The findings indicate that while halal certification only significantly effects customers' intention to purchase in Indonesia, product ingredients considerably influence consumers' intention to purchase in both countries (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2019).

Therefore, consumers nowadays are so much concerned and always be aware of what they eat, drink and use. The awareness of the Muslim and non-Muslim consumers plays a significant role in their perception and cognitive reaction towards products or foods in the market. This awareness is influenced by several factors, including religious, social, and economic considerations. These factors shape the understanding and awareness of halal food choices among Muslim communities (Billah et al., 2020). Therefore, the objective of this case study is to identify the selection factors and sources of knowledge in halal food and to know the level of public awareness from the aspect of knowledge and practice of halal food selection.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is quantitative and interpreting analysis by percentage. Respondents who answered the survey ranged in age from 20 to 40 and under. We use electronic review forms to collect the data contained in these investigations. This study employs the Likert scale, with 1 denoting strongly agree and 5 denoting strongly disagree. The purpose of using this scale is to measure the level of awareness and understanding of students on 12 statements about halal, halal logos and the virtues of choosing halal products

and foods in life. The data analysis used in this research is descriptive analysis which means we do not use other methods to translate data.

This study used two types of methods in collecting the necessary data. Data collection consists of two sources, primary and secondary. For the collection of primary source data, we use electronic surveys and distribute google forms to several residents in Malaysia. The survey is divided into four parts. Section A on respondent profiles such as age, gender, employee, academic qualifications, and income. Next, in section B we ask about the factors of food selection. Our C-section does research on halal knowledge sources among the people in Malaysia. Finally, Part D on halal knowledge among the respondents.

RESULTS

Table 1 below shows the background of respondents who have participated in this survey. The respondents who participated in this case survey were 100 people from the Muslim community in Malaysia. According to table 1 below, the highest percentage of respondents was 20 years and below at 83%. The remaining 10% are 21 years old to 29 years old, 40 years old and below 5% while the least are 30 years old to 39 years old which is 2%. Thus, according to the analysis of this survey, the female population is dominant at 72% and male at 28%. The highest level of education of the respondents was Diploma which was 65% followed by Degree and above at 26% and then Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) which is 8% and the least is 1% which is the Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR). The respondents who answered this survey were mostly students, 85% of whom were employed by 8% followed by non-employment by 5% and the last was pensioners at 2%. As for the income of the respondents, most of the respondents had no income, which is 81% because most of them are students. Next, 10% which is RM 1000 and below followed by RM 4000 and above which is 4% while RM 3000 to RM 3999 is 3% and the least percentage income is RM 2000 to RM 2999 which is 2%.

Table 1: Respondents' information

Item	(%)
Age	
20 years old and under	83%
21 – 29 years old	10%
30 – 39 years old	2%
40 years and under	5%
Gender	
Male	28%
Female	72%
Education	
Ujian penilaian sekolah rendah (upsr)	1%
Sijil pelajaran malaysia (spm)	8%
Diploma	65%
Diploma and above	26%
Occupation	
Student	85%
Work	8%
Not working	5%
Pensioner	2%
Income	
Rm 1000 and below	10%
Rm 2000 – rm 2999	2%
Rm3000 – rm3999	3%
Rm4000 and above	4%
No income	81%

Table 2 below shows the public awareness in terms of food selection factors. According to the analysis of the table below, there are three factors of halal food selection that reach 90% and above which are net (91%), religious claim (90%) and halal certification (92%). The rest of the time, the safe factor is 87%, 34% for the cheap price factor and the latter is the cultural factor of 11%. This shows that the community in Malaysia is very concerned about halal in choosing food as the top three percent is related to halal toyyiban which guarantees the community in Malaysia to always choose food that is halal and acceptable to Allah SWT. Thus, the halal certificate is the highest percentage plays an important role in choosing food as it is guaranteed to be clean, sacred, and shariah-compliant. In fact, the respondents were also aware that choosing halal food is a religious claim.

Table 2: Factors of food selection

Factor of Food Selection	Percentage (%)
Clean	91%
Cheap	34%
Safe to eat	87%
Religiosity	90%
Halal certified	92%
Cultural	11%

Table 3 below shows the sources of halal knowledge of the community in choosing halal food. The analysis of the survey below shows that most people in Malaysia know halal over the internet as it is the highest percentage at 91%. Then, 84% of the halal knowledge from the Malaysian halal portal (JAKIM), from social media is 80%. The rest were from families (68%), Mufti Malaysia websites (66%), talks, forums and exhibitions (61%), television (57%), books (56%) and friends (52%). According to this analysis, the internet is the highest source of halal knowledge as it is now a digital age where all information is only at your fingertips. They just type the word of the information they want to search on websites like google and YouTube. So, it is not surprising that the community chooses the internet as a source to know halal knowledge. They also choose the Malaysian halal portal (JAKIM) as a source of halal knowledge as the Malaysian halal portal is the official website of JAKIM which is trusted by the community to always be aware of halal. In fact, social media also plays an important role as the community now uses social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and others as a medium to spread halal-related matters and it is a fast-paced medium for the information to be spread to the community. The Malaysian community also knows halal knowledge through family, acquaintances, talks, forums, and exhibitions as well as books. In fact, they also know the knowledge of halal through the Mufti Malaysia website which is the official website that issues various rulings related to halal. Hence, from the website, they are not only aware of the rulings but also know the various types of food that are halal for the Muslim community to eat.

