

**MUSLIM CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOR AND  
RESPONSES TOWARDS HALAL LOGO JAKIM**

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by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

JAKIM	Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
INHART IIUM	International Institute for Halal Research and Training, International Islamic University Malaysia
IIH UKM	Institute of Islam Hadhari, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
MPPHM 2014	Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certificate 2014
MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
HDC	Halal Industry Development Corporation
MeSTI	Makanan Selamat Tanggungjawab Industri
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practice
GHP	Good Hygienic Practices
HAACP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
ISO	International Standards Organization
OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference
JAIN	States Department of Religious Affairs
MAIS	Islamic Religious Affairs Councils
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
TORA	Theory of Reasoned Action
SIT	Symbolic Interactionism Theory
CAP	Consumers' of Penang
NGO	Non-Profit Government Organization
CAQDAS	Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis
PI	Preliminary Investigation
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
C	Consumer
E	Expert
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
AFIC	The Asian Food Information Centre
MCMC	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia

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# **PERLAKUAN DAN RESPON PENGGUNA MUSLIM TERHADAP LOGO**

## **HALAL JAKIM**

### **ABSTRAK**

Kajian terdahulu membincangkan banyak kes penyalahgunaan dan manipulasi logo halal yang telah memberi kesan kepada pemahaman dan pengetahuan pengguna, yang secara formalnya diperkenalkan untuk mengurangkan keraguan dan kekeliruan pengguna Muslim. Ini menuntut keperluan kajian terhadap memahami perlakuan dan respon pengguna Muslim kepada halal logo JAKIM dengan penekanan kepada tahap pengetahuan, kesedaran dan keyakinan mereka di dalam rutin harian. Elemen visual juga dikatakan mempengaruhi keinginan dan pilihan mereka. Memenuhi kehendak kajian penomenologi, kajian ini menggunakan prosedur temubual berstruktur dan teknik persampelan bertujuan dalam menghuraikan pengalaman hidup 20 orang pengguna Muslim berdasarkan pandangan dan pemikiran peribadi semasa penggunaan logo halal. Kajian meneroka kaedah model penomenologi (1994) dengan analisis tematik (2006) dalam menganalisa data verbal. Theory of Planned Behavior mempengaruhi cadangan kerangka kajian dalam meneliti hasil dapatan berdasarkan kaedah triangulasi pemetaan oleh responden dan kajian lepas untuk meyokong permasalahan. Hasil dapatan kajian menunjukkan kurangnya pengetahuan halal logo oleh pengguna, isu kesedaran pula dibaikpulih dengan beberapa faktor pertimbangan, dan berbagai respon terhadap tahap keyakinan pengguna diterima. Rumusannya, kajian berjaya memenuhi keperluan dalam menggambarkan pengalaman hidup pengguna, serta meneroka peranan bidang komunikasi visual yangmana juga menyumbang kepada pengetahuan dalam membaikpulih industri halal di Malaysia.



# **MUSLIM CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOR AND RESPONSES TOWARDS HALAL LOGO JAKIM**

## **ABSTRACT**

Past literature had shown many cases of abused and manipulated halal logo which affects the knowledge and understanding of the consumers, that introduced to minimise doubtful transactions and confusion for Muslim consumers. This indicates an immediate study to understand the behaviour and responses of Muslim consumers towards JAKIM halal logo by focusing on their levels of halal related knowledge, awareness and confidence in their daily consumption and routines. The impact of visual elements argued to influence purchase interest and choices. In accordance to the nature of phenomenological research approach, this study applied a structured interview procedure and purposive sampling technique to characterize the lived experiences of 20 Muslim consumers based on their personal thoughts and views on halal logo use. The study explores a mixed method of phenomenology model (1994) with thematic analysis (2006) in analysing the verbatim data. The Theory of Planned Behavior used to influence the proposed study framework to review the findings, based on triangulation mapping that has been compromised by research participants and archive data as evidences to support studied issues. The findings indicated that consumers' halal logo knowledge is lacking, the awareness issue resulted to be improved with the consideration of few factors, as well as multiple responses were received on the consumers' confidence level. In conclusion, the study had achieved the research objectives in describing participants' life experiences, hence exploring meaning making in the context of visual communication field, which also implies the contribution of knowledge for the improvement of halal industry in Malaysia.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The introduction of this chapter is the first step towards a deeper understanding on the behavior and responses of Muslim consumers regarding the consumption of halal logo JAKIM. The essential outline of this chapter includes background, problem statements, preliminary investigations, aims, objectives, research objectives, research questions, significance, operational definitions, the research structure and summary. Each section includes an introduction to the history of the work undertaken, thus leading to an overall response to the research solutions. This chapter primarily addresses and highlights Malaysians' Muslim viewpoints and issues related to halal logo JAKIM particularly in terms of halal consumption and its potential in the recent market, as well as their challenges while interacting with them. Also, the influence of visual communication field as a platform to demonstrate the product attributes presented visually in a form of halal logo, and indicates as trustworthy component in determining consumers' choices and preferences. Consequently, this yield a different meaning to Muslim consumers' behaviour and response while halal purchasing.

