The Effect of Religious Commitment on Halal Brand Relationship and Purchase Intention

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Abstract

Religion is a crucial element of every culture that is influential determinant of human behavior in daily life and marketplace. The purpose of this study is proposing a model to determine the effect of religious commitment on Halal brand relationship and purchase intention. A review of literature was conducted to propose the theoretical framework based on the recognized variables. In addition, the paper provides insight of each variable of the theoretical model. The goal of the implementing religious commitment with intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions is to identify the effect of this construct on Halal purchase intention as well as relationship with the Halal brand. Specially, the role of consumer-brand relationships is highlighted as a mediating variable between religiosity and purchase intention. Furthermore, practical implication of this research extends to the new window for marketers and businesses in different countries involved in the Halal market to know the importance of consumers’ religiosity. Making a durable relationship with the Halal brand assists corporations to maintain the association with their consumers (Muslim and non-Muslim) in this lucrative market. Finally, this study is one of the first to highlight the effect of religious commitment in the Halal market.

Keywords Halal, Religious commitment, Consumer-brand relationships, Purchase intention

1. Introduction

Religion as fundamental part of each culture can impact different aspects of human’s life such as their behaviors in society and marketplace (Choi et al., 2010; Khraim, 2010). In fact, religion as the most influential factor makes taboos and obligations for the consumers in their choice behavior and purchase intention in the bazaar. In addition, the degree of individuals’ religiosity is a significant point to reveal the commitment to a brand that consumers buy and use (Rindfleisch et al., 2005). The global markets seek to grasp the principles of a religion since it is a main source of decision-making and relationship (Khraim, 2010; Layton et al., 2011). Nowadays, consumers in the market are bombarded with various kinds of brands that they are everywhere and have penetrated into all realms of our life such as economic, social, cultural, sporting and even religion (Kapfere, 2008). Brands by creating distinctive values for their consumers can be distinguished in the market (Choi et al., 2011). Indeed, a brand is a source of purchasing decision-making and building a durable relationship (Mohammad, 2012).

Today, in the marketplace, the role of religious brands like Halal (Alserhan, 2010) is considerable because it adds value to its products, and gives meaning to the intention of consumers. This brand situates on a broad variety of product and service lines ranging from hospitality, banking, logistic, insurance, financial products, foods, beverages and cosmetic (Dali et al., 2009; Alserhan, 2010). Halal market currently generates about USD 1.5 trillion a year, and particularly in the food industry, Muslims contribute USD 632 billion annually to this market (Alserhan, 2010). Halal as a worldwide brand meets many requirements such as quality standard, and hygiene practice for its products. In current market, Muslim consumers are not only user of the Halal brand but also non-Muslim consumers across the world prefer to buy and use this brand. As an illustration, Rezai et al. (2010)
indicated the non-Muslim Russians that purchase from Muslim stores because they believe the products are fresh, safe and infection free.

Whilst previous studies have been done to explore different aspects of Halal such as Halal market condition (Alserhan, 2010), Halal supply chain management (Tieman, 2011), concept of Halal (Jallad, 2008), Halal certification (Shafie & Othman, 2006; Noordin et al., 2009), implementing brand theories on Halal brand (Borzooci & Asgari, 2013), and non-Muslim perception about Halal (Golnaz et al., 2010), there is a dearth of research to implement religious commitment construct on the Halal brand. To address this gap, this study proposes a model to reveal the relationship between religious commitment, consumer-brand relationships and purchase intention. Filling this gap in literature is significant because of some reasons. First, religious affiliation describes a categorical measure of the religion which one is affiliated to the religion and is an important pillar which affects the behavior of consumer in the marketplace (Muhamad & Mizerski, 2010). In this matter, discovering the behaviors of Muslim and non-Muslim consumers from other religions like Christianity or Hinduism to the Halal brand is a significant issue. Identifying the effect of religiosity as compared to other factors for making an association with the Halal brand as well as purchase intention assists marketers to know the intention of consumers extensively. Lastly, discovering the effect of different dimensions of religious commitment (internal and external) reveals reasons of association to the Halal brand.

