

The effect of halal clean label on the perception of young generation

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Abstract

Today, halal clean label seemed as a strategy which used by responsible of food marketer. For this reason, the position of halal clean label belongs on the consumer perception for their needs to consume healthy foods which necessitate the producers to be discerning to choose their products ingredients and production process. Since that, the halal food and clean label concepts partition the principles of being healthy and unarmful. In this study, we intended to recognize the relationship between halal food and clean label by studying the preceding literature that enclosed the two concept and study the role of halal clean food for the new Muslim and non- Muslim generations. The research study will be investigating the role of halal clean food for the marketers as a branding element to attract new young Muslim and non- Muslim markets. In the end of study, we will be representing the strategy position for marketers of halal food to target young non-Muslims segment by using the clean label concept.

Clean Food, Halal, Label, Perception Young Consumer.

Introduction

Most of industrialized countries became afflicted about food insecurity with the key contribution of agri-food industrialization (Lusk, 2016; Menses, Cannon, & Flores, 2014). Muslim consumers' awareness toward halal foods and products has been increasing. The halal concept becomes consumers' vital concern as it covers wide areas of consumption, though one might perceive it as only a food-related issue. In this fact, young consumers are becoming more concerned with food quality and health issues and start searching for new products that facilitate and ease their searching and evaluation process. So that, marketers start to target those customer segments by positioning their products as halal food or clean label food to be considered as a trust attribute for their products, and consumers would depend on its brand credibility. However, number of trends have emerged in conjunction with the halal food and clean label movement as opportunities for food makers to connect and resonate with their target audience (Shelke & Kim, 2018).

Today, in the world, there are more than two billion Muslims inhabited in 112 states, who are the current consumers of halal food (Khalek, 2014). Currently, young consumers are critical (Aji, 2018). They often want transparency in the manufacturing process, guaranteeing that their consumption is Halal. For this reason, that is an interesting fact to be researched on the concept of clean halal label and its effect on the young perception consumers.

In this study we will try to find the possibility of considering halal food as a clean label food and its effect among the young consumers perception.

Research problem

In this research paper, we will examine the probability and appropriateness of applying the concept of clean label for halal food and the possibility of using clean label as a branding element by halal food producers in targeting young consumer markets.

Research methodology

In this study, we will follow a desk research methodology that depends on previous studies and literatures that covered the topics of halal food and the application of clean

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label concept in food industries and try to determine consumer behaviour toward those two concepts.

Clean label in food sector

Labels are considered as an important information tool for marketers as they help them to quickly communicate information about the product or the production process to consumers, who in return depends on this information when evaluating different alternatives in the markets. Labelling strategies give consumers information in a text format that provides words and numbers about ingredients and production process. But since consumers have a limited cognitive capacity, more detailed information about a product's process or quality might result in information overload for consumers (Weinrich & Spiller, 2016). Therefore, it is much easier for consumer to depend on a healthy choice symbols that based on simplified images where consumers do not need to invest a lot of effort in information processing while making their buying decision (Hartmann, Hieke, Taper, & Siegrist, 2017). In order to reduce consumer confusion about the product cleanness and appropriateness for a healthy consumption patterns, marketers should search for simpler clues to indicate their products competitiveness in this field. However, one of the most modern label trends is "clean label" which will be covered in more detailed in this article.

When it comes to food, many consumers prefer naturalness. This valued product attribute is not clearly defined yet (Hartmann, Hieke, Taper, & Siegrist, 2017; Chiarini, 2013). However, food consumption is affected by three major trends: health concerns, sustainability, and convenience. Health concerns are driven by consumers' affluence, but also explained by the increasing number of food and lifestyle related diseases (i.e. Diabetes, obesity, etc.) and allergies and intolerances towards some specific food products or components such as gluten. These factors have encouraged consumers to be more interested in healthy food products that support healthy lifestyles into older ages and reduce the risk of certain diseases (Asioli, et al., 2017).

The trends of healthiness and sustainability have triggered consumers into considering which components are used in the food products that they eat in everyday life (Asioli, és mtsai., 2017). Hence, a new trend in food products has emerged, which is often summarized under the umbrella of the so-called "clean label" (Shelke & Kim, 2018).

