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Spanish Muslims' halal food purchase intention

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors that influence purchase intention of halal food among Spanish Muslim consumers. Data were obtained from a survey of 228 consumers living in various regions of Spain, then analyzed using the partial least squares technique. Our results showed that product awareness does not have an effect on purchase intention while other constructs do, including the mediating effect of consumers' attitude towards halal label and moderating effect of religious involvement. This study thus contributes to the advancement of knowledge on factors that motivate the purchase intention of halal food.

Keywords: halal food, halal marketing, religious involvement, purchase intention, structural equation model
JEL code: M

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1. Introduction

For centuries, religions have been considered to be mechanisms that allow different groups of strangers, from diverse origins, to coexist together (Norenzayan, 2014). Religion converts people, who do not know each other, into an imaginary moral community united by sacred bonds and under the supervision of a vigilant God (Graham and Haidt, 2010). However, throughout history, religion, along with its complex rituals and beliefs, has played a very important role in establishing a moral sphere among large communities that has contributed to coexistence (Norenzayan, 2014).

Religious people believe in some kind of supervising higher entities at some events in their lives more than at other times (Atran and Ginges, 2012). The literature has collected evidence, both from a perspective of the cognitive science of religion (Bloom, 2007) and cultural evolution (Henrich, 2009), which allows for establishing a correlation between the growth phases in the size and complexity of a society, and the evolution and complexity of religious elements that seek to achieve social solidarity in that society.

One of the biggest religions in the world is Islam. After Christianity, Islam is the second largest faith worldwide in the number of believers, and it is the one with the highest growth (Kocturk, 2002). One of the religious practices that Muslims (believers of Islam) must follow is the consumption of dietary prescriptions intended to advance their well-being, which is known as 'halal' food (Bonne *et al.*, 2007). Aside from five main pillars of life: *sahadah* (good deed); *salah* (prayer); *zakah* (charity); *shaum* (fasting), and *hajj* (pilgrimage), Muslims have to make sure they consume halal food so they are safe from the wrath of Allah (God Almighty).

The population of Muslims in the 21st century is approximately 1.8 billion and will reach the figure of 2.049 billion in 2020 (Inam *et al.*, 2016). The majority of Muslims live in the Middle East, North and East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), South East Asia (notably Indonesia and Malaysia) and is also represented among many minority groups in Europe, the Americas, China, and Australia (Mesa, 2012).

The rapid growth of the Muslim population in the world means that halal food supply is becoming an important issue. According to Inam *et al.* (2016), the halal market grows about 25% per year, which shows that it is a lucrative business not only among Muslim-majority countries but also among non-Muslim countries (Ahmad *et al.*, 2013). The demand of halal food in non-Muslim countries also grows positively (Meixner *et al.*, 2018). In the United States of America, almost 75% of the Muslim community still prefers to consume halal food (Hussaini, 1993). In Europe, France is one of the largest halal markets among non-Islamic countries (Lever and Miele, 2012). Therefore, halal product supply is not merely a purely religious issue anymore, but it has also become a new trend in business and trade (Lada *et al.*, 2009; Lestari and Gunita, 2018; Wilson, 2012).

For the reason above, we follow the steps of previous research focusing on halal food purchase intention in non-European countries such as France (Bonne *et al.*, 2007), Belgium (Bonne and Verbeke, 2008), United Kingdom (Ahmed, 2008), and Austria (Meixner *et al.*, 2018). We conduct our study in Spain, a country that has a long history of Islamic influence during the Moors' reign for over nine centuries from 800 A.D. until the 17th century (Mesa, 2012). Nowadays, the country is still a home for almost two million Muslims, based on statistics gathered by Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España (UCIDE, 2018).

This study uses quantitative approach by using the theory of planned behavior by Ajzen (1985) as a theoretical basis. We aim to tackle questions such as how is the perception of Muslim consumers in Spain towards halal food? What is the intention to purchase the halal products? Does religious involvement moderate the attitude toward the halal perception and their purchase intention?

Aside of having conventional linear regressions, we also incorporate the mediating role of 'attitude towards halal label' between 'halal awareness' and 'halal purchase intention', and the moderating role of 'religious involvement' between 'attitude towards halal label' and 'halal purchase intention'. To analyze the results

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and test the hypotheses, this work uses structural equation models through partial least square (PLS), using SmartPLS version 3 (SmartPLS GmbH, Bönningstedt, Germany) (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Ringle *et al.*, 2015).

