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The Halal-Green Consumerism Concept in Al-Qur'an: An Analysis

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Abstract

Consumerism is one discipline of social science that is important in an Islamic system of life. Basically, all forms of expenditure, financial management, consumerism procedures either involving the household, office administration, institution, organization or nation needs to be planned and managed as best as possible. This is to avoid various socio-economic problems such as fraud in financial transactions, wastage, culture of huge debts and halal issues related to consumers. This is according to the capitalist economic system widely used currently, which says that consumers are rational if they maximise material utility. Therefore, in line with the halal-green concept that exist in numerous fields and adopted universally, the investigation of the halal-green concept is crucial as it is the basic approach that designs the type of consumerism. Hence, this working paper aims to examine and analyse the halal-green consumerism concept in al-Qur'an. The question is, what is the halal-green consumerism concept? What is structure of the halal-green consumerism concept? To answer these questions, this working paper was written solely by using secondary data that were analysed using the content analysis method. The findings showed that integral features of the halal-green consumerism concept could be used to counter consumerism-*ghuluw* issues (to consume according to wants and instinctual inclination) in a more holistic and comprehensive manner.

Keywords: Consumerism, Halal, Green, Halal-Green

Introduction and Objectives

Consumerism is the last stage after the production and distribution activities have finished. All individuals in society are consumers throughout their lives regardless of religion, ethnicity, culture or status (Salam, 2008). Thus, discussions related to consumerism activities are very important in light of materialistic influences as well as numerous consumerism issues that arise as a consequence of contemporary socio-cultural and socio-economic changes in the Muslim society, especially in Malaysia. In order to settle these consumerism issues that arise in a Muslim consumer society, an examination of the halal-green consumerism concept is needed as a basic approach to realign the current consumerism discipline.

The halal-green concept is a universal concept used and accepted in various fields. Hence, the integration of the halal-green consumerism concept discussed here is a new phrase introduced based on the terms consumerism, halal and green. However, the phrase is not something that was just coined but rather had existed and applied by the Prophet SAW himself and it adheres to the teachings of Islam, which ensures sustainable human life in this world and in the afterlife (Abdullah, 2009:73). Generally, the phrase halal-green consumerism refers to a consumerism model that is clean, sacred, safe, of quality and nature friendly (protects and nurtures the environment).

Therefore, the discussions in this working paper aims to examine and analyse the halal-green consumerism concept in al-Qur'an. The discussions are divided into three main sections. First, definition of the halal-green consumerism concept; second, to identify the verses in al-Qur'an related to the halal-green consumerism concept; and third, to analyse the verses in al-Qur'an that are related to halal-green consumerism.

The Definition of Halal-Green Consumerism

There are main two keywords that must be defined in this working paper. The first keyword to be defined is consumerism. Consumerism from a linguistic aspect means use or apply (Johannsen & Page, 1980:79). Meanwhile, from a terminology aspect, it means to consume goods and services in order to fulfil current needs (Pearce, 1983:81). Moreover, Moffat (1984:64) also stated that consumerism refers to matters related to consuming goods and services in order to satisfy the consumer's needs until it creates a benefit or utility value.

Next, Yahaya and Othman (2002) and Hassan (1993) elaborated on consumerism by referring to individuals who buy, rent, receive, consume, maintain or dispose goods and services either for consumption, saving, protection or disposal in its final form. Consumerism or *istihlak* in Arabic is referred as *itlaf al-'ayn* which is interpreted as consuming something that offers needed benefits. For example, water is used for drinking or irrigation. It would decrease or finish altogether but the benefit obtained is sustenance of life and fertile agriculture land. So, *itlaf al-'ayn* does not produce benefits but *istihlak* produces benefits (Qal'ahjiy, 1991:94).

Based on discussions on the definition of consumerism, it can be concluded that consumerism refers to all matters related to a consumer oriented towards actions, such as consumer behaviour towards goods, products or services, including administrative and developments matters.

The second keyword is halal-green. Before defining halal-green, the meaning of halal-green is first explained. Halal or *halla*, *yahillu* or *hillan* refers to a noun in Arabic, meaning to liberate, release, to break or enable (al-Amidi, 1980). Besides that, halal in the *al-Ta'rifat* by al-Jurjaniy, refers to two meanings. First, the probability of consuming something that is needed in order to fulfil physical needs such as food, beverages, medication, clothing etc.; second, probability of benefiting and consuming something based on religious (Azaman, 2010).

