Islamic Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWoM) and Religious Awareness Roles in Consuming Halal Food: A Conceptual Paper

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Islamic Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWoM) and Religious Awareness Roles in Consuming Halal Food: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract
Halal concept plays important role among Muslim society in Malaysia. The Qur'an commands Muslims to only eat halal food. Social media acts as one of the latest marketing trending due to digitalization of businesses in the world. Islamic marketing nowadays plays important roles as communication medium in providing knowledge about halal foods. Electronic word of mouth marketing can influence people in consuming halal food. This is due to most people are more likely to trust the opinions of people they known rather than advertising messages from outsider. Religious awareness among Muslim customers is also important in deciding halal food consumption. As such, this paper aims to investigate the role of Islamic marketing, electronic word of mouth and religious awareness in consuming halal food among Muslim consumers.
Keywords: Islamic Marketing, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWoM), Religious Awareness, Halal Food, Consumer

Introduction
Muslims are commanded in the Qur'an to only consume halal food. Muslims abstain from consuming haram items like wine, pork, and meat that has not been slain according to Islamic law. Muslims who purchase products with a certificate of halal are certain that the ingredients, manufacturing, and operational procedures follow Islamic Shariah law (Usman et al., 2021). It is not surprising that halal food receives great attention from all parties given that food is a basic human necessity that humans constantly consume on occasion. Halal food and beverages account for US$1.37 trillion of Muslim expenditure in 2018, followed by apparel ($283 billion), media and amusement ($220 billion), Muslim-friendly travel ($189 billion), and consumer pharmaceuticals and cosmetics ($156 billion). According to predictions, halal food and drink will continue to be the most expensive Muslim purchase in 2024, totaling US$1.97 trillion (DinarStandard, 2020). As a result, it is crucial to conduct the study in relation to halal food (Usman et al., 2021).

One of the new marketing strategies that combined an ancient public relations technique with a cutting-edge delivery method is social media marketing. Such a strategy is getting a lot of

traction over time due to the growing usage of smartphones because it depends heavily on how consumers perceive the veracity of advertising. Numerous research on social media marketing have been done, and there is strong evidence that viral marketing is a force to be reckoned with as well (Ramesh, 2014; Dunne et al., 2013; Ismail et al., 2019). Therefore, this study will look into the roles of Islamic marketing, electronic word of mouth and religious awareness in consuming halal food among Muslim consumers.

Literature Review
Halal Food Consumption
Knowing about halal food is not the same as knowing about halal-certified food. Muslims are typically aware of halal food since halal law is founded on religious beliefs. Muslims continue to eat food that they think to be halal despite the fact that their belief is false, according to reality. The food that is bought or eaten is not halal-certified. This case shows that the terms "halal food" and "halal-certified food" are frequently used interchangeably. There may be perception gaps, with Muslims perceiving halal food as being food they consider to be halal. Halal food is thought of by academics as being food that has undergone inspection and certification. The research findings may be biased if the respondent's intentions and the researcher's intentions differ. As a result, researchers must clearly distinguish between the idea and assessment of certified halal awareness (Usman et al., 2021).

In the realm of food intake, Islam does explicitly distinguish between Haram (unlawful) and Halal (lawful). According to Yousaf (2016), Muslims are not allowed to consume Haram foods like wine, pork, carriage, or meat that has not been slain according to Islamic law. Additionally, Muslim consumers' tastes are influenced by their practice of Islam (Wilson and Liu, 2010), where the significance of Halal and Haram is made aware to Muslims (Wilson and Liu, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how religiosity affects basic human attitudes and behaviors (Hanafiah and Hamdan, 2021)

Islamic Marketing
Understanding how Islamic marketing affects the opportunistic enterprises that serve today's consumers is essential before moving on. In our day and age, especially in the business and consumerism scenes, Islam is becoming more and more pervasive (Wilson, 2014). Given that 52% of Muslims are currently younger than 24 years old and that Muslims make up a quarter of the world's population, they constitute a sizable potential market for immediate purchases. In addition, Muslims are anticipated to grow in population by more than 35% over the following twenty years, according to (Wilson and Liu, 2011). This portion of the population is undoubtedly a gold mine just waiting to be discovered (Ariffin et al., 2021).

Islamic branding and marketing are unique and superior because Muslim customer behaviour is largely a cultural construct that is still developing (Wilson and Liu, 2011). In order to have a deeper understanding of what important to Muslim customers, academics and marketers need to examine through their unique perspectives (Wilson and Liu, 2011; Wilson et al., 2013). Islamic branding and marketing are unique, it's interesting to note that Islamic branding, according to Alserhan (2010), depends on three concepts: country of origin, target market, and halal status. Halal certification is so crucial in Islamic marketing (Ariffin et al., 2021).

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWoM)

In comparison to traditional marketing channels, eWoM has a big benefit because it enables consumers to freely interact and comment online on a variety of items, sharing their experiences and opinions regardless of the comments' content, elevating freedom of expression to a whole new level. Due to anonymity and self-disclosure, another benefit of online communication is the freedom and willingness of commenters (Sun et al., 2006). Despite the new potential provided by eWoM, it is uncertain whether its drawbacks will outweigh its benefits. eWoM offers a considerable advantage over the. Due to the speed at which information is spread through social media, another important problem that must be taken into account is how the business can restrict bad press and prevent it from harming its reputation (Kietzmann and Canhoto, 2013). According to Aula (2010), social media should broaden the range of reputation risk and increase risk dynamics that threaten the traditional company strategy. In social media, where people frequently post unverified material that may be accurate or misleading, the risk dynamic is extremely real. This knowledge is shared with other users, and the next person responds in a similar way, starting a cascade process that eventually becomes viral. It is difficult to design viral marketing because it exclusively depends on the audience to engage and spread the word to others. The phrase "viral marketing" actually applies to marketing strategies that are intended to spread the message like viruses (Klopper, 2002). As a result, it is nearly impossible to create viral marketing because one can always spread the word, but nobody can predict what will happen next (Ward, 2000; Wan Ismail et al., 2019).