To date there is no clear definition for clean label, and there is a lot of interpretations for the concept as (Asioli, et al., 2017; Shelke & Kim, 2018). Asioli (2017) suggests that a clean label product can be positioned as 'natural', 'organic' and/or 'free from additives/preservatives, or a product that using ingredients that are generally accepted by consumers. Shelke & Kim (2018) define the main aspects of Clean label concept, which are reducing the number of ingredients, not using ingredients with long and unidentifiable names, not use artificial ingredients or ingredients with no nutritional or functional benefits. Hence, a product with clean label is considered by consumers to be healthy with no artificial ingredients. Clean label as a concept shouldn't be misunderstood to be related only to the type of ingredients, clean label standards will also affect ingredient costs, product shelf life, storage, and packaging decisions (Pelofske, 2017). In short, the concept of "clean" is not based on scientific evidence, but on consumer perceptions and retailer positioning (David, 2015).

Nowadays, consumers' perception on halal food is strictly connected with halal certification (Khalek, 2014). Halal label replicates that the product is allowable to be consumed by Muslims and shows that the various food outlets were exposed to a rigorous examination before certification was published. In the next paragraph, we will discuss about young consumer behaviour toward clean label.

Young consumer behavior toward clean label

Any consumer buying decision is motivated with a need recognition and identification. In food sector, consumers might be either motivated by attaining something, as for example health and well-being, or avoiding something, as for example risk of disease, a distinction that has been applied to nutrition and health claims (Asioli, et al., 2017). However, Consumers generally express their concerns on food safety is the inverse of food risk and can be expressed as the probability of not suffering some hazard from consuming a specific food (Ergönül, 2013).

The inference biases of a negative bias or an optimism bias is also worth mentioning in this relation. If a consumer perceived a single ingredient of a food product as negative or harmful, this will lead to an exaggerated negative assessment of the food and negative bias can be found in this case. On the other hand, the optimism bias suggests that a positive perception for a food ingredient might lead to an exaggerated positive assessment of the food. Some of the trends subsumed under the term of clean label might be categorized as 'approach', as for example natural or organic, while others might be categorized as 'avoidance', as for example all 'free from' claimed foods (Asioli, et al., 2017).

Usually, young consumers might use cues and information's found on the front of the package (FOP) or in the product label to guide them in their buying decision such as symbols indicating naturalness, organic certification logos, or producers claims of free-from, thus, these products might be perceived as clean labels as we discussed earlier. However, both of peripheral processing and central processing is expected to play a role for clean label. In some cases, when buyers identifying the product as clean label, they might try to read information on the (FOP) in store or at home. These young consumers are highly involved and motivated to process and look at information and engage with it, thus, identifying the product as clean label. However, some consumers might find this not easy to assess, and nevertheless rely on heuristics, as the degree to which ingredient names sound chemical or are unknown, or the number of the ingredient in the product. Buyers can rely on these observable features as a cue to assess a product quality. Therefore, young consumers might favour products with understandable, short, known and simple ingredient lists, or products with some logos or symbols which indicate that the product is a clean product in order to reduce the cognitive effort needed in assessing the product (Asioli, et al., 2017).

As it is discussed in previous researches, and as we explained in the previous section, clean label is all about being healthy, and using ingredients and production process which perceived by consumers to be unharmed to their health in any way. And the question at this point will be if marketers of Halal food can convince their young Muslims and non-Muslims consumers that the halal brand can be treated as clean label and therefore, they will be able to target other consumers who are not interested in halal food from a religious point of view or even targeting non-Muslims consumers. In the next section we will try to define halal food concept as a clean label option for marketers of halal brand.

Halal food

'Halal' is an Arabic word that means permission in law (Wilson & Liu, 2011). It also refers to food or products that are lawful for Muslim to buy and eat or consume. However, according to Rehman and Shabbi (2010), Halal concept obeys the Shariah rules which clearly specify what is acceptable or not acceptable behaviours for Muslims.

