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Predictors of Halal Product Awareness and Its Relationship with Purchasing Intention

Evidence from Turkey *

Metin Saygılı
Nihal Sututemiz

Abstract: Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship of halal product awareness and purchasing intention by using the health consciousness, subjective norms and halal certificate information of Muslim consumers as predictors. In this study where the Theory of Planned Behavior was taken as a basis, a quantitative research design was followed. In this context, the population of the study included Muslim consumers in Turkey at and over the age of 18 who have purchasing capacity. The drop-collect and online questionnaire technique was utilized in the study to collect the data. The data of a total of 2289 participants were included in the analysis. In testing the research model, the Structural Equation Modeling method which is a multivariate and sophisticated type of analysis was employed. The results showed that halal product awareness had a positive effect on the purchasing intentions of the participants for halal products. Additionally, it was determined that the three variables taken as the predictors of halal product awareness had statistically significant effects on halal product awareness. The variable with the highest effect among these variables was halal certificate information.

Keywords: Halal product awareness, halal certificate, health consciousness, subjective norms, purchase intention, halal product.

JEL Classification: M30, M31

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@ Asst. Prof., Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, msaygili@subu.edu.tr, 0000-0001-6920-822X
Assoc. Prof., Sakarya University, nihals@sakarya.edu.tr, 0000-0002-8964-7198

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Introduction

The start of consumers, producers, retailers and employees to mobilize as an integrated construct in the global economy has directed people towards a modern lifestyle. Such a lifestyle allows the formation of worldwide demand by consumers for products that are compatible with the values proposed by the religion of Islam (Elasrag, 2016). While firms that are aware that halal and haram are concepts that shape the lives of Muslim consumers are producing products that will meet the wishes and needs of Muslim consumers, they conduct design and marketing activities in a way that considers these consumers' sensitivity for halal (Dinçer & Bayram, 2017, p. 27).

The consumption of halal products by more people may be possible by making them aware with accurate and scientific information and increasing their awareness. Awareness regarding halal products should not be limited to only food products, but it should also be reflected on other categories such as personal care, cosmetics, and cleaning products. As the issue of halal is discussed alongside issues such as health, cleanliness, hygiene, safety, and quality, the topic of halal product consumption and healthy living is among the top topics that need to be also investigated in the scientific sense and preserve their currency.

In the foundations of understanding the consumer, knowing about the knowledge and awareness levels of the consumer towards the product (good and service) constitutes importance. This is because a positive attitude towards a good or service affects purchasing intention positively, while a positive intention constitutes the basis of a positive behavior.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between halal product awareness and purchasing intention alongside the effects of health consciousness, subjective norms and halal certificate information on halal awareness in Turkey, which is a country where Muslim consumers holding Islamic beliefs constitute the majority of the population. Studies in Turkey have generally focused on halal foods, not other halal products. However, this study focuses on all product groups, not just halal foods.

In light of the findings to be obtained in this study, if firms consider the results of this study in forming their marketing strategies towards halal products, they will obtain findings that they may utilize in positioning their products and market segmentation. Additionally, considering the elements of the marketing mix of firms, the study will shed light on making inferences regarding especially products and promotion.

Moreover, this study is also expected to provide benefits regarding which steps should be taken by the institutions and organizations of the state about halal certificates and halal awareness.

Theoretical Background

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which was developed by Ajzen (1991), is one of the frequently used ones among social cognitive models. TPB proposes the view that the behaviors of the individual do not take place merely by their own will, but attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control towards the behavior also determine their intention towards the behavior, and behavior is formed depending on this intention (Ajzen, 1991). TPB, which argues that the intention of the individual towards performing a behavior is the most significant determinant on the individual's conduct of that behavior, assumes that individuals display rational behaviors, they consider usable information, and they explicitly or implicitly assess the outcomes of their behaviors (Ajzen, 2005).

