

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMERS' INTENTION  
TOWARDS PURCHASING HALAL FOOD IN LINXIA,  
CHINA

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the  
degree of Master of Halal Industry Management

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to identify the factors affecting Muslims in Linxia, China, in their intention to purchase halal products and their buying behaviour. The global food market is concerned with food safety and its hygiene which is considered a worldwide issue. However, the business in China, concerning halal integrity or halal food industry, is significantly less. It happens as most people are unaware of the importance and existence of the halal food industry. If the awareness is low, their attitude will be the same way as people might have less opinion about it or even zero understanding. Interestingly, although the Muslim population in China is very few as it is not a Muslim majority country, Linxia has a Muslim majority population that practices the Islamic teachings. Linxia is well-known as The Little Mecca. Apprehending their situation resided among non-Muslim environments with the higher influence from surroundings, exploring their attitude and behaviour toward the halal food industry is thought-provoking. Therefore, this study was constructed to identify the attitude and purchase intention of Muslim Consumers in Linxia toward halal food products. The theory used to identify the factors is the Theory Plan Behaviour (TPB). The data was collected from 302 Muslim participants, and then it was further analysed using the SPSS software. The result depicted that the participants' attitude is positively correlated with their purchase intention and buying behaviour of halal food products, and their purchase intention has a significant and positive impact on buying behaviour of halal food products.

