

Exploring Consumer Attitudes Towards Halal Products

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Abstract

Halal products are goods and services those Muslims are allowed to consume according to the Quran. Based on the literature, 'halal' concept has been spreading in different sectors such as tourism, food, entertainment and so on. In this environment, people try to consume in terms of their religious beliefs. In terms of Islamic perspective, the purpose of this study is to look at the tendency of local Muslim people in Kastamonu to halal products and determine the current position of them. The qualitative study findings showed: Local people in Kastamonu will continue to buy halal certified products, halal products are good for health and balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products need to be preserved.

Keywords: Halal Products, Tendency of Consumers, Islam.

Introduction

Consuming is an indispensable need for all people around the world. Dressing, using personal care products, cleaning equipment, having trips, staying in different accommodation establishments and food and drink are the main and common products and services. Many people try to spend effort in order to consume products and services healthy. These points are also mentioned in religions books. Qur'an is one of them. According to Qur'an, people have to consume everything in halal way.

There are many factors that affect consumers' purchasing decisions. One of them is religious belief which is signified as a cultural factor. In the studies related to marketing, it is justified that religion, one of the key cultural elements, has a strong impact on consumer behavior and buying conduct (Essoo and Dibb, 2004: 684; Soesilowati, 2011: 153). Consumers may not buy products or services because they are not appropriate in terms of their religious belief while consumers sometimes buy in accordance with their religious belief. At this point, 'halal product' concept engages as an effective component in terms of product preferences of consumers considering their religious belief (Kurtoglu and Cicek, 2013). Halal product is defined as an output which does not contain any forbidden element according to Islamic rules; prepared, processed, carried and stored in an area which is purified from those components; and which does not any connection directly with food that is prepared by not taking into account any rules (Ambali and Bakar, 2014: 5).

According to the book, 'The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam', written by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who is a worldwide respected person and the chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, the locution "Halal" is described as follows: "That is consumable, Allah has permitted to consume that and there is not a restriction for the consumption of that. (Al-Qaradawi, 2013: 25). According to Islam, "Halal" means permitted; "Haram" means unpermitted for Muslims (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008). In Islam, food and beverage are important elements of halal concept (Nasir and Pereira, 2008; Baran and Batman, 2015). Hence, Halal has a meaning which is 'allowable' as to Islamic teaching (Sharia law). Additionally, halal can be also evaluated as one of five movements that categorizes the morality of human action in Islam, others being Fard (mandatory), Mustahabb (proposed), Makruh (disliked), and Haram (forbidden) (Faruki, 1966). In respect to the Islamic view, the word "halal" in tourism

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is evaluated as above described points to any implementation or operation in tourism which is 'allowable' according to Islamic teaching (Battour and Ismail, 2016).

For halal product, there are also some crucial points except Islamic rules. Many different authorities can certify the product as halal. A lot of countries from different regions of the world, as well as primary food producers and exporters, attempt to capitalize upon the increasing potential of the world-embracing market for halal products and services. These countries do not only concentrate on the production and supply of halal products and services, but also halal certification. For instance, Turkey, Pakistan, Brunei and Bangladesh have been working on the improvement of halal certification procedures and brokers. Halal certification is not valid only for Muslim countries, but also countries like Thailand and Singapore have some developments and implementations on halal certification. Furthermore, some Muslim foundations, for example, IFANCA (Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America), are involved in halal certification, too (World Halal Forum, 2011). (Halal Certification.pdf). When it is looked at Turkey, GIMDES (Association for the Inspection and Certification of Food and Supplies) and TSE (Turkish Standardization Institute) play key roles in terms of halal certification.

The majority of local Muslim people in Kastamonu have a conservative view. Thus, the city might be considered as suitable to explore consumer attitudes towards halal products in this region. Besides, the concept "halal" and halal product have been defined by referring to different sources and literature has been reviewed. Some of the significant researches related to this topic have been explained. The researchers aimed to determine the tendency of consumers in Kastamonu to halal products and whether local people are interested to consume those products. This research will contribute to raise the awareness of local people against the halal products.

Literature Review

'Halal product' term contains any kind of goods or services that people can consume. Tourism, food, drink, cosmetics, cleaning materials can be shown as examples. With the rising number of Muslim vacationists, there will be a bigger demand for Halal/Muslim friendly products and services (Çetin and Dinçer, 2016; Arpacı and Batman, 2015). According to the study of Carboni et al. (2017) for Tunisia, it is significantly seen that Muslim consumers from the tourism sector and the academic field have certain demands. In this case, attracting Muslim tourists is regarded a decent business chance in an increasing number of Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Despite Tunisia is a Muslim-majority country, there is not any particular effort in order to attract more tourists and demand on halal products. This research shows that tourism operators are persistently more familiar with the deliberated goods in worldwide for Muslim consumers. The specified demands of this conservative group have been identified and this attitude for Muslim-oriented tourism has made a difference.

