



FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER INTENTION
TO PURCHASE *HALAL* FOOD AMONG MUSLIMS
IN THAILAND

BY

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ABSTRACT

With the rising global demand for *Halal* food, more countries have emerged to serve this potential market, including non-Muslim countries. Thailand is one of them which plans to be a *Halal* food hub with the aim to become a major *Halal* food exporter regardless of the relevant *Halal* issues in the country. The demand for *Halal* food in the Thai market itself has also increased recently and continue to have an upward trend. If it is this reason, an investigation of Muslim consumers' consumption behavior becomes an interesting subject. Many researches have been conducted to try to understand factors that influence Muslim consumers in their choice of purchase. Previous researches support that behaviors are greatly influenced by intention while many researches on consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food have been conducted in the Muslim countries. This study emphasizes consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food in non-Muslim country, Thailand. The data were collected by self-administered questionnaires from respondents in the Songkhla province. The proposed research model is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and extended to include certain relevant factors to investigate the association among attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, religiosity, and trust on consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food. Factor analysis was conducted to ensure the validity of the research instrument. Then, the Partial Least Square (PLS) was utilized to test the hypotheses. The findings indicate that the extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is applicable to explain consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food in Thailand. Four out of five propositions had significant support in which attitude, subjective norm, religiosity, and trust predict consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers, though perceived behavioral control did not show a significant influence on consumer intention. The findings of this research provide valuable implication for Marketing Managers and also contribute to the academic perspective by enlarging the body of knowledge.

ملخص البحث

مع ارتفاع الطلب العالمي على أطعمة الحلال، ظهرت كثير من الدول لخدمة هذا السوق المحتمل، بما في ذلك الدول الغير إسلامية. وتُعد تايلند إحدى هذه الدول التي تخطط لأن تكون مركزاً لأطعمة الحلال، حيث تهدف أن تصبح مصدراً رئيساً لأطعمة الحلال بغض النظر عن قضايا الحلال الأخرى في الدولة. في الآونة الأخيرة أصبح الطلب على أطعمة الحلال في السوق التايلاندية مستمراً وأخذ الطلب منحى تصاعدياً. وهذا راجع إلى سلوك الاستهلاك الذي يحققه المستهلكين المسلمين مما يجعله موضوع اهتمام. وقد أجريت العديد من الأبحاث في محاولة فهم العوامل التي تؤثر على المستهلكين المسلمين في اختيارهم لشراء هذه الأطعمة. ومن خلال الأبحاث السابقة وجدوا أن سلوكيات الأفراد تتأثر إلى حد كبير بعامل النية، حيث تم إجراء العديد من الأبحاث حول نية المستهلكين لشراء أطعمة الحلال في الدول الإسلامية. هذه الدراسة تركز على نية المستهلكين لشراء أطعمة الحلال في البلدان الغير إسلامية كاتاييلند. تم جمع البيانات عن طريق استبيانات تملأ ذاتياً من طرف المستجيبين في محافظة سونجخللا. ويستند هذا النموذج في الدراسة المقترحة على نظرية السلوك المخطط (TPB)، وتوسيع نطاقها لتشمل بعض العوامل ذات الصلة للتحقيق في رابطة بين السلوك، والمعيار الشخصي، وسيطرة السلوكية المحسوسة، والتدين، والثقة في نية المستهلك لشراء أطعمة الحلال. وقد أجري تحليل العوامل لضمان صحة أداة البحث. وتم استخدام (PLS) لاختبار الفرضية. النتائج تشير إلى أن نظرية توسيع السلوك المخطط (TPB) هي التي تنطبق على شرح نية المستهلكين لشراء أطعمة الحلال في تايلند. هذا وقد حظيت أربعة من أصل خمسة مقترحات بدعم كبير فيه السلوك، والمعيار الشخصي، والتدين، والثقة التي تتنبأ بنية المستهلكين لشراء أطعمة الحلال لدى المستهلكين المسلمين التايلنديين، على الرغم من سيطرة السلوكية المحسوسة التي لم تظهر تأثير كبيراً على نية المستهلك. نتائج البحث توفر اقتراحات ضمنية، وقيمة لمدراء التسويق وهي أيضاً تساهم في تطوير المنظور الأكاديمي من خلال توسيع مجالات المعارف.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Science in Marketing.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter one provides an overview of *Halal* food and related information on the country of the study. The chapter also describes relevant studies on consumer intention. The problem statement and the objectives of the study are defined together with the research questions. The significance of the study is also included. The definition of terms used and structure throughout this thesis is provided in the last section of the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