## ملخص البحث

تسعى هذه الأطروحة إلى تحديد العوامل التي تؤثر على المسلمين في لينشيا، الصين، في نيتهم شراء المنتجات الحلال وفي سلوكهم الشرائية. تهتم سوق الأغذية العالمية بسلامة الأغذية ونظافتها الصحية التي تعتبر القضية العالمية. ومع ذلك، فإن الأعمال التجارية في الصين التي هي حقا بشأن سلامة الحلال أو صناعة الأغذية الحلال هو أقل من ذلك بكثير. يحدث ذلك لأن معظم الناس لا يدركون أهمية وجود صناعة الأغذية الحلال. إذا كان الوعي منخفضا، فسيكون موقفهم بنفس الطريقة التي قد يكون بها الناس أقل رأيا حول هذا الموضوع أو حتى صفر فهم. ومن المثير للاهتمام، على الرغم من أن عدد السكان المسلمين في الصين قليل جدا لأنها ليست دولة ذات أغلبية مسلمة، إلا أن لينشيا لديها أغلبية مسلمة تمارس التعاليم الإسلامية، وهي معروفة باسم مكة الصغيرة. القبض على وضعهم يقيم بين بيئة غير مسلمة مع تأثير أعلى من المناطق المحيطة بها، فإنه مثير للتفكير في استكشاف موقفهم وسلوكهم تجاه صناعة الأغذية الحلال. لذلك، شيد هذا الدراسة لتحديد موقف وشراء نية المستهلكين المسلمين في لينشيا تجاه المنتجات الغذائية الحلال. النظرية المستخدمة لتحديد العوامل هي نظرية خطة السلوك (TPB). تم جمع البيانات من 302 من المحييين المسلمين. ثم تم تحليلها باستخدام برنامج SPSS وقد أظهرت النتيجة أن موقف المستجيبين يرتبط بشكل إيجابي بنوايا الشراء وسلوك الشراء للمنتجات الغذائية الحلال وأن نية الشراء لها تأثير كبير وإيجابي على سلوك شراء المنتجات الغذائية الحلال.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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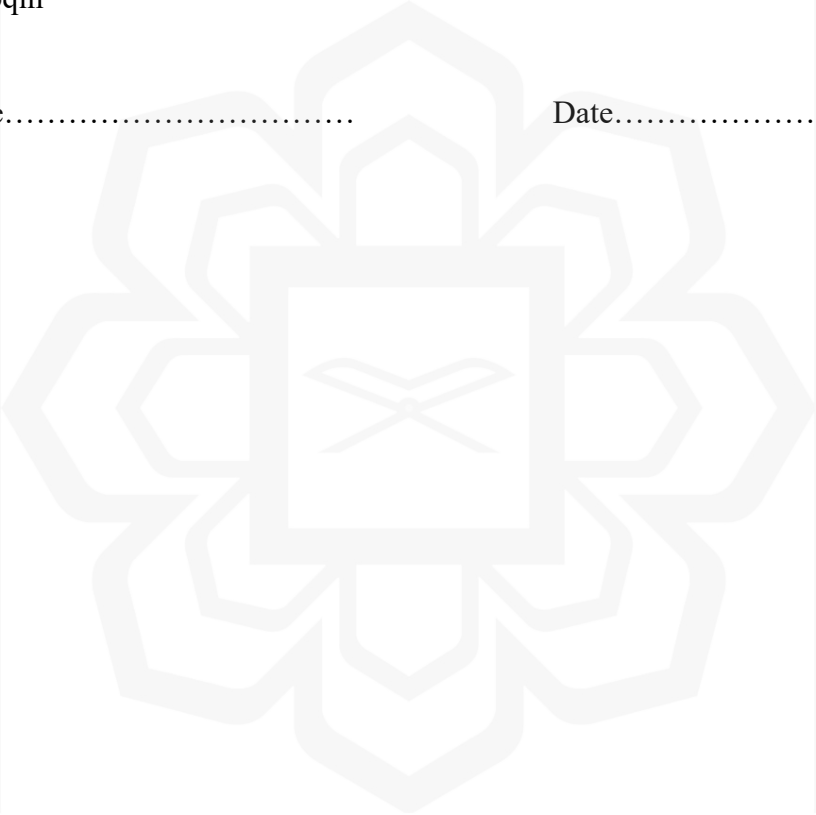
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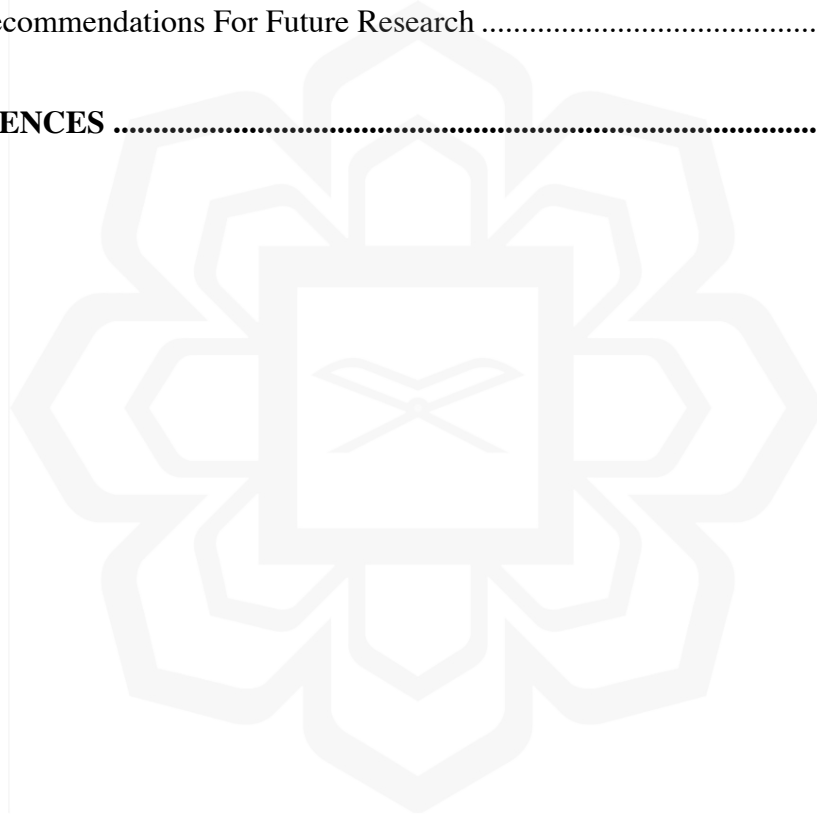
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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Food industry is becoming more apprehensive and sensitive about the manufacturing and obtaining of halal food products. On the other hand, halal food products are broadly accepted and acknowledged as a measure for food safety and quality assurance (Majid et al.,2015). Currently, the concern for consuming halal products is not just widespread among Muslims but as well extended to non-Muslim consumers. As a result, the understanding of halal products is expanding worldwide, mainly in non-Muslim countries. Linxia, the place where Islam is prosperous, is also called “The Little Mecca”. Linxia consists of Hui, Dongxiang, Baoan, Salar and other Muslim ethnic groups that accounted for 56.2% of the total population of the prefecture. Therefore, making the halal food industry more apprehensive in Linxia, and the considerable number of Muslim consumers plays a very important role in making the halal market very potential.

