THE INFLUENCE OF CROSS-GENERATION ATTITUDE ON HALAL FOOD PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The term 'halal' has been used as a tool by most food industries to attain competitive advantage. Nevertheless, the increase in demand for halal food products may be stunted due to the lack of awareness from the consumers, especially the younger generation. Young consumers may take halal issues lightly. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the influence of cross-generation (namely Generation X, Y and Z) attitude on halal food products. Data were collected from 410 respondents in Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia through an online survey. The data were analysed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA. The results indicated variances in cross-generation attitude towards halal food products. The study outcomes are beneficial for manufacturers in producing halal food products based on their intended group of consumers. Further study should look into determining the factors that may influence cross-generation attitudes on halal food products.

Key words: Halal, food product, generation X, generation Y, generation Z, consumers, attitude

INTRODUCTION

The demand for halal food products is estimated to expand due to the increasing number of Muslim population around the globe. For Muslims, religion is the main factor that helps shape their decisions (Abd Rahman, Asrarhaghighi & Ab Rahman, 2015) where it stimulates consumers' attitude, behaviour, purchase decision, and eating habit (Mansori, 2012). Religion and its teaching tend to influence the food consumption attitude (Abdul *et al.*, 2009). Prior studies claimed that halal is no longer considered a religious matter, as it is applicable in everyday life as a means to lead a safer, healthier, and better life (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011; Nor Ardayanti *et al.*, 2013; Norrakiah *et al.*, 2015).

Apart from religion, there are various other factors that can influence consumers' attitude towards halal products, such as trust and certainty (Abdul *et al.*, 2009), halal certification (Bonne & Verbeke, 2006), cleanliness and price (Kordnaeij *et al.*, 2013), advertisement (De Chernatony, 2010; Wang, 2013), environment, surrounding people (subjective norms) (Suddin *et al.*, 2009; Kordnaeij *et al.*, 2013), availability of the products (Kordnaeij *et al.*, 2013), and product quality (Ahmad & Juhdi, 2010; Wang, 2013). In addition, respondents from different generations perceive this matter rather differently (Greene, 2004; Evelyn, Eva & Robin, 2011; Lazarevic, 2012).

The present generations, in general, are categorised into three, namely, generations X, Y, and Z. Generation X refers to those who were born between 1965 and 1979. They are regarded as innovative, media savvy, reluctant, and pretentious (Littrell *et al.*, 2005; Jackson, Stoel & Bradley, 2011). Meanwhile, generation Y are those who were born between 1980 and 1994 (McCrindle, 2009) and represent 40% of Malaysia's populace (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011). This generation is exposed to different choices and decisions in obtaining products or services (Evelyn *et al.,* 2011), making them appear less loyal to one particular brand as to another generation cohorts (Greene, 2004; Lazarevic, 2012). Lastly, Generation Z comprises of those who were born between 1995 and 2000 (McCrindle, 2009). They are techno-savvy as their everyday life basically relies on machines, internet, gadgets or any other technological instruments (Shatto & Erwin, 2016) including in

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consuming high technology food processing (Kraus *et al.,* 2017). Therefore, prior to making a purchase, they are able to gather relevant information regarding the product or services they seek.

Although the demand for halal food products is increasing worldwide, halal awareness among the Malaysian generations is still uncertain. A previous review reported that the younger generations in Malaysia are lacking in halal awareness (Krishnan *et al.*, 2017). There are various factors that have led to these findings (Isa, Parhan & Ismail, 2015; Yang, 2017). Yang (2017) mentioned that packaging conditions, the quality of the food products, service quality and reputation of the producers influence the halal purchasing behaviour among consumers. According to Golnaz *et al.* (2012), most of the younger generations are ingenuous towards religious matters, when compared to the older generation due to lack of exposure in education, information, and religious practices. Although Isa *et al.* (2015) reported that both Muslim and non-Muslim youths do possess a high level of halal awareness, their findings could be biased and may fail to generalise the young generation in Malaysia due to a small test population. On the contrary, Yang (2017) reported that age, education level and occupation of the consumers were not significantly influenced their purchasing behaviour towards halal food products. Hence, this study investigated the influence of cross-generation on their attitude in regard to halal food products using a larger test group.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional survey method was conducted via social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp applications, among consumers in Selangor. The initial screening question posed referred to their year of birth so as to ensure that the respondents fulfilled the two inclusion criteria. First, only respondents who fell into the three generations were recruited for the survey, namely Generations X until Z. Second, the respondents should currently reside in Selangor area for which they were required to provide their residential postcode. The data collection process took almost three weeks in September 2018.

