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People's Awareness on *Halal* Foods and Products: Potential Issues for Policy-Makers

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Abstract

The concept of *halal* products or foods is now gaining a worldwide discussion due to its recognition as an alternative benchmark for safety, hygiene and quality assurance of what we consume or drink daily. Thus products or foods that are produced in line with *halal* prescriptions are readily acceptable by Muslim consumers as well as consumers from other religions. For a Muslim consumer, *halal* foods and drinks means that the products has met the requirements laid down by the Shariah law whereas for a non-Muslim consumer, it represents the symbol of hygiene, quality and safety product when produced strictly under the Holistic *Halal* Assurance Management System. 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 describes their perception and cognitive reaction to products or foods in the market. As such, their awareness is an internal state or a visceral feeling by way of sensory perception towards the products/foods they used or consumed. Given the significance role of awareness about *halal* in the life of Muslims and their obligations to be Shariah compliant; this paper will address the determinants and identify the sources of awareness of Muslim consumers on *halal* products or foods. It is argued that many things can lead to awareness of *halal* products or food unfortunately, most of the previous studies only focused on *halal* certification logo. Many problems are associated with *halal* logo (labeling) as the only source of awareness for Muslim consumers on *halal*. This logo is also yet to be empirically proven as well. This paper delves into other sources that can bring about awareness of Muslims on *halal* products in order to fill the void. Methodologically, the paper utilizes both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitatively, the paper delves into literatures to identify those alternative ways and quantitatively tests them through self-administered survey using Partial Least Square (PLS). The findings show that the religious belief, exposure, certification logo, and health reason are potential sources of Muslim awareness about

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halal consumption. However, health reason is the most contributing predictor of level of *halal* awareness. It is hoped that the results from the paper would provide another avenues for government and policy makers to improve their policy decisions and mechanisms of making Muslims in Malaysia to be more aware of *halal* foods and products.

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1. Introduction

Malaysia is now on a motion or track towards becoming a developed country by year 2020. Thus, with such vision Malaysia does not depend on single sector but has various economic generators that can contribute to the country's wealth and economic growth. In this context, one of the most important sectors is *halal* food/product sector that is no longer merely an industry that complies with religious requirements to feed about 60 per cent million Malaysians who are Muslims but it is becoming an economic force in itself both domestically and globally. Much has been said in the past few years about Malaysia's drive to be a *halal* hub. Looking at the Third Industrial Master Plan (IMP3), Malaysia's government is tasked with making the *halal* hub a reality in a few years to come. Government efforts have started since 2006 but yet there are still a lot to do in making Muslim consumers be more aware of what they eat, drink and use in relations to *halal* and Shariah compliance. According to the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (MIDA) reports, part of the government's effort has been identified in terms of special tax incentives which are in place for *halal* food production. Companies that invest in *halal* food production and have already obtained *halal* certification from the Islamic Development Department of Malaysia (JAKIM) are eligible for the Investment Tax Allowance of 100 per cent of qualifying capital expenditure within a period of five years (Amanda, 2012).

A profound setback for materializing and achieving the dream of Malaysia becoming a *halal* hub country lies inside the issues of *halal* certificates and logos for products manufactured outside Malaysia which are being sold locally. The problem compounded further in lieu of the absence of a globally-standardized *halal* authority. A starting point of policy relevant information for policy-makers on the step to take must begin with policy-research questions such as: what is the level of awareness about *halal* foods/products among Muslims? What are the sources of information or factors that contribute to level of awareness of Muslims on *halal* foods/products? In an attempt to provide answers to these questions, the following objectives are aimed to be achieved in this paper by (a) examining the level of awareness of Muslim about *halal* foods or products; (b) examining the correlation between some likely identified factors and level of awareness on *halal* foods/products among Muslim; (c) establishing which of the sources is the dominant factor that can bring about Muslims' awareness on *halal*.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Growing Demand for Halal Foods/Products in Malaysia

The claims that Islam is the fastest growing religion and second largest in the world are true based on the increasing number of Muslim population by over 235 percent in the last fifty years (Abdul Latif, 2006). Food is a basic part of existence of mankind. Food consumed by Muslims that meets the Islamic dietary code is called *halal* food. The increasing awareness of Muslims all over the world on their obligation to consume food based on Islamic dietary requirements creates greater demand for *halal* foods

and products. In Malaysia, “*Halal Express*” by MISC Bhd has been established as a response for a growing number and the increased volume and movement of *halal* products and the demands for specialized transport and/or logistics services. As we know, Malaysia consists of different states such as Sabah, Sarawak, Negeri Sembilan, Kelantan, and Pahang. Malaysia has multiracial society such as Malay, Chinese, and Indian and has multi-religion likes Islam and Buddhism. Apart from these beliefs, the custom and tradition which they inherited from their ancestors, environment and also states may influence their way of living especially eating habits, perception and attitudes towards food. As an example, for a Muslim consumer, *halal* foods and drinks mean that the products has met the requirements laid down by the Syariah Law whereas for a non-Muslim consumer, it represents the symbol of hygiene, quality and safety product as produced strictly under the Holistic *Halal Assurance Management System*. Therefore, in any area such as Shah Alam, the people came from different states and are joined together. Automatically they formed diverse group of peoples. These groups of people are mostly Muslims and they have to eat *halal* food. Because of that, it is important to identify the Muslims’ level of awareness on *halal* consumption in Shah Alam.

2.2 Conceptualizing Halal

The word “*Halal*” means permissible or lawful by Islamic laws. It refers to foods or products consumed by Muslim. According to Wahab (2004), *halal*, when used in relation to food in any form whatsoever in the course of trade or business or as part of a trade description, is applied to lawful products or foods or drinks. *Halal* can also take any other expression indicating or likely to be understood as permission by Islamic religion to consume certain things or utilize them. Such expression shall have an indication that neither is such thing consists of or contains any part or matter of an animal that a Muslim is prohibited by Shariah to consume. In addition, if it is an animal, it would indicate that it has been slaughtered in accordance with Hukum Shariah. In other words, it does not contain anything which is considered to be impure according to Hukum Shariah. If it is food stuffs, it means that it has not been prepared, processed or manufactured using instruments or ingredients that were not free from anything impure according to Hukum Shariah. Moreover, it and has not in the course of preparation, processing or storage been in contact with or close proximity to any things that are considered to be impure according to Hukum Shariah. Thus, in Islam, all foods are considered *halal* except the following, which are Haram: swine/pork and its by-products; animals improperly slaughtered or dead before slaughtering; animals killed in the name of anyone other than ALLAH (God) and drinks such as alcohol and intoxicants. *Haram* also covered carnivorous animals, birds of prey and land animals without external ears; blood and blood by-products and foods contaminated with any of the above mentioned products as they are raised to eat or drink *halal*, hygienic and safe foods or products (Riaz & Chaundry, 2004).

2.3 Concept of Halal in the Quran and Sunnah

Allah (S.W.T) has created all that is in the earth for the purpose of human survival and sustenance in life as in the indicated in many verses of the Holy Quran where He says:

“*It is He who have created all that is in the earth for you*” (*Qur’an*, 2:29).

