



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**ANTECEDENTS OF HALAL MALAYSIA BRAND EQUITY BASED ON
CONSUMERS' EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT RESPONSES**

WAN RUSNI BINTI WAN ISMAIL

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By

WAN RUSNI BINTI WAN ISMAIL

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

June 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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WAN RUSNI BINTI WAN ISMAIL

June 2019

Chairman : Associate Professor Mohhidin Bin Othman, PhD
Faculty : Halal Products Research Institute

Halal Malaysia brand does not represent a specific brand instead it can be found on various product packages due to its roles as the third party endorser. This has placed Halal Malaysia brand in the risk of equity dilution due to the sensitive nature of Halal issues to Muslim consumers and the volatility of manufacturers' commitment towards maintaining Halal standard as required by JAKIM. However, the evidence on the effectiveness of Halal Malaysia is unclear as to date there are evidences that pointed out that this brand suffers from various setback including issues related to the negative publicities and brand recognition. For the purpose of this study evaluation of Halal Malaysia brand was carried out using customer based brand equity evaluation as it allows for the brand equity to be investigated from various perspectives. The current study was carried out using mixed method approach based on consumers explicit and implicit responses. Qualitative semi structured interview was carried out to determine consumer's explicit response and quantitative research using implicit association test instrument was also carried out to determine Halal Malaysia equity based on consumer's implicit association. Findings showed that consumers possessed fixed mindsets which influence how they evaluate Halal Malaysia brand. This has resulted that in certain products being perceived as low tolerance which makes Halal Malaysia cue on the products to be considered as negligible cues. Furthermore, these products also can potentially undermine the credibility of Halal Malaysia as consumers faced difficulties to associate these products with Halal, hence the presence of Halal Malaysia is viewed as either fake or JAKIM has involved in some sort of unlawful activity and awarded the endorsement illegally. Hence, it is crucial for Halal Malaysia brand proprietor to use a different approach in promoting this brand and the new direction should focuses on devising better strategies in the way information is disseminated which emphasizes more on educating consumers through brand knowledge.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**ANTESEDEN EKUITI UNTUK JENAMA HALAL MALAYSIA BERDASARKAN
TINDAK BALAS PELANGGAN SECARA IMPLISIT DAN EKSPLISIT**

Oleh

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Halal Malaysia bukan hanya mewakili mana-mana jenama atau produk yang tertentu tetapi logo nya boleh di temui pada berbagai barangan kerana ianya cuma berfungsi sebagai badan bebas yang terlibat secara langsung di dalam pensijilan Halal. Oleh kerana tanggungjawab badan pensijilan Halal yang membolehkannya memberi pensijilan kepada mana-mana produk yang di rasakan sesuai menyebabkan berbagai masalah timbul kerana isu Halal amat sensitif di tambah pula dengan masalah di pihak pengeluar yang kadang kala gagal mematuhi standard yang telah pun ditetapkan oleh pihak JAKIM. Jika di lihat daripada kepentingan jenama Halal Malaysia pada pelanggan Muslim amatlah penting untuk ekuiti Halal Malaysia di siasat kerana ianya akan memberikan petunjuk jelas tentang keberkesanan logo ini. Penyelidikan ini di lakukan menggunakan penilaian ekuiti pelanggan kerana penilaian ini dapat dilakukan dari berbagai sudut. Penyelidikan ini juga di lakukan menggunakan kaedah kualitatif di mana tindak balas implisit dan eksplisit terhadap jenama Halal Malaysia digunakan dalam menentukan nilai ekuiti. Temu bual kualitatif di lakukan untuk menentukan tindak balas jelas pelanggan untuk menentukan toleransi pelanggan terhadap kehadiran logo Halal Malaysia pada barangan yang berbeza dan bagaimana keadaan ini akan mempengaruhi ekuiti. Dalam masa yang sama kajian kuantitatif juga di lakukan untuk menentukan tindak balas eksplisit pelanggan menggunakan ujian *Implicit Association*. Dapatan dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pelanggan mempunyai mindset yang tetap yang menyebabkan sesetengah barangan di kategorikan sebagai kategori toleransi rendah hinggalah kewujudan Halal logo tidak dipedulikan oleh pelanggan. Oleh itu, amatlah penting untuk pemilik Jenama Halal Malaysia untuk mencari cara yang lebih berkesan untuk mempromosi brand ini dan penekanan yang lebih patut diberikan kepada mendidik pelanggan melalui pengetahuan tentang Halal Malaysia.

