



HALAL FOOD KNOWLEDGE AMONG NON-MUSLIM FOOD-SERVICE WORKERS IN GENERAL SANTOS CITY, PHILIPPINES

PENGETAHUAN MAKANAN HALAL PADA PEKERJA JASA BOGA NON-MUSLIM DI GENERAL SANTOS CITY, FILIPINA

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the level of halal knowledge of non-Muslim food service workers in terms of the selection of ingredients and cooking procedures. It used a descriptive survey method with one hundred purposefully selected respondents. The researchers developed a test-type survey questionnaire aimed at identifying the level of halal knowledge of non-Muslim food service workers. Frequency counts, percentages, and means were used to analyze the data. Findings showed that workers' knowledge of the selection of ingredients is good and satisfactory for cooking procedures. The research aims to contribute to the limited research on halal knowledge in the area and provide recommendations on the practice and research of halal food knowledge.

Keywords: spiritual capital, mindset, behavior

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui tingkat pengetahuan terkait halal pada pekerja jasa boga dengan keyakinan non-Muslim, dari sudut pandang pemilihan bahan dan tata cara memasak. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode survei deskriptif dengan seratus responden yang dipilih secara sengaja. Para peneliti mengembangkan kuesioner survei tipe pengujian dengan tujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tingkat pengetahuan tentang halal pada pekerja jasa boga dengan keyakinan non-Muslim. Jumlah frekuensi, persentase, dan rata-rata digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa para pekerja memiliki pengetahuan yang baik tentang bahan makanan halal dan pengetahuan yang memuaskan pada prosedur memasak halal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk berkontribusi pada penelitian terbatas tentang pengetahuan halal di daerah tersebut dan memberikan rekomendasi pada praktik dan penelitian pengetahuan makanan halal.

Keywords: Modal spiritual, kerangka berpikir, perilaku

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INTRODUCTION

Along with being a meeting place for sellers and buyers, the traditional market also serves as a place Halal food is becoming a profitable industry in Muslim nations and non-Muslim ones. Halal food demand has skyrocketed in tandem with the growth of the world's 2.1 billion Muslim population (Datucali

& Sali, 2020). According to Tho (2019), consumers globally spend \$1.3 trillion on halal food and beverage goods, followed by \$270 billion on halal clothes, \$209 billion on halal media and entertainment, \$177 billion on halal travel, \$87 billion on halal medicines, and \$61 billion on halal cosmetics, estimating that the global halal sector will be worth \$3 trillion by 2023.

Given the global expansion of halal commerce, halal food items are no longer just a religious obligation but are also becoming a significant economic force both nationally and globally. Halal foods and drinks for a Muslim consumer mean that the products have met the requirements laid down by Shariah Law, whereas for a non-Muslim consumer, they represent the symbol of a hygiene, quality, and safety product as produced strictly under the Holistic Halal Assurance Management System (Wibowo & Ahmad, 2016).

The word "awareness" means knowing or understanding a particular subject or situation. The context of halal awareness can be conceptualized as the informing process for increasing levels of consciousness about what is permitted for Muslims to eat, drink, and use. It means having a particular interest in or experience with something and/or being well informed of what is happening at present with halal foods, drinks, and products. Halal food is defined by the ingredients of the product and covers other aspects such as safety and quality, handling, processing types of equipment, processing aids, packaging, storage, transportation, distribution, and retailing (Hasan, 2016). As stressed by Efendi (2020), "product knowledge" is consumer knowledge related to understanding product characteristics, the effects of using the product, and the level of satisfaction that the product will provide. Product knowledge can have an impact on consumer purchasing attitudes and behaviors. The demand for halal food is very high; for instance, halal food businesses and alike, including the factors that play vital roles in their operations, particularly their food-service workers, must have extensive knowledge of the products that they offer to cope with the drastic demands of their consumers and increase the extent of their halal food awareness to satisfy their customers.