Therefore, nothing is forbidden except what is prohibited either by a verse of the Quran or an authentic and explicit Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). To make lawful (*Halal*) or unlawful (*Haram*) is the right of Allah alone. No human being, no matter how pious or powerful, may take it into his hands to change it. The basic reasons for the prohibition of things are due to impurity and harmfulness. As a Muslim, we are not supposed to question exactly why or how something is unclean or harmful in what Allah has prohibited, rather we should render our appreciations and gratitude to Him (SWT) as indicated in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

“O ye who believe! Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you, and render thanks to Allah if it is (indeed) He whom ye worship” (Qur'an 2:172).

An in-depth understanding of human beings about what Allah has prohibited demand our appreciations because the prohibitions of those things are for our own safety. Looking for excuses are among the biggest lies told against Allah or a form of distortion of what He permits and forbids. Thus, Allah's order on prohibited and non-prohibited things must be followed by all Muslims. The fact is that Islamic laws are universally applicable to all races, creeds, and sexes. Allah has commanded us to do that which He commanded the Messengers, where He says:

“O ye Messengers! Eat of the good things, and do right. Lo! I am aware of what ye do” (Quran 23:51).

As such, the term *halal* encompasses cleanliness and hygiene in food preparation because cleanliness is part of religion and Allah only permits hygiene, safe and *halal* foods or products for Muslims' consumptions. This is clearly highlighted in the following *ayah* of the holy Quran where He says:

“He hath forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and swine flesh, and that which hath been immolated to (the name of) any other than Allah. But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is no sin for him. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (Qur'an 2:173).

In the above mentioned *ayah* of the Holy Quran, we have been clearly informed on what kind of food Muslims should consume and not to consume. The reasons for prohibitions are even substantiated with clarifications through Quranic exegeses by *Ulamah*. For example, the reasons for forbidden carrion and dead animals are due to unfit for human consumption where their decaying process leads to the formation of chemicals which are harmful to humans. Blood that is drained from an animal contains harmful bacteria and toxins, which are harmful to human products of metabolism and development. Some of these authentic reasons are even highlighted in the following Quran where Allah (SWT) says:

“And verily in cattle (too) will ye find an instructive Sign. From what is within their bodies between excretions and blood. We produce, for your drink, milk, pure and agreeable to those who drink it.” (Qur'an 16:66).

From this verse, we can see that Islam only allows a good and healthy food for Muslims to be consumed. For example, milk is a complete food, rich in protein, calcium, vitamin A and B. This natural and provisional advantage is only possible to be derived from lawful animals when they are alive. When they die, it becomes Haram because of the like harmful effects one may encounter from eating or drinking out of the dead animals.

2.4 Halal Foods or Products in Hadith

The Hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has addressed the concept of *halal* related all forms of foods, products and drinks for human consumptions regardless of race, colour and nationality. One of the Ahadith of the Prophet even teaches human beings the perfect way of slaughtering animals to become lawful or *halal* for eating. The Hadith related to this context was narrated on the authority of Abu Ya'la Shahddad ibn Aus, saying:

The Messenger of Allah said: “Verily Allah has prescribed proficiency in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters” (Hadith No.17 of Imam Nawawi by Sahih Muslim).

It cannot be denied that, Islam provides clear guidelines on the *halal* food process. As a Muslim, we must follow all the guidelines especially in terms of slaughtering. On another occasion, it was narrated by Rafi’ bin Khadij that the Prophet (SAW) told Muslims who wanted to slaughter some animals using reeds by saying:

“Use whatever causes blood to flow, and eat the animals if the Name of Allah has been mentioned on slaughtering them...” (Sahih Bukhari, Vol.3, Book 44, No 668).

In this Hadith, it clearly shows that, Islam is very concern on the food processing in relations to fulfillment of *halal* requirements. The narrated Ahadith mentioned above have clearly clarified the rules and processes in slaughtering animals to be lawful for eating by Muslims.

Some of the Ahadith of the Holy Prophet also addressed those unlawful or non-*halal* foods or products for human consumptions. For example, it has been narrated by Az-Zuri that:

“Allah’s Messenger forbade the eating of the meat of beasts having fangs” (see: Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 7, Book 7, No 4350).

According to this Hadith, we may have noted that as there are lots of foods, drinks and products, which are permitted to eat, drinks and use, there are also a lot of drinks and foods that are not permitted for human consumptions, such as alcohol, pork etc. we are sometimes get confused on whether certain foods or drinks or products are *halal* or Haram. In this situation, the Hadith of the Holy Prophet sheds light on this where he says:

“Halal (lawful) is clear and Haram is clear; in between these two are certain things that are suspected (Shubha). Many people may not know whether those items are Halal or Haram. Whosoever leaves them, he is innocent towards his religion and his conscience. He is, therefore, safe. Anyone who gets involved in any of these suspected items, he may fall into the unlawful and the prohibition. This case is similar to the one who wishes to raise his animals next to a restricted area, he may step into it. Indeed for every landlord there is a restricted area. Indeed the restrictions of Allah are the unlawful (Haram)” (see: Sahih Muslim, No: 2996).

It can be understood that, unlawful (Haram) things are prohibited to everyone alike but *halal* foods and drinks are the sources of energy for human beings as they can supply nutrients for the body development and replace dead cells, for movements, work, exercise, and for thinking. Thus, they are permitted by Quran and Sunnah for the benefits we can obtain from them, otherwise they are prohibited if they are not prepared in the right manner, condition and method for consumptions simply because of the harmful effects we may encountered from eating, drinking and using them.

2.5 Safety and Hygienic Food in the Context of Halal

Hygiene has been given much emphasis in *halal* and it includes the various aspects of personal body, clothing, equipment and the working premises for processing or manufacture of foods, drinks and products. The objective is to ascertain that the food (whatever kinds) produced is safe, hygienic and not hazardous to human health. In the context of *halal*, hygienic food, drinks and products can be defined as free from *najis* or contamination and harmful germs. So, it obviously shows that *halal* is very particular in food matters especially in the practice of keeping ourselves and the things around us clean in order to prevent diseases. Hence a safe food, drink or product is one that does not cause harm to the consumers be Muslim or non-Muslim when it is prepared and/or eaten or in accordance to its intended usage. In order to assure we are safe the producers should take necessary steps to comply with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practice (GHP). Good Manufacturing Practice is where the producers apply the combination of manufacturing and quality control procedures to ensure the products are consistently manufactured to their specifications and *halal* prescriptions given by *Halal* Certification Body. The Codex General Principles of Food Hygiene and the Malaysian Standard MS1514 on General Principles of Food Hygiene lay down a firm foundation in hygienic practices in ensuring food hygiene (Sumali, 2009). This is no doubt in inline with the objectives of *halal*. In other words, General Principles of food Hygiene laid down complements the aim of *halal* when putting into vigorous enforcement. Therefore, these principles are internationally recognized and the guidelines can be used together with other specific and appropriate codes of hygienic practice laid down in *halal* certification processes by JAKIM. . At this juncture, we shall turn to address the relationship or common line of agreement between what foods or drinks or products Allah has permitted (*Halal*) for us and safety or hygienic reasons. This is discussed in the next section of this paper.

