

Antecedents of Consumers' Behavior towards Halal Food among Jordanian Customers: A Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Approach

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Abstract

The Halal concept has been a major element among consumers living in an Islamic country like Jordan. This study aimed to examine the relationships between the antecedents of consumers' intention and consumers' behavior towards Halal Food in Jordan, and the mediating effect of consumers' intention (INT) in the relationship between perceived behavior control (PBC) and actual consumer behavior (ACT) towards Halal Food. A total of 250 consumers completed a survey that was conducted at middle locations in the capital of Jordan (Amman). The study used the structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques (Amos 20.0) to evaluate the casual model and the confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement. Results of the study demonstrated the strong predictive power and explained the consumers' behavior in Jordan. These result demonstrated the ability of the original Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model to explain consumer's behavior towards Halal Food in Jordan. The findings highlighted that the relationship between consumers' attitude and subjective norm were significant and positive on consumers' intention, and consumers' intention on consumers' behavior was found to be significant with a positive relationship. And one hypothesis resulted in an insignificant relationship namely; perceived behavior control and consumers' intention. Moreover, intention was found to have no mediating effect.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) consumers' attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavior control, intention and consumers' behavior, Jordan.

Field: Marketing

1. Introduction

Halal industry has become one of the most important industries in the global. Muslims' Population is estimated to be 1.6 billion Muslims around the world in 2012 according to the Global Religious Landscape and growing at an annual rate of 1.8%. In addition, Japan Halal summit 2014 indicated that the Global Halal industry is growing at 20% annually. Indeed, the Halal market is one that food companies cannot ignore. With rising income levels and increasing demand for new and differentiated Halal food products in key Muslim markets, this marks significant opportunities for all food companies. Halal products trade has prospered in recent times, prompting much of the commercial and industrial centers that are racing to make a profit crossing billions basing on the increase in the number of Muslims in Europe and around the globe. Additionally, some of the food and beverage companies export their products to the Arab countries, especially sweets and children's products and some drinks. Halal products indicate that food and beverage are dealt with according to the teachings of Islamic law in the slaughter, preservation, manufacturing and marketing (Islamic food and Nutrition council of America, 2014).

"Halal" concept is one of these commitments that play an important role in Muslims' lives and consumption. Today, estimates have revealed that Muslim population is rising around the world and that the number is continuously increasing meaning that the demand for halal products is growing immensely. The global halal food trade is estimated to be worth USD 641.5 billion in 2010 in comparison to USD 587.2 billion in 2004 meaning that businesses should indeed be tapping this growing market segment. (Agil and Nor 2012).

Religious commitment plays an important role in Muslims' lives through shaping their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes towards Halal foods (Rehman and Shabbir, 2010). These beliefs cannot be avoided when a society relies on Halal foods (Bari and Abbas, 2011). In addition, these religious commitments and beliefs influence the feelings and attitudes of Muslims towards their consumption habits (Abdul Khalek , 2014).

Recently, interest has been growing among companies that want to provide products for the Islamic market, because trade in Halal products checks prosperous not only in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Middle East but also in Europe where it is estimated that Europe's Muslim population will exceed 58 million by 2030 (PEW Research Center, 2011). This requires opening new markets for halal products.

It is noteworthy that Nestlé, which is considered one of the world's largest food and beverage companies, has been working in the halal industry since 1980 and that 75 factories of its 456 factories are halal certified (Agil and Nor 2012). Furthermore, several efforts are being invested by the Malaysian government in order to develop Malaysia as a global hub for halal industry (The Report, Malaysia 2012).

Arab countries have most of the Muslims in the world, and they must eat Halal food (Hanzaee and Ramezani, 2011). The Quran and the Sunnah are considered as important laws in Muslims' life, and are seen as

the practice from Prophet Muhammad and his friends. Omar et al. (2012) asserted that the Halal is an Arabic word meaning lawful or allowed by the lawgiver (Allah), whereas Haram means unlawful or prohibited ; moreover, they mentioned that one the major challenges that face the food and beverage industry in the halal aspect is understanding the behavioral patterns of individual Muslims.

