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Will the Real Halal Logo Please Stand Up?

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Abstract

The introduction of Halal logo issued by Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) has influence the awareness and perception among Muslims consumer about the importance of consuming Halal products and the important of Halal logo. The Halal logo, furthermore, encompasses imported products from different countries that are certified by JAKIM. However, little did the consumers know that there are fake logos and identifying the authorized halal logo by JAKIM could be challenging. The objective of this study was to investigate the ability of Muslim consumers in order to recognize the authorized Halal logo. 360 structured questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah and 349 usable questionnaires were analysed. The findings showed that most of the respondents (86.8%) were able to identify the authentic halal logo issued by JAKIM. However, the remaining (13.2%) perceived the fake halal logo as the authentic halal logo. It is concluded that the consumers should aware and attain knowledge to recognize the authorized halal logo and JAKIM should play an important role to monitor the authenticity of the halal logo used by food operators.

Keywords: Authenticity, Halal, Halal logo, JAKIM, Malaysia

Introduction

Foods play an essential part in our daily life and most of the foods are influenced by region, culture and religion (Alzeer, Rieder & Hadeed, 2018). One of the factors influencing purchase decision is religious belief and every Muslim is strictly obliged to search and consume halal product. It is not only to worship Allah SWT, but also for healthy and hygienic purposes (Majid, Abidin, Majid & Chik, 2015). In order to ensure the Muslim consumers consume halal food, Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) has set up the Halal certification and logo since 1994 (Asa, 2018). The JAKIM halal logo is used as a sign of quality assurance that emphasize purity, safety and quality of the food product. Since then, Halal certification and logo act as a way to reassure and inform the consumers that the products are not only Halal but also *Shariah* compliant. Therefore, all food operators and manufacturers that sell and serve halal food products, should obtain the halal certification and display the authorized halal logo.

Obtaining the Halal certification, indeed, could be challenging to food operators and manufacturers as it requires thorough procedures imposed by JAKIM. Noordin, Noor, Hashim and Samicho (2009) mentioned that the procedures cover the preparation, kinds of ingredient used, the slaughtering process, hygienic handling and serving the food. In other words, it consists of 'farm to fork' management. Significantly, meeting the halal requirement would be in accordance to the global standards such as International Organization for Standardization 9000 (ISO), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP), Good Hygienic Practice (GHP) and Codex Alimentary (Liow, 2012). Reflecting the statement, halal foods are accepted by non-Muslim consumers, indicating its high standards requirements. Thus, halal certification and logo not only add value to the products, but reaching a wider market.

Since halal has become universal, there are irresponsible food operators using unauthorized halal logo to market their products. Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism (MDTCC) reported that there were six fake halal logo that resembling the genuine logo issued by JAKIM in the market (Halim, Mohd, Salleh, Yalawae, Omar, Ahmad, Ahmad & Kashim, 2014). The imitation created confusion among the consumers and sadly, they believe that the fake logo is the real one.

Identifying the authentic halal logo has raised an issue since there are forged domestic and international halal logos in the market. This leads to confusions and cause doubts among Muslim consumers during the purchase. Thus, this study attempts to investigate the ability of Muslim consumers in identifying the authentic halal logo issued by JAKIM.

Literature Review

Concept of Halal

Halal has become a universal concept (Mohamed, Rezai, Shamsudin & Chiew, 2008) where it is not only for Muslim but equally important for non-Muslim consumers. The reason being is the concept of halal should incorporate the element of tayyib, indicating the wholesomeness of the food being prepared and served (Majid et al., 2015). This important element could be an important selling point to all market segments (Ismail, Othman, Rahman, Kamarulzaman & Rahman, 2016). Since consuming halal food is important in Islam, Mohamed et al. (2008) stated that Muslim consumers are found to be very sensitive pertaining to the halalness of the food they consume. Therefore, consumers are relying on the halal logo before they make the purchase.

