



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i17/5144>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i17/5144

Received: 16 Nov 2018, **Revised:** 23 Dec 2018, **Accepted:** 29 Dec 2018

Published Online: 30 Dec 2018

In-Text Citation: (Piah, Abidin, Usman, Rus, & Adzmy, 2018)

To Cite this Article: Piah, Z. H. M., Abidin, I. H. Z., Usman, S. B., Rus, M. H. M., & Adzmy, A. (2018). Cognizance of Halal among Secondary School Teenagers in Dungun, Terengganu: Contributing Factors. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(17), 37–48.

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Special Issue on Revisiting Foodservice and Gastronomy Intersection: Business, People and Performance,
2018, Pg. 37 - 48

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Cognizance of Halal among Secondary School Teenagers in Dungun, Terengganu: Contributing Factors

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Abstract

The growing number of Muslim populations in Malaysia uplifted the demand of Halal food. Since the boom of this concept all over the world, this Halal food industry has witnessed several food scares and food-related lawsuits. Halal logo fraud is one of the popular cases occurred. The increase of food product in the market that uses fake Halal logo remains plentiful. This study attempts to identify the sentience of Halal food among secondary school teenagers and to identify its contributing factors. Data were collected by distributing questionnaires to the secondary school students in Dungun by using a convenience sampling method and a total of 250 questionnaires were successfully completed and returned. Descriptive and regression analyses were employed, and the overall result of the study revealed that the school teenagers are aware and concern with the Halal information and issues among them. It also found that the role of the education, advertisement and parents have a significant relationship on Halal food sense among secondary school students in Dungun. There is a need for future research, however, to consider other influencing factors to the Halal food awareness among secondary school teenagers, in a broader sample size.

Keywords: Teenagers, Halal, Sense, Roles, Food

Introduction

The Halal food industry is continuously growing due to the increase number of Muslim populations. Today, the total number of Muslims are approximately 1.6 billion composing about 23% of the world population, and this number is estimated to increase to 2.2 billion or 26% by 2030 (Calabria, 2018). The growing concern among the Muslims about Halal food (Sungkar, 2010; Teng et al., 2013) as well as the increasing trend in attitude and intention to purchase Halal food products by non-Muslims (Golnaz et al., 2013) escalated the demand that leads to the growth of this industry.

According to Rezai et al. (2008), Halal refers to a code of conduct which is permitted by Syariah and it applies to every activity handled by a Muslim. Baharudin et al. (2012) stated that Halal is the universal term that applies to all facet of life. The word Halal is not only used in the context of consumables or product used by Muslims, it has a varied scope of application which covers from an inter-human relationship, clothing and manner, social and business transaction, trade and financial services to investment or any others which are in compliance with the laws of Islam (Muhammad et al., 2009). For example, when applied to the economy concept, it refers to a business organized in a manner deemed permissible in Islam. When it applied to food, it refers to the entire food chain that operated within Islamic guidelines.

The Halal foods concept is now recognized by worldwide as an alternative benchmark for safety, hygiene and quality assurance of what we consume or use daily. The Halal products that are processed in line with Halal prescriptions are readily acceptable by all including the non-Muslim consumers (Ambali & Bakar, 2014).

However, the global food industry, in general, has suffered from several food scares and food-related lawsuits that have made media headlines. The Jakarta Post (2016) reported that in the US, a businessman who is considered as a pioneer in the Halal food industry was sentenced due to the fraud of exporting meat products to Indonesia and Malaysia. The founder of the Midamar Corp. was fined US\$60,000 because had deceived the packaging labels of beef products so that the company could export the products that did not comply with the Malaysian and Indonesian standard for Halal. Other than that, two McDonald's outlets in Detroit had been sued for Halal fraud by claiming the chicken products they used were certified Halal and they agreed to settle the lawsuit for \$700,000 (Bryanh, 2016). A few years back, Super King Market in Anaheim was fined \$527,000 for committing the same fraudulent act (OC Weekly, 2011).

While in Malaysia, on May 7, 2015, a Halal certificate of Secret Recipe's restaurant chains had been revoked because of cleanliness issues (The Straits Time, 2015). In February 2016, there was an issue of "pork-free" and "no-pork" disclaimers. Such disclaimers are used by food producers who did not have a Halal certification to attract Muslim consumers (Ismail, 2016). Some Muslim who do not really know the difference may get attracted to dine at the restaurant. A couple years back, a company that produced a rice vermicelli of 'Mosque' brand claimed its product as Halal, but the production process was not operated under specified requirements of hygiene by the authority, and the Halal logo used was only to deceit the consumers (Sinar Harian, 2014). In the same year, two of Cadbury chocolate products were recalled from the market after the Ministry of Health during its periodic checks for non-Halal ingredients found traces of pork DNA in these two products (News Desk, 2014). This case had caused an uproar in the country.

