

The Attitude and Behavioural Intentions of Muslim Fast Food Customers in a Southern African Market Environment

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Abstract

Through the lens of social exchange theory and the theory of reasoned action, this study examines the influence of halal marketing and halal certification on the attitude of Muslim fast-food customers. The study further explores the influence of attitude on the behavioural intentions of these consumers in an emerging African market environment. Data was collected from 306 Muslim fast-food customers using self-administered questionnaires. The study found that the attitude of Muslim fast-food consumers is directly influenced by halal marketing and halal certification, which ultimately influences their behavioural

intentions in a positive manner. By applying a dual theory approach, the influence of attitude and its precursors on future behavioural intention in a fast-food industry environment is uncovered.

Keywords – *Halal Marketing, Halal Certification, Attitude, Behavioural Intention*

Introduction

Islam is recognised as a religion with food inhibitions that governs the product buying behaviour of Muslim consumers through clearly prescribed rules (Khalek, 2014). These rules have a direct influence on consumers' attitude, and ultimately their future behavioural intentions (Ashraf, 2019). The term —halal has been borrowed from the Arabic language and its meaning translates to being legal or allowed. All food products that are perceived as being edible or fit to drink are considered halal, except if they are prohibited by the Qur'an (the Islamic holy book) or the axioms of the Prophet Mohammed (Awan et al., 2015). The global Muslim consumer market is valued at \$2.1 trillion, making it one of the most prominent market segments in the world. In addition, the halal food and beverage market has illustrated consistent growth over the past decade, with an estimated value of \$632 billion (Khan, Asad & Mehboob, 2017).

Marketers have realised that the Muslim consumer market environment is changing globally as a result of transforming purchasing habits, social lifestyles, and generational needs. Over the past decade, Muslim consumers have developed a growing interest in fast-food products (Awan, Siddiquei & Haider, 2015). This is also the case in South Africa, where the halal fast-food industry is valued at R45 billion. Numerous fast-food brands in the country, such as Anat, Roman's Pizza, KFC (South Africa), Nando's, and McDonalds, have created halal offerings in their fast-food range because Muslim consumers have developed an increased awareness of the halal nature of the fast food that they consume (Abraham, 2018). Furthermore, the Muslim population is a growing segment of the overall population in South Africa (Bashir, Bayat, Olutuase & Latiff, 2018), and there is great potential for the future growth of this market segment. As a result, knowledge of the factors that influence the attitude and thus the future behavioural intentions of Muslim consumers towards fast-food purchases becomes increasingly important.

Since the dawn of the new millennium, research on the halal food and beverage market has been conducted mainly in countries with large Muslim populations, with limited focus on southern Africa (Awan *et al.*, 2015; Khan *et al.*, 2017). Few studies have explored the fast-food industry in an emerging African market like South Africa, with a specific focus on Muslim customers and their attitude and behavioural intentions towards fast-food purchases. To address this gap, this study intended to determine the factors that influence the attitude and future behavioural intentions of South African Muslim customers towards halal fast-food purchases. The study is contextualised to the South African fast-food industry, which is highly competitive and characterised by low switching barriers. The Muslim customer segment is significant due to its 25% to 30% year-on-year market share growth potential in the fast-food industry in South Africa (Bodiat, 2017). Consequently, the authors believe that knowledge on the attitude and behavioural intention of the Muslim fast-food customer segment will enable fast-food retailer brands to develop an improved understanding of the precursors and outcome of attitude as a behavioural variable. This understanding will strengthen the ability of fast-food retailers to grow their market share of this customer segment in the future.

This study secures an academic contribution since it established the prominent role of social exchange theory (SET) in consumer behaviour research. It also confirms the influence of halal marketing and halal certification on attitude and behavioural intention. Furthermore, the direct influence of attitude on behavioural intention is validated. The study expands on the model proposed by Roberts-Lombard, Amer, Ward, Millar and Santana (2019) through a newly developed focus in a similar service setting. Therefore, this study's contribution complements previous research. From an industry perspective, this study provides value by securing possible guidance to fast-food brands on how halal certification and halal marketing can foster a positive attitude and strengthen future behavioural intention in a positive manner.