2.6 Relationship between Halal, Hygienic and Safety Food

Consumption of *halal* as ordained Allah (SWT) must be viewed from the wider scope and in total perspective. The concept of *halal* totally encompasses all aspects of human life as it gives us a better and insightful meaning when it is viewed from the perspective of quality and total goodness of what we should eat, drinks and use daily. Thus, to the Muslims, food must not alone be of good quality, safety and hygienic but also be *halal* (Hayati, et al., 2008). It shows that all food is *halal* except those that are specifically mentioned in Quran as Haram. Islam only permits its followers the lawful, hygiene, safe and good foods, drinks and products as stated in the Holy Quran and Shariah. Hence, the consumption of *halal* is not only an obligatory in serving Allah but obedient to *halal* shows that material and ingredient are not harmful to health since Allah permitted only what is good for human existence. Hygienic, safety and cleanliness are strongly emphasized in Islam via *halal*. It includes every aspect of personal hygiene, dress, equipment and premise where food is processes or prepared. In fact the basis of *Halal* itself is hygiene and health (Hayati, 2008). The objective is to ensure that the foods, drinks and products people take or use are absolutely clean and not harmful to human health. It therefore worth to note that in Islam the consumption of *halal* and using of *halal* products are obligatory in serving Allah (SWT). In this context, Muslims communities must be mindful of food or drink ingredients, handling process and packaging of consumable products. Processed foods and drinks as well as products are only *halal* if the raw materials and ingredients used are *halal* and it is fully compatible to the Islamic guidelines (Zurina, 2004). As such Muslims must be aware about *halal* aspect of what they are consuming. This awareness in relation to *halal* is discussed in detail via the section of the paper.

3. Conceptualizing Awareness

While according to Randolph (2003), the word “awareness” means the knowledge or understanding of particular subject or situation. The word “awareness” in the context of *halal* literally means having special interest in or experience of something and/or being well informed of what is happening at the present time on *halal* foods, drinks and products. As such, awareness describes human perception and cognitive reaction to a condition of what they eat, drink and use. Subjectively speaking, awareness is a relative concept where a person may be partially aware, subconsciously aware or may be acute aware of an issues relating to *halal* aspect of what is permitted by Allah. It may be focused on an internal state, such as a visceral feeling or on external events or issues by way of sensory perception. Awareness provides the raw material to develop subjective ideas about one’s experience related to something (Nizam, 2006). Awareness about something is therefore a basic part of human existence. On top of everything is the self-awareness. Awareness means one exists as an individual with private thoughts about the state of something. Therefore, different people have different level of awareness about something. In other words, awareness is the processes of informing the general population or increasing levels of consciousness about risks related to anything that could endanger human life and how people can act to reduce their exposure to it. So, awareness in the context of *halal* can be conceptualized as the informing process to increasing the levels of consciousness toward what is permitted for Muslims to eat, drink and use. To have an in-depth understanding of this concept, it is interesting to examine different sources by which human being can be conscious of something as discussed in the next section of the paper.

3.1 General Sources of Halal Awareness

3.1.1 Religious Belief

Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interprets and responds to what they feel is supernatural and sacred (Johnstone, 1975). Most religions prescribe or prohibit certain behavior including consumption behavior. Thus, in Islam it is clearly stated that *halal* foods, drinks and products are permissible but non *halal* is forbidden for human consumptions. Schiffman & Kanuk (1997) assert that members of different religious groups’ purchasing decisions are influenced by their religious identity, orientation, knowledge and belief. Therefore, it shows that religion and belief are sources of awareness towards consumption behavior. Religious knowledge or belief is one of the main determinant factors of food avoidance, taboos, and special regulation in particular with respect to meat (Simons, 1994). Religious knowledge or belief is the best guideline to determine the food consumption because several religions impose some food restrictions e.g. prohibition of pork and not ritually slaughtered meat in Judaism and Islam, and pork and beef in Hinduism and Buddhism, except for Christianity which has no food taboos. Although the dietary laws imposed by some religions may be rather strict, the amount of people following them is usually quite substantial. For example, Hussaini (1993) pointed that 75% of Muslims migrants in the US follow their religious dietary laws. It shows that, wherever or place Muslims choose to live, they are still aware of *halal* due to their religious knowledge and belief. To substantiate this understanding, one would see that the concept of human awareness has been highlighted in the Quran and Sunnah to guide Muslims to lawful things in life. What is *halal* and *haram* are declared through Quranic injunctions, and the believers are obliged to accept it as such (Hussaini, 1993). In Islam awareness has been given clear and proper consideration with respect to lawful and the unlawful things as Hadith says:

“The Halal is that which Allah has made lawful in His book and the Haram is that which He has forbidden, and that concerning which He is silent, He has permitted as a favour to you”, (see: Ibn Majah, No 3367).

From this Hadith it can be concluded that human can be aware about what is lawful or unlawful for consumption when he or she refers to Al-Quran and Hadith because both of these resources had given clear guidance relevant to what is consumable for Muslims. However, the challenge arose in manufactured products that contained hidden information. The solution to this has been addressed through labeling or certification as other sources of awareness about *halal* products by Muslim policy makers and certification bodies in many Islamic countries such as Malaysia.

3.1.2 Role of Halal Certification (Logo/Label)

In a Muslim majority nation such as Malaysia, the concept of *halal* is an absolute key to consumption. Muslim consumers nowadays are faced with a broad selection of products and services, which somehow doubtful. Manufacturers and marketers have been indirectly forced to use *halal* certification and logo as a way to inform and to reassure their target consumers that their products are *halal* and Shariah-compliant. In general, the Muslim consumers in Malaysia look for the authentic *halal* certification issued by the Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) which is under the purview of the Ministry in the Prime Minister's Department. The introduction of *halal* logo and certification by (JAKIM) has generated more awareness among the Muslims on the importance of consuming manufactured products or engaging in services that follow Islamic guidelines and principles. In Malaysia, Muslims consume the foods, drinks and manufactured products by looking at *halal* logo that authorized by the government agency. *Halal* logo itself is considered an important source or factor because the foods or drinks can be trusted in terms of *halal*, safety and hygiene. Therefore, *halal* logo is a signal for which food outlets are permissible to be patronage by the Muslims in the country. Labeling is also important as a source of awareness about safe and hygienic foods and drinks related diet and health. For example, fruits, vegetables and starchy staples, must have full nutrition labeling, and marketing practices conducive to have healthy food choices.

3.1.3 Exposure

The fact of living in era of modern science and technology creates food products encumbered with varieties. This evolution comes together with booming of additives and ingredients to match with demands and perfections in food production. Different types and variety of foods and products offered in the market often confuse the consumers and most of them are unaware of what they have consumed or are consuming. According to Anderson et al (1994), consumers have to rely on the seller or outside observers, and put their trust in the information source and information received. Hence, it is important to facilitate consumers with guideline through teaching and exposure to purchasing the right food. Patnoad (2005) assert that one of the best ways of making people aware of types of what they eat in the context of safety and hygienic condition which is the main aim of *halal* is through educational exposure. Educating them would make them expose and make the right choice of what they consume daily. Thus, major responsibility of government or agency in charge of *halal* lies in delivering food safety education and resources to a variety of target audiences. Food safety education efforts must be directed toward consumers, school-aged children, and food industry employees. In Malaysia and other Muslim countries consumers can be exposed to the *halal* to increase the level of their awareness via education and learning. There are various medium by which the government can make people aware of *halal* in this modern age of technology advancement. People can be educated through daily newspaper, television, radio, internet or any other channel of communication. All these can play an important role in providing the information about *halal* alert and exposure. Therefore, teaching exposure can serve as a source of awareness on *halal* related to what the Muslims consume.