Halal food products are broadly accepted and acknowledged as a measure for food safety and quality assurance. The purpose of this study is to identify the awareness and purchase intention of halal food products among Muslims in Linxia, China.

Today the halal market is estimated to be around \$2.3 trillion (apart from Islamic finance and banking). Halal food has the largest share of around \$634.6 billion (Salahuddin, 2010; and Daud et al., 2012). The animal product industry, which accounts for milk, egg and meat, is one of the top producers in the world. The milk industry ranks number four in the world, whereas the egg ranks No.1; meat produce ranks sixth with a total of 6601 million tonnes, contributing to the 2.1% of the total world meat produce after China, USA, Brazil, Russian Federation and Germany (MOSPI, 2019).

However, in this research study, the focus will be on Muslim consumers' intention and behaviour in Linxia; the researchers have not yet studied the awareness of halal amongst Muslims. In addition, the intention of consumers towards buying halal food and halal consumers involved in consuming halal food products has not been explored until now. Therefore, since there are no reliable statistics related to the consumer's intention to buy halal food products, it will be explored in this research category.

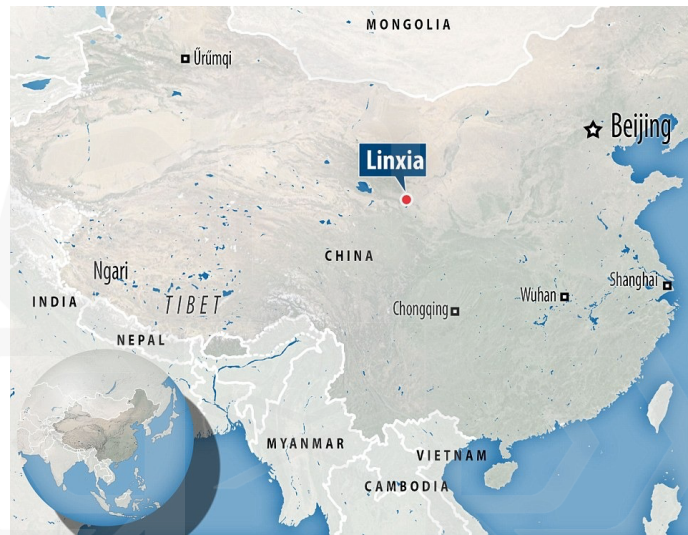


Figure 1.1: Map of Linxia

Source: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.dailymail.co.uk/news/china/article-5957615/amp/Muslims-Chinas-Little-Mecca-fear-eradication-Islam.html>

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

People from all over the globe have purchased items manufactured in China, and the country's economy is at the top of the world. However, the halal food business in China is nearly empty since most people are unaware of the halal food industry in China and have no opinion about it. Certainly, consumers from other countries do not have faith in the halal

food sector in China, particularly in Linxia. Food safety is one of the most important public health issues worldwide. It has also become one of the most challenging social issues in China that need to be addressed. Domestic issues concerning food safety occur more frequently in China than in other countries; there are loopholes in all the food chain aspects—from the farm to the table; public concerns over food safety are growing (Yongning & Yan, 2016).

In this study, the researcher wishes to explore Muslim customers' awareness and halal knowledge in Linxia. By determining their level of awareness, the researcher may correlate it with the level of demand for halal products and services. As awareness grows, the demand for halal products increases, motivating manufacturers to develop halal items. In this regard, the economics of the halal industry in Linxia is growing, which benefits the halal industry's growth and contributes to the public's faith in halal goods from Linxia in particular and China in general.

Moreover, globally only a few studies have attempted to scrutinise the problems in measuring the factors that trace the attitude and intention of consumers in purchasing halal food products among countries that have the majority of the non-Muslim population. In consciousness, the level of halal awareness in China is scanty, and recent research did not investigate halal awareness in the Chinese context.