The problem starts when some Muslims are not too aware of Halal-ness of the food they buy and what is more of concern is that consumers, teenagers generally, are not interested to know more about Halal even though they got the means to find information about it everywhere (Musa, 2013).

Thus, this paper is about to examine the awareness of the teenagers regarding Halal and the possible factors that contribute to it in the hope that appropriate measures could be undertaken by not only relevant authorities, but Muslim parents to be exact in order to instill and nurture the values of Islam within their children.

Literature Review

Halal knowledge and its contributing factors

A good knowledge of Halal is influenced by the experience of information exposed about Halal products. Values and beliefs affected the selection of products by the consumer (Rajagopal, et al. 2011). Commonly, knowledge refers to the information that is known or realized by a person or a group of people. Clarke and Rollo (2001) believed that knowledge is the information coming through the framework of experience, judgment and understanding of something, and can be seen through a framework of understanding and mental skills which built by the human intellectual. It is also defined as awareness, consciousness or familiarity obtained from experience and understanding of something. Specifically, knowledge is about the skills built by a person or a group of people through theoretical or practical understanding of a matter (Sinclair, 2010).

Advertisement

Advertisement can be defined as the instrument that can be used to advertise and promote the company's product (Malik et al., 2014). Advertisement and the information on Halal product can be seen in any electronic media such as television, radio, internet, banner/billboard/outdoor display, magazines, bulletin, newspaper, documentaries, articles, sales promotion and so on (Rahim & Pawanteh, 2009; Ayanwale et al., 2005). Anderson et al. (1994) have earlier pointed out that consumers have to depend on the seller or outside observers and put their trust in the information source and the information received. Many researches show that the advertisement helps consumers to obtain any information about the food product, as well as helping consumers to make a purchase decision. Consumers are practically influenced by what they saw, and Internet drives their purchasing decision (Swidi et al., 2010).

Television commercials and prime-time programs have been recognized as important influences on the types of food that children ask their parents to buy for them and the food they buy for themselves and these mediums play a significant role in providing Halal alert and exposure to Muslim consumer (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). According to Malik et al (2014), the advertisement can shape the attitudes and perceptions of the consumer which later will influence their buying behavior because they get information and the knowledge about the product through it. In a situation of Halal, Saabar and Ibrahim (2014) agreed that advertising has a vital role in promoting Halal towards young Muslim by giving more information, increase knowledge and increase their awareness on Halal products even though most of them do not rely on advertisement to get information on Halal products.

Education

Some universities in Malaysia has setting up their own halal institute to cater and to complement the halal research and development, while some offering halal studies in diploma, degree, master, and Ph.D. level so that industry can generate the well-trained personnel in every area of expertise in the halal industry. Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP), and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) are among the universities that have their own halal institution and halal programs for students (Ahmad et al., 2011; Hassan, 2011). In addition, there are also several government organizations, the non-government organization (NGO) and private companies that engage in promoting awareness of the consumers on the halal product through any kinds of promotional activities such as halal conference, halal seminar, halal auditor training, halal forum and so on. However, from web pages of the institutions, companies, and departments, those activities required tad expensive fees and limited in certain urban areas.

A previous study by Abdul et al. (2015) found that education, either formal and informal religious education has a great influence on the consumption of Halal food among Muslims. Besides that, several studies revealed that there is a positive relationship between educational exposure and the level of awareness on Halal food (Ambali & Bakar, 2014; Patnoad 2001). It has long been affirmed by Endang (2010) that found Muslims who received a formal religious education at the religious school were more concern on the Halal status of the food they eat as compared to those who did not received a formal religious education. Educational exposure is one of the best ways to make people aware of what types of food they consume in the context of safety and sanitary condition; which are the main aim of Halal (Patnoad, 2001).

Parental Roles

As Malaysia generally practice's collectivist culture, family plays a vital role in educating family members on the importance of Halal food (Abdul et al., 2015). However, parents need knowledge, tools, incentives and environmental support to provide right food choices and help guiding eating practices of their children (Crockett & Sims, 1995). Previous studies revealed that subjective norm is significant where family, friends and colleagues play an important role for Muslim in choosing Halal products in Malaysia (Lada et al. 2009; Syed & Nazura, 2011).