TPB has been included among theories that have been frequently utilized in studies conducted for the purpose of explaining consumer behavior towards halal products (Ali et al., 2017; Endah, Daryanti & Hati, 2017; Kaplan & Gezen, 2017; Khan, Asad & Mehboob, 2017; Nursalwani & Zulariff, 2017; Rimadhani, Baga & Sahara, 2017; Bakar, Shahwahid & Eksan, 2018; Elseidi, 2018; Haque et al., 2018; Sherwani et al., 2018; Bashir et al., 2019), and it has been used in explaining purchasing intention. In the scope of this study, TPB will be taken as a basis in explaining purchasing intention towards halal products.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Subjective Norms and Halal Awareness

In studies conducted in the context of "*halal*", subjective norms and halal awareness have usually been included as independent variables. Nevertheless, to provide inferences regarding the relationship between subjective norms and halal (product) awareness, the direction and magnitude of the relationship were examined on the basis of correlation analyses. In the study they conducted to investigate purchasing intentions towards halal food products, Bashir et al. (2019) determined a positive relationship between subjective norms and awareness.

In this study where the theoretical framework of TPB was taken as a basis, halal product awareness was associated with attitude, which is one of the main

variables of TPB. In the literature, there are studies revealing that there is a relationship between halal product awareness and attitudes (Abd Rahman, Asrarhaghighi & Abd Rahman, 2015; Aziz & Chok, 2013; Hamdan et al., 2013; Bashir et al., 2019). There are also studies suggesting that subjective norms affect attitudes or are related to attitudes (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005; Khalek & Ismail, 2015). While Lada, Tanakinjal and Amin (2009) found a positive effect of subjective norms on attitudes towards halal products, studies by Hall and Sevim (2016), Endah, Daryanti and Hati (2017) and Kaplan and Gezen (2017) found a positive relationship between subjective norms and attitudes towards halal products. As mentioned before, it is clear that knowledge lies at the center of halal awareness. Abd Rahman, Asrarhaghighi and Ab Rahman (2015) stated that knowledge refers to the facts, emotions or experiences known by a person or a group of people. Considering this context, as knowledge provides the main inputs in the formation of halal awareness, and considering subjective norms as a source of knowledge, these play a critical role in the emergence and development of halal product awareness. Furthermore, Aziz and Wahab (2013) determined a positive relationship between knowledge regarding halal products and attitudes.

In light of this information, the following hypothesis was proposed for the relationship between subjective norms and halal product awareness:

H_1: Subjective norms have a positive effect on halal product awareness.

Halal Certificate and Halal Awareness

A halal certificate is a concept referring to the procedures, materials used, preparation, slaughtering, cleaning, handling and processing, transportation and distribution processes required for producing a product and offering it to the consumer (Lada, Tanakinjal & Amin, 2009; Shaari & Arifin, 2010). For this reason, a halal certificate is a safety guarantee showing that the product Muslims will have has been produced in compliance with Islamic rules.

A halal certificate is also an indicator of quality, clean and hygienic products. A halal certificate (logo-label) displayed on the package of the product will directly affect Muslim consumers in consuming this product, and the feeling of safety and relaxation experienced in the consumption of the product will increase the trust and interest of consumers in terms of purchasing (Nurcahyo & Hudrasyah, 2017).

The familiarity of consumers with product components has the potential to influence their decisions regarding "whether it is halal or not". Most consumers have substantial knowledge and awareness on what they are consuming. This knowledge

and awareness are usually collected through the contents, labels, certificates and logos displayed on the product (Wandel, 1997). Thus, the certificate information affects awareness. Additionally, the knowledge level regarding the contents of the product may provide clues to explaining what types of reactions people give in their purchasing behaviors. As a halal certificate provides a guarantee on the substances found in the content and composition of the product, it is seen as a variable that needs to be considered in influencing and explaining purchasing intention.

Halal certificates have been used by Salehudin and Lutfhi (2011) and Awan, Siddiquei and Haider (2015) in studies where TPB was used as a theoretical construct by inclusion in the model for this theory. In the study by Aziz and Chok (2013) that was conducted to develop a halal product purchasing behavior model and test it, the effects of a halal certificate on purchasing intention were investigated. Hussain et al. (2016) also carried out a similar study and examined the effects of a halal certificate on attitudes towards halal products. In the study, it was also assumed that a halal certificate is a determinant in forming positive attitudes.