With all the notions mentioned above, halal food consumption is undeniably growing in many countries around the world, one of which is the ASEAN country, the Philippines. Based on the data released by the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) in 2020, the Muslim population has increased in the country by an estimated 4-5 percent of the country's population. Particularly on the island of Mindanao, Philippines, in most of the cities and municipalities, especially in General Santos City, Halal food businesses and consumers are very apparent and visible. Halal foods are now patronized by both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

Moreover, the fundamental rationale of this research is to measure the extent or level of halal food knowledge of non-Muslim food-service workers in General Santos City, Philippines. The researchers decided to conduct this study because much of the research that is being undertaken and explored related to halal food knowledge commonly explores general consumers' perceptions and not from the perspective of food-service workers who are non-Muslims. They often look at the different factors that affect Muslim customers' product knowledge and purchasing behaviors. Still, they have not sufficiently explored the level of knowledge of individuals who are non-Muslims. The researchers also believe that by conducting this research, there will be recommendations and conclusions that the researchers will formulate to increase the knowledge and overall awareness of non-Muslim food-service workers regarding Halal foods, which will eventually help boost Halal food businesses. Halal food tourism in General Santos City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Halal Concept

Halal foods are those that are defined by Islamic nutritional laws as being lawful or permitted. Muslims avoid haram (forbidden) foods and beverages (Toronto Public Health, 2004). Halal is an Arabic term that means permissible or legal. It is the Qur'anic dietary standard in terms of food. Haram, which means unlawful or prohibited, is the polar opposite of halal. Halal and haram are concepts that can be applied to any aspect of life. Food, meat, cosmetics, personal care products, pharmaceuticals, food ingredients, and food contact materials are examples of these phrases (Islamic Council of Victoria, 2019).



All foods are considered halal, or lawful, by Islamic law, except for pork and its byproducts, animals slaughtered improperly, or those that were dead before killing. Animals were slaughtered in the name of anyone other than Allah, including predatory creatures, birds of prey, animals with no external ears (including some birds and reptiles), and blood, alcohol, and food. All of the seafood is halal. Muslims are cautious about the ingredients in their cuisine, which requires them to be skilled readers of components. Food ingredients derived from multiple sources, such as gelatin, emulsifiers, and enzymes, necessitate some research on the part of the Muslim consumer to determine whether they are permissible (El-Zibdeh, 2009). Halal was thought to pertain primarily to meat and poultry, specifically the method of slaughter. This has subsequently expanded to include non-meat foods such as dairy, baked goods, snacks, confectionery, ready-made meals, and other processed food and beverage products (International Trade Centre, 2015).

The worldwide halal sector is worth \$4 trillion (including Islamic finance) and is predicted to grow to \$7 trillion in three years. The growing Muslim population, GDP growth in Muslim countries, emerging halal markets and players, Muslim lifestyle offerings, and the halal ecosystem drive the halal industry forward. These reasons promote the global expansion of the halal business while also offering opportunities in various market segments of the economy (Azam and Abdullah, 2020).

Halal Knowledge

Knowledge is information, understanding, or skill that you get from experience or education (Merriam-Webster). It is an awareness of something or the state of being aware of something. Halal knowledge is about how the Muslim individual should digest and practice some Islamic teachings regarding halal and haram (Sadeeqa et al., 2013). Most non-South African consumers are aware of the importance of halal food products. This might be due to adequate knowledge and familiarity with halal and the benefits of consuming halal food products. It shows that non-South African consumers' attitudes have a significant positive relationship with their intention to purchase halal food products (Abdalla, 2018). Increasing understanding of what is and is not acceptable under halal slaughter could change views toward halal animal products among non-Muslims and Muslims who are unsure about the requirements of their religious tradition (Jalil et al., 2018).

Choosing halal food is a religious necessity for Muslim customers based on Islamic principles. Non-Muslim consumers, on the other hand, value Halal for the health benefits it gives, which are entirely voluntary on an individual basis, rather than to comply with religious requirements (Mathew et al., 2012). Understanding non-Muslims' behavior toward halal products provides insight for industry players in tapping the market and expanding the halal market generally. Religion, marketing, safety, and convenience all have a role in encouraging non-Muslims' Halal consumption. However, belief alone is insufficient to explain non-Muslim Halal consumption (Ismail et al., 2017).

Most non-Muslims understand the basic concept of halal food. They also appreciate that halal food is clean, wholesome, and safe to eat. Non-Muslims are aware of the advantages of halal food. In Malaysia, a good understanding of halal food among non-Muslims may be influenced by good interaction with Muslim people, increasing the trend of halal food knowledge and acceptance among non-Muslims, where most of them understand that halal food benefits all (Bakar, 2020). With non-Muslims becoming more knowledgeable about halal, there is a valuable opportunity to convey Islamic ethical ideas to a broader audience by broadening the meaning of the halal brand. Non-Muslims will perceive Muslims as contributing something of value to humanity if they use these socially conscious goods and services, which will benefit society as a whole (Said et al., 2013).