In addition, many factors may influence teenage youths' consumer regarding Halal information, purchasing behavior and decision making. A study by Abdul (2012) for instance, found that these young consumers' purchasing behavior are mostly influenced by friends, if they live away from their family. However, a family has been identified as one of the most influential environmental factors affecting food- and nutrition-related decision and behavior, measured by levels of parental modeling and interactions (Gillespie, 1989). In this case, parents are the ones who are responsible to educate their children since they are little. Puteh (2001) asserted that to develop and educate an attitude of the children, especially adolescent, it should start from the early stage which parents will influence the children by becoming a positive role model. As stressed by Van Hooft et al. (2006),

human behavior was generally influenced by the expectations of others, such as friends, family and societal norms.

Method

Design and Population

This study was descriptive in nature and a quantitative approach was taken to gather all data needed. The sample of this study was selected based on the number of secondary school teenagers aged between 13-17 years old in Dungun Terengganu. Due to limited time, only five secondary schools within this district that are adjacent to one another are carefully chosen. In practice, the sample size is determined based on the expense of data collection, and the need to have sufficient statistical power. According to Roscoe (1975) the suitable sample size must not be below than 30 and not over than 500. The total number of teenagers in these five schools are approximately 740 people making a sample of 250 people sufficient to be part of this study, which later been divided proportionately to 50 students from each school.

Procedure

The questionnaire constructed was piloted to examine the content to avoid misunderstanding issue of the questions asked, before been reconstructed to increase the content validity of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on all the core constructs stipulated in the conceptual framework and are adapted and modified from the earlier studies. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework applicable to Halal awareness among teenagers and is originated by Othman et al. (2011). Since the sample of this study were teenagers and Bahasa Melayu are their main language, thus the language used in the questionnaire were simplified and translated to Bahasa Melayu. Few assistants were appointed to conveniently administer the questionnaires, and all were completed and returned, and none were eliminated and deemed fit to be analyzed.

The data gathered was then coded and keyed in using a Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS), Version 20.0 for analysis. Descriptive analysis was first employed to check on the mean and standard deviations of all items before using multiple regression analysis to test the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable.

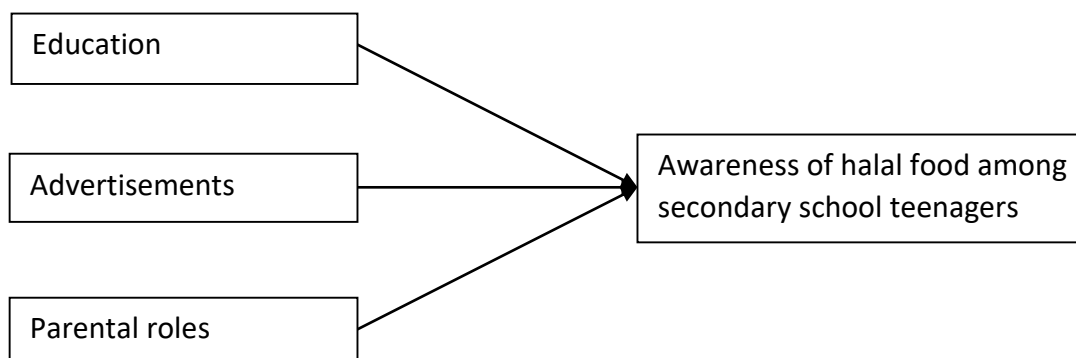


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework. Adapted from Othman et al. (2011)

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the sample with regard to their demographic background. The majority of the respondents are female which represent 64.4% (n=161) compared to male, 35.6% (n=89). About 99.2% (n=248) of the respondents are Malay while the remaining 0.8% (n=2) are from other races. For the age group, 38.8% (n=97) are from the age of 15, 30% (n=75) are 16 while the remaining are those who are 17 years of age, 31.2% (n=78).

Table 1: Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Variables	n	%
Gender		
Male	89	35.6
Female	161	64.4
Age		
15 years old	97	38.8
16 years old	75	30
17 years old	78	31.2
Race		
Malay	248	99.2
Others	2	0.8

The results of the mean scores and standard deviations of items in each variable in the study are summarized in Table 2. Items are measured on a five-Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing “strongly agree” and 5 representing “strongly disagree”.