Table 3: Sources of Halal Knowledge

Sources of Halal Knowledge	%
Internet	91%
Television	57%
Social Media	80%
Book	56%
Family	68%
Friends	52%
Talk, Forums and Exhibitions	61%
Malaysian Halal Portal (JAKIM)	84%
Website Mufti Malaysia	66%

Table 4 below explains the awareness of halal knowledge among the respondents. Items 1 and 2 show that most respondents strongly agree and agree that they know the concept of halal food in Islam and the criteria and characteristics of the halal logo recognized by JAKIM, with each getting 97% strongly agreed from the respondent. Whereas, for the third item, 47% strongly agree that they know the ingredients in the food product categorised as halal toyyiban; 41% agree, 12% are unsure, 12% disagree, and 0% strongly disagree. A total of 77% of respondents strongly agreed that they cared about the importance of halal food selection. However, there were also 6.7% of respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement. A total of 16.3% agreed with this statement. As for the 5th statement, "I know that food products and food premises are schemes that can be applied for Malaysian Halal certification," it shows that 63% of respondents strongly agree with this statement. 25% agree, 9% are unsure, and 3% disagree with this statement.

Table 4: The awareness of halal knowledge

ITEM	1	2	3	4	5
	(Strongly Agree)	(Agree)	(Unsure)	(Disagree)	(Strongly Disagree)
I know the concept of halal food in Islam	63%	33%	4%	0%	0%
I know the criteria and characteristics of the halal logo that recognized by JAKIM	64%	29%	7%	0%	0%
I know the ingredients in the food product categorized as halal toyyiban	47%	41%	12%	0%	0%
I know the importance of halal food selection.	77%	21%	2%	0%	0%
I know the food product and the food premise is a scheme that can be applied for Malaysian Halal certification	63%	25%	9%	3%	0%

Finally, the selection of halal products in Malaysia is mostly based on the halal logo, followed by halal ingredients and halal certification. Basically, they can determine which food is halal by using the halal logo in general. Because this halal logo is believed to be valid and trusted by most Muslims, it is not surprising that many people in Malaysia choose to see the halal logo first as a basic matter before buying food products (Abdul Razif Zaini, 2020). However, since there are many cases of forgery of the halal logo and the issue of the withdrawal of the halal logo, there are also buyers who began to doubt the validity of the halal logo and began to study the ingredients. This also encourages the community to further examine the validity of the halal certificate of a product. By using the internet, people in Malaysia can find out whether the halal certificate of a product valid or not. This teaches consumers, especially residents in Malaysia, to be careful when buying food.

Next, refer to Table 5 for statements related to halal food selection practices. In the first item, most respondents who always buy food products with halal stamp recognized by JAKIM, 65% strongly agree, 30% agree while 5% are unsure of the statement. Meanwhile, 63% of respondents strongly agreed that they would always check the halal status of the product before purchasing it on the second item, 26% agreed, 10% were unsure and 1% disapproved of the match. Next, referring to the third to seventh item shows that most respondents who strongly agree always viewing information on the content of the ingredients are halal before purchasing it which is 60%, 54% of respondents strongly agree that they only eat at food premises that display halal certification, 58% of respondents strongly agree that they only eat at food premises provided by Muslim workers. While the sixth item showed that respondents always prioritize the cleanliness of food premises before eating or buying items by getting 72% strongly agreeing, 24% agree and 4% are unsure of the statement. Last item 85% strongly agrees with the statement "I feel confident in food premises that have halal certification as they meet the Malaysian Halal Certification Procedures recognized by JAKIM.

Table 5: Practice Selection of Halal Food

ITEM	1 (Strongly Agree)	2 (Agree)	3 (Unsure)	4 (Disagree)	5 (Strongly Disagree)
I always buy food products has a halal stamp recognized by JAKIM	65%	30%	5%	0%	0%
I always check the status of halal product before buy	63%	26%	10%	1%	0%
I'm always looking a content information about ingredients are halal before buying them	60%	24%	14%	2%	0%
I only eat on the premise of food displaying halal certificate	54%	31%	12%	3%	0%
I only eat on the premise of food served by Muslim workers.	58%	30%	11%	1%	0%
I always prioritize the cleanliness of food premises before eating or buy things.	72%	24%	4%	0%	0%
I feel confident in the food premises have halal certification as it meets the Manual Procedure Halal Certification and recognized by JAKIM.	85%	14%	1%	0%	0%

Overall, most respondents are aware of the concept of halal in Islam, and they know that the concept of halal and haram is not related to the prohibition of pigs and alcohol alone but also broader than that. Respondents also showed a high level of awareness of the importance of researching the contents of a product before purchasing it. Most respondents very concerned with the halal logo especially the halal logo of JAKIM in the selection of products, food and restaurants that are believed to be safe and secure.

Since students make up the majority of the respondents, it is likely that they obtain their information about halal via online sources. According to the majority of respondents, the primary consideration when selecting halal products is cleanliness. The study's conclusions demonstrate that over 90% of the respondents were aware of and knowledgeable about halal items.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it's evident that the community has a high level of awareness regarding the availability of halal food options. Understanding and adhering to halal norms not only meets the demands of Muslim communities but also fosters inclusivity and diversity as people become more aware of the dietary choices they make. Raising public knowledge of halal food options can result in more thoughtful and informed eating decisions, which in turn can promote harmony and cultural sensitivity in society. The community will benefit from this study by being able to make informed decisions about food products and becoming more aware of halal issues. Aside from that, the community can learn about halal from online resources because information is readily available to them. Additionally, the community is aware of where to find online solutions for halal-related problems. Another benefit for Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan is the ability to conduct more thorough research on the community's choice of halal products.

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