#### **1.1.1 The halal concept leads to Malaysia's potential for halal consumption**

Malaysia aims to be recognized as a developing Islamic country for international halal hub in the recent years. There has been increasing demand for halal food (Adam Kredo, 2015), because research shows a growing number of Muslim communities with continuous request for halal goods. Furthermore, the findings by Abdul Latif (2006) show the increasing number of Muslims in the world.

Therefore, this growth a desire to find the validity of products status prior to the consumption. Indeed, Islam's influence as the world's fastest-growing and second largest religion has had a direct impact on this rise and also positively allowed Muslim consumers to determine food selection (Dindyal et al. 2003), behavior, consumption habits, and purchasing decisions (Shatenstein et al., 1998). More importantly, a true Muslim should take serious consideration of what is permissible (halal) and not permissible (haram) because Islam requires its adherents to uphold its shariah values (Shafiq et al., 2015). It has been firmly discussed in the Quran, Muslims must consume halal in every aspect of routine. As Allah's adoration, "O humanity! Eat what is lawful and healthy in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the devil. That's it! He's an enemy open to you ... "(Surat Al Baqara, 2:168). And, "Halal is clear, and haram is clear; there are some (suspected) issues between them. Some people will not know if Halal or Haram are these things. Whoever leaves them, and his faith and his conscience is innocent (Abidillah Al-Nu' man bin Bashir R.a), said Rasullah S.A.W.

As a cultural factor, religious influence Muslims behavior and buying conduct (Essoo and Dibb, 2004: 684; Soesilawati, 2011: 153). Malaysians, in general, are believed to use the impact of religiosity in all purchasing habits and this affect their decision-making in purchasing power (Syed Shah Alam & Nazura Mohamed Sayuti, 2011). The halal concept is explained as consumable, Allah has permitted to consume that and there is no restriction for the consumption of that (Al-Qaradawi, 2012: 25). Halal product is an output which does not contain any forbidden element according to Islamic rules; prepared, processed, carried and stored in an area which is purified and does not have any connection directly with food prepared by not taking into account any rules (Ambali et al. (2014).

The growing number of halal products pledge better demand towards increasing higher intention to consume halal labelled products. Thus, initial efforts were undertaken with the declaration of halal recognition proposed for goods with shariah compliance by the certification bodies and authorities in Malaysia (Bergeaud-Blackler, Florence, Johan Fischer & John Lever, 2015). The initiative was launched by the Islamic Government Agency formally founded as the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia or Jabatan Kemajuan Islam of Malaysia (JAKIM) with the aim to emphasize the importance of halal knowledge and substantially expanding it to the Malaysian community.

Notably, Malaysia became the first country to adopt halal logistics requirements and halal certification for suppliers of logistics services worldwide (Muhammad Naim, JAKIM Halal Hub Group, 2016). As an advantage, in this Malaysian society, applying halal values and beliefs to their everyday practises is highly intense. The support that has been widely extended amongst Muslims helps further improve the awareness and dissemination of halal-related issues. According to Marco Tieman (2017), many countries are entering the second stage of rapid development recently, and Malaysia is progressing gradually toward development in phase 3 for halal supply chain.

The progressive efforts to enhance the visibility of the halal image accredited in this country are therefore needed as part of the strategic plans to address the deep-seed of the halal industry on the global market. In an on online article (retrieved July 2019) by N. Md. Saad, the Malaysian government demonstrates its comprehensive strategies in strengthening the halal industry's development to achieve the vision of establishing Malaysia as an international halal hub.

Malaysia is the first country that actively expresses concern about improving its reputation in accordance with the halal industry and the economy. Thus, expanding halal food demand is becoming serious and requires several considerations, mainly to comply with shariah rules. However it has now created a new impactful paradigm interlinked with global issues such as sustainability, environment awareness, food safety and animal welfare encompassing food processing, transportation and distribution (Baizura Badrudin et al., 2012).

Since many Islamic countries now seek to place themselves on the global halal market, the practices of halal principles and values must be compatible with Islamic ethics and beliefs in order to be recognised worldwide. Unfortunately, by entering the global halal food market, Malaysia is exposed to many vulgar environments, threatening its reputation as an Islamic country. As a matter of effort, the authority is encouraged to promulgate the impacts of standards, specific laws and regulations, as suggested by Rokshana (2017). Moreover, the government should gradually play a role in establishing various strategies and policy enforcements to overcome issues with regards to their reputation in an effort to maintain a certain standing.