How consumers make decisions on purchasing and consumption has been a popular research topic among marketing researchers. Consumers include social responsibility, personal need and want in their decision-making process (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Ahmed (2008) states that there are four factors that influence the consumer-buying decision: cultural, social, personal, and psychological. Among factors, there is the belief that religious group is one of the most important social factors that influences consumer behavior. Religious obligation becomes a foundation in directing people behaviors. This is also true for Muslims where Islam influences and determines for its followers, not only the specific acts of worship but every aspect of their lives. In particular to the food purchasing decision and consumption, there are differences in practice from one religion (to another), while culture and religiosity can also manipulate religious expression (Razzaque & Chaudhry, 2013). Alam, Mohd, and Hisham (2011) states that culture can have a great effect on choices and motives in shopping and consumption. In a wide range of products such as food, cosmetics, and financial

services, religious compliance and influence effect preference of certain products over another (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012).

Halal (حلال) is an Arabic word which literally mean permitted and lawful. The term governs not only consumption but also all actions and things that Muslims are permitted to perform and engaged. On the other hand, *Haram* means that which is forbidden and unlawful. There is an example from the Quran¹ pertaining to *Halal* and *Haram* as a command of Allah² (s.w.t.):

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful (7:157)

With regard to food, Islam is perhaps one of the strictest religions when it comes to consumption, Muslims have to conform to dietary prescriptions as known as *Halal* food. Muslims are permissible to eat all good food which is lawful and is not stated as *Haram* (prohibited). Dead meat, blood, pork, and unslaughtered meat in the name of Allah are forbidden. This principal derives from the following Quranic verses:

O men! eat the lawful and good things out of what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan; surely he is your enemy (2:168)

He only prohibits for you the eating of animals that die of themselves (without human interference), blood, the meat of pigs, and animals dedicated to other than God. If one is forced (to eat these), without being malicious or deliberate, he incurs no sin. God is Forgiving, Most Merciful (2:173)

¹ The complete record of the exact words revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

² God in Islam.

Besides, scholars agree that unlawful acquisition of food is also a ground for *Haram* (Bonne, Vermeir, Bergeaud-Blackler, & Verbeke, 2007). Islam provides guidance on what can be consumed. Drinking and eating must be *Shariah*³ compliant, meaning that *Halal* must be honored in the entire process including the origin of food, acquisition, preparation, etc. Ideally, Muslim consumers should decline economic pleasure if it conflicts with the Islamic spirit (Alam et al., 2011).

Most Islamic businesses are conducted on the basis of who you know especially in non-Muslim societies. It is highlighted that Islam is the influential force that controls Muslims' behaviors either individually or collectively. Because of religious requirements, Muslim businesses imply monopolistic features because Muslim consumers tend to shop from certain outlets (Ahmed, 2008). It emphasizes that Muslim consumers' purchase decision relies on the degree of trust on the *Halal* food provider. However, many non-Muslim producers have tried to engage in this market and have requested for *Halal* certification to access Muslim consumers. Non-Muslim consumers are more interested in *Halal* products because of assured hygiene and quality. Eventually, *Halal* is no longer a religious matter, it includes ways of doing business. It becomes a global symbol and standard of choice that provides benefit to food producers (Bonne et al., 2007; Tieman, Vorst, & Ghazali, 2012).