According to al-Awqaf (1990) and al-Qaradhawi (1994), halal is something that is required and permitted to do by syarak. Besides that, the term halal in al-Qur'an is in some parts followed by the word *tayyib*, which refers to good or proper. This shows that Islam does not only emphasise on halal aspects but also aspects of good and proper (*tayyib*), such as cleanliness, sanctity, safety, quality and not being deleterious or harmful (Wahab and Azhar, 2014) in all aspects, either for humankind to consume, eat, wear, carry out commercial transactions, work etc.

Next, the definition of green refers to either one of the secondary colours that results from combining yellow and blue. The colour green is abundantly portrayed in foliage and it alleviates tension and cools the eyesight. According to Matin (2010) and Lau (2010), green refers to something friendly and protects the environment; while Azizan and Suki (2013) stated that green refers to something that reduces the negative effect on the environment.

Hence, this special feature of green was universally adopted and accepted in various fields. For example, the Green House Concept was introduced with the intention to help reduce the consumption of energy, water and natural resources besides providing quality air and comfort for occupants of houses (Karim, Yusoff & Talib, 2016). Hence, in order to form a comprehensive and realistic green concept, it should be built and related based on the *tayyiban* concept, which is closely related to the halal concept found in al-Qur'an. When the green and *tayyiban* concepts are merged or related then surely there will exist a relationship between the both, pertaining to the aspect of goodness towards humankind and the environment.

Based on the definition of both the keywords earlier, it was found that halal-green consumerism was not solely limited to the halal-haram aspect related to food, clothing and other material aspects. However, in this working paper a holistic definition of halal-green consumerism was adopted and it is a discipline of knowledge about the reality of the aspects of consumerism such as cleanliness, sanctity, safety, quality and being not deleterious besides being 'environmentally friendly' (protecting and nurturing environmental sustainability) as well as beneficial to humankind.

Methodology

This qualitative study only used secondary data. The content analysis method was used to analyse the data collected from the secondary source, which were past studies and literature related to this study such as thesis, journals and writings related to the concept of consumerism and halal-hijau concept. Next, the discussion of this idea of the halal-green consumerism was done by referring to the main sources of Islam, which is al-Qur'an and the literature related to the scriptures of interpretation and published authoritative studied.

Verses in Al-Qur'an Related to the Halal-Green Consumerism

There are no discussions in al-Qur'an that explicitly refer to halal-green consumerism. However, there were six verses chosen for the analysis. In order to determine if the verses of al-Qur'an are included in the verses about halal-green consumerism, this working paper had determined it according to two characteristics. First, the consumption must be clean, safe and of quality; second, the consumption must be of benefit to humankind and the environment. Each verse that

fulfils one of these characteristics was presumed to be a verse regarding halal-green consumerism. This is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Verses of Al-Qur'an Pertaining to Halal-Green Consumerism

No.	Surah & Verse	Interpretation of the Verses
1	Al-Baqarah (2:168)	Surah al-Baqarah (2:168) is a command from Allah SWT to all humankind to choose foodstuffs and reap benefits from all-natural resources that are halal and good among HIS conferment (al-Qurtubiy, 1993:143). Halal in this verse refers to something that is not prohibited (<i>haram</i>) by syariat, while good refers to something that is not deleterious to the human body and mind (al-Tabariy, 1992:81 & 88; Ibn Kathir, 2008:404). According to Hamka (1982:48), halal can be divided two aspects, namely the nature of existence (<i>zat</i>) and verified sources aspects. Besides that, this verse also explains the prohibitions by Allah SWT so that nobody follows the path of Satan by committing acts that are prohibited by Allah SWT such as misleading the command of Allah SWT so that people would NOT choose halal and good food or prohibit what has been made halal by Allah SWT (Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghiy, 2001:323).
2	Al-Baqarah (2:219)	Surah al-Baqarah (2:219) elaborates on the command of Allah SWT about humankind pondering between sins and benefits. Drinking of <i>khamar</i> (alcohol) and gambling are sins that outweigh the benefits (Hamka, 1982:186). According to Ibn Kathir, (2008:535) and Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghiy (2001:449), <i>khamar</i> is any form of drink or food that is deleterious to health as in both the mind and body, destroys the social and religious framework, however part of society looks at the benefit gained by the body such as helping the digestion process and relieving stress. However, the benefits are far outweighed by the sins in these actions. Besides that, gambling has negative effects on the mind, religion, property as well as societal wellbeing (Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghiy, 2001:449).
3	Al-Ma'idah (5: 88)	The <i>mufassir</i> (interpretation scholars) stated that this verse from surah al-Maidah (5:88) is an admonishing from Allah SWT to several companions of the Prophet SAW who wished to distant themselves from their wives in order to be closer to Allah SWT. This action was seen as transgressions that have been outlined in the syarak (Al-Tabariy, 2000). Hence, in-relation to the <i>halalan-tayyiban</i> concept, it covers an action or effort to prohibit something that has been made halal by Allah SWT for humankind (Ibn Kathir, 1999).
4	Al-Anfal (8:67-69)	Surah al-Anfal (8:69) describes how Allah SWT has made it halal to confiscate war booty and commanded that the profits from the war booty be managed based on the <i>halalan-tayyiban</i> concept (Ibn Kathir, 1999; Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghiy, 2001). Emphasis on the <i>halalan-tayyiban</i> concept not only comprises the consumerism