Some of those strategies are presented in Table 1.1 by N. Md. Saad (retrieved 2019) as shown below. The refinement of the government's policy and strategy has highlighted the need to secure consumer guarantees in terms of safety and human protection. The amendment specifically introduced by the Trade Description Act 2011 (TDA 2011) was therefore intended to improve the jurisdiction of JAKIM as a halal authority and to ensure the protection of consumers while selecting products, while at the same time increasing their awareness.

Table 1.1: Development of Halal Industry in Malaysia

Development of Halal Industry in Malaysia
In 1974, the Research Centre for Islamic Affairs Division started to issue halal certificate.
Since 1994, a halal logo is included in the halal certificate.
Beginning 2000, comprehensive halal standards and a systematic halal assurance system were implemented.
In 2004, initiative of MS1500 was introduced to comprehend halal standard
In Sept 2006, the Halal Industry Development Corporation was established and the Halal Industry Development Masterplan was formed.
In 2009, MS1500 halal standard revised, to strengthen the fundamental of halal certification standard
In 2011, the Trade Descriptions Act 2011 enforced the development of halal industry in Malaysia – to expand the jurisdiction of JAKIM

The concept of halal is widely perceived by Islamic jurisprudence and principles as permissible. The increasing number of Muslims has brought extensive market segmentation and advantages in particular to the consumption of halal food. According to Shah Alam and Sayuti (2011), the international market for halal foods is enormous and rapidly growing. The launch of the various halal brands and products is thought to be crucial as a platform for competitiveness and economic aggression in the marketplace. The impact of relative knowledge and understanding among Muslim consumers especially during product use, are commonly reflected on their religious background and beliefs. Hence, past studies addressed the importance of halal knowledge and awareness as compulsory particularly during halal consumptions.

According to Rasli (2013), there are several important elements that reflect on the perception of individuals on the halal concepts, these include their backgrounds, religions, cultures, education and social interactions. As a result, this will further influence the different level of understanding among each of them. Thus, this can be described as an issue of realization towards consuming what is permitted for Muslims to consume or use (Ambali & Bakar, 2012). It is believed that Muslims' consumption behavior reflects their strong belief and principles on religious entity. Religious knowledge compliance with the understanding of Islamic concepts are crucial as the matter of concern contributes into measurement of knowledge.

Agreed by Bharuddin et al. (2015), the role of halal knowledge is important while practising Islamic teachings regarding the concepts of halal and haram, thus making it a significant aspect that must be emphasized on. Moreover, it is essential to live according to Islamic ethics and faith, especially with regards to the food consumed. Food manufacturing provides substantial market segmentation and recently had an impact on all nations. Thus, in the context of the global halal market, strengthening halal concepts and certificates are pertinent in gaining the attention from both national and international business markets.

In general, the recognition of the halal brands is a possible positive factor for consumer's interest in terms of halal purchase and consumption (Golnaz, Zainal and Mad Nasir, 2012). The availability of halal information and increasing level of awareness among consumers have resulted in more opportunities and higher demands for halal markets. The factors such as religious perception, knowledge and trust are potentially important and play a major role in influencing food choice, food purchase decisions and eating patterns in particular (Blackwell et al., 2001).

As part of the approaches, approval for goods pursuant to the Shariah laws was added to the halal certification logo (Rokshana, 2017) in lieu of concerns all of which includes halal practices, such as registration, monitoring and compliance. Halal logo has been found to play a major role in convincing Muslim customers to purchase halal goods (K. M. Omar et al., 2012) which is necessary to demonstrate that the quality of consumers meets the Islamic standard (Dali. N. et al., 2007). This implies that Muslim consumers in Malaysia will be highly dependable on the various sources of information pertaining to the concept of halal released by JAKIM. Not limited to all parties at the national levels, especially the government, policymakers, suppliers, and manufacturers that must be actively supported their efforts and actions, particularly in disseminating news and recent updates on the halal related issues in Malaysia.

### **1.1.2 Visual communication: A marketing platform of gaining Muslim's attention and halal interest**

The impact of visual communication are broadly discussed in advertising. The practice of them are associated in the various forms of advertisement as mean of communication to convey a message or ideas graphically. By using the elements of typography, images, illustration, visual or symbols, it's effectively much greater to help in explaining, understanding, remembering and memorizing the information of the content. It is argued that the element of visual communication is one of the most effective forms of sharing information (Nishadha, 2021), and it is interesting to note on why and how the strong visuals can offers a direct information to the audiences, hence practically substantial than verbal communication.



