

## **Purchase Intention for Halal Products by Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago: A Focus Study**

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### **Abstract**

Halal food is an important characteristic of Muslim culture. It incorporates aspects of quality, food safety and international standards for processing and packaging through halal certification procedures. The primary concern of the Muslim consumer and food is the concept of halal, which indicates the permissibility of food and other goods and services based on the Islamic laws. Muslim consumers have more positive attitudes towards halal food products than towards halal products in other product categories. Muslims also look at other criteria such as quality, cleanliness, safety and contamination. It was found that Muslims often consume halal meat because it is believed to be tastier and healthy. The population of Trinidad and Tobago is only seven percent Muslim but halal food is prevalent in many places. One halal certification body has been in existence for over twenty years which certifies many restaurants and food products as halal. Halal food is heavily advertised through social media as well as through the use of billboards and television advertisements. Muslims and non-Muslims purchase halal food. The objective of this research is to identify the prevailing attitude to halal labelled and advertised food by Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago. The data was collected using two qualitative focus groups discussions with Muslim segments of the population who reside in Trinidad and Tobago. The study investigated the effects of attitude, awareness, religiosity, subjective norms and behavioural control on the Muslim intention to purchase halal food products sold in the country. The study found these to be significant factors affecting food purchase intention, with religiosity and attitude being the most significant factors.

**Keywords:** *halal food; awareness; attitude; religiosity; subjective norms; behavioural control; intention to purchase*

## Introduction

Religion and faith have a significant impact on personal and societal cognition, behaviour and consumption culture (McDaniel and Burnett, 1990; Kadirov, 2014; 2019). It influences the way people evaluate products, develops established practices and influences choices and attitudes (Delener, 1990). These choices range from cultural norms and relationships to fashion and dietary concerns (Mandlik et al., 2021). This is more important for some religions than others. Judaism, Hinduism and Islam have a wide spectrum of dietary laws, while Christianity has less formal food related guidelines.

Islam, one of the world's major religions is followed by 24.1% of mankind. This is estimated to increase to 70% (nearly 3 billion) by 2060 (Pew Research Centre, 2015). Muslims are found living in almost all countries of the world, including Trinidad and Tobago, where they constitute approximately six percent of the population, about 80,000 people (Pew Research Centre, 2015). Trinidad and Tobago is the southernmost twin island state of the chain of islands known as the Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago is a republic and lies only seven miles off the coast of Venezuela in South America (Robinson, et.al, 2021).

Of major importance to Muslims around the world is the availability of halal products such as food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, logistics and services (Kadirov et al, 2020). Rahman et al. (2015) found that Muslim consumers have more positive attitudes towards halal food products than towards halal products in other product categories. Bergeaud-Blackler (2004) found that Muslims often consume halal meat because it is believed to be tastier and healthy. Halal means permissible and in the context of food, it refers to all aspects of slaughtering, storage, display, preparation, hygiene and sanitation (Shafie and Othman, 2006).

The presence of halal food in Trinidad and Tobago is well established. There is a functioning organization which certifies halal food establishments, processors and products as well as approves as halal certified imported halal food, meats, and pharmaceuticals. Through the efforts of the DarulUloom Halal Committee, there are over 400 certified poultry depots, restaurants, caterers, bakeries and other food distribution outlets throughout the country. Additionally, much of the locally-sold beef, lamb and goat is halal certified while being imported from Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Uruguay.

There is the presence of halal certificates, halal logos and advertisements displaying halal products in various business enterprises and food establishments in Trinidad and Tobago. It is therefore a very well-known concept, at least among the Muslim population, however, the level of acceptance or intention to purchase halal has not been investigated.

The research will focus on the attitude that the Trinidad and Tobago Muslim consumer has towards halal. According to Fatmi et.al, (2020), given that halal products' demand is expected to increase in the coming years, the determinants affecting purchase intention towards halal products need to be studied to facilitate market growth. Understandably, the concept of halal will vary among the Muslim sects.