In the case of the purchase of a halal product, the behavioral beliefs of the individual will determine whether they will have a positive or negative attitude regarding purchasing (Wilson, 2014). Omar, Muhammad and Omar (2008) revealed that properties such as product contents, a halal certificate/logo and ownership had a significant relationship with the attitudes of consumers towards halal products. The studies by Shafie and Othman (2006) and Ambali and Bakar (2014) produced similar results and demonstrated that Muslim consumers approach products with a halal certificate positively while choosing the products they would purchase. With this aspect, a halal certificate serves as a guarantee in terms of forming a positive attitude towards products. Taking TPB as a basis, the relationship between a halal certificate and awareness may be associated with attitudes.

The Islamic values shared among Muslim consumers reveal their necessity to take halal logos into account due to their function of providing information in purchasing intentions and decisions. Therefore, the information to be obtained from the halal certificate is also an important factor in construction of halal awareness (Muhamad, Leong & Isa, 2017).

Tatlı, Erdem and Arpacık (2017) reached the conclusion that a halal certificate is among the factors that determine the halal food awareness and attitudes of consumers and are found important in halal food consumption. In this context, with the information provided by a halal certificate, Muslims may have more information and be aware of the contents of the products that they are planning to purchase or consume (Azam, 2016). For this reason, the following hypothesis

was proposed on the relationship between halal certificate information and halal product awareness:

H_2: Halal certificate information has a positive effect on halal product awareness.

Health Consciousness and Halal Awareness

According to the Islamic point of view, consumer products are considered as products allowed by Allah that are clean, healthy and suitable for consumption (Alom & Haque, 2011, p. 77). It is out of the question for something that is not suitable for human health to be accepted by Muslims. In this case, Muslim consumers who have health consciousness need to prefer halal products that do not contain any component in their content that is harmful in terms of health (Bonne et al., 2007, cited in Ambali & Bakar, 2013).

When people have become more conscious about health, their halal principles are no longer limited to piety, but they also become an attractive, healthy and hygienic consumption style and lifestyle (Quantaniah, Noreina & Syakinah, 2013, p. 444). In this context, the consumption of halal products is useful not only for physical health but also for spiritual development. This is because, by consuming halal products, a Muslim not only becomes healthy but also abides by the commands of Allah. This is why Muslim consumers are much like other consumer segments that demand healthy and quality products that need to be compatible with the requirements of the religion of Islam (Al-Harran & Low, 2008).

It is clear that health consciousness is important in determining the purchasing intentions of Muslim consumers towards halal products. TPB provides significant contributions in being able to predict behaviors, and health consciousness is among variables that are discussed in the scope of TPB (Hussain et al., 2016; Hoque, Alam & Nahid, 2018; Widodo, 2013; Kaplan & Gezen, 2017; Elseidi, 2018).

Amat, As'hari and Sundram (2014) investigated the effects of health consciousness on attitudes towards halal products by proposing a relationship between health consciousness and attitudes. Elseidi (2018) concluded that there is a relationship between the purchasing attitudes of consumers towards halal-labeled food products and their health-related perceptions, while health perceptions affect attitudes towards the products in question. Hoque, Alam and Nahid (2018) found a statistically significant relationship between health consciousness and attitudes. In their study conducted based on the theoretical framework of TPB, Widodo (2013) revealed that the health perceptions of consumers have a significant and positive effect on their attitudes towards halal products.

Kaplan and Gezen (2017) determined a positive relationship between health consciousness and attitudes towards halal products. Based on this, a relationship is expected to exist between the consciousness levels and halal product awareness of Muslim consumers who value their health. For this reason, the third hypothesis of the study was formed as follows:

H_3: Health consciousness has a positive effect on halal product awareness.

Halal Awareness and Purchasing Intention

Hamdan et al. (2013) found that the most important factor in the halal food purchasing preferences of Muslim consumers was their knowledge level regarding being interested in the product. The findings of their study showed that the knowledge (awareness and/or familiarity) levels of Muslim consumers regarding processed products were one of the factors effective in the formation of their purchasing intentions and decisions.