The bilingual (Malay and English languages) questionnaire employed in this study was adapted from Awan *et al.* (2015). The questionnaire was segmented into two sections: socio-demographic profiles and consumer attitudes towards halal food products (6 items). The responses were measured using the four-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly Disagree (SD), (2) Disagree (D), (3) Agree (A), and (4) Strongly Agree (SA). The mid-point scale was excluded in order to help the respondents make a definite decision and to avoid a neutral or intermediate position (Garland, 1991). Prior to the actual survey, the questionnaire items were validated by a selected panel of experts within the subject area. The overall reliability of the questionnaire was tested among 60 respondents residing outside the state of Selangor, where it displayed a good Cronbach's alpha value of 0.954. The data were then analysed using SPSS (SPSS Inc., version 24) for descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to investigate how cross-generation may influence their attitudes upon halal food products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profiles

Of the 420 responses received, only 410 (97.6%) fulfilled the inclusion criteria and were subjected to further analyses. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. A majority of the respondents were males (n = 213, 52%) and married (n = 226, 55.1%). Almost equal distribution of age was observed, where 35.9% belonged to Generation Z (n = 147), 31.7% were Generation Y (n = 130) and 32.4% were Generation X (n = 133). Most of the

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents in this study

Characteristic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	213	52
Female	196	47.8
Group age		
18-23 (Gen Z)	147	35.9
24-38 (Gen Y)	130	31.7
39-53 (Gen X)	133	32.4
Marital Status		
Single	226	55.1
Married	184	44.9
Religion		
Muslim	302	73.7
Non-muslim	108	26.3
Occupation		
Government	98	23.9
Private	128	31.2
Self-Employed	26	6.3
Student	148	36.1
Unemployed	10	2.4

Table 2. Consumer attitude towards halal food products (n = 410)

Item	Mean	SD
Halal products are easily available in any food markets.	3.524	0.581
When I am going to purchase a product, I will look for the Halal certificate.	3.766	0.508
I believe that consuming Halal food are beneficial to my health.	3.82	0.433
The probability I would buy Halal food products is very high.	3.546	0.756
I am very particular regarding my food choice, especially Halal foods.	3.227	1.162
I am rather not to buy food that does not have a Halal certificate even though it is commonly eaten by Muslim.	2.868	1.294
Overall	**3.459**	**0.574**

respondents were Muslims (n = 302, 73.7%) and were either working in the government or the private sector (55.1%).

Consumer attitude towards halal food products

The consumer attitude towards halal food products is summarised in Table 2. The overall mean score for the consumer attitude towards halal food products was 3.459 (SD 0.574). "I believe that consuming Halal food are beneficial to my health" (M = 3.82, SD = 0.433) obtained the highest mean score followed by "When I am going to purchase a product, I will look for Halal certificate" (M = 3.766, SD = 0.508) and "The probability I would buy Halal food products is very high" (M = 3.546, SD = 0.0.756). The findings indicate that consumers have a positive attitude towards halal food products. This supports the study conducted by Khalek, Ismail & Ibrahim (2017) where they reported that 95% of the consumers agreed that halal food is healthy. In addition, halal food is also symbolic of adherence to Islamic law.