3.1.4 Health Reason

It is not only religious motives that can determine people awareness towards *halal* food or products for consumption, but also health issues related to religious identity and degree of acculturation in whatever we consume daily (Bonne et al, 2007). Thus, for example, it is important to ensure that the meat comes from a healthy animal so that people can be healthy. Rice (1993) asserts that much modern ill-health is attributable to poor nutrition and unhealthy state of what consumers take daily. This is closely related to argument for *halal* consumption since the primary aim of Allah on *halal* is to ensure healthy life for people. *Halal* urges to ensure full commitment to producing, serving clean, safe foods and products for the consumers. In other words, the *halal* products should be recognized as symbol of cleanliness, safety and high quality. It can be concluded that health reason becomes another source of information by which people can be aware of what they are consuming daily. As such, the agency or government as a whole should use health reason as alternative policy source of information to convince Muslim consumers on the importance of their awareness towards *halal*.

3.2 Conceptual Model for Halal Awareness

Given the various sources of information found in the literature that can facilitate people awareness about *halal* consumption, it is important to empirically study them to identify actual significant roles play by each of them as predictor of *halal* awareness among Muslims in Malaysia. The outcome of this empirical investigation is expected to serve two purposes (a) to serve as a source of relevant policy information for government or agency (JAKIM) on how to improve level of *halal* awareness among Muslims in the country and (b) to provide new alternative direction for government policy on how to tackle issues associated with *halal* products or food in the country. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model.

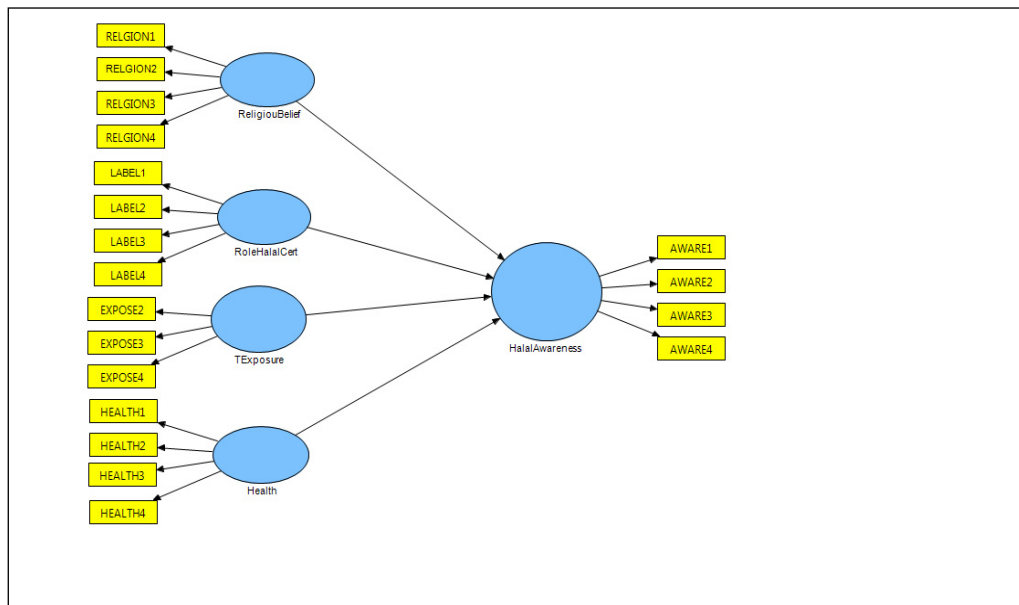


Figure 1: Initial Formulated Research Model

3.2.1 Operationalizing of variables

In this conceptual framework, the level of awareness on *halal* food and product among Muslims is considered the dependent variable, which is expected to be influenced by the independent variables in terms of exposure, religious belief, health reason, and labeling/log enforcement. Exposure on *halal* foods or products may include advertisement either on newspaper, television, radio, internet or any other channel of communication, which can influence Muslims' level of awareness about *halal* foods (Patnoad, 2005; Anderson et al, 1994). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Exposure through advertisements and teaching has a positive influence on Muslims' level of awareness towards halal foods or products.

Religion often associated with deity, morality, worldview of a person's daily life. It can also be understood that person must pursue their religion with enthusiasm and intensely engaged with their faith in relations to anything items for consumption. For most Muslims religious belief has been theoretically identified to be a significant source in sculpting their behaviour and food habits as seen in the previous section of the literature. Therefore, the Muslims' belief in Islam can influence their level of awareness on *halal* food (Simons, 1994; Hussaini, 1993). Base on this point of view, we hypothesize that:

H2: Religious belief of Muslims has direct influence on their level of awareness towards halal foods or products.

The fact that human health is related to fitness; it is one thing that Muslims cannot be easily overlooked. Muslims who are concerns about their health reason may possibly choose *halal* food because it offers healthy ingredients (see: Bonne et al, 2007). This then will lead to level of awareness on *halal* food. In the light of this we hypothesize that:

H3: Health related reasons have a positive influence on level of awareness towards halal foods or products among Muslims.

Labeling and/or logo are a display of information about a product on its container or package. In this respect, the extent of information about *halal* food or product that must be impacted by a label is governed by the relevant safety in Muslim societies such as Malaysia. Thus, labeling and logo enforcement can serve as important influencing mechanisms in triggering Muslim's level of awareness on *halal* foods or products. This is because they need to justify the products and foods' status either by its logo or by its labeling as *halal* or *non-halal* before purchasing or consuming it (Osman, 2002). Hence, we hypothesize that:

H4: Halal certification enforcement has a direct influence on level of awareness towards halal foods or products among Muslims.

4. Methodological Approach

4.1 Data collection

As this study addresses the issue of Muslims' level of awareness towards *halal* consumption the unit of analysis is individual Muslims in the selected areas of Shah Alam. In terms of sample size, 210 Muslims from 18 years old and above were chosen as the respondents. A convenience sampling was used to obtain information from a particular subset of Muslims. Therefore, a quota of 60 working respondents, 50 unemployed respondents and 100 student respondents participated in this study. Thus, data was collected through personally administered questionnaires by research assistants. This method is chosen because the designed questionnaires could be collected from the informants within a short period of time

and any doubts that the respondents might have about any item of the questionnaire can be clarified on the spot (Sekaran, 2010). Therefore, the research was a cross-sectional survey carried out between April and May, 2012 using Partial Least Square (PLS).

4.2 Goodness of Measures for Instrumentation

Researchers have used a questionnaire with five-point Likert scale to obtain data for each of the construct in the model of the study. Based on the insights obtained from previous studies on consumer awareness and consumer perception towards brands, label, *halal* Malaysia logo, product, science and technology (Leclerc, Schmitt & Dube, 1994; Mariam, 2003; Mazis & Raymond, 1997), a questionnaire was adopted with some modifications to earn information on the Muslims' awareness towards *halals* foods and products.