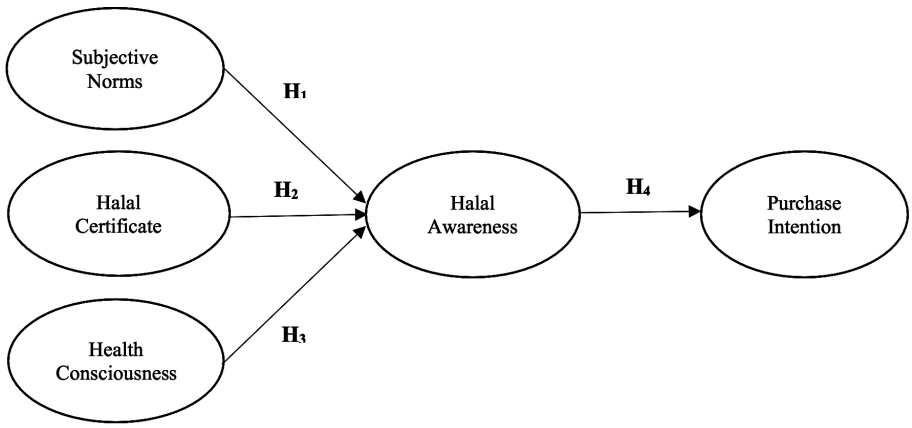
In the study conducted by Ansari and Mohammed (2015) based on TPB, while the effects of attitude, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms on the halal product purchasing decisions of Muslim consumers were being investigated, the awareness of consumers regarding halal products was considered as a fourth factor that may affect purchasing decisions.

Bashir et al. (2019) observed that awareness affected purchasing intention and purchasing behavior. Azam (2016), Aziz and Chok (2013), Masnono (2005), Yunus et al. (2014) and Zakaria et al. (2016) found that halal awareness has a positive effect on purchasing intention. On the other hand, Nurcahyo and Hudrasyah (2017) could not find an effect of halal awareness on halal product purchasing intentions. This finding produced outcomes that supported the idea that halal awareness does not affect halal product purchasing intentions similarly to the findings of the studies by Awan, Siddiquei and Haider (2015), Jamari, Samingin and Sundram (2014), Majid, Sabir and Ashraf (2015), Krishnan et al. (2017) and Bashir et al. (2019). As seen here, studies on this topic have produced conflicting results. Based on this, it is expected that awareness, which is an output of the state of being conscious, has an effect on purchasing intentions. This is why the fourth hypothesis of the study was expressed as follows:

H_4: Halal product awareness has a positive effect on halal product purchasing intention.

According to the hypotheses given above, a conceptual model was developed and is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Research Model



Method

Sample and Data Collection

For the objective of this study, an explanatory research design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of Muslim consumers in Turkey at or over the age of 18 who had purchasing capacity. However, due to the impossibility of reaching this entire population, the sample was determined by using the convenience sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling method. The online questionnaire method was utilized as a data collection tool. The questionnaire was applied on 2385 people at or over the age of 18 years who agreed to respond to the questions by considering the objectives of the study and depending on the principle of volunteerism. Ninety-six questionnaire forms filled out by those whose responses to the Likert-type items were all the same and those who did not completely answer the questions were removed from the analysis. The analyses of the data were carried out on the forms of 2289 participants who met the specified criteria. This way, the ratio of the acceptable questionnaire forms to all forms that were returned was 96%.

As the type of analysis to be used in the study was Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), which is a multivariate and complex analysis method, it was important that the sample in question had a sufficient size. There is no absolute standard regarding sample size in SEM applications. It was shown in the literature that larger samples generally produce more stable solutions with a higher probability of repeatability, but decisions on sample size should be taken based on a set of fac-

tors. For example, there are various minimum sample sizes recommended based on the complexity of the model, missing data and the presence of a construct with fewer than three indicators (Hair, Anderson, Babin & Black, 2010). Additionally, "in the relationship between sample size and the complexity of the model, it is recommended that the ratio of the number of subjects to the number of model parameters is 20:1 or 10:1. If this ratio is smaller than 5:1, one should approach the statistical consistency of the results with suspicion" (Kline, 1998, p. 112). The measurements in our model contained 42 indicators. Additionally, the model did not contain a latent structure with missing data and less than three indicators. Considering all regression weights and variances that needed to be estimated, the total number of parameters became 88. If we considered the ratio of 20:1, we would need to have a minimum of 1760 participants. In this study, for the consistency of the results, 2289 participants were reached. The number of the participants was approximately 25 times the number of the parameters to be calculated. Such a sample size was suitable for the criteria in the literature.