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Thank you.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 18 June 2019 to conduct the final examination of Wan Rusni binti Wan Ismail on her thesis entitled "Antecedents of Halal Malaysia Brand Equity Based on Consumers' Explicit and Implicit Responses" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBBE	Customer based brand equity
HMB	Halal Malaysia brand
JAKIM	Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia
IAT	Implicit Association Test



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the introduction of the study. The first section focus on the broader scope of brand and its functions, Halal Malaysia brand and the importance of brand equity study. The following section, discusses the current problems and issues related to the studies on Halal Malaysia brand equity, which require investigation. The objectives and research questions of the study will be highlighted in the third and fourth sections of this chapter. The sixth section explains the significance of the study from the academic and practical perspectives, followed with the organization of this thesis, definition of terms and conclusion.

1.1 The Background of the Study

Halal concept can no longer be viewed just as an Islamic dietary law and only applicable to Muslims because today, Halal has transformed into huge businesses and has strong impact on Malaysian economy which currently valued at RM30 billion with an expected growth of 25% in the next 5 years (Rosli, 2018). Currently, Halal industry contribution towards the nation's economy is not only generated through local businesses as the rapid development is highly related to the global businesses which currently estimated at USD2.3 trillion and the number is expected to grow continuously annually (Ab Hamid, Mohd Shahwahid, Othman, & Saidpudin, 2017).

The growth of Halal economy is fueled by the increasing numbers of global Muslim population which help in creating demand. It is expected that Muslim population will rise from 1.7 billion in 2014 to 2.2 billion by 2030 which is equivalent to 26.4 percent. The growth of Muslim population is expected twice the rate of non-Muslim population which where the rate for Muslim is 1.5 percent as compared to 0.7 percent for the non-Muslims (Lipka, 2015). This has created opportunity for the local businesses to expand their market to not only other Islamic countries but also to other non-Islamic countries including Japan, Korea, China, Australia and Brazil (Ab Hamid et al., 2017).

Malaysia involvement in Halal industry has started since 1970s however only recently such effort has become very rewarding due to its tremendous growth. Currently, Malaysia is considered as leader in Halal industry and the development is fueled by the Malaysian government. Such support can be seen through the Third Industrial Master Plan 2008 – 2020 which has been devised to ensure that the development of Halal hub is carried out efficiently both locally and internationally (Abdul Manaf, Cheng, & Fuad, 2013). Halal ecosystem is also developed as a mean to support the Halal industry through various government agencies that work together to ensure that Halal blueprints and master plan can be implemented systematically. Furthermore, Halal ecosystem was designed to ensure the rapid expansion of the domestic halal industry and various plan

has been carried out as a platform to ensure that local entrepreneurs able to penetrate global market (Ngu, 2015).

Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) is the façade used by JAKIM that serves as the representation of Malaysia Halal assurance system and it plays a vital role in brand promotion, image and identity. As a Halal industry leader, HMB should possess strong equity which is at the same pace as of the current Halal industry development. It is important for Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) to possess strong image locally as it provides an indication that all the efforts orchestrated towards the development of Halal industry are working effectively according to the Halal Master plan. The effectiveness of these efforts can be viewed through how consumers perceive and evaluate the importance of Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) in clarifying the Halal status of the products hence, reflect the image Halal Malaysia brand (HMB).

1.2 Problem in Context

Brand equity refers to the commercial values of brand measures according to consumer's ability to recognize, memorize and perceive superiority in terms of quality and reliability (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993; Kotler et al., 2006; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). It is crucial for manufacturers or retailers to understand the commercial value of Halal Malaysia brand (Halal Malaysia brand (HMB)) because the effectiveness of this brand in influencing consumers will have a significant impact on their bottom line. Even though brand is only an intangible asset, it has the capability to produce tangible result for instance cash flow (Kaplan & Norton, 2004; Keller, 1993). However, for Halal Malaysia brand case, it is still difficult to determine what is the current value of this brand as previous studies to determine the strength of this brand resulted in mixed findings.

These inconsistent findings have raised questions on what is the actual brand equity for Halal Malaysia brand: why the findings from survey often yield positive outcome (Syed Marzuki, 2012). Studies on consumer behavior often suggest that consumers made their decision based on factors such as subjective norms (Low & Cheng, 2004). Study by Shah Alam and Mohamed Sayuti (2011) on Halal branding in Malaysia for instance also found that subjective norms has positive relationship with Halal product purchase which suggested that consumers decision was influenced by the norms and people surrounding them (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007).

Inconsistencies in the findings could also resulted from various issues that are not yet considered in previous studies for instance factors such as tolerance which are not fully discussed in the literature despite of its significant impact on Muslim consumer's consumption decision. The role of tolerance and intolerance for ambiguity are never tested on Halal brand study before, however one cannot rule out the significant impact of ambiguity in Muslim consumer's decision as Muslims are taught to avoid doubtful things. Apart from the Islamic core teaching that emphasize on Halal (permissible) and Haram (forbidden) another category which is "Syubhah" or doubt impact on decision making is not yet fully explored. This refers to the situation where Muslims are advised

to avoid things that does not meet the criteria of neither permissible nor forbidden and what left becomes doubtful matters or *Syubhah* (Salehudin, 2010).