Finally, the purpose of this paper is to propose a model that indicates the effect of religious commitment on Halal brand relationship and purchase intention. Thus, this study provides an excellent platform for scholars through which to deploy religiosity in the realms of Halal market. The following theoretical model (Figure 1) frames the constructs and their relationships in the model. To further understanding the salience of implementing religious commitment on the purchase intention, the research objectives driving this study are as follows:

1. To investigate the influence of religious commitment on purchase intention.
2. To investigate the influence of religious commitment on purchase intention as mediated by consumer-brand relationships.

![Figure 1](Proposed theoretical model)

The proposed model is designed with religious commitment as an independent variable with two dimensions which are: intra-personal and inter-personal. Consumer-brand relationships with three dimensions namely, brand trust, brand attachment and brand commitment plays role as mediator, whereas purchase intention is a dependent variable. The following discussion provides an overview of variables and conclusion as well.

### 2. Religious commitment

Religion is the mainstay of every culture that affects the daily life of its followers (Mokhlis & Spartks, 2007) as well as shapes the person’s moral system and society’s ethical structures. As consumers make decision based on the norms of their religion (Khraim, 2010), it affects attitude, value, behavior and even their consumption style. Thus, study on the religious is beneficial for firms, because ignoring the religious belief of consumers affects aspects of their business while paying attention to it develops
their markets (Swimberghe et al., 2009). According to study by Muhamad and Mizerski (2010), religious commitment is one of significant factor that affects consumers in the marketplace. Moreover, religious commitment indicates to what extent one person adheres to the stable and pragmatic values which are not being changed all too frequently (Khraim, 2010).

Religious commitment comprises two dimensions intra-personal (internal) and inter-personal (external) that play crucial roles in the devout people’s life (Mokhlis & Spartks, 2007). The internal dimension declares the religious identities, religious attitudes, religious values, and religious beliefs, and the external dimension expresses the religious affiliation, devotional practices, or membership in a religious community. In fact, intra-personal religiosity reveals the cognitive aspect of religiosity and inter-personal reflects the behavioral facet of religiosity or individual participation in the organized religious activities that have effect on purchase intention (Mukhtar & Butt, 2012). Furthermore, religious commitment varies from person to person. While, religious people strongly follow their religious principles such as regularly attending weekly worship services, being strictly committed to the religious doctrines and association of the group, the people whose belief in religious tenet is weak feel free to behave in other ways (Mokhlis & Spartks, 2007). Thus, this different degree of adherence to which individuals become committed to a religion impacts directly on the choice behavior in the market and obligation to a specific brand (Khraim, 2010; Rindfleisch et al., 2005). Finally, religious commitment extends beyond than religion itself, so investigation on the effect of consumers religiosity on Halal brand relationship and purchase intention in the marketplace makes a valuable stream.

3. Consumer-brand relationships

Brand relationship is rooted in sociological, anthropological and cultural theory (Esch et al., 2006). Brand relationship reveals the relationship between brands and consumers (Fournier, 1998). Indeed, this relationship indicates the strength of consumers’ emotional connection to the brand. Focusing on sole dimensions namely, brand trust, brand attachment and brand commitment describe consumer-brand relationships extensively (Bouhlel et al., 2009, 2011; Magnoni et al., 2011). A relationship may be truly effective when most or all of these dimensions are strong. So, investigation the roles of trust, attachment, and commitment in the relationship that consumers build with the Halal brand reveals that how consumers perceive Halal brand and also in how they are relate to it.