In this study, we have used both validity and reliability tests to measure the goodness of data. Construct validity is used to test how well an instrument developed measures a particular construct intended to measure (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010), while reliability is used to test how consistently the measuring instruments had measured the constructs. Validity measures in this research are in three folds which are- construct, convergent and discriminant in order to examine how well the questionnaires used tap the constructs as theorized in the model.

4.3 Construct Validity

We assessed the construct validity by looking at loadings and cross loadings to identify any problematic items, if any. Following Hair et al (2010), a significant value of 0.5 loadings is used as cutoff. Hence, if any items has loading value of 0.5 on 2 or more factors they would be considered cross-loaded and rendered invalid. As has been depicted in Table 1, items measuring each construct in the study are highly loaded on their particular construct and loaded lower on others, thus construct validity of the instruments is established.

Table 1: Loadings and Cross Loadings for Construct Validity

Variables	Religious-Belief	Exposure Teaching	Halal Awareness	Health	Label Logo
AWARE1	0.2000	0.182	0.713	0.362	0.191
AWARE2	0.229	0.234	0.758	0.223	0.347
AWARE3	0.249	0.148	0.899	0.493	0.417
AWARE4	0.126	0.143	0.813	0.473	0.296
EXPOSE2	0.039	0.744	0.139	0.006	0.140
EXPOSE3	0.009	0.872	0.215	0.114	0.136
EXPOSE4	0.205	0.584	0.076	0.066	0.165
HEALTH1	0.184	0.077	0.407	0.819	0.484
HEALTH2	0.115	0.133	0.448	0.889	0.342
HEALTH3	0.079	0.001	0.413	0.869	0.093
HEALTH4	0.079	0.024	0.371	0.695	0.018
LABEL2	0.322	0.160	0.048	0.094	0.583
LABEL3	0.233	0.175	0.420	0.262	0.928
LABEL4	0.199	0.140	0.298	0.277	0.855
RELGION3	0.861	0.049	0.226	0.133	0.201
RELGION4	0.750	0.044	0.174	0.089	0.219

4.4 Convergent Validity

We have also tested the convergent validity of the instrument to examine the extent of the degree in which the multiple items measuring the same construct of the study are in agreement with one another. In this respect, we examined the factor loadings alongside with both composite reliability and average variance extracted. The results of Table 2 show that all items' loadings exceeded the recommended value of 0.5 as suggested by Hair et al (2010). In addition, the composite reliability is used test the degree to which the construct indicators really represent the latent and the values obtained ranging from 0.782 to 0.893, which exceeded the recommended value of 0.7 by Hair et al (2010) as shown in Table 2. The average variance extracted (AVE) was used to examine the variance captured by the constructs' indicators relatively to measurement error. According to Barclay et al (1995), the value must be above 0.5 for justification. In this study, the AVEs for the indicators are within the range of 0.552 and 0.675 respectively (Table 2). Looking at the results for the parameter estimates and the test of their statistical significance obtained or t-values, it can be concluded that all the five variables in the model are valid measures their respective constructs (see: Chow & Chan, 2008).

Table 2: Results of Measurement Model

Model Constructs	Measurement Items	Loadings	t-value	Composite Reliability (CR) ^a	Average variance Extract (AV) ^b
Religious Belief	RELGION3,	0.861	11.139**	0.789	0.653
	RELGION4	0.750	6.273**		
Exposure	TEXPOSE2	0.744	4.502**	0.783	0.552
	TEXPOSE3	0.872	9.968**		
	TEXPOSE4	0.584	3.299**		
Health	HEALTH1	0.819	29.942**	0.892	0.675
	HEALTH2	0.889	49.059**		
	HEALTH3	0.869	36.963**		
	HEALTH4	0.695	16.907**		
Halal_Cert	LABEL2	0.583	5.311**	0.839	0.644
	LABEL3	0.928	48.898**		
	LABEL4	0.855	25.302**		
Halal Awareness	AWARE1	0.713	15.663**	0.875	0.638
	AWARE2	0.758	16.046**		
	AWARE3	0.899	64.226**		
	AWARE4	0.813	29.742**		

Note: ** P<0.01

(CR)^a: Composite reliability (ρ_c) = $(\sum \lambda_i)^2 / [(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum Var(\epsilon_i)]$, where λ_i is the outer factor loading, and $Var(\epsilon_i) = 1 - \lambda_i$ is the measurement error or the error variance associated with the individual indicator variable(s) for that given factor (see: Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

(AVE)^b: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = $(\sum \lambda_i^2) / [(\sum \lambda_i^2) + \sum Var(\epsilon_i)]$, where λ_i is the outer factor loading, and $Var(\epsilon_i) = 1 - \lambda_i$ is the measurement error or the error variance associated with the individual indicator variable(s) for that given factor (see: Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

4.5 Discriminant Validity

We equally tested the discriminant validity of the measures to examine the degree to which items differentiate among construct or distinct concepts. This was carried out first by looking at correlations between the measures for possible potential overlapping of constructs. Second, we examine whether items are strongly loaded on their own construct in the model. Third, we examine if the average variance shared between each construct and its measures is greater than the average variance shared between the construct and other constructs as suggested by Compeau et al, (1999). In this respect, the results of Table 3 show

that the squared correlations for each construct is less than the average variance extracted by the indicators measuring that construct. In other words, the measurement model reflects an adequate convergent validity and discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Result

Model Constructs	Rel_Belief	Exposure	Halal Awareness	Health	HalalCert
Rel-Belief	0.653				
Exposure	0.003	0.552			
HalalAwareness	0.063	0.045	0.638		
Health	0.019	0.004	0.016	0.675	
Halal_Cert	0.066	0.033	0.168	0.086	0.644

Note: Diagonal bold values represent the average variance extracted and other values represent the squared correlation of latent construct variables.

4.6 Reliability Analysis

The reliability is an indication of the consistency with which the instruments measures the concepts and helps to access the “goodness” of measure (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Therefore, reliability is a measure of how closely the various items that constitutes a scale correlate. There are many different types of reliability estimates. One of the most widely used tests is Cronbach’s Alpha employed in this study as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Reliability Tests Result

Variable	^a Number of Item	Cronbach’s Alpha
Exposure	3(4)	0.71
Health	4(4)	0.84
Religious Belief	2(4)	0.78
Role of HalCertif(logo)	3(4)	0.81
HalalAwareness	4(4)	0.79

Note: ^aFinal number of items is displayed outside and the initial number of items as in the figure 1 research model in bracket.

