

HALAL PRODUCT MANAGEMENT: FACTORS SHAPING CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF HALAL CHOCOLATES IN KARACHI

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to find the important aspects that are affecting the determinants of consumer perception toward halal chocolate purchasing in Karachi. This study focuses on the diverse roles of religious knowledge and Islamic dietary laws that were modeled to impact Consumer perceptions towards halal chocolate ingredients. One of the most common ingredients is lard. Lard is a common substitute for oil used by food manufacturers in chocolates since it is less expensive. Muslims have become more concerned about halal food items and their ingredients, which motivates them to use halal food products. The study was particularly based on Karachi. The research is based on a quantitative approach. The study was conducted among 345 Muslim consumers. The responses of the participants to self-administered questionnaires have been used for gathering the data. Following that, the data were examined using the statistical software SPSS. The results revealed that Religious Knowledge has a significant positive impact on Consumer perceptions of halal chocolate product purchasing. The rest of the factors, namely Islamic Dietary Laws, do not have any significant effect on Consumer Perception towards halal chocolate purchasing, particularly in Karachi. Although Pakistan is a Muslim country, compared to other Muslim states like Malaysia, there is limited knowledge of Halal ingredients in chocolate products. There is no formal Halal certification issuing body in the country that can identify haram adulterants in chocolate products. The results of this study will have a significant impact on Pakistani food producers and marketers who are looking for new ways to enter the halal chocolate market and enter Muslim markets as suppliers of certified halal chocolates.

Keywords: *Consumer Perception; Religious Knowledge; Islamic Dietary Laws; Halal Consumption.*

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INTRODUCTION

Increasing concern has developed among Muslims regarding halal food products, their branding, marketing, supply chain, and certifications (Aziz & Vui, 2012; Prakoso et al., 2023). Muslim consumers are also concerned about ingredients, leading to an extended need anticipated for the use of halal food products (Ahmed et al., 2019). It is a religious concern to opt for permissible food items for consumption (Rasdi et al., 2023). Consciousness about halal food is not only limited to the countries of minority Muslims, although it is receiving a drive into the countries of Muslim dominance (Salman & Siddiqui, 2011). Religious commitment has a noteworthy effect on the lives of individuals by determining their values, knowledge, and attitudes. These religious commitments and values influence people's attitudes toward the consumption of food (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011). Halal goods, halal confections, and halal food ingredients have received attention from countries that are members of the Organization of Islamic Conference. The availability of halal goods is still insufficient to meet customer expectations. Many Muslims might not even decide how to purchase halal goods (Soesilowati, 2010).

The main issues facing the food products industry—adulteration detection and food authenticity—are of greater importance to consumers and food businesses. The most crucial issue with food authenticity is accurate labeling, however, it is common practice to substitute expensive raw materials with less expensive ones. Lard is a common substitute for oil used by food manufacturers in chocolates since it is less expensive (Aftab et al. 2013). Adulterants of fat consist of two groups' vegetable oils as well as fats. In an analysis of religious concerns, the presence of pork and lard in food products is a serious subject (Rohman & Che Man, 2010). The world's favorite snack and beverage is chocolate (Mittal & Ravinder, 2012). Several ingredients, including cocoa press cake, cocoa nib, cocoa butter, cocoa mass, and cocoa powder, as well as permitted optional additives and flavoring agents, are combined to create chocolate. Cocoa margarine proportionate, cocoa spread substitute, and cocoa butter alternate are trans fats typically added to chocolate. For monetary reasons, businesses added lard to their chocolate and chocolate items in developing countries. The potential lard presence in chocolate including chocolate items offered in the marketplace focuses especially on lard adding up to cocoa spread, which is, truth be told, the most vital fixing in chocolate formulation (Che Man et al., 2005).

Additionally, none of the labels for chocolate produced locally specified the trans-fat content. There are no regulations on saturated and trans-fat in Pakistan. It's frequently hypothesized that

chocolate's high saturated fat content raises cholesterol (Aftab et al., 2013). This study, therefore, seeks to answer the research question: How well can we predict consumer perception from a combination of religious knowledge, and Islamic dietary laws toward purchasing halal chocolates in Karachi?