Every Muslim pursue what has been stated in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. One of them is about the status of dietary laws. In this law, Muslims must consume halal foods and avoid haram foods (Ahmad et al., 2013). However, Chinese Muslims are projected to remain a minority in their country, making up about 8% of the total population at mid-century (Ma, 2015). Hence an effort is made to study the halal awareness among Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. Because recent research did not investigate halal awareness among them, and it is stated by Zakariya (2017) that awareness of halal affects consumer's decisions towards buying halal food products. It highlighted that halal awareness has an influence on illuminating the intention to purchase halal products.

The awareness will be given great result on people's purchase of Halal food, and the economy will grow accordingly. Additionally, their study has revealed that the most influential factor regarding Muslim consumers' choices to buy halal food corresponds to the level of knowledge about dealing with the product. Although many studies have been conducted on the halal food industry and halal consumers in Muslim majority countries, only a few studies have attempted to scrutinise the problems in measuring the factors that trace consumers' intention in countries that have the majority of the non-Muslim population. There has been no detailed published research on Muslims halal consumers' intention in the Linxia context (Liu & Li, 2016) based on the current literature review. The purpose of this study is to examine Linxia Muslims' preferences in obtaining halal food products by using the valuable theory of planned behaviour (TPB). Given the growing phenomenon of halal certified products, investigating consumer decisions toward purchasing halal food products is well-timed.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The main purpose of this study is to identify the factors affecting purchase intention of halal food products among Muslims in Linxia and identify the most significant factors which affect consumers' intention in this regard.

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between awareness and intentions to purchase halal food products in Linxia.
2. To determine the relationship between consumer attitudes and intentions to purchase halal food products.
3. To determine the impacts of purchase intention on buying halal food products among Linxia Muslim consumers.



## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What is the effect of halal awareness on the purchase intention towards halal food products among Muslims in Linxia?
2. What is the relationship between consumer attitudes and intentions to purchase halal food products?
3. What is the impact of purchase intention on buying halal food products among Linxia Muslim consumers?

## **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

There are numerous theories that are associated with the purchase intention study. As for the present research, the researcher explores the TPB as the main scope of study. Altogether three independent variables are used in this research, and they are: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The effects of these variables are on the Muslim consumers' purchasing intention towards halal food products within the context of Linxia, China.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The life of Muslims is shaped and guided by Qur'an and Sunnah in every type of action and decision performed. In the Islamic lifestyle of a Muslim, which elaborates on an individual's way of life and includes everything inclusive of halal food, medicine, and travelling, Muslims must abide to religious obedience. The current study is significantly important to Halal industry employees, stakeholders, educators, and common people. In

this paragraph, the argument is about the implication of the research which is offered from the different perceptions; Firstly, an individual who is educated and who is working in the food industry or any type of food area in Linxia is based on their educational potential and proficiency. With this data, the researcher can find more assistance, which can overpass the gap among them. This study will explore the opportunity to identify the current level of behaviour intention among users towards purchasing halal food products.

Secondly, it is suggestively essential to stakeholders and individuals who are directly or indirectly involved in the consumption of food products by going to restaurants, hotels, university/college/school cafeterias, small food markets and shopping malls for food and beverage where buying, selling and eating are practised.

This research may serve the academicians and halal researchers as a reference for further research in Halal Consumerism. Furthermore, it may help the Halal Industry in Linxia to be more prosperous, as Muslim Producers will be more aware and informed about the Consumers demand and their reasons for choosing halal products, which encourages the Muslim Producers to produce halal products; thus, it contributes well to the development of Halal Industry in Linxia.

## **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study is limited to the Muslims in Linxia, with 302 participants. Therefore, it does not cover the other Muslim population in other parts of China. Furthermore, the research is carried out to identify the factors affecting purchase intention in buying halal products, using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) only, and does not cover the other theories. The methodology is limited to a quantitative with a data analysed using the Atlas.ti software version 23.

## 1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

It is the responsibility of every Muslim to understand the message of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an and in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad Peace Be upon him. One of Allah's messages on the field of consumption is that the whole entire mankind in general, and Believers in particular, must consume halal (permissible) and toyyib (wholesome or best quality) food. As mentioned in Surah Al-baqarah verse 168 and 172, respectively.