The dynamic visual aid is particularly effective when statistics fail to communicate the information meaningfully. Without a doubt, when information is substituted by images, graphics, or symbols, it becomes much easier to comprehend. According to K. Hobbs et al. (2017), in the real world, the power of visual in modern communication is irrefutable. It is estimated that the visual content is 40 times more likely to be shared on social media than text-based content. Similarly, for the most part, people retain approximately 80% of what they see, than what they read. When visual or graphic representations arise to present the information, this draws their attention and compels individuals to view and memorize them spontaneously.

The context of visual element usage in representing a religious culture and values has raised further attention in the global halal markets. Despite with its potential in creating brand awareness is mentioned as a strategic key marketing, religion pointed as a source of reference and strong peripheral cues in advertising, declared from past studies. The use of visual cues in advertising as mean of communication strategically useful to persuade and influence consumers by simply informing on the existence of the new products advertised in the market. Hence, it is vital to promote certified halal products with the guarantees of maintaining the religious values throughout marketing activities.

Muslims are tied to the principle of consuming permissible products that aligned by Islamic laws. Thus, marketers are able to highlight information that motivates consumers to buy their products when they have halal symbols (Idris et al.,2006). In addition, as an advantage to incorporate with religious cues to gain Muslims attention. To further demonstrate this, it is interesting to note that earlier study has discovered the influence of religious symbols on marketing goals, as well as a platform while communicating on product features.

Muslim consumers, in general, are easily attracted to it and rely on the halal symbol when making purchasing selections, due to their strong faith and religious tradition. Similarly, because to the limited availability of time while shopping, people tend to rely significantly on the halal symbols, and the simplest method to do so is to rely on the official logo issued by the authorities. The support of the halal symbol serves as a component of a campaign designed to influence and persuade people about the attitudes toward reliable and trustworthy products. Agreed a former International Trade and Industry Minister, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz on June 2003 at The Star, that the introduction of halal logo by sole authority of JAKIM would help to clear any confusion about Malaysia products' status especially in the international market.

The halal logo is usually printed on package as a prominent tool to gain recognition in the marketplace (I. Pham et al., 2012);(J. C. Machado et al., 2012). The impact of visual symbol in a form of halal logo has compelling consumer interest to consume labelled halal product with much easier and confidence. This is aligned with the key objectives of practicing halal logo to instill confidence and assurance feelings, hence provides in-depth conceptualization of the term that vital in influencing consumers' choices and preferences with the competence halal understanding.

Meanwhile, the visual representations jeopardize the audience's positive response, particularly in terms of trust. The use of authentic visuals or real images ensures that people interpret information in a convincing manner, which may include promoting the credibility of shared beliefs based on the content. This is why the majority of consumers rely on visual aids to communicate ideas or to exchange information.

This is also acceptable because it is likely to increase individuals' responses by eliciting their emotional states. People's psychological contents are persuaded to perceive the values of products that carry this symbol, when the halal logo is used as a credible sign for influencing their thoughts and emotions. Significantly, this influence a positive impact to consume labelled products that more close to them, physically and emotionally. In another perspectives, the illusion of religious symbol visually described in a form of halal logo on packaging, is greatly acceptable to influence Muslims' purchase intention. Supported by past study, religious symbol in packaging as mean of communication tend to increase perceived religious symbolic-value of the product among consumers especially Muslims (Akbari et al., 2017).

Consequently, helps marketers to demonstrate the entity of products and its importance to penetrate Muslim halal market, pointed same authors. Moreover, argued Taylor et al., (2010) the use of religious symbol will expand consumer evaluation, and the effects are getting stronger as religiosity increased. The indication of halal logo usage emphasized by the Malaysia halal authorities especially JAKIM, has nevertheless shown the impact of the understanding that Malaysian Muslim prefers product that reflects to their religion.

As an initiative, the genuine halal logo design must be crucially developed with credibility aspect when transferring information, and also as a guarantees of consuming products that compliance with Islamic laws. Due to that, in 2012 government decided to nullify the state authority's logo while keeping only JAKIM halal logo (Habib, 2012) at product's package. However, the color of Malaysia's halal logo allowed to be modified to suit with packaging as desired by the manufacturer (Mahmood, 2011). And, it has been practiced until today as been gazette by the Trade Description Order 2011.

This resulted with the various halal logo designs exist in the recent market, contributes into misperception to validate products' status. Many past studies discussed on the multiple cases on halal logo abuse, and consumers' difficulties to recognize genuine halal logo JAKIM, particularly while comparing imported products. To help consumers with different halal products, the different halal certification bodies from different countries tend to use various forms of halal logo designs that been printed on products package with different typeface, colors and images ( M. N. b. H. Mohd et al, 2008).