Halal Logo

According to Ismail et al. (2016), halal logo refers to a symbol to show that the product or business is certified halal by JAKIM. Moreover, JAKIM halal logo (see Figure 1) is highly accepted and recommended in the global market (Muhammad, Isa & Kifli, 2009). The introduction of halal logo introduced by JAKIM created awareness among Muslim consumers consuming products that follow Islamic principles (Shafie & Othman, 2006). The logo has become an instant recognition for Muslim consumers to consume the products without any doubts.



Figure 1. Halal logo issued by JAKIM
(Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2019)

As depicted in the figure above, the authorized halal logo includes several features. It involves an eight cusp star at the center of a circle, the Arabic halal word at the center of the star, the word “HALAL” below it, the word Malaysia written in Roman alphabets and in Arabic within the circle of the logo and two small five cusp stars are positioned to separate the Roman alphabets from the Arabic word mentioned (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, 2019). On the other hand, Halim et al. (2014) highlighted that there are six fake halal logos in the market. Hence, it might cause confusion among the Muslim consumers. Identifying the authorized halal logo is crucial and it requires knowledge to recognize the authentic halal logo. Figure 2 depicts some examples of fake halal logo in the Malaysian market. This was also known as halal food fraud. According to Ruslan, Kamarulzaman and Sanny (2018), the use of fake halal logo is a part of halal food fraud, signifying irresponsible producers or manufacturers that do not adhere to the Syariah law. The following logos were included in the questionnaire to examine the ability of the consumers to recognize the authentic halal logo.



Figure 2. Examples of fake halal logo

The authorized halal logo can only be displayed once the food operator has obtained the halal certification. In Malaysia, JAKIM is responsible to endorse the certificate to food operators. Remarkably, Malaysia is the only country whose halal certification is issued by the government while the other countries are endorsed by Islamic associations (Nasaruddin, Fuad, Mel, Jaswir & Hamid, 2012). The main purpose of halal certification is to indicate whether the product is halal and safe to be consumed by Muslim consumers or not (Demirci, Soon & Wallace, 2016). Therefore, product that carries halal logo could give necessary assurance to Muslim consumers.

Methodology

Research Design and Instrument

This study was mainly quantitative with the use of cross-sectional design. Respondents of this study consisted of Muslim consumers from three shopping malls at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. The first section consisted of demographic questions such as gender, age group and educational level. The second section included the halal logo as depicted in Figure 1 and 2. The respondents were asked to select only one out of four logos that they perceive the authentic halal issued by JAKIM.

Data Collection and Plan for Data Analysis

Researchers distributed the questionnaires to all respondents of the study. 360 questionnaires were distributed, indicating 120 to each mall. Convenience sampling technique was employed. This survey targeted to Muslim consumers that were above 20 years old. Researchers approached each respondent and asked their consent to participate in the study. Respondents took approximately less than three minutes to complete the questionnaires and returned it to the researchers. The data collection was done over a period of two weeks. Out of 360 respondents, 349 were used in the analysis, indicating the usable data. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis to enable the researchers to identify the percentage of consumers that were able to identify the authentic halal logo.

Results and Discussion

Respondent's Profiles

Researchers obtained 349 usable questionnaires and were included in the data analysis. Most of the respondents were female, between 30 to 39 years old and hold a diploma qualification. Specifically, the following table presents the demographic information of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondent's Profiles

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	141	40.4
	Female	208	59.6
Age group	20-29 years old	42	12.0
	30-39 years old	244	70.0
	40-49 years old	35	10.0
	50-59 years old	21	6.0
	≥60 years old	7	2.0
Educational level	High school	33	9.5
	Certificate	97	27.8
	Diploma	123	35.2
	Bachelor's degree	62	17.8
	Postgraduate	34	9.7

Halal Logo Identification

To examine the data, the researchers used descriptive statistics to determine the distribution of consumer's perception on halal logo. Figure 3 displays the data findings.