2. Literature review

In this part we explain the relationships between the constructs. Some previous studies have explored the effect of halal awareness on consumers' purchase decisions (Alserhan, 2010; Bonne and Verbeke, 2008). Some also prove that trust on halal certificate or label can provide sensory stimulation that attracts consumers (Zannierah Syed Marzuki *et al.*, 2012).

2.1 Halal awareness and halal purchase intention

For Islamic believers, halal is a law established by Allah (God Almighty). Therefore, following the halal rules is also seen as a subjective norm which Muslim consumers must consider before making a decision from an abundant selection of food products (Asnawi *et al.*, 2018). The choice and purchase of products can follow a cognitive process in the sense that consumers need to know of a product offering and to understand its most relevant characteristics (Awan *et al.*, 2015).

Muslims who still hold their religious value usually check whether the meat or ingredients of the food they consume are produced according to Islamic way (Aziz and Chok, 2013). In this sense, halal awareness here literally means being well-informed about the halal-ness of consumed products (Aziz and Chok, 2013; Bonne and Verbeke, 2008; Lada *et al.*, 2009).

High halal awareness will lead to halal types of food as the ultimate choice of what to eat, drink, or use (Awan *et al.*, 2015). Since the norms of Islam provide clear and appropriate ideas of behaviors that are right or wrong, a consumer who has a greater halal awareness will have higher halal purchase intention Aziz and Chok (2013). Therefore, we formulate our first hypothesis.

H1: Halal awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention.

2.2 Halal awareness and attitude towards halal label

Since the existence of halal food has been acknowledged in several countries, usually such products are indicated with a label or certificate that helps consumers with their identification (Aziz and Chok, 2013). In general, the Muslim consumers tend to look for the authentic halal certification issued by the respected authorities not only in countries of Muslim origin but also in host countries (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Spanish halal label (adapted from https://institutohalal.com).

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A research conducted by Hussaini (1993) showed that 75% of Muslim immigrants in the US still hold onto their religious dietary laws. Therefore, there is certain attitude toward the halal label, which is the implication of a belief (prior to reaction, gesture, or behavior) as a result of knowing the concept of halal (Mohsin-Butt and Aftab, 2013).

In addition, as pointed out by Nasution *et al.* (2016) halal awareness brings peace of mind to Muslim consumers before they consume a product. Therefore, we would like to examine the degree of Spanish Muslim consumers' attitude towards halal food label and whether it is affected by their halal awareness. Based on that argument, we formulate the second hypothesis.

H2: Halal awareness has a positive effect on attitude towards halal label.

2.3 Attitude towards halal label and halal purchase intention

Another of the considered effects is how the attitude towards the presence of a halal label will determine consumers' behavior, that is, how it will affect their purchase intention (Lada *et al.*, 2009). Among believers, the purchase of halal food products is also seen as a socially desirable behavior (Alam and Sayuti, 2011). Finally, in the context of consumer behavior, attitude towards halal label can positively affect their purchase intention for a halal product (Haque *et al.*, 2015).

H3: Attitude towards halal label has a positive effect on halal purchase intention.

In addition, it is also important to see whether consumers' attitude toward the halal label acts as a mediator that connects their halal awareness and purchase intention (Briliana and Mursito, 2017). A variable mediating halal awareness and purchase intention has been incorporated in some research, such as Briliana and Mursito (2017) and Mohd Suki and Abang Salleh (2019). In our case, we put attitude towards halal label as mediating variable. For this hypothesis, we adopted the mediation model proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Zhao *et al.* (2010).

H4: Attitude towards halal label mediates the relationship between halal awareness and halal purchase intention.

2.4 The moderating effect of religious involvement

Previously we have already discussed that belief in religious teachings has significant influence on attitudes and behavior, on both individual and social level (Jamal and Sharifuddin, 2015). It is considered that some individuals defend religious values when they incorporate the norm dictated by their spiritual beliefs into their behavior (Nasution *et al.*, 2016). This study has considered a combination of cognitive factors such as 'halal awareness', attitudinal factors, such as 'attitude towards halal label' and assigned one of the constructs as a mediating variable. To gain better perspective on the effect of religion, we also incorporate a moderating variable to relate with 'purchase intention' of halal food products.