The concept of permissible, forbidden and doubt in Islamic teaching share strong resemblance with the concept proposed in the tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity theories (Frenkel-Brunswick, 1949; Budner, 1962). The resemblance between these concepts are quite apparent as consumer's tolerance towards certain products are constantly challenged based on the level of ambiguity surrounding the products they intend to purchase or consume. Ambiguity in this case can be manifested through implicit and explicit product attributes and how consumers evaluate multiple cues found in the products. The extend of consumer's tolerance towards familiar and unfamiliar cues in products are also crucial aspects that influence Muslim consumer's decision, but these aspects are never tested in related studies (Yousaf & Malik, 2013).

Another problem that has never been highlighted in previous literature is the impact of multiple cues on consumer's decision especially when the cues itself is completely unfamiliar and conflicting. In reality one single food product can carry multiple cues consisting of brand name, visual cues, list of ingredients and various third party endorsements in order to boost consumer's confidence towards the products (Purohit & Srivastava, 2001). Halal endorsement is in fact created to meet this purpose, however it is unclear how far Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) can influence consumers purchase especially when they are confronted with cues that challenge their tolerance (Salehudin, 2010). While previous studies on Halal logo influence try to prove that Muslim consumers rely on Halal logo before making their purchase decision, it is still unclear in which product categories that Halal logo is really becoming indispensable cue that will entirely transform consumers doubt and convince them into purchase.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, this study attempts to answer the following research questions.

- 1) How do Malay Muslim consumers evaluate visible Halal Malaysia brand cue presence on the Halal food products?
- 2) What is the current Halal Malaysia brand equity according to consumers based brand equity audit?

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the arguments presented in the problem statement the following objectives are formulated for this study:

- 1) To identify how Malay Muslim consumers evaluate visible Halal Malaysia brand cues presence on Halal food products.
- 2) To investigate Halal Malaysia brand equity using consumers based brand equity audit.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study investigates Halal Malaysia Brand (Halal Malaysia brand (HMB)) using consumer based brand equity evaluation where this brand is evaluated based on consumer's perception. It is difficult to evaluate HMB on its own as this brand only acts as an endorser that verifies the Halal status especially for food products. Hence, the importance of Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) cues is tested against Halal food products categories in order to identify Muslim consumer's tolerance and whether the presence of Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) as Halal endorser has become a credible or negligible cue. This research limitation is in terms of its ability to be generalized due to the small sample size used in both quasi experiment and qualitative interview. However, it also offers in depth understanding of Halal Malaysia brand equity through consumer's evaluation of product pairing which is difficult to be achieved through survey. Furthermore, this study also looks into the theory of tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity and the impact it has on Muslim consumer's decision making.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Academic Contribution

This study will provide contribution to a new body of knowledge in gaining further understanding of the Halal Malaysia brand equity. This study employed mixed method approach that offers different perspectives in evaluating brand equity. Studies on Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) is often limited to measuring awareness and intention to purchase however it does not help in explaining other factors particularly other aspects in brand equity evaluation. Rich qualitative data used in this study could help to increase current understanding of Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) equity and the antecedents involved including the impact of tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity. Currently, studies on Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) mostly rely on the explicit measurement, however this study used different approach in measuring consumers based brand equity where implicit measurement is carried out to determine Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) valence.

Contribution to Halal Malaysia Brand Proprietor

Information on the current HMB equity can be very beneficial to JAKIM as it will provide the agency an opportunity to identify their strengths, weaknesses and potential threats that could jeopardize its current equity. It could also provide an opportunity to

Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) proprietor to check whether their expectation and the current equity are matched. Furthermore, current knowledge will also help JAKIM to identify the areas that require improvement which open room for them to strategize their action towards improving the weak areas.

Contribution to Consumers

Information from this study is also crucial to consumers even if consumers may not use the information directly. Nevertheless, the information can be utilized by JAKIM to formulate better delivery system and ensure that the information disseminated reach consumers more effectively. This will ensure that Muslim consumers in particulars are protected through current and update information in relation to Halal Malaysia brand (HMB).

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This section presents the organization of the thesis which contains five (5) chapters:

Chapter one (1) provides the introduction and background of the study. This chapter also focuses on the objectives of the study and explains the problem statement. The significance of the study is also elaborated. This chapter focuses on the organization of the thesis for easy referencing.

Chapter two (2) focuses on the literature review relevant to the research problem. This chapter discusses on how attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control shaped consumer's behavior. The impact of tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity is also discussed in this chapter. Consumers based brand equity dimensions are also discussed in this chapter. The importance of Halal Malaysia brand towards consumers purchase decision and whether its Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) is responsible credence is also discussed.