Religious Awareness

According to PEW (2017), more than 80% of customers globally practise some form of religion. One of the most reliable sources of customers' essential beliefs is religion, which has an impact on why people buy things even subconsciously (Mathras et al., 2016; Minton and Kahle, 2014). By characterising how closely people adhere to their religious membership and the underlying tenets, religiosity offers special insight (Mathras et al., 2016; Minton and Kahle, 2014). In other words, religiosity is a useful indicator of how closely religious people heed warnings against materialism and splurging on luxuries (Oneto and Minton, 2019). Religious factors can significantly affect consumer behaviour and purchase choices. Halal goods strictly adhere to Islamic law as established by the Al Quran and Sunnah (Musa et al., 2022).

Halal awareness can be defined as consumers' capacity to discern and remember (Nurhayati and Hendar, 2020). Ambali and Bakar (2014) defined halal awareness as having exposure to or understanding of halal products, such as halal foods and beverages (Usman et al., 2021). Some organisations, such the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Malaysian Islamic Progress Department, and the Brunei Religious Council, Ministry of Religious Affairs, perform halal certification as a means of duty to ensure a halal product. The Indonesian Ulema Council (LPPOM-MUI), which houses the Institute for the Assessment of Food and Cosmetic Drugs, is in charge of performing product inspections, conducting halal certification, creating the halal logo, and putting the full halal certification system into place. Because halal certification is proof that the items are religiously permissible in accordance with the holy Quran, it gives consumers confidence when consuming products (Guntalee and Unahannda, 2005). Hence, a halal certificate will reduce Muslim concerns about selecting a product and provide Muslims with a sense of security and ease while buying or consuming the products (Hamdan et al., 2013; Usman et al., 2021).

Methodology

This study aims to explore how Muslim consumers' consumption of halal food is influenced by Islamic marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, and religious awareness. Islamic marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, and religious awareness are the suggested independent variables. Halal food consumption decision is the dependent variable for this study. In order to better understand and explain the interaction between Islamic marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, and religious awareness that affects decisions to purchase halal food, this study uses descriptive questionnaires. Respondents will receive structured questions to gauge their propensity to make purchases. Additionally, several statistical tools such as correlation and multiple regression are suitable for the study. Therefore, the proposed conceptual framework is:
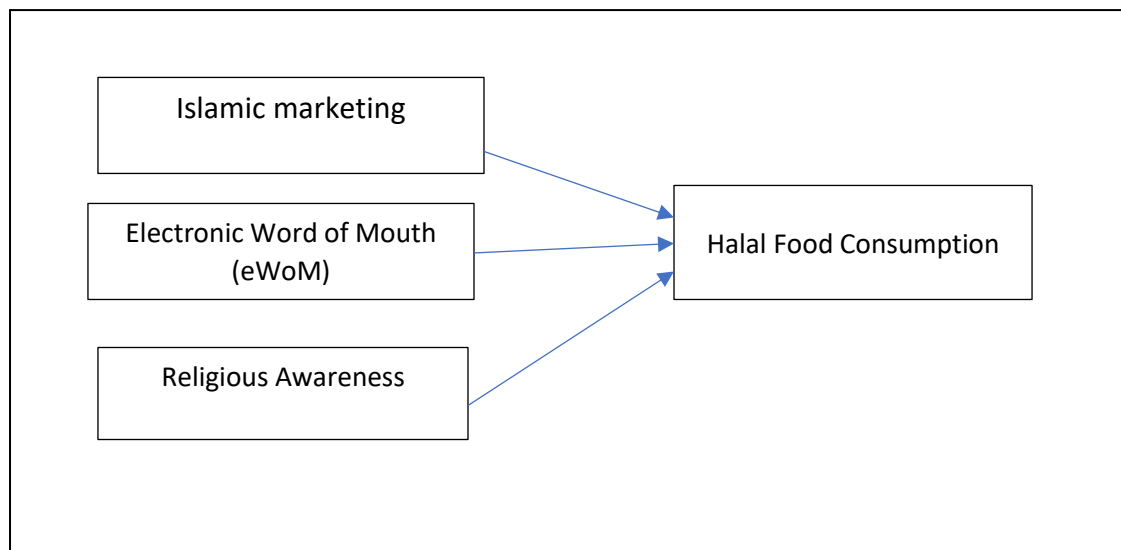

Figure 1. Proposed Framework

Conclusion

The proposed study would look into how consumers' religious awareness, electronic word-of-mouth, and use of Islamic marketing affect their choice of consuming halal food. The proposed variables in forming a decision to buy halal food include Islamic marketing, electronic word of mouth, and religious awareness. The proposed framework is intended to assist academics, halal food industries, and marketers in gaining useful insight. Future scholars are therefore encouraged to conduct an empirical investigation using the proposed methodology.

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