In this case, we examine whether religious involvement acts as moderator that also explains the relationship between customers' attitude towards the halal label and their purchase intention (Baazeem *et al.*, 2016; Jamal and Sharifuddin, 2015). For this hypothesis, we also adopted the model proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Zhao *et al.* (2010).

H5: Religious involvement moderates the effect of attitude towards halal label on halal purchase intention.

The relationship between constructs and constructed hypotheses are visually presented by Figure 2. The upcoming section will provide further explanation about our preferred methodology and respondents' profiles.

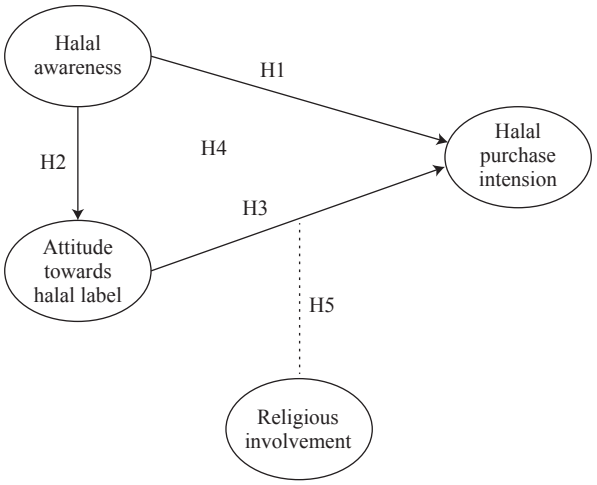

Figure 2. Research model.

3. Materials and methods

This research aims to test the hypothesis presented in the previous section and represented in Figure 2. Initially, this study begins with an exploration of the factors and scales used as estimators of theoretical concepts (Hair *et al.*, 2011; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Using an online questionnaire, we examined factors that influence purchase intention of halal food.

The questionnaire contains 18 questions explaining four constructs. We adapt the scales proposed by Jamal and Sharifuddin (2015) to measure religious involvement (3 items). For halal awareness (4 items), we adapt the scales proposed by Lada *et al.* (2009). Next, we use scales by Haque *et al.* (2015) to measure attitude towards halal label. For halal purchase intention (4 items), we use scales by Garg and Joshi (2018). The questionnaire use Likert scale with 5 indicates 'strongly agree', 4 indicates 'agree', 3 'some agreement', 2 'disagree' and 1 indicates 'strongly disagree'.

The participants were 228 Muslim consumers who live in Barcelona, Madrid, Seville, and Cordoba. They volunteered to participate in answering our questionnaire. We use this convenience samples to avoid complications using random samples, considering Muslim population in Spain is limited. The sample size exceeded the minimum requirement recommended by Malhotra (2007).

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the sample. Although most of the respondents were not born in Spain, 94.7% have Spanish nationality. Among the participants, the number of men is somewhat higher than that of women (53.5%) and the most frequent age was between 26 and 35 years (36.4%).

The data collected were processed by hierarchical regression combined with path analysis, using SmartPLS 3 software (Henseler and Sarstedt, 2013), to test the research hypotheses previously proposed which are temporary answers to the formulation of research problems expressed in the form of a statement sentence (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

First, we had to test the model's validity and reliability to ensure that only valid and reliable construct measures were involved for next step (Hulland, 1999). Afterwards, we tested the structural model by calculating the paths between constructs.

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Table 1. Respondents' demographic profiles.

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	men	122	53.5
	women	106	46.5
	total	228	100
Age (year)	<26	75	32.9
	26-35	83	36.4
	36-45	70	30.7
	total	228	100
Nationality	non-Spanish	10	4.4
	Spanish	216	94.7
	prefer not to answer	2	0.9
	total	228	100
Residence	Catalunya	103	45.1
	Madrid	43	18.9
	Andalucia	63	27.6.
	Valencia	15	6.57
	others	4	1.83
	total	228	100

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3.1 Exploratory factor analysis

Our next step was to analyze composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and the average variance extracted (Table 2). These values exceed the thresholds recommended by the literature. A requirement to see whether the result met the requirement is the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), which is a comparison index of the distance between the correlation coefficients and their partial correlation coefficients. The KMO value is considered sufficient if it is above 0.5. The results showed that the value of the KMO was 0.580. Thus, the KMO value has met the requirements because it is above 0.5 (Pallant, 2013).