This chapter gives an overview of the Muslims in China and Linxia, as a background of why Muslim consumers in Linxia mainly are selected to be the subject in the research. It explores the problems that occurred, which need attention to be solved. The objective of this research is also stated to ensure that the flow of the research follows the right direction. This research is hoped to be a useful reference for Academicians and researchers involved in Halal research matters and the development of the Halal Industry in Linxia, which will benefit both Muslim consumers and producers.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is an overview of the literature related to the factors affecting purchase intention towards halal food products in general with the focus of Muslim consumers in Linxia. This includes the fundamental of halal, the halal awareness and the demography. Since the study aims to obtain the impact of purchase intention on buying halal food products among Linxia Muslim consumers, the literature review will aid in understanding if the earlier research and findings are still relevant today and, if so, how is it supported.

#### **2.2 THE CONCEPT OF HALAL FOOD**

Millions of Muslims all over the world are influenced by the notion of halal when it comes to their food intake. However, the overall classification of halal products and their understanding differs from area to region, and the idea of halal is more than just a marketing tool. In the words of Wilson and Fan (2010), halal food “reflects a broader belief structure and ethical way of behaving.” According to the World Bank, the global market for commodities that comply with Islamic law produces annual revenue of \$632 billion for the food business alone (Izberk-Bilgin & Nakata, 2016).

There are many social and cultural variances, and halal is a term with a variety of interpretations. Because of this, a thorough analysis of its definition and breadth might provide us with some fascinating managerial insights. According to the rules provided by the Qur'an and hadith, it is possible to determine if a food item, service, or anything else is

halal. Halal is sometimes misconstrued as a consumption-related belief that is restricted to food intake alone. Nonetheless, Islam in general, and its sacred text in particular, are concerned with a wide range of other aspects of daily life, not just the halal thought of eating (Al-Bukhari & Sahi, 1976). Mukhtar and Mohsin Butt (2012) observed that Muslims are least confused about cases of permissibility. However, the preparation and the ingredients can always be a matter of concern.

For Muslims, the foundation of every activity must be devotion, which is the act of offering gratitude to the Almighty God. *“I did not create the jinn or humans for any other purpose than to worship”* (adz-Dzariat: 56). Following the Shari’ah, the eating routine is also considered a kind of worship, with certain regulations and practices to follow. According to the Qur’an, eating should not only be sufficient for halal, but it should also be nutritious. Examples of this are found in numerous passages of the Qur’an, where halal phrases are used in various contexts and are always preceded by the words of righteousness. A few examples of the previously stated passages read: *“O people, eat of good things in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the devil, for he is a clear enemy to you”* (2: 168). *“Eat all that you have done well, and fear Allah, for Allah is Forgiving, Most Merciful”* (11: 69). *“Eat all that Allah has provided you with good solace and thank the grace of God if you worship Him”* (16: 114). *“And eat what Allah has provided you with good solace and fear Allah, with whom you are believers”* (5: 88).

It is possible to combine halal and haram ingredients purposefully or inadvertently during the processing of items using scientific and technological advancement. As a result, determining whether a product is halal and pure requires specialised research that requires interdisciplinary expertise in areas such as food, chemistry, biochemistry, manufacturing, engineering, biology, and pharmacy, as well as an understanding of Shari’ah. Riyaz and Khadry (2004) also said that to manufacture halal items, they must adhere to the three zero idea, which means that they must be free of constraints, free of faults, and free of danger (Prabowo & Abdur Rahman 2016). Contaminants should not contaminate the raw materials used to manufacture halal goods, products, or primary and secondary materials at any stage of the manufacturing process during the processing of raw ingredients. Given the significant risks that any manufacturing or distribution firm faces if there are allegations of

forbidden items. While corrective action will be taken, no haram (free of faults) products should be created for the market. If these manufacturing processes are implemented, a firm will not be exposed to any risk, for instance, risk-free.

Food manufacturers utilise the halal certification and logo to indicate to customers that their products are Shariah-compliant (Alam & Sayuti, 2011). Historically, Muslims were largely unaware that their meals did not adhere to the prescribed diet. On the other hand, Muslim consumers nowadays are increasingly requesting more halal-labelled food products, and more food manufacturers are prepared to accommodate these prospective clients (Bonne et al., 2007).