As a result, this implies a lots of challenges facing by consumers especially Muslims while interacting with halal symbol during product selection. Agreed Shafiq et al (2015), consumers with greatly lacked of information tend to easily confuse and had difficulty to identify genuine halal logo JAKIM. Theoretically, it is addressed as an impactful tool to assist peoples to choose products with confidence. It is a part of avenue to signal a trust for target consumers (Z. Mohamed et al, 2008);(Z. Zakaria, 2008). Unfortunately, manufacturers tried to gain benefit from the situation and being irresponsible by introducing fake or unauthorized halal logo, thus cause doubts among Muslim peoples in Malaysia (Zailani et al., 2010).

The credibility of halal logo JAKIM has been exploited and misused, consequently will impact consumers' minds and views during consumption and decision-making. Evidently, this demonstrates the need of good marketing activities as a means of establishing the strength of halal symbols as a standard for product safety and Islamic compliance. It is unambiguously demonstrated that the halal symbol is effective as a visual cue used by manufacturers to assist consumers in recognizing halal products.

Recognizing the influence of visually presented communication has been extremely beneficial for the advertising world, particularly when displaying a message about halal consumption. By the means of advertisements, the use of visual signs and symbols has impacted the changes to consumers' social and cultural process, hence influence them to buy the goods that they do not even need (Selma Balci, 2016). Supported by Celik (2009) that characterizes peoples' social status and place in society which affects the individual' consumption behaviors. The strong ties among them has further shaped the consumption culture, as one way to manage consumers' perception while consuming products by considering the components of individual's cultures, values, and religious belief, thus conveniently leads into their awareness level (Selma Balci, 2016). In the nutshell, visual communication is a critical visual weapon with a variety of applications and principles that must be deployed as a part of the process in order to ensure that visual communication has a long-lasting impact and is more understood than any other mode of communication.

### **1.1.3 The significance of halal logo JAKIM as an official mark of trust**

The halal logo is an official mark to indicate the consistency and purity of the products. In general, the use of halal labelling is seen functional as an assurance to verify the product's conformity to Islamic dietary laws, also ensures that it comprises all the permitted elements, delivers consumers' satisfaction, reliable, meets the required standard of hygiene, safety and nutrition (Rokshana, 2017). While Muslims are aided in the selection of products allowed in Islam (De Run and Ming, 2011; Mahmood, 2011), and Ismaeel and Blaim (2012) argued that halal logo is great at influencing decision-making.

The guarantee of a halal logo and certificate that gives adequate knowledge and awareness of the trustworthy elements, protection and quality would particularly help to expand its prestige to the Muslim consumers. The halal logo instantly creates a huge phenomena in strengthening products and serve as a good platform for marketing tool purposes. It greatly helps Muslim people in delivering information needed as a resourceful reference about product attributes to protect Muslims. Furthermore, according to Bonne and Verbeke (2008), the serious impact of the halal logo will play as a benefit cue for Muslim consumers, as it comprises of the units of trust, and belief in informing their target consumers that their products are halal and Shariah compliant, in general, to the Muslim consumers (Shafie, 2006).

On the other hand, the halal logo is designed to avoid fraud and mislabeling, hence also acted to prevent deception and make welfare-maximizing choices (Bashar. H. Malkawi, 2014). Nuradli et al., 2007 stated, consumers are more concerned with halal logo and willing to trust halal logo more than those carrying ISO or similar certification (Shahidan and Md.Nor, 2006). Hence, it can be a mark of trust on products considered permissible for use and consumption by Muslims (Pham et al., 2012; Machado et al., 2012).

In general, many more studies indicated on the similar perceptions on this issue, and emphasized the relevancy of halal labelled products that most believably to be consumed for everyone. The halal logo is believed manage to capture an attention of non-Muslim towards its reputation in delivering an assumption that product is safe and clean to use. Hence, proven that non-muslim consumers do respond positively to halal foods certification (Siti Hasnah, Dann, Annur and De Run, 2009).

## **1.2 Problem Statements**

Several past researches have found higher demands for halal products, thereby offering advantages for retailers and businessmen for marketing strategies. Due to the growing numbers of Muslims, this subsequently influenced the adoption of halal concepts and its principle in line with Islamic values and laws. Therefore, during halal transactions, the halal indicator or label that addresses the product status can be deemed important for Muslim consumers' consideration. Nonetheless, it functions as a way of removing uncertainty (Che Ahmad, 2012), as a source of knowledge (Shaari and Ariffin, 2010), reducing or removing doubts and skepticism that undermine confidence and belief units (Shafie, 2006), while shielding Muslims from deceptive practice (Lindenmayer, 2001), and as a result, critically affecting decision-making (Ismael and Blaim, 2012).