		aspect but also involves all aspects of development such as ethics in administrative institutions, financial management, integrity of policy makers, and the fortitude of Muslims in designing a strategy or action plan.
5	Al-Nahl (16:66)	Surah al-Nahl verse (16:66) explains the joy in the conferment by Allah SWT, among them are livestock that have numerous benefits and goodness for humankind. For example, Allah SWT has made milk, which is nutritious and easily available to humankind and produced by the livestock besides the blood and waste also found in the animals. Hence, the power of Allah SWT has made pathways or channels in the body or abdomen according to its functions without disrupting one another (Ibn Kathir, 2008:201).
6	Al-Nahl (16:114-115)	Surah al-Nahl (16:114-115) explains that Allah SWT had clearly discussed explicit guidelines related to what is prohibited as well as the forms of prohibitions. This comprises three aspects. First is prohibition due to changes to the natural form (<i>zat</i>) such as carcass; second is prohibition due to the natural form (<i>zat</i>) itself, such as pigs; and third is prohibition that involves procedures, such as slaughtering of animals not according to the procedures set by the syarak (Ibn Kathir, 1999). Besides that, the role <i>al-Darurah</i> was also taken into consideration concerning issues on food and consumerism.

According to Table 1 above, there were six verses related to halal-green consumerism comprising two verses from surah al-Baqarah (2:168; 2:219), one verse from surah al-Ma'idah (5:88), one verse from surah al-An'am (6:119), and two verses from surah al-Nahl (16:66; 16:114). Hence, it could be concluded that discussion of these verses had included various aspects of life, such as food, livelihood (*rezeki*), commercial activities, family matters, management institutions etc.

Findings and Discussion

The discussion on the halal-green consumerism concept in this study are divided into four parts. First, the philosophy of halal-green consumerism; second, the principle of halal-green consumerism; third, the ethics of halal-green consumerism; and fourth, the aim of halal-green consumerism.

The Philosophy of Halal-Green Consumerism

Philosophy is the main and important basic element found in halal-green consumerism. It refers to the individual's belief and knowledge about the understanding of a concept or reality that is presumed to be the basis of a higher knowledge as well as a motivating factor of each micro-economic agent's behaviour (Hawa, 2009; Jimale, 2012). The philosophy built in this context is the philosophy of *tauhid* (monotheism), which is the most important pillar in all aspects of human life (Sulaiman, 2007:3; Hasan, 2011:21). *Tauhid* leads humankind to believe that Allah SWT is the one who creates, owns, manages and plans the Universe without the help of anybody; thus, only Allah SWT is the most qualified to receive allegiance and to be worshipped by every human and creature (Hanapi, 2014:70). Besides that, through *tauhid*, humankind will always return to Allah

SWT as the Creator of this universe in every action of theirs without committing sins or prohibited actions, exercising extreme attitudes when taking action, changing a halal status to haram or vice versa, cheating etc. Each action must be presumed to be halal from aspects such as its existence, procedures, source etc.