Either by birth or adoption, Islam has become the fastest growing religion on earth throughout 112 countries. Most Muslim countries belong to the Organization of Islamic Conference Nations (1.4 billion), Asia (805 million), Africa (300 million), Middle East (210 million) accordingly, and have spread through Europe and America, building the Muslim population to a quarter of the world's population. This huge number of Muslims signals the marketing opportunity for food producers who want to

³ Islamic law.

acquire consumers who share a common faith and dietary requirements. The approximate value of the global *Halal* food market in 2010 is \$US500 billion and is projected to a growth of 7% annually (Alam & Sayuti, 2011; Lada, Tanakinjal, & Amin, 2009).

In Thailand, Muslims represent the core religious minority since the majority are Buddhists. There are approximately 7.5 million Muslims which is 12% out of 62.5 million of the Thai population. Muslims are concentrated in the southern border provinces, for example, Satun, Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. The Muslim population is also highly intense in Bangkok and the other southern provinces compared to the other parts of Thailand (Royal Thai Embassy [RTE], 2012). The demand for *Halal* food in Thailand increases about 20% annually. In 2011, Thailand exports \$6.8 billion of *Halal* food to 57 Islamic countries and it has grown by 12.1% in 2012 as world demand for *Halal* food keeps increasing. The export of *Halal* food accounts for 20% of Thailand's total food export (The *Halal* Standard Institute of Thailand [HSIT], 2007).

In Thailand, food producers employ the *Halal* logo and certification issued by The Central Islamic Committee of Thailand (CICOT) as a standard for the entire country. The *Halal* certified producers have a right to label their products with the *Halal* logo to assure Muslim consumers that they are *Shariah* compliant. Despite the fact that the Muslims are a minority in the country, the government had proposed to establish Thailand as a *Halal* food hub in 2003 with the aim to develop product quality, certification, marketing strategies, and to enhance competitiveness. Relevant institutions have established, for example, the *Halal* Standard Institute of Thailand (HSIT) and the *Halal* Science Center (HSC) at the Faculty of Allied Health Science of Chulalongkorn University, to continuously improve and promote *Halal* food in the

domestic and global markets (National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards [ACFS], 2008).

Even though Thailand is promoted to be the *Halal* food hub and number of institutions responsible for *Halal* food operation now exists in the country, some *Halal* issues are get to be resolve. These include unethical food production and practice of non-Muslim producers, the major food producers in the country. There are many products that are not consistently *Halal* certified. This leads to consumer confusion and cause them to be extra careful in purchasing. Given the example of a national food producer and exporter which is found to use unauthentic *Halal* logo on some of its ready-to-eat products. Another prime example is a famous global fast food restaurant chain in which is not *Halal* certified. However it tries to take advantages of unsuspecting Muslim consumers by hiring women who wears head scarves to signal that its products are *Halal*.

These examples of *Halal* issues in Thailand reveal that some food producers in the country do not understand the essentials of consuming *Halal* food for Muslims and are not concerned with the significance of the Muslim consumer as a minor market segment in the country. In addition, it reflects the procedures and authoritative power of the respective *Halal* institutions in Thailand. The standard, quality, and *Halal* foods should be honored in order to be competitive in the international market and to protect consumers from being at a disadvantage from consuming *Haram* products without realizing. Food producers should address the essentials of how consumers make purchasing decisions on specific products such as *Halal* food.

Halal is a matter of religious beliefs so that consuming *Halal* food is imperative for Muslim consumers. Even though religion affects the lives of Muslim, its force in the consumer market remains unclear. The degree of the religious role in food

consumption also depends on the religion itself regarding food prohibitions and what it means to individuals (Bonne et al., 2007; Tieman et al., 2012). Individual Muslims may possess a different degree of intention to purchase *Halal* food. So what factors may have influenced their intention to purchase *Halal* food?