The current study hence explores customer knowledge of haram adulterations in components in chocolate products that are readily available in markets and identifies certain concerns for the guarantee of halal ingredients used in chocolate products (Che Man et al. 2005; Fadzlillah et al., 2011; Aftab et al. 2013). Much research has been performed in social media marketing, but there are still research gaps. Marketers are still unclear about how social media impacts consumers' attitudes and purchase decisions, leading to the consumer purchase decision. Another gap is that the impact of eWOM has not been explored on the consumers' purchase intent, along with the effect of other factors that may have played a role in the popularity of social media, like consumer trust in social networking websites, performance expectancy of products presented, hedonic motivation of the consumers, level of interactivity.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of research is to evaluate the impact of religious knowledge, and Islamic dietary laws on consumer perception towards halal chocolates in Karachi, Pakistan.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research study aims to address the knowledge gap about halal chocolates in Karachi, providing a preliminary idea for marketers, food manufacturers, Muslim consumers, academic researchers, and students in Pakistan to recognize the need for halal food certificates (Salman & Siddiqui, 2011). The study highlights Pakistan's lack of awareness about Halal food affirmation and lack of a recognized Halal certificate issuing body, despite its registered NGO, Halal Development Council, promoting Halal Economy. The study intends to address the lack of knowledge in the food industry regarding ingredients and food laws due to increasing consumer fragmentation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines consumers' perceptions of halal chocolates and chocolate components as well as the adulteration of chocolate goods, which is a severe issue in Islam when lard and pork are used as oil substitutes in chocolate compositions. To protect Muslim consumers from fraud intentionally or unintentionally a reliable technique is necessary in halal food products for finding pork and lard adulteration. As per the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S.

Department of Agriculture adulteration to noncompliance to health or safety norms. Haram ingredient adulteration in manufactured food has become common and many cases were reported worldwide (Fadzlillah et al., 2011). The most popular theories to comprehend the halal product acceptance behavior of the religious society are the theory of reasoned action (Khalek, 2014; Ozgen & Kurt, 2013), the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1991; Alam & Sayuti, 2011), the technology acceptance model, and the triandis model (Rahim & Junos, 2012).

Religious Knowledge

The consumer's perception and their level of knowledge and religiosity are different (Said et al., 2014). Religion has an impact on consumer deeds and controls the action plan on halal food utilization. On the other hand, the methodology of food consumption relies on the consumer's force of religious mindfulness. Highly religious individuals are inflexible because they are powerfully dedicated to their beliefs (Kılıç Altun, & Aydemir, 2021). In Islam, the term "religiosity" refers to the commitment to upholding the fundamentals of the faith both practically and conceptually through upholding other people's rights, adhering to Allah's commands, abstaining from wrongdoing, and engaging in prayer (Othman & Hashim, 2010). Halal is a religious issue. Halal items are Shariah Compliant, with no utilization of haram adulterations. Muslim customers fundamentally comply with Shariah's necessities (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011). Religion decides to buy halal food. As a source of information, they assist marketers in developing successful marketing strategies (Prakoso et al., 2023). Muslims concerning halal and haram food were impressively high, they reliably have a high need for halal issues when they buy food (Soesilowati, 2010; Othman & Hashim, 2010).

H1: Religious knowledge has an insignificant influence on Muslim consumers' perception of halal chocolates.

Islamic Dietary Laws

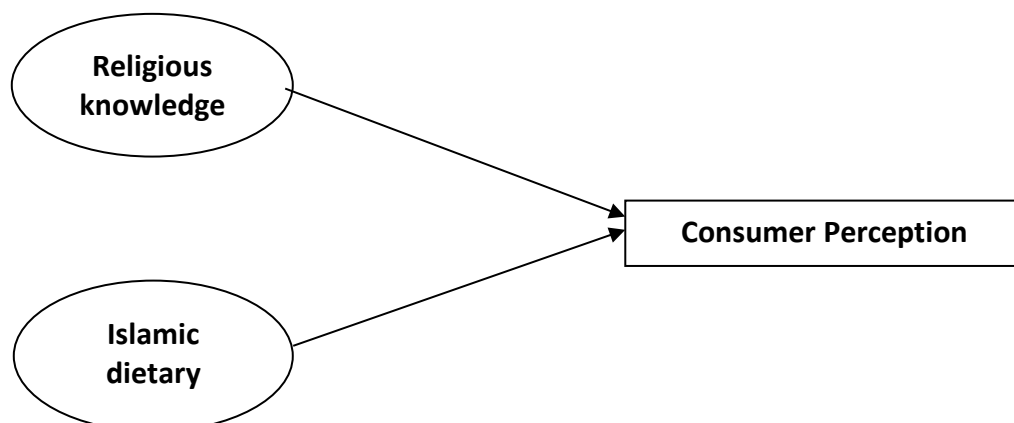
The adulteration of food items has turned into a typical issue in various countries. Food producers often use lard as an alternative ingredient for oil. The use of lard and pork is a real matter in Islam (Fadzlillah et al., 2011; Rohman & Che Man, 2010). Due to its acceptance as a replacement standard for safety, hygiene, and quality, the idea of halal products is currently gaining worldwide debate (Rasdi et al., 2023). Halal foods and drinks for a Muslim consumer mean that the products have met the Shariah law requirements. Consequently, Muslim and non-Muslim consumers are greatly concerned about what they consume (Farah, 2021). Muslims' responsibilities and the importance of halal awareness in their daily lives must be compliant