This article introduces the reader to the key focus of the study, the theories applied to secure the grounding of the study, and the formulation of the proposed hypotheses through a comprehensive literature review. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological process followed, the key findings of the study, the contributions made, and the recommendations proposed.

Conceptual Framework

Social Exchange Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action Grounding The Study

SET and the theory of reasoned action (TRA) are applied as the foundational theories in the study. Numerous researchers acknowledge SET as a social behaviour theory that is multidisciplinary in nature through its relevance to fields like business management, philosophy and psychology (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels & Hall, 2017; Emerson, 1976). SET is built on the premise that individuals' behaviour is influenced by social and cultural norms and values (Özel & Kozak, 2017). As a result, SET argues that social acceptance is a key principle that influences the attitude and behaviour of an individual when engaging in an exchange with a partner (Chinomona & Mofokeng, 2016; Mura, Lettieri, Radaelli & Spiller, 2016). Bagozzi (1975) concurs, stating that social exchange is more than just an understanding of economic exchange about cost versus benefit. Social exchange encompasses an understanding of social values and its ability to influence the outlook of individuals, ultimately guiding their behaviour in an exchange relationship. Therefore, SET favours reward of any kind, whether it is social acknowledgement or economic benefit, which influence individual attitude and thereby future behavioural intention (Chou & Hsu, 2016; Redmond, 2015).

Thornton and McGlynn (1998) argue that a key premise of the TRA is that attitude is a direct precursor to future behavioural intention. Developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the TRA argues that changes in the behaviour of individuals are a result of binary factors. The first factor encompasses an understanding of the outcome when a specific behaviour is performed or not performed, while the second factor entails knowledge that an individual might have of the approval or disapproval of society for conducting the specific behaviour (Hoogstraten, De Haan & Ter Horst, 1985). Newton, Newton and Ewing (2014) agree, arguing that social behaviour is guided by social influence. Therefore, an individual will behave in a manner that is socially acceptable to others. As such, the TRA suggests that individuals' future behavioural intentions are built on their attitudinal and normative beliefs (Davies, Waite, Pookulangara, Hawley & Xiao, 2011; Grube, Morgan & McGee, 1986). Scholars like Chen (2016) and Paul, Modi and Patel (2016) have confirmed the importance of the TRA in the social sciences field by arguing that a critical underpinning of the TRA is the intent to participate

in a specific behaviour. The TRA has strong predictability and is significant to estimate the behavioural intentions of people in domains like marketing management and consumer behaviour (Chen, 2016; Paul *et al.*, 2016; Roberts-Lombard & Petzer, 2018).

A Perspective on Previous Islamic Marketing Studies over the Past Decade

Islamic marketing studies have primarily explored Muslim countries or western markets with large Muslim communities. Limited research studies have explored Islamic marketing and its influence on consumers' attitude and their future behavioural intentions from an African and SET perspective, especially its application to the southern African context. Table 1 highlights Islamic marketing research that was done over the past decade, reflecting the limited research on the topic from an African and SET perspective.

Table 1: Prior research conducted on halal marketing and halal certification across the globe

Article title	Key premise	Theory applied	Article reference
—Islamic marketing and consumer behavior toward halal food purchase in Bangladesh: An analysis using SEMII	—The purpose of this paper is to examine consumer behavior toward halal food purchase in Bangladesh. Specifically, how do individual beliefs about trustworthiness of the halal food products affect individual intentions to purchases and actual purchasing behavior?II	Theory of planned behaviour (TPB)	Ashraf (2019:1)
—The acceptance of halal food in non-Muslim countries: Effects of religious identity, national identification, consumer ethnocentrism and consumer cosmopolitanismII	—International restaurant and fast food chains such as KFC, McDonald's and Subway currently serve halal food in some non-Muslim countries, with mixed results. The purpose of this paper is to identify the factors that most influence the product judgements of halal food amongst non-Muslim consumers in non-Muslim countries, and to assess the extent to which these judgements are related to willingness to consume halal food.II	Social Identity Theory	Wilkins, Butt, Shams and Pérez (2019:1)
—Determinants of halal purchasing intentions: Evidences from UKII	—This study aims to explore the perceptions of Arabian Muslim consumers about halal food products and to investigate their behaviour towards halal-labelled food products in UK mainstream supermarkets using the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). The role of Islamic religiosity and consumers' confidence regarding the halal logo as moderating factors is investigated.II	TPB	Elseidi (2018:1)
—Linking halal food	—The purpose of this paper is to explore the	Resource-	Ab Talib,