Measures

All variables included in the questionnaire were measured by using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1: Absolutely disagree, 2: disagree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Agree, 5: Absolutely agree). The items of the scale were adapted from studies where valid and reliable measurements were achieved. In this context, to measure halal certificate information in the study, 14 statements in the studies by Shaari and Arifin (2010) and Awan, Siddiquei and Haider (2015) were adapted to this study. To measure health consciousness, 8 statements in the studies by Shaharudin et al. (2010) and Kaplan and Gezen (2017) were adapted to halal products and included in this study. In the measurement of subjective norms, 6 statements obtained by utilizing the studies by Khalek and Ismail (2015) and Kaplan and Gezen (2017) were adapted to this study. Halal product awareness was measured by 8 statements adapted from the studies by Ambali and Bakar (2014), Hasan (2016) and Rahim, Shafii, and Shahwan (2013). In the measurement of halal product purchasing intention, by utilizing the studies by Lada, Tanakinjal and Amin (2009), Haque et al. (2015), Varinli, Erdem and Yıldız (2012), and Aditami (2016), 6 statements were adapted to this study.

Before starting the final study, meetings were health with three academicians and two experts to assess the face validity of the scale (Davis, Golicic & Marquardt, 2009; Edward, George & Sarkar, 2012).

Analysis and Results

The data were tested by Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) by using the AMOS 24 program. This process firstly involves the testing of the measurement model for validity and reliability by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and then involves the testing of the structural model by SEM (Anderson & Gerbing, 1998).

The measurement model was assessed in terms of the fit indices, regression weights and modification indices (MI). Thus, the fit indices of the model obtained as a result of the CFA were χ^2/df=13.819; GFI=.768; AGFI=.741; TLI=.832; CFI=.842, and RMSEA=.075. As these findings were not on an acceptable level (Mishra & Datta, 2011; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger & Müller, 2003), they showed the necessity of improving the model. This is why the standardized regression weights (loadings) and modification indices (MI) of the variables included in the model were analyzed. By removing the variables that did not explain the relevant construct sufficiently or had low weights and the variables that showed high correlations with a high number of variables, the analysis was repeated. After this change, the fit indices of the measurement model were reassessed, and the findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Results of the Post-Revision Measurement Model

Construct	**Standardized Loadings (λ)***
Subjective Norms	
Most people I value choose halal products.	.765
People may influence me for consumption of halal products.	.787
My family members prefer halal products.	.805
My friends may think I should choose halal products.	.678
Halal Certificate	
A halal certificate provides guarantee that the product is halal.	.687
When I purchase a product, I demand a halal-certificated product.	.862
Halal-certificated products are more attractive than those without a halal certificate.	.697
Halal certificate is important for me in product selection.	.878
Halal product selection is based on the halal certificate on the product.	.588

Health Consciousness	
I make many sacrifices to protect my health.	.756
Eating healthy is important for me.	.800
I keep my health in mind in many activities I perform in my life.	.823
I am prepared to leave many foods out of my life to stay healthy.	.740
I think about my health.	.834
I am sensitive to changes in my health.	.780
I take responsibility for my health status.	.816
I identify as a person with health consciousness.	.752
Halal Awareness	
I am highly conscious about halal product consumption.	.873
I know and am familiar with halal products.	.764
I know the properties of a halal product.	.763
Purchase Intention	
I will think about purchasing halal products.	.867
I will think about directing my purchasing preferences towards halal products.	.880
I am planning to spend more on halal products.	.840
I go to a store with the expectation of purchasing a halal product.	.831
I absolutely want to purchase halal products in the near future.	.892
I recommend my family and friends to purchase halal products.	.881
χ2/df:= 4.773 **CFI:** .955 **GFI:** .945 **AGFI:** .973 **TLI:** .973 **RMSEA:** .041	

The findings shown in Table 1 demonstrated that each statement sufficiently explained the relevant construct (Hair et al., 2010). The post-revision measurement model fit indices showed an excellent fit with the data at hand.