When customers see the halal certification and logo, they can be confident in choosing any food product or restaurant that has been halal certified. Halal certification is also advantageous to marketers since it provides third-party verification of product quality. As a result, halal products are widely recognised worldwide, customer confidence increases, and products are shielded from being criticised by Islamic-inspired companies (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012). Many businesses across the world are attempting to get a halal certification in an effort to expand their market presence and increase consumer satisfaction with their products. Companies will be able to obtain promotional capabilities that they have never had access to previously as a result of this (Rios et al., 2014). Marketers may use the perks of Halal certification by engaging with their target customers and ultimately become an intrinsic advantage for the consumer. Coincidentally, halal and high-quality food products have several advantages for customers who choose to consume them.

### **2.3 HALAL MARKET DEMAND IN CHINA**

Since the time of the Prophet Mohammad, Muslims have lived in China. However, few people are aware of China's large Muslim population, or the complex history of survival endured by Muslims living among races and cultures renowned for their capacity to transfer and inculcate outsiders, such as the Chinese. As a result of centuries of expansion, the

Muslim community in China has grown from a tiny colony of Persian and Arab traders along the country's southeast coast to a huge and varied population dispersed throughout the country. Chinese Muslims currently constitute the largest geographically scattered minority group in the country, as well as the most developed and well-integrated into all aspects of daily life in the country (Armijo, 2008).

In 2011, there was about a 1.8 billion population, where 24% of the world's population are believers of Islam (Grim & Karim, 2011). By 2050, the Chinese Muslim population will grow up to 95 million, building it the largest Muslim population in the world, according to Pew Research Centre projections (2015). Still, Chinese Muslims are projected to remain a minority in their country, making up about 18% of the total population at mid-century (Pillsbury, 1981). Food as a product or commodity derives its values from society. Within society, social institutions such as religion significantly influence our perceived value for food products (Shepherd, 1989; Jamal & Sharifuddin, 2015). Thus, the fact that halal products as food items derive their value from religion and society is not shocking.

Millions of Muslims in China have a significant need for halal goods, which is also noteworthy (Ma, 2014). China has the ninth-largest Muslim population in the world, and its halal marketplaces are also among the most active in the industry. It is estimated that China's halal business is valued at US\$2.1 billion, with yearly growth of 10% (Edbiz Consulting, 2013). While China's halal industry and certification system are developing, it is still in its infancy compared to the halal industries and certification systems in Muslim-majority countries. Although there are many halal certification agencies in China, they do not collaborate and do not adhere to a centralised halal guideline and certification framework (Edbiz Consulting, 2013). A similar situation exists concerning Chinese halal producers, who do not share the common knowledge of or adherence to halal manufacturing laws and guidelines. Aside from a lack of credibility in its supply chain operations, the Chinese halal sector also lacks appropriate technology and human capacity, not to mention a lack of international credibility. As a result, non-halal components are often substituted in the manufacture of halal products in China; one extreme example involved the sale of pork labelled as "halal beef" in one province (Khaliq, 2013).

Concerns about product adulteration have led Chinese Muslims to seek authentic halal goods made with only halal ingredients and manufacturing procedures. In China, there is an enormous demand for a genuine halal industry, which is currently lacking. The Chinese government is aware of the difficulties associated with halal goods. It has recently solicited international assistance in organising and upgrading its halal certification program and collaborates with the halal industry. The opportunity for halal merchants to advertise their product to this rapidly growing and potentially massive market is tremendously advantageous.

The study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Chinese Muslims' consumption in general. Additionally, it is particularly concerned with uncovering the necessities and factors that influence Chinese Muslims' consumption of halal everyday products, as well as their intentions when purchasing halal goods.

#### **2.4 HALAL AWARENESS AMONG CHINESE MUSLIM COMMUNITY**

Consumption of halal foods is closely connected with Islamic practice (Wilson, 2014). However, unlike Muslims in Muslim-dominated nations, it is not reasonable to believe that Islamic principles only influence Chinese Muslims' consumption behaviour. Their consuming habits have also been influenced by their unique living environment, which is vastly different from that of other people. They are born within a Muslim society, but they grow up in a Confucian one. Although they live in a society where religion is not the major concept of life, they are nevertheless considered an ethnic minority within a very big population. As a result, they eat meals that are vastly different from those eaten by the bulk of non-Muslims who are termed as Han people. In particular, the Cultural Revolution, which lasted for ten years between 1960 and 1970, had a significant impact on religious activity in various ways.