The respondents in this study were found to look for the halal certification when they purchased products (M = 3.766, SD = 0.508) which supported the findings reported by Khalek (2014). Nevertheless, their attitude towards buying halal products was also influenced by other peoples where item "I am rather not to buy food that does not have Halal certificate even though it is commonly eaten by Muslim" was scored the lowest (M = 2.868, SD = 1.294). This finding is in accordance with the study carried out by Khalek (2014), which reported that slightly more than 20% of the young Muslim consumers will dine in a non-halal food outlet and that peoples' perception can affect consumer's decision in choosing halal or non-halal food products.

Influence of cross-generation attitude towards halal food products

One-way ANOVA was used to examine if generations X, Y, and Z influenced the consumer's attitude on halal food products. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for each of the three generations. An alpha level of 0.05 was used for all analyses. The test of homogeneity of variance was significant (Levene $F_{(2, 407)} = 36.800$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the equal variance assumption was violated. Hence, adjusted F statistics was used, which was the Welch statistics. The Welch statistics was selected because it is more robust when compared to the Brown-Forsythe test.

The one-way ANOVA output revealed a statistically significant main effect, Welch's $F_{(2,243.773)} = 42.390$, $P < 0.05$, indicating that there were generation differences in attitudes towards halal food products. The estimated omega squared (ω^2) was calculated using the following formula:

$$est.\omega 2 = \frac{df\,(F-1)}{df\,(F-1) + Ntotal}\,; \text{ where } df = 2,\ F = 42.390,\ N = 410$$

The estimated omega squared was 0.168 ($\omega^2 = 0.168$), indicating that approximately 16.8% of the total variation on attitudes towards halal food products was attributable to differences in cross-generation.

In addition, post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell post hoc procedure had been performed to determine the pair that differed significantly among the three generations. The results summarised in Table 4 indicated that generation Z (M = 3.730, SD = 0.364) scored a significantly higher average for attitude towards halal food products than generations Y (M = 3.186,

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the three generations (Gen X, Y and Z)

Generation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Z	147	3.730	0.364
Y	130	3.186	0.632
X	133	3.425	0.574
Total	**410**	**3.459**	**0.574**

Table 4. Post Hoc results for consumer attitude towards halal food products by cross-generation

Generation	Mean	Mean Differences ($X_i - X_j$) (Effect sizes are indicated in parentheses)		
		Z	Y	X
Z	3.730	–		
Y	3.186	-0.544* (1.055)	–	
X	3.425	-0.305* (0.635)	0.239* (0.396)	–

Note: *$p < 0.05$

SD = 0.632) and Z (M = 3.425, SD = 0.574) with effect size of 1.055 and 0.635, respectively. In addition, the results also revealed that Generation Y exhibited a significantly lower preference for halal food products when compared to generation X with an effect size of 0.396. One of the reasons that possibly leads to the findings was older generations are more religious than the younger ones (Golnaz *et al*., 2012).

Based on the findings, the attitude towards halal food products significantly differed among the cross-generations. The various reasons that contributed to the differences include advertisement (Kordnaeij *et al*., 2013), subjective norm (Basha *et al*., 2015; Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017), religion (Abd Rahman *et al.,* 2015), quality of halal products (Ayyub, 2015; Soh, Razaei & Gu, 2017), attitude towards other products, and consumption barriers (Kordnaeij *et al.,* 2013). Similarly, further efforts should be made by the government including the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) in improving the consumer's knowledge and awareness towards halal food products since their level of knowledge and awareness can influence their purchasing attitude (Bashir *et al*., 2018) and behaviour (Hamdan *et al*., 2013; Khalek, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This research investigated the influence of cross-generation on consumers' attitude towards halal food products. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there were significant differences among the attitudes of Generations X, Y, and Z towards halal products. Hence, future study is needed to understand the possible factors that may influence these generations to have different attitudes upon halal food products. The findings obtained can help the manufacturers and industry players to produce products according to their target age group.

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