Reliability

The reliability of each construct found in the measurement model was tested with Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) analyses, and the findings are shown in Table 2. The Cronbach's Alpha and CR values of the constructs were higher than the critical value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010, p. 710), and the AVE values were higher than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These findings showed the internal consistency of the statements measuring each construct and indicated that the constructs were reliable. The CR and AVE values are also used in testing the validity of constructs.

Table 2
Reliability and Validity of the Constructs

	Cronbach's α	**CR**	**AVE**
Subjective Norms	.834	.845	.578
Halal Certificate	.863	.863	.563
Health Consciousness	.928	.929	.621
Halal Awareness	.868	.843	.643
Behavioral Intention	.949	.947	.749

CR *(Composite Reliability)* $= (\Sigma\lambda)^2 / [(\Sigma\lambda)^2 + \Sigma e]$; *AVE (Average Variance Extracted)* $= \Sigma \lambda^2 / [\Sigma\lambda^2 + \Sigma e]$; $e=1-\lambda$

Validity

The validity of the constructs was tested based on convergent validity and discriminant validity. To test convergent validity, firstly the standardized regression weights of the variables in Table 2 were assessed. The standardized regression weight of each variable was found to be higher than the value of 0.50, indicating convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity was also tested through the values of CR and AVE. Hair et al. (2010) emphasized that the AVE value needs to be larger than 0.5 (AVE>0.5), and the CR value needs to be larger than the AVE value (CR>AVE). As seen in Table 3, the CR values were larger than the AVE values, and the AVE values were larger than 0.5 for all constructs. Accordingly, convergent validity was achieved for the constructs.

For discriminant validity, against a "restricted model" where the correlations among all dimensions were fixed to "1", an "unrestricted model" where the interdimensional correlations were left at the variable values was tested (Bagozzi, Yi & Phillips, 1991). For this test, the hypothesis H_0: $\Phi_{iJ}=1$. Φ_{iJ} refers to the interdimensional correlation coefficients. Table 3 presents the χ^2 and df values and their differences for the restricted and unrestricted models. If the difference in χ^2 ($\Delta\chi^2$) between the two models is greater than the critical table value for 10, which is the difference in degrees of freedom (Δdf), H_0 is rejected. This way, discriminant validity, which shows that each construct is a separate construct, is achieved.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity Results

Models	χ^2	**Degrees of Freedom (df)**
Restricted model	2598.540	293
Unrestricted model	1350.891	283
$\Delta\chi^2$	**1247.649**	
Δdf		**10**

As the findings in Table 3 showed that the $\Delta\chi^2$ =1247.649 value was greater than the ${}_{10}\chi^2_{0.05}$ = 18.31 table value, the hypothesis H_0 was rejected, and discriminant validity was provided.

Test of Hypotheses

After confirming the measurement model in terms of construct validity and reliability, the proposed hypotheses were tested by SEM using the Maximum-Likelihood Estimation method.

Accordingly, all paths between constructs must be only from the predictive construct to the outcomes. The goodness of fit statistics of the model were found as χ^2/df=4.842; GFI= .955; AGFI= .944; TLI=.973; CFI= .976 and RMSEA=.041. These findings showed the excellent fit of the model with the data at hand.

The causal effects between the constructs in the model were assessed with standardized regression weights, t-values and p-values. The findings are shown in Table 4. The Table also shows the results of the hypothesis tests.