Chapter three (3) explains the methodology utilized in this study. Discussion in this chapter revolves around research design, location of the study, population, the sample chosen, and the instrument used. Furthermore, this chapter also elaborates on the procedures of data collection, as well as a brief overview on how the data was analyzed.

Chapter four (4) deals with the data analysis and the result from the analysis is elaborated and presented. The analysis performed is in line with the objective of this study which is to investigate Halal Malaysia brand equity using qualitative and quantitative method. Analyses opted are thematic analysis for qualitative and *D* measure, descriptive and paired sample *t* test for IAT statistical tests.

Chapter five (5) focuses on the discussion and the conclusion. Discussion is based on the research objectives indicated earlier in Chapter 1. This chapter also summarizes the significance of the study which highlights its theoretical contributions and managerial implication. Finally, the limitation of this study and future research directions on Halal Malaysia brand equity study are acknowledged.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Affective

A concept which is used in psychology to describe a feeling or emotion which consists of three components known as valence, arousal and motivational intensity (Walls, Okumus, & Wang, 2011).

Antecedents

A precursor or something that existed before or logically precedes another (Aarts, Chalker, & Weiner, 2014).

Brand

An identifying mark or identification for specific products or organization (Kotler, Keller, Ang, Leong, & Tan, 2006).

Brand awareness

The extent to which consumers are familiar with the qualities or image of a particular brand of goods or services (Tuominen, 1999).

Brand Association

Anything that is deeply seated in the consumer's mind about the brand which is also related to the positioning concept in marketing (Keller, 1993)

Brand Assets

Any positive characteristics that can be associated with the brand (Aaker, 1991).

Brand Equity

A commercial value and intangible asset derived from consumer's positive perception of the brand's name (Aaker, 1991).

Brand loyalty

The tendency of consumers to continuously purchase one brand's product over another (Aaker, 1991).

Cue / Signal

A term that refers to a signal, sign or indication (Bettman, 1979; Spence, 1974).

Explicit Memory

A term which involves conscious recollection of thought (Nessim & Wozniak, 2001).

Implicit Memory

A term that involves the unconscious recollection of thought (Peterson et al., 1986; Whittlesea & Price, 2001).

Intolerance

Disinclination to accept others view, beliefs or behavior that differ from one's own (Frenkel-Brunswick, 1949; Budner, 1962).

Mindsets

The established set or attitudes held by someone (Murphy & Dweck, 2016).

Perception

The ability to see, hear or become aware of something through the senses (Rookes & Willson, 2005).

Perceived Extrinsic Cue

Refers to non-product or service related cues but consumers take them into consideration during the evaluation of products or services such as brand, warranty, image, price etc. (Purohit & Srivastava, 2001).

Perceived Intrinsic Cue

Refers to the actual product related attributes such as ingredients or taste that cannot be manipulated (Suri & Monroe, 2003).

Repeated Measure Design

Sometimes also known as within subject design where this research design involves with multiple measures using the same subject two or more times in different condition (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Syubhah

Mushbooh in Arabic, literally means doubtful or suspected, often referred to food consumption where in Islamic dietary law, anything that raise suspicion need to be avoided (Yousaf & Malik, 2013).

Tolerance

The ability or willingness to tolerate the existence of opinions or behavior that one dislikes or disagrees with (Frenkel-Brunswick, 1949; Budner, 1962).

1.9 Conclusion

This research aims to investigate Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) equity by looking at how consumers evaluate Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) cue in different products evaluation scenario. Factors such as tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity are taken into consideration in the attempt to evaluate how far consumers really rely on Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) cue when making a purchase. This chapter starts with a brief introduction on Halal Malaysia brand and the importance of investigating the Halal Malaysia brand (HMB) equity. This is followed by with the discussion on the problem statement, objectives and the significance of conducting it. The following chapter will discuss the literature review pertaining to the study.

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Received diploma in culinary arts from Universiti Teknologi Mara in 2003. Awarded with bachelor of science honours in hotel management in 2006 which is also from Universiti Teknologi Mara, majoring in hotel management and tourism recreation management. Master of science in foodservice management was awarded by Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2012 majoring in food retailing and consumers behavior.

Academic Employment

Previous academic employment was with Segi College Kuala Lumpur from the year of 2007 to 2010 and work under department of hotel management, teaching mostly subjects related to culinary and hotel operation. Universiti Teknologi Mara offered academic post in 2011 under department of culinary and gastronomy teaching subjects related to the pastry and bakery operation.

Publications

Othman, M., Boo, H. C., & Wan Rusni, W. I. (2013). Adolescent's strategies and reverse influence in family food decision making. *International Food Research Journal*, 20(1).

Azmi, A., Buliah, A. L., & Ismail, W. R. W. (2016). International tourist shopping styles in Kuala Lumpur. In *Proceedings of the 2nd International Social Science Conference 2016*.

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