By looking at the results of reliability tests in Table 4, the Cronbach’s Alpha results range from 0.71 to 0.84 thus confirming the reliability of the instrument. The range of reliability test using Cronbach’s Alpha is from zero to one. The closer to one means there is high level of internal consistency among items and thus reliability of the instruments is ensured in this study (see: Table 4). Given the self-reported nature of the data, we also assessed Harman one-factor test to examine any potential common method variance bias. As contended by Podsakoff & Organ (1986), common variance bias is problematic if a single latent factor account for majority of the total explained variance. In this study, the result of the un-rotated factor analysis shows that the first factor only accounted for 23.72% of the total 76.3% variance and thus common method bias does not arise.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Profile Distribution of Respondents

This profile distribution of respondent is carried out in order to see the different variable with the percentage and number of respondent that fall under each category as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary Profile of Respondents

Variables	No. of Respondent		Percentage (%)	
Age				
-	21-25 years old		113	53.8
-	26-30 years old		39	18.6
-	31-35 years old		28	13.3
-	36 years old and above	30		14.3
Gender				
-	Male	102		48.6
-	Female		108	51.4
Education Level				
-	SPM	49		23.3
-	Diploma		55	26.2
-	Bachelor		85	40.5
-	Master		4	1.9
-	Others		17	8.1
Working Status				
-	Working		60	28.6
-	Self-employed		50	23.8
-	Students		100	47.6

By looking at the Table 5, most of the respondents were at the age 21-25 years old with 53.8%. Besides that, most of the respondents are female with 57.4%. In terms of education qualification, most of the respondents are Bachelor with 40.5%, followed by Diploma with 26.2%. Furthermore, number of the respondents with working status are 60 (28.6%), while self employed are 50 (23.8%). The rest are students with 47.6%.

5.2 Assessing Descriptive Statistics for Halal Awareness Factors or Sources

5.2.1 Exposure

On a five point Likert scale, 52.4% of respondents strongly agreed that their understanding about *halal* is based on their exposures to what they see and hear through advertisements. Also, 53.8% of respondents agreed that they can get information on *halal* foods or products easily from mass media such as television, radio, magazines and Internet. While 69% of respondents strongly agreed their family has exposed them to *halal* food, 43.8% of respondents agreed they have been exposed to *halal* foods and products through their friends.

5.2.2 Religious Belief

On five points Likert scale, most of the respondents strongly believed (82.9%) they must consume only *halal* edible food or product items. In addition, as Muslims, 71.9%, believed they must strictly forbid themselves from taking non-*halal* foods or products as ordained by Islamic religious tenet. Also 84.8% believed that eating non-*halal* foods or products is a sin for Muslims and 91.4% believed eating *halal* foods or using *halal* products is an obedient to Islamic injunctions.

5.2.3 Health Reasons

The finding shows that 34.3% of the respondents strongly agreed they can prevent any disease and remain hygienically healthy by consuming *halal* foods or products. In addition, 40% of the respondents

strongly agreed they must eat *halal* food to have better diet. Besides, most of the respondents (44.8%) strongly agreed that *halal* food is healthy food and that healthy food is a symbol of cleanliness, safe and high quality.

5.2.4 Role played by Halal Certification

In this study it was found that respondents strongly agreed that for them role of *halal* certification itself is more important than other information about the foods or products with 41.4% strongly agreed. 46.2% of the respondents strongly agree that they are attracted to buy foods or products by looking at the *halal* logo certification. In addition, 48.6% agreed that they will only consume products or food items with genuine *halal* logo and label. Above all, some of the respondents (40.5%) agreed they know how exactly the *halal* logo looks like.

It is not surprising why the average mean level about *halal* consumption is very high among the Muslims in Shah Alam as reflected on Table 6, where the mean value $M = 3.7$ with standard deviation of 0.74 approximately.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Level of Awareness on *Halal* Consumption

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am highly aware of <i>halal</i> food	210	1	5	4.29	.735
I believe I have enough knowledge about <i>halal</i> food	210	1	5	3.58	.828
I always concern with <i>halal</i> issues	210	1	5	3.60	.984
By consumer right, I always take action when there is something wrong with food I purchase	210	1	5	3.25	1.118
MEAN_AWR	210	1.00	5.00	3.68	.737
Valid N (listwise)	210				

6. Hypotheses Testing

In this section, the researchers addressed the path analysis to ascertain the hypotheses put forward in the study. As the results depicted in the Figure 2, the R^2 value of 0.354 indicates that 35.4% of the variance in Muslims' level of awareness towards *halal* foods and products can be explained by religious belief; role of *halal* certification (through logo and labeling); exposures to *halal* information and health reasons of the respondents.

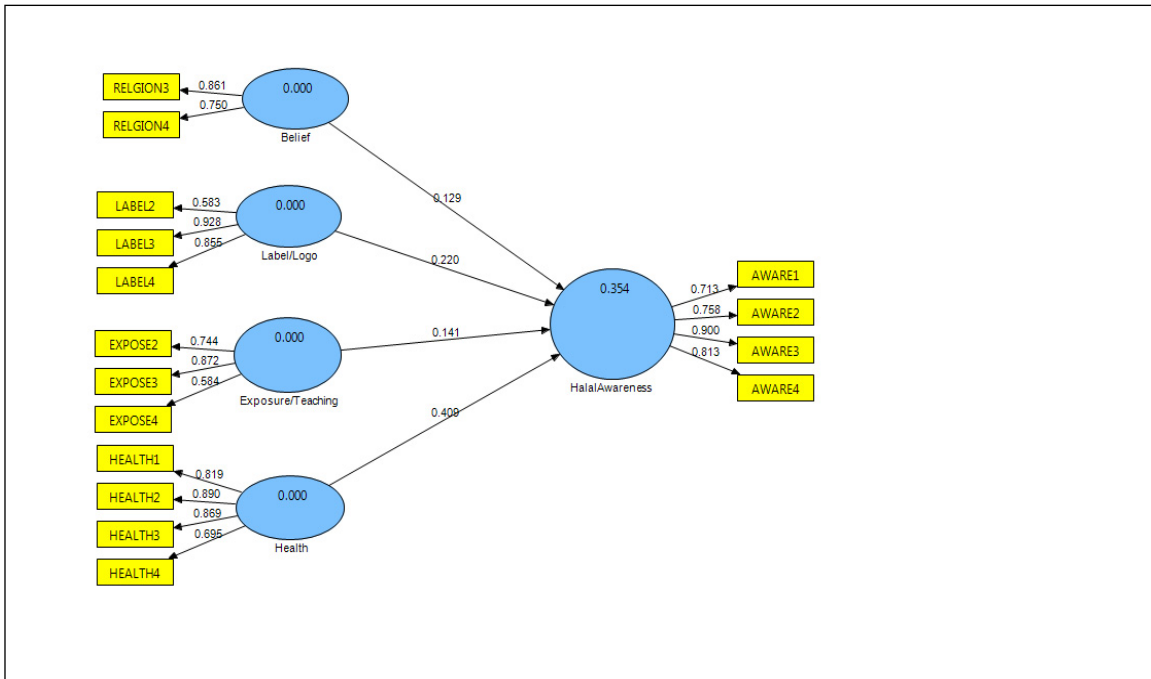


Figure 2: Results of the path analysis for final research model

Table 7: Summary of Path Coefficients and Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Coefficient	t-value	Remarks
H1	Exposure → H/awareness	0.141	2.281**	supported
H2	Rel/-belief → H/awareness	0.129	1.837**	supported
H3	Health-reasons → H/awareness	0.429	5.466**	supported
H4	H/Certif (Logo) → H/ awareness	0.220	4.028**	supported