Numerous studies on consumer behavior regarding the behavioral decision making process have adopted some determinants of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to measure consumer intention relating to certain behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggests that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control have influence on behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2005). There is an assumption that consumers who express their intention to perform specific action will be more likely to engage in the behavior rather than those who have no such intention (Ajzen, 1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is also widely used to determine consumer intention in different areas, for example, Management, Islamic marketing, science, food, and internet research (Alam et al., 2011; Bang, A. Odio, & Reio, 2014; Borges, Oude Lansink, Marques Ribeiro, & Lutke, 2014; Cook & Fairweather, 2007; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). However, in the area of food research, the Theory of Planned Behavior is the major model to investigate food choices and behavioral intention (Kim, Ham, Yang, & Choi, 2013). The studies of consumer intention can be complicated if researchers explore too many perspectives in relation to the topics. However, this study will focus on consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers.

Various studies have been conducted on Muslim consumers and *Halal* matters. Many are related to the *Halal* food certification and its marketing implications (Ahmed, 2008; Shafie & Othman, n.d.). Some are relevant to the *Halal* supply chain and logistics (Tieman, Ghazali, & Vorst, 2013; Tieman et al., 2012). However, the studies on

consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food are weak compared to the other typical foods such as the organic food. Razzaque and Chaudhry (2013) find that food is essentially perceived as a high involvement product for Muslims while it is generally perceived as a low involvement product in the non-Muslim society. The result explains further that religious commitment is involved in brand decision. On the other hand, the study of *Halal* meat consumption of migrant Muslims in France shows that the intention of low dietary acculturated consumers can only be predicted by attitude toward *Halal* meat consumption. However, the intention of those high dietary acculturated consumers can be predicted by attitude and perceived behavioral control (Bonne et al., 2007). Furthermore, the study of *Halal* food purchasing in Malaysia finds that the three determinants of behavioral intention of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) are valid by which attitude, subjective norm, and behavioral control affect consumer intention (Alam & Sayuti, 2011).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Muslim market segment around the world shares a similarity in terms of a common faith, the sense of being an Ummatic Muslim community and dietary requirements. The fact is Muslim consumers are alike to every other consumer segments which demands quality and healthy products. The thing that is different is that Muslim consumers also demand those products to comply with the *Shariah* requirements (Lada et al., 2009). However, in order to purchase the products, consumers do not make decisions based only on the product itself but also on individual and social forces. It is the same with Muslim consumers in different locations and culture who tend to differ in their degrees of Islamic adherence which would have affect their intention to purchase *Halal* related products (Bonne et al, 2007). These differences probably lead to differences in their

purchasing decisions of individual Muslims and societies regarding *Halal* food purchasing intention.

Besides, the increase of the Muslim population also has profound effects on the demand for *Halal* food. Not only Muslims but even non-Muslim consumers desire *Halal* food because of trust and assured quality, leading to a higher demand for *Halal* food in the global market (Alam & Sayuti, 2011). There are relevant institutions among countries to certify *Halal* food. The Central Islamic Committee of Thailand (CICOT) and The Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) are some examples. At present, more non-Muslim countries have emerged as *Halal* food producers to serve this demand. Even in the non-Muslim countries like Thailand, more food producers request *Halal* certification to penetrate into the local minority Muslim market. However, there was the issue in which some manufacturers were found to use unauthentic *Halal* certification. Some Muslim originated companies have introduced their own *Halal* logos, using Islamic sounding brand names and displaying Arabic characters (Shafie & Othman, n.d.). All these problems affect Muslim consumers' trust and confidence in the *Halal* food purchasing. Lada et al. (2009) mention that Muslim consumers may turn their attention to well-known products, the ingredients of which they can scrutinize in contrast to buying less trustworthy products with the *Halal* logo. It is obvious that even though there are *Halal* certified products in the market, Muslim consumers still need to rely to a certain degree on their own consideration, observation, and purchasing decision.