2. Literature Review

Muslim consumers are considered as the main market segment encouraging the Halal food commerce; as products are manufactured according to their beliefs (Al Muala, 2011). It is important to gather more information about Muslims' behavior, and what they expect in dealing with the halal food and beverage industry (Cook, Yale, and Marqua, 2010). The researchers based their definition of the actual purchase behavior on Al Muala's definition in (2011) and defined the consumer's behavior as his willingness to conduct actual behavior toward Halal food in Jordan. Moreover, there were important factors that can explain the consumer's intention and the actual consumer's behavior such as Attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavior control. Attitude (ATT) is the first significant determinant of behavioral intention that can be stated as "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question" (Ajzen, 1991). Consumer's attitude is defined as the consumer's positive or negative feeling which results in certain behavior towards halal food. In the theory of planned behavior (TPB), the second determinant of behavioral intention is subjective norm (SN), subjective norm is "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform in a certain manner" (Ajzen (1991). However, the researcher defined subjective norm as the perceived social factors (family, friends, and relatives) that could have influence on the Muslim's behavior. As for the Perceived behavior control, Omar et al. (2012) stated that individuals act in an extent of control over performing a behavior. Perceived behavior control can be seen as the degree of ability the person shows when engaging in a certain behavior. Ajzen (1991) defined it as the substantial modification in both intentions and acts. Basing on that, consumers of halal products will show higher purchase intention and actual behavior when they feel they have more control in the decisions to buy these products.

2.1 Mediating Effect of Consumer's Intention

In order to test the mediation effect in this study, structural equation models (SEM) were developed and a comparison was conducted between indirect effects and direct effects. Some researchers defined purchase intention as a predetermined decision to behave in a continuous certain manner in the near future (Ramayah et al., 2010). In addition, some studies found that a positive correlation exists between consumers purchase intentions and their actual buying behavior (Lu et al., 2010). Ajzen (1991) saw that the purchase intention as the direct originator of behavior. Therefore, Ajzen and Fishbein (1991) defined actual purchase behavior as the "individual's readiness and willingness to purchase a certain product or service".

2.2 Theoretical Research Framework

Many previous studies used theories in order to explain and predict the model of study. This study has been based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in predicting intentions and consumer's behavior. This theory has been used widely in consumer behavior research (Ajzen, 1991). This study used the TPB as the main theory to explain consumer's behavior towards Halal food in Jordanian market.

The main components of the TPB are the consumer's own attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, intentions, and behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, Al Muala (2011) asserted that the original TPB model has a strong predictive power to explain consumers' behavior in the Jordanian market. The relations among these variables are described in (Figure 1.1). Most theories relating to consumer's behavior have been created in developed countries as TPB was established by Ajzen & Fishbein in USA.

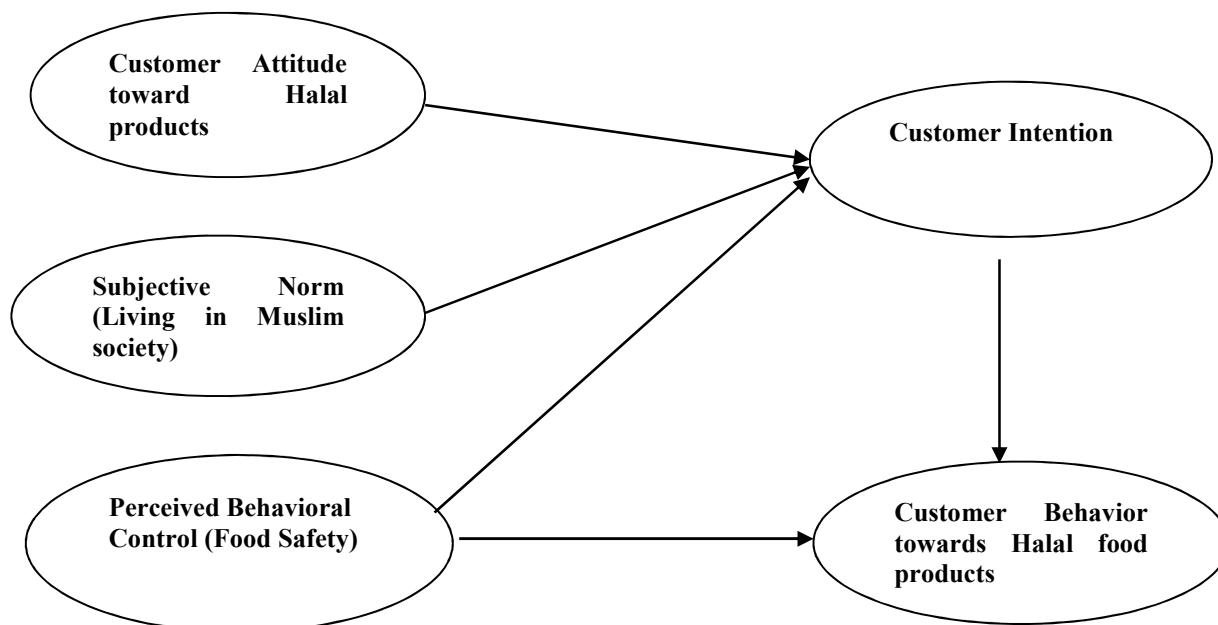


Figure 1.1: Research Framework

Hypothesis Formulation

There were 6 hypothesis formulations for this study stated as:

H1 Consumer's Intention is positively related to Consumer's Behavior.