with Shariah (Ambali & Bakar, 2014). Food consumed by Muslims must meet the general Islamic dietary laws (Bukhari et al., 2022). Halal is resultant of the Arabic word importance permit, legitimate, and allowed (Khalek, 2014). Halal food is reasonable to consume under Islamic law (Teng et al., 2013). In Islam, consuming is seen as an issue of worship, in the same route as a request to Allah and diverse religious exercises. Muslims must ensure that the food they eat is clean and composed on the right path, with the avoidance of things that are denied in Islamic dietary laws (Rahim & Junos, 2012). Due to the reported harmful health effects of trans fatty acids, convenience products chocolate, and pastry were examined (Aftab et al., 2013). Policymakers can adopt consciousness initiative, highlights the need for education concerning the structure of the business and at the time of purchase (Singh & Sharma, 2013) and the effect of variables on customers' observation of halal food items prepared as per Islamic dietary laws (Mutsikiwa & Basera, 2012; Rahim & Junos, 2012).

H2: Islamic dietary laws have an insignificant influence on Muslim consumers' perception of halal chocolates.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of this model is the Theory of Reasoned Action (Lada, *et al.*, 2009). The religious construct is based on the model of Delener's of religiosity and consumer decision behavior (Delener, 1994). Prior empirical evidence supports the influence of religion on purchasing goods decisions and other purchasing behaviors (Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Mortimer *et al.*, 2020). Incorporating many constructs that are relevant to Islamic dietary law and practices can help people comprehend how to use Halal food (Othman & Hashim, 2010; Bukhari *et al.*, 2022).



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is based on a quantitative approach (Brandimarte, 2011). The research purpose is explanatory. This research aims to analyze the perception of consumers toward halal chocolates in Karachi (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The research is fundamentally explanatory and after instruments have been utilized for information gathering and overviews through survey and theory creating and testing. Regression from a correlational study will be employed. Both dependent and independent variables are present in this study. As evidenced by this study, customers in Karachi have opinions about halal chocolates and chocolate ingredients. The total study will incorporate primary research, and questionnaires are particularly useful in this context. Surveys completed by Muslim consumers, notably in Karachi, focus on young consumers to learn more about their perceptions when purchasing chocolates and chocolate-related products as well as their awareness of halal. By using a questionnaire regarding age, gender, education, income, and occupation, a sample of Muslim chocolate consumers was chosen. Because they are more likely to be interested in chocolate-related products and because their opinions can be applied generally, young consumers are good candidates for the study. There were 345 respondents in the sample. On a five-point Likert scale, "1" denoted strongly disagree, and "5" denoted strongly approve, all responses were totaled. The distribution of the questionnaire was done by convenience sampling. Following a pilot study, 345 Muslim customers were used as the study's sample. All the data were combined, and SPSS was used to strengthen the dependability of all the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Three industry experts who work for the target company also approved the survey tool. Regression analysis using dependent and independent variables will be employed in this investigation. Descriptive statistics, exploratory analysis, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis are then used to analyze the acquired data.

Composition of the Data

Measures

Structured and unstructured questions were included in the study instrument's systematic design. Five significant constructs that were obtained from a literature review were included in the questionnaire's design; (a) Consumer Perception towards Halal Chocolates, the study used seven items adapted from (Salman & Siddiqui, 2011; Widodo, 2013). The internal consistency coefficient of the measuring scale (i.e., Cronbach Alpha) was 0.657. (b) Religious Knowledge, an example of this construct is "I believe in basic tenets of Islam (such as Touheed)" (Salman & Siddiqui, 2011). The internal consistency coefficient of the measuring scale (i.e., Cronbach Alpha) was 0.534; (c) Islamic Dietary Laws, sample items are "Muslims have to follow a set

of dietary laws as ascribed by their religion” (Salman & Siddiqui, 2011). The measuring scale's internal consistency coefficient, or Cronbach Alpha, was 0.544. On a five-point Likert scale, "1" denotes strongly disagree, and "5" denotes strongly agree, all replies are scored. The survey also contained information about each respondent's education, age, gender, income, and occupation from their profiles.