Afterwards, we eliminated items that are considered not 'strong' enough. Here, we eliminated the ones with low factor loadings, or as explained as a rule of thumb, the item should have a rotated factor loading of at least 0.6 (Pallant, 2013). The results show that all items had been loaded into the five respective factors. The results are presented in the Table 2.

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Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis result.

Variables Indicators	Factor loadings (λ)	CR[2]	AVE[2]
Religious involvement (Jamal and Sharifuddin, 2015)			
I frequently read religious books (Quran and Islam-teachings)	0.869	0.859	0.671
I frequently listen to religious lectures on television / radio	0.823		
I attend religious discussion with friends, relatives, or family	0.761		
Halal awareness (Aziz and Chok, 2013)			
I actively read or search related information halal products	0.300*	0.774	0.793
Food production methods are also important in determining the halal status	0.846		
I will only purchase the product if I know the slaughtering process is suitable to halal concept	0.676		
I understand and know exactly the meaning of 'halal'	0.387*		
Attitude towards halal label (Briliana and Mursito, 2017; Mohsin-Butt and Aftab, 2013)			
The existence of a halal label in the packaging of food products is important	0.907	0.876	0.596
I will choose a product based on whether there is a halal label	0.467*		
Halal label makes me feel safe to consume the product	0.875		
Choosing to buy halal products is a good idea	0.826		
I always look for the halal label on the product packaging before buying any products or goods	0.702		
Halal purchase intention (Garg and Joshi, 2018)			
I prefer to buy 'Halal' certified products even when the brand is not very popular	0.974	0.933	0.778
I would recommend my family and friends to buy halal food	0.872		
I am interested in buying halal food	0.939		
I will keep buying halal food according to my need	0.722		

[1] Items with (*) were not included in further analysis.

[2] AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

3.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Next, we confirm the constructs with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The study employed additional fit indices in assessing the viability of the current CFA model. This study applies partial least squares structural equation modelling, with the help of the SmartPLS version 3 software (Ringle *et al.*, 2015).

Hair *et al.* (2011) suggested accepting items with minimum loadings of 0.6. Here, the loadings of all items were all greater than 0.6, therefore individual item reliability was accepted. Next, we examined construct internal consistency by using composite internal scale reliability. All Cronbach alphas of latent variables already fulfilled the requirement for a minimum 0.7 for internal consistency (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Last, we checked internal consistency by evaluating the average variance extracted (AVE). Our result had an AVE of above 0.5 for all variables, which fulfilled the requirement by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in Table 3.

According to Schreiber *et al.* (2006), confirmatory factor analysis is also used to test unidimensionality, validity, and reliability of construct measurement models. Before going to the analysis of the structural model, the goodness of the fit of the model was calculated by analyzing the standardized root mean-square residual (SRMR) proposed by Henseler *et al.* (2015). We found that the SRMR value is 0.085. Any SRMR value less than 0.10 and more than 0.08 indicates a good model fit (Henseler *et al.*, 2015; Hu and Bentler, 1999). To provide a compact explanation of the CFA results, we present the results in Table 4.

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Table 3. Confirmatory factor analysis result.

Items	Religious involvement	Halal awareness	Attitude	Purchase intention
I frequently read religious books (Quran and Islam-teachings)	0.888			
I frequently listen to religious lectures on television / radio	0.923			
I attend religious discussion with friends, relatives, or family	0.824			
Food production methods are also important in determining the halal status		0.902		
I will only purchase the product if I know the slaughtering process is suitable to halal concept		0.879		
The existence of a halal label in the packaging of food products is important			0.922	
Halal label makes me feel safe to consume the product			0.902	
Choosing to buy halal products is a good idea			0.881	
I always look for the halal label on the product packaging before buying any products or goods			0.772	
I prefer to buy 'Halal' certified products even when the brand is not very popular				0.940
I would recommend my family and friends to buy halal food				0.940
I am interested in buying halal food				0.920
I will keep buying halal food according to my need				0.858
Cronbach's alpha	0.858	0.740	0.893	0.935