H2 Consumer's Attitude is positively related to Consumer's Intention

H3 Subjective Norm is positively related to Consumer's Intention.

H4 Perceived Behavior Control relates positively to Consumer's Intention.

H5 Perceived Behavior Control relates positively to Consumer's Behavior.

H6 Consumer's Intention mediates the relationship between Perceived Behavior Control and Consumer's Behavior

3. Methodology

This study utilized the quantitative research design to investigate the predictors of consumer behavior. The population of this study consisted of customers of Halal products residing in Amman during the study. A sample size of 250 respondents was chosen from different customers in the capital of Jordan. The research instrument used in the study was the questionnaire which was structured based on prior research and the literature review. A total of 210 questionnaires were returned and only 200 were usable for subsequent analysis, giving a response rate of 80 %. The questionnaire was divided into four parts: part (1) demographic variables (5 items); part (2) customer attitude (6 items) adapted from Omar et al. (2012), subjective norm (6 items) adapted from Leo and Lee (2010), and perceived behavior control (6 items) adapted from Kim and Chung (2011); and part (3) customer intention (5 items) adapted from Ramayah et al. (2010), and part (4) customer behavior (5 items) adapted from Al Muala (2011).

3.1 Data Screening and Analysis

The 210 dataset were coded and saved into SPSS version 17.0 and analyzed using AMOS version 20. The data was carefully examined for missing data. It was discovered that nineteen (19) questionnaires or 3.3 percent had missing responses. However, the missing cases were treated with replacement of mean so none was deleted. This method is considered to be feasible by several scholars (Siddiqui, 2013). Next, inspection of Mahalanobis distance (D2) was conducted to identify outlier cases. Outlier result showed that 10 dataset were deleted due to D2 values greater than χ^2 value. For univariate normality test, Z-skewness scores greater than +3 or -3 were absent. Thus, each item was considered to be normal data. Basing on that, only two hundred 200 questionnaires remained for final analysis.

Furthermore, several statistical validity tests were then conducted such as reliability test, composite reliability tests, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for construct convergent validity, discriminate validity for multicollinearity treatment, descriptive analysis and correlation. After this, structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis using AMOS 20 was conducted. SEM has been selected because SEM using confirmatory factor analysis could minimize measurement error through multiple indicators per –latent variable, ability to estimate both direct and indirect effects, and a testable model and ability to ensure consistency of model with data and to estimate effects among constructs. The SEM analysis produced three structural models namely hypothesized

structural model, revised model and competing model (Siddiqui, 2013). All variables were measured using Seven-point Likert scales from (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Disagree somewhat, (4) Undecided, (5) Agree somewhat, (6) Agree, (7) Strongly Agree.

4. Results

Most of the respondents were male (66.8%) compared to female (33.2%). Their ages ranged from 20 to 50 years. About 64.6% of respondents were married, the majority (73.9%) lived in the middle of Amman city and about 40% of the sample hold a Bachelor degree.

Descriptive statistics of variables

Overall, the results in Table 1 showed that the mean score of customer attitude was considered very high (6.1). In contrast, customer behavior was relatively low with mean score (5.33), indicating that the customer's perception for Halal food was considered a low behavior.

Table1: Descriptive statistics of variables and Reliability Results

Variable Name	Original Item	Total Mean	Items after CFA	Cronbach Alpha after CFA	Composite Reliability
Attitude	6	6.09	2	.70	.86
Subject Norms	6	5.92	2	.76	.85
Perceived Behavior Control	6	5.68	4	.78	.87
Intention	5	6.04	3	.87	.93
Customer Behavior	5	5.33	4	.72	.65

The results implied that the measurement scales used for all variables were internally consistent and reliable. Moreover, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) indicated that the factor loadings of all observed variables or items were adequate, ranging from 0.49 to 0.86. In this study, the "cut-off" point chosen for significant factor loading was 0.30, which was the minimum level required for a sample size of 350 and above as suggested by Ziadat (2014). This indicated that all the constructs conformed to the convergent construct validity test. The remaining numbers of items for each construct were as follows: attitude (2 items), subjective norms (2 items), behavior intention (4 items), intention (3 items), and customer behavior (4 items), total items remaining were 15.