Another study shows that Bangladesh has great opportunities to enhance Islamic tourism, as this country has many natural beauties, Islamic heritage, cultural and archeological heritage, historic heritage which has potential tourism destinations. In this case, different establishments including Organization of Islamic Conference play a key role. The authors have approached to the issues on developing Islamic tourism in Bangladesh. Additionally, they have presented some measures to improve new tourism tendencies on accelerating economic development in Bangladesh (Fahim and Dooty, 2014).

Japan, as a country, started to improve its halal tourism business because of the demand from the Muslim market. Goods and services for Muslims began to spread remarkably. People and foundations are conscious of the implications of the huge compliance against Halal. That is why halal tourism is going to be one of the niche products for the tourism sector in Japan (Gakkai, 2016).

According to Samori et al. (2014), the businesses are taking consumers' tendency into account and halal food standard has been developing. This halal food standard in Malaysia changes all regulations related to food and beverages into a standard to be adhered to by producers and marketers. This standard gives a decent advantage to Malaysia in order to promote itself in universal area. Malaysian Government, as the leader of halal sector, has presented important ideas and plans to enhance and encourage participants in this sector. This standard gives quality guarantee in food and drinks for general users while the standard reveals the solutions for their doubt on food purchasing for the specific Muslim consumers. Thus both pure science and humanities concentrate on halal study in academic field, because both sciences have significant contributions on developing the halal industry (Samori et al., 2014).

Consumers' consideration on halal product has been examined and studied in Malaysia and Brunei by Dali et al. (2009). Comparing with non-halal certified products, the prices of these halal certificated goods have been investigated in order to understand whether the consumers find the goods expensive. At the end of research, consumers' evaluations on halal products have been gathered under 11 factors which are promotion, place, attractiveness and quality, halal certification, price, sample product, market demand, small and medium scaled producers, halal certification for Muslim companies, the differences between halal certified and non-halal certified products and clear work. In addition to that, it is seen that promotion, place, price, market demand, small and medium scaled producers and clear work factors play key role in terms of perceiving halal certified products as they are more expensive than non-halal certified products (Kurtoğlu and Cicek, 2013).

The current developments show that movements by Muslims to non-Muslim countries have been increasing rapidly. Thus, those countries needed to meet Muslims' needs based on ways of life and they began to enhance their capacities in order to cater according to their preferences. In a paper done by Halkias et al. (2014), it finds out the case of Italy, where there is a big action to present halal goods and even accommodation and facilities that cover the main tenets of Muslim belief.

A different research aimed to investigate the applicability of "Theory of Planned Behavior" so as to measure the intention of halal cosmetic products preferences of Malaysian consumers. In this study, it was found that subjective norms are positively associated with the intention and attitude of preferring halal cosmetic goods. Furthermore, it has been figured out that attitude has had a small influence on intention of preferring halal cosmetic products (Aziz et al, 2010). Wan-Hassan and Awang (2009) looked into administrative and promotional works on halal food of the restaurants operated in New Zeland. Consequently, the results demonstrated that the majority of restaurants mentioned that Muslim tourist market is not important for them. Furthermore, those restaurants are unwilling to promote halal products and those food and beverage businesses do not want to put any sign in this direction just out of the places.

Hacıoğlu et al. (2015) examined domestic tourists' attitudes towards halal thermal hotels in Afyon. The results show that domestic tourists who prefer halal thermal hotels have positive attitude. According to the research, those kind of tourists attach importance to food and beverage with priority. Most of resorts use pork in food that is why Muslim tourists prefer those enterprises which offer halal certified products (Hacıoğlu et al., 2015).

Research Methodology

The researchers began to study this topic by asking "How is the tendency of people in Kastamonu to halal products?"

The purpose of this study is to look at the tendency of local people in Kastamonu to halal products and determine the current position of them. A purpose of a study is a kind of findings that will able to be found by the end of a research (Kucuk, 2014: 105). This study is important on behalf of seeing the tendency in Kastamonu and stepping forward at that topic.

Population and sample

Local people live in Kastamonu formed the population of study. In this population, the authors have decided to the sample. Convenience sampling, one of the non-probability sampling methods, has been implemented in the research. In convenience sampling method, which is also known accidental or appropriate sampling, researcher tries to collect data from the easiest and reachable subjects up to reaching the large sample size needed for the study (Gurbuz and Sahin, 2015).

Measurement tool

The data has been collected by questionnaire technique which is one of quantitative data collection methods. When the authors prepared the scale, they have benefited from a research named, "A study on the Preferences of Consumers of Halal-Certified Products: A Case Study of Istanbul" by Ozdemir et al. (2014). It is understood from the reliability test, this measuring tool is reliable to use it.