DATA ANALYSIS

To determine the underlying structure for the items of the factors determining determinants of consumer attitude towards the halal chocolates questionnaire, exploratory factor analysis was carried out. Five factors were asked for based on the proposed equation: Consumer perception towards halal Chocolates, Religious Knowledge, and Islamic Dietary laws. The KMO significance value of the predictor variable is 0.739 which shows 73.9 % of inconsistency. Moreover, a significant result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the matrix is not an identity matrix (Adil & Fatima, 2013).

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.739
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	968.1486
	Df	120
	Sig.	0.000

Source: Study Analysis

After applying exploratory factor analysis, the estimation of alpha for Consumer perception towards halal Chocolates was 65.7%, for Religious Knowledge the alpha value was 53.4%. The alpha value for Islamic Dietary laws was 54.4%. Factor results represent the independent variables' correctness of the data. The foremost factor “Consumer perception towards halal Chocolates” has an eigenvalue is 2.022, the other factor “Islamic Dietary Laws” also has an eigenvalue is 1.513 and the factor “Religious Knowledge” has an eigenvalue is 1.472. Table 2 presents the things and component loadings for the rotated components.

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix

	Component					
	Alpha	1	2	3	4	5
CP3	0.657			.771		
CP4				.764		
CP2				.678		
CP1				.521		
IDL4	0.544				.796	
IDL3					.758	
RN2	0.534					.832
RN3						.699
Eigenvalue		2.441	2.169	2.022	1.513	1.472
% of Variance Explained		15.259	13.553	12.640	9.454	9.199
Cumulative % of Variance Explained		15.259	28.812	41.452	50.906	60.105

Source: Study Analysis

Regression Analysis

The survey was dispersed among 345 Muslim consumers of chocolate in Karachi. The regression analysis is the examination process for the estimation of the relations between the independent and dependent variables (Armstrong, Scott, 2012). Table 3 shows means, norm deviations, and inter-correlations for Consumer perception towards halal Chocolate and its predictors Religious Knowledge, and Islamic Dietary laws.

Table 3. Means, Norm Deviations, and Inter-correlations for Consumer Perception and Predictor Variables (N = 252)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	CP	RN	IDL
CP	3.9296	0.62624	1		
RN	4.1587	0.59931	.238**	1	
IDL	4.5179	0.5977	.155*	.228**	1

Table 4. Shows the outcome of hypothesis testing through instantaneous regression analysis for predicting Consumer perception towards halal Chocolates. The combination of variables considerably predicted over 10.3% of the total variance in predicting Consumer perception towards halal Chocolates $F(4; 246) = 8.140; p < 0.001$, with two variables which significantly predicted Consumer perception towards halal Chocolates except for Islamic Dietary Laws. In addition, the issue of multicollinearity is not shown among indicators because the variance

inflation factor (VIF) esteem for every indicator is less than 10 (Adil and Fatima, 2013). The coefficients of parameter estimates suggest that 'Religious Knowledge' (0.183; $p < 0.05$) reflects a statistically significant impact on Consumer perception towards halal Chocolate. Thus, their respective hypotheses (H_1) were supported respectively. On the converse, 'Islamic Dietary Laws' (0.063; $p < 0.05$) have shown a statistically insignificant impact in predicting Consumer perception towards halal Chocolates thus, H_2 was not supported.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing for Consumer Perception through Norm Regression Analysis

HYP	Predictors	B	SE	T-Stat	Sig.	VIF	Remarks
	(Constant)	1.842	0.4	4.606	0		
H1	RN	0.183	0.066	2.768	0.006*	1.119	Supported
H2	IDL	0.063	0.066	0.948	0.344	1.105	Not Supported

$$F(5,304) = 27.9, (p < 0.001); AdjR_2 = 0.303 *p < 0.05$$

The estimations of β in the above table demonstrate that all values are positive. The Sig value of Religious Knowledge is 0.006 which is satisfactory in a 99% confidence interval. The sig value for Islamic Dietary laws is 0.344 which is greater than 0.05. The regression analysis shows that the above hypothesis is accepted. Religious Knowledge and Islamic Dietary laws have a significant impact on consumers' perception of halal chocolates.