Although the deeper meaning of halal will most likely only be available to those familiar with the Islamic theology, halal is also viewed as a sign of quality. According to Khan and Haleem, (2016) there is strong evidence that non-Muslims now also prefer halal foods for additional safety, hygiene and quality assurance features.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)**

The Theory of Reasoned Action assumes that people have volitional control over the behaviour of interest, specifically that they are capable of performing the behaviour they desire (Hashim, 2018). The TRA according to Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975) is a social- psychological model which claims that a person's actual behaviour in performing certain actions is directly guided, as a central factor, by his or her own behavioural intention. This theory forms the basis of the investigation of Muslim and non-Muslim consumers' inclination to purchase. Several have used this theory to identify predictors of intention to purchase including Rezai (2008) who stated that in basic terms, the Theory of Reasoned Action says that a person's behaviour is determined by their attitude towards the outcome of that action and by the beliefs and opinions of the person's social environment which is referred to as the subjective norm. In further developing the theory, Ajzen and Fishbein in 1980 proposed that a person's behaviour is determined by his intention to perform the behaviour and that this intention is in turn a function of his attitude towards the behaviour and his subjective norm. This means that if the person perceives that the outcome of his behaviour will be positive he or she will be inclined to perform it and if negative then it will be declined. Similarly, if relevant others see performing the behaviour as positive and it motivates him or her in order to meet their expectations, then a positive subjective norm is expected (Rezai, 2008).

### **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

The Theory of Planned Behaviour was developed as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action. It is considered an important social cognitive model that aims to explain variance in consumer behaviour (Rachbini, 2018). It was introduced by Azjen (1985) and has been applied to investigate the relationship between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control as well as intention and behaviour (Ajzen, 2005). The core concept of TPB is that people systematically use knowledge before taking action and that their behaviour actions are not taken impulsively (Fatmi et.al, 2020). Many researchers have utilized this theory in their investigation into halal food purchase. As stated by Bashir (2020), several studies have revealed that the Theory of Planned Behaviour is an effective model which has been used in predicting and measuring the intention of the consumption of halal foods. Thus, through the application of the TPB people's intention and behaviour can be predicted by measuring their attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Bashir, 2020). In this study these determinants of TPB will be investigated through qualitative analysis as well as other variables which have been researched as factors affecting purchase intention. Fatmi et.al, (2020) called this hybrid theory as extended TPB. Other factors that are relevant to the purchase of halal products and often tested as extended TPB are religiosity, halal certification, awareness, knowledge, modesty, and other factors such as trust, self-efficacy, motivation (Khan et al., 2019; Krisjanous et al. 2021).

### **Attitude**

Attitude is defined as a person's positive or negative feeling about an act. An attitude shows relative sustainable evaluations, feelings and tendencies toward a product or thinking (Kordnaeij et al., 2013). It can also be defined as an internal expression of an individual's

feeling, which reflects whether an individual likes or dislikes a product or service (Golnaz, 2010). It is expected that a positive attitude towards a particular item will result in a greater inclination to purchase it. As pointed out by Rachbini (2018), attitude is considered as an important element in influencing consumer intention in purchasing halal products because those with high positive attitudes appeared to have greater intentions to intend to purchase halal products.

According to Bashir (2020), in the context of halal foods, attitude is considered a significant factor in influencing consumer intention regarding the purchasing of halal food products. Alam and Sayuti (2011) similarly found that there is a significant and positive relationship between attitude and intention to purchase halal products. Their study results show that the TPB model could explain 29.1 percent of the variance in the intention to purchase halal products.

### **Subjective Norm (SN)**

Subjective Norm refers to an individual's perception of social pressure to execute certain behaviour (Yeon Kim and Chung, 2011). Put simply it refers to perceived social pressure from other persons on whether or not to perform the specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Lada et al (2009) found that subjective norms have been shown to be the most influential driver of intention to choose halal products. The main drivers of subjective norms include family, friends, colleagues, relatives or other such significant groups (Ajzen, 2005). These groups exert an influence on the consumer such that they perform an action that they believe will meet their approval. Consumers may believe that family, friends, colleagues and other ones like a certain behaviour and this will cause that they be influenced by their beliefs (Pavlou and Chai, 2002). In fact, Mukhtar and Butt (2012) have found that subjective norms appear to be the strongest of all the predictors for choosing halal products.