Data collection

The authors have handed out 340 questionnaires by drop-collect method to the people who live in apartments in Kastamonu city center. 1 week later, the surveys have been collected by the authors, but 15 of them were invalid. Therefore 325 surveys have been taken into account for this study.

Research Findings

The questionnaire has been implemented to 325 respondents by drop and collect technique. The majority of these respondents "325 participants" are cooks, farmers, retired, waiters, state officers, students and drivers.

According to the results, socio-demographic features and tendency of consumers to halal products are seen in the following table.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

Variants	Distribution	n	%
Gender	Male	222	68,3
	Female	103	31,7
	Total	325	100,0
Age	18-24	150	46,2
	25-39	98	30,2
	40-49	42	12,9
	50-64	31	9,5
	65+	3	0,9
	Missing	1	0,3
	Total	325	100,0
Marital Status	Single	189	58,2
	Married	132	40,6
	Missing	4	1,2
	Total	325	100,0

Table continued on the next page

Education Degree	Uneducated	4	1,2
	Literate	12	3,7
	Primary education	94	28,9
	High school	80	24,6
	Associate degree	33	10,2
	Undergraduate	68	20,9
	Master	24	7,4
	Doctorate	3	0,9
	Other	4	1,2
	Missing	3	0,9
Total	325	100,0	
Monthly Income (TL: Turkish Liras)	Less than 1000 TL	109	33,5
	1001-2000 TL	98	30,2
	2001-3000 TL	66	20,3
	3001-4000 TL	37	11,4
	4001 and over	14	4,3
	Missing	1	0,3
	Total	325	100,0

It is clear from the above table that 325 respondents joined to this survey and males were the majority with the number of 222 (68,3%), while female respondents were 103 (31,7%). When it is looked at the ages in Table 1; 18-24 age group has constituted the biggest part of respondents with 150 (46,2%) while only 3 (0,9%) people were 65 or over years old with the minimum number. Table 1 also shows that 189 (58,2%) of respondents were single while 132 (40,6%) of them were married. In the education part of research, there are many different degrees. For example, 94 (28,9%) respondents are 'primary education' graduates while 3 (0,9%) respondents have 'doctorate' degree. Different monthly incomes of respondents can be seen in Table 1 above, too. The participants who have 'less than 1000 TL' monthly income is dramatically high with the number of 109 (33,5%). The participants have '4001 and over' monthly income occur the minority with the number of 14 (4,3%).

Table 2: Using Halal Certified Product

No	Halal Certified Product Used	Frequency	Percent
1	Personal care products	16	4,9
2	Food	167	51,4
3	Cleaning equipment	16	4,9
4	Personal care products and food	35	10,8
5	Personal care products and cleaning equipment	3	0,9
6	Food and cleaning equipment	25	7,7
7	Personal care products, food and cleaning equipment	59	18,2
	Missing	4	1,2
	Total	325	100,0

It has been also asked whether the respondents use the halal certified products. The question was "What kind of products group that have halal certification do you use? (You can mark more than one option). According to the answers, 167 (51,4%) of total respondents have showed that they consume 'halal food'. 16 (4,9%) respondents mentioned that they use halal certified 'personal care products' while the same number had been formed for 'cleaning equipment with the number of 16 (4,9%). 59 (18,2%) people agreed that they use halal certified 'personal care

products, food and cleaning equipment' while only 3 (0,9%) respondents emphasized that they use halal certified 'personal care products and cleaning equipment'. The answers of 4 (1,2%) respondents were invalid. They have been mentioned in Table 2 as missing answers.

Table 3: Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0,923	0,925	19

'Tendency of Consumers to Halal Products'' part of the survey which is formed by 19 expressions has been tested in order to see whether it is reliable and it seemed that the scale is reliable with the number of 0,923.

Table 4: Tendency of Consumers to Halal Products

No	Tendency of Consumers to Halal Products	Numbers of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Consuming halal certified products is beneficial for health.	324	4,12	1,199
2	I am going to continue to buy halal certified products.	324	4,13	1,121
3	Halal certified products always satisfy consumers' expectations.	322	3,67	1,261
4	Advertisements of halal certified products lead me to buy them.	319	3,60	1,307
5	If the product I will buy has halal certified, it becomes one of the reasons affects my purchase choice.	324	3,91	1,172
6	Balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products needs to be preserved.	323	4,09	1,071
7	Even halal certified products cannot be found in the city that I live in; I buy them by online shopping.	319	3,26	1,259
8	I suggest to my friends and surroundings the halal certified products that I buy, too.	323	3,96	1,125
9	I want to pay more to the halal certified products.	320	3,43	1,328
10	I want to take a long haul in order to buy halal certified products.	321	3,44	1,293
11	Buying halal certified products gives warm-and-fuzzy to me.	321	3,94	1,156
12	Halal certified products are more proper for palatal delight.	319	3,92	1,061
13	I also care to packaging while I buy halal certified products.	322	3,91	1,155
14	The brand of halal products is important.	324	3,99	1,148