** p<0.01

In addition, the results in Figure 2 also show that religious belief and role of *halal* logo certification are positively related to *halal* awareness among the Muslim respondents with beta values $\beta = 0.129$, $p < 0.01$ and 0.220 , $p < 0.01$ respectively. The same goes to exposure and health with β values of 0.141 , $p < 0.01$ and 0.409 , $p < 0.01$ respectively. The t-value of the path coefficients are generated to test the significant contribution of each path following the bootstrapping approach to validate the hypotheses put forward in the study (see: Chin, 1998). The results show that all hypotheses in this research are supported with t-values ranging from 1.837 to 5.466 at an alpha-value less than 0.01 respectively (see: Table 7). It is paramount to examine the predictive capacity of the R^2 of the research model of the study (endogenous latent variable). According to Chin (1998), R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33 and 0.19 for endogenous latent variable are described as substantial, moderate and weak respectively. In this study, the R^2 value of endogenous latent variable (i.e., *halal* awareness) explained by the four predictive constructs is 35.4%, (see Figure 2) which is above moderate. Hence, it shows that the four constructs in this study which are exposure, religious belief, health related reasons and role played by *halal* certification (represented by *halal* logo or label) are genuine predictors of Muslims' awareness about *halal* foods and products for their consumptions.

7. Discussion On Findings, Issues and Implications For Policy-Makers

7.1 Discussion on Findings

Based on the finding, it can be seen that most of the respondents in Shah Alam are highly aware toward *halal* consumption. People become conscious to their life as a reaction to their way of living as a Muslim with little knowledge on the concept of *halal*. In addition, the findings of the study also show that the four constructs in this study's model which are exposure, religious belief, health related reasons and role played by *halal* certification (represented by *halal* logo or label) are genuine predictors of Muslims' awareness about *halal* foods and products for consumption. Based on the findings, it can be seen that there is positive relationship between all these identified factors and the level of awareness about *halal* foods or products among Muslim in Shah Alam. For example, educational exposure and the level of awareness on *halal* have positive relationship to each other where ($\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.01$). It aligns with Patnoad (2005), with emphasis on how media can depict a 'picture' of food, drink and product for people awareness with the aim of increasing their exposures. In Malaysia, *halal* food and drink or products are regularly discussed over the television, radio, and printed media as well as via the Internet. Religious belief also shows a positive relationship with the level of awareness on *halal* where ($\beta = 0.129$, $p < 0.01$). Besides, health reasons influence the level of respondents' awareness on *halal* food and has a positive relationship where ($\beta = 0.429$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indirectly supports the idea raised in studies by Ray Rice (1993) that much modern ill health is attribute to poor nutrition. According to Kartina (2005), people have become more cautious about what they eat as they become more concern with cleanliness and health, which is the ultimate value in *halal* consumption. The implication here is that the policy-makers have to recognize that nowadays; *halal* is no longer a mere religious issue but a global symbol for quality assurance and lifestyle as well. Thus, attention of policy-makers should be paid to health related components of what people of a country are consuming by reinforcing regulatory policy of *halal* compliance in foods and products for consumption. Role played by *halal* certification, which can be seen through *halal* logo also have positive influence on the level of awareness about *halal* consumption among Muslims where ($\beta = 0.220$, $p < .05$). This positive influence is supported with the study by Lindenmayer (2001) that one aspect of labeling is premised on the principle that the consumer has a right to know what he or she is purchasing and subsequently using or consuming it. With the information that *halal* logo or label provides, Muslims may be better informed and aware about the foods or products that they are thinking of buying or consuming. The implication here is that reinforcing the policy of *halal* certification which can be seen through *halal* logo will also protect the consumers from false, misleading or deceptive practices (Lindenmayer, 2001). Nowadays, Muslims are making their presence felt socially and politically and are requesting *halal* labeled food products (Riaz & Chaudry, 2004). However, there are some potential issues associated with *halal* foods and products that worth discussion to provide inputs for policy redirection on *halal* foods or products in Malaysia. These issues are addressed in the next section.

7.2 Potential Issues Identified for Policy Redirections and Reconsiderations

In Muslim countries and even more in countries with Muslim minorities, Muslims are attentive to the permissive and prohibitive ingredients of their foods especially since food chains are becoming longer and more complex (Bergeaud-Blackler, 2005), which may fuel uncertainty relating to process characteristics and credence attributes unless these are prepared under and maintained in strict compliance with the laws and customs of the Islamic religion to the end consumer. Thus, the unification of the concept of *halal* and *tayyib* is very vital for Muslims in choosing quality foods and products to consume (Sazelin & Ridzwan, 2011). For Muslims, it is also a significant resource because the fact that it deals with what they eat or drink or use that lead to its religious compliance and they cannot be substituted by

other alternative processes. John Funston (2006) points out that since the 1980s Muslims in Malaysia have become more concerned about whether their food fully meets *halal* requirements; being free of alcohol and pork is no longer considered sufficient. The presence of the word *tayyib* (means good and pure) where the quality or estimated value of the lawfulness or the unlawfulness (*halal* or *haram*) must be taken into account in the process of production, manners and ways of consumption and its' effect (Anas et al., 2010). However, it remains unclear whether the process of foods and products really take this element into consideration or not. In Islamic Jurisprudence, harmfulness and defectiveness that are caused by the matter itself is defined as something that are prohibited by *syari'at* because it contain certain harm or defect that cannot be removed (Zaydan, 1997). The fact is that the emergence of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) that obscures the difference between plants and animals can potentially be perplexing especially to Muslims. This is because such products could have been mixed with non-*halal*-derived genes, for example, certain soybeans had been spliced with genes from a pig to create a resilient and bountiful harvest. Zaydan (1997) further cautioned that in the fundamental of Islamic Jurisprudence, something that is essentially permissible from the Islamic law may become *haram* due to external factors. In short, whatever food consumed must meet the criteria of *halalan tayyiban* (lawful and good quality) which encompass the holistic concept of quality including hygiene and sanitary, safety, wholesome and the permissible by God (Sazelin & Ridzwan, 2011). Whereas the determination of criteria for *halal* or *tayyib* at the individual level is reduced, the shared responsibility are perceived as obligatory to many (*fardhu kifayah*) since Muslim consumers lack information on the supply chain and cannot be reassured that no cross-contamination has occurred with non-*halal* ingredients. From policy perspective, it can be argued that the realization of a major part of the *halallan* and *tayyiba* is also related to the experts and authorities where the recognition of the concept is based on a set of collective – in this particular case, religiously inspired – principles to which all parties should adhere. Nonetheless, we argue that what constitutes the Islamic worldview on *halallan* and *tayyiba* and what is practiced by Muslims and non-Muslims or Western communities offer some overlap, which needs to be carefully understood by policy makers and Shariah bodies, failing of which '*halal concept*' will become more of enigmatic subject only.