Thus, based on the above mentioned matters, consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food has become the focus of interest in this study. It is useful to take a closer look at how Muslim consumers intend to purchase *Halal* food. Most consumer intention studies relevant to the *Halal* products have been conducted in Muslim

countries but no such studies have been conducted exclusively in the non-Muslim countries. However, in this study on Thailand, the differences of context in the non-Muslim countries probably may or may not provide different results. Thus, it is interesting to identify the factors that influence consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslims.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research provides a review of the *Halal* food concept and a better understanding of the current situation of *Halal* food in Thailand. The primary purpose of this study is to identify the factors affecting Muslims' intention regarding the *Halal* food purchase in Thailand. In order to generate a useful implication of the findings, the specific objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the relationship among attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control towards consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers.
2. To identify the role of religiosity and trust on consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers.
3. To identify the most significant factors that affect consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In relation to the objectives, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the relationships among attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control towards consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers?

2. What are the role of religiosity and trust on consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers?
3. What are the most significant factors that affect consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslim consumers?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted to understand consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food in a non-Muslim country, Thailand. It also discusses the various aspects of *Halal* such as *Halal* industry and *Halal* issues, even though *Halal* food and the Islamic marketing research is not fully developed in Thailand.

The study is conducted applying the Theory of Planned Behavior. Generally, a theory- driven research provides a better understanding about consumer behavior and would be able to fill the gap in the existing body of literature associated with the topic. This study contributes to the understanding of consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior to food and religion. The predictive power of the traditional Theory of Planned Behavior as well as religiosity and trust as relevant variables will also be examined in the typical context of Thailand. The modification of the model is expected to maximize its predictive efficiency.

In addition, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the managerial perspectives. It provides further knowledge for policy-makers with insight into the factors that influence consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food among Thai Muslims. This insight can be considered by policy-makers to adjust to current strategies and also to develop future strategies and initiatives to enhance the *Halal* food purchase intention. A better understanding of consumer intention would benefit Marketing Managers in such a way to provide the right products, better communications, and prompt marketing

programs to promote desired behavior in order to achieve the company's goals. Small, medium, and even large-scale producers would be able to benefit from this. Local food manufacturers who wish to export *Halal* food to other countries may also gain from this application of research as well as international manufacturers who want to expand their business into Thailand's *Halal* food market. Knowing how consumer intention towards purchasing Halal food is positively formed may urge both local and international brands to invest in Shariah-compliant products. In addition, it can contribute to relevant *Halal* organizations by assisting them in developing policies to promote the *Halal* food industry as well as to protect Muslim consumers from being at a disadvantage.

It is therefore important to conduct this study since it will enlarge the knowledge of factors that influence consumer intention to purchase *Halal* food in a non-Muslim country. Furthermore, it is essential as support to all relevant parties such as local producers, international producers, *Halal* certification agencies, and government agencies in order to understand consumers and serve them well.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this study, several terms mentioned. Therefore, the broad definition of the key terms are presented below:

1.7.1 Consumer Intention

Consumer intention is a mental state which is influenced by psychosocial variables (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Consumer intention precedes action in which the strength of the intention will positively lead to the probability to perform the action in appropriate opportunity and time (Ajzen, 2005). This study defines consumer intention

as the action that will be taken after consumers recognize the existence and the essentials of *Halal* food.

1.7.2 *Halal* Food

Halal food is a kind of food that meets the Islamic dietary requirements and that is permitted for Muslims to consume.

1.7.3 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) holds that consumers who express intention toward a given behavior is more likely to engage in those behaviors. Intention is determined by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (I Ajzen, 1991).

1.7.4 Attitude

Attitude is a function of belief which refers to a personal positive or negative evaluation toward an attitude object (H. Y. Kim & Chung, 2011). In this study, attitude emphasizes on the consumer's belief toward *Halal* food in Thailand.

1.7.5 Subjective Norm

Subjective norm is a person's awareness of social pressure regarding performing the behavior (Donald, Cooper, & Conchie, 2014). This study defines subjective norm as an opinion of salient referents to motivate or not to motivate individuals to purchase *Halal* food.