Halal food industry is vastly growing all around the world, cross Muslim and non-Muslim countries. The growth in the Muslims population in all of the world as majorities or minorities among different countries almost everywhere in the world, makes halal food industry prosper; the acceptance of halal foods is fuelled by the religious beliefs, change

in the mind set of Muslim consumers, and worldwide ethical consumer trends (Hughes & Malik, 2012). Driven by growing demand, the Halal food market continues its growing across the global food supply chain. (2015) estimates that global Muslim spending on food and beverages has increased 4.3% to reach \$1,128 billion in 2014. This takes the potential core Halal food market to be 16.7% of global expenditure in 2014.

Global food markets quickly absorbed the concept of halal food (Alam & Sayuti, 2011). Therefore, the halal market gained increasing acceptance among both of Muslim and non- Muslim consumers who associate halal with ethical consumerism and food that is appropriately processed in a way that is healthy and not hearting consumer. For example, for a Muslim consumer, Halal food and drinks mean that the products have met the requirements laid down by the Sharia law as well as safety and hygienic matter, whereas for a non-Muslim consumer, Halal consumptions represent hygiene, quality and safety given that the products are manufactured strictly under the Holistic Halal Assurance Management System. Therefore, the concept of Halal products or food can be a synonym for safety, hygiene and quality assurance of what is consumed (Ambali & Bakar, 2013).

In food sector, Halal label indicate that the product does not contain anything considered to be impure according to the Sharia. Halal food based on Sharia means that it has not been prepared, processed or manufactured by using ingredients or instruments that were impure or can harm the consumers in any possible way. Therefore, in Islam, swine/pork and its by-products; animals improperly slaughtered or are dead before slaughtering; animals killed in the name of other than Allah (SWT) and drinks that intoxicate such as alcohol and other intoxicants, carnivorous animals, birds of prey; blood and blood by-products and foods “contaminated” with any of the above-mentioned products are considered a ‘not Halal’ or ‘Haram’ products, and Muslims are prohibited to consume them (Riaz & Chaudry, 2003). Thus, the easiest way for the Muslim consumers is by purchasing food products with Halal certification and logo as a significant way to inform and to reassure that the products are Halal (Shafie & Othman, 2006).

Hygiene aspects has been given much emphasis in the concept of Halal and it includes various aspects of personal body cleanliness, clothing, equipment and the working premises for manufacturing of foods. For example, it is important to ensure that the meat comes from a healthy animal so that people can be healthy (Ambali & Bakar, 2013). Rice (1993) suggest that much modern ill-health is attributable to poor nutrition and unhealthy state of what consumers take daily. Thus, Halal urges to ensure full commitment to producing and serving clean, safe foods and products for the consumers (Ambali & Bakar, 2013). In other words, Halal products should be recognized as a symbol of cleanliness, safety and quality for a healthy life. It can be concluded that health reasons are another determinant of Halal food.

At this point we can conclude that the main objective of Halal is to ascertain that the food produced is safe, hygienic and not hazardous to human health (Ambali & Bakar, 2013). The fact that human health is related to fitness is one thing that young Muslims and non- Muslims are agreed on, and so young Muslims and non- Muslims who are more concerned about their health may possibly choose Halal food because it offers healthy ingredients (Bonne & Verbeke, 2006).

Moreover, the concept of being healthy require young consumers to watch over what is taken into their body, food cleanliness, food source, and the method of handing and preparing the food they consume. The main reason is to minimize any harmful effects to the body (Mathew, binti Amir Abdullah, & binti Mohamad Ismail, 2014). Halal food is defined by its cleanliness and freshness, to achieve this, food processing methods are vital in sustaining the cleanliness and freshness of the food and directly affect the nutritional quality of halal food consumed.