Table continued on the next page

15	I prefer to buy halal certified products after I try the sample one.	314	3,87	1,183
16	It is difficult to find halal certified products.	321	3,36	1,315
17	I take care to use the halal certified cleaning equipment.	323	3,50	1,291
18	It is important for me to buy halal certified products.	321	4,08	1,020
19	I think, nutritive value of halal certified products are higher than others.	323	3,80	1,148

(1: Totally Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Totally Agree)

In the last part of survey, tendency of consumers in Kastamonu to halal products has been tried to determine by 19 expressions. Those statements have measured how far local people in Kastamonu are enthusiastic to consume halal certified products based on a five point Likert scale. Although the number of respondents answered this questions change, it can be still said that almost all of respondents expressed their ideas to the statements. The number of respondents replied to the expressions can be seen in Table 4.

As can be seen from Table 4; according to answers by given 324 respondents, they emphasized that they will continue to buy halal certified products with highest average which is 4,13 with 1,121 standard deviation. Following this, 324 respondents believe that halal certified products are good for health with 4,12 with 1,199 standard deviation Apart from those, 'Balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products needs to be preserved' and 'It is important for me to buy halal certified products' expressions also have high mean average with 4,09 and 1,071 standard deviation (323 respondents), 4,08 and 1,020 standard deviation (321 respondents).

When it is looked at the minimum averages of expressions; according to the opinions given by 319 respondents, people are not willing to buy halal certified products by online shopping if they do not find in the city they live in. The mean of this expression was 3,26 with 1,259 standard deviation which is between 'Neutral' and 'Agree'. Additionally, 321 respondents have given ideas to 'It is difficult to find halal certified products' with the average of 3,36 and 1,315 standard deviation.

There can be also seen that there are some differences among standard deviations of expressions. The highest standard deviations are 1,328 (I am willing to pay more to the halal certified products), 1,315 (It is difficult to find halal certified products) and 1,307 (Advertisements of halal certified products lead me to buy them) which means that significant differences can be seen between answers for each expression given by respondents. On the other hand, the lowest standard deviations are 1,020 (It is important for me to buy halal certified products), 1,061 (Halal certified products are more proper for palatal delight) and 1,071 (Balance of affordable price-good quality about halal certified products needs to be preserved) which means that minor alterations can be found among responses given by participants.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The world presents more and more options and opportunities to the people. People can easily reach to many things in different sectors. At this point, humanity may forget health condition. Halal products are the good examples of health. Every detail about human health had been thought in Qur'an. As it is known, halal term comes from the book.

In this study, majority of the respondents have mentioned that they want to consume halal products. For the sake of example, most of respondents emphasized that they will continue to buy halal products and they think that halal products are good for health. Besides, respondents agreed that there should be a balance between affordable price and good quality. When the issue

is addressed in this way, it can be said that local Muslim people in Kastamonu do not avoid from the necessary cost in order to consume halal products.

This research should be considered within the constraints like all other researches. The scale has been implemented only to the residents in apartments. People who stay in other kind of houses remain out of the research. In addition, due to economic and time constraints, the research was limited to 340 respondents. It is suggested that researchers who are interested in halal products can study similar topics. Same scale might be implemented in another cities and those results can be compared in order to see the differences between communities. Apart from those, the scale also can be developed and it can only focus on halal cosmetics, halal transportation or halal travel agency etc. So every category can be better understood.

As a new trend, halal products may include lots of things such as food, hotel, cleaning equipment, personal care products etc. For determining the consumers' tendency, the authors of this research have done the study by implementing questionnaire in Kastamonu. According to the results, as it had been already mentioned in research findings part, there are some important points regarding the tendency of consumers. For instance, halal certified products have been mentioned as a benefit for health with a high average of agreement. Willingness of continuing to buy halal certified products also has been emphasized by respondents. Furthermore, most of the respondents agreed that buying halal certified products is important for them.

According to expressions that participants answered in Table 4, people live in Kastamonu have a high tendency of consuming halal certified products. In the light of this information, those recommendations might be given:

- Promotions about halal products in order to raise the awareness,
- Promotional campaigns in accordance with different cultural preferences,
- Benefits of using halal products can be transmitted by brochures,
- Number of halal markets can be increased,
- Halal products' prices can be reduced to satisfy more people,
- Quality attributes required by Islamic standards for halal products should be consistent with the needs and preferences of consumers,
- Different strategies for different consumer demands,
- Halal products actions for each type of halal products should be determined by component authorities,
- Local governments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions etc. should involve to the subject and create a common structure.

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