The Principle of Halal-Green Consumerism

A principle is the basis and core to thinking and economic activity (Dail, 1984:5). Hence, the halal-green consumerism principle can be divided in two. First is the welfare and benefit principle. Islam emphasises the consumption of all natural resources bestowed by Allah SWT as long as it provides welfare and benefit to the individual, family and society, either for sustenance of life, physical or spiritual health as well as a reminder to humankind to abdicate oneself to Allah SWT (Ibrahim & Labib, 1998:323). Basically, the halal conferment by Allah SWT is a blessing from Allah SWT and is demanded by *syarak*. This is because the consumption of something that offers benefits to the creation (humankind and creatures) of Allah SWT will promise happiness in this world and the afterlife (Salam, 2008:125-126). Second in the principle of moderation. Consumerism must adhere to the principles of moderation and balance in which consumption is at a minimum. It is better if consumption is moderate and not to a level of frugality (Hamid & Pauzai, n.d.). This is because Islam encourages consumption and expenditure that is moderate and balanced in order to control the instinctual inclination (*nafsu*) of humankind as well as to avoid being lazy, careless, feeble thinking etc. (al-Furqan, 25:67) (Salam, 2008).

The Ethics of Halal-Green Consumerism

Ethics is a word that originated from the Greek word "*Ethos*", which means "*Code of Human Conduct*". In general, Islamic ethics refers to regulations that set boundaries on behaviour or human actions according to Islamic law (Shiddiq, 2010:15). There are two ethical codes regarding halal-green consumerism that will be summarised.

First is the halal and quality ethics. In ensuring the consumerism issues are on the right track, Muslims as consumers, must choose goods, services and products that are halal and of quality as well as avoid goods that are prohibited (haram) and those that do not fulfil the specifications of the *syarak* (Karim, Kamri & Kassim, 2013:17). Besides matters that are evidently halal or haram, Muslim consumers also need to safeguard themselves from matters that are *syubhat* (matters with vague religious decrees). The term halal refers to something that is permitted and receives blessings (*pahala*) when performed, while haram is something that is prohibited and poses implications of sins (*dosa*) (Jamaludin & Ramli 2012:21). Besides that, emphasises on halal and quality not only comprises consumerism aspects but also involves all aspects of development such as ethics in institutional administration, financial management, integrity of policy makers and the capability of Muslims to design a strategy or action plan.

Second is the ethics of balanced consumerism. Islam allows a Muslim to enjoy life in this world but prohibits a lifestyle that freezes life and hinders civilizational development (Hassan, 2001:32; Shiddiq, 2010). However, Islam also controls the permission given by Allah SWT so that humankind does not transgress the limits of balance (Salleh, 2002:72). Consequently, a moderate

and conducive consumption allowed by Islam would change into a practice that transgresses limits, be excessive and lead to enslavement (al-A'raf, 6:31; al-Maidat, 5:87).

The Aim of Halal-Green Consumerism

When implementing halal-green consumerism, receiving the blessings of Allah SWT is the ultimate aim. The confidence and faith in the existence of afterlife as a realm of retribution would make humankind trustworthy and responsible in implementing all forms of action, either involving matters regarding the family, personal, society or even administering a country. Next, humankind will put forward their best efforts to obtain goodness and rewards in heaven. Goodness can only be obtained by humankind when it practices goodness and fulfil all responsibilities with full faith and sincerity towards Allah SWT. Happiness in the afterlife can be obtained by humankind by always hoping for the blessings of Allah SWT in every deed they perform.

Suggestion and Conclusion

According to the overall discussions in this working paper, there are six verses related to halal-green consumerism in al-Qur'an that comply with the objectives. After the verses were analysed, it was concluded that the halal-green consumerism concept in al-Qur'an comprises four main criteria. First, the halal-green consumerism philosophy, which is tauhid; second, the halal-green consumerism principle, which is the principle of welfare and benefits as well as the principle of moderation; third, the ethics of halal-green consumerism, which is the ethics of halal and quality as well as the ethics of a balanced consumerism; and fourth, the final aim of the halal-green consumerism is receiving the blessings of Allah SWT.

Hence, halal-green consumerism is very useful when practiced in daily life, either when managing an organization, institution, office as well as administering a nation etc. This shows that the halal-green consumerism concept could become an effective and comprehensive consumerism model based on a true Islamic mold.

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