With regards to Islamic branding and issue of *halal* certification manifested by *halal* logo or labeling of foods or products, it is clearly reflected in some studies that not all local companies in the food industry place the "Islamic" feature on their packaging and labeling of the products, perhaps owing to the multicultural nature of Malaysia (Syed & Nazura, 2011). Until now, there seems to be no clear understanding of what term Islamic Branding (IB) means (Copinath, 2007). Within Muslim countries nowadays, owing to the concept of avoiding of doubt, in cases where products are viewed as being foreign for Muslim buyers, or potentially contentious, it may be more crucial to brand *halal* as it presents itself as a potential deal breaker, if absent (Wilson & Liu, 2010). In fact as Wilson & Liu (2010, p. 116) put it: "unnecessarily restrict *halal* into being an ingredient brand, or at best an extension; fail to accurately represent or serve distinct, commercially viable and apparent homogenous Muslim sub-segments. According to them, in the face of increased deterritorialisation, denationalization and migration, these deficiencies will increase. Miss opportunities to create new brands and product innovations – rather than mere adaptations or copy-cats. Subsequently requires Muslim consumers adapt, rather than the product or service...". Although by branding a company could make use of the branding techniques developed by Western experts, it has to take into consideration the spiritual needs of the target Muslim consumers in order to reduce *halal* quality uncertainty. Mere use of *halal* logo or label will not rebrand a product or food for Muslim consumption. Mere label and *halal* certification is an attempt of leaving the matter of *syubhah* in the sale and purchase transactions, aiding the transactions which involve *riba*, gambling, *gharar*, falsehood or fraud in Islamic states. This issue of Islamic rebranding of many companies through *halal* certification logo must be addressed by policy-makers and Shariah bodies in Muslim countries. The JAKIM approach with *halal* certification follows the Islamic branding, and could be the vehicle for guaranteeing positive Islamic branding. However, some principles are still debated and

there is no worldwide authority on *halal*; neither is there a consistent *halal* trademark, hence quality reassurance based on the Islamic branding seems not suffice in Malaysia yet and consumers seek additional reassurance through effective mechanisms. Hence, the lack of a scheme and authority for systematic monitoring and controlling of the *halal* control points throughout the marketing chain, together with the lack of a trustworthy *halal* quality signal or label (Riaz, 1996), drive consumers to seek additional reassurance through civic quality coordination. Perhaps one may argue that the major challenge for the implementation of a successful Islamic branding lies in overcoming the existing problem of standards and holistic principles as well as the establishment of independent control mechanisms that signal *halal* quality through a trustworthy label.

Another and strongly related critical issue is who should monitor, control, and certify *halal* quality. In other words, the issue of what constitutes *halal* in the industry; the steps and procedures for quality assessment and monitoring is of paramount consideration for policy redirection. Previous research shows that someone can strictly follow the dietary rules and eat *halal* meat without following other religious prescriptions (Bonne & Verbeke, 2006). For example, in Malaysia, as there are more than 20 different ministries and agencies that continue to have input in *halal* regulation (Syed & Nazura, 2011), governance of *halal* is unsystematic. Hence, today's trust in *halal* reassurance is mainly based on a well thought personal conviction, much more than on institutional confidence. Consumers are more concerned with the *halal* logo (Nuradli et al., 2007) and some of the Muslim consumers trust *halal* logo more than those carrying ISO or similar certification (Shahidan & Md Nor, 2006). However, it remains unclear whether all Islamic requirements, from breeding to retailing, are inspected and included in the certification process. Since several principles of *halal* have not been formalized yet, one would be rightly correct to say that they are obviously not controlled in many food items and products especially those imported from outside. In Malaysia, a government agency (JAKIM) claims to be working on the supervision of the *halal* chain, especially in adhering to *halal* standards on acquiring ingredients before a company can be given certification. However, one of the main problems faced by *halal* certification is the lack of proper policing and monitoring, which makes it very difficult to prove if a food-producing company is following *halal* requirements, especially when the production takes place overseas. To substantiate this issue Syed Ali Tawfik Al-Attas (2006) - the Director-General of Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) - has lamented by saying "It's only when we send representatives to those countries that all of a sudden, everything is in place. But as soon as the representatives leave, it's back to business as usual. The question is who does the daily monitoring?" Thus, monitoring is a potential issue in *halal* certification especially after the issuance of the certificate, where many companies are no longer worry to comply with *halal* requirements as stated in the certification. Clearly, it is obvious that certification and quality reassurance alone will not provide a satisfactory solution to determine the consumer's choice of foods and products.

Regarding the issues related to quality, safety and hygienic, generic *halal* convention covering the aspect of the slaughter, storage, display, and preparation as well as the hygiene and/or sanitation are under the JAKIM guidelines (see Shafie & Osman, 2002). However, not all of these guidelines are observed. For instance, clear principles have yet to be formalized and are thus not controlled. There are some allegations that a company is not adhering to *halal* procedures despite being certified *halal*; this is tantamount to misleading the community. In addition, quality assurance scheme such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) is yet to be efficient and successful due to the fact that all potential hazards in the chain are yet to be identified and scientific information for systematic assessments are yet to be provided (Lund, 2002). Although, the complex *halal* logistics activities is the process of managing the procurement, movement, storage and handling materials, parts, livestock and semi-finished inventory, both food and non-food, through the organization and the supply chain in compliance with the general principles of Shariah (Islamic) law. However, pertaining to this matter, actors such as breeders,

slaughterhouses, certifying agencies, retailers, consumers, and religious representatives are in most cases have different stakes in and viewpoints on *halal* production and processing, which jeopardize the economic potential of the *halal* market. Hence, the motivations of the different actors within the chain, technical constraints, economic necessities or cultural choices are crucial issues in this discussion for policy-makers to be readdressed. We argue that one fundamental problem that arises in the *halal* chain is reaching a guarantee on the quality, safety and hygienic considerations throughout the chain. Technical constraints and issues of debate relate mainly to appropriate benchmark for quality, safety and hygienic assurance (if any are to be used) and relate to the possible design and implementation of effective programs that aim to promote compliance of best practice for consumers.

8. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the level of awareness and concern about *halal* food and product consumptions among Muslims is gaining impetus in Shah Alam. As obviously shown by the findings of the study, the growing demands for *halal* consumptions is aided by a number of potential factors or sources identified, which include: their religious belief, exposures, role played by *halal* certification via *halal* logo/label and health related reasons. The results of paper have been established by modeling between these factors and level of awareness on *halal*. Given the fact that Malaysia consists of different races with multi-religion that lead to different beliefs, custom and tradition, these differences may influence their way of living especially in eating habit, perception and attitude toward foods and product items for consumption. The paper also highlights some potential issues for future direction of food and product policies in Malaysian. Some of the potential issues include lack of global standard for *halal* logo or label, and monitoring the processing stages after certification has been issued to a company. As identified in the paper the motivations of the different actors within the *halal* chain, technical constraints, economic necessities or cultural choices are crucial issues in this paper for policy-makers to be readdressed. In addition, pertaining to this matter, the paper draws the attention of the policy-makers to a point that actors such as breeders, slaughterhouses, certifying agencies, retailers, consumers, and religious representatives are in most cases have different stakes in and viewpoints on *halal* production and processing, which may jeopardize the economic potential of the *halal* market in the future. Hence, some policy actions are needed to be established as governance of *halal* is unsystematic by the government in Malaysia. Finally, although the legislation made by the government would eliminate the problem of fake *halal* certificates from unreliable sources yet policy mechanisms are needed to secure the confidence of Muslim in certifying products with several legislation in place for the protection of consumers in terms of *halal* foods and products.

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