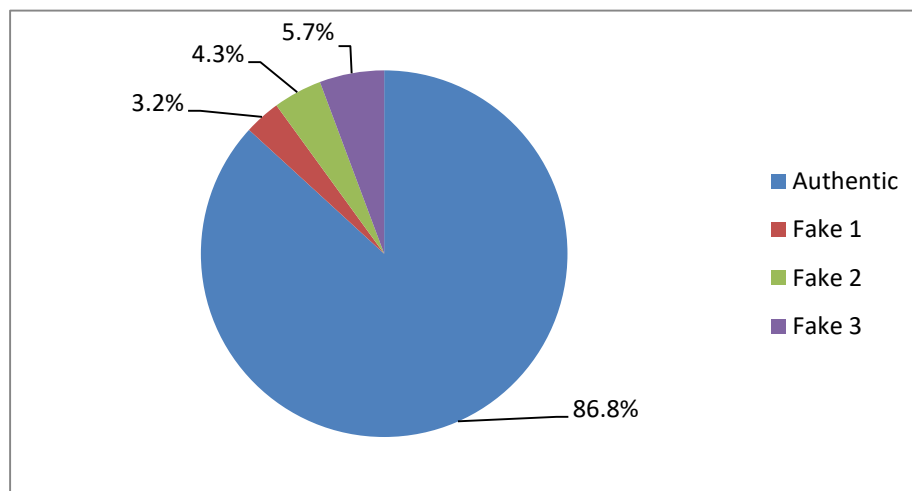


Figure 3. Distribution of consumer's perception on halal logo

The analysis shows that most of the respondents (86.8%, N=303) were able to identify the authentic halal logo issued by JAKIM. However, in total, 46 respondents (13.2%) perceived the fake halal logo as the authentic halal logo. Similarly, it indicated that they were unable to identify the authentic halal logo. Specifically, 20 respondents (5.7%) identified Fake 3 as the authentic halal logo. Followed by 15 respondents (4.3%) and 11 respondents (3.2%) identified Fake 2 and Fake 1 as the genuine halal logo, respectively.

Discussion

The analysis shows that most of the respondents (86.8%, N=303) were able to identify the authentic halal logo issued by JAKIM. However, in total, 46 respondents (13.2%) perceived the fake halal logo as the authentic halal logo. Similarly, it indicated that they were unable to identify the authentic halal logo. Specifically, 20 respondents (5.7%) identified Fake 3 as the authentic halal logo. Followed by 15 respondents (4.3%) and 11 respondents (3.2%) identified Fake 2 and Fake 1 as the genuine halal logo, respectively.

The findings revealed that a majority of respondents in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah were able and aware of the authentic halal logo. This reflects their adherence to the Muslim way of life. In addition, it showed that JAKIM's campaign of introducing and educating consumers about halal certificate and logo has reached a greater audience. According to Ambali and Bakar (2013); Galdeano, Ahmed, Fati, Rehan, & Ahmed, (2019); Ahmed, Majid, Zin, Phulpoto, & Umrani, (2016), the discussions of halal are regularly took place in television, radio, newspaper, books and internet. Consequently, it has created greater awareness among the consumers through such exposure (Patnoad, 2001).

However, there are a small number of respondents that was unable to recognize or identify the genuine halal logo issued by JAKIM. The existence of multiple halal logos in the market might cause a misperception among consumers. Although the number is relatively small, consuming products without authentic halal logo should not be practiced among Muslim. The lack of knowledge and information about halal logo might be one of the reasons causing the issue. Thus, it is necessary for JAKIM and other related should regularly educate the consumers through television, radio, social media or other channel of communication. All these efforts could increase the awareness and knowledge among consumers about halal matter (Ambali & Bakar, 2014).

Conclusion

The findings showed that most respondents have the knowledge of how the authentic halal logo looks like. This has proved that the awareness of halal logo among the Muslim consumers is gaining impetus in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. In order to improve the level of awareness and concern among Muslim consumers, it is necessary for JAKIM and other related agencies to improve their role to educate and ensure the Muslim consumers purchasing the food with authentic halal logo. Increased knowledge and awareness among the Muslim consumers about the authentic and fake halal logo could assist in reducing the possibility of purchasing fraudulent products. Moreover, government should take action against food producer who violate the law. Stringent and regular monitoring by the relevant agencies could battle this prolonged issue. It could protect the Muslim consumers from purchasing product with fake halal logo. Therefore, all these efforts would eliminate the problem of product with fake halal logo and secure confidence of Muslim consumers purchasing halal food products.

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