Discriminant Validity of Constructs

The results obtained from the variance extracted, AVE was calculated by averaging two variance extracted from the variables based on the SMC data using the following equation:

$$\text{Variance Extracted} = \frac{\Sigma(s \tan dardizedSM C)^2}{\Sigma(s \tan dardizedSM C)^2 + \Sigma \epsilon_j}$$

(Source: Zeit and Berteau 2011).

For discriminant validity to be upheld, it has been suggested that AVE should be greater than .50 (Al Muala, 2011). Researchers suggested that the correlations square between the constructs should be less than the average variance explained by each construct (AVE > correlation square) (Henseler et al., 2015). Thus, all constructs used for this study supported discriminant validity. The CFA measurement and structural model have had a good fit with the data based on assessment criteria such as GFI, CFI, TLI, RMSEA (Malhotra, 2011). All CFAs of constructs produced a relatively good fit as indicated by the goodness of fit indices such as CMIN/DF ratio (< 2); P-value (> 0.05); goodness of fit Index (GFI > .90); and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of values less than 0.08 (< 0.08) (Zeit and Berteau, 2011). Additionally, in case not achieved, these values have to be confirmed with factor loading for each construct which should be more than .30 (Zeit and Berteau, 2011). Most constructs have achieved values of GOF.

4.1 Hypotheses Results

A direct effect represents the effect of an independent variable (exogenous) on a dependent variable. The hypothesized model did not achieve model fit (p<.000). Therefore, the explanation of hypotheses result was based on Generating Model (GM) (Table 2 and Figure 1). The SMC or (R²) for generating model to variance in customer behavior was 61%, variance in customer intention was 48%.

Table 2: Direct Hypotheses Testing Result of Generating Model: Standardized regression weights

Hypothesis	Regression Weights From	To	SE	C.R	P	Results
H1	INT	BEH	.17	7.8	***	YES
H2	ATT	INT	.08	2.4	.02	YES
H3	SN	INT	.09	6.7	***	YES
H4	PBC	INT	.07	1.2	.23	NO
H5	PBC	BEH	.19	3.5	***	YES

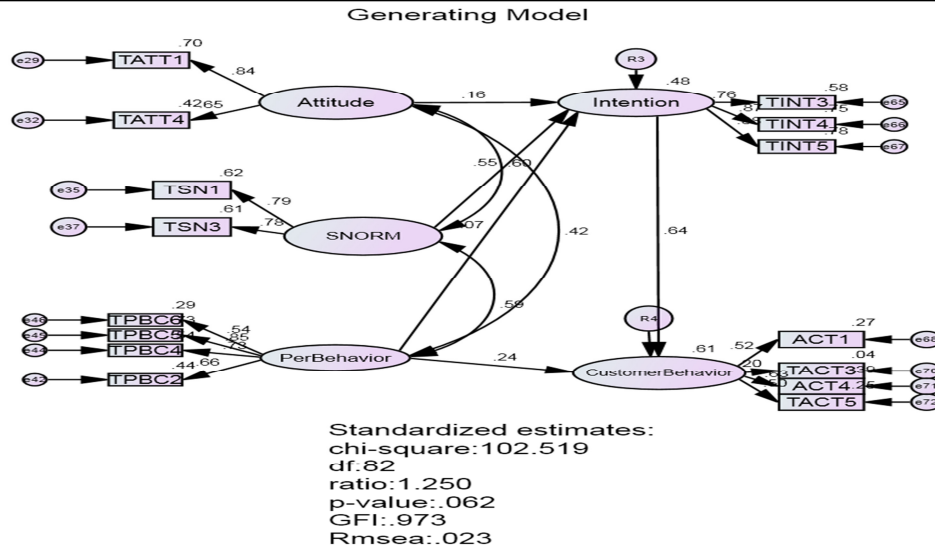


Figure 1.2: Generating Model

Hypothesis 1: Consumer’s Intention is positively related to Consumer’s Behavior.

As seen in table 2, according to the Direct Hypotheses Testing Result of Generating Model, the results indicated a positive relationship between the consumer's intention and the consumer's behavior. This goes in accordance with a research conducted by Lu et al.(2010) which found that a positive correlation exists between consumers purchase intentions and their actual buying behavior .

Hypothesis 2: Consumer’s Attitude is positively related to Consumer’s Intention

According to table 2, the results revealed a positive relationship between the consumer's intention and the consumer's attitude. According to Budiman (2012), one of the major factors that affect consumer intention is his attitude.

Hypothesis 3: Subjective Norm is positively related to Consumer’s Intention.