certification and business performance	relationship between halal food certification (HFC) and business performance. This study argues that halal food certificate implementation positively influences business performance.	based view theory	Ai Chin and Fischer (2017:1)
—Dynamics of Muslim consumers' behavior toward halal products: Exploration study using fMRI technology	—The purpose of this paper is to investigate the brain responses of Muslim consumers to halal and non-halal products using a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) technology.	TPB	Al-Kwafi, Abu Farha and Ahmed (2019:1)
—Fairtrade and halal food certification and labeling: Commercial lessons and religious limitations	—This article explores the complexities that are faced when certifying and labeling halal food. It presents for the first time a macromarketing understanding of the problems and benefits that halal food supply chains may face when attempting to standardize certification and labeling.	No theory applied	White and Samuel (2016:1)
—Shaping the halal into a brand?	—The purpose of this paper is to review current literature and practices concerning the usage and consumption of halal, within marketing and branding. Following this, the paper is to both stimulate discussions and encourage further thinking within this field.	Inductive reasoning and syllogisms as a basis for conceptual metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis	Wilson and Liu (2010:1)

From Table 1 it can be noted, that no previous extensive research on Islamic marketing has been done in Africa, especially from a SET perspective as a grounding theory. Consequently, there is a need to explore the influence of halal marketing and halal certification as potential antecedents of attitude that may influence the future behavioural intentions of Muslim customers in Africa – especially considering that Africa is an emerging Muslim customer market for different product categories, such as fast food.

Halal Marketing

Numerous marketing research scholars refer to halal marketing as an extension of traditional marketing through a focus on religious

compliance to develop value for customers (Nurhasanah & Hariyani, 2017). In this study, halal marketing relates to the communication and delivery of value to customers that is built on Islamic, ethical principles (Fadahunsi & Kargwell, 2015). In the context of this study, halal marketing was measured focusing on the importance of the halal brand, the relevance of celebrity endorsement, the familiarity of a brand name, the customer knowledge of product quality, the customer's price sensitivity towards products, and the influence of sales promotions on product purchases (Rawashdeh, 2015).

Halal Certification

Halal certification can be described as formal validation in the form of a certificate that a product is halal. These certificates are issued by accredited bodies that are approved by the Muslim Association or Muslim Council of the country in which it is based (Akbiyik & Eroğlu, 2016). Regarding this study, halal certification refers to the provision of assurance that products are halal, thereby developing trust in the product consumed (Ab Talib *et al.*, 2017). In this research, halal certification was measured by making reference to the assurance that food products are halal, the marketability of food products, and the halal logo, which develops trust in the product(s) (Rawashdeh, 2015).

Attitude

Researchers argue that attitude is a biased inclination that elucidates a positive or negative behaviour towards a product, service, individual or organisation, and encompasses a customer's fondness towards specific products (Yeo, Goh & Rezaei, 2017). Attitude is a general evaluation by an individual of whether something is good or bad (Tormala & Rucker, 2017). Therefore, in this study, attitude refers to a favourable or non-favourable evaluation of a product that leads to a desire to purchase or an intent not to purchase a product (Linh & Ha, 2016). Attitude was measured by referring desirability to purchase, an intent to purchase, or an evaluation of a product that can lead to a decision to purchase or not to purchase (Rawashdeh, 2015).

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