In today's society, people are more concerned about their health, which helps Halal food as it covers the whole concept of consuming clean and hygienic food to promote better health. Consumers today are more aware of the importance of health, which influences their behavior towards food consumption. They search for food that can keep them fit and improve their mental state and quality of life. Halal food constitutes an essential aspect of Islam. The role of cultural practices and religious beliefs in food is complex but has a unified understanding among Muslim followers (Khan & Haleem, 2016).

Entrepreneurs have good knowledge and understanding of food hygiene. In terms of the concepts of halal food, it was revealed that most Malaysians have an excellent understanding of halal foods, including the ways they are processed, prepared, and marketed. This also includes their awareness of food products often referred to as "mashbooh" (Rahman, 2011). Halal knowledge, the



halal logo, and attitude significantly affect purchase intention and buying behavior. Halal logos and attitudes with equal values were determined to be the most significant factors influencing purchase intention towards halal food products. Halal knowledge factors are suitable to predict and measure purchase intention and behavior. This may indicate that foreign consumers are sufficiently aware and educated about halal food products. Analyzing foreign customers' purchase intentions and buying behavior on halal food goods notably assists decision-makers in the food industry sector in better understanding aspects that substantially influence foreign halal consumption behavior (Abdalla, 2019).

Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were positively influenced by the purchase decision of halal food products among non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia. Apart from that, the acculturation effect moderates the relationship between attitude and intention to purchase (Lim et al, 2020). Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of what they eat, drink, and use. The knowledge of Muslim and non-Muslim buyers of things or foods on the market describes their perceptual and cognitive reactions. As a result, their understanding of the products or foods they used or consumed was based on sensory experience and an internal state of visceral emotion (Ambali & Bakar, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a descriptive quantitative design to examine the level of awareness of halal food among non-Muslim food service workers.

Sample

The respondents, which consisted of one hundred fifty (150) non-Muslim food-service workers with a minimum working experience of at least three (3) months in the food and service industry, were purposely selected from local casual dining eateries in General Santos City.

Procedure

The researchers obtained approval from the relevant offices of the Joji Ilagan International School in the form of a written permit. After the approval, the researchers sent a formal letter through email, implying the need for permission to hand out survey questionnaires at selected non-Halal food service establishments. In gathering data, the researchers distributed printed survey questionnaires. Researchers guaranteed the respondents that the information acquired is for research purposes only and is not liable for any personal use without the respondents' consent, following the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Instrument

The researchers developed a test-type questionnaire to measure the knowledge of halal food among non-Muslim food service workers. Initially, the test comprised five (5) areas of halal knowledge, which are (1) selection of ingredients, (2) handling of ingredients, (3) cooking procedures, (4) storage and packaging, and (5) distribution. Each section contains six (6) question items that correspond to a specific area and are in a multiple-choice format.

The questionnaires were validated by halal course instructors, owners of halal food establishments, and Islamic studies scholars. The researchers conducted a pilot test on 15 respondents, consisting of food stall vendors that were randomly selected throughout General Santos City, for the reliability test of the questionnaire. For the questionnaires to be considered consistent and reliable, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the "reliability" of the different sections. A Cronbach value closer to 1 indicates that an item scale is consistent. A value above 0.80 indicates "very good." A value between 0.60 and 0.80 indicates a "good" result. Moreover, values below the indicated value correspond with different interpretations ending with "unacceptable."

After the reliability test, the result shows that out of five (5) areas or sections (namely, selection of ingredients, handling of ingredients, cooking procedures, storage and packaging, and distribution), only two (2) were considered "reliable scales," which are: (1) selection of ingredients, and (2) cooking procedures. Therefore, only these two areas of halal knowledge were used in the final data collection. The following reliability test results can be seen in Table 1.