As it is seen from table 2, Subjective norm resulted to have a positive relationship with the consumer's intention. According to the research conducted in 2010 (Puschel et al. 2010), subjective norms highly affected the consumer's intention.

Hypothesis 4: Perceived Behavior Control relates positively to Consumer’s Intention.

Basing on the results from the Standardized regression weights in table 2, perceived behavior control didn’t affect the consumer's intention. This goes in accordance with a study conducted in 2012, which revealed that perceived control behavior was not related to the consumer's intention. (Kang et al., 2012).

Hypothesis 5: Perceived Behavior Control relates positively to Consumer’s Behavior.

As it is seen from table 2, Perceived behavior control resulted to have a positive relationship with the consumer's behavior. Michaelidou and Hassan found the same results in their study conducted in 2014.

4.2 Mediating Effect Analysis of Generating Model (GM)

For this study, mediating effect of customer intention in the relationship between perceived behavior control and customer behavior was tested (H6) and showed no mediating effect (see Table 3). This result revealed that the relation between PBC and INT was not significant and the relationship between PBC and ACT was also not significant (see Table 3). Additionally, this result indicated that customer intention did not have a mediating effect between perceived behavior control and customer behavior.

Table 3: Mediating Effect

Hypothesis	From	Mediation	To	Indirect effect	Direct effect	Total effect	Mediating
H6	PBC	INT	BEH	.04	.23	.27	Not Mediating

5. Discussion and Recommendation

This study attempts to examine the goodness of fit of the hypothesized structural model by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior in the halal food industry. The Generating Model (GM) supported (4) direct effects hypotheses. The results presented a clearer perspective to marketers in order to encourage buying behavior for improved segmentation, targeting and positioning of market. This study provided a number of practical implications for marketers in enhancing consumers' purchase behavior towards Halal products.

Firstly, customer intention was found to have a direct significant effect on customer's behavior. This means that if the customer has a positive intention this will lead to buying Halal food, this is supported by numerous past studies (Ajzen, 1991; Mualla 2011; Lee, 2013). This indicates that marketers should develop an effective marketing program to guide consumer's intentions positively which will directly reflect on his purchase behavior.

Secondly, customer's attitude has a direct significant effect on customer's intention. Those who have positive attitude about Halal products are more likely to have intentions towards Halal food in the future. Past studies have obtained similar results (Puschel et al. 2010; Wahyuni, 2012; Sabi 2014; Al Muala, 2011). Marketers should shed the light and try to understand the consumer's attitudes in order to obtain a competitive advantage and induce the purchase intention which will trigger the sales of halal products.

Thirdly, subjective norms have a direct significant effect on the consumer's intention. This would imply that families, friends and others could have high influence on intention towards Halal food (Puschel et al. 2010). Therefore, in order to attract the consumers to buy halal products, marketers should alter the perceptions of the people considered vital to the consumer.

Fourthly, perceived behavior control has a direct significant effect on customer behavior towards Halal food but none on purchase intention. The perceived control variable found no significant positive influence on purchase intention of Halal food, this finding was supported by Kang et al., 2012. On the other hand, perceived behavior control was a major factor in affecting the actual purchase behavior. This was supported by Michaelidou and Hassan (2014). Marketers should take into consideration while developing their marketing plans that the levels of perceived behavioral control had no effect on behavioral intentions, but is considered as a significant (positive) predictor of actual behavior.

As for the mediating effect of customer intention, results showed that the intention didn't have a mediating effect between Perceived Behavior control and actual behavior (Suengas et al, 2010; AL-Majali and Nik 2010; Al Muala, 2011). This means that the customer tends to have the preference toward Halal food rather than just thinking about it.

5.1 Suggestion for future research

The studied model should be investigated in a different settings such as in Gulf countries, and examined through other variables that could include Halal products attributes such as (brand and quality), perceived value and customer's loyalty. Additionally, further studies can rely on different instruments. Thus, the researchers suggest that the qualitative method of in-depth interview can be more suitable to measure the level of customer behavior toward Halal food amongst customers in Arab countries. This can be better achieved when the researchers build trust relationships with customers and speak their language.

6. Conclusion

The research investigated the antecedents of customers' intention/behavior towards halal products. There were several direct paths significantly related to either intention or behavior (purchase intention, customers' attitude, and subjective norm). Generating Model (GM) was the suitable model to explain the customers' behavior toward Halal food as compared to the Hypothesized and TPB Models. Lastly, results of the study demonstrated the strong predictive power of the original TPB model to explain customers' behavior toward Halal food in Jordan.

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