### **Perceived Behavioural Control**

Perceived Behavioural Control is defined as perceptions of the extent to which the behaviour is measured to be manageable (Awan et al, 2014). According to Ajzen (1991), it refers to people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour of interest. In relation to halal food it would involve the ease of accessibility in obtaining halal food. This ease can be categorized into two components. The first part is self-efficacy which can be defined as an individual's self confidence in his or her ability to perform a behavior. The second part, on the other hand, termed as facilitating condition, refers to availability of resources needed to engage in a behavior (Tan and Teo, 2000). According to Bashir (2020), in terms of halal food consumption, several previous studies have determined that Perceived Behavioural Control influenced consumers' intention towards halal foods.

### **Halal Awareness**

Awareness is the ability to perceive, to feel and to be conscious of events and objects. According to Bashir (2020), awareness is the first step in the purchasing process. It indicates that consumers who were not well conversant with the product or service have now become familiar with it. Therefore, being aware of the availability of halal products, the conditions which make it halal and the ingredients all contribute to the buying behaviour for the consumer.

Bergeaud-Blackler et al. (2006) in a survey conducted in France showed that French Muslims chose to consume halal meat products because they believe that halal products were tastier, healthier and concerned about the animal welfare. This clearly shows that understanding of the principles which are integral to halal food processing influences purchase intention. According to Zakaria et al (2018), consumers' awareness of halal has an effect on their decisions towards buying halal food products. Many researchers such as Hamdan et al (2013) have found that awareness is the most influential factor on Muslim consumers' selections to buy halal food.

### **Religiosity**

Religiosity is defined by Worthington et al (2003) as the degree to which a person uses or adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs and practices and uses them in daily living. Therefore, the consumer who is also religious will have a purchase intention and by extension buying behaviour subjected to the level of his religiosity. As pointed out by Abou-Youssef et al (2011), Muslim consumers may vary in their behaviour due to differences of their religiosity level. According to Bin Abdullah (2021) authors assert that the greater the degree of an individual's religiosity, the more likely it will be that they will strive to conform to their religious obligation. Thus, religiosity plays an important role in governing an individual beliefs and behaviour (Kadirov, 2014). El Seidi (2018) also found that Islamic religiosity moderates the effects of the Theory of Planned Behaviours' three determinants of purchase intention of Halal-labelled food products. In this case, he found that in addition to these components, other determinants, such as trust, moral obligation, habit, involvement or values and dietary acculturations were additional factors (Bin Abdullah, 2021).

### **Halal Certification**

The usage of the halal logo has become an important criterion in the phase of evaluating the reliability and quality of food for both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers (Akbiyik and Eroglu, 2016). The halal logo is an indication that the product is halal certified. For Muslims, halal-certified products with halal logo bring peace of mind because it is the main sign to distinguish between halal and non-halal products. In addition, the halal logo declares the Islamic criteria, which are permitted by Islamic law, whereas, for non-Muslims, halal-certified products with halal logo confirm safety, hygiene and food quality (Aziz and Chok, 2013). Especially in a non-Muslim majority setting, the halal certification is significant, both from the point of view of giving the Muslim consumer confidence, but also as an indicator of halal food products' quality and safety attributes. According to (Ariff, 2009), the halal certificate and logo not only guarantees Muslims what they consume or use is according to the Islamic laws but also encourages manufacturers to meet the halal standards.

### **Purchase Intention**

The Theory of Planned Behaviour and its components, attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are used in this research to understand the purchase intention for halal foods by Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. Purchase intention is defined as an individual's willingness to purchase a certain product (Ajzen, 1985). According to Hosein (2012), purchase intention is considered one of the main components of consumer intellectual behaviour that could describe how an individual intends to purchase a certain product. The Theory of Planned Behaviour has been used by various researchers in different fields of studies to measure

people's intention to purchase, consume and accept halal food products (Nazahah and Sutina, 2012).