Brand trust is an essential part of any brand management strategy since it reflects an emotional issue (Temporal, 2011). Gurviez and Korchia (2002) mentioned that “trust in the brand, from the consumer’s point of view, is a psychological variable that reflects a set of aggregated presumptions relating to the credibility, integrity and benevolence that the consumer ascribes to the brand”. Furthermore, trust is the foundation of valuable relationship and assists corporations to construct the best association and reap some benefits (Serrat, 2009). Lack of trust causes a weak relationship between the brand and consumers (Gurviez & Korchia, 2002). Trust as a fundament of the durable relationship with the Halal brand would be attainable when performance of the brand meets the expectations of the consumers. Then, the Halal brand keeps its promise to consumers in terms of making guarantee of their satisfaction. Finally, consumers in different level of perception feel safety with the Halal brand.

In addition, brand attachment is the power of communication between one brand and person (Park et al., 2010). Thus, when a consumer attaches to a brand strongly, is less likely to use competing brand because of capturing consumer’s mind and heart. Lacoeuilhe (2000) also explained that “attachment to the brand is a psychological variable that reveals a lasting and inalterable affective relationship (separation is painful) to the brand and expresses a relation of psychological closeness to it”. Furthermore, Sorayaei and Hasanzadeh (2012) describe attachment as mirror of psychic state of the consumer that clarifies the relations of the brand which have been created during time. So, attachment to the Halal brand would be permanent when consumers feel connection to the Halal brand, then, they feel are a part of the Halal brand, and lastly, thinking about the Halal brand could make a lot of pleasure for them.
Finally, brand commitment describes the degree to which the consumer is emotionally involved to a particular brand and willingness to maintain a relationship with a brand (Wang, 2002; Hee Jung & Myung Soo, 2012). Consumer brand commitment may develop via two routes: first, one clarifies the experience with the brand’s consistent functional performance that is associated to the utilitarian needs, and second, focuses on the perception of the brand’s symbolic values (Wang, 2002). Accordingly, commitment to the Halal brand in order to maintain a relationship with the brand mirror an emotional connection of consumers which is encapsulated to the willingness of consumers to defend the Halal brand, loyalty to the Halal brand and proud to tell others that ‘we are user of the Halal brand’.

4. Purchase intention
The most crucial point in each industry concentrates on increasing its consumers’ purchase intention. In fact, purchase intention is a desire to continue using the specific brand (Changa & Liub, 2009; Tariq et al., 2013) help marketers to foresee the purchase behavior of consumers and understand the market (Liza, 2011). Moreover, purchase intention is also the extensive attention of consumers towards the specific brand (Changa & Liub, 2009; Shah et al., 2012). According to study by Shaari and Arifin (2010), assessing the Halal purchase intention would help to better understanding the needs and expectation of consumers. In this regard, evaluation the considerable constructs to boost the purchase intention would be another stream that each industry must pay attention to make a superior purchase intention. Religious commitment with behavioral and cognitive facets plays important role as a predictor of Halal purchase intention (Shaari & Arifin, 2010; Golnaz et al. 2010). Finally, in order to analyze the purchase decision process by consumers, the effect of consumer-brand relationships on purchase intention is a significant issue in the market (Khan et al., 2012).

5. Conclusion
In this research, an attempt was made to conceptually clarify the implementation of religious commitment on making tough relationship and purchase intention. In this study, we proposed a model that describes the connections between religious commitment, consumer-brand relationships and purchase intention. Religious commitment that is explained based on interpersonal and intrapersonal factors has been employed in this research. This construct is important because of its effect on consumer behavior regarding to intention and making relationship to the specific brand in the market. The highlight point in this study is the application of this model to determine the impact of Halal brand relationship as mediated between religiosity and purchase intention. The effect of brand trust, brand attachment and brand commitment to make a considerable relationship with consumers is significant stream of the research. Hopefully, the findings from this research will be useful for Halal manufacturers and marketers to capture a large portion of this market. The theoretical importance of this study lies in the insight it provides into how religious commitment of different consumers affects on the Halal brand in marketplace. Indeed, the variety of consumers’ adherence to the religion due to internal and external components is a source of different behavior of consumers in the market. Finally, it is recommended to deploy this proposed model empirically in different cultures or countries amongst Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

References