Halal perception towards new young Muslim and non- Muslim consumers

Recently, new young generation of Muslims represent agents of change for the halal industry. Young Muslims are becoming more aware of their identities and more attentive towards the requirements of their religion. They are different in their values and attitudes from the ‘traditionalists’. These young Muslims in the age-group of 15-35 are educated, tech savvy, connected and ready to engage. They use the knowledge of the world and experiences to improve their lives and those around them. Since they are tech savvy, and remain connected through social media, they are not shy from using technology to share and move ideas forward beyond their own geographic and cultural boundaries. This has significant implications on halal products as this new generation of Muslim consumers have the power to influence the marketability of any products using social media and making the Halal concept clearer for non-Muslims (Hughes & Malik, 2012). Ogilvy Noor (2010) revealed that this new Muslim consumer group forms a deep relationship with brands and seeks brands that embrace important values such as humility, transparency, purity and togetherness. Another prominent change in the lifestyle of the young Muslim is the inclination for convenience, ready-to-eat food rather than cooking from scratch. They also have a more sophisticated taste in food thus creating a demand for high-end halal products. The young consumer taste evolution, and these changing trends, not only promise a growing demand for halal foods but also require diversification of the halal market with a focus on ingredient origin, health benefits, and quality. (Hughes & Malik, 2012).

Studying and understanding young consumers’ perception towards halal food is an important area for prior researcher to investigate (Bergeaud- Blacker, 2006; Golnaz, Zainulabidin, Mad Nasir, & Eddie Chiew, 2010; Wilson, et al., 2013) . Previous studies tried to determine the differences perceptions between young Muslim and non-Muslim consumers towards halal food and concluded that food safety and hygienic environment significantly influence their consumption of Halal’s food. According to Canadian Agri-Food Trade Service Report (2008), in many non-Muslim countries, there is a strong demand for Halal products for both of young Muslims and non-Muslim customers. The Halal products popularity is growing among young non-Muslim customers due to humane animal treatment concerns and the perception that Halal products are healthier and safer.

Halal food is not a religious obligation for young non- Muslim consumers. Hence, Halal products must undergo a thorough inspection to ensure a clean and hygienic manufacturing process. Halal values can be popularized among young non-Muslim consumers if the society at large is made to be more aware of issues concerning health, animal rights, and safety (Golnaz, Zainulabidin, Mad Nasir, & Eddie Chiew, 2010).

According to previous studies Halal logo did play a role in the young Muslim and non- Muslim consumer’s purchase decision (Shaari & Nur Shahira , 2009; Golnaz, Zainulabidin, Mad Nasir, & Eddie Chiew, 2010). Young consumers had no means or time to check or obtain the necessary information on the products to satisfy their principles when making a purchase. Thus, the Halal logo is the label they can rely on in determining the Halal status of a product (Zakaria, 2008). Alternatively, the young Muslim consumers generally check and identified from which country a food product is originated before purchasing them (Ahmad, 2008).

Results and Discussion

In the past few decades the halal food trademark grows enormously and starts to appear in almost all over the world. Halal products are targeting Muslims consumers who want to consume products that compatible with their religious beliefs. Halal food principles are all about consuming clean food that don’t harm consumers by any way, and it covers

booth of food ingredients and production process. Another labelling strategy that used by food marketers nowadays is clean label. Clean label positioning depends on consumer perception for their needs to consume healthy foods that's free from harmful artificial ingredients which require food producers to be selective in choosing their products ingredients and production process. And since both of halal food and clean label concepts sharing the principles of being healthy and unharmed, we aimed in this study to identify the relationship between halal food and clean label by reviewing the previous literature that covered the two concept and examine the role of halal clean food for the new young Muslim and non- Muslim consumer and then investigate the role of halal clean food for the marketers as a branding element to attract new Muslim and non- Muslim markets and suggest a positioning strategy for marketers of halal food to target non-Muslims segment by using the clean label concept.

Conclusion

Basing on the preceding researches which reviewing the different definitions for clean label and halal food as a vital food, we can accomplish that halal rules are not only concerned only with safety, hygiene, and healthiness of the foods, but also offer a good guide for eating healthy standards. Similarly, halal food industry requests new technology and innovation. This study suffered from some limitless position for the food manufacturers, distributors, suppliers and marketers in Muslim and non- Muslim market. This research study is an initial point for the marketers to endorse and produce awareness among the consumers and to comprehend the need of halal clean food label to enhance the brand trustiness. Because many halal food products available in market have halal logo, it reflects that it is less credible. In this fact, we suggest halal food marketers as a positioning strategy that could aiming non-Muslim segment by introducing their product as a Halal clean label product.

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