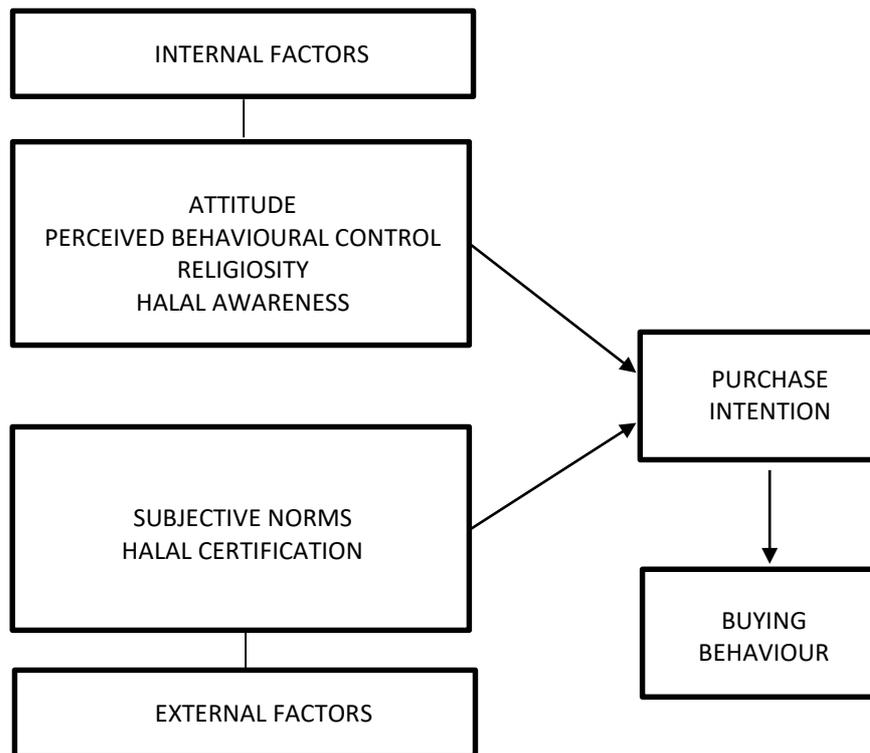
### **Buying Behaviour**

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) stated that most individuals' behaviours were predictably based on their intentions. Among these behaviours would also be the way the consumers purchase. Together with purchase intention, it therefore becomes a second dependent variable that can be investigated along with purchase intention using the Theory of Planned Behaviour. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2001), the consumer buying behaviour is how individuals, groups, and organisations select, purchase and dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to meet the consumer demand. Buying behaviour has been defined by Khan (2007) as the decision-making process and physical activity involved in acquiring, assessing, using and disposing of goods and services. Regarding halal food products, the buying behaviour that it emanates from is a step taken by the consumer after the intention to purchase that product. Therefore, a consumer who has no prior intention to purchase that product will not buy these products (Bashir, 2020).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The literature has provided many determinants for purchase intention and buying behaviour for halal products. These factors can be divided into internal factors, which are those variables related explicitly to a particular decision-maker. These would include, Attitude, Perceived Behavioural Control, Religiosity and Halal Awareness (Fatmi et.al, 2020).

There are also external factors, referring to the external forces which affect the intention of consumers to purchase halal products or services. This refers mainly to Subjective Norms and Halal Certification. The study will look at the effect of these factors (independent variables) on the purchase intention and buying behaviour for halal food products (dependent variables). This will be done using Focus Group interviews with Muslims using a semi-structured set of questions. A structural representation of the conceptual framework is shown below in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of the Study

## Methodology

### Focus Group Study

Focus group research is described as a way of collecting qualitative data which essentially involves engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions) ‘focused’ around a particular set of issues (Wilkinson, 2004). Social science researchers have used focus group research as a means of analysing consumers’ attitudes and opinions (Greenbaum, 1998). There are many benefits which can be derived from this approach. According to Krueger and Casey (2000), the focus group method is an economical, fast and efficient method for obtaining data from multiple participants. This efficiency of data collection over a short period of time in a single spatial environment is obtained through the methodology of focus group interaction which allows for a sense of belonging to a group which can increase the participants’ sense of cohesiveness (Peters, 1993). The camaraderie and common sense of purpose allows focus group discussions to yield valuable and instructive data.