The halal label shall generally be given based on basic principles and procedures which are satisfactory, safe and fit for consumption (Iberahim, H. et al., 2012). Most significantly, it remains not only to its comprehension and trustworthy characteristics, but also to influence the choices and preferences of customers, especially to Muslims for both religious and quality purposes (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008); (Gurnert, 2006). Unfortunately, recent cases of fake halal logo have illustrated the severity of the matter and negatively affect the credibility of the logo in the market. Based on articles published in Utusan Online (2007), the value of halal logo for Muslims as well as the issues of forged halal certificates and logos have never failed to make headlines in Malaysia. Moreover, according to Teng and Wan Jamaliah (2017) the JAKIM halal certificates were in question, their halal labels and definitions manipulated and violated, so the credibility of the halal certification became the central issue.

However, with the recent updates on the issues of its credibility, consumers are more doubtful about the status of halal labeled products. Haroon, R. (2021) dictated, Muslims have been a fool to believe that any food packaging with the halal label and logo is certified. The perception of relying to halal label is supposed to be the securest way to acknowledge the existence of shariah-compliance products. Thus, the label must highly credible to confirm the status. In reality, as many people are aware of the critical impacts of halal logo, they begin to demand for genuine halal certification to guarantee that the product is halal (Abdul et al., 2009).

According to D.H. Diana Ag. Damit et al. (2017), some businesses recklessly misused the halal logo to mislead customer of their suspicions of the ingredients used in their product (Mohamed Syazwan and Mohd Remie, 2012). Thus resulting in the display of different forms of non-official halal logo at their premises to deceive consumers (Ilyia et al., 2011). The growing numbers of reported fake logo cases have resulted in further concerns to consolidate consumers' perspective and views, whereby the serious consequences possibly lead to consumer misunderstanding when perceiving the halal logo. D.H. Diana Ag. Damit et al. (2017) agreed, that labeling misuse can lead to customer's confusion.

This implies an evidence to the concerns of Muslim consumers in stepping out from the difficulties to get an access of halal knowledge and information. Faced with many crucial issues and challenges, most of the major problems mentioned above emerge from the absence of information, which leads to uncertainty and misunderstanding (Rokshanan, 2017). This worsens as customers are fooled by the fake logos on display because they are unable to identify the correct halal logo (W. R. Wan Ismail et al., 2016) which results in unintentionally purchasing non-halal goods (Sirajuddin et al., 2013).



Additionally, unscrupulous businessmen misuse the halal logo to promote their company, and the repeated abuse of halal logos has made consumers more wary about trusting products and halal logos (Teng and Wan Jamaliah, 2017). According to Shafiq et al. (2015), JAKIM's halal certificate leads to confusion as many people with lack of information on the genuine halal logo face difficulty in identifying the actual halal logo from the fake logos. This further addressed the potential issues on consumer doubts to the authenticity of the certificate and permissibility of food consumed, including the credibility of the certifying authorities. When easily mistaken with fake halal logos on the market (Z. Zakaria et al. (2017), consumers with less information and knowledge will be doubtful and more concerned regarding the products in the market.

This include whether to verify the authenticity of a foreign halal logo (Z. Zakaria et al., 2017). In the end, it is assumed that inadequate information unconstructively leave implications towards brand equity (W. R. Wan Ismail et al., 2016). Stressed Zailani et al. (2010), ineffective halal labels, trademark and logo validity triggered probable doubts among Malaysian consumers. Hence, W. R. Wan Ismail et al. (2016) argue that Malaysian halal brands are still unable to achieve the target because not all Muslim consumers are able to identify the correct and valid halal logo.

In respond to this and as part of the strategy to gain consumers' confidence in their halal logo and certificates, JAKIM aggressively engages their audiences by launching a portal containing information that lists all approved halal logo from other countries. Unfortunately, the portal was not successful because not all customers would take the initiative to check and confirm the logos found on products available in the market (Tieman, M. 2013).

According to Shafiq et al. (2015), in the absence of information, consumers are likely to be fooled by fake halal logos or at least remain confused with various logos used in the market. This shows that halal security requires more institutional faith and trust instead of merely relying on personal beliefs (A. R. Ambali and A. N. Bakar, 2012) or, in other words, identification of logos relies more on guesswork than on accurate information, as claimed by Shafiq et al. (2015). Furthermore, JAKIM should plan for more effective measures to disseminate halal logo updates. In addition to these concerns, advertising campaigns also do not appear to hit target consumers (A. R. Ambali and A. N. Bakar, 2012).