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing Results

Causal Effects	**Std. Reg. Weights (β)**	**t**	**p**	**Results**
Subjective Norms → Halal Awareness	.493	16.846	<.001	H_1 Accepted
Halal Certificate → Halal Awareness	.521	17.799	<.001	H_2 Accepted
Health Consciousness → Halal Awareness	.089	6.418	<.001	H_3 Accepted
Halal Awareness → Purchase Intention	.895	30.930	<.001	H_4 Accepted
R^2_{HA} =.98 R^2_{PI}=.802				

All structural coefficients in the model were found to be statistically significant, and all hypotheses were accepted. The relative effect of halal certificates on halal

product awareness was the highest (β=.521; p<.001). This was followed respectively by subjective norms (β=.493; p<.001) and health consciousness (β=.089; p<.001). The rate of the total variance in halal product awareness explained by these three constructs was found as .98. This value showed that almost the entire variation in halal product awareness could be explained by the three constructs in question. The variance of halal purchasing intention explained by halal product awareness was found as .802. This value showed that halal product awareness had a very high share in the halal product purchasing intentions of the consumers.

Conclusion and Discussion

In the study, the model proposed on the basis of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was tested. The findings showed that TPB is a model that could be used to explain purchasing intentions towards halal products.

The variables that were proposed to influence halal product awareness in this study were halal certificate information, subjective norms and health consciousness. These three independent variables explained 98% of the variance in halal product awareness. This means that we could explain halal product awareness excellently with these three variables. The relative significance of the effect of halal certificate information among the variables in question was found to be higher than the others (β=.521; p<0.001). Azam (2016) also showed that halal logos (certificates) are a determinant of awareness on halal foods and products. Ambali and Bakar (2014) presented similar results, and they found a positive effect of halal certificates on halal awareness. The results of the study by Erdem, Varinli and Yıldız (2015) showed that the awareness of Turkish consumers on halal certificates and their sensitivity towards these were very high. The findings of this study were similar.

The findings of Tatlı, Erdem and Arpacık (2017) demonstrated that halal certification was among the factors that determined the halal product awareness and attitudes of consumers and were considered in halal product consumption. In light of these findings, the effect of halal certificate information on halal product awareness that was obtained in this study was also supported in this aspect.

Subjective norms were found to be positively related to halal product awareness with an effect with significance in the second place (β=.493; p<0.001). This result was compatible with the findings of the study conducted by Bashir et al. (2019) to examine purchasing intentions towards halal food products.

Another variable whose effect on halal product awareness was examined was health consciousness. The effect of health consciousness on halal product aware-

ness was found to be positive and significant (***β***=.089; p<0.001). The findings obtained in this study were similar to those reported in the studies by Ambali and Bakar (2014), Kaplan and Gezen (2017), and Demirel and Yasarsoy (2017).

This study also investigated the halal product awareness of consumers and the effects of this awareness on halal product purchasing intentions, and it was concluded that halal product awareness positively affected purchasing intention (β=.895; p<.001). This situation indicated that the role of halal product awareness was very significant in the formation of the halal product purchasing intentions of the consumers. The observation of the effect of halal awareness in the formation of halal product purchasing intentions in a country where the vast majority of society are Muslim may be considered as an indicator that consumers have halal awareness in the products they purchase. Furthermore, in the society in question, although it would be an expected situation that Muslim individuals show sensitivity to the issue of halal in their exchanges, having knowledge on what a halal product is, or in other words, having halal product awareness constitutes importance.

Examining the relationships reported in the literature, the relationship between halal product awareness and purchasing intention turned out as expected (Masnono, 2005; Jamari, Samingin & Sundram, 2014; Yunus et al., 2014; Zakaria et al., 2016; Hamdan et al., 2013; Majid, Sabir & Ashraf, 2015; Krishnan et al., 2017). The results reported by Azam (2016) revealed that the effect of halal awareness on purchasing intention was positive. By discussing awareness as the capacity to perceive, feel and be aware of events and objects, Aziz and Chok (2013) showed that halal awareness affected purchasing intentions. In other words, the results obtained in this study were similar to those obtained in the aforementioned studies. On the other hand, Nurcahyo and Hudrasyah (2017) did not find a significant effect of halal awareness on halal product purchasing intentions. This finding produced outcomes supporting the idea that halal awareness does not affect halal product purchasing intention similarly to the findings of the study by Awan, Siddiquei and Haider (2015), and it was different to the results obtained in this study. Additionally, the results obtained in this study demonstrated that halal product awareness had a relatively strong effect on purchasing intentions (***β***=.895; p<0.001). While this result showed that different factors may have effects on halal purchasing intentions, halal product awareness creates a highly strong positive effect.