Table 4. Confirmatory factor analysis test summary.[1]

Categories	Acceptable limit	Conclusion
Unidimensionality	factor loadings of all indicators ≥0.70	all factor loadings of all indicators are ≥0.7
Validity		
Convergent validity	AVE ≥0.50	all constructs have AVE >0.5, the moderating effect has the value of AVE which is a little below 0.5, but still acceptable
Construct validity	fit indexes is acceptable (SRMR value ≤0.9)	fit index satisfies acceptable fit level (0.085)
Reliability		
Internal reliability	Cronbach's alpha ≥0.70	all constructs have Cronbach's alpha values >0.7

[1] AVE = average variance extracted; SRMR = standardized root mean-square residual.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Structural model evaluation

Next, the relationships between constructs were analyzed through structural equation modelling. As an assisting tool, we also used SmartPLS Version 3 for the analysis. Bootstrapping technique was used to find out the significance of the coefficient. Table 5 summarizes the path coefficients and their *t*-values.

Table 5 revealed that halal awareness and attitude towards halal label had influences and significant effects on purchase intention, explained by the positive coefficient and *t*-values higher than 1.96 (Hair *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1) and hypothesis 3 (H3) were supported. Attitude towards halal label also had

Table 5. Path coefficients.[1]

Hypothesis	Relations	Path coefficient	*t*-values	Decision
H1	halal awareness → halal purchase intention	0.335	4.913	supported
H2	halal awareness → attitude towards halal label	0.934	8.810	supported
H3	attitude towards halal label → halal purchase intention	0.752	11.095	supported

[1] Bootstrapping (n=500); $P<0.001$.

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influence and a significant effect on halal purchase intention, which means hypothesis 2 (H2) was also supported. This result supports the findings by previous researches, which are Bonne *et al.* (2007), Lada *et al.* (2009), Aziz and Chok (2013).

It seems that Spanish Muslim consumers rely so much on a halal label or sticker on the package of the product. They do not really care about the product's brand. Even though a brand is well-known for its quality, consumers will still not buy it unless there is a halal label attached to its package. Another interpretation of the result is that the halal component in the product is perceived to be more important than general perception of quality.

4.2 Mediation effect

In the case of the relation between halal awareness, attitude towards halal label, and halal purchase intention (H4), we found that attitude towards halal label acted as a mediator on the effect of halal awareness and halal purchase intention. We put the explanation of the relationship between these three constructs in Table 6, which involves other two paths, in this case H2 and H3.

As Zhao *et al.* (2010) suggested, positive significance (*t*-values) of both paths forming the mediating relation mean that a mediation effect exists in the form of complementary partial mediation. It means that the mediated effect and direct effect both exist and point in the same direction. From Table 6, we see that the total effect of 1.037 and indirect effect of 0.703 are both positive and significant. In this case, the mediation results showed that halal awareness can act as a direct predictor of halal purchase intention. At the same time, halal awareness may also function as an indirect predictor of halal purchase intention via attitude towards halal label. The role of attitude as a mediating variable here corresponds with the findings of Garg and Joshi (2018).

4.3 Moderation effect

As shown in Table 7, the moderating effect of the religious involvement is positive and significant. In our model, we estimate a standardized path coefficient of 0.159. Regarding the significance, the *t*-value indicates that the moderation effect is significant because the *t*-value of 5.219 is higher than 1.96 (Henseler and Fassott, 2010).

Table 6. Mediation paths.[1]

H2	($\beta_2 = 0.934$)	halal awareness → attitude towards halal label
H3	($\beta_3 = 0.752$)	attitude towards halal label → halal purchase intention
Mediation/indirect effect	($\beta_2 \times \beta_3$)	0.703
t-value		10.986
H1	($\beta_1 = 0.335$)	halal awareness → halal purchase intention
Total effect	($\beta_1 + (\beta_2 \times \beta_3)$)	1.037
H4		halal awareness → attitude towards halal label → halal purchase intention
Decision for H4		supported

[1] Bootstrapping (n=500); $P<0.001$.