The focus group tool is the interview. It is a specialized form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter (Anderson, 1990). The interview is different from other forms of data collection such as questionnaires etc. It is highly desirable for obtaining information based on i) emotions, feelings and experiences, ii) sensitive issues and iii) insider experience and privileged insights (Wisker, 2001). Thus, the focus group interview can give a deeper and clearer understanding of the issues by engaging the people intimately connected to the issues for which the focus group has been assembled. The focus group interview aims at collecting high quality data in a social context (Patton, 2002). The focus group interviews will help the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the issue (Kadirov et al., 2021); a group of people can be interviewed in a relatively unstructured way

regarding their experience to understand their feeling and behaviour (Bryman and Bell, 2007). For the focus group interview, a semi-structured questionnaire was used. This consists of ten questions divided into a format including one opening question, two introductory questions, one transition question, four key questions and two open-ended questions. Each interview is expected to last for 60 minutes. Each session, being done through Zoom, was recorded with permission sought prior to the session. The recording was transcribed into text in order to analyse the data obtained.

## **Sampling**

In order to obtain a clear and detailed understanding of the issues being investigated, it is important to choose participants purposefully. Purposeful sampling is a technique used in qualitative research for identifying and selecting information rich assets (Patton, 2002). For the purpose of this study therefore, individuals were chosen who are aware of halal foods and were in the habit of purchasing halal. For the purpose of this research, each focus group consisted of twelve participants and each session lasted for between 1 and 2 hours (Morgan, 1997). The sessions involved participants from each island that makes up the twin island state of Trinidad and Tobago. In both cases, the objective was the same; to explore the attitude to halal product purchase intention and to determine the factors that influence this attitude.

## **Choosing the Participants**

According to Longhurst (2003), there are many strategies for selecting participants for semi-structured interviews and focus groups. One such approach is purposive sampling. Members of a sample are chosen with a purpose, to represent a type in relation to key criterion (Lewis and Ritchie 2012). In this research, stratified purposive sampling as described by Creswell (2012) will be used since the aim is to select groups that display variation in a particular phenomenon but each of which is fairly homogeneous, so that subgroups can be compared.

Lewis and Ritchie (2013) identify that the selection criteria for the focus group participants must be prioritized. A first step in prioritizing the criteria is to decide which are most important in terms of achieving a sample that is inclusive of the demographic structure of the population being studied. Once the priority of the criteria has been considered, it will be possible to assign them as primary, secondary and if necessary, tertiary criteria. In the proposed focus study research, the primary criteria would be Muslim. The secondary criteria would be age, gender, education and income level. The focus group was organized to have a range of these criteria in each session, the aim being to include participants who were different enough to stimulate the discussion of diverse views and experiences but similar enough to avoid unhealthy conflict or alienate anyone and thus inhibit their contribution (Lewis and Ritchie, 2013).

## **Recruitment of the Participants**

Many methods are available for recruiting participants into the focus group survey. These include letters, information leaflets, posters, advertisements in newsletters, emails, messages on online forums and even social media sites (Lewis and Ritchie, 2013). Longhurst (2003) observed that group membership lists can be a useful tool for recruiting. People who already know each other through sports clubs, online groups, community activities, church groups or work make an ideal focus group. For this research, a Google form questionnaire was developed

which provided information regarding the objective of the focus group session. Those who are interested were sent a Zoom link via WhatsApp or e-mail and reminded before the session.