For the purpose of developing halal (product) awareness among consumers and providing information in this regard, it is important to use both conventional and social media tools. Important duties fall upon both producers/retailers and the state in this matter. For this reason, the following section provides recommenda-

tions for the state as a policymaking institution, firms that produce and market the products in question, and finally, researchers and academicians that are conducting and/or will conduct studies on halal products.

Implications

Academicians and Researchers

First of all, this study was taken on in a general sense without making any distinction on product type (i.e., food, cleaning, cosmetics), and it was conducted with Muslim participants in a Muslim-majority country. The application of the model that was used in this study on a certain product group and in different countries and/or cultural contexts, for example, on Muslims in a non-Muslim-majority country, may provide different results. Additionally, in future studies, the discussion of services that are outside consumer goods that were discussed in the context of this study may allow the assessment of the model in a different context in terms of "halal services".

Second of all, in this study, only halal product awareness was used as the predictor of halal product purchasing intention. In future studies, adding new variables involving halal marketing activities among these predictors may provide benefits in explaining halal product purchasing intentions. Another variable that could be added to the model may be "product contents". This is because consumers examine the content information of the products they purchase, and they may make their purchasing decisions accordingly. Examining the effects of this variable on both halal product awareness and halal product purchasing intentions may contribute to the assessment of the behaviors of consumers towards halal products.

Finally, in future studies, also examining the demographic, social and cultural environment factors in addition to economic factors, lifestyle, personal and psychological factors behind purchasing decisions, intentions and behaviors towards halal products is important in terms of a more in-depth investigation of the topic.

Firms and Implementers

The results obtained in this study revealed that the halal awareness of the consumers affected their purchasing intentions towards halal products positively and strongly. For this reason, it has become inevitable for firms to inform consumers regarding what is halal and especially halal certificates and to conduct work to increase halal product awareness. It is also important for firms to give priority to

promotion activities at the basis of the marketing activities they will carry out. Therefore, as the conduct of promotion activities (i.e., advertisement, announcement, publicity) in a way to embrace consumers with both religious and health-related sensitivities may have an effect to increase their halal product awareness, it will also be useful to increase the demand of consumers for halal products.

Considering the theoretical background, conceptual framework and research model in this study, information (halal certificate), consciousness (health consciousness), social influence (subjective norms) and awareness (halal product awareness) effective on the intentions and behaviors of consumers were discussed. Based on this, it is important for firms to conduct their market segmentation activities by taking these factors as a basis. This is because, with market segments to be defined based on these variables, it may be possible to develop strategies prioritizing the purchasing intentions of consumers. Moreover, positioning and promotion strategies for halal products may be developed by considering the information, consciousness, awareness and social influence dynamics of consumers.

Policymakers

Considering the results of this study, another important issue is the responsibility of the state and institutions of the state regarding halal product awareness. The results of this study showed that halal certificate information affected halal product awareness positively. Zailani, Fernando and Mohamed (2010) emphasized that the state should provide some incentives and measures (incentivizing measures) for the publicity and prevalence of halal certificates. Accordingly, the institutions and organizations of the state may conduct activities to provide information and increase awareness on halal-certificated products. Additionally, the state may support activities encouraging the sale of halal-certificated products with its institutions and organizations and provide support for the publicity of firms where halal-certificated products are sold and for these firms to be able to publicize their products.

What is more, the fact that the Muslim population around the world has an increasing momentum and that this population also has an increasing purchasing power allows the halal product market to be positioned among the fast-growing markets of the world. Considering this market in terms of its annual growth trend, it may be thought of as an attractive market. This is why it is important for firms to take their place in this market. Great responsibilities also fall upon states. With the necessary legal regulations and incentives, firms may be allowed to get a share of the market for themselves.

Another role falling upon the state about halal product awareness may be focusing on training and implementation efforts. This is because, as knowledge is the main component of awareness, the participation of consumers in informative education activities on halal products may provide an effect to increase halal product awareness. With collaboration to be made with universities and the support of academics on this issue, seminars and conferences to be given on the topic of halal products will also play an important role in the accurate understanding of consumers on the concept of halal product.

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