Table 1. Reliability Test Result

Area	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Interpretation (Janssens et al., 2008)
Selection of Ingredients	.713	6	Good
Handling of Ingredients	-.124	6	Unacceptable
Cooking Procedures	.688	6	Good
Storage and Packaging	-.210	6	Unacceptable
Distribution	-1.262	6	Unacceptable

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 indicates the survey result for the area "selection of ingredients." The indicator consists of six (6) questions. As shown, 1.3% of the respondents got a zero, and the other 1.3% got one correct point with a percentage. Two percent of the respondents got two correct points. Three (3) correct points were garnered by 19 respondents, or 12.7% of the respondents, followed by 28 respondents with four correct points (18.7%). Forty-seven respondents got five (5) correct points (31.3%), and forty-nine (49) respondents got a perfect score (32.7%).

Table 2. Test Scores of the Respondents on Knowledge on Selection of Halal Ingredients

Number of Correct Points	Number of Respondents	Percentage
0 correct points	2	1.3%
1 correct point	2	1.3%
2 correct points	3	2%
3 correct points	19	12.7%
4 correct points	28	18.7%
5 correct points	47	31.3%
6 correct points	49	32.7%

Table 3 indicates the survey result for the indicator "cooking procedures." The questionnaire is composed of six questions about cooking procedures. No respondents got zero (0) or one (1) correct point. Two (2) respondents got two correct points, or 1.3% of the respondents. Seven (7) respondents got three correct points (4.7%), and thirty-five (35) respondents got four correct points (23.3%). Forty-six (46) respondents got five correct points, which makes up 30.7% of the respondents, and sixty (60) of them got six correct points (40%).

Table 3. Test Scores of the Respondents on Knowledge on Halal Procedures in Cooking

Number of Correct Points	Number of Respondents	Percentage
0 correct points	0	0%
1 correct point	0	0%
2 correct points	2	1.3%
3 correct points	7	4.7%
4 correct points	35	23.3%
5 correct points	46	30.7%
6 correct points	60	40%

Table 4 shows the level of halal knowledge of non-Muslim food-service workers. It shows that their level of halal knowledge in terms of the selection of ingredients has a mean of 4.71. This means that non-Muslim food service workers in General Santos City have a 'moderate' understanding or



knowledge of selecting halal ingredients. This means that they have a good understanding of permissible and prohibited items when selecting ingredients. The level of halal knowledge in cooking procedures also has a weighted mean of 5.03, which interprets the level of halal food knowledge in terms of cooking procedures as "high." This implies that local non-Muslim food service workers are highly aware of the different guidelines of halal food cooking procedures. Further, it shows that the overall level of halal food knowledge among these food-service workers is good, with a mean of 4.87.

Table 4. Level of Halal Food Knowledge among Non-Muslim Food Service Workers

Area	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
Selection of Ingredients	4.71	Moderate
Cooking Procedures	5.03	High
Overall Halal Food Knowledge	4.87	Moderate

The results reflect that although many non-Muslims understand the basic concept of halal food (Bakar, 2022), educating them is still useful in order to improve understanding and comply with the appropriate practices of halal food preparation, especially related to the selection of ingredients for halal cooking. This further reveals that in areas where Muslims are a minority, halal food knowledge among non-Muslim food workers is generally low as compared to other countries where Muslims constitute a higher percentage of the population (Rahman, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that, generally, the level of knowledge on halal foods among non-Muslim food-service workers in General Santos City is good. Since the scope of this paper is limited to the selection of ingredients and the cooking procedure for halal food, future researchers may focus on and add other aspects that can measure halal food awareness. Further research may identify other factors or areas that could help determine the level of knowledge of non-Muslim food service workers. This includes all other aspects and factors that play pivotal roles in the entire operation of the food service industry. Similar studies should also be conducted throughout different regions, and provinces, particularly in areas with diversified populations, as knowledge and awareness of people coming from other places may vary according to their customs, traditions, and practices, or may use other research approaches that may elicit further the level of non-Muslims' halal knowledge. It is recommended that future researchers also consider other sectors of the food and beverage industry, such as coffee shops, milk tea shops, and other relevant establishments, to broaden the scope of the target respondents and make the data more diversified.

The increasing demand for halal food among Muslims provides growth opportunities, particularly in the food service industry. Thus, the researchers recommend that non-halal food service establishments may partake in having their establishments certified to attract halal food customers to patronize their business, and food service establishments may also intensify the knowledge and awareness of their non-Muslim food service workers by giving them appropriate and relevant seminars and training regarding halal culinary and tourism.

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