**Table 1.** Demographic Data of Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Education Level	MthlyIncome (TT\$)
M1	27	Male	Tertiary	< 5,000
M2	45	Male	Tertiary	< 5,000
M3	25	Male	Tertiary	5,000 - 10,000
M4	50	Female	Tertiary	< 5,000
M5	59	Male	Tertiary	>5000
M6	30	Female	Tertiary	5,000 - 10,000
M7	51	Male	Secondary	< 5,000
M8	40	Female	Tertiary	< 5,000
M9	50	Male	Secondary	5,000 - 10,000
M10	40	Male	Tertiary	5,000 - 10,000
M11	62	Male	Secondary	< 5,000
M12	30	Male	Tertiary	> 10,000
M13	24	Male	Tertiary	< 5,000
M14	41	Female	Tertiary	< 5,000
M15	67	Male	Tertiary	> 10,000
M16	33	Male	Tertiary	5,000 - 10,000
M17	37	Female	Secondary	< 5,000
M18	35	Female	Tertiary	< 5,000
M19	54	Female	Secondary	< 5,000
M20	40	Female	Secondary	5,000 - 10,000
M21	40	Female	Tertiary	> 10,000
M22	19	Female	Tertiary	< 5,000
M23	26	Female	Tertiary	< 5,000
M24	27	Male	Tertiary	>5000

### Analysis of Data

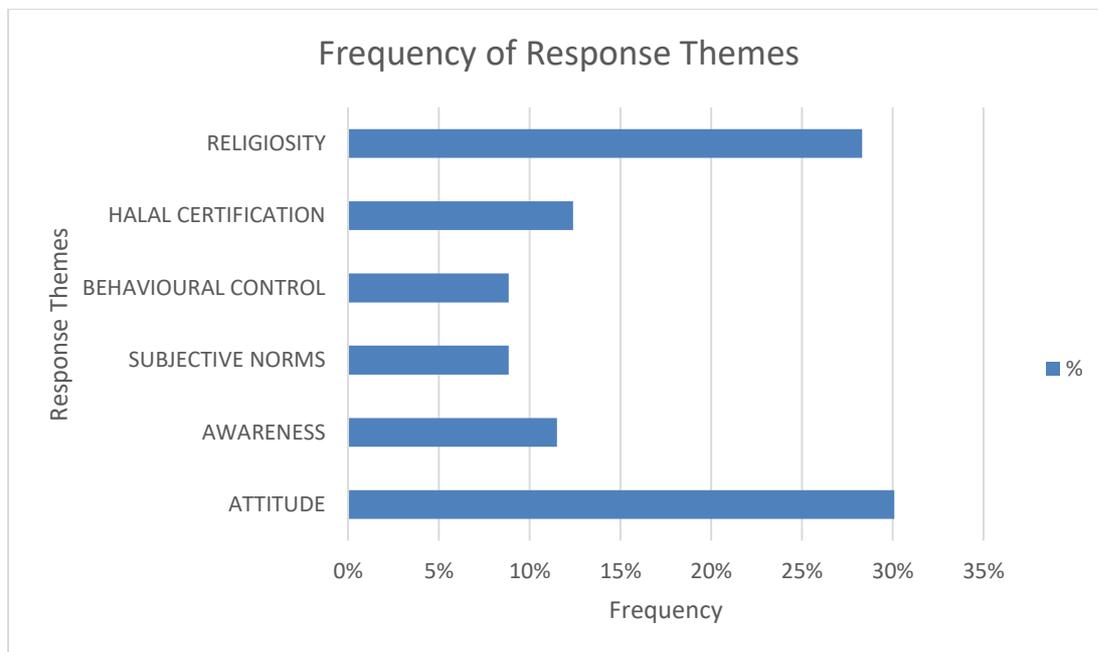
Based on the qualitative analysis approach, QSR Nvivo 10 software was used to analyse the data from the focus group interviews to code common responses of participants regarding their attitude towards halal products in Trinidad and Tobago. The emerging themes are tabulated below.

## Results

The six major constructs for the Purchase Intention of Halal foods from the literature were found present in the data collected from the two focus groups. These are presented in the table below (Table 2) in order of decreasing frequency of references and compared in Figure 2.