DISCUSSION

The word "Haram" in Arabic implies forbidden. Jurists have categorically declared the following objects to be "Haram" considering the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah (Prakoso et al., 2023). Most animals that are reptiles and insects, animal diglycerides, glycerides, glycerol/glycerin, hormones, lipase, monoglycerides, phospholipid, bacon, blood, carnivorous animals, collagen, dead animals, enzymes, ethanol, ethyl alcohol, wine and spirits, emulsifiers, fatty acids, gelatin, and halal animals are not slaughtered by Islamic law. Food additives, including emulsifiers, raising agents, preservatives, coloring, and gelling agents—all of which are governed by the alphabet 'E'—are found in processed foods. Some of these are derived from non-Zabiha or haram animals, like Khanzeer, while others are made from animal origin but are not produced in any Islamic nation. These 'Haram additives must be avoided at all costs, e.g., 'Haram additives are E120, E160a, E471, E472 [a-e], E473, E474, E475, E476, E477, E478, E542, E570, E572, E631, E635, E640, and E920 (Kılıç Altun, & Aydemir, 2021).

For the benefit of international corporations, Pakistan manufactures a wide variety of goods. It has been determined that their original product line is haram. This casts doubt on their local

goods. Because the animal source cannot be confirmed to be a Halal animal and an authorized Zabaha, these goods must be classified as haram. Many international Islamic organizations have confirmed that fat is a common food that comes from pigs. The key is that they are not using their original concentrate in Pakistan, which is something we can say with certainty. Research has shown that pig fats are an ingredient in several products made by multinational corporations, including toothpaste, shaving cream, chewing gum, chocolate, candies, biscuits, cornflakes, toffees, canned foods, and fruit tins. (Rasyid, 2022; Yener, 2022).

Muslims are required to abide by the rules established by our faith, which serve as a guide for Muslims. All religious groups maintain that since it has a connection to pigs, food that contains it should not be consumed since it will enter human bodies. If we eat halal food, we will go to heaven; however, if we eat haram food, we will go to hell. Nobody should take the laws governing halal and haram diets lightly; they are a serious problem.

The results revealed that Islamic dietary laws do not have any significant influence on consumer perceptions towards halal chocolates in Karachi. The reason is that there is limited knowledge and awareness of Halal ingredients, particularly in chocolate products. There is no formal Halal certification issuing body in the country that can identify haram adulterants in chocolate products. It's important to create awareness among Muslim consumers related to adulterants that could be utilized and make the product haram. The Islamic dietary laws must be communicated by brands as it creates understanding between the brands and the consumers.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

In conclusion, Religious Knowledge has a significant positive impact on consumers' perception of halal chocolates. The rest of the factors namely Islamic Dietary laws do not have any significant influence on Consumer Perception towards halal chocolates in Karachi. As a product attribute in Islam, halal is focused on the nature, cause, and the preparing technique for the food (Osman et al., 2014). Religious learning is the best rule to focus on food utilization. The contamination of pig sources in food items is forbidden in Islam. On the other hand, information backs the way that a staunch believer and a very dedicated Muslim may not be aware of the way that whatever food is accessible in Pakistan is halal certified or not (Khan et al., 2019). Consequently, items that contain lard must be expressed in food labeling and a logo must be applied on halal items (Kawata et al., 2018).

Muslim scientists ought to have the urge to investigate the detection techniques for food adulteration (Fadzlillah et al. 2011). Marketers need to emphasize halal branding more to

increase halal awareness (Wilson, & Liu, 2010). Customers frequently believe that all manufactured food is halal, which may be one of the reasons halal awareness is not linked to food consumption. To ensure that consumers are satisfied with halal food products, policymakers should keep an eye on all food producers. The present study incorporates certain limits. It is limited to a small sample size. This study's restricted funding prevented it from evaluating the larger context of customer perceptions of halal chocolates. As one of the most popular confectionery items in the country, chocolate, it is crucial to educate consumers about its halal status and the relevance of its ingredients as well as to research consumer perception. The sample is too small to be generalized because it is restricted to young Muslim consumers, chocolate aficionados, and research students. We selected for this research a wide range of Muslim consumers in Pakistan but questionnaires cannot be filled by them so this is the limitation to make research restricted and questionnaires will be filled in Karachi only.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Companies should follow the procedures for producing products following the standards for quality and halal to safeguard the interests of consumers. It is possible to convey information about or raise awareness for halal-quality products through communication channels. Customers should make it a habit to check the ingredients for the product's quality. It aids businesses in understanding their clients' wants and tailoring their strategies accordingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future exploration may be gathering information from different zones with bigger examples to have a more exhaustive study. The region chosen for the study is Karachi. The result assembled may for the most part be restricted keeping in mind the end goal to enhance the outer legitimacy of the instrument, geographical diversity. The study needs to be designed to enhance consumer awareness regarding halal and haram ingredients and create awareness about halal in the life of Muslims and their obligations to be Shariah compliant.

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