Table 2: Variables Items Means and Standard Deviations

Construct/ Items	Mean	SD
Education		
1. I get Halal information during Fardhu Ain Class (KAFA).	1.66	0.734
2. I get Halal information during primary school.	1.57	0.681
3. I read Halal information on the notice board at school.	2.22	0.852
4. I get Halal information during secondary school.	1.84	0.995
5. I heard about Halal information during Halal seminar/talk.	1.78	0.843
Advertisement		
1. I rely on an advertisement to get info on Halal food product.	2.49	1.142
2. Advertisements have increased my knowledge of Halal food product.	1.87	0.866
3. Advertisements have increased my awareness of Halal food product.	1.76	0.750
4. I notice the advertisement of Halal food product in the media.	1.79	0.731
Parental roles		
1. My parents told me about Halal food product at home.	1.44	0.579

2. I get information about Halal foods product from my mother.	1.56	0.613
3. I get information about Halal foods product from my father.	1.67	0.687
4. I buy Halal food because my mother asks me to do so.	1.78	1.015
5. I check Halal logo on food product because my mother asks me to do so.	1.42	0.661
6. I know the current Halal issues through my parents.	1.67	0.721
Teenager's Awareness of Halal	2.93	0.302
1. The official Halal logo.	1.90	0.686
2. I am aware of Halal food brands in the market.	2.76	0.974
3. I often search Halal information at Jakim website.	1.52	0.654
4. I check the Halal logo on the packaging before I purchase the product.	2.56	0.882
5. I know any Halal logos from other countries.	2.25	0.837
6. I know Halal logos abroad certified by Jakim.	1.66	0.690
7. I have examined the packaging carefully before purchasing food products.		

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was employed to help determine which of the three independent variables could be used to predict the contributing factors to the Halal sense among secondary school teenagers in Dungun, Terengganu. The model was significant [$F(3,246) = 16, p < .001$] with the predictors explaining 68.1% of the variance in the Halal awareness among secondary school teenagers in Dungun and the ANOVA table further showed that the model was highly significant.

Among the three predictors entered into the model, all made statistically significant to the cognizance of Halal among secondary school teenagers and that predictors were Education with sig. value at .017 when $p < .05$, and Advertisement and Parental Roles with sig. value at .002 and .000 each, when $p < .01$. In terms of importance, Parental Roles made the largest unique contribution to the model with $\beta = .242$. The following table summarizes the findings from the multiple regression analysis:

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

	B	SE B	β
(Constant)	9.882	.841	
Education	.169	.070	.146*
Advertisement	.226	.074	.188**
Parental Roles	.249	.063	.242**

Note: $R^2 = .681$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

General Discussion

The findings of this study clearly showed that there is a positive relationship between the roles of parent, education, and advertisement and Halal food awareness among secondary school teenagers. Among the three roles, the parental role is found to be the strongest influences on Halal food awareness among school teenagers at Dungun. As the parent is the first educator of children at

home, parents can have a great influence on the awareness of Halal food (Lada, H.T. & Amin, 2009). In this study, the parental role is important in giving Halal food information to their children, ask them to buy Halal food and educate them to check Halal logo on food product from the young age so that the children will know how to identify the Halal products in future. Puteh (2001) asserted that to develop and educate an attitude of the children, especially adolescent, it should start from the early stage which may influence the children by becoming a positive role model. Hence, parents should show a good example as a Muslim consumer to find Halal food products and prepare themselves with current Halal issues and knowledge to influence Halal food consumption among their children.

On the other hand, this study proved advertisement as one of the efficient medium to get Halal food information, and it is crucial to increase the knowledge and awareness of Halal food among students. This finding is similar to (Saabar & Ibrahim, 2014) that indicated that advertising plays a significant role in promoting Halal food towards young Muslims, providing abundant of knowledge and information regarding Halal products, hence create awareness on Halal products. Since most of the teenagers rely on advertisement in the media, the advertisement of Halal foods today should be extensively shown on the mass and social media to introduce more Halal foods especially local Muslims' food products. As asserted by Ambali and Bakar (2012), newspaper, television, radio, internet and any other channel of communication play a significant role in providing Halal alert and exposure to Muslim consumer.

The findings also revealed the importance of education in shaping the knowledge of the teenagers pertaining Halal products. Most of the respondents were strongly agreed that they get the information of Halal during Fardhu Ain Class (KAFA), during primary school and during secondary school. It showed that the school teenagers in Dungun alert with Halal information provided by the school and they are well-informed with Halal information during their schooldays. This finding is in agreement with the study by Abdul et al. (2015) which showed education, formal and informal religious education has a great influence on the consumption of Halal food among Muslims.

This study will definitely build a new body of literature and extending to the existing ones. It can be considered as a useful reference and insight for the potential researchers, generating the future direction of other similar perspective studies. This study may also act as starting point for the educators, especially school educators and the government to include halal education in secondary school syllabus so the knowledge of halal food can be exposed to the young at an early stage.

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