**Table 2:** Main themes from focus study group analysis

Construct	References
Attitude	34
Religiosity	32
Halal Certification	14
Awareness	13
Subjective Norms	10
Behavioural Control	10



**Figure 2:** Relative Importance of Themes

### Theme 1: Muslims consumers' attitude towards the purchase of halal food

This was the most dominant theme from the responses of the participants. All considered halal food to be containing attributes that were difficult to ignore or forego. Many felt it a duty to purchase halal food as it was superior to non-halal food. Four sub-themes were identified. The most common advantage of halal food was that it was considered safe. According to one participant, halal food “shows a certain level of quality assurance.” Some participants were more inclined towards halal meat purchases due to the expectations that the animals chosen for halal slaughter would meet higher and stricter standards of animal health and husbandry. One participant summed up the general consensus by saying, “I feel I’m not being given such meat

or animals that may have died on their own.” Another sub-theme of attitude was quality with participants looking at the way meats are processed as resulting in “quality better than non-halal products.” A significant contributor to the positive attitude to halal food was the element of trust with several participants indicating that they would only purchase and consume food coming from a credible source.

### **Theme 2: The level of halal food purchase connected to the appreciation of the Muslim way of Life**

The theme of religiosity was very close to attitude. Three main sub-themes were identified. The most prevalent of these was knowledge of the laws of Islam and how these laws dictated that a Muslim should purchase halal. When asked what their understanding of halal was, one participant said, “My understanding of halal is what is lawful and prescribed for us as Muslims.” Similarly, many participants connected their halal food purchase to their Islamic knowledge, “I believe it’s connected to the laws of the Shariah. Food, drink and what you wear all fall under the Islamic laws.” The concept of feeling safe was also covered in the sub-theme of knowledge of what is permissible and what is not. Another important sub-theme of religiosity that was referenced was animal welfare in relation to how animals are reared, treated and processed into halal meat and products, as one participant put it, “Even though I know that everyone’s criteria is different for measuring good treatment of animals, I know for sure if the halal criteria is met, certain things would not pass.”

### **Theme 3: Halal labelling and evidence of certification**

The third theme that emerged regarding purchase of halal food was the labelling, logo or halal certificate found either on the product or accompanying it. Halal labelling is a guarantee for Muslims that halal standards are employed throughout the life-cycle of this product. One participant expressed this view as, “we know definitely with the DarulUloom certificate, it’s a process they go through with checking all the facts, they do a lot of work and research in it and the people doing it are credible Muslims. So I think that would be an important factor in choosing. With the DarulUloom certificate, you are one hundred percent sure. That’s one of my criteria in eating at a place or eating a particular product.” There were so many consensual feelings of appreciation for certification that one participant said, “Thank Allah for the Halal Committee.”

### **Theme 4: Awareness of Muslims regarding halal food purchases**

Participants expressed a desire to purchase halal based upon an understanding of the processes involved in halal food manufacture as well as the benefits derived from these processes. One sub-theme of halal awareness was the slaughter process leading to halal meat and meat products. Participants showed a considerable amount of knowledge of the criteria for halal slaughter of animals such as, “When you slaughter, you allow all the blood to flow out.” Similarly, some participants were aware of differences in halal processing standards. One participant said, “I would ask if the meat was stunned or mechanically slaughtered.” Another sub-theme of awareness was the understanding that halal food was healthier to consume, “There are many animals fed hormones to speed up their growth, how conducive is that to consume?”

## **Theme 5: Social Construct or Subjective Norms**

Participants expressed a desire to purchase halal based upon an understanding of the processes involved in halal food manufacture as well as the benefits derived from these processes. One sub-theme of halal awareness was the slaughter process leading to halal meat and meat products. Participants showed a considerable amount of knowledge of the criteria for halal slaughter of animals such as, “When you slaughter, you allow all the blood to flow out.” Similarly, some participants were aware of differences in halal processing standards. One participant said, “I would ask if the meat was stunned or mechanically slaughtered.” Another sub-theme of awareness was the understanding that halal food was healthier to consume, “There are many animals fed hormones to speed up their growth, how conducive is that to consume?”

## **Theme 6: Availability and Accessibility / Behavioural Control**

The availability and accessibility of halal foods in Trinidad and Tobago was recognized as a factor which may also influence halal food purchase. One participant gave an example of halal food availability, “I think it is very important because halal chicken is just huge in Trinidad because for me, it’s harder to get non-halal chicken. One difference between the responses of the participants in Trinidad and Tobago was availability. This would be due to the much smaller population of Muslims relative to other ethnic groups in Tobago compared to Trinidad. As a result, one participant noted, “Definitely in terms of take-away food outlets, it’s very different in Tobago.”