Table 7. Moderation path.[1]

	Moderation effect path	β	*t*-value	Decision
H5	religious involvement × attitude towards halal label → halal purchase intention	0.159	5.219	supported

[1] Bootstrapping (n=500); $P<0.001$.

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Therefore, the hypothesis saying that the moderating effect of the religious involvement influences the effect of attitude towards halal label on purchase intention (H5) was also supported as seen from the positive coefficient and significant *t*-value. This is consistent with findings of Baazeem *et al.* (2016), Nasution *et al.* (2016) and Madiawati and Pradana (2016). When religious involvement is higher, the positive influence of attitude towards halal label on purchase intention will be higher. On the contrary, lower religious involvement indicates that the positive influence of attitude towards halal label on purchase intention will decrease.

5. Conclusions, implications and future research directions

Incorporating several marketing-related factors combined with socio-religious theory, this study empirically provided evidence of the significant relationships between halal awareness, attitude towards halal label, and halal purchase intention. Several previous publications have incorporated such constructs in their research, for example Lada *et al.* (2009), Aziz and Chok (2013) and Mohd Suki and Abang Salleh (2019). However, only few manage to put attitude towards halal label as a mediating variable. Therefore, we felt that we received interesting result from our empirical study.

Both halal awareness and attitude towards halal label were proven to have a positive relationship with halal purchase intention. This result was unsurprising and frequently discussed in literature of halal consumer behaviour (Awan *et al*., 2015; Aziz and Chok, 2013; Bonne *et al*., 2007; Lada *et al*., 2009). In reality, the if Muslims has more awareness on halal food, their tendency to buy halal food product will also be higher.

Our result also shows that a mediation effect of attitude towards halal label exists in the form of complementary partial mediation. It means that Muslim consumers' attitude towards halal label has both mediated effect and direct effect on their purchase intention. The mediation test results showed that halal awareness can act as a direct predictor of halal purchase intention. At the same time, halal awareness may also function as an indirect predictor of halal purchase intention via attitude towards halal label. This result corresponds with Briliana and Mursito (2017).

To further enrich the discussion, we also proposed to incorporate religiosity as one of the factors. Initially, we designed religious involvement as a construct with direct relationship with purchase intention. However, more intriguing discussion in previous literature occurs as a result of having religious factors as a moderating effect, as seen in Jamal and Shukor (2014) and Jamal and Sharifuddin (2016). Therefore, our research model in this paper incorporates religious involvement as a moderator on the relationship of attitude towards halal label and halal purchase intention.

Our result shows that religious involvement also plays a significant role in predicting Muslim consumers' intention to purchase halal products. It might explain that even though Muslims are not the majority in Spain, they still take their involvement in religious activities into account concerning their dietary habit. Considering there have not been many academic publications focusing on halal consumer behaviour in Spain, our result opens door of further research opportunities related this matter.

However, we also realize that there are still weaknesses and limitations in our work. We have not explored more about consumers' demographics to determine whether they are native Muslim Spanish or second/third generation Spanish citizens. This classification is important since the level of halal awareness and religious

involvement might differ. Future research should also distinguish the respondents according to whether they were born Muslim or had converted from other religions.

Having convenience sampling technique, we were quite grateful that we were able to gather 228 respondents to voluntarily answer our questionnaire. Having used a convenience sample, it is not possible to extrapolate the results to the total population. However, the distribution of the sample obtained is fairly balanced.

We were confident that our respondents were less likely to give biased information since they were filtered by several preliminary screening questions. Nevertheless, using volunteer respondents can also become a limitation since there were not offered incentives or rewards. As argued by Honigmann (2003), unrewarded voluntary respondents may not feel motivated in getting involved so they may not represent of the target population.

In terms of halal purchase intention, there should also be a difference between actual purchase or repeat purchase of the food product. Therefore, more variables from previous theories can be taken into account, for example purchase behaviour, behavioural control, and repurchase intention. It leads to our recommendation for future research that it might be better to have a breakdown of food products into different categories to provide more precise picture and research scope.

Last but not least, we expect this article's contribution to be useful for academic research as well as for halal food manufacturers, practitioners and related policymakers. Hopefully it can be a useful additional source of knowledge for further explorations of halal food consumption in any country or society, since the topic is always updated and fits with the global context.

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