Despite many difficulties and challenges for Muslim consumers to purchase halal food and food products due to the various unauthorized halal labels available in the market (Rokshanan, 2017), positive halal initiatives are extremely crucial to strengthen their perception on halal knowledge. This implies an effort to tighten the enforcement and the standard operating procedure (SOP) by JAKIM for the declaration of halal certification particularly for all imported products (Bernama, 2020). However, Z. Zakaria et al. (2017) claim that the halal awareness campaign promotion, so far have not really been successful. While Mahiah Said et al. (2014) state that there is also a lack of halal awareness content in the Malaysian education context, that is discovered as the core issue leading to further investigations.

### **1.2.1 Central Problems Based on Halal-Related Studied Phenomenon**

Literatures found that lacking of knowledge and awareness level have resulted to the difficulties faced by Muslim consumers when experiencing with the halal logo by JAKIM. Indirectly, this will influence the way they perceive and behave towards halal products consumption.

Many view that the impact of halal knowledge and awareness critically affect their perceptions to consume halal logo as it indicates product trustworthiness. This implies that the understanding level towards halal concepts must be at maximum while decision-making before determining purchase patterns. Literatures shown that those people with minimum level of exposure will take for granted and remain in confusion, thus less concerned to search for the halal logo during purchasing. Moreover, number of researches pointed on Muslim challenges to differentiate genuine halal logo design, confused, doubtful, easily taking for granted and etc. Reflects to this, only a few studies have focused on the attitudes played by halal logo design itself. Thus, it is hoped that the study will fill the study gap particularly in describing the expression of Muslim consumers while experiencing with Malaysia halal logo. Their relevant opinion and perspective are required to clearly understand the component of studied phenomenon that involved. Based on the rising issues as shown above, the major research problem (RP) for this research are (refers Table 1.2 below):

RP1: Lack of consumer's knowledge and awareness has made it difficult to recognize genuine halal logo design

RP2: There is lack of confidence on the validity of halal logo

### **1.3 Research Questions (RQ)**

The research questions in Table 1.2 below revealed as:

RQ 1: What are Muslim consumers' knowledge on the halal logo, based on their socio-demographic factor?

RQ 2: How does halal logo awareness affect Muslim consumers' halal purchases?

RQ 3: How can Muslim consumers' confidence level be evaluated?

#### 1.4 Research Objectives (RO)

The research objectives in Table 1.2 below described as:

RO 1: To study about Muslim consumers' knowledge on halal logo, based on socio-demographic factors

RO 2: To examine the awareness of halal logo, based on Muslim consumers halal purchase

RO 3: To evaluate Muslim consumers' confidence on the halal logo

Table 1.2: Research Problems vs Research Questions vs Research Objectives

Research Problems (RP)	Research Questions (RQ)	Research Objectives (RO)
RP1.Lack of consumer's knowledge and awareness has made it difficult to recognize genuine halal logo design	RQ1.What is Muslim consumers' knowledge on the halal logo, based on socio-demographic factors?	RO1. To study on Muslim consumers' knowledge on the halal logo, based on socio-demographic factors
	RQ2. How does halal logo awareness affect Muslim consumers halal purchases?	RO2. To examine the awareness of halal logo, based on Muslim consumers halal purchases
RP2.There is lack of confidence on the validity of halal logo	RQ3. How can Muslim consumers confidence level be evaluated?	RO3. To evaluate Muslim consumers' confidence level on the halal logo

#### 1.5 Research Aims

The lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the halal definition among Muslims and halal product manufacturers may affect the credibility of the concept of halal in Islam. The research aims at highlighting Muslim consumers' expectations in perceiving the Malaysian halal logo and other consumption issues related to it.

## **1.6 Research Scope**

In accordance to the phenomenology approach, a study investigates Muslim consumers' lived experiences when consuming halal logo products. Their subjective experience with selection criteria and purchasing preferences has been articulated sufficiently. The systematic data collection was conducted via interview with 20 Malaysian Muslims drawn from a purposive sample of 8 experts and 12 homogenous samples. Muslims consume products in accordance with their religious beliefs and values and are exposed to halal principles and practices. As a result, Muslims are assumed to be able to recognize products that are certified "halal". The widely recognized international symbol of purity, quality, safety, and hygiene, as represented by the Malaysia halal logo, is consistent with Islamic Shariah rules and teachings. The legitimate visual symbol in a form of halal logo was established to assist consumers with their buying experience and to clearly indicate the product status. This includes summarizing their challenges and difficulties while recognizing halal logo designs. Thus, the role of product attributes delivered visually has a strong effect to determine selection and decision-making. This appears to show that visual communication plays significant influence in perceiving the intensity of message that is successfully viewed as trustworthy and reliable.