## **Discussion**

The focus group interview, though not conducted in person, nevertheless yielded positive data relating to the topic. Participants were generally enthused that halal food was available and accessible in a non-Muslim majority island. Many concluded however that the spatial distribution of halal food outlets concentrated more in urban geographical areas where the Muslim population was higher than the national average. It was highlighted though that as a small island, there was liberal movement to all areas of the country for job related issues or recreation. Halal food availability waned in outlying areas as well as Tobago, which has a predominantly tourism-based economy. It was expressed that Halal Tourism, also called Islamic Tourism or Muslim Friendly Tourism which according to Battour and Nazari Ismail (2015) that opens up new and exciting opportunities for enhancing economic growth, should be explored especially in Tobago.

The results show a positive inclination for purchase of halal food based on its Shariah or Islamic law requirements by a Muslim (Kadirov, 2019). Additionally, other quality attributes such as health, food safety and hygienic processing facilities were identified as potential influencing factors for non-Muslims as well. As summarised by Mathew et. al. (2014), for Muslim consumers, choosing halal food is a must and it is a religious requirement based on the Islamic teachings. Non-Muslim consumers on the other hand value halal because of the health benefits it provides which is purely voluntary on an individual decision rather than to obey a religious requirement. In congruence with this, many respondents agreed that the concept of halal needed to be explained so that there would be greater awareness of halal products nationally. A better

understanding of what halal represents could leave a greater purchase intention which later transforms into the behaviour of purchase and repeat purchase (Mathew et. al., 2014).

Whilst religiosity was a significant factor among those interviewed, it was noted that halal food product purchase intention was not only influenced by the level of religious commitment shown by the Muslim population but also the particular Islamic ideology followed by adherents of the faith. As observed by Lever and Miele in 2012, religious food auditing has facilitated the recognition and standardisation of halal at the global level but it has also increased competition between certifying bodies that promote different notions of “authentic” halal.

This situation was expressed by many respondents as resulting in confusion due to differences in standards. The local halal certifying body for example does not approve mechanically slaughtered poultry as halal, however the local supermarkets sell this poultry which is imported and accompanied with halal certification from foreign halal certifying bodies.

There was therefore the call for one acceptable standard for halal. Hallim and Mohammed Salleh (2012) outlined that this is so far impractical since there are hundreds of active halal certifying bodies around the world, from governments to local mosques and Islamic organisations with different standards on animal feed, slaughtering methods, purchasing and logistics contributing to the fragmentation of global halal markets.

## **Conclusion**

The study focused on factors which may influence the intention to purchase halal food products in Trinidad and Tobago by Muslim consumers. Constructs identified were similar to those found in studies conducted in other regions, especially where Muslim majority populations reside. Except for a few studies, multiple studies have found that attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control (also the TPB components), religiosity, halal awareness and halal certification/halal logo are the significant factors that influence halal products’ purchasing intention (Fatmi et al, 2020). The results of this study add to this body of evidence.

Consumers share a positive attitude towards halal food products based on their perception of such food being of high quality, safe to consume and prepared in hygienic and monitored premises. Religiosity was another common factor during purchase intention which showed the participants had an acute sense of duty and an inclination to follow the Islamic laws. It can be noted that despite being a minority sector of the population, Muslims enjoy the opportunity to purchase a large variety of halal foods both locally processed and imported. Many food outlets, especially in Trinidad were halal certified and halal labelled choices are available at many supermarkets.

Other factors such as awareness, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control also contributed. The results indicated that there is potential for increased market share for halal labelled food products through the improved marketing of these products as hygienic, higher quality and safe. Increased awareness of halal food on a national scale will result in greater acceptability of the halal construct. This study, done in a Muslim population of only six percent of the national population can also indicate to further research of the non-Muslim segment of the population and their attitude towards halal products.

## Conflict of Interest

The author has declared no conflict of interest.

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