## **1.7 Research Significant**

The indication of halal logo plays as powerful and yet, great in influencing consumers' purchases. It is an effective visual cue in marketing, when able to communicate the ideas on credibility, hygiene and quality for those products carrying the logo. The results of this research are important to explore Muslim consumers' views and perspectives while interacting with the Malaysia halal logo.

Also, to convince Muslim consumers to be more informed and alert with all issues and challenges in promoting halal awareness and its concepts in Malaysia. Importantly, this study will also contribute to the following groups as below:

#### **1.7.1 Reducing Consumers' Purchase Conflict**

Despite being able to provide sufficient information on the halal logo to minimize conflict and misunderstanding, the study will directly contribute to the knowledge and understanding of consumers, which in turn is exceptionally helpful for halal purchase.

#### **1.7.2 Researchers or Academicians' Future Engagement**

This study would serve an additional source of information for the engagement of similar research subject, thus subsequently leading to better understanding of future recommendations and innovations.

#### **1.7.3 Improve Government's Policies**

This study will significantly provide results useful for the revision of current policies and regulations.

#### **1.7.4 Entrepreneurs' Marketing Guideline**

This study will serve as an important guideline in their marketing campaigns so that their expertise and information can be broadened as an added benefit before taking any critical steps in product growth.

## **1.8 Preliminary Investigation (PI)**

The preliminary investigation was conducted on January 2019 with a selection of 16 experts from the Department of Islamic Development of Malaysia (JAKIM), International Institute for Halal Research and Training (INHART UIA) and Institute of Islam Hadhari IIH (UKM). The inputs constructed within four elements are as stated below:

- **Enforcement or Policymaking**

The role of enforcement is also discussed as part of the solution to this issue. It is firmly believed that enforcement is crucial to boost the validity of halal certificates and gauge the degree of consumer's trust. Parellel perceptions of the impacts of the enforcement and its elements were also expressed by the experts.

The consensus of statements that compliance has an effect on the confidence of consumers, leads to a better halal policy as well as public trust and the efficiency of the certification process, and also results in the consistency, protection and hygiene standard of products. The majority of the 16 experts gave the same views that any enrollment would seek the consent of JAKIM as core authority. The implementation of institutional supervision and monitoring by JAKIM sufficient to strengthen the roles of the certificate and to prevent misuse of the logo. In summary, enforcement is important to minimize logo misuse, to help define the legal logo, to give a better image for the certificate and also to demonstrate the profile of Muslims throughout the world.

- **Halal Certification**

Results also show a number of views pertaining to the use of halal certification, both positive and negative reactions. It is also noted that the negative effects of halal certification would jeopardize JAKIM's authority as the policy maker, and effective implementation of this label or logo is necessary to help consumers identify acceptable and permitted products. According to experts, halal certification is informative and practical to gain consumers' trust. Findings also demonstrated the worrying issue of experts to the current issues of fake halal certificate that leads into purchase conflict, difficult to define thus may ruins halal reputation. In summary, the importance of halal certification and labeling is impactful to improve the overall credibility of halal principles.

- **Authority (the government/JAKIM)**

A majority of the experts agreed with all findings in the literature especially positive findings on halal certification. The authority or regulating agencies may be required to fullfill a number of criteria include demonstrating their integrity in issuing halal policy, providing halal guidance, interacting with halal companies, winning the trust of customers, reducing doubts, improving the quality and efficiency of halal certification, and providing constructive suggestions on daily updates. They also claimed that halal authority must be well integrated, systematic and rational. The results also indicated in an agreement that conflicts occur between halal certification officers, particularly during the certification processes, thus affecting the pace of approval.



- **Awareness**

The experts also addressed the issue of awareness and agreed that halal awareness is essential because it can reduce consumers' uncertainty and purchasing conflicts. In addition, halal awareness also contributes to product trust and typically depends on the level of understanding, which is extremely useful for deciding the safety and hygiene standard of the product. The ideas of effective halal campaigns may also increase the level of Muslims' halal awareness, which strongly suggests that initial efforts should be further promoted and strengthened.

Three additional questions were adapted from a study of Abdul et al. (2009) also answered by the experts. The answer are as follow:

- **Criteria during food purchasing**

Most experts emphasized on the substantial impact of halal logo and certificates as convincing elements during purchase. However, the information on ingredients, expiry date, price and nutrition are also included as part of the criteria. Further elaboration on the criteria of food purchase is presented in Chapter 4.2.

- **Definition of "halal food"**

A majority of the experts defined halal food as free and prohibited from haram, permissible and food processing is under shariah or Islamic law. Further elaboration on the definition of 'halal food' is presented in Chapter 4.2.